

THE SCARPA  
TABLES  
FOR IUAV

edited by Valeria Tatano



# **THE SCARPA TABLES FOR IUAV**

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**The Scarpa tables for luav**

edited by Valeria Tatano

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With contributions from  
Enrico Calore, Massimiliano Condotta, Marco Crosato,  
Margherita Ferrari, Umberto Ferro, Eva Jervolino, Mauro Maiotti,  
Luca Pilot, Rosaria Revellini, Valeria Tatano.

Graphic design  
Laura Moglia

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## THE SCARPA TABLES FOR IUAV





Valeria Tatano<sup>1</sup>

## Artfully crafted

Those who have studied, taught or worked at the Iuav in recent decades, living in the spaces of the Venetian university, know that classrooms, studios and offices are almost always inhabited by “Scarpa tables”, the name the Iuav community<sup>1</sup> has given to the tables with a steel tube structure and a wooden top of which there are numerous variants, differing in the colour of the supporting parts, the type of top and the dimensions, but always identified as “Scarpa tables”.

As flexible as hardly any other piece of furniture has ever managed to be, they are the tables on which lectures are attended, drawings are made, models are produced and revisions are made among papers, books and computers, but they also serve as lecterns for lecturers and as surfaces for meetings, conferences, academic senates and any other kind of activity that can take place in a university. They are placed in professors’ studies, in the workspaces of administrative and technical staff, in the offices of department, research and academic directors, where they replace the traditional desks and the hierarchical logics often implied by their diversity of size, materials and forms in workplaces.

They have encountered pencils, Indian ink pens for drawing on transparencies (the legendary Rapidographs), pins to anchor sheets of paper, portable parallelographs, not to mention cutters, awls and hammers.

They are table tops, and when turned on their sides they become walls for displaying project exhibits during graduation sessions, they are elements that can be used to construct exhibition routes for shows and workshops, and when stacked they become sculptural fans that free up space, creating new conformations.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of Architectural Technology, Università Iuav di Venezia

In their formal simplicity, combined with a determined resistance to time and the unexpected, they have accompanied thousands of students throughout their studies and are an unequivocal testimony of how Carlo Scarpa is still a fundamental presence for Iuav and its community.

Yet there is no trace of the origin of the Scarpa tables.

In the archives of university projects and documents there is no hand drawing, not even a sketch or description, so much so as to cast doubt on the widespread certainty that links its genesis to an idea of the architect Carlo Scarpa, who was born in Venice on 2 June 1906, died in Sendai on 28 November 1978, and was a professor at the University Institute of Architecture in Venice, of which he was Director from 1971 to 1974.

This lack of authenticity, but certainly not of clues, was evident in 2020 when the need arose to acquire new tables for Ca' Tron, one of the Iuav campuses that houses classrooms, offices and research facilities.

The tables were needed for the new layout of the Sala Camino, a large room on the main floor overlooking the Grand Canal, long used as a classroom. With the redevelopment the building has been subjected to in recent years, in particular the refurbishment of the roof and façade, the former Aula A5 was converted from a teaching space to a conference room for meetings and seminars<sup>2</sup> [PHOTOS 30-35].

Specifically, the Venetian-style terrazzo floor was refurbished, employing ancient artisanal techniques involving a long sequence of operations necessary to heal the wounds inflicted over the years by extensive traffic, preparing it for future natural wear and tear. The work restored clarity to the design and colours of the floor, and prompted consideration of a layout that would allow an overall view of the room.

It was thus decided to opt for transparent tables made of glass or plastic that could be placed side-by-side to create a broad work surface, but the search turned out to be unsatisfactory, especially since transparent tables are often objects with a great formal “character”, which are difficult to use in large numbers as we needed them for our function. It was thus almost natural to think of a variant of the Scarpa

table, maintaining its structure and replacing the wooden top with glass, studying a suitable solution for their connection, starting from the original drawings.

Yes, but how exactly are the Scarpa tables made? And who has the drawings?

Iuav's technical office does not have any project drawings, yet it acquires the new tables to replace the damaged ones, which are replaced only after they have undergone various maintenance operations involving repainting the frame or installing new wooden tops, ruined not only by the normal wear and tear of time but also by cutting/engraving/nailing/gluing and many other activities that the transformations of the university's curriculum have brought about, not only in its educational objectives but also in its spaces<sup>3</sup>.

Yet while no original documentary material is available, the tables have been constantly present in the university, with a continuity that has alternated between replacements, maintenance and renovations, made possible by a knowledge handed down drawing on the one hand on the memory of the technical office staff, and on the other on that of the artisans who had followed their production since their conception. And it is precisely the constructive wisdom of the *craftsman*, he who "conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thought"<sup>4</sup>, that has kept alive the re-edition of an *artfully crafted* object.

