

World-Architects Magazine Insight

A review of Elettra Fiumi's "Radical Landscapes"

## My (Radical) Architect

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Space Electronic at Via Palazzuolo, 37 in Florence (Photo: Manuelarosi, cropped and rotated from [original](#) at [Wikimedia Commons](#))

***Radical Landscapes* is a new documentary directed by Elettra Fiumi about Gruppo 9999, the Radical Architecture collective from Florence that was co-founded by her father, Fabrizio Fiumi. Shown as part of DOC NYC, the film is as much a personal exploration on the part of the filmmaker as it is a historical account of a lesser known group of avant-garde architects.**

"When filmmaker Elettra Fiumi inherited her father Fabrizio Fiumi's archives, she discovered a man she knew nothing about." [So goes the description of \*Radical Landscapes\* on the DOC NYC website](#), which concludes: "In coming to know her father, Fiumi unveils a visionary genius we don't know enough about." Such words

immediately bring to my mind Nathaniel Kahn's 2003 documentary *My Architect: A Son's Journey*. While Kahn's father, Louis I. Kahn, was famous in his lifetime and has become even more famous and revered since his death in 1974, Fiumi's father and the Gruppo 9999 he was a part of were relatively unknown, then and now. *Radical Landscapes* draws attention to Fabrizio Fiumi, Gruppo 9999, the larger Italian Radical Architecture movement, and even broader ideas around collective life, but ultimately the documentary is about Elettra's relationship to her father — in life and in death.

The film paints a chronological portrait of Fabrizio, from the 1960s to his death in 2014, with Elettra weaving together footage from her father's archive, other historical images, interviews with Gruppo 9999 members, friends and family, collages created by the collective, and footage of Elettra making discoveries in the archive, confessing to the camera, speaking with family, and orchestrating events in memory of her father. This approach benefits viewers, like myself, who may know little to nothing about Fiumi and Gruppo 9999 going into the film (Superstudio and Archizoom have continued to garner most of the attention around Italian Radical Architecture), but it also invests the film with a strong emotional strand — à la *My Architect* — from beginning to end.



## Radical Landscapes Trailer\_SUB\_ENG

Fiumi Studios

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Trailer for *Radical Landscapes*

Early in the film Elettra speaks with her mother, Terry Fiumi, while showing her some of the footage found in Fabrizio's archive, including Elettra's sister, Lilla, walking about an indoor vegetable patch as a toddler and their brother, Morgan, sitting in a toilet swinging from the ceiling. Soon we learn that these strange and humorous installations and happenings were part of what Gruppo 9999 did at Space Electronic, the discotheque they created on Via Palazzuolo in Florence. Before that, Fabrizio and the other members of what would become Gruppo 9999 — Giorgio Birelli, Carlo Calдини, and Paolo Galli — spent time in the United States, finding influence in roadside architecture, the glitz of Las Vegas, and Andy Warhol's Electric Circus nightclub in Manhattan's East Village.

The group returned to Florence and — encouraged by University of Florence professors Leonardo Ricci and Leonardo Saviolo — they created Pop-like collages that imagined how technology could be harnessed for environmental good; they projected images on the Ponte Vecchio, turning Florence into Vegas for just one night in September 1968; and then, in December 1969, they opened Space Electronic, an immersive space of sound, light, reflections, plastic, and color — and easily the group's most famous creation. A few years later Gruppo 9999 won a competition for young designers that was part of the 1972 MoMA exhibition, "Italy: The New Domestic Landscape," but they split up soon after that, almost as quickly as they had formed: "a fire that flared up like a blaze," as Birelli describes it near the end of the film.

As the youngest of Fabrizio and Terry's three kids, Elettra was not old enough to experience the brief Gruppo 9999 happenings firsthand. They were revealed to her through the archive of her father, through the nine-year journey of making the film and learning everything she could about her father, and by recreating some of her father's creations. Without giving away too much about the last, which encompasses the last act of the film, Elettra's restaging of Gruppo 9999's creations brings her closer to Fabrizio — echoing Kahn's *My Architect*, as when he roller skates across the Salk plaza — but also brings the ideas of communal living and collective practices from the late 1960s and early 1970s into the present. Many of the ideas explored by the group, especially the ways technology could be used to help the environment rather than harm it, are still being tackled, while capitalism's unsustainable embrace of materialism and individualism is but one condition pushing many to now embrace communal/collective ways of living. As such, Gruppo 9999's ideas from a half century ago are resonating today, as captured in Elettra Fiumi emotionally invested exploration of her father.

**[Radical Landscapes](#) (Fiumi Studios, 2022, 87 minutes) directed by Elettra Fiumi is screening online until November 27, 2022 as part of DOC NYC (US viewers only).**

**Some of the footage from the feature-length documentary can be found in "9999: Florentine Memoirs" (below), a short made by Fiumi for *Revolution 9999*, the 2017 exhibition at Museo Novecento Firenze curated by Marco Ornella and Emanuele Piccardo.**



**9999: Florentine Memoirs (The story of the 9999 Group)**

Fiumi Studios

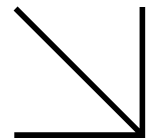
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"9999: Florentine Memoirs (The story of the 9999 Group)"

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