















Museology and Museography



MUSEOLOGY AND MUSEOGRAPHY

1. Presentation: preparatory reading and history of adaptation and museography, from XIX century to 1955.



Museology and Museography







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COURSE OF MUSEOLOGY AND MUSEOGRAPHY

Introductory reading to the First lesson on "Adaptation and Museography"

Musealization, general concepts

First of all what is a museum?

One could reply with a recent definition supplied by Antonio Paolucci, who states that museums are gold mines for the tourism sector and allow one to boast to the respective cultural ministries... Because the classical, medieval and modern collections scattered in the major European cities are, above all, a resource of beauty which we sometimes underestimate12.

Salvatore Settis insists that our museums are children of the great collections, not simple objects, but attributes of sovereignty subjected to special protection. Today, they carry out a civil function, as symbols of identity. Their value is not merely monetary13.

Indeed, among the privileges Old Europe can offer to the cultured man is that of a visit to the museum, which keeps intact its charm in its historical furnishings, its exhibitions and its routes.

It would be opportune to remember some words uttered by Francis Haskell in his description of the Borghese Gallery: moving among the classical statues, the polychrome portraits, the mosaics of Late Antiquity, the Caravaggios and the Domenichinos, the Rubens, the Flemish landscapes, the Canova etc.... is the joy of the eyes, astonishment, tumultuous emotion of the heart, adventure of the fancy, in one word happiness¹⁴.

But many are the museums which arouse admiration in the world due to their immense assets: From the Louvre to the British Museum, from the Vatican Museums to the Uffizi, from the State Hermitage to the

With the exponential growth of tourism, one need only think of the endless queues for access, the above mentioned museums call for a zero increase. This is nigh impossible; moreover, the issues of safeguarding, conservation, restoration and functional adaptation become essential (figs. 19-20).

Similarly, the many museums scattered in cities and the territory must also be adapted and equipped, since Europe, and it is not alone in this, is a whole museum, not physically but in essence. Consequently, it would be well to recall some principles expressed and codified in the documents produced by Italian and European

I would like to remind the reader that since the international conference in Athens in 1931 and its resultant Athens Charter, it has been advocated that one should: "recommends that the occupation of buildings, which ensures the continuity of their life, should be maintained but that they should be used for a purpose which respects their historic or artistic character (point I)"15.

In the Italian Restoration Charter of the same year, issued by the High Council for Antiquities and Fine Arts, the fourth point reads "that in the so-called monuments living only those uses are accepted that are not too far removed from the original use in order to avoid drastic alterations to the building during any necessary adaptations; while the ... point reads "That any alterations which should prove necessary to consolidate the buildings or to achive a partial or total re-integration or for the pratical use of the monument, the essential critetion to be applied, over and above the need to limit any such new elements to a minimum, should be that of making there alterations as simple and base as possible and in conformity to the structural form. "16.

In the Venice Charter of 1964, article 5 states that "the conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not changes the lay-out or deco- ration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted"17.

More recently, the Restoration Charter of 1972 underlined, in the instructions for the carrying out of restorations, attachment B, that "At all times aiming to secure the survival of monuments, it is always necessary to examine the possibility of new uses to old monumental structures, while taking care that these would not be incompatible with the historical-artistic interests. Any adaptation should be kept to the minimum, making every effort to conserve the external forms and to avoid major alterations to typological individuality, to the structural system and to the sequence of internal connections"18.

At present, noting the numerous encounters promoted by the Associazione dei Musei Italiani, by ICOM and by ICOMOS itself, it seems appropriate to urge an adequate equilibrium in the interventions of adaptation and valorisation, through the careful "evaluation" of the limits and the constraints expressed by the existing, in accordance to the teachings of the culture of critique. further, it is necessary to ensure the greatest efficacy to conservation policy in Italy and in the world; indeed, the operational reality is different to the theory, also due to the fact that the gradual extension of protection towards a global measure, towards integrated conservation, has given rise to the danger of a detachment between the theoretical views and operational

The fundamental issue today, in Italy and in the world, is not constituted by the nuances in thought within the scientific community, but lies rather in finding a point of convergence with all the cultural and productive elements, to commune between science and the economy in the sector of cultural heritage.

