



## Members



### Gianfranco Spada - architect

With harmony being an important dimension for architect Gianfranco Spada, his work questions the relation between space, objects and persons. At a time when architecture is looking for sustainable solutions to intrusive building expansion, architects are challenged by pressing ethical issues. This has always been a strong prerogative for Gianfranco Spada. Respect for the environment and intelligent use of sustainable materials can be seen in all his projects. Straight lines and luminous spaces explore the boundaries between architecture and art, a search for simplicity, a visual and spiritual feast. Gianfranco, who trained in Venice, has left his mark in many European cities, most notably in Barcelona where in 2000 he set up a professional association called "Arquites", followed by **Atelier27**, an architectural company he co-founded in 2002. Gianfranco is now at work in London where he is a consultant Architect for a British firm involved in large international projects.



[\(Please refer to the bottom of the page for useful links related to the field of Architecture\)](#)

Accademia Apulia has asked Gianfranco Spada the following questions:

#### **What inspired you to study / practice architecture?**

I was motivated to study architecture by several factors, but I'd say that my family's sartorial background may have had something to do with it: building a house is pretty much like designing a good outfit, albeit on a different scale.

#### **What are the makings of a 'good' architect?**

One can be a good architect in many different ways. What's important is that people are able to distinguish between a 'famous' architect and a good architect, because fame and quality don't always go together. There is a tendency to produce architectural specimen that are a reflection of their creators' ego. I believe that a good architect does not let their ego influence their work. What are the makings of a 'good' project?

A good project is dependent on a good customer. Generally, an architect materializes the aspirations of his customers.

#### **Name three buildings / projects that you particularly like?**

The Pantheon in Rome - probably the most remarkable building in history; the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies Van der Rohe, and the Museum of Danteum in Terragni, unfortunately never built.

#### **What are the main determinants in the design process for you?**

The deciding factors behind every project are many and different every time, however I would say that an important determinant to bear in mind is that generally the end users of projects are people, which architects tend to forget about; proof of this are those architectural specimen paraded in glossy magazines that look great but that in reality are hostile and uninhabitable spaces.

#### **Which European city would you say is architecturally harmonious?**

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Me gusta Te gusta esto.

I wish I could discern between architectural harmony and harmonious urban development. I have lived in many European cities (Venice, Brussels, Barcelona, Valencia, London) and each has something different to offer both architecturally and urbanistically. But if I were to pick a city, I'd say Venice for urban harmony and London for architectural harmony.

***How do you feel about the quality of architecture in London?***

The quality of architecture in London is very high especially when looking at the city's nineteenth century buildings which totally contrasts the modern architectural fracas, as seen around the Barbican. How are European, American and Asian perceptions of architecture different?

The approaches to architecture that you mention are historically, culturally and technologically very different. Such differences are however diminishing as the effects of globalisation strip each country of its traditions, making even architecture a 'single market'. Is there an architect or a designer from the past (or present) that you find inspiring?

I am inspired more by art and music figures than architects. Architecture, music and art are such related disciplines that we underestimate their value. But if I have to choose an architect, I'd say that Brunelleschi has stood the test of time - after centuries his works are more modern than many contemporary architects.

***Please describe the most gratifying moment of your career so far.***

Despite appearances, the profession of architect is quite modest; it requires constant stream of work. The design process takes time and is laborious, full of obstacles - gratifications are a rare commodity. However, I can remember a time when a few years ago, I spotted a house that I designed and completed a couple of years earlier in a village in Spain. As I approached discretely the fence I could see children happily playing by the pool - behind them a beautiful sunset. Then, just as I glimpsed through the windows of the place I saw the preparations for a dinner. Suddenly, one of the children saw me and innocently asked me: "Who are you?" I did not know what to answer at first, but then I said, "I am no one". I think that pronouncing the word 'no one' on that occasion was the most gratifying moment of my career.

***Are sustainable materials important factors in your work?***

Good architecture is only made from sustainable materials and techniques; our grandfathers built buildings that were really eco-friendly, and some architects continue to do so today. There are however some that use the words eco, sustainable, recyclable etc. for sheer marketing reasons. The truth is that while urban developments remain in the hands of unscrupulous speculators, architecture will never be sustainable.

