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MUSEUM MULTI- PLICITIES

Field Actions and Research by Design

edited by
Luca Basso Peressut
Cristina F. Colombo
and Gennaro Postiglione

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MELA BOOK 10 – MUSEUM MULTIPLICITIES: FIELD ACTIONS AND RESEARCH BY DESIGN

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Acknowledgments

This book grew out of the work of the Research Field 05 “Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions,” led by Jamie Allen of the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design in cooperation with Gennaro Postiglione, Politecnico di Milano, within the European project MeLa—*European Museums in an age of migrations*. MeLa is a four-year interdisciplinary research project funded in 2011 by the European Commission under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities Programme (Seventh Framework Programme). Adopting the notion of “migration” as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, MeLa reflects on the role of museums and heritage in the twenty-first century. The main objective of the MeLa project is to define innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges of the contemporary processes of globalisation, mobility and migration. As people, objects, knowledge and information move at increasingly high rates, a sharper awareness of an inclusive European identity is needed to facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion. MeLa aims at empowering museums spaces, practices and policies with the task of building this identity. MeLa involves nine European partners—universities, museums, research institutes and a company—who lead six Research Fields (RF) with a collaborative approach, and this book is meant to report about the findings of the experimental phase that follow and conclude the research.

The editors would like to thank all the scholars who enriched this book with their suggestions and contributions, as well as all the museums and their staff, curators, directors, who kindly supported the projects, providing information and hosting the “actions.” A mention goes to the English editors and translators.

Introduction

MeLa Framework, Actions and Design Experiments

MeLa – *European Museums in an age of migrations* reflects on the role of museums and heritage in Europe in the twenty-first century. The project adopts the notion of “migration” as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, and its main objective is to identify innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges posed by intensive migration flows; accelerated mobility and fluid circulation of information, cultures, ideas and goods; the political, economic and cultural process of creation and consolidation of the European Union, and the consequent high degree of cultural encounters and cross-fertilisation.

MeLa Project aims to investigate how, and to what extent, the layerisation, complexification and fragmentation of societies and identities; and, perhaps more importantly, the recognition of the central focus of such changes to the human experience of life and society in modernity do, could and should, affect the future of European museums.

The investigation and the consideration of the role of contemporary museums and heritage are nowadays becoming a relevant component of the European agenda and a lively debate on the subject is gaining prominence, nurtured also by several research projects and academic studies. Museums themselves are questioning their *raison d'être* and roles, and are undergoing a process of deep transformation of their missions, strategies, practices, architectural spaces and exhibitions.

Museums, as stated by ICOM in 2007, are service institutions for society and their development devoted to the conservation and transmission of cultural values. Today these institutions, that work on *identity representation* or as *identity agents*, find themselves in the middle of a process involving the construction of a pluralistic and complex civic community

related with a variety of peoples' ever-changing needs, as well as the multiplicity and multiethnicity of contemporary culture.

It is well-known that the topic of migration of peoples and cultures and the consequent “layerisation” of societies and identities are not recent issues and—triggered by the international economy and the process of globalisation—they are in fact widely recognised as fundamental elements to the establishment of modern Europe, from its onset five centuries ago until now. These migration processes produce unexpected melting-pots and hybridisations that can change the form of the world we know, “re-morphing” not only the geographical borders of states and nations but also all the conceptual boundaries we are involved in.

The dynamics of today's multiethnic and multicultural Europe ask for a shift also in the organisation, design and use of cultural institutions—such as museums—from an approach focussed on the formation of national identities to a new one based on the today's complex multiplicity of voices and subjects involved. They should be able to foster a rewriting of grand, national narratives, considering a more articulated transnational and transcultural scenario (Karp et al. 2006). In this social, political and cultural context, museums have therefore undergone profound transformation processes. Each typology of museum (historical, ethnographical, archaeological, etc.) has specific needs and characteristics and requires a specific substantiation in order to evaluate whether or not, and to what extent, they wish or need to be involved in these changes. In addition, these institutions must determine which role they can play in collaborating in the defining of a new European citizenship and/or to include new identities.

The questions of how all these remarks, changes and theories influence the practice of design exhibitions and museums are of great interest. The “exhibitionary complex,” theorised by Tony Bennett (Bennett 2006), has to be interpreted and exploited in the new light that postcolonial and cultural studies have cast on museum institutions.

Therefore, the MeLa Project objectives have been, and are, on the one hand, to study and deepen certain over-mentioned theoretical reflections and, on the other hand, to evaluate their operational effectiveness. Elaborating a critical space needed to survey, define and test consequences on the practice of curatorship, the design of exhibitions and the typology of the museums. As a consequence, MeLa reflects on the role of museums, dealing with several complex and crucial issues such as history, socio-cultural and national identity, but also exhibition design and museography, in order to investigate how museums can respond to the contemporary challenges of globalisation and European integration, while also achieving a relevant advance in terms of knowledge in the field.

Some of MeLa Project central questions include the following:

- How are cultural negotiation processes re-mapping museum and curatorial practices as a site, institution, category, organisation, or set of social processes?

- How do museums deal with the challenge of representation of cultures in contemporary society?
- How can museums play the role of mediators in cultural exchange?
- How do museums take the commitment of dialogic, participative and multisensory forms of visitor engagement that challenge the authoritarian and mono-centric form of existent didacticism?
- How does multiculturalism result in museum displays, if any?
- What different kinds of cultural objecthood are produced by the re-configuration of the relations between objects, and between objects and persons, within museums where such concerns predominate?
- How can a visit to an exhibition also be transformed into a journey into the other-than-self, introducing a comparative vision or multi-vocal narration?

In this framework, potential scenarios and proposals are under exploitation to define and design new forms of museums and exhibitions able to respond effectively to the challenges of the present age of cultural complexity and layerisation. Also put to the test is how physical forms, spaces and their organisation can affect the change a museum's roles and scope (through new architectural expressions, new interiors, new models of exhibition spaces, etc.).

→ RELEVANT ISSUES FOR 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM AND EXHIBITION DESIGN

The analysis of the projects for recently renovated or newly built museums in Europe, highlighted a complexifying of the museum spatial programme. The following can be considered as in-progress and working definitions, the aim of which has been and will be to help exhibitions and museums designers to better understand the actual trends and the needs lying behind them. What follows is a list of key-issues, defined as a contribution by Polimi research Group to the MeLa Critical Archive.¹ They should be of help when approaching the design of an exhibition and/or a museum and though not exhaustive, our goal is to really point out what can support the designer in defining solutions able to match most of the challenges set up by the actual complex, hybrid, plural and interethnic society.

Pro-active spaces

Along with the inclusion of those common facilities required nowadays, it seems possible to identify the emergence of some other additional spaces, the purpose, form and features of which are not precisely codified

¹ The MeLa Critical Archive is intended to be a digital platform aimed at cohering, conveying and sharing the interdisciplinary investigations produced within the four year long Research Project. This has been conceived as a multipurpose dissemination tool drawing together and organising the main insights by the involved researchers through a critical post-reflection; as a communicative project pointing out the complexity of the different approaches and findings, and illustrating the unitary yet multifarious cultural proposal; as well as a research instrument fostering questions, enhancing synergies, highlighting potentialities and opening further perspectives.

and are most likely ensuing from a perceived need more than a formalised requirement. These spaces indeed do not usually have a defined function, but rather remain open to several appropriation practices and uses. The hypothesis is that these places may be the precursors in the development of a new model of museum space, conceived as a response to new approaches and practices that currently are themselves under development. These spaces can be defined as “pro-active spaces.” The adjective “pro-active” suggests the capability of these sites lies in consciously reacting to events and, furthermore, in timeously adapting to, or even driving and fostering changes (Lanz and Montanari 2014).

Empathic experiences

The development of communication strategies and exhibition practices based on strengthening the involvement of the visitor and their physical and emotional interaction with museum space is another trend attached to the MeLa research investigations. This takes place often in using ICT tools and immersive exhibition settings, but also through theatrical installations and specific period rooms which create a displacement in the visitor, and sometimes elicit a sort of re-enactment for some of the stories to be narrated.

Exhibiting new objects

MeLa scholars have also deduced the elaboration of new strategies for widening and strengthening the collections and museum content, which are now revised, opening them up towards new documents that need to be included beside the traditional collections. Strategies capable of communicating the plurality of stories which those new objects represent and store. To some extent, this new curatorial approach is also used to include in the narration what is not actually present in the collection, to promote comparative understanding and critical visions of a museum's master narrative, including it into the realm of a larger, more inclusive set of stories. In this way, curators had recognised that no story is ever individual and/or isolated, but always part of a wider puzzle often hidden in the past by museums in order to build a more simplified and easily accessible narrative.

Temporary layers

Probably one of the greatest changes in the museum complex has taken place in the last ten years and presents a deep transformation of the museum structure in terms of its temporality connected to the display of its collections: being the temple of eternity where changes should never occur. Due to its new socio-cultural role, temporariness has become one of the crucial elements of the collection display: the need to interpret and re-arrange the collection on a short- or medium-term now imposes new layouts on museum designs, facing the need to introduce into the exhibitions, external elements on a temporary basis.

Beyond the museum

Even despite the traditional location in the core of the city, many museums are now decentralised, in a wider transit system that creates new centres in a broader territory. As with contemporary art, museum exhibition spaces also transmigrate to different urban and territorial places to correlate and to explore relationships between “inside” and “outside.”

MeLa has recorded an increasing interest in the activation and testing of display practices “outside” the museum with reference to the initiation and strengthening of participation in local communities, as well as the use of urban places in the exploitation of museum activities. Typical of ecomuseums, very much rooted in the local communities in which they actually are produced, the linkage between people, places and stories has increased considerably, becoming one of the more relevant activities performed—among others—by city or migration museums.

Museum architecture: a quest for identity

Architecture, with its iconic and symbolic values, has always had a peculiar role in shaping museum experience. Its forms and languages have characterised the civic identity of this institution: the classical style of the first art museums, the regional style of ethnographical museums in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Modern Style of museums in the mid-twentieth century, the architectural extravaganza of colonial museums, ending with the bombastic style of contemporary “global” museums designed by renowned archistars. Today, especially in the field of contemporary art, gigantism and glamour are used as architectural flywheels to publicise occasionally humdrum content. In this sense architecture reflects the values carried and communicated by the economic, political and cultural age in which museums are built (Basso Peressut 2012, 46–52). Questioning the key role played by architecture in the shift of the contemporary situation is even greater: giving evidence to a socio-cultural programme involved in the whole of society and facilitating—when not anticipating—its many issues, become urgent in a museum architecture today.

The project’s Research Field 05, *Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions*—which is developed in parallel to, and in consultation with, the other five project research areas—is aimed at elaborating experimental design proposals for museum exhibitions (temporary and permanent) and user-centred research, to understand the needs and values of the many prospective users of the museum system. Furthermore, the project intends to verify and test the results connected with the first critical elaboration work and the models pinpointed and examined in the MeLa Research Field 06, *Envisioning 21st Century Museums*.

Museum Multiplicities: Field Actions and Research by Design collects experimental works led by several research teams involved in the MeLa

Project—gathered in the first section of the volume, entitled “Actions”—as well as scholars and students in Architecture attending the Politecnico di Milano—organised in a section called “Research by design”—all of whom share the common purpose of challenging the traditional idea of exhibition and introduce participative practices able to promote a better cultural integration and dialogue.

The theme running throughout the essays presented in the book relates to finding applicative strategies and promoting practices which enhance the awareness of a *collective identity* of people living in Europe—whether they be part of communities historically rooted in a certain territory or groups of recent immigrants—and the understanding of *differences*. Since European culture is based on a centuries-old history of migrations, transfers, exchanges, and contacts, the fear of opening up to an authentic intercultural dialogue seems rather unjustified, except from the perspective of questioning the certainties about quality of life and the alleged level of happiness that long-standing residents have already acquired or believe to have the right to (Augé 2014, 55–56).

The adoption of a transcultural perspective, however, may be the key for a further enrichment of the material and immaterial heritage of the continent, as well as a more effective conservation and enhancement of this patrimony, and a real social integration.

Museum practices—exhibitions, conferences, meetings, didactic workshops, guided tours, technological devices, networking, complex display systems—can realistically inspire a change (Bruguera 2010) and become the image of a Europe that has always been united by continuous flows of contacts. A Europe where diversity is not regarded with hostility, but as a means to acknowledge the existence of the *other-than-self*.

→ STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The first part of the volume opens with the curatorial experiences of Giulia Grechi and Anna Chiara Cimoli.