Starting from these elements the history of the tables has been reconstructed, also relying on the memories of those who knew and worked with the professor, with accounts that in the case of Carlo Scarpa's life verge on the legendary because the more than 40 years that separate us from his death are rich in studies and research but also in anecdotes and stories linked to the desire of the many who knew and worked with him to keep his work alive<sup>5</sup>.

This narrative has many gaps, which perhaps others will fill. Our intention is to leave a trace of the present of an "object" that for half a century has seen thousands of designers, professors and students use its surfaces for drawing, sketching and discussing, building a strong bond with the Iuav community.



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**1-2** Architecture and lecture hall for lessons on theory at the campus of the Regio Istituto Superiore di Architettura at Ca' Giustinian, on the San Trovaso canal, in 1934. The photo belongs to an official collection of the Venetian photographer Giacomelli, who took pictures of the palace's rooms after the renovation work

commissioned by Guido Cirilli, director of the Institute. In the album, now kept in the luav Project Archive, the rooms of the first campus of the Royal Institute are illustrated, with the classrooms set up for the various teaching functions. Source: luav Project Archive.

We do not have a firm date for the appearance of the Scarpa tables, but it can be assumed that they were designed at the beginning of the 1970s and that they replaced the previous tilted drafting tables, coinciding with a time line that saw the convergence of student protests in 1968, the university for the masses and a new project for academic reform.

The Graduate School of Architecture of Venice was established in 1926 on the initiative of Giovanni Bordiga, president of the Academy of Fine Arts<sup>6</sup>. At the campus of Ca' Giustinian, along the San Trovaso canal, lessons on theory were held in the tiered lecture hall set up with the long benches behind, those for drawing in the classroom with the plaster casts used for copying real objects, those for architecture in the classroom with the adjustable tables for architectural drawings<sup>7</sup> [PHOTOS 1-2]. Each class had its own dedicated space and equipment<sup>8</sup>, a condition that would be put to the test by the growing number of students for whom the original location became too small, leading to the Institute's relocation to the former Tolentini Convent<sup>9</sup> in the early 1960s.

The process of identifying the location and finalising the transfer of activities was not a short one as the monastery complex required major works, entrusted to Daniele Calabi and Mario Bacci, which lasted until 1964, when all academic functions became operational in the new location. In addition to the restoration work on the convent and the reorganisation of the spaces, it was also necessary to think about new furnishings, and an initial commission was issued in 1962 to Franco Albini<sup>10</sup>, who suggested the purchase of 300 tablet chairs, although some members of the board of directors asked for a more general plan for the furnishings so as to avoid separate supplies<sup>11</sup>.

In 1963 Calabi and Bacci wrote to the director of the Iuav to inform him of the progress of the work and the expenditure to be made, making a specific request for the furnishings:

[...] For the use of the premises themselves during the coming seminar periods, however, we consider it necessary to order the following equipment, which also requires the completion of some finishes and systems (lamps, etc.).

- a) 300 or 400 drawing tables for students (in addition to the existing 130) with their stools;
- b) 30 or 40 drawing holders, 14 drawers with their keys, Olivetti type or similar;
- c) 200 or 300 chairs, possibly with tablets, for the classrooms;
- d) some shelving, cabinets, coat racks and the like<sup>12</sup>.

The sudden death of Daniele Calabi in November 1964 prevented the project from being completed, and it was taken over by Mario Bacci in collaboration with Egle Trincanato.

The situation that the archive photos show us regarding the organisation of the furniture in those years is very heterogeneous: adjustable trestles with wooden shelves occupied the dining hall, used as a drawing room [PHOTO 3], between 1965 and at least until the student protests of 1968<sup>13</sup>, which became the great hall the following year, while the classrooms are furnished with metal chairs with tablets designed by Albini<sup>14</sup>.

The years of protest, which at Iuav began in 1967 with an occupation that lasted 100 days<sup>15</sup>, were animated by debates and discussions that remained respectful of the spaces and furnishings. When the occupation was over, “in the survey carried out to check the damage, everything appeared in order, the walls white, intact. There was a great respect for the place, not so much the dining hall as the great hall, the hub of university life. It is with this that the large banner interacts, cleverly arranged on the back wall, stretched between three ladders: an installation in which the quoted phrase takes on an assertive, almost axiomatic tone: ‘Occupation is the only and current instrument of protest and research’. Among the architecture faculties, Iuav was the most open to teacher-student dialogue, an exemplary ‘utopia’. But after introductory seminars and theoretical co-management, occupation – denying a state of affairs, a system whose survival depends on and is identified with the place and the activities that take place there – remained the only viable path, the most current, the one cast in its own time, the most concrete”<sup>16</sup>.

The student protest was interrupted but then resumed in 1977 with other political and social undercurrents.