An unambiguous line of conduct appears to be necessary in order to avoid that only the trend of super restorations continue to manifest itself. This must limit speculative motivations so as to obviate the identification of restoration with reuse. "Reuse is founded on the assumption that the true motivation of restoration must be the utilisation in the present of the historical real estate, because what counts is bringing it back to catering to the concrete needs of our time; this is equivalent to disowning two centuries of conquest by critical-historical culture, encouraging only the consumerism of architectural heritage and opening the road to an arbitrary and uncontrolled transformation of monuments"19.

The invitation proposed by Giovanni Carbonara is therefore that of acting with every more awareness in a dialectic between the operational moment and the speculative moment, the only guarantee to increasing the level of both20 (figs. 21-22)

Hence, some architects will have to try and avoid a certain excessive protagonism, which gives rise to embarrassing situations. There is no lack of examples in Italy nor in other European countries21. Many interventions on the existing are too unbalanced in terms of the "beautiful", of the "refined", with an excessive enrichment of the old via the new. These motivations have produced the "machine of the year 2000", which appears to have erased and then reinvented a fin-de-siècle architecture, such as the Gare d'Orsay in Paris, or of restoring the 1700s to the 2000s in 14 months, such as the episode of Palazzo Grassi in Venice. In recent years, many have come to sense a feeling of confusion when entering the Musée d'Orsay. The initial enthusiasm at the novelty on the part of the authors of the new turned into a profound annoyance, almost oppressed by the heavy "Theban" re-evocations, which oppress the masterpieces exhibited and which have debased the essence of the architecture (figs. 23-24).

Often, some monuments have been the object of a misunderstood artisticity, which is not aiming at their conservation and is therefore limited to their reproposition, which ends up humiliating them by the disproportion and (why not?) the violence inflicted on them.





In many aspects, it is possible to find the double soul of the architecture again and, at the same time, the reflection of a crisis of creativity and identity in contemporary architecture.

I still recall the presentation of a project, an early one, by Renzo Piano, for the Basilica of Vicenza, before André Chastel and many young architects of the time, including myself. There, the author made absolute the principle of intervention. In fact, he insisted on the concept that the edifice is conceived for the purpose of being used, as if to say that the reasons for the reuse must prevail and trump all other motivations, including

This introduces us to the world of the "archistars". The role of the archistars today needs perhaps to be looked at in more depth, reviewed and moderated in search of a greater equilibrium when working on preexisting architecture. Fortunately, from the end of the 1970s, there has been an ever more widespread respect not only toward the heritage of the past, but also modern architectural properties. There has been an increase in the understanding between the spaces and the daily use, as abandonment and incompatible use cause the deterioration and the gradual loss of the cultural property.

Furthermore, the dialogue between the ancient and the new has concretised through continuous doctrinal and operational research. Among the major protagonists, Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano and Jean Nouvel act with a prevailing technological interest. In fact, their projects could be defined as being high

In the Médiathèque in Nimes (1984-1992), adiacent to the Maison Carré. Foster avoids any mimetic reference and, through the new structure, proposes dialogue with the existing building with absolute linearity and simplicity (fig. 28).

More recently, he confronted and resolved, with efficacy, the restoration and return to functionality of the Reichstag in Berlin (1992-1998) (figs. 25-27). Foster simplified the hall and created a paved square on the terrace top. The dominating element is, however, the new dome of steel and glass. This reproposes the theme of insertions into the existing structure, appearing to all effects to be critical, distinguishable implementation. It presents the novelty of the helicoidal access ramp to the upper Belvedere.

