

# for Morandi

a photo essay by Mathieu Bruls architect

colophon

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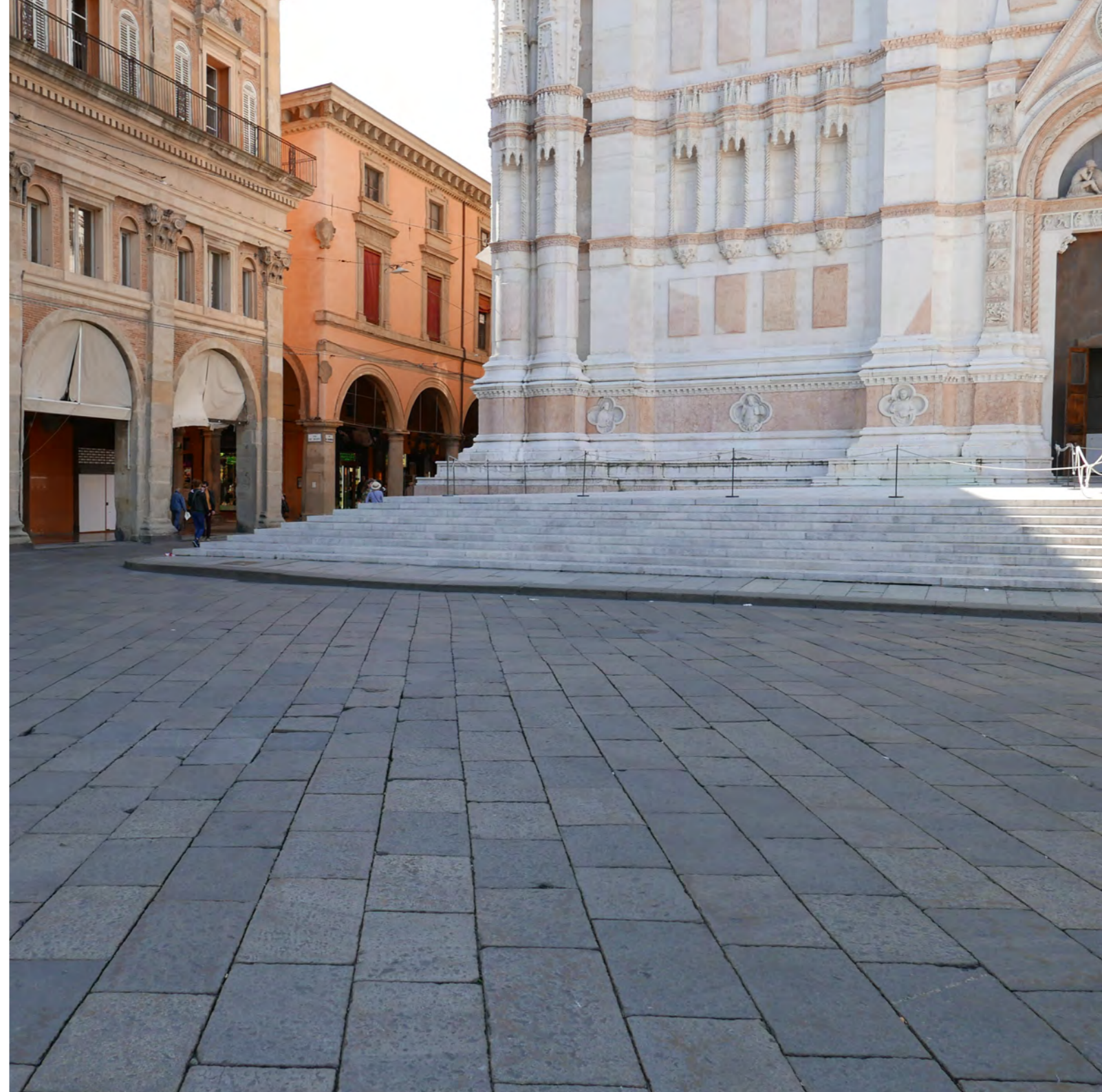
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Via Leoni, Verona



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Piazza Armando Diaz, Milano





## for Morandi

At last, I was able to visit the apartment in which Morandi lived together with his mother and sisters.

Morandi's bedroom / studio was on display as if the artist could come home at any moment.

However, the reflection of the separating glass and the overdesigned renovation of the rest of the apartment created more distance than what I had hoped for. In addition, I was unable to look out his studio window and convince myself that I could see the landscape scenes Morandi had painted from there.



Via Falcone, Milano

This was hardly the cella of the so-called painter of silence I would have expected.

I was doubly disappointed because earlier in my life, I had the opportunity to visit the almost totally authentic home of architect Luis Barragan.

He is often referred to as the 'architect of silence' and lived a monk-like lifestyle and had an extremely long stature - especially in comparison with his smaller-sized Mexican countrymen; a Morandi double in shape, solitude and delicacy.

I found some comfort, while reflecting on what Morandi himself would have thought about the treatment of his former home, by remembering the anecdote in which he forbids those that cleaned his studio from even removing dust from his objects.

Later on, while strolling through the streets of Bologna, I imagined walking in the footsteps of Morandi.

It is obvious that the artist spent his time finding the right composition, the shape and surface of the staged objects and the appropriate light for a future painting.

It seems obvious that this reflective search and the subsequent, continuous training on how to see did not stop while Morandi walked the streets.

The meditative intensity of Morandi's course of action must have given him some confidence to act, probably being unable to reflect on that knowledge in any other way than painting that exact painting.

Inspired, I reenacted a Morandi wandering and found myself moving aside a bit to find the precisely right frame for a street photograph - one just asking to be taken. I enjoyed discovering familiar, however overlooked, light. Even the weathering of the city stones can easily be compared with the aged surfaces of many of Morandi's still lifes.

Moreover, one could suggest the obvious, but not yet labelled, Italian wabi-sabi in all of this.



Via de Giudei, Bologna

Perhaps we could start agreeing that all these longneck bottles in his paintings resemble the extremely high and narrow stone towers that are so present in Bologna's streets.

Or that the rhythm of a series of identical bottles against a closed box resemble the side view of the city's cathedral arches.

Could we subsequently see an alley or a square in the space amongst the painted objects?

At least we can recognise that if objects, such as vases or buildings, deliver a strong contour line suggesting or becoming a character, we can compose meaningful space in between.

Is this an illustration of what the interaction between people can possibly be like?

Or should we read the bold image of the boxes in the paintings as an interface?

Let's address this box as the prominent subject of Morandi's paintings, as well as the formative ingredient of his city.

These volumes or bodies show their apparent outside image, but more importantly they contain or protect what is meant to be their true purpose.

Despite all the importance of the outside world, the bella figura, what is still relevant is housed within the box.

Or shall we follow the analogy of the house (exterior) that becomes a home (interior). By doing so, we enter the intimate and true arena of content.

Like Morandi, I recognise how I like my amateur pictures - photos in my case - without (at least visible) people in them; obviously to make us humans omnipresent at last.

I recognise that I search for striking man-made space and its meaning, knowing that public space demonstrates the relationship between people and their authority.

Now, Morandi becomes a politician, using the skills of a keen town planner.



Piazza del Otto, Agosto, Bologna