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Winner of Piranesi Prix de Rome 2016 XIV Edition, competition for via dei Fori Imperiali in Rome.



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General considerations and urban layout

In the present state, along the street planned in 1873 and constructed with a new geometry in 1932, there is a dual ruin: one of archaeological excavation and one that is the product of the excavation. The first cannot find its own identity since its creation lacked a planned design, and the second is deprived of its order and of its coordinated appearance, generated by the indifference of the works conducted in the 1930s. The loss of such monumental architectural unity led to the progressive erosion of the iconic quality of the intervention after the First World War and an increased complexity in the perception of the whole and of the detail. This, however, is an unrelenting process together with the Institution of the Roman Capital and with the knowledge - progressively gained - that its identity is strongly linked to the image of the palimpsest and therefore has a contextual acceptance of complexity: which is composed of an increase of scientific information together with the loss of clarity in the perception of the monumental system. The archaeological configuration of Rome is mostly the product of the modern city (from the 1800s and 1900s). Archaeological Rome does not exist without modern Rome. The great archaeology of Rome actually did not always exist. It is a product of the attainment of the Unity of Italy and thus, the

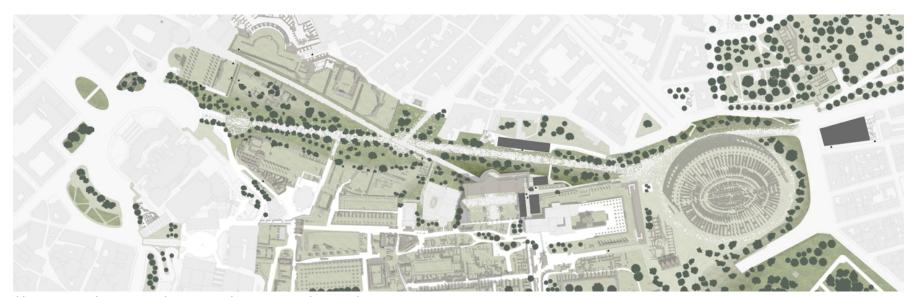
recent modern era. This is obvious when considering what the area of the Campo Vaccino was before the Unification of Italy: a beautiful park with a large bastion of the Orti Farnesiani created by Vignola, and the ruins that appeared semi-submerged in the extraordinary landscape halfway between classic geometry and the romantic spirit.

A great beauty that Rodolfo Lanciani, Giacomo Boni and Pietro Rosa sacrificed to reach the level of Imperial Rome, with a few exceptions, transporting away hundreds of thousands cubic metres of earth and rubble. This "gap between centuries" originated, in part by the partial inaccessibility of the ancient ground that generates, physically and mentally, that which can be defined as "Archaeological enclosure"; and in part by the poor legibility of this surprising sequence of traces linked to the various architectural and monumental phases, in which modern interventions and contemporary archaeological excavations are inserted. The dual ruins, ancient and modern, whose residues are overlapped and are combined with the fragments of the progressive and millennial demolition process, begun with the fall of the Empire and continued until the contemporary era.

It is time to assemble the pieces and to arrive to a recapitulation, in which it is also finally possible to see the end of the archaeological research and the return of the public space where the ruins can once again be romantic and rich in pathos. No longer a scientific ruin but a beautiful one that can have a strategic relationship with the natural landscape.

The major reference from which the methodological and design phases were taken was the respect for the palimpsest and all of its stratifications and related signs. The project is considered as a moment of evolution of the monumental system: a contemporary contribution able to communicate with its history and its many remains and to re-establish a unitary vision of a whole and balanced harmony between architecture, the city, archaeology and nature. The new - interpreted as a successive stratigraphy of the historic palimpsest - is inserted in the site with the objective of linking the archaeological level to the modern and contemporary one and to render the sense of the place and its monuments explicit and accessible, by promoting its usability but most importantly its beauty.