In the meantime, the university had changed, even in its numbers: in the 1968-1969 academic year the number of students enrolled at the University Institute of Architecture in Venice was 1,447, with 248 freshmen. In 1970 the freshmen rose to 1,288 and then 1,400 in 1973, bringing the total number to 4,355 students<sup>17</sup>. The years of rapid growth were those in which Carlo Scarpa directed the I.U.A.V., dedicating himself to teaching but also to developing various projects for the Tolentini campus, such as the entrance, on which he had been working since 1966 and which would be completed posthumously, the study for the roofing of the terrace that opened onto the cloister, and the fitting out of the great hall for the 1975 celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the Liberation<sup>18</sup>.

In the photos of the arrangement of the former dining hall [PHOTO 4], the two red panels housing Emilio Vedova's large black and white work entitled *Scontro di situazione* conceal the wash house and form the backdrop to the mezzanine floor destined for the oratories, organised with tables made of simple trestles and wooden tops. Only in the pictures taken towards the end of the 1970s do the Scarpa tables appear in the same position [PHOTO 5], and they would remain there through new protests, assemblies, faculty councils even when the set-up was dismantled in 1996<sup>19</sup>. It would be Franca Pittaluga's project for the new library, realised between 2011 and 2014 in the east wing of the former convent, that would definitively replace them in the great hall with a long table equipped to manage the monitors and electrical connections, indispensable for the laptops and tablets that had once again changed the way of designing, but also of studying and "being" at the university.

That the tumultuous 1970s were the years of the new tables' debut is confirmed by a new source, not as far as the author is concerned, but in the form in which the clue came to us.



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**3** The former dining hall of the Tolentini Convent was used as a drawing room in 1965, after restoration work was carried out to house the university campus designed by the architect Daniele Calabi. Source: luav Technical Office.

**4** The former dining hall of the Tolentini Convent that has become the great hall, with Carlo Scarpa's 1975 layout. In the background are the two large red panels covering the washbasin on which Scarpa places the work by Emilio Vedova entitled Scontro di situazione. Source: luav Project Archive.





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**5** Great hall of the Tolentini campus with Scarpa's layout photographed in the late 1970s. The photo includes the Scarpa tables on the mezzanine floor. The image is subsequent to the 1975 layout, in which the same tables were not present, as shown by the panel in the foreground (one of the three that Scarpa placed in the

room, suspended in the air and connected by metal rods anchored to the walls) which bears the Gramsci quote "Get an education because we will need all your intelligence", in which the word "intelligence" was replaced with "aim" during the protests of the late 1970s. Source: luav Project Archive, from Cucciniello.



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**6** Main floor of Ca' Tron, 1980s, arranged as a study space. Source: luav Photographic Laboratory.

**7** Nardocci Classroom on the Tolentini campus (now home to the Cartography and GIS Laboratory cartography library), set up as a computer room in the 1990s. Source: luav Photographic Laboratory.

Giuseppe Davanzo, Carlo Scarpa's assistant from 1962 in the Interior Architecture and Architectural Composition course, later professor of Interior Architecture until 1991<sup>20</sup>, ten years after retiring wrote a book set in the historical campus of the I.U.A.V. entitled *Quella notte ai Tolentini*<sup>21</sup>. It is a sort of mystery novel centred on the murder of Professor Rambaldo, a fictitious name given to Enzo Cucciniello, a professor of architectural technology engaged in research on accessibility issues who turns out to have been killed by a disabled student who held him responsible for his paralysis<sup>22</sup>. The story is an opportunity to recreate the small academic community of the institute at the time, with the power relations and inevitable tensions between the various characters, highlighting Cucciniello's efforts to get the planners, and above all his colleagues as teachers, to deal with the issues of overcoming architectural barriers. Among the many descriptions of the Tolentini campus given in the text, we find an indirect testimony for our research when one of the protagonists, Professor Serafi (Davanzo's fictional name), enters his office:

He opens the door with difficulty. The key jams, as always because of the many copies made: one for each professor, assistant, expert, researcher who hangs around the office. The two grey tables that dominate the space are yet another edition derived from a 1970s design by Carlo Scarpa and freely adopted by the Institute's Technical Office, barbarised by the application of black or grey Formica to prevent the pornographic but always hilarious hieroglyphics left behind by generations of students as evidence of the boredom of many classes<sup>23</sup>.

Davanzo's temporal location is reflected in the words of two Venetian craftsmen who worked with Scarpa for a long time and made the first tables for the university. They are Francesco and Paolo Zanon of Officina Zanon in Venice.



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**8-9** International Design Seminar on the former Safa area in Cannaregio, held at the Tolentini campus in the summer of 1978, with the Scarpa tables used horizontally to work on models and vertically to display the large drawings. Discussed by Franca Pittaluga, Raimund Abraham (8); Rafael Moneo, Gino Valle, Peter Eisenman and Carlo Aymonino (9). Source: luav Project Archive, from Pittaluga.