Using art for investigating awkward questions of primarily anthropological relevance in the context of an ethnographic museum—the Ethnographic Prehistoric Museum “Luigi Pigorini” in Rome—, Giulia Grechi and the team of Routes Agency aim at studying some of the most topical issues in contemporary Europe: the relationship between cultural identity and migrations, diasporic cultures, the idea of oneself and the other in a postcolonial scenario. “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions”—the exhibition project presented herein—is based on these premises. As Giulia Grechi affirms, the project “has investigated the collective visions produced by contemporary migrations in a postcolonial perspective, with the aim of re-narrating the tale of the past, of history and of memories, in the light of the challenges and the voices of a radically othered present, imbued with otherness.” That is to say, “Crossing Bodies,” through a series of artistic actions, suggests the need to challenge the consolidated view of European identity, and “awaken” the repressed shared memory on

which our culture is based (Chambers 2003). Museums can play an active role in fostering such a process of reappraisal of the collective vision. Photography is the protagonist of the travelling exhibition conceived by Anna Chiara Cimoli. Documentary videos, talks, conferences, guided tours, as well as other activities, complete the curatorial programme and promote a participative involvement of the public. Moreover, they have proven the start of a multicultural dialogue. The images displayed in “The Memory of the Sea” portray fragments of Mohsen Lihidheb’s museum—The Sea Memory Museum in Zarzis, Southern Tunisia—and show what the sea has returned of unfortunate migrants who, set sail from the coast of Africa and have never landed on European soil. The photos by Alessandro Brasile and Mattia Insolera thus become an effective vehicle to carry the voice of those who have disappeared in silence beyond the shores of the Mediterranean. They prove, once more, that it is mainly artists who are the ones keeping track of a dramatic contemporary phenomenon that “becomes public discourse only when emigration turns into tragedy,” as Cimoli states. The exhibition creates a dialogue in the distance between Lihidheb’s intimate museum and “institutional” museums, calling into question the way in which a country and its cultural institutions preserve, implement, and convey a museological memory of emigration in real time. The chapter features the remarks of Dario Cieol, curator of the Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines in Dudelange, Luxembourg, which hosted the most recent stage of the exhibition.

The team of the Design Department of the Politecnico di Milano, in collaboration with the National Research Council (CNR) and the researchers of the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID) with Christopher Whitehead of the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies at Newcastle University, conducted two different experimentations related to the application of advanced technologies in museums.

Rita Capurro, Sara Chiesa, Eleonora Lupo, Davide Spallazzo and Raffaella Trocchianesi, in partnership with the Museo Diocesano di Milano, approached the themes of identity, diversity and cultural dialogue in a particularly ticklish ambit: religious heritage. The promotion of an effective interreligious and intercultural dialogue is a priority of the Museo Diocesano, who accepted to host an on-site action targeted at verifying the potential of digital and mobile technologies—and religion itself—in fostering a confrontation between people with diverse cultural roots, and thus furthering the aptitude of the museum as an appropriate platform for interreligious encounters. Video narrations, performative interaction and three-dimensional visualisations were applied to the content of five paintings in the museum’s permanent collection. In this process, advanced devices became tools for enriching the observation experience, favouring confrontation and critical reflections; what is more, electronic tablets were capable of collecting visitors’ personal contributions, widening the range of the themes tackled and even exploring analogous topics outside

the catholic tradition. The project extends to a performative/gestural and connective level, in order to “increase the intercultural dialogue through a transcultural practice.”

“Combined with visitor expectation, movement through a museum space is a usefully restricted laboratory of human experience, allowing an occasion for the deeper examination of relationships between people and things in environments and contexts.” As far as a curator can strive to control and guide the path of a visitor moving through the rooms of a museum, every visit remains an intimately personal and almost unique experience, due to the dissimilar interests, cultural training, experiential baggage peculiar to each individual. This results in different, but equally valid, narrations of the same exhibition itinerary. The galleries of three European museums—Museum of Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, and Discovery Museum in Newcastle—are the setting for the experimental action conceived by Jamie Allen, Jakob Bak, Chris Whitehead and David Gauthier, who used technology (head-mounted cameras) to study and record the “walkthrough” experience of visiting an exhibition space. The purpose of the research was to offer a view of the possible gap existing between the display “maps” (Whitehead 2012) assumed by the curators and visitors’ own re-mappings—investigating how multimedia technology can improve the conception and the design of future exhibitions and museum architecture.

The second section of the book, “Research by design,” opens with the essays, signed by Gennaro Postiglione and Cristina F. Colombo with Elena Montanari, report the results of academic studies developed under the aegis of the MeLa Project. These investigations have focussed on the way in which museums—notably those closer to ethnography—can now promote cultural integration and/or enhance the local identity and memory, taking up the challenge posed by ever more complex, multilayered and multi-vocal societies, until becoming their image. The experiments-by-design for new museums of culture—the Liquid Museum of Mediterranean Culture, the new Oslo Kulturhistorisk Museum, and Multiethnic Milan—or open-air, diffuse museums, like the projects “Border Memories: Re-enacting the Difficult Heritage in Venezia Giulia” and the Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori, take their cue from the findings of the research conducted by the partners of MeLa Project and attempt to speculate on the twenty-first-century museums: pro-active spaces (Lanz and Montanari 2014), places providing emphatic experiences through the implementation of ITC tools and immersive displays, dynamic and updated centres with multi-narrative displays, and linked to local communities.

The conclusive essay by Luca Basso Peressut and Alessandro Raffa faces another debated museological and museographical question: the transformation and reorganisation of colonial museums, and the way of communicating the memory of the colonial past of the European nations. This legacy became the object of a “conscious omission” after the disintegration of the empires, producing, as the authors maintain, a vacuum of

collective memory that continues to this day. Again, digital technologies are fundamental instruments to start a project for the recovering of that loss. In this case, it is a web portal—the Virtual Museum of Overseas Memories—that aspires to become a repository of a colonial architectural heritage fallen into oblivion, relying however, on a plural vision, free from ideological preconceptions.

LBP, CFC, GP

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Actions



“Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions”

→ GIULIA GRECHI

The exhibition: a social place for encounters among visitors, rather than between objects and visitors; a narrative form, where the past is re-enacted, and the present includes what usually does not belong to it; a ritual occasion, where the invisible magically appears visible; an event that invites the public to participate by directly contributing to the creation of meaning, an enrichment of social exchange.
(Drugman 1995, X)

In the wake of Leiris’s and Bataille’s ethnographic surrealism of the 1920s and 1930s, since the second half of the 1980s contemporary art has been characterised by what Hal Foster referred to as an “ethnographic turn” (Foster 1996). Many contemporary artists began their careers positioning their works in the in-between spaces of the research field that included the re-interpretation of Fanon by cultural and postcolonial studies and the critical re-interpretation of the anthropological approach itself, started by the research group *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fisher 1986). Such group investigated the voids that had been left unexplored, especially in the visual arts. In a wide area of theoretical and artistic research, characterised by its extremely distinct interdisciplinarity, the acknowledgement of such overlaps and the awareness of their productivity have remarkably increased. The contemporary approach to the relationship between anthropology and art does not involve mediating non-Western objects

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 1.01
— Fiamma Montezemolo,
Traces, video frame,
2012. Video included in
the exhibition “Crossing
Bodies: Postcolonial
Visions,” curated by Routes
Agency, Museo Preistorico
Etnografico “L. Pigorini,”
Rome, Italy (1–15 December
2012). Courtesy of Fiamma
Montezemolo.

and aesthetics to the benefit of the Western public (Price 1989), as it used to do in the past. Neither does it mean to construe new fetishes of the Others meant as subalterns that produce their own “ethnic art,” asking them to explain themselves according to an expected “authenticity”; nor to construe contemporary art as an object of research of a renovated anthropology of art, considering the world of the art as anthropology would consider another culture. On the other hand, this does not mean making art about anthropology either. It is more a matter of considering anthropology and art as two *undisciplined* disciplines that exploit the mobility of their borders in order to obtain a productive field of new critical discourses about the construction and the representation of identities, exploring their epistemological potential and critical implications (Schneider and Wright 2006). Furthermore, as Clifford Geertz claims, “one of the advantages of anthropology as a discipline is that nobody, not even those people who study it, exactly know what it is” (Geertz 2001, 107), which can lead to various results, more or less dangerous, the most interesting of which is a permanent and productive identity crisis.

A re-negotiation and a contextual and multiple redefinition of the relationship between art and anthropology especially in the context of ethnographic museums (with their difficult relation with their own colonial past), calls into question the binary, ethnocentric and essentialist divisions that founded the European narratives about modernity (Montezemolo 2002). Moreover, all this can deconstruct the majestic concepts of authenticity and primitivism, as well as challenge the presumed neutrality of the ethnographic display through a critical curatorial process that focuses on the centrality of colonialism in the construction of such heritage and of its related narrations. On the other hand, such a project can also be a useful tool to diagnose the current and problematic relationship between our culture and migrations, diasporic cultures, and the vision of oneself, which is strictly connected to a missing acknowledgement of the fact that such colonial past is actually not *past* at all. It is not a case that I mentioned a “diagnosis,” as I mean to highlight how, in the case of Italy, the relationship between the Italian culture with its own colonial past is considered as a downright repression: it is not an unconscious *removal* of that traumatic and hard past, but a *repression*, that is, a (conscious) estrangement of a difficult or unpleasant memory from our consciousness, and of the shift of feelings that are linked to it (aggressiveness, narcissism, racism, feeling of superiority) to another daily place, minimising the power of that past (for example, in the popular representations of “Italians as good people”), altering it, or dissimulating it, and thus avoiding to acknowledge its role in constructing contemporary culture in respect to its own relationship with the other. Therefore, this implies facing a collective memory which is extremely conflicting and not represented well enough in the museum rooms:

the modern museum, as a European-derived modality of knowledge and cultural power, has to register the highly charged pertinence of excluded times and spaces to the making of modernity, particularly in the harsh light



of the intertwined centralities of colonialism, imperialism and global migrations. At this point, the museum becomes another space, a heterotopia; an unsuspected site for the critical diagnoses of the modernity it seeks to exhibit and explain. (Chambers 2013, 242)

IMG. 1.02 — Logo of the exhibition “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions.” Designed by Routes Agency.

The project “Crossing Bodies: Immaginari postcoloniali” (“Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial visions”), curated by myself and my colleagues from the Routes Agency, was displayed at the Ethnographic Prehistoric Museum Luigi Pigorini in Rome in December 2012. “Crossing Bodies” evolves from this critical awareness and from the consciousness raising about the fact that our own identity (both as Europeans and Italians) is a totally migrating identity, for its history and the popular visions originated from such history. First of all, the postcolonial scenario has brought about a shift in the subject of the discourse, that is to say in whoever is “allowed” to speak. This new configuration, which is conflicting but at the same time productive, has produced unprecedented critical discourses; consequently, the modernity narrative opens up to the rifts and the discontinuities of *other* stories and perspectives, which challenge the prevailing European-American viewpoint about the narration of History, thus exposing it to a radical critical questioning. “Crossing Bodies” has investigated the collective visions produced by contemporary migrations in a postcolonial perspective, with the aim of re-narrating the tale of the past, of history, and of memories, in the light of the challenges and the voices of a radically *othered* present, imbued with otherness. The aim was to present other ways to narrate and points of view which have often been overshadowed, in order to “awaken” the repressed collective memory on which our culture is based, revealing and analysing its repressive dynamics,¹ in order to take on its charges and responsibilities, as

showing the repression that dwells in the dark heart of modernity means touching upon the repressed collective memory that makes it possible to create a consistent and homogeneous image to support both publicly and privately. Modernity has been built upon this repression, upon the negation of bodies, of the stories and cultures on which the Atlantic political economy, and consequently of modern Europe, has been founded. (Chambers 2003, 139)

1 “Historians of sexuality have never used any other notion but that of repression, for a very simple reason: such notion highlights the social elements that determine the process of denial. Consequently, it is possible to analyse the history of such denial starting from the notion of repression.” (Foucault 1998, 168)

The project involves a videos exhibition,² a photography installation by Mauricio Lupini (*Observing Ethnography*, 1996–97), a relational work of art by Massimiliano Di Franca (*Spazi Vocali*, 2012), a contemporary dance performance by MK (*Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino*, 2012) and the projection of the video *Traces* (2012), by the artist-anthropologist Fiamma Montezemolo, presented by the artist herself with Iain Chambers, Lidia Curti, Viviana Gravano and myself.

→ FOR AN AESTHETICS OF JUXTAPOSITION AND A POLICY OF SUBVERSION

The boundary between collection and fetishism is mediated by classification and display in tension with accumulation and secrecy.
(Stewart 1984, 163)

The photography installation *Observing Ethnography* (1996–97) by Mauricio Lupini puts up a double subversion. The images represent portions of various ethnographic museum displays: objects, artefacts, or photographs behind the glass of the showcases of several ethnographic museums, which have been entirely or partially re-photographed. The observer's eye has to doubly focus in order to be able to read such images: they are exhibited at the Pigorini museum, and they apparently they look like the other ethnographic pictures that are displayed in the same museum, but if you take a close look at them it is possible to catch sight of a shadow or a reflection on the grain of the photograph, which indicates that what we are looking at is the picture of a picture exhibited in another showcase, in another museum like this one.³ Mauricio Lupini does not put into question the “artefact,” but the *showing* criteria conceived in order to insert it back in a prevailing narrative. In these images which, as Benjamin does, we can define *dialectic images*, the past “converges” with the present, because of a sense of contiguity or of juxtaposition, rather than of continuity. Lupini's photographs are disguised as “museum exhibits” and they seem to recall the objectifying attitude towards the museum object mentioned by Taussig about the Gold Museum of Bogotá (Taussig 2005). However, as they are re-photographed and re-displayed with an act of repetition, de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation, they bring about a sense of contradiction of the visions connected to the classic ethnographic *displaying*, which is stuck under the weight of its removal. Therefore, it is necessary to take a different look at the past, criticising the roles of the observer and the observed: in a double subversion both of the observation devices and of the displaying devices on themselves, ethnography and its method, which is based on the relationship observation–displaying, become the object of the artist's gaze first, and of the visitor later. Thus, it is possible to enter that “third space” that

