

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
October 1986

MARIO BOTTA
November 20, 1986 - February 10, 1987

The first major American exhibition of the work of the Swiss architect Mario Botta will open at The Museum of Modern Art on November 20, 1986. MARIO BOTTA, presenting photographs, architectural models, and original drawings of twenty projects, examines the important role Botta's work has played in the revitalization and renewal of modern architecture.

Organized by Stuart Wrede, curator in the Department of Architecture and Design, MARIO BOTTA is the second of five architectural exhibitions in the Museum's GERALD D. HINES INTERESTS ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM. Conceived to examine current trends in architecture, the program is the first of its kind at any museum to be supported by a corporate gift. It includes the publication of catalogs to accompany the exhibitions, as well as lectures and symposia.

Mario Botta, who is forty-three, has practiced architecture for over twenty years. His earliest work dates from his apprenticeship with the architectural firm of Carloni and Camenisch in Lugano. In the late sixties, he received a baccalaureate from an arts high school in Milan and a professional degree from the architecture school in Venice. It was in Venice that Botta worked with three modernist architects who were to have an important influence on him: Louis Kahn, Le Corbusier, and Carlo Scarpa. Since 1970 Botta has had his own architectural practice in Lugano.

Botta first gained international attention with a remarkable series of houses, modest in budget and scale but of a powerful monumentality. While clearly modernist, these houses also have strong ties to the indigenous

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architecture of Botta's native Swiss canton of Ticino as well as to the classical tradition. Set in a landscape of hills and lakes to the southern slope of the Alps, they evoke a clear sense of place, their bold geometric forms often echoing those of local structures. The houses, built of simple materials, beautifully crafted, tactile, and sensual, have begun to define a new modern domestic type which is axially organized and presents a powerful symmetrical image.

Botta's recent large-scale urban projects, such as his urban proposal for Turin or the Chambery cultural center, build upon many of the formal themes developed in his private houses and, like them, express his preoccupation with context. In these projects he has succeeded in defining a viable alternative to those seeking to destroy the fabric of the traditional city and to those who would preserve the historic city at a certain moment in time. Botta's formulation, "a newness of the old and an archeology of the new," conveys a sense both of historic continuity and of present-day innovation.

In the essay accompanying the catalog, Stuart Wrede writes, "Mario Botta has developed as an architect immersed in the modern movement, but like others of his generation he has also become highly critical of how its ideals have been debased and exploited by commercial interests. Even more importantly, he has been able to approach critically the evolving ideology and theory of the modern movement itself. Unlike many of his colleagues whose critiques of the modern movement have led them to abandon it altogether, Botta has continued to work within its context, transforming and revitalizing it in the process. The willingness to experiment, to push for new solutions and syntheses, not blindly but critically, characterizes Botta's work and is part of the legacy of the modernist tradition."

On Tuesday, November 25, at 8:30 p.m., a symposium entitled "Mario Botta and the Modernist Tradition" will be held in conjunction with the exhibition. Participants will include Mario Botta, Kenneth Frampton, and others, with Stuart Wrede as moderator. Symposium tickets are available for \$6 for members, \$7 for nonmembers, and \$5 for students. Tickets are available at the information desk or by sending a check, payable to The Museum of Modern Art, and a stamped self-addressed envelope to the Department of Education, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019. For further information call 212/708-9795.

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Catalog: Mario Botta by Stuart Wrede. Over 150 black-and-white illustrations. 72 pages. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Paperbound \$7.95.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact Jeanne Collins or Matthew Bulluck, 212/708-9750.