**10-11** The 1990s on the Tolentini campus during the occupation of the “Panther” by the student movement, 1989-1990. Great hall set up for general meetings of the permanent assembly (10); Second floor: former C classrooms, set up for meetings and meeting spaces (11). Source: luav Photographic Laboratory.

In a 2010 interview, referring to a small wooden foot in the workshop, Francesco Zanon was asked whether it came from the Iuav tables.

Yes, we made hundreds of these tables designed for the IUAV, even after the professor's death. We made a lot of them and the first ones had these wooden tops made by a carpenter-turner. When he died, we made them ourselves, still in wood. But they added significantly to the total cost of the table, so we remade them in Teflon, which is much cheaper. This [pointing] is the original foot, it was left here. Then came an item from the Olivetti shop that went under some shelves: it only came to me recently but it had been here among the professor's things for years. I went to the Olivetti shop recently because we have to fix it up, and I saw the shelf and thought of the little piece that went underneath it<sup>24</sup>.

Hence if the clues lead to the artisans, it is from them that the testimony of that direct, continuous and untiring relationship between conception and production should be sought, typical of Carlo Scarpa's way of doing things, the Iuav tables being an example of constructive and functional consistency condensed into a single small object.

The tables were developed directly in the workshop, as recalled by Paolo and Francesco Zanon, who took over the shop inherited from their father, Gino Zanon<sup>25</sup>, who worked with Scarpa from the 1950s, collaborating among many other works on the construction of the Olivetti store, the renovation of the Querini Stampalia Foundation and the Brion Tomb<sup>26</sup>. From the voices of the two blacksmiths, still in business today, and from their ancient manual skills, linked to gestures rooted in memory, we were able to listen to, and in the workshop observe in person, the operations that, starting from individual tubes cut to size, lead to the assembly and construction of the table's structure<sup>27</sup>. An example of craftsmanship that has survived the competition of large-scale mass production and which it is our responsibility to preserve, highlighting the peculiarities of a work that in each operation and in each step retains the sense of its making, in the meaning and necessity of the individual processes.



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**12-14** Images of a small table with a metal frame and glass top designed by Carlo Scarpa, taken in the flat of Villa Valmarana ai Nani, in Vicenza, where the architect lived from 1972 until his death. The table is now owned by Tobia Scarpa. Photographs by G. Pietropoli.

## Anatomy of a table

The Scarpa table for Iuav is a designer object, although it cannot be called a “design” object.

It is recognised for its value and quality as the result of a design that created a functional and “beautiful”<sup>28</sup> element, replicable – first and foremost by its trusted craftsmen – like a mass-produced product, validated over time by those who have used it, and which has moved beyond the confines of academic spaces also thanks to its evocative capacity to recall the school and the time spent at the university. It is otherwise impossible to explain the many copies found in endless variations in the workspaces and homes of former Iuav students [PHOTOS 36-45].

This is not one of the bespoke, one-off pieces of furniture that Scarpa designed for his architectures, nor of the designer objects conceived for industrial production<sup>29</sup>, including a wide range of tables<sup>30</sup>. For example, despite using the same materials, it has nothing in common with the Doge table, designed for Casa Zentner in Zurich and put into production for a wider market as early as 1968, replacing the original wood and marble top with glass<sup>31</sup>. The drawn and brushed metal bars, connected in the Doge table with burnished screws, as will be the case for the Sarpi table of 1974, possess a figurative strength that makes them absolute protagonists of the space, so much so that at Casa Zentner when not in use the chairs that go with the table are kept separate from it, placed against the side shelves to leave the pedestal and top clearly visible<sup>32</sup>.

The Iuav table is essential and rigorous, its archetype possibly being traced back to a small table that Carlo Scarpa designed and had made for himself, depicted in the images of his home at Villa Valmarana ai Nani in Vicenza<sup>33</sup>, where he lived from 1972 until his death [PHOTOS 12-14]<sup>34</sup>. That same table is now owned by Tobia Scarpa, who remembers “always” seeing it in his father’s house<sup>35</sup> [PHOTOS 15-19].

The professor had it made with “plumber’s” pipes, using curved fittings to connect the glass top, lifting it from the base of the structure, a technology reminiscent of the chair that Mart Stam experimented

with in 1925 using gas pipes connected by flanges and that would lead to the definition of the S33 the following year, the tubular steel “cantilever” chair that would go on to join the furniture that at that time exploited the novelty of Mannesmann seamless tubing<sup>36</sup>, giving rise to the great season of modernist design<sup>37</sup>.

