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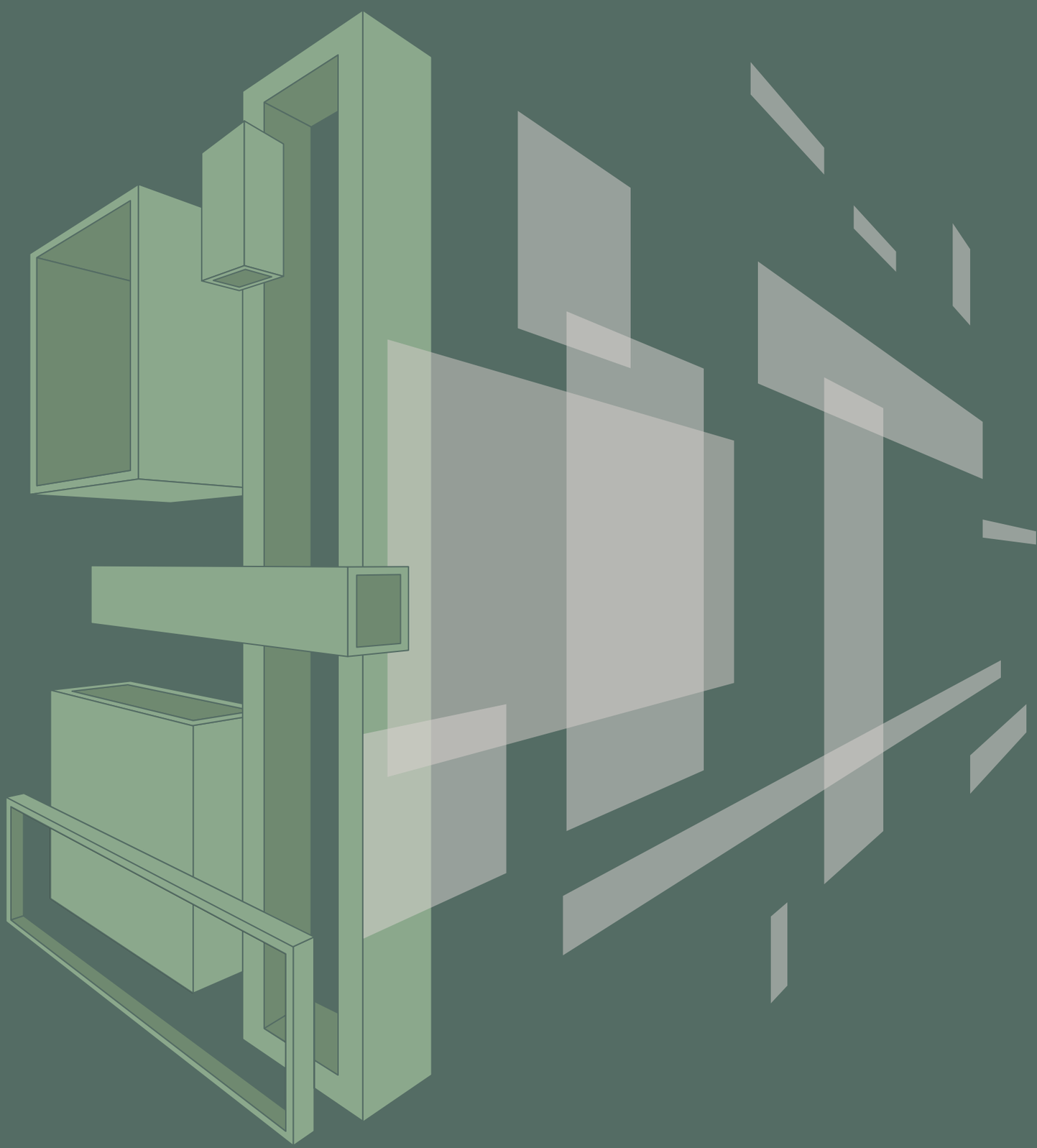
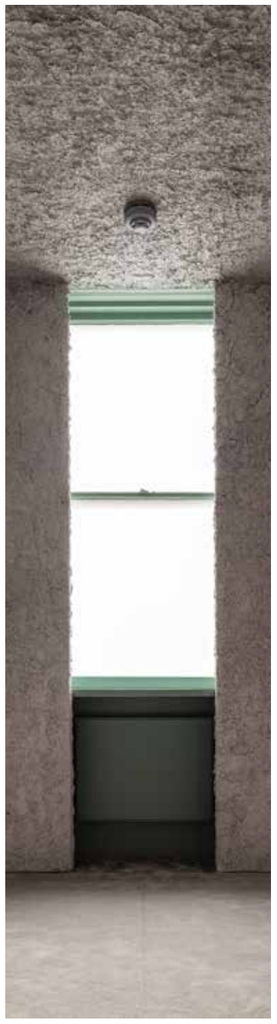