From the urban point of view, the strategic architectural decisions are: to maintain and render via dei Fori and via Alessandrina as a pedestrian road; to transform the present vision of the Central Archaeological Area in a new continuous topography with slopes and green "bridges" that connect the existing and designed parts. A place that recalls the landscape and the views of the nineteenth century.



Architectural and landscape project

The intervention is fundamentally a landscape project, one whose key elements are the modulation of the terrain and the design of the green area.

The design strategy can be resumed in six points:

- Interpretation of the urban public space, the past and the modern, as a continuous topography.
- 2. Use of the tradition of the romantic garden as a main reference, in order to visualize the continuous topography.
- 3. Consideration of the relationship with archaeology as an essential element to attain quality.
- 4. Consideration of the acceptance of the historical and present conditions of the site as a starting point.
- 5. Not to divide the area of the Fori Imperiali in a stratigraphy of independent horizontal levels.
- 6. Consideration of the insertion of new architecture in the site as an update of the architectural and monumental landscape of the area. The continuous topography, made up of green hills, extends throughout the area of the project "sewing the seams" between the monuments and the contemporary city, eliminating the gap between the levels and giving back the original meaning of public spaces and places of congregation to the Fori Imperiali. In this way, the Archaeological Central Area of Rome establishes an extraordinary continuous park composed by Parco Colle Oppio, Parco della Caffarella and by Parco Regionale dell'Appia.

The vegetation involved in the intervention is principally composed of Pinus pinea, which combines the past and the new, architecture and the open space, the hills and the valleys in a new and unique vision for the site. Cupressus sempervirens are planted next to the principal access points and in the points along the course where it is necessary to accentuate archaeological perspectives, marking for example the axial connection between the Arc of Constantine and Piazza del Colosseo. The flora is complete with native shrubs and small trees distributed on a green mantle with intervals of levelled dirt paths. The different remains of the 16th and 20th century axes are emphasized by a new pavement project. It was decided to keep Via Alessandina since it is a fundamental part of the palimpsest, integrating large paving stones known as basoli that harmoniously connect to the present pavement behind the Basilica di Massenzio.

Via dei Fori Imperiali will become a pedestrian road (moving traffic to via Quattro Novembre and via dei Serpenti by via Cavour) and will remain the principal visual axis, however with a re-dimensioned section. The new pavement uses stones from different origins (including those stacked in the arches of via Alessandrina) that generate the

irregularity in the design and whose geometry recalls the layout of the archaeological area around the Acropoli and the colle di Filopappo in Athens by Dimitris Pikionis. The final vision is that of a landscape in which nature and artifice are designed according to models already largely experimented on the Palatino, on via Appia Antica and in Villa Adriana, where the natural context has the same beauty as the monuments and gives the spaces an extraordinary atmosphere.

The new architectural interventions concern: the principal entrance and the facilities in the Basilica di Massenzio, the belvedere on Antonio Cederna terrace and the Antiquarium Museum on the Ludus Magnus.



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a. Main entrance

The facilities and reception lobby of the Central Archaeological Area are found on the southeast side of the Basilica di Massenzio - occupying the open spaces with the excavation of the Velia, between via dei Fori Imperiali, la via Sacra and the Clivio di Venus Felix - and are subdivided in the three pavilions placed around a sort of internal piazza that encloses the entrance. Up the stairs that are part of the Muñoz arrangement, behind the Tempio di Venere and Rome, there is the bar-cafeteria - on the substructure of the Horti Martii Columnae - the bookshop, in the northwest of the Basilica di Santa Francesca Romana and the foyer/ticket office/info point placed in front of the original access of the massenzian structure. This is inserted in the large and narrow anteroom that historically lead to the central nave of the building through

five openings. These restored passages mark the threshold of the access to the basilical floor, which is rendered once again usable with the insertion of a new pavement that emphasizes the double axis of symmetry of the two construction phases of the monument.