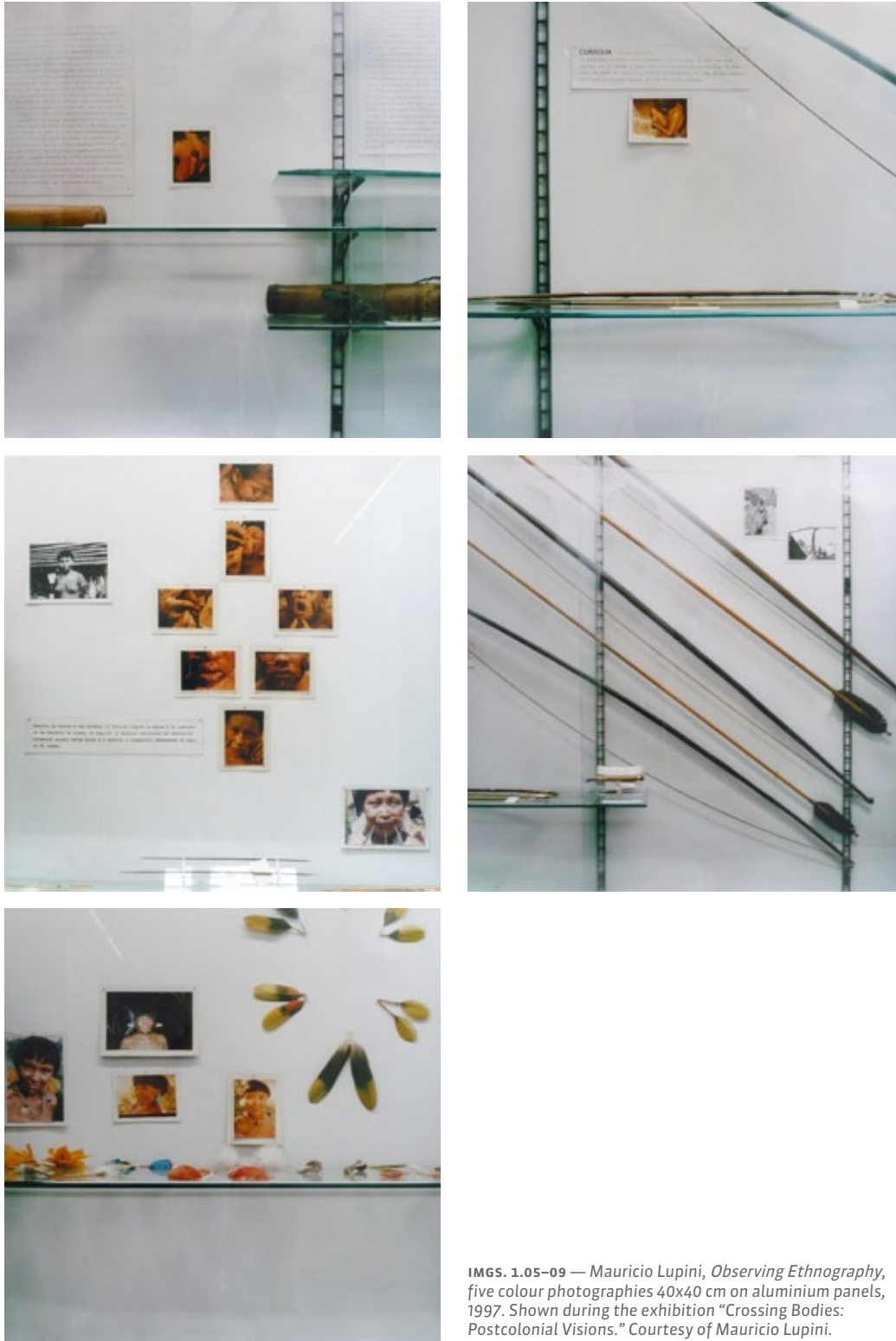
2 The clips were the following: Zineb Sedira, *MiddleSea* (2008); Isaac Julien, *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007); Lida Abdul, *In Transit* (2008); Adelita Husni-Bey, *Gestures of Labour* (2009); Marco Baroncelli and Enzo Orlandi, *Parole crociate* (2001).

3 This installation by Mauricio Lupini had already been exhibited in other contexts, mainly connected with contemporary art. It was the first time that it had been presented in an ethnographic museum.



IMGS. 1.03–04 — Mauricio Lupini, *Observing Ethnography*, photos of the display for the exhibition “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions.”
Courtesy of Routes Agency.





IMGS. 1.05–09 — Mauricio Lupini, *Observing Ethnography*, five colour photographs 40x40 cm on aluminium panels, 1997. Shown during the exhibition “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions.” Courtesy of Mauricio Lupini.

makes every traditional place a translation place, which can produce the discursive conditions that remove any kind of fixity from the meanings and the symbols of a culture, “so that we can appropriate of the signs themselves in order to translate them, re-historicise them and give them a new meaning.” (Bhabha 2001, 59)

→ THE MEANINGS AND THE SENSES OF LIMITS: THIS IS NOT A STORY TO PASS ON⁴

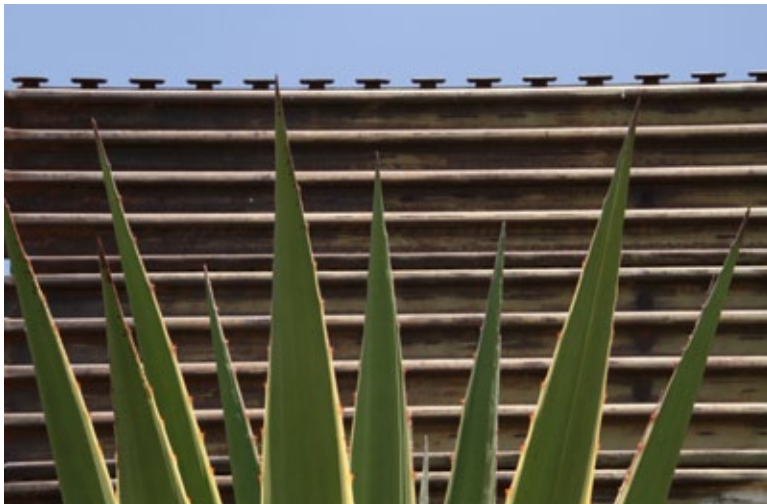
We want to place flags in waters so that we can move with it
(Lida Abdul, *What We Have Overlooked*, 2011, 2-channel video installation, Documenta (13), 2012)

Being migrants means being radically positioned on a borderline: between there and here, before and after, inside and outside, between stories and memories. However, it does not only imply a path of loss or dispersion, as it is sometimes represented. It is also a path of dissemination and of *aspiration*, of building new identity tales, new memories and imaginations (Appadurai 2003). Within this context, “Crossing Bodies” has attempted to go beyond the multicultural perspective, facing its limits and literally placing the border, as a disturbing place and collective imagination, into the museum. As Iain Chambers claims, it is not a matter of broadening the spaces of the public sphere to host other cultures and other stories, but rather of radically put into question our position and our gaze, dislocating and relocating it in a cultural and aesthetic sense, and consequently in a deeply ethical and political sense (Chambers 2003).

The video *Traces* (2012), by the artist and anthropologist Fiamma Montezemolo,⁵ focuses on the wall that divides Mexico and the United States. The artist knows that border very well, as she spent six years in Tijuana working as an anthropologist. In fact, *Traces* unequivocally marks the shift for Fiamma Montezemolo from being an anthropologist that works with art to an artist that works with ethnography. *Traces* represents an impossible ethnography, a strong critique against the ethnographic language whenever it closes itself within its own disciplinary barricades which make it impossible to deeply understand and express the most emotional, corporeal, sentimental aspects of the object of study. In the video, it is precisely this border between objectivity and subjectivity of the sight that constitutes the link between the artistic and the ethnographic approach. A female voice addresses the wall that divides Mexico from the United States, it talks to it as if it were a person: the wall is not only a subject, but also a geo-politicised body, a manly body as it decisively refuses to be penetrated. Yet, the female voice that talks to it addresses a body subject to its own vulnerability: its masculine strength is

4 This sentence is taken from the novel *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison, and it expresses the whole ambiguity of a story (in the case of the novel, the story of slavery, whereas in this case, the story of migrations) which cannot be neglected, on which it is not possible to pass, regardless of the desire to do so, because that would continuously create problems to the identity of the teller, and which is nonetheless difficult to pass on, due to the fact that it is an obscene, excessive experience which is impossible to narrate.

5 <http://www.fiammamontezemolo.com/>.



IMGS. 1.10–12 — Fiamma Montezemolo, *Traces*, video frames, 2012. Video included in the exhibition “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions.” Courtesy of Fiamma Montezemolo.

continuously interrupted and questioned by the cracks, holes, and chinks on its surface, marking the impossibility of a total panoptical control, the impossibility of a hermetic closure. The female voice addresses the fragility of that body-wall both with respect to the fleshy bodies that keep going to the other side, and with respect to its own material constitution, which is sensitive to the territory that it would like to dominate but keeps being transformed, threatened in its monolithicity, sensitive to the “uterine” and “cannibal” waters of the Pacific Ocean, which “eat you and spit out the leftovers. They chew you and do not digest you.” The only possible choice for the artist to relate to the arrogant presence of the wall is to transform it through an alchemic act which makes it possible to “denature” its power, turning it from a *fantasmatic* subject into a *disturbing* (*unheimlich*) subject, carrying out a dematerialisation process that is also a successful act of profanation of all essentialising narrative.

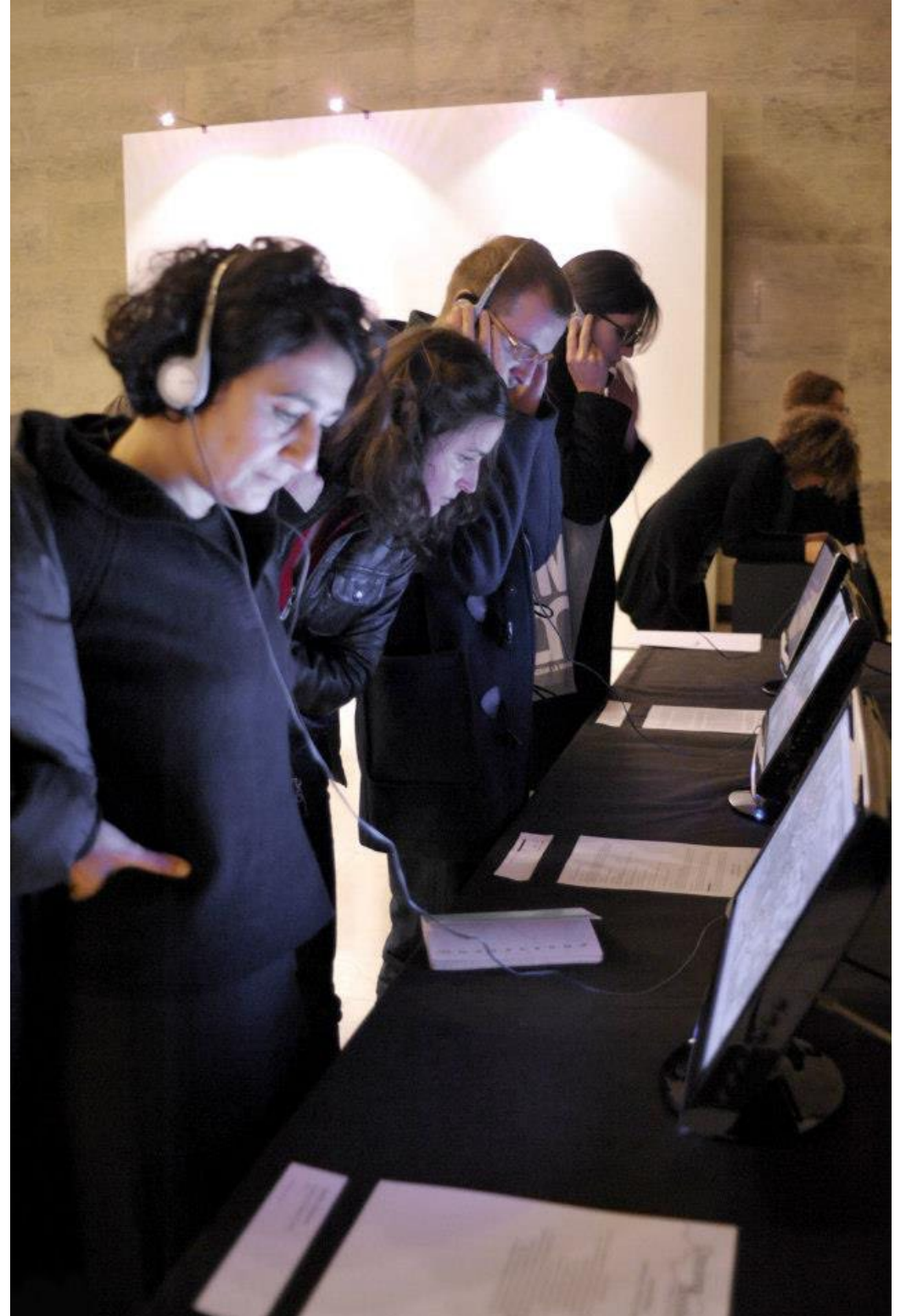
→ HOW SHALL WE BEHAVE WHEN THE OBJECTS ARE NOT ENOUGH?