The small table is made up of a few standard pieces that manage to construct an object of great elegance distinguished by the succession of horizontal lines of the tops, interspersed by the shadow created by the gap between the structure and the glass plate.

A rigour in form that is found in the Luav table<sup>38</sup>, composed of two parts: a structure of welded steel tubes<sup>39</sup>, and a plywood top<sup>40</sup>, with a finished size of 181×101 cm, and 72 cm in height<sup>41</sup>, although over the years the university has requested different sizes for specific needs<sup>42</sup>.

The structure is manufactured using cold-formed welded steel tubes with a diameter of 33.7 mm and a thickness of 2.6 mm<sup>43</sup>.

The tubes are cut to the required dimensions, milled to obtain the recess that connects the three corner pieces, then turned, assembled and finally welded to build the structure the wooden top will be anchored to by means of screws inserted into holes in the tubes. Thanks to the milling of the pieces, the angle determined by the connection between the two horizontal elements and the vertical leg gives the table a discreet elegance, a detail reinforced by the material and colour contrast between the metal and the wood.

Initially the tubes were treated with a red lead coat that gave the structure a typical orange colouring, but today that coating, made by mixing lead-based minium powder with baked linseed oil, is impossible to use due to the toxicity of the lead, and has been replaced first by a sandblasting treatment with subsequent powder coating, and later by an even simpler black paint.

The first tables were also complemented by turned wooden feet, 2 cm high, which were soon replaced by Teflon caps, which were cheaper than the earlier handmade versions.

The choice of a plywood top makes the table lightweight, facilitating their movement for interior layouts and continuous reorganisa-



tions that are increasingly frequent in the classrooms of a school of design that today offers a wide-ranging curriculum, demanding total flexibility of classroom spaces and their furnishings.

Classrooms that host architecture students, but also fashion, design and theatre students, who no longer open just rolls of drawings on the tables but also fabrics and clothes, mock-ups and set designs, working with computers, scissors and cutters.

Tables that are islands, on which one can spend entire days, alone or in groups.

Tables that can be joined, doubling in width or length, creating inhabited landscapes, silent for exhibitions, noisy and messy during workshops.

Tables that demonstrate how democratic design can not only combine beauty and functionality, but remind us that engagement and the sharing of ideas are nourished by well-designed objects and spaces.

Tables whose longevity certifies the good fortune of the “product” and the satisfaction of the customer, who has experimented with dozens of different seating solutions over the years, but who has not found a replacement for this “object” that can also act as a “space”, part of the history and identity of our university.



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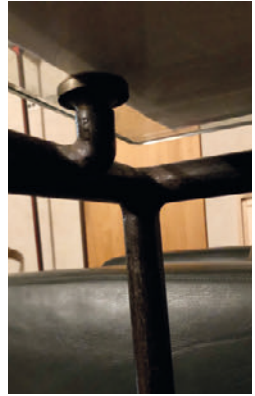
**15-19** Coffee table owned by the architect Tobia Scarpa, from the family home in Vicenza. It is a small table designed by Carlo Scarpa, with a structure made from water pipes and a glass plate. A standard 90° curved fitting and flange was used to create the connection to the top. Photographs by V. Tatano, November 2020.



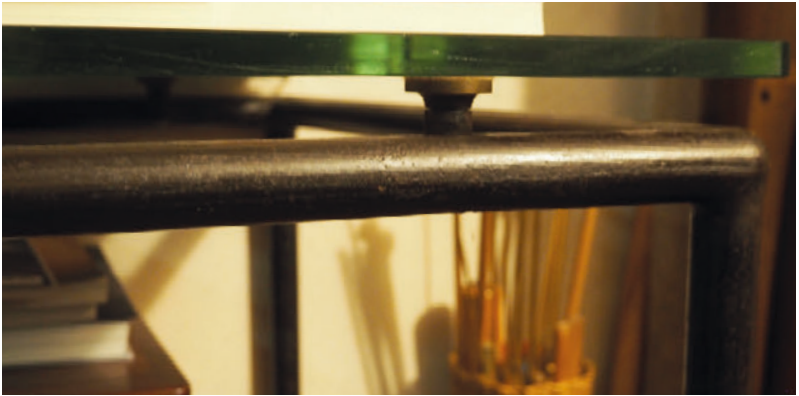
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## In the workshop

Photographic sequence of some of the processes involved in building the structure of the Scarpa table.

The images depict a series of operations necessary for the construction of the frame and were taken at the Zanon workshop in Venice.

The structure is manufactured using cold-formed welded steel tubes with a diameter of 33.7 mm (equal to 1 gas inch for gas pipes) and a thickness of 2.6 mm. The tubes are cut to the required dimensions, milled, turned, assembled and finally welded to build the table structure. The milling creates the recess for connecting the horizontal tubes, which is indispensable for fastening the three pieces of the corner.

