BACK TO THE FUTURE

Focus: museums awakening, from UAE to the world Saadiyat Island, Nantes, São Paulo

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Museums awakening, from UAE to the world

Even though the world museum (temple of the Muse) was born in Ancient Greece, its cultural role was destined to take on a new brightness in the 18th century when, for the first time, the concept of the public museum was defined within the framework of the Enlightenment. In this sense, the museums of the Enlightenment can be seen as a reflection of the cultural and intellectual renaissance that took place at that time.

In fact, the first museums of the Enlightenment were not just collections of objects, but were spaces for the spreading of knowledge and beauty, reaching and involving a large and relevant Italian historical museum, located in the royal palace of Capodimonte in Naples, whose building celebrates its 250th anniversary this year.

Moreover, the theme of the awakening of contemporary museums is addressed in the Focus through a first general overview, illustrated by Michele Mariotti’s photographs, on the Dubai Design District, and on the role of “Museoificazione” — according to the definition by Davide Ponzini, professor of Architecture & Plan section, where we find three significant initiatives in recent decades and which was based on the revolutionary intellectual idea of designing the exhibits without any screen or background, placing them in free relation with the unique space of the large open rectangular hall.

While not having a direct relationship with the content of this Focus, the three projects — the Metro Arquitetos Associados’ project has been retrieved by the architects to the collective memory of the modern museum. The following is devoted to a specific reflection by Titti Rinaldi downstream the theme of the exhibition spaces returns again in the Experiences section, which follows the final case study, the spectacular project of the Dubai Design District, held from 14 to 17 November 2017, confirming its commitment as a promoter of design in the UAE. The Focus is pleased to announce its support as the media partner of Dubai’s Downtown Design, held from 14 to 17 November 2017, confirming its commitment as a promoter of design in the UAE. The Focus is pleased to announce its support as the media partner of Dubai’s Downtown Design, held from 14 to 17 November 2017, confirming its commitment as a promoter of design in the UAE.
On the border between Austria and Italy there are some remnants of a complex military defence system that includes tracks, trenches, observatories and forts. Such a system was carried out between the mid-nineteenth century and the years preceding World War I for the protection of the Austro-Hungarian territory against possible threats from the Italian Kingdom. After the conflict ended, the area was annexed to Italy. Among the forts there is one that has peculiar characteristics. It is the Pozzacchio Fort, also called Valmorbia Werk, which is located in the vicinity of the town of Rovereto. While most of the forts were built with stones and reinforced concrete, Pozzacchio's was realised in a distinct way, predominantly from excavations in a huge rock, hiding in its context. The construction of its access road to the mountains was made during 1912, its execution occurred during 1913, but was never completed. Even so, the fort was the scene of disputes during World War I. In its initial conception, the fort had a main part dug into the rocks of a mountain and an external one with complementary military installations. In the inner part, an intricate system of spaces in a “U” shape, distributed on two levels was intended to accommodate dormitories for soldiers and officers, offices, ammunition and storage depots, water channels and tanks, latrines, telephone switchboard, artillery rooms, a room with an optical tube that could allow sending luminous signals to the allied troops. All these places were connected by a network of tunnels. The internal and external parts were linked by tunnels and a vertical well. There was an intention to settle in the upper part of the well three reinforced metal domes with cannons and machine guns. These domes would have been connected with the bottom of the rock through stairs and a freight elevator; the connection between the domes would have been made by corridors and stairs. A narrow winding road with tunnels dug in a mountain allowed access to the rock and to the area outside it, with sparse facilities. Among them there were quarters for officers to use in times of peace. The architects Francesco Collotti and Giacomo Pirazzoli carried out the intervention in the complex between 1997 and 2015. They made some specific designs, located inside and outside the rock, which affect the spaces and their perception at multiple scales. As the architects explain, the re-reading of the physical sources and the written ones, has allowed them to focus on a site-specific intervention strategy that excluded both a “pure invention” or a hyperhistorical reconstruction, typical of similar interventions, that most of the times are arbitrary. These kinds of interventions usually forget about contemporaneity.