I am the one
who goes away, always
away with the house
that can only stay inside
my blood—my house, which does not belong
to any geography.
(Bhatt 2005, 109)

The interactive installation *Spazi Vocali* (*Vocal Spaces*, 2012) by the relational artist Massimiliano Di Franca projects three different points of view on three different screens, three reflections on the concept of migration and diaspora exposed by the artist Jimmie Durham, the visual anthropologist Tarek Elhaik and by the researcher and dance historian Susanne Franco, through images and an audio contribution. Each one of them, with their own sensitivity and their own perspective which often combines the personal level and the professional one, contributes to creating a stratified and multifaceted vision about contemporary diasporas, also exposing the artists’ own intimacy. Moreover, Di Franca put an audio recorder at the visitors’ disposal, so that they could tell their opinions, their impressions, or any other kind of feedback about the installation, adding their voices to those of the three invited speakers so as to build a dialogue,⁶ a shared track aiming at triggering new *shifts* of meaning through active and relational dynamics. The artist wanted to open a relational space, generating an active response in the public: he did not consider the visitor as a passive observer of a work of art to be contemplated in a museum, but an active performer. Being active implied also sharing a concept of the museum heritage which does not necessarily have to be related to the object or the collection, but can be

6 The complete work by Massimiliano Di Franca, including the visitors’ audio recordings, is available at the following link: <http://www.roots-routes.org/2013/04/04/relationships-spazi-vocali-spazi-vocali-di-massimiliano-di-franca-con-la-partecipazione-di-jimmie-durham-tarek-elhaik-susanne-franco/>.

PAGES 22–23, IMGS. 1.13–14 — Massimiliano Di Franca, *Spazi Vocali*, 2012. Interactive installation included in the exhibition “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions.” Courtesy of Massimiliano Di Franca.



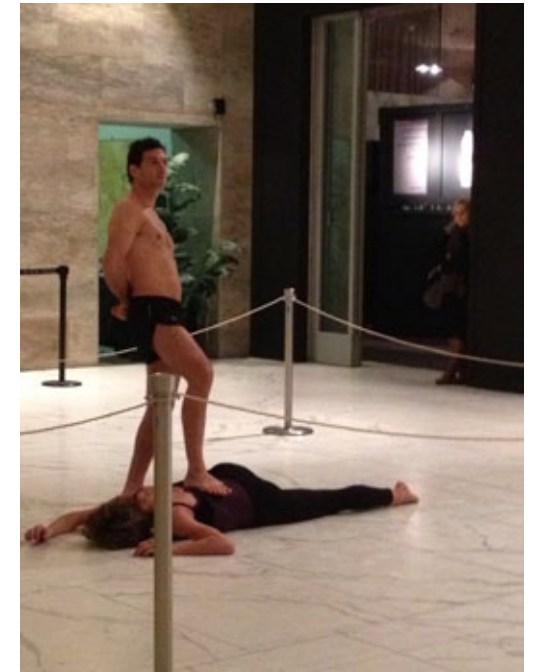
connected with narrations, memories or complex experiences such as those of contemporary diasporas. Moreover, the fact of stimulating not only the sense of sight but also the other ones, and the involvement of the visitors' voice, let their private and emotional past experiences and ideas emerge, thus leaving a partial mark in a different affective, relational, and shared heritage.

→ PERFORMING (COLONIAL) ARCHIVES

The first thing that the indigenous person learns is to know their place and to keep within their limits. Therefore, the indigenous person's dreams are muscular, active, and aggressive. I dream of jumping, swimming, climbing. I dream of bursting into laughter, of getting to the other side of the river with one jump only, of being chased by cars that never manage to reach me. (...) In the colonial world, the colonised affectivity is kept on edge as an open wound that refuses any medicine that would facilitate healing. And their psyche withdraws, obliterates, winds down in peculiar muscular movements that led some very cultured men to claim that colonised people are hysterical. (Fanon 2007, 16–20)

MK is an independent group engaged in performances, choreography and musical research. For “Crossing Bodies” they designed a site-specific version of their project “Danze coloniali” (“Colonial Dances”), entitled *Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino* (*Four Colonial Dances Closely Seen*).⁷ MK's colonial dances are choreographic tales that reprocess with merciless irony the colonial gestures and poses that have been internalised and unconsciously put up, in an apparently innocent form, by the global cultural market tourists; such images are linked to the encounter with difference and represent a sort of hidden script, ready to be put on stage in shows such as those that can be seen in tourist resorts, safaris, or exoticising performances. Bodies mark distances and at the same time they fill them up, constantly negotiating their relationship with the space, for the simple and flooring premise according to which what is far away is “always close to something else.” These topics had been dealt with in different ways in previous choreographic performances, such as *Speak Spanish* (2010–2011), *Il giro del mondo in 80 giorni* (2011), or *Grand Tour* (2011), and they acquire a particular resonance within the context of an ethnographic museum (a place where performing shows do not usually take place) with its original colonial sin. In the Pigorini Museum, just before entering the rooms of the museum, the performance *Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino* interrupts the usual flows of the museum spaces and its temporality, offering the visitor the possibility of a different sensorial experience, by reversing the “necropolitic” experience mentioned by Achille Mbembe—referring to the fact that the museum turns the exhibits into dead objects—into an ironic

⁷ Performance with Philippe Barbut, Biagio Caravano and Laura Scarpini. Guide: Haitem Dhifallah. Music: Lorenzo Bianchi. Coreography: Michele Di Stefano. *Quattro danze coloniali* is a production by MK and Armunia Festival Costa degli Etruschi, with the contribution of MiBAC.



IMGS. 1.15–18 — MK, *Quattro danze coloniali viste da vicino*, 2012. Performance with Philippe Barbut, Biagio Caravano and Laura Scarpini. Guide: Haitem Dhifallah. Music: Lorenzo Bianchi. Choreography: Michele Di Stefano. “Crossing Bodies: Postcolonial Visions.” Courtesy of MK.

vitality, where the movement of the bodies marks the constant activity of translation of oneself into the instability of every journey towards (or against) the other:

The community of time, that is the seemingly shared time of the narration of the European nation, is here interrupted when other times and constellations of belonging enter the museum. (...) All of this, as Achille Mbembe reminds us, is to transform the archive from a collection of seemingly past affairs and dead matters into a series of vital procedures; that is, into an exercise of living powers and possibilities. Here the past refuses to pass, it insists on its right to return and to interrogate and ghost the present. (Chambers 2013, 242)

Finally, MK's dances at the Pigorini museum direct the visitors' attention to the bodies that cross and dwell in the museum space, not as "objects" to be disciplined or regulated or educated. This way maybe also the objects inside the showcases of the museum can be freed from their oppressing objectivity so as to become, as Marx would say, "sensuous-supersensitive things," to the extent of lightly making a dance step.

→ I WOULD LIKE A MUSEUM IN THE NOT-SO-NEW 21ST CENTURY...

If objects, histories, cultures, people were once wrenched out of their context in order to be put on display and exhibited as European knowledge, today this has to be unwound from its colonial premises and handed back to the world it once presumed to define and own. In the harsh light of the gallery space and the illuminated caption can the *impossibility* of a healing be exposed? Can the modern museum house what amounts to a historical and ontological cut when its collection and criteria are re-routed through a radically diverse accounting of time and space? Beyond mere adjustment and modification, the museum as a critical space needs to become something more, something else. (Chambers 2013, 243)

Museums can resist the various death penalties that have been sentenced against them and can explore original vital spaces, provided that they are open to changes, and let themselves "be treated," in order to keep their social actions active. Those actions can be extremely useful this very historical moment, when it is clear that it is necessary to urgently reconsider the cultural concepts of citizenship and to seriously think out the work of cultural mediation. Ethnographic museums are particularly involved in this developing process, and have long been testing different modes of exhibiting⁸ and curating, such as, for example, the experiments of co-curation with the diasporic communities living in the territory. Such communities have been asked to interact with the museum heritage, which is being investigated by a great number of ethnographic museums (such as Pigorini). This has brought about a series of crucial questions: which

⁸ An example is the project that has been carried out since the second half of the 1980s by the Ethnographic Museum of Neuchâtel in Switzerland (MEN). The exhibitions of this museum often reconsider the concept of heritage by keeping, showing and telling in a critical way the traces of its construction. See website: <http://www.men.ch/>.

communities should be involved and how can we avoid that the criterion of selection be based on a static, nationalistic, or essentialist idea of identity? On what principles should the relationship between the museum and its heritage be based? To what extent can or must the museum control this process? What shall we do to avoid the risk of being an "off-setting," or comforting, simply "inclusive" gestures, and, on the contrary, make it a real opening to and sharing of authoriality and authority? These questions raise important and extremely useful matters in order to understand how the museum can be turned from a temple where to conserve Archives, History, Nation, Culture, into a place to *activate dynamics* even outside its surface, that is, over the surrounding territory and with various communities of "citizens." Moreover, such an attitude, which is radically reflective, demands an *ethical* position, which consists in thinking of the museum as a *cultural form* that is extremely useful to build communities that are conceived in a transnational, intercultural, and postcolonial way, completely disconnected from essentialising perspectives:

every debate about ethics has to start from the fact that human beings are not and must not be or carry out any essence, any historical or spiritual vocation, any biological destiny. Only within a context like this can ethics exist: because it is clear that if human beings were or were supposed to be this or that substance, this or that fate, there would not be any possible ethical experience, there would only be tasks to be carried out. (Agamben 2001, 39)

Museums can act as triggers of memory processes, in relationship with the present, which include also the conflicting perspectives about the past, or on the proper ways to narrate it, especially if the past which is narrated implies a difficult memory to be dealt with for a certain community. I am referring to what Tarek Elhaik defines "incurable images":

incurable images are sites of complex repetitions and zones of endurance for the spectator-patient who manages to bypass the enclosure of traumatic wounds by official narratives from both left and right sides of the politico-ideological spectrum. (Elhaik 2013)

Also Tarek Elhaik focuses on the ethical dimension of what he calls a "curation-as-clinical practice," whose aim is to provoke a sort of "creative relief" in front of the incurable images, which deeply challenge the curatorial practices themselves, and the disciplinary institutions that build and organise knowledge. This makes it possible to gain an identification practice in the public space and through it, which can be translated into a "public dream-space" (Taussig 1992, 46): a place capable of containing the affective strength of memorialisation strategies, of activating the spectators' bodies and their sensoriality, of going beyond coaction towards showing, thus constructing a porous and strongly political space.

I would like a museum in the not-so-new XXI century that abandons the idea of *looking* for the idea of *activation*; one that is not a building or even a fixed space but a series of events and a program; one where the institution gives up authority; one that is dedicated to research into the practical use-

fulness of art; one where art entails actual social transformation, instead of merely providing highly speculative strategies for bringing about such transformations. One where things are not excised from their contexts, where objects are contextualized instead of historicized. One where things are not exhibited but activated, given use-value instead of representing it. One that is not a structure but a moment; that is not a place to visit but a presence. (Bruguera 2010, 299)

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“The Memory of the Sea”: Exhibiting a Museum

→ ANNA CHIARA CIMOLI

AFTERWORD BY DARIO CIEOL

→ SERENDIPITY AND THE SEA MEMORY MUSEUM

In order to analyse the “The Memory of the Sea” project, I have to take a step back and briefly describe how I discovered into this unique place and the multilayered stories it tells.

The main focus of my research within the MeLa Project concerns migration museums and their interpretations: their communication strategies, layout, as well as the participatory practices they do—or do not—encourage (Cimoli 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). My interest, in particular, concerns the way these museums represent recent and contemporary immigration, blending it with more general anthropological concepts such as migration, mobility, the perceptions of the frontiers, citizenship, identity, etc. (Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012; Basso Peressut, Lanz, and Postiglione 2013; Ferrara 2012; Whitehead, Eckersley, and Mason 2012; Noack 2013).

Although the world of migration museums is a very diverse one, it is still possible to find a few common patterns. Simplifying a little, I would argue that many of these museums—which grew from the reconstruction or the restoration of historical premises where the history of emigration took place—rely on the historical charm of the building (Baur 2009). They often hint at milieu reconstructions, which reveal a certain taste for Titanic-like interiors and seem to be much appreciated by audiences. In Germany, and in northern Europe in general, where heritage tourism from the USA is quite common, this is quite a general trend, often comprising parties in 19th century costume and other initiatives of this kind (Macdonald 2013; Teulières and Toux 2008).

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 1.19
— “The Memory of the Sea,” Museo Preistorico Etnografico “L. Pigorini,” Rome, Italy (1–15 December 2012). Photo by Mariella Brenna.

Other very common features in these museums are their focus on archives and genealogy, which translates as some kind of genealogical epidemic, with the addition of the layout genre “old luggage plus screen,” dictated by the desire to refer to a somewhat romantic past, without neglecting contemporary technologies. This way, curators seem to think, “we won’t deceive anybody.”

But what about the other side of the coin? What about the countries emigrants are leaving from today? In fact, most European migration museums were created, more or less with a delay of a decade, in reaction to those in the USA, Canada and Australia. This story was written first in the “new worlds” and at a later stage in the countries of origin. It is a matter of shifting the point of view. Who keeps track of contemporary emigration, for example from northern Africa to Europe? Artists, of course, and this is the first and maybe the most obvious answer: putting contemporary art in a prime position is the choice made, for example, by the Cité de l’Histoire de l’Immigration in Paris (Renard and Poinot 2011; Cimoli and Buonasorte 2012). Families also keep a living memory of emigration, but on a very personal and intimate level. This becomes public discourse only when emigration turns into a tragedy.

It was evident since the beginning of my exploration that underlying this main research field was another one, somewhat more difficult to investigate, but in my opinion, just as interesting and important, and definitely complementary to the first. The main questions surrounding this parallel research were: how can a country keep and implement a museological memory of emigration in real time, and through what tools? Who is in charge of documenting, cataloguing, preserving and studying it? What technical devices, and more than that, what cultural process could facilitate this memory preservation? What is the role of museums in this regard?

During a seminar concerning the “The Journey as Rebellion: A New Aesthetics of the Frontier” by Italian blogger and writer Gabriele Del Grande,¹ I came across the story of Mohsen Lihidheb and his Sea Memory Museum, located in Zarzis, in southern Tunisia. I then started doing a preliminary research about that museum, dictated only by my curiosity.