At the British museum in London (1998-2002), the intervention remodelled the external space, moving the parking lots further away, but most importantly, it continues to propose the shaping and covering of the courtyard, thus the great court is set up as a grand hall covered by a transparent roof with hexagonal tesselation (fig. 29). With regard to Renzo Piano, one can see the diversification of some attitudes in these

A significant experience for his approaching of the existing architecture dates back to the episode of the Lingotto for Fiat in 1985. Here, he suggests light insertions and realises a public route and the famous "Bolla" for the meetings hall, etc. A second approach with the pre-existing is the case of the Niccolò Paganini auditorium in Parma (1997-2001) (fig. 35).

Here the intervention prescribed the demolition of some transversal walls in an industrial shed and their substitution with glass walls to enlarge the interior. In this space were put the Foyer, the hall, the stage and

Lastly, among the works of Jean Nouvel that can be considered to fall under the category of museography, I would like to cite the recent Vesunna Gallo-Roman museum in Périgueux, completed in 200324. Another insitu museum of the same period is Saint Roman en Gal (fig. 32), near Vienne.

This consists of a partial covering of the archeaological site. The whole is constituted by thin circular beams, a cantilever roof and vertical glass panels. Inside, steel and wooden catwalks facilitate visits, Here, like elsewhere, echoes emerge of the Italian pioneer projects of Franco Minissi from the 1950s; it should be sufficient to recall the protective insertions for the Villa del Casale in Piazza Armerina²⁵ (fig. 31).

Wishing to go over some significant moments, which have now entered the history of restoration and of museum conversions, while remaining within the scope of this essay, one can but briefly consider, as landmarks, the themes of conversion and the criteria of museography. Post-war Italy, with the works of Scarpa, Albini and Minissi, traced a route which was taken up in many countries of the world26.

In Rome, in the 1950s, following its restoration, an initial idea of conversion compatible with the museum of Villa Giulia takes form. Minissi's intervention influenced entire generations of architects with the new glass panels, the light supports, the two-storey routes allowing the appreciation of the architectural elements surviving from the Etruscan temple. In the 50s, 60s and 70s, Minissi's interventions are characterised by the knowledgeable and moderated insertion of the new with respect paid to the ancient.

Among the many works, in this sector, at least, I would like to cite the case of the Etruscan museum in Cerveteri

As in other places, the theme of transparency emerges, with large glass panels host the remains and which exhibit the newly restored wall structures behind

In the early 1980s, in Rome, another interesting solution is found, that of the rezoning of the Stenditoio hall of San Michele. Indeed, the large hall is converted into a venue for cultural events and conventions for the new Ministry of Cultural Activities and Properties and is inaugurated with the ICOMOS general assembly in

The new insertion realised by Minissi and Miarelli presents the solution of two fans which permit the division of the hall into three sections depending on the number of guests (figs. 33-34).

Also in the 60s and 70s, Hungary takes note of the lessons learnt from Italy and the directives of the Venice Charter. In fact, in the Royal Palace in Budapest, the historical museum features the appropriate presentation of the original fragments and their museal-didactic reading with visual representations on the panels (fig.

Less fortunate, perhaps, is the protection of the archeaological area of Baláca, in the ancient province of Pannonia (figs. 37-38). In the same period other important restoration works were carried out in Szombathy and Visegrad. While recent restoration in the royal palace of Visegrad and temple of Iside create some perplexity (figs. 39-43). Once again, the work here takes up the suggestions of some Italian projects but is not as light, almost moving toward a redefinition of the space²⁷.

In the 1980s, a growing phenomenon is witnessed which would influence many palaces and historical venues for temporary exhibitions in Italy and in Europe. This would be the case with the courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, where the mistake was made of leaving in the emergency stairs. At the same time, the international community is witness to numerous restoration interventions and new major works for museums (fig. 44).





Passing over the French projects in this sector planned for the bicentenary of the revolution, with strong political and cultural implications, and the new Roman museums born as sections of the National Museum of Rome, attention is due to the case of the Palazzo della Pilotta in Parma (1988).