On the west, between the final exedra of the central nave and the side of the Basilica dei Santi Cosma e Damiano, there is a vertical connection that allows access to the existing roof of the Basilica di Massenzio, which is rendered once again accessible. The elevator unites the level of via dei Fori Imperiali with the remains of Templum Pacis, which were recently excavated in proximity to the Basilica dei Santi Cosma e Damiano. They are protected and exhibited in a museum of antiquity located under a new roof/paved piazza and are also accessible from the archaeological level due to the reopening of one of the arches on via della Salara Vecchia.

The three volumes, characterized by a clear and strict geometry and a simple stereometry, establish a relationship with the pre-existing. A sequence of thin columns in light grey concrete dictates the rhythm of the façade and are closed internally by translucent marble slabs. The use of solid and durable materials give the architecture a strong physical presence and interprets roman models.

b. Belvedere

On the opposite side of via dei Fori Imperiali, on the belvedere Antonio Cederna, there is another pavilion destined to be a restaurant, conceived in the same composition as the volumes in the entrance. The front is characterized by peristyle columns that surround a marble hall in its interior and proportioned façade with arches designed by Antoino Muñoz, recovering the tripartition of the exterior.

c. Antiquarium

The new Antiquarium is located in the area of the Ludus Magnus, The building follows the perimeter of the present archaeological site toward piazza del Colosseo and on the via Labicana and via S. Giovanni Laterano, while on the west it is backed up from the overlooking buildings, leaving the view of the partial remains of the gladiator's gymnasium unaltered and free. In the interior, a footbridge placed on top of the remains of the elliptical walls of the arena leads to the heart of the exhibition space. The building is compact, in fact the column sequence and the marble surface that characterize the other designed buildings is inverted here. The extrusion of the archaeological void that is present in this area becomes the final end point of the intervention and of the perspective axis between Piazza Venezia and the Colosseum.



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Museological – museographical project (Antiquarium)

Inside the newly designed Museum on the Ludus Magnus, the space at ground level in front of the archaeological ruins is occupied by a footbridge easily crossed by visitors leading to the entrance. A contemporary work designed ad hoc acts as a connection element and of "comment" to the site and its new museographical dimension. In this articulated area around gymnasiums and barracks, training and relaxation spaces, technical areas and road paths, there is the intersection of cultures, playful and political aspects, in such a way that the physical structure unified pastime and social issues; but most importantly represented an important moment of aggregation and public confrontation. It was therefore thought to design a work that would "talk" rather than to only represent an image, this is the focal point of the research - as in the works of Jenny Holzer - that could find place not only within the limits of the plastic structure itself, but also on the translucent surfaces of the marble that contain the new architectural shape, in a continuity towards the exterior in a dialogue with the Colosseum, a reminder of an innovative vision of a monumental context.

The path continues to level -1 where a Lapidarium is located, between the space of a semicircular plan and the central point of the building. The rectangular cells, once used to house gladiators, are used to tell the story of the domizianea barrack and its protagonists, through the use of contemporary techniques of cinematographic narration. Each room is dedicated to a different phase in the history of Ludus Magnus.

The very heart of the Museum is a space at double height, in which is located the Forma Urbis Severiana.

A place that reinterpreted the original space where the map used to be, by tracing its shape and dimensions: 13 metres high, by 18 metres in length. On the walls are copies of fragments, assembled together with the use of a mapped projection that show some lost marble slabs, and at the same time represent the original location in the Tempio della Pace. In the same hall, some tables - that refer to those used during antiquity to consult the maps of Rome - are used for archaeological research of the Severiana Plan and its part with digital information projected directly over physical objects.

The same method is used to narrate the history and the development of the Central Archaeological Area, situated at level +1. The support from which the multimedia projections are executed is located here and is composed by five big models (3x5 metres) all in line, each dedicated to a specific temporal historic phase and with the possibility to "extract" from the map, three dimensional models of the most known buildings and their chronological sequence.

A space for temporary exhibitions in also located on the same level.

The second level is dedicated to the urban development of the city and shows the subsequent maps after the Forma Urbis Marmorea, and the Forma Romae of Rodolfo Lanciani.