When the call for ideas, “Idee migranti,” was published by the Museo Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini (Luigi Pigorini National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography) in Rome in 2012, I immediately thought that it might be a good occasion to display what the Sea Memory Museum is and to deepen the reflection on this quite exceptional place and the multiple meanings it conveys. The call for ideas was launched as a contest for installations, performances and conferences to be organised in parallel with the exhibition “(S)oggetti migranti” (20th September 2012–4th March 2013), curated in the framework of the European Project “Réseau Européen des Associations de Diasporas & Musées d’Ethnographie”

¹ The seminar was organised in the framework of the Teatro degli Incontri Festival, and took place at the Casa della Carità (House of Charity) in Milan from 4th–6th June 2012.

(READ-ME 2). My proposal, concerning a photographic exhibition as well as a conference, was accepted.

After the first display in Rome (1st–15th December 2012), the exhibition moved at the Galata–Sea and Migrations Museum in Genoa. On that occasion, a conference was organised as well. Another step of my project’s itinerary was held in Bergamo, at the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art (GAMeC). The last stage so far took place at the Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines in Dudelange (Luxembourg), from 8th May to 27th July 2014. This event is described in the last paragraph of this chapter by the Centre’s curator, Dario Cieol.

→ WHAT THE SEA REMEMBERS

Mohsen Lihidheb gathers and assembles in the Sea Memory Museum objects, turning them into installations that are subject to continuous change and dynamic interpretation. These objects include shells, fish skeletons, ropes, bottles, toys, clothes, anything interesting brought in by the sea. The museum therefore represents an artistic operation, and not just a work of preservation.

Even though the history of the *harraga* (the undocumented, or “illegal” emigrants) is not the main focus of the Sea Memory Museum, though this narrative still plays an enormous part. The encounter with Mamadou, the corpse of one of the emigrants who could not reach Europe and drowned en route, somehow marked a turning point in the collection. The sea currents brought him back to Africa, back from where he left. Lihidheb organised the burial of Mamadou and created a sculpture in the museum dedicated to him, which now acts as a polar star amongst the collection’s objects.

Sometimes, the making of these installations turns them into performances, testimonial actions, or some sort of laic rituals in a memory of the missing. This is the case, for example, for what Lihidheb called the “Marriage of the Siren.” One day, Lihidheb had found a little red jacket with black embroidery on the seashore. Its absolute elegance and femininity, but also the emptiness and unkept promises it evoked, presented an open question to him. He therefore organised a laic marriage, so as to give to the “siren” what she had been deprived of by an abrupt interruption.

Improvised and conceived in the absence of the public, such actions become substitutes, compensations which might fill the void left by death, and aid in the grieving process on behalf of those who cannot do so, with no grave to speak of. As Lihidheb recalls:

One day I came across a red, embroidered bolero, such as a bullfighter’s or that of a tiger tamer, recently deposited by the waves on the beaches of El-bibane and probably belonged to a girl of the group of the *harraga*, the illegal immigrants. Then I felt a sharp pain at the thought of this victim, still a child, innocent, in the prime of life. I took the jacket with a lot of respect and put it on a long tree trunk that I had already lifted on the roof of my car.

As if to signal an extraordinary load, I drove very slowly, with no sudden movements, and when I crossed the city of Zarzis to reach my village, Souihel, I honked all the way as in a real wedding procession. People looked at me surprised, although they are used to my folly. In front of my museum, the noisy procession paused a sign of great respect for this new fairy, who came into an area of peace and dreaming. (Lihidheb 2013, 36–37)

This text, as well as poems and other short pieces of prose, were recently published in Germany in a little book entitled *Mamadou et le silence de la mer* (2013). Writing, in fact, is also an essential part of Lihidheb's creativity. Blogs seem to be just the perfect place to host his reflections and thoughts.²

Installations, performances, poems, blogs are all part of the same “super-curatorial” project, the complexity of which struck me profoundly. Simplifying slightly, I would summarise the main features of the Sea Memory Museum as follows:

- Cross-border, transnational dimension. There are comings and goings from Africa to Europe, from Tunisia to Italy and vice-versa. The direction of contemporary migrations by boat in that part of the Mediterranean, northbound, is here reversed. Things go back to Africa that didn't want to leave the continent. A mixture of consumerism, despair, or nonchalance as in the case of the bottles thrown into the water is interpreted here, and without any form of judgment but through the lens of art, empathy and creativity.
- Private/public dimension: where does the *private* collection end, where does the *museum* begin? We may call it a contemporary *wunderkammer*, but unlike the ancient *wunderkammern*, here the educational aspect is very important: children from schools go there to see the dolphin's skull, as well as the messages in the bottles.
- An absolutely cost-free gesture. The museum is open to everybody, is free, and does not depend on funding whatsoever.
- Intertwining of different linguistic media, corresponding to different stages of the interpretative work: environmental action (collecting/gathering); visual art (assemblage/sculpture); poetry (as some sort of ex-post catalogue).
- Dynamic dimension, which means no assemblage or exhibit is fixed; everything is subject to constant re-organisation and re-interpretation. In this respect, real curatorial work is done over and over, since rethinking the collection in a dynamic way is at the core of all museum work.

² See websites: <http://zarziszitazarzis.blogspot.com>; <http://bastaharraga-boughmiga.blogspot.it>; <http://zarzisasppz.blogspot.it>; <http://azizi-bouazizi.skyrock.com> (in arabic); <http://boughmiga.skyblog.com>. News about the museum can also be found at <http://art.artistes-sf.org/mohsen>, and <http://zarzis-sea.skyblog.com>.

→ CURATORIAL CHALLENGES

How to display such complexity in an exhibition? It would have been interesting, if ambitious, to work on the same multilayered language as that of the Sea Memory Museum, but this would have required more time and space. The choice was to describe the museum through the eyes of two different photographers, so as to suggest, visually, the multiplicity of possible interpretations of the place. I selected the work of two photographers—Alessandro Brasile and Mattia Insolera³—mostly due to their different approaches to Lihidheb's museum and artistic process. The contrast between the two photographic languages, or visions, represented in my opinion, a means of capturing the complexity I knew would inevitably be sacrificed in the little gallery space—a mezzanine in the Oceania section of the Pigorini Museum with just one usable wall on which to hang the pictures.

Brasile, in his feature dating from 2007, commissioned by the weekly magazine *Il Venerdì di Repubblica*,⁴ describes the museum like an anthropologist, emphasising the connection between the museum itself and the territory—stressing in particular the inclusion of nature. The open-air museum is represented in its chaos, much as a workshop where things happen constantly—a studio more than a gallery. Messy, wild, “dirty,” in Brasile's view the museum is a place where nature and human meet, not always peacefully. Contradictions, frictions between human's desires, as well as destiny and pain: no easy happy end is available here. Through the pictures, the visitor can imagine the attempt to make sense, over and over: Lihidheb's incessant work is nothing but an empathic attempt to inflate meaning where there seems to be none. Dispersed objects find a provisional harmony when assembled; the emphasis is on the process of meaning-making and re-making over and over.

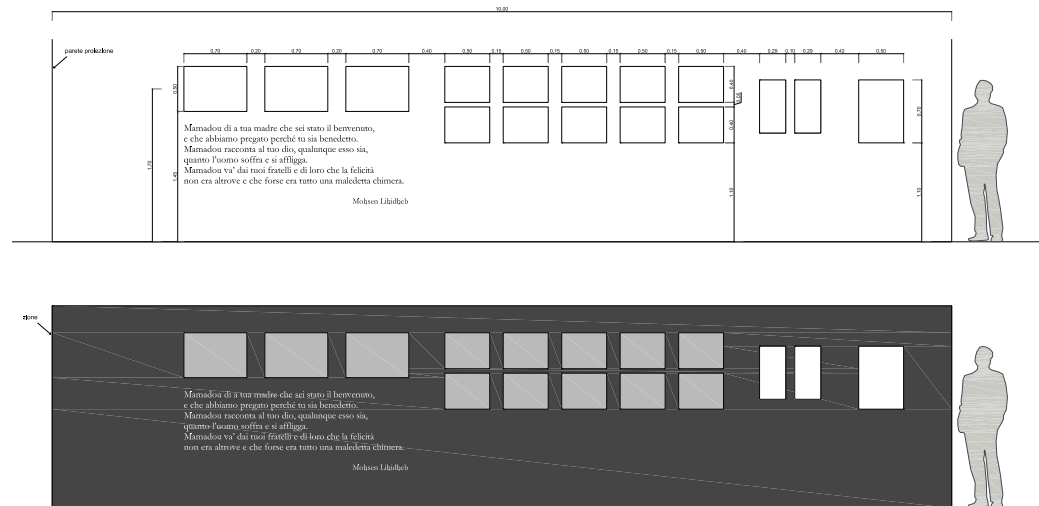
Mattia Insolera's reportage in Zarzis is part of a series called *The Path of the Righteous Man*, inscribed in a broader project called “Transmediterranea” (2010).⁵ In his pictures, a high emotional temperature and a strong sense of the sacred are displayed. Time seems to be suspended and the atmosphere perfectly still. A silent tension animates the images. Here Lihidheb is neither a workman nor a craftsman but a man of compassion, a lay celebrant. He gives form to chaos, turns death into life. He is a *modulor*: a contemporary “homo ad circulum et ad quadratum.” His activity is put in dialogue with that of Vincenzo Lombardo, the gravedigger in Lampedusa, his brother in compassion with a similar sense of responsibility towards the dead, to whom he dedicated a touching poem (Lihidheb 2013, 77–78).

I then contacted a film-maker based in Strasbourg, Fitouri Belhiba, a friend of Lihidheb's, also from Zarzis. He agreed to participate in the exhibition with a video from 2004, *Sacrées bouteilles*, to be broadcast in a loop.

³ See websites: <http://www.alessandrobrasile.com>, and <http://www.mattiainsolera.net>.

⁴ The photographs were displayed in 2007 at the SalinaDocFest: a festival of documentary films held every summer in Salina, Sicily.

⁵ The photograph feature was done in collaboration with Medici Senza Frontiere (Doctors without Borders) and published on *E!*, the Emergency magazine.



IMG. 1.20 — “The Memory of the Sea,” Museo Preistorico Etnografico “L. Pigorini,” Rome, Italy. Layout of the exhibition by Anna Chiara Cimoli.

Regarding the budget, the time and the human resources available, together with the MeLa group, we decided to create a very simple and clear layout, based on an ideal itinerary: leading from a short introductory text, which would explain the context, the route would continue to Brasile’s pictures; then to Insolera’s; then to an excerpt of a poem by Lihidheb, dedicated to Mamadou in adhesive letters. Belhiba’s video would be the last step.⁶

The ten pictures by Brasile were hung close to each other in two superposed rows. This solution, negotiated with the photographer himself, offered the visitor—though maybe not consciously—a panorama of the museum from morning to sunset: exactly the time it had taken to do the shooting.

The three pictures by Insolera, printed in bigger dimension (50x70 cm against 40x50 cm), were hung with a wider interval. Showing three dimensions of Lihidheb’s work—objects, landscape, human being—these images gave a thoroughly different interpretation from those of Brasile by evidencing the sacred, somehow non-temporal atmosphere of the place, as well as some sort of magical, spiritual component. The choice of the pictures was also discussed with the photographer.

The opening seminar, which took place on 1st December 2012, was the occasion for a dialogue with Alessandro Brasile and Gabriele Del Grande, introduced by Vito Lattanzi, director of the museum. Brasile described his experience of the Sea Memory Museum, and commented on his photographic translation of the place, also showing pictures that were not featured in the exhibition. Del Grande’s talk was based mainly on materials from his blog (<http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com>). His first-hand knowledge, acquired during time spent in Arab countries as a journalist and writer, as well as his deep knowledge of Arabic, made Del

⁶ Mariella Brenna helped me both in designing and in mounting the exhibition. I am also thankful to architects Carmen Carbone and Marco Muscogiuri, who gave me useful insights about the layout, and to Rosa Anna Di Lella, who took care of the organisation and the communication.



IMGS. 1.21–23 — “The Memory of the Sea,” Museo Preistorico Etnografico “L. Pigorini,” Rome, Italy. Photos by Anna Chiara Cimoli.



Grande's talk very enriching. His reflections were focused on the concept of the representation of the frontier: through texts of pop or rap songs; slogans sung in stadiums in the occasion of football matches; viral videos on the web; and other forms of "unauthorised" mass culture expressions. Through these elements, Del Grande gave an overview of what he calls the "aesthetic of the frontier."⁷ In particular, he analysed the role of the web and of social media in spreading information regarding emigration to Europe from certain African countries.

The second stage of the exhibition took place at the Galata-Sea and Migration Museum in Genoa (6th–28th February 2013),⁸ and in a sense, represented a reproduction of the previous one, but with a different pace. The bigger space here allowed a completely different layout, narrative and highlights. The space was a huge rectangular room with windows facing south. A new image by Mattia Insolera was added: one with Mohsen Lihidheb in prayer in front of an installation made out of the clothes found on the seashore. This picture, printed in bigger dimensions than the others (120x90 cm), was given the place of honour, just at the end of the room, facing the entrance.

The opening seminar, entitled "The representation of migrations in the Mediterranean at the time of the Arab Spring," hosted my reflection about the place of the Sea Memory Museum among the migration museums and the sites of consciousness—stressing its peculiarity and its uniqueness—as well as a speech by the freelance journalist, Stefano Pasta,⁹ whose reflections about migration and its representation in newspapers and the media has been crucial to my research. Pasta discussed the role played by social media and other communicative tools during the Maghreb revolutions.