***Is there a divide between collegiate architectural curriculum and the actual practice of architecture? If so, what do you say to students that are heading for the profession?***

University and the work place are, unfortunately, and especially in architecture, two totally different realities. Often universities teach material that does not find a direct application in the actual profession. I would say that the best way to counteract this effect is by working and covering ground as you go along.

***What books do you have on your bedside table?***

I mainly read essays and biographies. Right now I have my hands on a book on the exile of Diderot, and an eighteenth century musical treatise by Antonio Planelli.

***Do you read design / Architecture / Designmagazines?***

I receive many Architectural and Design publications but I also navigate the Internet to keep abreast on matters of design around the world. And I contribute to an independent architectural forum called Architettabile ([www.architettabile.com](http://www.architettabile.com)) as well as a personal blog of Architectural Avatars ([www.avatars.es/blog/](http://www.avatars.es/blog/))

***Your interests go beyond architecture: you are the president of the Traetta Society. How did the attraction for this musician begin?***

Music is an universal language that everybody can understand, but at the same time has rules that are less known, many of which are common to architecture. One only has to look at the Suite of Fibonacci, to appreciate how music as architecture contribute to the concept of harmony, which we mentioned earlier. The mission of Traetta Society (you can join the Society on Facebook too) is to rediscover Tommaso Traetta, who was one of the greatest forerunners of Mozart and opera reformer of the eighteenth-century. Traetta is a symbol of Italian musical creativity and has been unjustly relegated to a secondary position by the powerful German music historians, who built the foundations of classical music, giving most of its credit to German authors.

Traetta represents a host of southern Italian composers who, just before the French Revolution, completely dominated the music scene nationally and internationally. Traetta also represents the artistic and cultural richness of Southern Italy so ill-treated during the process of Italian unification.

***In 1779, In recognition of Traetta's contribution to music, he was laid to rest in the Music Room of the Ospedaletto in Venice, yet in 1982 his bones were moved to Bitonto, a small town in Puglia. Why?***

This is a matter of opinion, but I maintain that moving the resting place was a serious mistake both ethically and culturally. Traetta decided to die in Venice, and most probably knew before he died that he would be buried within the Ospedaletto, the most celebrated resting place for musicians. Moving his bones from the grandeur of Venice to Bitonto may have gone against his will. Furthermore, had he remained in Venice many more people would have kept his name alive by simply visiting the Ospedaletto - a place of historical significance, rather than Bitonto, a modest little town Traetta abandoned at a young age.

***What is the future of the Traetta Society?***

There are many initiatives in the pipeline. However, the most important appointment is the Traetta Week, a music festival that takes place annually during the eight days that coincide with both the birth and the death of this amazing composer ( March 29-April 6) Further information can be found by visiting [www.traetta.com](http://www.traetta.com)

***What is your message to young aspiring Architects?***

The profession of Architecture has changed a lot in recent years. Now, more than ever, it is of fundamental importance to have good open mindedness to face the challenge of global design. The buildings of today are complex machines designed remotely, built with elements coming from different latitudes, with customers who speak languages different to our own. Architecture is not an art form to represent the world; Architecture is making treasure of various disciplines, including art, but especially technical and economic considerations that can materialize the aspirations of the customer and the success of the project.

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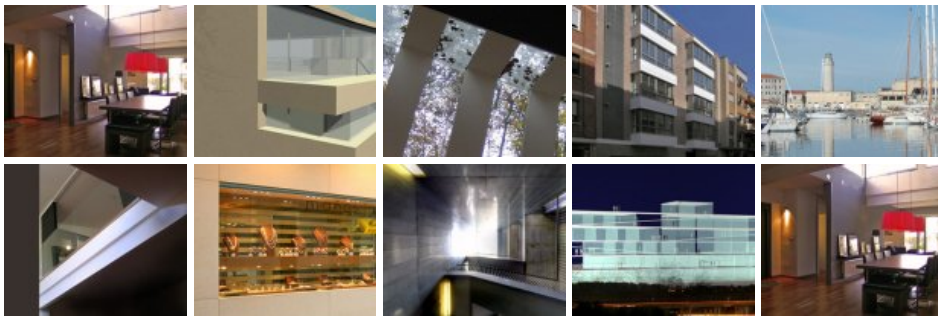
**Accademia Apulia UK suggests the following links for a career in Architecture**

London Metropolitan University

AA - Architectural Association School of Architecture

Barlet School - Faculty of Built Environment

**UEL - University of East London - AVA (Architecture & the Visual Arts)**



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