

VIA DEI FORI IMPERIALI EIGHTY FOUR YEARS LATER. NINETEEN PROJECTS BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PALIMPSEST

By Pier Federico Caliarì

A delicate issue, still sensible. The most beautiful boulevard in the world becomes the subject of a public consultation eighty-four years after the last famous competition held on that same area, which for the first time brought to light – all together - the great monuments of the imperial Rome. Then there were Terragni, Libera, Moretti, B.B.P.R, Ponti, Ridolfi, Foschini, Del Debbio. Today there are Chipperfield, Linzasoro, Consuegra, Paredes and Pedrosa, Amann Canovas Maruri, Purini, Franciosini, Andriani, Tortelli and Frassoni, ABDR.

The International Call for Project for Via dei Fori Imperiali – issued from the Accademia Adrianea di Architettura e Archeologia in partnership with the Order of Architects of Rome - was attended by eighteen projects plus one that ran out of competition. A remarkable international participation, considering the entry level of the competition, which associate a project teams of professors from Italian and foreign Schools of Architecture with international profile design offices. This is to achieve a high level of scientificity - required for such a complex issue that only the university can offer - combined with a high level of professional experience in addition to a multi-disciplinary approach required by the notice. So, not only designers, but also museographers, landscape architects, structural engineers, archaeologists, art historians, artists assembled very skillful teams in term of competencies.

The events of Via dei Fori Imperiali can be summarized in four phases: a first phase (1873_1924), fifty years long, during which the boulevard appears in all the urban planning of Roma Capitale. A second phase, which lasted twenty years, the fascist indeed, when the boulevard was built, with high social costs not easily compensable. A third phase, which lasted a decade (1975_1985) when it was designed its demolition. Finally, the fourth, the second two decades (1997_2016), during which the beautiful Antonio Muñoz's, and part of Raffaele De Vico's, set has been destroyed. In 2001 it was placed the ministerial restriction that luckily saved Via dei Fori Imperiali.

Today, not only Via dei Fori Imperiali, but the whole central monumental area of Rome is subjected to a major change, not only due to the archaeological excavations but also to the the creation of new underground infrastructures which actually have turned it into a continuous construction site, where it is hard to see the end. This is compounded by a massive tourism pressure and the use of the boulevard for all kinds of events, institutional, sports, political, costume.

The need to intervene with an overall plan for the Via and the monumental areas that use it, to to implement services to the public and a new accessibility and practicality of the archaeological ground, are the reasons that led the Adrianea Academy to propose this public consultation which relates to the retraining and re-signification of Via dei Fori Imperiali - moving from its protection - considering it as an rwork.

The results, both scientific and political of the Call, independently from the outcomes, the winners and the losers, are actually still a lot To be deciphered and subtend a delayed reflection over time. This, Not considering individual projects, but that corpus of ideas and proposals generated by the The Call as a whole, and by the tension towards a final synthesis. If on the one hand, many of the projects are proposed as architectural manifestos and then with a very declarative (if not utopian) cut, other projects seem to have decided to impose to the Call a different theme from that proposed by the notice, inspired by a desire to redraw the typology of imperial forums, destroying Via dei Fori Imperiali that brought them to the light.

Although two-thirds of the projects have been pronounced for confirmation and upgrading of the most beautiful street in the world, one third of the projects, has committed in its deletion.

The judging committee, for its part, wanted to clarify that Via dei Fori Imperiali is part of a thousand-year palimpsest that combines synoptically architectural episodes so far away in time, forming the continuous re-tracing of the city. Consequently, it wanted to confirm that Via dei Fori Imperiali is an established sign, a re-founding act, with its unique dual perspective on Colosseum and Altare della Patria, and that is part of the architectural culture from which the entire western world has learned, that of the Italian Renaissance.