The third step of the exhibition took place at the GAMeC, the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Bergamo, from 3rd–7th July 2013 in the occasion of the European Border Studies Conference *Mapping Conceptual Change in Thinking European Borders*, a joint conference of the EU-FP7 projects EUBORDERSCAPES and EUBORDER-REGIONS. The conference was organised by the University of Eastern Finland in cooperation with the University of Bergamo.

The opening of the exhibition acted as the welcoming event of the conference. Giovanna Brambilla Ranise, the gallery's head of education, welcomed the public with a short speech about the social agency of the

7 Gabriele De Grande used the expression "a new aesthetic of the frontier" in the title of a conference he held at the Fondazione Casa della Carità in Milan in June 2012: "Il viaggio come ribellione. Una nuova estetica della frontiera."

8 Galata curator, Niela Buonasorte, has seen the exhibition in Rome and proposed to bring it to Genoa. Her collaboration, together with Pierangelo Campodonico (the museum's director), Maria Paola Profumo (President of the Fondazione Musei del Mare e della Navigazione) and all the museum staff, was extremely important, and I am very grateful for that.

9 Stefano Pasta collaborates in particular with *Famiglia Cristiana* and with "La Città Nuova," the blog of the *Corriere della Sera* dedicated to the "new Italians," available online.



IMG. 1.24 — "The Memory of the Sea," Galata-Sea and Migration Museum in Genoa, Italy (6–28 February 2013). View of the opening seminar "The representation of migrations in the Mediterranean at the time of the Arab Spring," with Anna Chiara Cimoli and Stefano Pasta. Photo by Mariella Brenna.



IMGS. 1.25–26 — "The Memory of the Sea," Galata-Sea and Migration Museum in Genoa, Italy. Photos by Anna Chiara Cimoli.



IMG. 1.27 — “The Memory of the Sea,” GaMEC, the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bergamo, Italy (3–7 July 2013). Visitors watching the short film *The Postman of the Mediterranean* (2013) by Kami Fares and Giulia Ardizzone. Photo by Anna Chiara Cimoli.



museum and its peculiar interest in the theme of migration and transnationalism. I would like to underline how open, flexible and welcoming the museum was to the project. Together with its very strong social involvement—comprising activities with the migrants, courses for cultural mediators with diverse backgrounds, as well as workshops in the prison and other initiatives of the kind (Brambilla Ranise 2009)—the museum proved to be extremely helpful and collaborative from every point of view.

For this phase of the project, Fitouri Belhiba’s video work was replaced by a more recent one, *Il postino del Mediterraneo* (2013), by Kamikairy Fares and Giulia Ardizzone, whom I had seen on the *La Repubblica* website during the preparation period of the exhibition.

After the vernissage, the documentary film *Mare chiuso*, by Andrea Segre and Stefano Liberti, was also shown, on the university premises. This was then followed by a discussion concerning “Mediterranean Euro-African Borderscapes: Representations, Experiences, and Policies,” which provided the occasion to open a dialogue between myself, Stefano Liberti and the public about the liquid Mediterranean borders, their representation, and the recent Italian migration policies. The discussion was moderated by Chiara Brambilla from the University of Bergamo, who was also the organiser and coordinator of the conference.¹⁰

The GAMEc and the University in Bergamo supported me in the experimental use of two tools, aimed at involving the public and having them express opinions and prejudices, ask questions or simply share experiences and viewpoints. The first one was part of the exhibition itself, and originated from the “topos” of the message in the bottle, symbolic of Lihidheb’s work, as well as that of the whole reflection about the circularity of meanings, vectors and ideas throughout the Mediterranean.

10 I am extremely grateful to Chiara Brambilla, who invited me to take part in the conference with the Sea Memory Museum project, and to Giovanna Brambilla Ranise who welcomed Chiara’s proposal to host the exhibition at the GAMEc.

The hundreds of bottles collected over time won him a Guinness World Record; besides that, whenever he finds a message in a bottle, he does his best to look for the sender and get in touch with him or her. Important human relations were born this way.

In the exhibition space, some twenty empty plastic bottles were left on a table, together with sheets and pens. Visitors were then invited to write their own “message in the bottle” to Lihidheb. This was intended to provide the means for the public to take the floor, leaving a trace of their own passage in the exhibition; also, this method allowed us to collect the visitors’ impressions, and at the same time to “thank” Lihidheb for all the work done. Messages of hope, encouragement, human fraternity were the more frequent (among more trivial ones). At the end of the exhibition the more meaningful were scanned and sent to the artist.

The museum agreed to co-organise, on a Saturday afternoon, an event we called the “Dialogues Around the Memory of the Journey.” Participants in the dialogue were asked to bring along an object that reminded them of a journey, be it real, imaginary or sentimental, and to share its story. The format was ironically borrowed from the speed-dating model: personal and brief face-to-face encounters which can start from a given topic, in order to break the ice. The idea goes somewhat in the same direction as the *Living Library*, a format designed in northern Europe to foster reflection about prejudice and discrimination through personal encounters.¹¹

The invitation to participate, diffused via e-mail by the museum’s press office, read as follows:

The format of the event is borrowed, not without irony, from speed-dating: providing brief but intense meetings, which allow everyone to talk to everyone else face-to-face. In fact, there is a lot of talk about migrations, but meeting people behind their roles is not so obvious. The protagonists, here, are the migrants, who have travel stories to tell and who, by reading them again and again, update and transform them from an inert material, forever linked to the past, into a malleable substance that can be interpreted in the light of the present life and the projects for the future. Yet everybody, migrant or not, is invited to take an active part: each participant will speak and listen in turn, always in a face-to-face dynamic. Everyone, in fact, has got a story to tell, as well as material or immaterial objects linked to a particular journey. It is neither about exoticism nor folklore, on the contrary, we meet and let ourselves be met in an informal way around something that is shared by everybody. All participants are invited to bring along an object evoking an important journey (be it a journey in space, as well as human, personal, affective or professional...). The objects will be displayed in the museum’s room just for the afternoon, therefore composing a sort of “pop-up” collection. Afterwards

11 For an overview of a recent Italian experience see: <http://bibliotecavivente.wordpress.com>. I have taken part myself into that experience, both as an organiser and as a participant, and found it methodologically extremely powerful in order to break stereotypes and make people share their visions in a “protected” and non-hostile way. About the *Living Library* format see also *Biblioteche di libri e biblioteche di volti* (Maggi, Meardi and Zanelli 2011).

IMGS. 1.28–29 — “The Memory of the Sea,” GaMEC, the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bergamo, Italy. “Dialogues Around the Memory of the Journey”: face-to-face encounters between museum educators, volunteers and visitors. Photos by Anna Chiara Cimoli.



IMG. 1.30 — “The Memory of the Sea,” GaMEC, the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bergamo, Italy. “Dialogues Around the Memory of the Journey”: face-to-face encounters between museum educators, volunteers and visitors. Photo by Marco Muscogiuri.



they will be given back to their owners. (<http://www.mela-project.eu/events/details/migrating-objects-dialogues-on-the-memory-of-the-journey>)

Despite the fact that a summery Saturday afternoon is not the moment when the GAMeC is more crowded, the experience was very enriching and fruitful. Four museum educators with different migration backgrounds—all trained within the framework of the GAMeC courses and with a long experience in the field—came along and animated voluntarily the afternoon with great generosity. Another heritage educator with a migratory background, trained in the framework of the FAI (Fondo Ambiente Italiano) courses, came from Milan and spent the afternoon with us. The rest of the public was composed partly by persons involved in the conference (organisers, researchers, students) and partly—even though lesser—by occasional visitors, with a total of about 30 people.

Among the objects brought were photographs; objects referring to immaterial journeys (e.g. role games); and some very personal items such as an amazing tissue handwritten with natural pigments, used as a protection ritual in the Muslim tradition in Iraq. This last item was brought by one of the museum educators, who recounted the story of how her mother used to bless her, her children and her husband every time she went back home.

Some elements helped evaluate the impact of this activity. The first is the fact that most of the people spent a long time in the exhibition room—at least one hour, but most often more. Another element is the fact that, having experienced a dialogue with one mediator, most of the visitors decided to undertake a new conversation with another one. No one, among those “invited,” refused to take part into the activity (some tourists, though, just passed by without even stopping).

Participants, as a sign of thankfulness and acknowledgement of their effort, were then given a certificate stating: “The museum certifies that Mrs./Miss/Mr. ... spent the afternoon of 6th July sharing his/her story and listening to the person sitting in front of him/her.” The contrast between the “formal” layout of the certificate and the irony of the message was intended to stress the rarity of an afternoon where people just listen to each other, gratuitously, just for the pleasure of it.

At first, I thought that the disparity between the number of Italians and of those with a migratory background would weaken a bit, the transformative power of the encounters—changing the nature of the interaction. I later realised that in fact, this dynamic permitted the group to go deeper into ideas of difference; of what each of us means by “journey”; of negotiating one’s point of view. It was not about being a migrant or not, rather, it was about experiences that go beyond one’s origin, and encompass everybody.

Elena Montanari from MeLa kindly recorded some of the dialogues, providing a useful tool for further reflection.

→ PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION¹²

According to Lihidheb, an ecologic conscience and a sense of responsibility towards the migrants go hand in hand and can have enormous educational implications. The playful dimension of the Zarzis museum, despite the seriousness of the themes therein, becomes central here. Lihidheb is also used to working with youngsters: some of his installations were made in collaboration with the so-called “Ninjas of the Sea”—a group of teenagers living in the area, whose sensibility towards nature and other human beings is a source of inspiration for Lihidheb.

The overall project, since the beginning, is that more pictures are added at any stage, so that the exhibition grows with its history, gaining more complexity and depth. At the same time, its aim is not to become a mere visual diary of an artistic experience, but rather a tool for reflecting on the representation of migrations. It is therefore crucial to accompany the pictures with “live” experiences: dialogues, readings, workshops, and so on.

The project for Dudelage comprises an assemblage workshop with school children. This follows in the vein of Lihidheb himself, who uses all the tools of his creativity, assembles and disassembles objects, discoveries and words—giving sense to the time spent by the shore, a time of meditation and artistic action. But the meaning is not found once and forever. He then starts over, mounting and dismounting, matching, naming, exposing, not for an audience but almost by himself, in an intimate gesture. The doing and redoing of forms through the assemblages, in the Sea Memory Museum, rhymes with the tension to tell the migrants’ epic over and over. This is not to add new information to the already disturbing media noise, but rather to accompany the process of recovering from a collective loss through artistic action and the transformative power of creativity. It will be interesting to see how school children react to this proposal.

There is something deeply sacred in this continuous “illogical” activity, and an ancient wisdom. As Brasile recalled in Rome, this empathic, compassionate vision of nature and human life was born out of a radical change in Lihidheb’s own life, which passed through a kind of conversion to the values of dignity, simplicity and harmony—giving up a certain behaviour considered bad or damaging.

Besides the personal spirituality—which goes far beyond religion—lies a collective, universal sense of the sacred, based on the healing power of rites, words, actions re-told and re-done, over and over. The epic of the journey by sea is an integral part of the cultures that developed by the water. As Del Grande recalled in his talk at the Pigorini Museum, in North African countries this kind of narrative coincides with the story of Tariq ibn Ziyad, the conqueror of Spain in the 8th century, who ordered that the boats be burned after their arrival, since there is no return as the loser: you win or you die. This famous speech, which is still circulating today,

resonates with the ritual gesture of burning the passport before getting on the boat. Those who take the boat are the *harraga*, those who burn their passport, as well as the frontiers: the same expression is used for both cases. Interestingly, Del Grande suggested that while some European museums give a passport to the visitors of migration museums, so as to identify with a peculiar biography, in order to tell the story of the *harraga* it would make sense to give a passport as well as a lighter to burn it.

The little exhibition, which at its beginning numbered 13 pictures and one video, will hopefully become richer and offer more interpretative layers in future. As a provisional evaluation, it proved to be an effective tool for discussion and reflection, rather than just a visual source, as it was originally intended. In fact, the pictures speak when integrated with dialogue, discussion and confrontation. The visual material also works as a reagent when projected in a personal dimension, and applied to one’s experience of migration, diversity and displacement: this was the sense of the “Dialogues” organised in Bergamo.

The Mediterranean, seen from the museum in Zarzis, has erratic proportions. They would be well described in a map taking into account the routes of the bottles, with their messages without a recipient—so timeless and yet so full of meaning, even today. Del Grande speaks of the “unwritten routes” of the Sicilian fishing boats: an oral mapping that avoids the wrecks of boats to have no hindrance, either physical or bureaucratic. Migration requires both new mapping and new forms of representation (van Houtum 2010 and 2013).

While it took a century to begin to tell the story of emigration from Europe in museums, Lihidheb represents, through his multilayered, articulated curatorial actions, what is happening on the Tunisian coast in real time. His singular voice, poetic and unpretentious, is valuable because it keeps track of a fast-moving story, that no one has the time (or the will) to fix. For those who make it, to the other side of the Mediterranean, a new life begins; for those who do not find a memorial place, an area of research and compassion; perhaps a “site of conscience” for an awareness yet to be built.

Anna Chiara Cimoli

12 Part of this paragraph comprises some reflections published in my article “Il Museo della memoria del mare: Oggetti testimoniali sulla soglia liquida del Mediterraneo” (Cimoli 2013d).

