

# THE ACCELERATIONIST

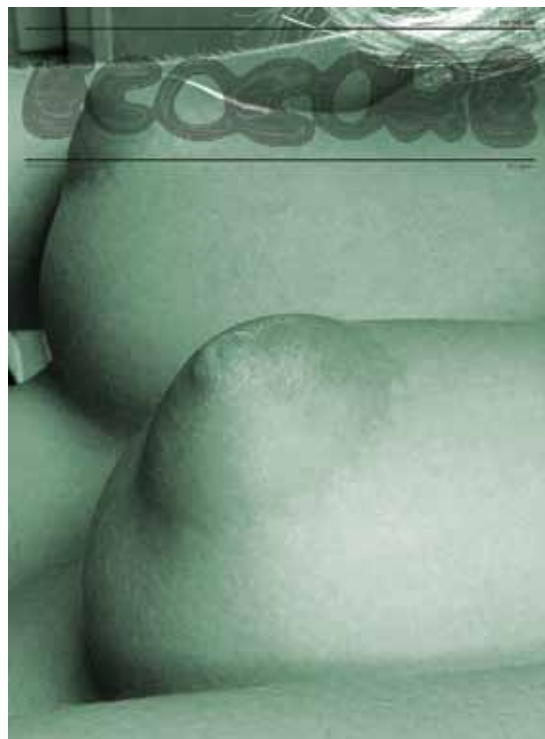
*Alessandro Bava's ecological manoeuvring*

Between his zine called Ecocore, his part in the AIRBNB Pavilion collective, his Super Surface presentation, his utopian micro-city in Naples, and his mega-church for Detroit, it can be said that Alessandro Bava is an architect of our time, with experiments and projects that swirl through different waters and outright confront the topics of today using the best means at hand. Taking the form of online magazines, e-books, on-site installations, exhibitions, and etcetera, Bava's work is focused on the influence of the Internet in the way our world is now conceived, and most especially, in the way we inhabit it.

FRANCESCO SPAMPINATO

AIRBNB Pavilion, Schöner Wohnen: installation view, Armada, Milan, 2015





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Ecocore aims to explore “the camouflaged souls of ecology”, exploiting the classic lifestyle-magazine, challenging how environmentalism is traditionally associated with consumerism through the rising number of ‘green’ products on the market, and entertaining the rhetorical discussions on sustainability.

### ANOTHER LINGO

Speculating on post-apocalyptic ecosystems, Ecocore fits into recent discourses on ‘accelerationism’ because it doesn’t use the radical tactics of disobedience (like those employed by many environmentalists, i.e. via marches and protests in the streets), but instead simulates the corporate language of advertising and entertainment to reveal the dystopian consequences of our blind trust in science and technology. As a logical extension, Ecocore often acknowledges the important role of celebrities as policymakers on sustainability and on respecting nature, a choice that, like other accelerationist tactics, easily generates scepticism.

Alessandro Bava is also one of the four co-founders of a collective called AIRBNB Pavilion, which produces metalinguistic projects about the house, the interior, and the role of the architect and designer in the Internet era. The dynamics of owning and inhabiting houses has drastically mutated over the past few years. Migration and the more-and-more accessible forms of tourism have increased mobility. A digital platform like Airbnb is representative of new ways of sharing and conceiving the house.

### BEING THERE

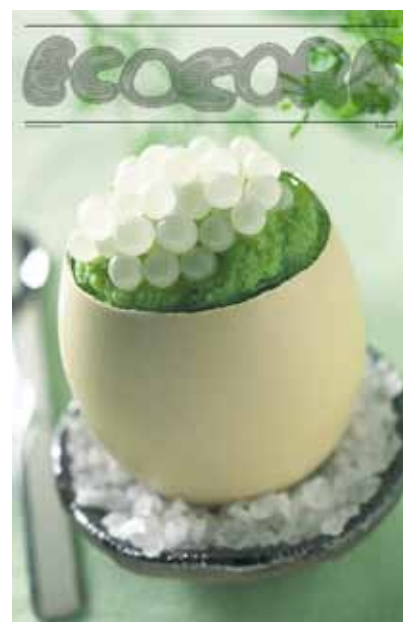
The collective was born as an unofficial satellite pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014, realised in an apartment rented through Airbnb. For three days running, Bava and the other members of the collective – Fabrizio Ballabio, Luis Ortega Govea, and Octave Perrault – lived in the apartment, where they installed works by 30 emerging artists and architects. “Architecture is now made-up of interiors



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A recent graduate of the AA School of Architecture in London, Neapolitan architect Alessandro Bava is part of a generation that is less interested in disciplines per se than in social and intellectual problems related to the increasing pervasiveness of the Internet. Recently, he has edited a disaster-themed issue of DIS magazine, presenting a series of artist and writer contributions concerning the anthropogenic.

Bava, who practices as architect, artist, curator, editor, and producer, has attracted attention through Ecocore, an annual zine he began publishing in 2010. Ecocore deals with ecology through a vast spectrum of contributions, a mixture of found material and stock images. The zine has a free format: only one of the five issues has actually been printed, with the others available online. The next edition – thanks to a grant from the Graham Foundation – is likely to be more similar to an actual magazine or a book.