ELEMENTAL

Interpreting architecture as a faculty to transcend the ordinary, ***Antonino Cardillo*** *describes in his own words the collection of perspectives that intimately reflect on the elements of nature.* ***Mrinalini Ghadiok*** *discusses the journey that led to the creation of four grottoes - architectural marvels construed by the poetics of space sculpted into artistic renditions of thought.*

As an architect, I understand architecture as a process, an evolution of thought, a journey from inception to creation; it is dynamic, responsive and rather impressionable. Architecture is rarely a unique moment or singular image, devoid of variance. And therefore, architecture is seldom able to define a specific thought with the sanctity that it has been conceived with.

Antonino Cardillo challenges the very norms of the architectural process as we have popularly come to know it. His works transcend the course to deliver moments that are sublime, experiences that are intangible, and spaces that are overwhelmingly immersive.

Premising his work on the classical elements of antiquity: fire, air, water and earth, over a period of five years, Cardillo reintroduces the themes of the grotto and the arch in the architecture of the present. “The four grottoes represent an investigation about forgotten meanings of the past, like a contemporary translation of a codex based upon the ideas of protection and eroticism. The grotto alludes to uterine protection and the arch alludes to the presence of the phallus. Both are related to the origin of the sacred. Consequentially these archetypes, which still inhabit the subconscious of the humans, admonish us that there is something else beyond the common sights imposed by society,” says Cardillo.

The architect’s astute approach to the four projects is softened by the sensuality of their forms the crudity of textures celebrated by the eroticism concealed in the act of construction. A discriminating palette of natural materials fuses together to realise the four distinct, yet agnate grottoes, each an exquisite sanctuary of elegance.

FIRE SPECUS CORALLII

The bold stroke of a fine brush on a plastered canvas defines the apical arch, repeated in tandem to create relentless perspectives and interminable depths.

AIR COLOUR AS A NARRATIVE

The brawny architectural language is injected with life as a faint glow suffuses the volume, or a distinct beam draws incisive patterns of light and shade.

WATER CREPUSCULAR GREEN

The gentility of the perfectly selected verdant hues, delicately sheeting expanses of bare walls are layered deliberately over abrasive textures.

EARTH HOUSE OF DUST

The earth is disrobed and fractured, crumbled into a fine dust that evolves into forms, forms into space, and space into experiences.

Through architecture, Cardillo explores the anthropological meanings that each colour or material contains. He capers with light and cavorts with shadow before introducing them to his created volumes. “If light is the raw material of architecture, when light encounters a solid material changing its nature and form, it reverberates on other surfaces in a game of divisions until it decays into darkness,” claims the discerning designer.

Antonino Cardillo is not the customary architect; he is a builder of visions, of exceptional experiences, and transcendental moments. And there perhaps can be no better description of his works, than in his own words.