The architect, Guido Canali, restored and adapted the palace as the seat of the National Gallery of Parma. The project can be said to follow some of the themes of Carlo Scarpa, but Canali is more sensitive to archaeological research and to the understanding of the existing buildings. The intervention is essential in presenting the properties exhibited with respect for space, with provocations provided by the scaffolding acting as a support and the knowledgeable use of lighting to exalt the oeuvres presented28 (figs. 45-46).

From the end of the 1990s, in the major capitals, from Rome to Vienna, but especially in Berlin, London and Paris, major museum conversions continue to be carried out. Berlin presents itself to the public opinion of the world after the major works carried out in Potsdamerplatz and the redesigning of the city with the redefinition of the Museum island and many more restoration and reconstruction projects29 (figs. 47-48).

As for Rome, we can mention but a few considerations. The equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius finally finds a home. In December 2005, the new museum venue set up in the Giardino Romano of the Palazzo dei Conservatori, designed by Carlo Aymonino, is inaugurated. The hall has an elliptical shape and exhibits three of the most prestigious sculptures of the Capitoline collection: the gilded statue of Hercules, the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius and the remains of the statue of Constantine30.

Distant seem the years, now, which witnessed the statue of Marcus Aurelius suffer and then be moved first to the interior of the Istituto centrale del Restauro, then into a provisional reliquary inside the Palazzo Nuovo on the Capitoline Hill, awaiting a more decorous site (figs. 49-52).

In recent years, particularly, one of the most interesting set ups in Europe has been created at the Centrale Montemartini. The exhibition space inserted into the system of the Capitoline Museums (1996-97) constitutes a valid example of a reconversion of an industrial archaeological oeuvre into a museum. The architect, Francesco Stefanori, realised, beside the machinery, the exhibition of over 400 Greek and Roman sculptures from the Capitoline Museums, among which is also the pediment of the temple of Apollo

In those same years, in Paris, the Musée des Arts et Métiers makes a number of suggestions. While, on the whole, it is an interesting museum due to the great quality and quantity of exhibits and the good didactic and educational function it serves for young visitors, some perplexities do emerge from the conversion of the church. Doubtless the set up is reversible, but it presents itself as a large sequence of metallic tiers which exhibit the first motor vehicles. The location may not be the most suitable for the exhibiting of these objects, but the strong contrast is surprising and curious (figs. 55-56).

In Vienna, among the many complex and widely discussed projects, like that of the Albertina (fig. 30), I would like to draw your attention to a new episode between the ancient and the contemporary, the Museumsquartier, which was inaugurated at the start of the new century. Today, when entering the largest courtyard, one is drawn in by the realisation of the two blocks set against each other which host two different museums, by the architects Manfred and Laurids Ortner. To the left of the ancient Winter Equestrian School is the Leopold Museum, in a parallel configuration with the Kunsthistorisches Museum, while, on the right, the Museum Moderner Kunst, with its curved roof, converges towards the centre of the courtyard. The connection with the wing hosting the stables is solved with a stairway which has the function of closing the contemporary episode, besides that of creating a proper entrance to the museum. Furthermore, new horizontal and vertical connections facilitate the fruition of the whole museum complex³² (figs. 57-58).

From the last decade, I would like to cite, due to large scale of the project, but also, particularly, due to the success of the museum conversion, the set of interventions carried out at Santa Maria della Scala in Siena. Santa Maria della Scala, today, has moved from being a "millenial hospital to a museum of the third

Today, like in the past, the Senese public commissioning office has renewed its commitment with a farsighted project. The construction yard is always open to the public, like an open museum, even before presenting itself as a proper museum. The municipal administration promoted an international competition for ideas in 1991, which was won by Guido Canali.

It should be remembered that the progressive archaeological digs have provided new historical and urban knowledge for the city of Siena. An important aspect is constituted by the various restorations, both of the surfaces, according to the criteria of critical-conservative interventions, and of the set up of many archaeological and historical-artistic properties.

