

ALCANTARA – MAXXI PROJECT 2022/Studio Visit

Space Popular: Search History

Exhibition curated by Domitilla Dardi

MAXXI. Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo

7 December 2022 – 15 January 2023

Rome

Opening: 6 December, 2022

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“We are very glad that for the eleventh edition of the Alcantara-MAXXI project, the Space Popular have reinterpreted the work of a Great Master of Twentieth Century Architecture through a monumental intervention that relates Rossi's urbanism to the digital one”

Domitilla Dardi

The partnership between **Alcantara** and the **MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo** (National Museum of 21st-Century Art, in Rome), continues with the fifth edition of **Studio Visit**, a programme curated by Domitilla Dardi that invites contemporary designers to put forward a personal interpretation of the works by the masters in the MAXXI Architecture Collections.

This year Lara Lesmes and Fredrik Hellberg, directors of the architecture and art studio Space Popular, have been invited to explore the work of Aldo Rossi, one of the most internationally influential Italian architects of the 20th century. The two architects took Rossi's notions of 'urban fact' (fatto urbano) and 'analogous city' (città analoga) as a basis for how we collectively make the virtual city.

Reflecting on the proliferation of so-called metaverse platforms that aim to recreate existing real-estate market models by selling virtual land, Space Popular proposes instead a civic approach to virtual urbanism. The Immersive Internet (what they choose to call the metaverse) should be independent from privately-owned for-profit forms of authority and, instead, collectively built and managed, and concerned with issues inherent to immersive online environments (such as teleportation, browsing, bookmarking, tracking and privacy).

In *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi embraces the subjective experience over time, presenting the city as a sequence of spatial experiences that, while unique to each one of us, remains 'permanent, universal and a necessary fact'. According to Space Popular, this notion is more akin to the experience of moving across virtual environments than what any of the so-called metaverse platforms have proposed so far.

Search History presents the experience of moving across virtual environments in the Immersive Internet (which is the only, ever-shifting, unmappable, metaverse) through a tribute to Rossi. A multi-layered annular structure transforms to the rhythm of an original soundscape composed and produced by Spanish music duo San Jeronimo.

In continuous movement, the Alcantara sheets immerse us in a soft and shifting architecture whose flowing movement constantly composes new landscapes, looking beyond the physical limit of the material and providing a glimpse at new perspectives. Alcantara supports this reading by crossing boundaries, lending itself to daring cuts, unique prints and rich textures.

Rossi himself was attracted to the chromatic possibilities of Alcantara during the 1980s when the company hired him to design a small theatre, which remains unbuilt. And he was struck by this material, “between ancient and future that, in its perfection and colours, concealed behind traditional draperies and colours, green, blue and yellow”.

Space Popular has often presented virtual environments with little or no digital means, as they understand that digital screens or headsets are just the latest iterations of virtual reality hardware with precedents such as frescoes or tapestries that date back hundreds of years and remind us that tactility remains the most important companion to audio-visual experiences.

“Search History is at once an object, a threshold and an environment” – Space Popular states. “In its in-between stages it is an abstract landscape of layers. It reflects on Rossi’s ideas of the building as an entity that absorbs, records and plays back the history of the city onto itself”.

The work by Space Popular will become **a part of the MAXXI Architecture permanent collection**, as in the previous editions of Studio Visit.

The **Space Popular: Search History** exhibition will be open to the public, in accordance with government regulations, until 15 January 2023.

The over ten year partnership between Alcantara and the MAXXI, centered around research on contemporary design topics, has led to the definition of a new form of cultural collaboration in the art world.

The press kit and a selection of images can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the MAXXI Foundation website at <http://www.maxxi.art/area-stampa/> by entering the password areariservatamaxxi and on the Alcantara website at www.alcantara.com/press-area

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The **MAXXI** is the first national museum dedicated to contemporary creativity. Conceived as a great campus for culture, the MAXXI was designed by Zaha Hadid, winner of an international competition. It is a great work of architecture featuring innovative, spectacular forms. It produces and hosts art, architecture, design and photographic exhibitions, but also projects in fashion, cinema and music, theatrical and dance performances, lectures and meetings with artists, architects and key contemporary figures. The Collection is on display with free entry from Tuesday to Thursday and rotating works. The MAXXI is much more than a museum: it’s a platform that’s open to all the languages of creativity and a place of meeting, exchange and collaboration, a space open to all, a laboratory of ideas and for the future.