ECOCORE I, e-den issue: cover, 2010 (1)

ECOCORE III, The Fo.Od issue: Cover, 2012 (2)

ECOCORE III, The Fo.Od issue: Spread with images by Yngve Holen, 2012 (3)

AIRBNB Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2014 (4)  
Artworks by Olivia Erlanger, Pascal Flammer & Marta Casagrande, Durisch + Nolli Architetti

able to accommodate invariable states of domesticity, work, and consumption”, they declared in an interview with 032c magazine: “Rooms are as political as the public square and as productive as the factory—they are both intimate and public. A radical new form of the city is emerging through the Internet.”

The context-specific project in Venice reflected on Airbnb as an ‘agency’ that commodifies design and the architectural features of lodgings, as well as their specific locations. However, whether it is a beach house in the Hamptons or an elegant Venice flat with a Jacuzzi, these thousands of spaces are furnished in standard IKEA style, ready to accommodate the most generic guests. After all, Airbnb’s motto of is: Belong Anywhere.

### DIY

Following the Venice experiment, the collective hosted a panel at the Swiss Institute titled *All That is Solid Melts into AIRBNB*, a telematics participation by radical architect Andrea Branzi, who was part of the legendary collective Archizoom in the 1960s and 70s. They also participated in group shows or curated their own, always contributing with ready-made installations of domestic environments around which they would install the works of invited artists. Their most recent project is *Welcome You’re in the Right Place*, currently on view at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin.



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Having established his own architecture practice, Bava and Sons, the first commission he received was the design of an event organised by 89plus – a research project co-founded by Simon Castets and Hans Ulrich Obrist – and the Google Cultural Institute that took place at Fondation Cartier in Paris last December. Bava’s concept, *Super Surface*, consisted of a psychedelic marbled platform furnished with flat white cushions, additionally intended as a work-space, which invited the audience to lie down and listen to the panellists during the Nouvelles Expériences en Art et Technologique (NEAT) conference.

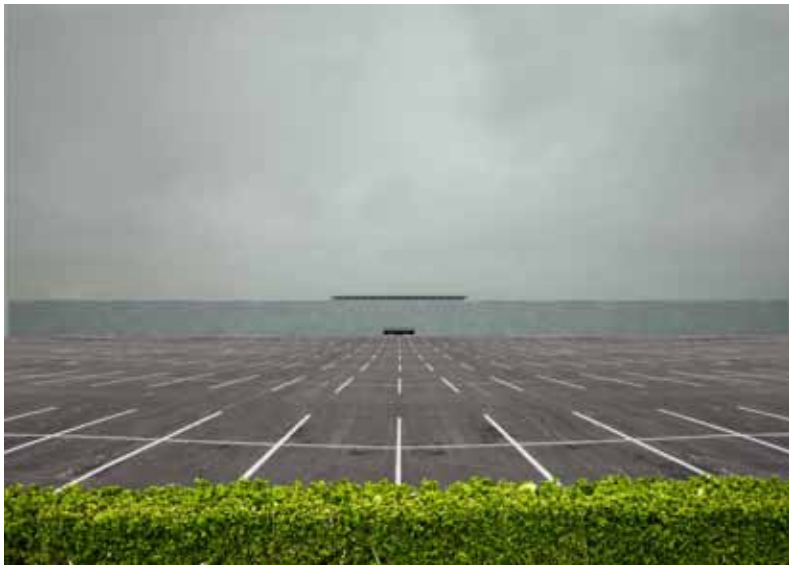
AIRBNB Pavilion, Everything That is Solid Melts into Airbnb, Swiss Institute, New York, 2014 (1)

Welcome You’re in the Right Place, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2015 (2)

Bava and Sons, Super Surface: Installation view, 89Plus Residency at Google Cultural Institute, Fondation Cartier, Paris, 2014 (3)  
Photo: Olivier Oudah



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City of God (interior), 2014 (1)

City of God (exterior), 2014 (2)

LES Chair (after Savonarola), 2015 (3)

Most of the other projects Bava has been involved in are self-initiated. One of these is *coast.biz* (2014), a utopian micro-city to be built on a disused industrial site in Naples. The idea was for a tax haven, an autonomous zone loosely inspired by Archizoom's *No-Stop City* (1969).

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

Similarly, Bava's thesis project, *City of God* (2014), consists of a mega-church for the post-bankrupt city of Detroit, an interstitial destination for the orphaned masses inhabiting the dysfunctional production site, symbolic of the recent economic crisis but also of the recent shift to forms of service industry. *City of God* exists also as an e-book featuring poems by Harry Burke and published by Version House. Bava has also started experimenting with furniture. His remake of the Savonarola, a popular Renaissance chair, says a lot about his fascination for the past as a starting point to speculate on the future.

Like that of Archizoom and other radical architects of the 1960s, Bava's practice oscillates between the collective projects of the AIRBNB Pavilion and individual research, art and architecture, editorial and design experiments, intellectual and political discussions. As an architect, more than the accelerationists or post-internet visual artists and thinkers with whom he is associated, he might suggest concrete living modes and units for our increasingly immaterial world. <

[ecocore.co](http://ecocore.co)  
[airbnb pavilion.com](http://airbnb pavilion.com)

Francesco Spampinato is a New York-based writer and educator. He teaches at RISD in Providence, Rhode Island, and is the author of *Come Together: The Rise of Cooperative Art and Design*, published by Princeton Architectural Press, New York (2015).