Among these, that of the Fonte Gaia by Jacopo della Quercia is of note, located in the medieval rooms of the barn, while a copy is exhibited in Piazza del Campo; also, a cycle of frescoes attributed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Canali's intervention can be called a light restoration: naturally, he used the underground spaces, which were converted into depots, warehouses and technical facilities for the presentation of the archaeological collections and the materials from the Senese territory. The whole of the archaeological section is inserted into the underground passages dug into the tuff; here, the essentiality of the museum conversion, the wooden elements, carpets and supports are significant. A special definition is reserved for the various types of glass panels distributed along the routes and to the situation of the lights.

The project realised in Santa Maria della Scala is, as a whole, one of the most significant museum conversions of the last few decades in Italy. This bodes well for the future of Italian heritage and for appropriate functionalization projects (figs. 59-61).

Conclusion

These brief reflections urge one to consider the museums of our time not as closed locations reserved for scholars. They are open to the world community, but must not be merely testimonies of globalisation and of technical or technological efficiency, rather, they must continue to present and guard our memories, promoting knowledge and fruition in a correct equilibrium between the ancient and the new.

The rediscovery and the conservation of values must be one of the major issues of our society; one should endeavour not to indulge only in commercialization and facilities, but to transmit to young people the passion and respect for the memory and the past, so that it be bequeathed to posterity34.







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All photos are by the author except when indicated.

12. A. PAOLUCCI, Musei un codice etico per la tutela, in "Avvenire", 6 July 2008. See some recent books: D. POULO T, Musée, Nation, Patrimoine, Paris 1997; D. POULO T, Musée et muséologie, Paris 2005; ID, Une histoire du patrimoine en Occident, XVIII-XXI siècle, du monument aux valeurs, Paris 2006; an also 25 musées, edited by Christine Desmoulins, Paris 2005.

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- 17. F or the Venice Charter see the Atti del II Congresso Internazionale degli Architetti e Tecnici del Restauro, Il monumento per l'uomo, Venice 25-31 May 1964, Padua 1971, pp. LXIX-LXXXI (English text), pp. XCIII-XCV (French text)
- 18. The Italian Charter of Restoration of 1972, op. cit. note 9.
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- 22. This testimony is connected to the recording carried out during the presentation of the project on the evening of 30 August 1988 at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza.
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- 24. On Périgueux and Jean Nouvel's Gallo-Roman Museum, see a brief essay in "Lotus", n.134, 2008, pp.14-
- 25. On Minissi see chapters 3.3 and 3.4 dedicated to some of his most significant works. Furthermore, see some of his publications: F. MINISSI, Conservazione dei Beni Storico artistici e ambientali, restauri e musealizzazione, Roma 1978, e ID, Il museo degli anni 80, Roma 1983. ID., Conservazione, vitalizzazione, musealizzazione. Roma 1988.

