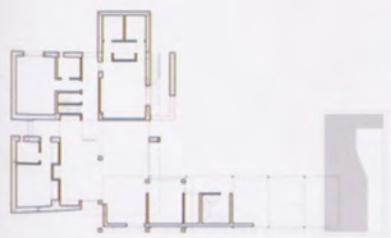
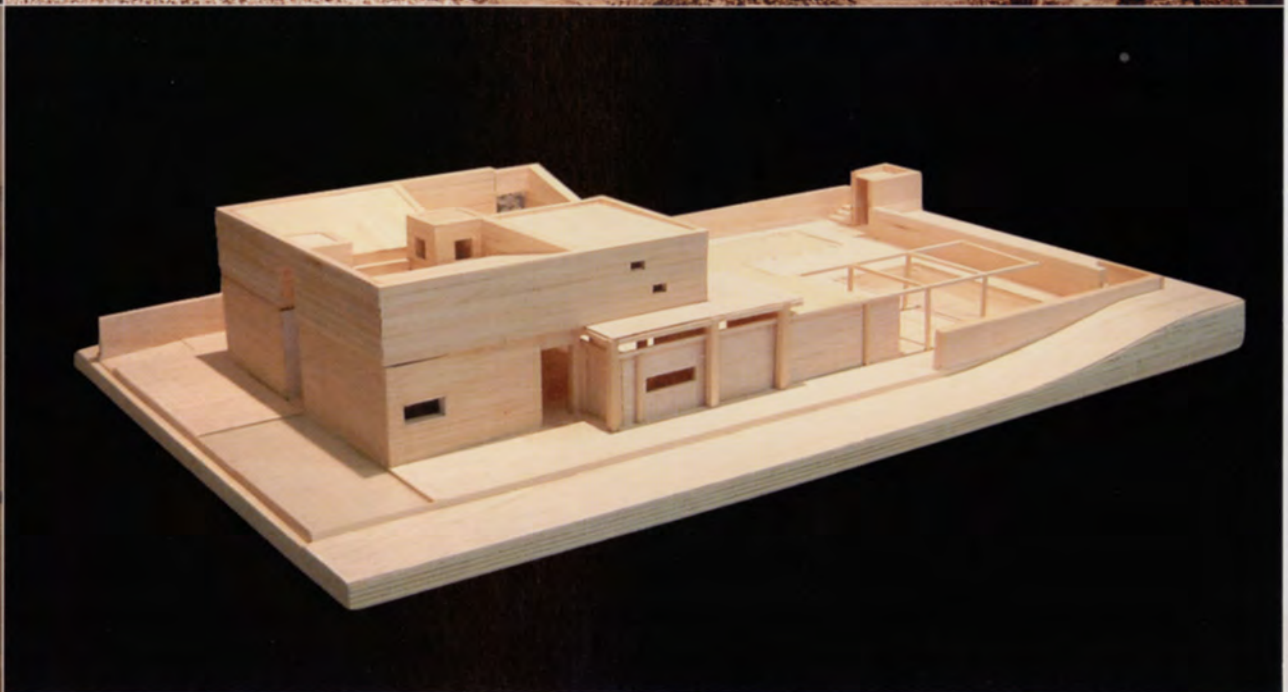
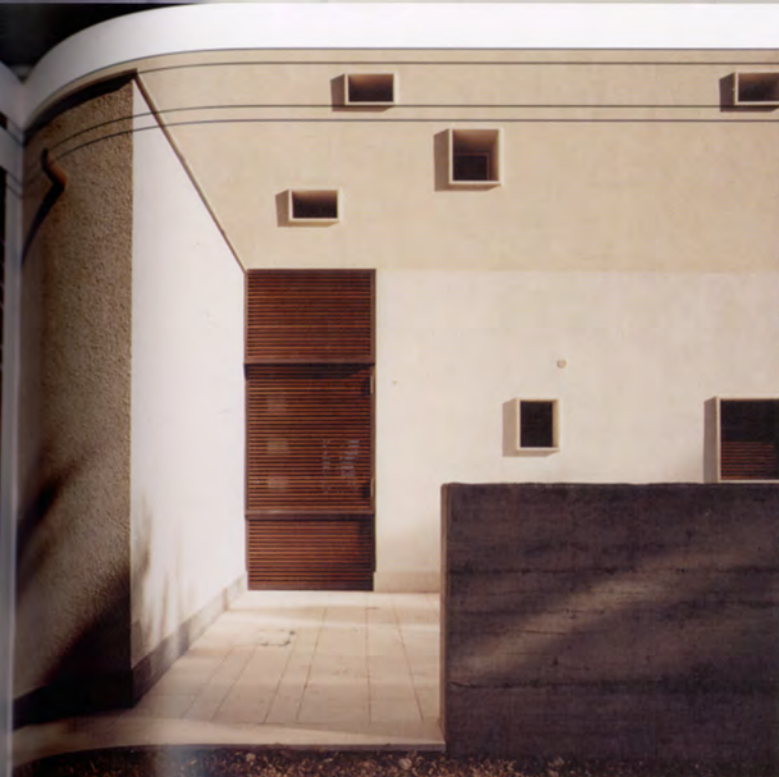