IMG. 1.31 — “The Memory of the Sea,” CDMH, Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines, Dudelange, Luxembourg (8 May–27 July 2014). Flyer designed by kontext.lu.

**La Mémoire
de la Mer. Objets
Migrants en
Méditerranée.**

Une exploration en images par
Mattia Insolera | Alessandro Brasile
Kami Fares

Lieu de l'exposition
Centre de Documentation
sur les Migrations Humaines
Gare-Usines, L-3481 Dudelange

Vernissage
Mercredi, le 7 mai 2014 à 19h

L'exposition sera ouverte
du 8 mai jusqu'au 27 juillet 2014
du jeudi au dimanche
de 15h00 à 18h00

Visites guidées
en dehors de cet horaire
sur demande

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area
Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

organisée par:
Centre de Documentation
sur les Migrations Humaines

→ “THE MEMORY OF THE SEA” DROPS ITS ANCHOR IN THE CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION
SUR LES MIGRATIONS HUMAINES IN DUDELANGE, LUXEMBOURG

In May 2014 the exhibition “The Memory of the Sea,” opened at the Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines (CDMH). In the following chapter, the curator of the Centre, Dario Cieol, describes first the spatial arrangement of the exhibition and the creation of the new digital story booklet related to it. Subsequently, he summarises the manner in which the surrounding activities and educational workshops turned out. In the last paragraph, a conclusion is drawn from the subject areas the exhibition relates during its residency in Luxembourg, followed by a personal delineation of how the exhibition provides hints of the probable upcoming demands for migration museums.

Spatial arrangement and interactive tools

The architectural space of an exhibition hall sets the spectrum of possible arrangements for prearranged elements of an exhibition. From the three indispensable components of the exhibition, the curators concluded to start with the video of Kami Fares and Giulia Ardizzone in the halls of the CDMH. The decision to start with the video was very influential to the visitor, since the video includes all the necessary information to further explore the other two components: the photographic observations and communications of Alessandro Brasile and Mattia Insolera.

The video-journalistic approach presents to the audience the *ménage-à-trois*—Mohsen Lihidheb, the Sea Memory Museum, its objects—and gives hints about its location. The video was presented on an iPad stand for the audience to be able to forward, rewind or pause it in order to analyse the information. After the ten-minute introduction sequence, the visitor continues with the second part of the exhibition.

Alessandro Brasile’s photographs are hung chronologically; from sunrise to sunset. The photographs appear to me as many fragments of a non-existing hole. Fragments of a place with a plentifulness of sense-giving objects in constant change. The pictures were arranged with an equal distance between them, only varying in height in order to create irregular running waves. The curators chose to hang the pictures with most of the elements on the lowest points of the waves in order to emphasise Brasile’s view, as well as to allow guests of every height to appreciate every single detail of the photographs. Like the change of arrangements in the Sea Memory Museum, the waves carry the ambivalence of a constant inflow of unpredictable strength. The composition ends with a no easy happy ending. A disruption from the systematically undulate hung composition constitutes the bigger printed photograph of Mamadou, arranged on one of the museum’s walls, all by itself. By reshaping the series of Brasile, actually realised for a different purpose, Brasile’s photograph of Mamadou makes a difference. It seems to have an explanatory power specially designed for the curator’s aim. Its outstanding placement on a lonely wall increases the probability that the audience will dig deeper into the image.

IMG. 1.32 — View of the iPad stand located in the museum hall, displaying the video *The postmen of the Mediterranean* (2013) by Kami Fares and Giulia Ardizzone. Photo by Dario Cieol.



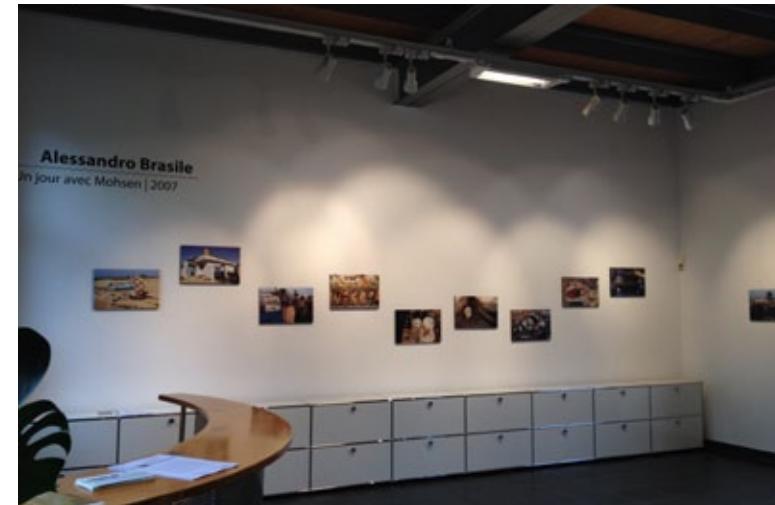
IMG. 1.33 — Two visitors using the iPad installation. Photo by kontext.lu.



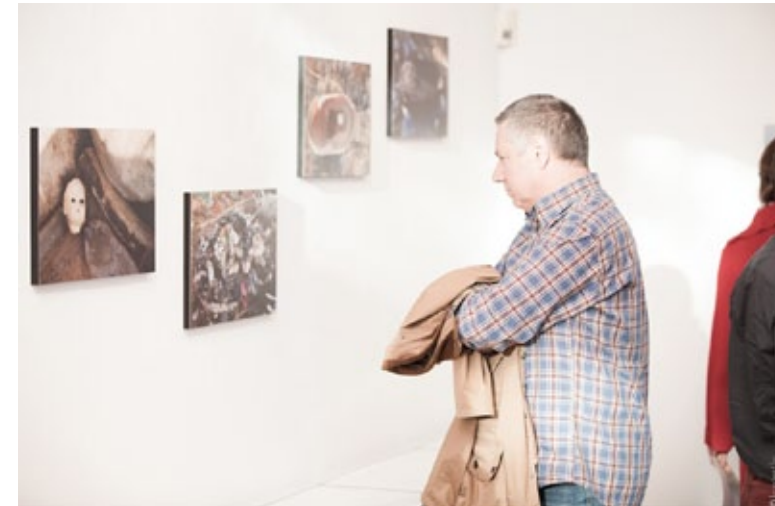
An area is left to gather the visitors around and review what has been perceived from the exhibition during the guided tours.

The audience continues through a longer corridor and upstairs. Separated by the empty corridor, the third part of the exhibition constituted of five photographs by Mattia Insolera, commences. As Anna Chiara Cimoli mentioned, the photographs are part of a series of Insolera's "Transmediterranea" project. On his photographs, Insolera illustrates the actors and the places with high contrasted and saturated colors, and with a strong focus on his point of interest. In most of his pictures the three actors are centred in oval fields, creating a sacred atmosphere. In other words, the objects of the museum are treated by their shepherd in a sacred way. It seems like a canonisation of Mohsen Lihidheb, the museum and its objects. Insolera's part of the exhibition bearing the title "Monuments de la Mer" draws parallel between the protagonist in the photographs and the urbanistic implementation of monuments in an old European tradition.

IMG. 1.34 — Alessandro Brasile's photographs. Photo by Anna Chiara Cimoli.



IMG. 1.35 — A visitor observing Alessandro Brasile's photographs. Photo by kontext.lu.



The four photographs taken in the Sea Memory Museum in Zarzis are arranged in a strict way. Lihidheb, represented in the highest photograph, is placed on the left—vertically seen—Golden Section of the wall. The other three smaller photographs are arranged on the same height with an equal distance between them.

When the visitors' eyes move downwards they discover themselves standing on a map of the Mediterranean. Counteracting the common view, the map shows neither national boundaries nor the names of countries; it is reduced to the shape created by the land and the sea. The map can be a helpful tool for guided tours: for example to talk about the water currents in the Mediterranean, distances between continents, borders, islands, or places visited by the audience. The map works as a kind of abstract compass. The four photographs are hung over the north African coast border, whereas the final photograph is located on the opposite wall, separated by the imaginary sea on the map; just above the western European coast.

IMG. 1.36 — View of the entrance to Mattia Insolera's section. Photo by Anna Chiara Cimoli.



IMG. 1.37 — Mattia Insolera's section with a detail of the floor map of the European continent. Photo by kontekst.lu.



This last photographic monument, called *Cimetière de bateaux de Lampedusa* is placed somewhat inconspicuous in the interactional corner.

On the European continent of the map, there is a desk covered with a guest book, several MeLa publications and an oversized glass bottle. The glass bottle is a symbolic reference to the messages in a bottle collected and sent by Mohsen Lihidheb. The visitors can create their own message—may it be painted or written—and put it into the bottle. All messages will be sent to Lihidheb.

Inspired by Lihidheb, the CDMH supported the curators' idea of giving birth to a digital story booklet related to the exhibition. On the first phase it will only be accessible for visitors or groups performing follow-up course work. As Lihidheb clearly points out, he regards the collected objects as a handshake with another person, the digital story booklet allows visitors to express their personal thoughts about an object-related experience; an object to which they assign a change of mind of affections or emotions.

The establishment of the different stories told in the digital booklet have a common source: the object-centredness. By growing and constantly reshaping the crowd-sourced contributions, the initiative could become a digital museum of migration and objects.

Educational workshops and surrounding activities

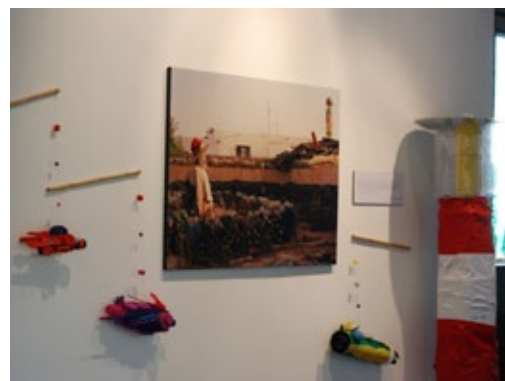
Educational workshops

The debarkation of an exhibition to another place might create new synergies. The CDMH had the great chance to partner up with other institutions to set up a row of eclectic educational workshops, since the institution itself does not have employees to do so.

The first workshop has been organised by the "Projet Ensemble" (Projet Ensemble 2013). The language courses for adults (Luxembourgish and



IMG. 1.38 — Mattia Insolera's *Cimetière de bateaux de Lampedusa* hanging over the writing desk. Photo by Dario Cieol.



PREVIOUS PAGE, IMGS. 1.39–44 — Views of the exhibition rooms arranged with primary school children's works. Photos by Dario Cieol.

THIS PAGE, IMG. 1.45 — Poster design for the event "Ceci n'est pas la mer à boire - La mer imaginée par les élèves de l'École d'Italie" (26 June 2014). Design by kontext.lu.

French) combined their graduation ceremony with a visit to the exhibition. The preparation work consisted of their own collages about their personal experiences associated with the Mediterranean. The tour was held in French and the students were invited to describe the pictures of Brasile and Insolera. Alex, one of the students, described the museum as a monumental wake-up call, stating that if we do not pay attention to our global ecological system in the future our gardens will look like Lihidheb's garden.

Located in the Italian Quartier, the CDMH, constantly looks for interactions and collaborations with other association of the neighborhood. The most recent was with the local elementary school, which approached the CDMH in order to organise an exhibition with children from six to ten years old. Having already scheduled the exhibition "The Memory of the Sea" after a meeting with the curators, the CDMH consented to combine both projects. By opposing initial positions. The idea was to create an analogy between the children's project and Lihidheb's sculptures, which are created with objects he collects from the sea, where he lives. Thus the children were to recreate the sea with objects collected nearby their homes and school, far away from the sea. Since the percentage of foreigners in the Italian Quartier is above the national level almost every children in the neighborhood come from different ethnicities and cultures, making their perceptions of the sea more interesting. According to the teacher, most of them still remember their first experience of a journey to the sea. The project, which is still in progress, shows fish as the most common thing being associated with the sea. Rich in complexity might nonetheless be the different chosen forms of representation. These kinds of dynamic interactions, which allow the kids to let their imagination flow, release the young artist spirit within them.

The guided tours were very dynamic tools to reach different groups. Scholars and student were attending. It was up to the teachers and professors, to use the input to develop further pedagogical activities.¹³ The messages written to Mohsen Lihidheb and the use of the digital story booklet give proof of the impact.

¹³ Christian Mertens deserves special thanks for his support and his contribution. As a teacher he treated several related subjects (immigration regulations and asylum politics, migration and identity related to personal experiences) with his students after the visit of the exhibition.

IMGS. 1.46–47 — “Projet Ensemble”: guided tour with a class of the Lycée Nic Bieber Dudelange. Photos by Christian Mertens.



Surrounding activities

Every year the event “Invitation aux Musées” is held in the whole country. The initiative was first brought up by the museums of the City of Luxembourg 17 years ago. Nearly all the museums of the whole country contribute with particular activities for this special occasion. No doubt, this year the CDMH will focus all the events around the MeLa exhibition. The CDMH’s programme was composed by a guided tour and a round table.

On May 17th the CDMH invited people to participate to the guided tours—“Invitation aux Musées – Invitation aux Quartiers”—arranged in collaboration with MeLa Project. The aim was to enrich both projects by exploring traces of migration and the sea by combining the guided tours of the exhibition and the Italian Quartier. The public was more than listeners and observers; they were critics who provided specific knowledge about the past of the quarter. A more visible trace of recent migration from the seaside were the signs of the Mediterranean



IMGS. 1.48–49 — “Invitation aux Musées – Invitation aux Quartiers”: guided tours of the exhibition and the Italian Quartier. Photos by Anna Chiara Cimoli.

restaurants. Spontaneous interactions between the participants and the habitants passing by completed a creative Saturday afternoon.