The new plan of Rome of Nolli and the several maps of Piranesi, Canina, and Nibby (about 10x5 each) are suspended in the space to represent the evolution of different phases during the years of the Capital.

Other designs and paintings of Ancient Rome are exposed on the opposite side and are a useful visual aid that complete the comprehension of the maps. From one plan of the city to another, on an interactive table, it is possible to work on the Forma Urbis of Lanciani, isolating the different layers.

An exhibition gallery is located on the same level, characterized by a window five metres long, and located in the centre, where models, sketches, findings and original pictures or copies of the first writings of the plan of Roma Capitale (1873) until the present developments are exposed. Strips of LED screens are placed on the walls showing different events that have characterized the history of the city in a continuous sequence.



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Archaeological project (Arrangement Fori Imperiali)

The theme is to transform the Central Archaeological Area of Rome. The new topography from which the archaeological remains flourish not only unites the different existing levels, allowing an easy access to the public but also contributes to creating a harmonious equilibrium between nature, archaeology, architecture and the city.

In the areas where the slopes meet with the archaeology of the Fori, light railings - designed according to the model of 19th century gardens - or the intervention of the topography of the terrain, mark the physical limit and yet still allow for a panoramic view.

Along the path, there are three new entrances/exits to the Area, in particular: from the Campidoglio toward Clivus Argentarius - via di San Pietro in Carcere; from the district Monti, from via Campo Carleo taking advantage of the existing connection; and in proximity to the present access, which is demolished and redesigned.

At the archaeological level, the Foro di Cesare and the Foro della Pace are reconnected using two existing passages and through others that are to be designed in the interior of the structures of the Alessandrino district, under via dei Fori Imperiali. With the same intent of using the site better, it was decided to reconstruct the stretch of via della Curia that historically connected the Chiesa dei Santi Luca e Martina with via dei Fori Imperiali.

Along the road axis of via dei Fori Imperiali - the symbolic meeting place between ancient and modern -

we propose the dislocation of some contemporary artworks, which are current interpretations of the dialogue between the past, present and future. The idea is to design works that are site specific, conceived according to the theme - as well as the definition of logistic and technical aspects, such as the placing, dimensions, materials - selected through the announcement of an international competition that may be open or by invitation.

The theme that could be synthesized by the title lo sguardo di Giano, aims to direct the work of the artists across two elements, integral parts of the same context. The archaeological area, emblematically "cut" from the via dei Fori Imperiali, is present not only for the knowledge of scholars but also for the perception of thousands of visitors and residents, as a place of chronological, cultural, religious, political and social stratifications and crossings. Stimulating the creative reflection of plurality and the concept of multicultural "interference", is represented by an observation point, capable of opening a comparison with the ancient and with the past. Naturally, such reflection of memories can only be possible if anchored to an active vision of our present and of possible future implications.

The artists that will be involved will have to respond to some orientation criteria, starting from the diversity of the areas' cultural origins, to confirm the plural and multicultural character of the place is the objective of their work. Some artists for example - known for their experimental, incisive and innovative character of their research - Cevdet Erek, Cristina Iglesias, Bruce Nauman; known for their interest and capacity to confront themes linked to memory, history and society - Kader Attia, Gianni Dessì, Rachel Whiteread; known for their capacity to design works with "monumental" or environmental characteristics and in the end to establish a dimensional relationship with the open space and/or with surrounding architecture - Nunzio Di Stefano, Maria Dompè, Peter Eisenman, Petrit Halilaj, Mauro Staccioli, are a few possible criteria from which to start.



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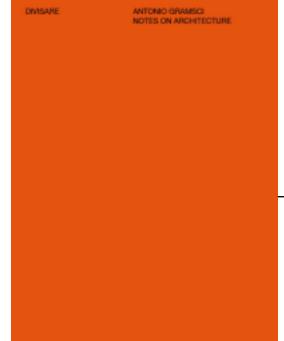
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