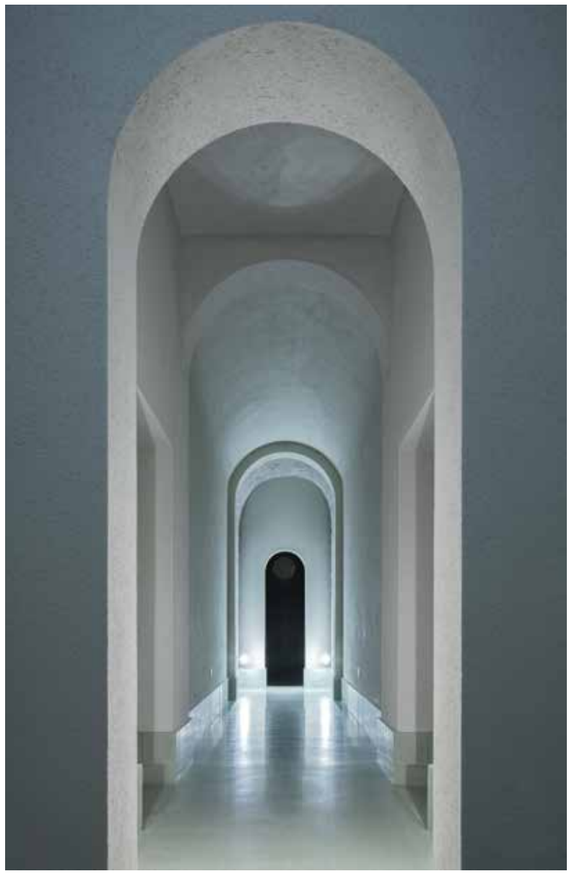
FIRE

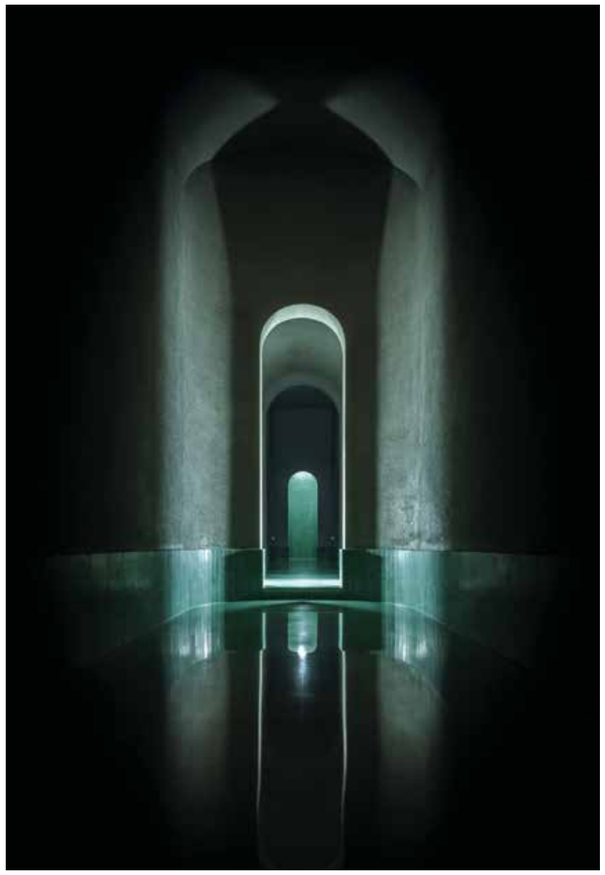
SPECUS CORALLII, THE CORAL CAVE

Location	*Sicily, Italy*
Year	*2016*
Area	*165 sqm.*
Client	*Gaspare Gruppuso, Cattedrale di Trapani*

Photographs by Antonino Cardillo

The Coral Cave is a refuge from the world. A grotto where love can still happen. The place where the city regains its sacral dimension that binds those who were to those who are.
The Coral Cave explores a Pre-Modern idea: when architecture was imagination and the city was the labyrinth of memory. That labyrinth renewed every day with the caresses of our eyes; that speaks to us, mutedly, of lives lived. The image is the place where the dead speak to the living. Where it confirms the idea of life as permanence and tradition. Without this silent dialogue, the city dies; entertainment and alienation take over neutralising the subversive potential of love.
The Coral Cave speaks of the sacred that comes from the sea. The cadence of space recounts the allegories of beauty and





FIRE
SPECUS CORALLII, THE CORAL CAVE

metamorphosis imaged from shells evoked by the sediments of the stone base, and corals, to whose willowy asperities alludes the pink asperity of the perpendicular vault. Shells and corals populate the imagery of the town of Trapani. The story of the arrival of the Madonna from the sea and the carved stones of her sanctuary reveal how, along with the tradition of corals, the theme of the shell is a fundamental myth of the sacredness of the city. The colour and tactile surfaces of the Specus rediscover the sensuality of the stone and dust that speak of the place and the bowels of the earth where they were carved. Thus, the Coral Cave, with its evocation of a mysterious underwater dimension, relates that consciousness which, from the sea, has sedimented for millennia the sense of the life of the city and its landscape.
The Coral Cave looks like an antique oratory. The classic configuration of its architecture, a rectangle governed by the 'silver ratio', makes it available for different uses and interpretations; preventing the dominance of function and technology, always casual and transitory pretexts for architecture, from bringing about the obsolescence of the work.

AIR

COLOUR AS A NARRATIVE

Location	*London, United Kingdom*
Year	*2015*
Area	*27 sqm.*
Client	*Illuminum Fragrance*

Photographs by Antonino Cardillo

Behind a portal on a Georgian street in London, lives a small grey grotto.
Its rugged walls, imprinted with gestures of the mason's trowel reveal the eroticism, which was conveyed in the act of construction by the original creators.
The pozzolanic ash echoes the volcanic topography from where it was quarried.
As 'chambers of light', the three tall openings facing the street orchestrate light and shadow. Facing them, the expansive rough wall becomes the backdrop for a sweeping semi-circle of 37 irregular glass forms, each suspended by a black thread.
Enclosed are colours; invisible colours revealed only by the nose.