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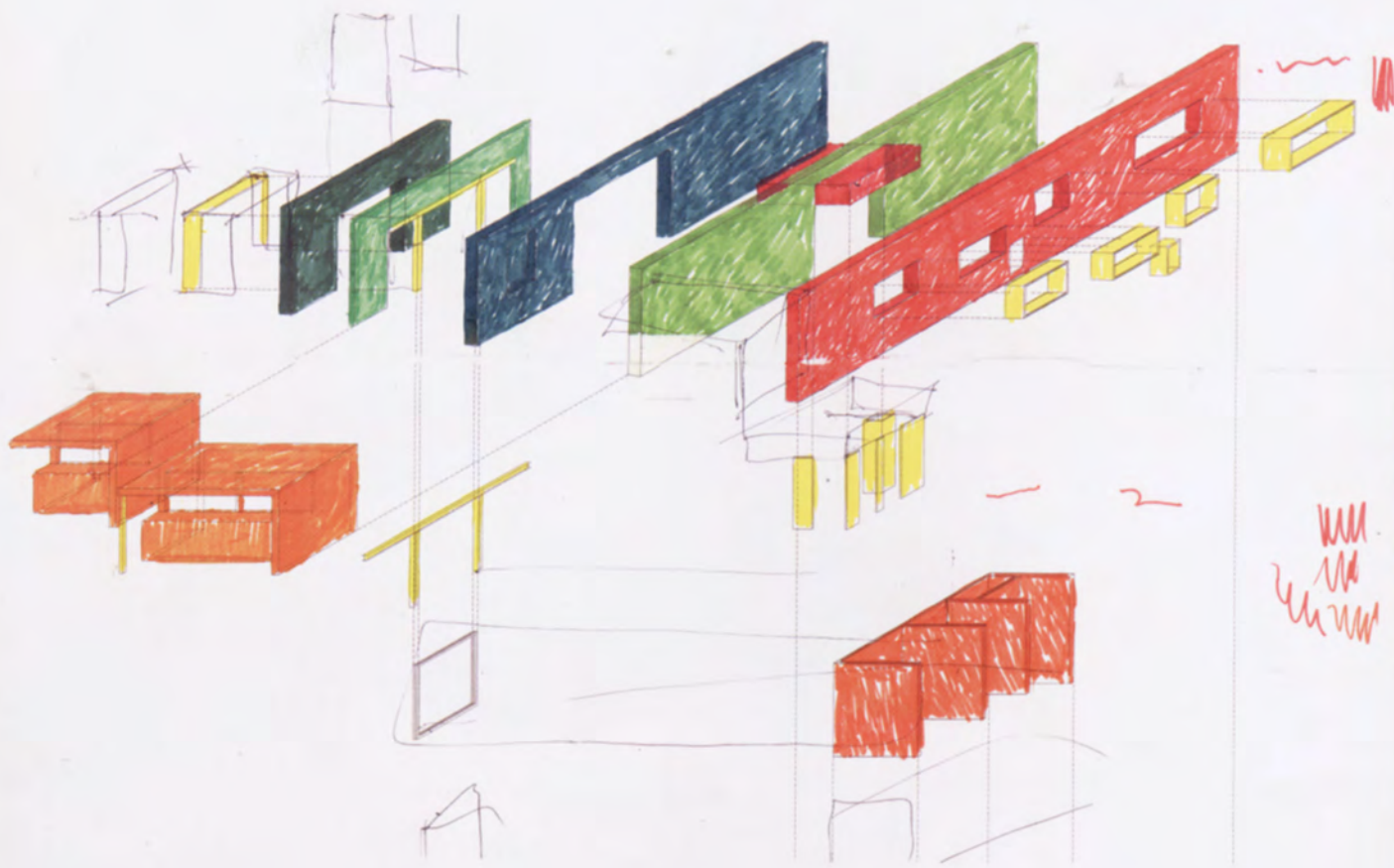