A series of holes are drilled into the tubes that form the base of the plywood surface to allow them to be subsequently attached using flat screws.

**20** Steel tubes.

**21** Cutting and turning the pieces that will make up the structure of the rectangular base and the four feet of the table.

**22** Milling the pipes at the point where they will be connected with the other elements.

**23** Detail of the pipes ready to be joined.

**24** Detail of the table leg placed at the base structure.

**25** Detail of welding performed followed by filing.

**26** The different parts are pre-assembled on the work table.

**27** Welding of the contact points of the various parts.

**28** Detail of the joint from an overhead view.

**29** The completed table structure.

Photographs by the luav Photographic Laboratory and V. Tatano, March 2020.



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## At Ca' Tron

Photographic sequence of the assembly of the Scarpa tables for the Sala Camino at Ca' Tron.

Tops and frames were transported by boat, separately, and the assembly of the glass plates was done on site.

Unlike the structure of traditional models, where the tube hole is left open as it is covered by the plywood top, for this version a steel disc was placed to close it, which is necessary to allow the glass top to be secured.

**30** Transport of the crystal tops.

**31** Preparation of the steel structures.

**32** Application of glue (UV adhesive) to the steel disc.

**33** Placement of the glass plate on the frame and using a UV lamp to fix the adhesive.

**34** Detail of the completed fixing, with the steel disc fully visible.

**35** Corner detail with the plate slightly detached from the structure.

Photographs by V. Tatano, May 2020.





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## Outside luav

Over the years many former Luav students have had copies of Scarpa's tables made with different functions, replicating shapes and materials in a manner faithful to the original, or betraying some of its principles.

These re-editions demonstrate the evident quality of the object, but also testify to the persistence of a strong bond with the school, the table – re-edited with the customisations necessary to cope with new functions – providing a sort of affective continuity.

A brief survey identified a number of examples that can provide a picture of the heterogeneity of the solutions adopted.

**36** Staging for the exhibition *Carlo Scarpa. Venini 1932-1947*, curated by Marino Barovier, 29 August 2012-6 January 2013, organised as part of *Le stanze del vetro* on the Island of San Giorgio, Venice. Some of the vases on display were placed on the faithful replicas of Scarpa's tables, with a choice that combined two distinct areas of the professor's work in terms of functionality and chronology.

**37** Architectural firm. The tables reinterpret the Scarpa model, unaltered in its steel structure, but adopting a black laminate top with a wooden frame.

**38-39** A photographer's studio. Space for archiving materials is never enough and thus the tables become storage "areas".

**40-41** Small table for the spaces of the ENI Enrico Mattei Foundation at Ca' Tron. Built by *Officina Zanon*, the structure is based on the luav version for the Ca' Tron conference room, modifying the measurements, adapted to the function of a tabletop in a conversation area, and some of the materials (the crystal and the metal of the tabletop fastening disc). The detail of the connection between the vertical and horizontal element of the corner demonstrates the care taken in its production. Photographs by luav Photographic Laboratory, 2020.

**42-45** Domestic versions, functioning as dining table and kitchen peninsula.



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## Notes

- 1** From its founding to the present day, luav has changed its organisational structure and name from Scuola Superiore di Architettura di Venezia [Graduate School of Architecture of Venice], the name under which it was founded in 1926, to I.U.A.V., an acronym for Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia [University Institute of Architecture of Venice], to Università luav di Venezia in 2001. In this text, the abbreviation luav will be used to identify the university when not necessary to place it temporally.
- 2** I followed the work on Ca' Tron as the Rector's delegate for building and real estate, a position assigned to me by Professor Alberto Ferlenga for the duration of his mandate (2015-2021).
- 3** Obviously all these operations could be carried out without "harming" the tables, allowing even the most "daring" workshop operations to combine practical experience with respect for the school's furnishings.
- 4** Richard Sennett explores the world of manual labour, focusing on the intimate connection between the hand and the head, in his 2008 book *L'uomo artigiano*, Feltrinelli, Milan.
- 5** With regard to Carlo Scarpa, there is not only a rich bibliography on his works of architecture, furniture and design, but also texts that convey the character of the professor himself, describing his lively and complex personality and how this characterised his relationships with his clients and the people he worked with. These include the books by Guido Pietropoli, first a student and later a co-worker of Scarpa, who wrote two books that are both personal and professional narratives: Pietropoli, G. (2020), *Carlo Scarpa 1968-78. Quasi un racconto and A fianco di Carlo Scarpa*, Amazon Fulfillment, and a series of lectures given at luav collected by Franca Semi, who was Scarpa's assistant in the Architectural Composition course and later in his professional activity: Semi, F. (2010), *A lezione con Carlo Scarpa*, Cicero, Venice.
- 6** For a history of luav from its inception until the 1980s see: Zucconi, G., Carraro, M. (eds.) (2011), *Officina IUAV, 1925-1980. Saggi sulla scuola di architettura di Venezia*, Marsilio, Venice. On the teaching organisation from its beginnings to 1963: Carullo, R. (2009), *IUAV. Didattica dell'architettura dal 1926 al 1963*, Polibrass, Bari.
- 7** The organisation of the classrooms and its furnishings was captured by the photographer Giacomelli in 1934 and the images are collected in an album entitled *La sede del Regio Istituto Superiore di Architettura a San Trovaso, 1934* and today kept in the luav Project Archive.
- 8** To "breathe" the air of those years see Franco Mancuso's fine essay for the day of studies on Bruno Zevi: Mancuso F. (2019), "A Venezia, collegando lo scavo scientifico sull'antico al lavoro sui tavoli da disegno", in Rossi, P.O. (ed.), *Bruno Zevi e la didattica dell'architettura*, Quodlibet, Macerata, pp. 119-141.
- 9** For a detailed history of the Tolentini campus see: Brodini, A. (2020), *Lo luav ai Tolentini: Carlo Scarpa e gli altri. Storia e documenti*, Firenze University Press, Florence.