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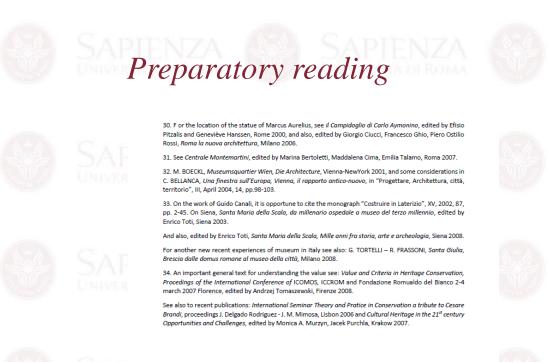
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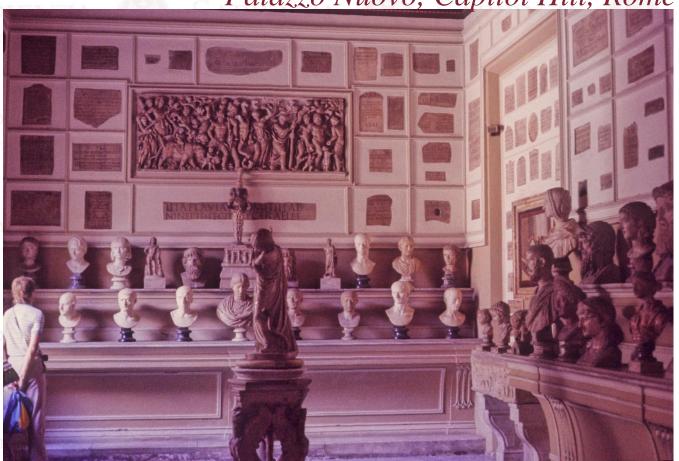
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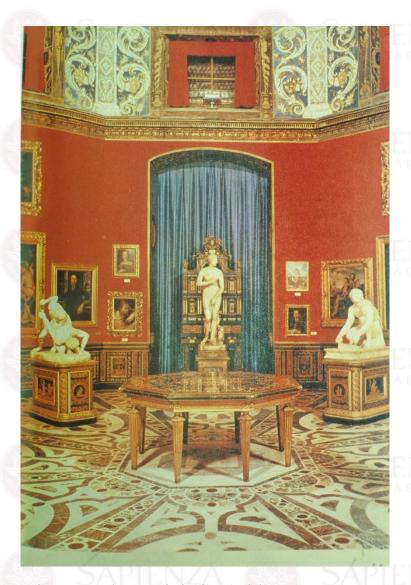
Presentation: preparatory reading and history of adaptation and museography, from

XIX century to 1955.

Palazzo Nuovo, Capitol Hill, Rome



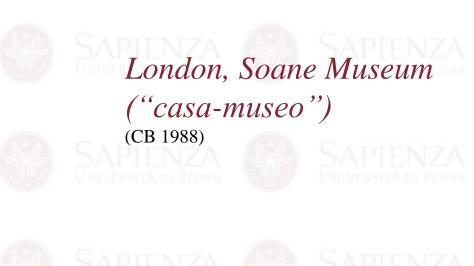
An ancient exposition (CB 1990)





Firenze, Palazzo Pitti (CB 1984)

San Petersburg, Hermitage

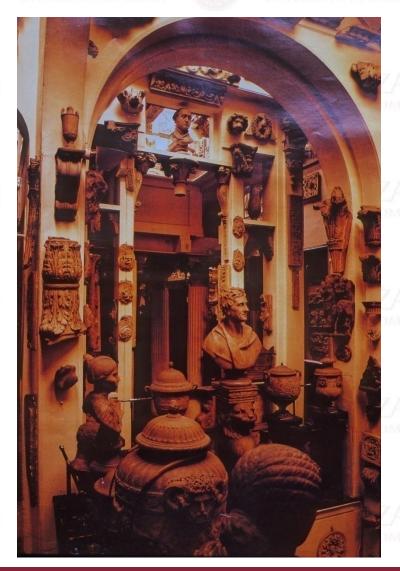














(CB 1997)























Palazzo Ducale, Urbino





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Courtyard after the restoration (CB 1987)





A new concept for the exposition after second world war.

(CB 1987)













Support design by Carlo Scarpa (CB 1982)



























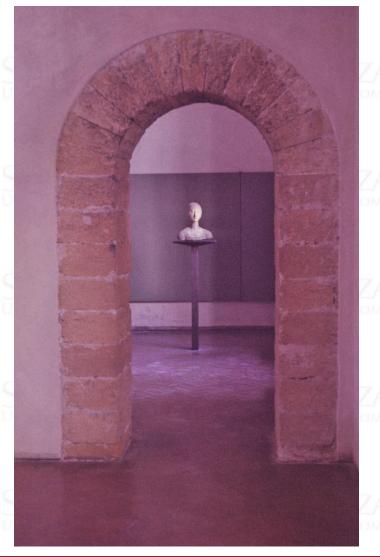












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