The unexpected appearance of a strip of colored asphalt in one of the remotest regions of Sicily – known for its superb olive oil and respected for its fierce independence – signals the presence of a fine mind, as does, in quite a different way, a learned edition of Robert Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalato in Dalmatia* (originally published in 1764 and edited by Marco Navarra in 2001). Cleft as his activities are, Navarra's thinking about place, time, and building emerges all of a piece from his work. When Navarra's studio, NOWA, intervened with modest means in the hilly Caltagirone region, where even the rail connection had long been severed, he removed the tracks and transformed their curving path into a bicycle lane. At even inclination the path snakes through the hills, passing over dams and skirting rocky ledges. It offers views and an experience of locomotion to cyclists and hikers like no other passage through this landscape. Resembling a flume, the former rail bed traces a canted horizon of its own against the rolling crest lines in the region. Abandoned station buildings and small structures along the former tracks have been emptied out and painted, while a few steel steps over rocks and some cuts in the hills raise the expectation of visitors. The result is a → →



→ → landscape lost to the train but suddenly transformed into a Pirandellian topography in which things appear other than they are. A landscape thus cast into doubt keeps visitors hovering between discovery and disbelief. When Navarra prepared an Italian edition of Robert Adam's book on the Imperial Palace at Spalato, his erudite commentaries not only converged on a vanished past but also opened up to the present and its expectations. The problem of rehabilitating an entire landscape – not just a building or an urban agglomerate – and to do so from, and on, an abandoned rail bed has implications for other sites. For his rehabilitation at the scale of an entire region, Navarra extends gentle feelers into its geography and reconnects the former railway to the land by making it fit for human locomotion and the circumspect vision of its ever-changing appearance. The way Navarra has rehabilitated the old raiiside buildings betrays a touch of Aldo Rossi's melancholy. Meditating, as Rossi did, on architecture's inevitable loss of usefulness and familiarity, Navarra does not yield to futility but vigorously claims a new use and purpose for the old. He has even proposed temporary sheds for field-workers and farmhands. Their ephemeral but thoughtfully considered accommodations are to be built from plastic fruit and vegetable crates, easily assembled and equipped with water canisters and waste tanks. If Navarra's architecture carries the imprint of his native region, the thinking he brings to its realization is of a piece with Sicily's historical role in the Mediterranean. \_Kurt Forster

← ← STRIP PARK, CALTAGIRONE/SAN MICHELE DI GANZARIA, ITALY, 1998-2001. Tracing a path through the Sicilian countryside along what used to be a railroad track, this twenty-two-mile route entwines two plans: the strips's natural circumstances and architectural interventions used to frame the landscape. Asphalt along the path is color-coded to signal intersections with roads, stop points, and scenic views, while metal and wire-net pergolas punctuate the passage from one end to another. HOUSE C, CALTAGIRONE, ITALY, 2001-2002. This restoration of a 1970s-era house features an austere facade that fronts the road and a rear organization that was created to accommodate functional and domestic needs with a courtyard, a swimming pool, and a garden. Although newly remade, the house is consistent with large period farmhouses in Sicily that have minimal exterior treatments.



NOWA OFFICE, CALTAGIRONE, ITALY, 2002. This office on the ground floor of a private residence is defined by a series of colored parallel walls marked by cutouts and boxed elements. The windows lining the office are framed in wood, which connects the building's exterior and interior shell. → ARENA GARDEN, SAN MICHELE DI GANZARIA, ITALY, 2003-2004. This park reclaimed the land formerly inhabited by a railway station and designed it into a terrace that overlooks the River Tempio Valley, a meadow garden, and a central meeting space for public events.