- 10** Franco Albini arrived at luav in the 1949-1950 academic year as a professor of Interior Architecture, Furniture and Decoration and remained there until 1964.
- 11** Brodini, op. cit., p. 56.
- 12** Letter of 18 January 1963, [AD luav, S VI/1.1-6], quoted in Brodini, op. cit., p. 140.
- 13** On 1968 at luav: Carraro, M., Maguolo, M. (ed.) (2012), "Cronache dai Tolentini. Studenti, docenti, luoghi 1964-1975" in *Giornale luav* 110 and the monographic issue of the journal *Engramma* no. 156 May/June 2018, "Il 68 che verrà", Edizioni Engramma, in particular Maguolo, M., Masiero, R. (2018), "luav 68. Labirinto politico. Un saggio per immagini".
- 14** In 1958 Franco Albini designed a chair with a tablet made of painted iron tubing, with a seat and backrest in plywood, produced by the Poggi company for luav.
- 15** Maguolo, M. (2011), "Gli anni tempestosi", in Zucconi, Carraro, op. cit., pp. 177-188.
- 16** Maguolo, Masiero, op. cit.
- 17** Maguolo, op. cit., p. 185.
- 18** The design and construction phases of the great hall are well described in Brodini (2020), op. cit.
- 19** The date is given in Monaco Mazza, L., Reina, M.M. (2018), "Progetti per l'Istituto Universitario di Architettura nel convento dei Tolentini", in Ferrighi, A. (ed.), *Venezia di carta*, LetteraVentidue Edizioni, Siracusa, pp. 142-145.
- 20** Giuseppe Davanzo is the author of the project for the renovation of the luav Tolentini library between 1987 and 1988. He used a smaller than usual version of the Scarpa tables for the furnishings, with a black laminate top and wooden frame.
- 21** Davanzo, G. (2001), *Quella notte ai Tolentini*, Edimedia, Treviso.
- 22** Enzo Cucciniello (1933-2013) was a professor in Building Science and later in Architectural Technology, director of the Materials Testing Laboratory and author of the cultural project called *Venezia per tutti*, and of *ArchEtica*, an initiative inspired by the guiding principles outlined by the National University Conference of Delegates for Disability (CNUDD), launched in 2000.
- 23** Davanzo, op. cit., p. 13.
- 24** Video interview by Alba Di Lieto of Francesco and Paolo Zanon, at the Officina Zanon Gino di Paolo e Francesco Zanon in Venice, on 22 March 2010. The interview is available in its entirety on the Palladio Museum website, at the link: <http://mediateca.palladiomuseum.org/scarpa/web/videointervista.php?id=9> (last accessed: 4 April 2021).
- 25** In the documentary *Un'ora con Carlo Scarpa*, a Rai Incontri production, edited by Gastone Favero, directed by Maurizio Cascavilla, 1972, Gino Zanon describes his collaboration with the professor in these words "He always gives us very difficult jobs, but we agree on the way to build and finish them", while a very young Francesco Zanon enthusiastically recounts the experience of being able to produce a truly artisanal

work where each element “is designed and built” as if it were a “unique piece”.

**26** For Scarpa, work in the workshop, as it was for work in the carpentry workshops, was not simply an activity of supervision and verification, but an operational and creative interaction with the actual makers of his ideas, which took place directly on the drawings, inserting new explanations in the designs, or sketching new descriptions. It is therefore not surprising that a group of drawings by Carlo Scarpa from the Officine Zanon, the result of this collaboration, was acquired in 2004 by the Veneto Region for the collections of the Castelvecchio Museum, further expanding its already vast archive.