WATER

CREPUSCULAR GREEN

Location	*Mondrian Suite Art Gallery* *Rome, Italy*
Year	*2014*
Area	*40 sqm.*
Client	*Klaus Mondrian*

Photographs by Antonino Cardillo

In the interior refurbishment of the Roman art gallery, the use of colour and texture is inspired by the opening scene of Richard Wagner's 'Das Rheingold', which describes a greenish twilight.
This work was made on a very low budget with only one builder. The poverty of means applied here relates to the idea of architecture being a faculty to transcend the ordinary.
Like a green golden grotto, a rusticated vault envelopes the upper part of the room, rendering a trilithon schema on the backdrop. Ahead, a rounded altar features a mirror arched bridge and a suspended black slab above. On either side, two black and golden flûtes emit diffused lighting.
Everything is painted in shades of green. Words of the space relate to each other a cohesive narrative, which aims to unfold the imagination of the inhabitants.

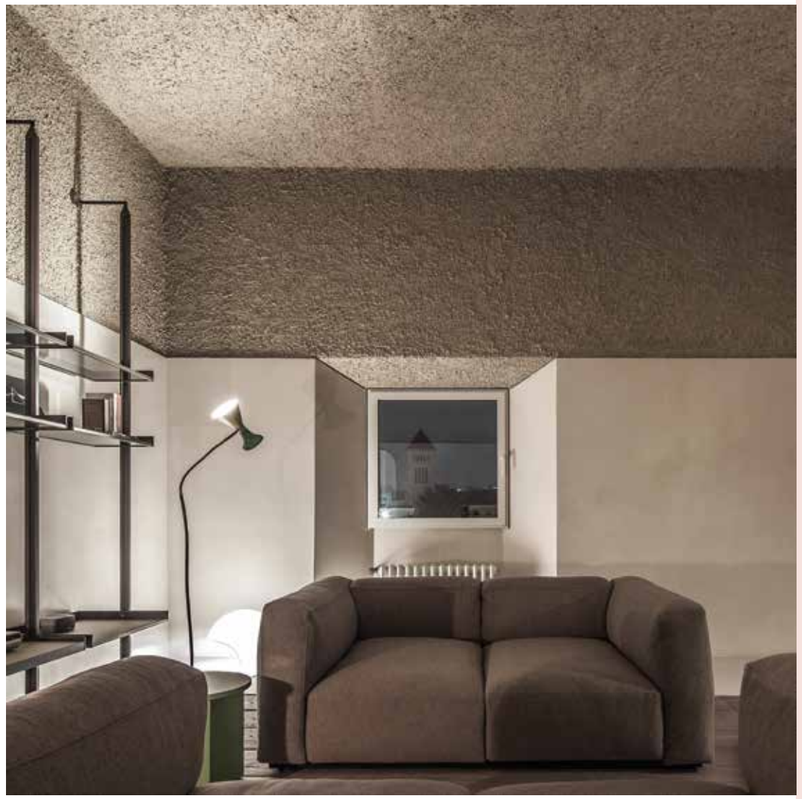
EARTH

HOUSE OF DUST

Location	*Rome, Italy*
Year	*2013*
Area	*100 sqm.*
Client	*Massimiliano Beffa*

Photographs by Antonino Cardillo

In this house, classical orders and proportions celebrate dust. The golden ratio divides the sides of the living room - a light grey base supports a ceiling of rustic plaster of the colour of the bare earth. The work is a craving for primordial caverns, for Renaissance grotesques, for nymphaeums in Doria Pamphilj, and for faintly Liberty façades in the streets off Via Veneto.
A balanced sequence of compressions and dilatations makes up the space of the house. On the walls, passages and windows appear, as if dug out of the base, like carvings in a baguette. A series of arches, abstract memories of 14th-century Italian paintings, disguise doors and cupboards. Among these, one studded with a pink glass doorknob introduces the intimate rooms, which too, are distinguished by the palest pink on the walls - yearning for dawns and flowers, the colour of beauty, the colour of beauty that dies.



Pic: Marco Ponzianelli

THE HOUSE OF DUST

Antonino Cardillo
Rome, April 2013

Architecture is dust.
Dust that becomes form,
Dust transfigured by the mind.

Dust is memory so dust is also death.
Ancestral memory of death,
Dust refers to the beginnings.

That modernity that disowns sediment,
That shaves walls, that sanitises space;
That modernity that disowns dust,
Disowns even death.

Deprived of memory,
And so slave to a credible youth,
Ignoring its end, it repeats itself;
Without end.

In this house classical orders
And golden proportions celebrate dust:
Angels and choirs have abandoned Heaven,
And Heaven has adorned itself with earth.

www.antoninocardillo.com