Watch without being seen

Reuse of Pozzacchio Fort

Francesco Collotti and Giacomo Pirazzoli

Work
Pozzacchio Fort

Client
First lot:
Superintendence for the Architectural and Cultural Heritage of the Autonomous Province of Trento
Second lot:
Trambileno Municipality

Location
Pozzacchio District, Trambileno Municipality
Valmorbia District, Vallarsa Municipality

Project Year
1998-2009: design
2010-2013: execution

Architecture and Design
Francesco Collotti, Giacomo Pirazzoli

Architect
Francesco Collotti, Giacomo Pirazzoli

Project Team
Serena Acciai, Cristiano Balestri, Mauro Boasso, Suela Ceremelli, Ita Cornia, Valentina Tanfani, Sara Tonzellini

Engineering
Claude Benincasa, Stato Alluvia-Temme

Construction Bespoken
Pier Luigi Sepe

Supervision of Construction General spa

Image credits
Federico Calabrese
Within the rock, the design consists of the provision of some dispersed architectural structures, such as stair, platforms, walkways, parapets, balconies, benches, footbridges and so on. Despite the first sensation of being lost inside the fort, one is attracted by these contemporary structures that are situated in its interior spaces and in its borders, stimulating the curiosity for the place, where the troops would have performed their daily activities and actions of attack and defence.

There are some spaces that also catch the attention inside the fortified complex. In its central part, iron platforms and parapets illuminated indirectly ailing their postmodern indicate the contour of the never completed wooden barracks meant for the dormitories of the soldiers and officers. The intricate net of tunnels finally leads to the niches of the light artillery, where balconies of many different shapes were inserted, emerging from the rock, as little explosions from its interior. In one of this border spaces there is a circularized installation that contains the optical tube, and the footbridge takes the form of the structure upon which the reinforced concrete domes would have been constructed, culminating the contact between the interior and the exterior of the fort, this time as a big explosion.

The use of a single material, iron, has a significant impact in the intervention. Almost all structures were painted entirely with the same red lead colour, which exalts the material and, at the same time, belongs to the mineral dimension of the place. The metal structures also determine a sequence of points, surfaces and planes, more or less dense, more or less transparent, where there is an alternation of emptiness and fullness. «The expansion, at the same time agile and powerful, of a mass in space», and the use of red lead colour, refer to the sculpture Grande Ferro Sestante that Alberto Burri made in 1982 at the Ex Seccatoio Tabacchi, in the Città di Castello. The machine designed by Collotti and Pirazzoli looks like a sextant, guiding the visitors inside the fort, accompanying them through the reading and appropriation of this “document of memory”.

Outside of the excavated rock, as it was said before, there are also some other dispersed structures that complete the complex. In the first phase of the project, the architects built two delicate structures with metallic pillars and wooden roofs to protect some ruins and to host a model
of the fort. With this model children may begin to understand the space. They also erected a building to house an information point, a bar and toilets. In this intervention, Collotti and Pirazzoli followed the indications of some documents that specified how the dormitories of the soldiers and officers inside the rock should have been and they constructed outside a model in a 1:1 scale to refer to, though it is made with other materials. The architects also intended to execute security works in the ruins of the barracks, with the insertion of a structure made with metallic pillars and a roof, but failed to carry it out. Just like Burri’s sculpture is part of its context, the intervention in Forte Pozzacchio is part of its environment, establishing relations that are not only physical, but also conceptual. It recreates transition spaces between the interior and exterior, admitting that the new insertions positioned at the borders and on the top of the fort interact with the landscape much more than it could have occurred in conflict times. More than telling the one and true history of Forte Pozzacchio, the intervention explores the existing indications in a much more delicate way, letting the visitors deduce what it might have been, what it is, and what it still can be. Histories that relate to the preliminary existence of the place of the fort, when there was only rock and landscape; of the human efforts required to carry out the war; of the personal dramas suffered during the conflict; of the period after the war, when nature was taking over space again of recent years, when people newly began to explore the exterior and interior of the fort; of the present and future potentialities made possible by the current “reconquest” of the fort. All clues are exposed for the visitors to collect, retrieve their memories and conform their own narratives of the fort’s history. Ana Carolina Bierrenbach
Federico Calabrese

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www.acrilforte.it/public/A%20riveder%20le%20stelle.pdf
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