**27** A visit to Officina Zanon Gino in Venice was organised on 4 March 2020, which was attended by staff from the Property Management Service and the luav Photographic Laboratory, as well as architect Margherita Ferrari and myself, during which we observed the processes employed to build the table structure.

**28** In a brief telephone interview on 15 January 2021, Valeriano Pastor, a professor at luav, of which he was Rector from 1979 to 1982, recalls that the reception of the tables by his colleagues was a “pleasant surprise”. With an “elementary” solution that was as obvious as it was right, Scarpa outlined a new way of standing at the drawing table.

**29** Bassi, A. (2014), “Carlo Scarpa architetto e designer”, in Bagnoli, S., Di Lieto, A. (eds.), *Carlo Scarpa, Sandro Bagnoli: Il design per Dino Gavina / Design for Dino Gavina*, Silvana Editoriale, Milan, pp. 21-53.

**30** The tables designed by Scarpa are collected in the publication: Various authors (2009), *I tavoli di Carlo Scarpa alla Fondazione Querini Stampalia a Venezia*, printed by Grafiche Antiga, Estel-Simon.

**31** On Casa Zentner and its furnishings, see: Fornari, D., Jean, G., Martinis, R. (2020), *Carlo Scarpa. Casa Zentner a Zurigo: una villa italiana in Svizzera*, Electa, Milan, in particular the essay by Fornari, D., “Arredi fissi e mobili: dal pezzo unico alla produzione seriale”.

**32** “The importance of the table – due to the formal complexity of the pedestal structure and the material richness of the top – is emphasised by the arrangement of the chairs in barocchetto style: turned towards the shelves, to leave the view of the table unobstructed, except at mealtimes”. In Fornari et al., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

**33** The architect Guido Pietropoli made me aware of the existence of the coffee table and the photos showing its presence at Scarpa’s home in Vicenza.

**34** According to Philippe Duboÿ the tables were inspired by the counters of the Rialto market. Duboÿ, P. (2016), *Carlo Scarpa. L’arte di esporre*, Johan & Levi, Monza, p. 203.

**35** The information on and images of the table were received during a meeting with Tobia Scarpa in November 2020.

**36** The process of manufacturing seamless steel tubes, later known as “Mannesmann tubes”, was invented in Germany in 1885 and was to form the basis of furniture design from the 1920s onwards, with some famous pieces such as Marcel Breur’s Wassily armchair of 1925 and the Cantilever chairs by



Stam (S33, 1926), by Breuer (B32, 1929, with the artistic copyright of Mart Stam) and by Mies van der Rohe (S533, known as “free swing”, 1927), all produced by the company founded by Michael Thonet, who switched from using curved wood to curved tubular steel. See: Sala, N., Sala, M. (2005), *Geometrie del design. Forme e materiali per il progetto*, Franco Angeli, Milan.

**37** Bradbury, D. (2019), *Modernismo. Arredi, design e grafica 1920-1950*, Electa, Milan.

**38** The description of the production of the Scarpa table is taken from the documentation in the archives of the luav’s Property Management Service and from discussions with the artisans Paolo and Francesco Zanon.

**39** The description of the production of the Scarpa table is taken from the documentation in the archives of the luav’s Property Management Service and from discussions with the artisans Paolo and Francesco Zanon.

**40** Scarpa’s material of choice was originally a blockboard known commercially as “Moralt”, which was followed by plywood.

**41** The indicated size corresponds to the dimensions of the frame and the dimensions of the panel, although in newer tables the measurements of the top have “increased” to 182×102 cm. As to the reason for the size of the tables, there are two versions: according to some it is related to the size of the plywood sheet used, which was produced in double the size of the table, allowing two tops to be made from each panel, without any scrap. For others, they were related to the size of the Schoeller card stock, which was very popular with the professor, so that

two students could work on each table facing each other.

**42** In 1992 the then Rector Marino Folin requested a quote for “the supply of 17 ‘Scarpa model’ tables measuring 1.50×0.75 m and 5 tables measuring 0.75×0.45 m. These tables will consist of a metal frame painted matt black and a 20 mm poplar wood top covered in black laminate”. luav archive document, ADluav VI/4.1-2. The previous year, the university had purchased 40 “Scarpa-type” tables measuring 102×182×72 in height, with a black-coated metal frame and tops made of 19 mm okoum planking (luav archive document 21.03.1991).

**43** The size of 33.7 mm corresponds to one gas inch, a conventional measurement invented to classify the diameter of pipes for the passage of fluids, different from the standard inch equal to 25.4 millimetres.






# PORTRAITS







**Tables that demonstrate how democratic design can not only combine beauty and functionality, but remind us that engagement and the sharing of ideas are nourished by well-designed objects and spaces.**