The next day, during the “Invitation aux Musées,” a perfect occasion was given by a fourth partner to have some more specific museum talks. For the first time the “Fondation Bassin Minier” organised the “Festival de la Culture Industrielle et de l’Innovation,” in collaboration with 27 cultural institutions from the south of Luxembourg. The motto of the festival is *workplaces*. Experts on the fields were invited to participate in a round table on the subject of the representation of migration. The round table was divided in two parts.

First, the migration museums and the Sea Memory Museum were presented as working spaces, with contributions from Anna Chiara Cimoli, Kami Fares and Mattia Insolera. Anna Chiara Cimoli pointed out the struggle of migration museums to promote an interactive approach and exemplified the extraordinariness of the Sea Memory Museum by

IMG. 1.50 — “Invitation aux Musées”: round table with Anna Chiara Cimoli, Mattia Insolera, and Carole Reckinger (left to right). Photo by Dario Cieol.



its ability to display objects in real time. Unfortunately, due to technical complications, Kami Fares was not able to attend the round table. Nevertheless, the video provided important information to further analyse the Sea Memory Museum as a workplace.

The second part consisted of the interventions of Mattia Insolera and Carole Reckinger. Mattia Insolera focused on his latest project promoted by the Caixa Foundation, *Surviving Greece*, to document the struggle of young Afghan migrants in Patras, Greece. The photographer elaborated in detail the use of Facebook as a new workspace that allows a more interactive approach with the covert goal to bring together an audience of different social and cultural backgrounds. Despite the often-criticised lack of privacy, the network remains very popular and it is used in many different forms (find distant relatives and childhood friends, share life experiences, insider tips, discovering places, meeting new people, etc.). Insolera, with his day on end photographic reportages, requests to represent migrants also with its common habits for example to other adolescents. Insolera paved the way for the final intervention with the series of photographs he took in the periphery of Patras from a group of young Afghan migrants working in the orange fields.

Carole Reckinger, a political science practitioner and photographer, spoke about the project “Bitter Oranges,” a work that is still in progress. In the project the orange orchards in Rosarno (Italy) are observed as the workspace (and surviving space) of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (*Bitter Oranges* 2013). Seeking for better understanding of the point of view from the people concerned, Carole Reckinger, Diana Reiner and Gilles Reckinger distributed cameras to the people working in orange fields and living in the surrounding areas of the camps. Reckinger concluded that the points of view did not vary much from her own photographs.

A common fact both lecturers pointed out were the low and informal paid wages. Neither in Rosarno nor in Patras could the workers (or working

survivors) gain more than 27 euros per day. It was argued, according to a question from the audience, that unlawful exploitation inside the European Union is hard to be controlled by consumers. A recognised fair trade label for the workplaces inside the European Union does not exist. After two productive hours, the round table came to its end. The discussions gently challenged the attendees to further analyse the topics raised above.

Conclusion

The exhibition “The Memory of the Sea” is a small treasure. In its actual form the exhibition introduces many related subjects, such as:

- museums as workplaces;
- the role of the objects in the museum;
- the practice of steady real time exhibiting;
- the sea and ecology;
- migration in the Mediterranean from an object-linked point of view with the ability to avoid contentious political opinions;
- new migration, memento(s) and recognition.

Regarding the divergence between the core exhibition and the outcome of the pedagogical workshops, it can be stated that the common perceptions of objects associated with the sea have definitely been deconstructed. Shells became bottles and boats. The objects in the “Sea Memory Museum” points out different and unperceived ways of how mankind is related to the sea.

May it be the imprints of teeth on the vents of the water tanks, may it be the letters of hope, prayers or other difficult objects to explain, such as shoes and other pieces of clothing. The Sea Memory Museum accumulates fragments of stories related to the practice of crossing the sea. The personal possessions of the sea crossers and castaways can be considered as their last retraceable sign of life or in any case as the last sign of an important stage in their lives.

Insolera series “Monuments de la Mer” underlines the previous comment. The bottles and the clothing washed up to the shores of Zarzis by the currents are collected and formed to monuments by Mohsen Lihidheb. In Lampedusa the boats confiscated by the coast guard involuntarily form another monument of the migration in the Mediterranean. Neither the boat cemeteries nor the reception center for asylum seekers are located in a known or accessible place (Reckinger 2013, 23). It’s a rarely requested subject, some kind of the same genre as it has been in the past for the establishment of Immigration and Emigration Museums. But probably the day will come that a rising minority and their descendants will claim a visible recognition of their past.

Dario Cieol

Dario Cieol’s text was edited by Gabriela Arias Jeffrey

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Rethinking Religion Representation as Transcultural Experience in Museums

The on-site Experimental Action at Museo Diocesano di Milano

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→ RELIGIOUS ASSETS AS POTENTIAL INTERCULTURAL HERITAGE

By the nature of their institutional role, museums are committed to improve society, pursuing strategies to facilitate dialogue between different cultures and solve issues arising from cultural diversity (Silverman 2010, 13). It is significant that in 1996, UNESCO adopted the Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development in which important principles were announced. In particular, a relevant role has been assigned to the dialogue between cultures, as a major social and political challenge and as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence.¹ UNESCO reiterated the importance of these statements in 2001 with the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, as well as in 2005 with the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, ratified by eighty countries (including Italy) at the end of 2007, thereby acquiring binding force (Bodo and Bodo 2007).

The museum has become more and more a “listening ear”² of a multi-cultural and intercultural society where cultures co-exist and debate. The

1 The “Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development” was adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development—Stockholm, Sweden, 2nd April 1998. Point 5 of the principles recognised: “The dialogue between cultures appears to be one of the fundamental cultural and political challenges for the world today; it is an essential condition of peaceful coexistence.” See website: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/cultural.pdf>, accessed 21st December 2013.

2 This expression has been used by the Anacostia Museum & Center for African American History and Culture’s director, during his conference presentation at the General Conference of ICOM in 1971.

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 1.51 — Museo Diocesano di Milano, Milan, Italy. Expert users exploring by tablets the content of the artworks in the “Sala della Confraternita e del SS. Sacramento e S. Caterina” during the first user test of the on-field experimental action at the museum. Photo by Davide Spallazzo.

intercultural dialogue relies on differences among cultures or “diversities” considered and enhanced as resources for mutual understanding. The museum, accepting the challenge to describe and interact with society, could be the privileged place in which these resources can be endorsed.

One of the most interesting and controversial themes of the intercultural debate is interreligious dialogue.

The representation of religious issues in the public discourse of contemporary society seems to be a difficult issue. Problems of identity, diversity and dialogue among different cultures are amplified whenever religious aspects are involved. That is an important concern for museums (Benoit 2010; Capurro 2013).

Few museums have a formal policy on religious issues, and instead religious museums—representing one or more religions—are considered the proper place to develop narratives on religion and religious issues. These bodies have the responsibility to use their collections to promote mutual understanding between people in the whole field of religious faith and practice (Paine 2013, 12).

In any case, the *mise en scène* of religious museums is not a neutral topic but is affected by cultural settings and by the contexts of the museums themselves. There are different approaches to what can be summarised under the label of “religion.” Talking about religion can imply the different aspects. As far as discursive strategies are concerned, three approaches are possible, according to the following frame:

- **discussion of religion**, when contesting, discussing on, undermining religious identities (the discussion around the aspects of identity of a religion is not intrinsically intercultural, but by questioning religious fundamentalism it is possible to open up to the following interreligious dialogue);
- **discussion among religions**, when confronting, dialoguing about, or questioning religious diversities and frictions (since this approach stimulates confrontation, it fosters the interreligious dialogue among different religions, be it in a neutral way—by juxtaposing symbols or beliefs—or in a provocative way—raising frictions);
- **discussion through religion**, when dialoguing among diversities (this approach fosters an intercultural dialogue because it uses religion to open the discussion and confrontation in a wider cultural sphere (Capurro and Lupo 2013).

For the creation of an effective project, which has intercultural dialogue as its main goal, the work team had to consider all of these variables and possible frictions.

The setting of the experimental action here presented, is the Museo Diocesano (Diocesan Museum), owned by the Church of Milan and opened in 2001. Its collection mainly comprises art and sacred art. The site is well known in Milan because it is a very active node in the cultural life of the city, housing various cultural projects and exhibitions. It is the

natural setting for presenting a project of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as its mission clearly indicates:

The Diocesan Museum is a place dedicated to the hopes and needs of our society, a place where art meets Christian wisdom. Open to everybody, it invites visitors in search of the meaning of life to take an active part in its initiatives. With its cloister, an area increasingly available for public use, its library and bookshop, it is not only an historical site but one which is both lively and liveable. Closely linked to the museum’s underlying mission is its aim to be seen as a space which is accessible, dynamic and enjoyable. (<http://www.museodiocesano.it/museo/mission>)

Besides these aspects, it is important to underline that the Church of Milan is very active in the field of intercultural and interfaith dialogue, with different institutions promoted partly by Caritas Ambrosiana, such as the Centro Come,³ and partly by organisations promoting interreligious dialogue and unity, such as the Forum of Religions (FRM),⁴ the Milan Council of Christian Churches (CCCM),⁵ the European Ecumenical Centre for Peace (CEEP),⁶ and the Ambrosian Centre of Dialogue with Religions (CADR).⁷ Many of these institutions’ activities have been successfully implemented in the social sphere, especially in the city of Milan, a particularly multicultural area with over 220,000 foreign immigrants out of a total population of about 1,300,000 (Istat - Italian National Institute of Statistics, 2010). Over the last two decades, while xenophobic groups have vehemently opposed the integration of immigrants into the community, the Church of Milan has shown fierce determination to make the city a welcoming place for people of all ethnic, racial, cultural and religious backgrounds (Camponio 2006). In this challenging context the museum has yet to develop specific programmes for improving interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Indeed, the choice of this museum for the experimental action is very stimulating for all these different reasons and because, as a religious museum, it is an appropriate venue for religious narratives, discussing this topic, by stimulating debates, and fostering equality and dialogue among different communities (Capurro 2010, 108).

→ AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT PHASES

The experimental action here discussed has two main aims: the first is verifying some theoretical propositions about the intercultural potentials of digital and mobile technologies elaborated by the authors within the MeLa Project framework (Lupo et al. 2014), and the second is discussing and verifying the intercultural potential of religion and the role of the

3 <http://www.centrocome.it>, accessed 21st December 2013.

4 <http://www.forumreligionimilano.org>, accessed 21st December 2013.

5 <http://www.consigliochiesemilano.org>, accessed 21st December 2013.

6 <http://www.ceep.it>, accessed 21st December 2013.

7 <http://www.cadr.it>, accessed 21st December 2013.

museum as an ideal place for the encounters of different religions.

The theoretical frameworks propose three possible attitudes according to which museums and cultural institutions can invite people to deal with diversity (Lupo et al. 2014):

- **Multicultural storytelling:** it conceives and represents different cultures alongside each other, but in a separate way.
- **Intercultural dialogue:** it identifies interconnections among cultures and represents dialogue and contaminations.
- **Transcultural practice:** is characterised by the practice of passing through cultures, calling the audience to a displacement towards other cultures.

Furthermore the project is based on the use of digital technologies, such as video narrations, performative interaction and 3D visualisations meant to stimulate different interpretations on the cultural assets and intends technology as:

a transversal driver that intercepts place/space, content and sociality within museums, functioning as a medium that widens the relation between visitor and content to the ones among visitors and content-in-space and visitors and visitors. (Allen and Lupo 2012, 163)

The development of a digital interface in the museum, together with a platform enabling comments, and the production of contributions on religious topics, should facilitate the connections and relations among visitors with different cultures.

The most promising aspect of bringing technologies in the museum come through an approach that is well informed by the technological culture form which these technologies and their use-patterns and values emerge. That is, thinking “eco-systemically” about what it means to bring technological interventions into the culture and historical context of a cultural or heritage institution, and vice versa. (Allen and Lupo 2012, 26)

The main focus is designing a visitor experience capable of transforming a contemplative visit into an interactive and contributory one, possibly enabling and stimulating intercultural dialogue too.

Religious cultural assets have been chosen for their inherent intercultural potential (Capurro and Lupo 2013), and in particular, the experimental action regards five paintings of the collection of Museo Diocesano selected in the so-called “Sala della Confraternita del SS. Sacramento e S. Caterina.”

Five paintings from the 18th century representing various miracles about the Eucharist were chosen because of the topics they deal with (miracles and Eucharist)—topics that are quite exclusively Christian—and because their figurative as well as iconographic language can be difficult to understand, not only for non-Christian or -Catholic people, but also for contemporary Italians with a religious background. This choice



was meant to fully test the potential of digital technology both in helping the interpretation of artworks and exploiting them as stimuli for dialogue and confrontation.

The project is a pilot experience and the action has been accordingly limited to only five paintings of the collection, selected not only for their relevance within the group, but also for the different topics with which they deal.

Two groups of the MeLa consortium take part in this ongoing activity: the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano and ITIA from CNR (National Research Council), which express design (and partially curatorial) skills and technological and programming abilities respectively. The curators as well as the director of Museo Diocesano are not directly involved in the design activities but act as dialoguing partners in the evaluation of the project and its results. The methodology adopted to structure, evaluate and improve the project is design-driven and consists of an iterative process that goes back and forth between theory and practice in a progression of design, testing and reflection, involving several actors at different stages of the project.

This research-by-design is indeed structured in activities that can be grouped into two categories: research actions and on-field experimental actions. The first kind of actions are meant to build a theoretical framework for the project, to define the curatorial part and to evaluate the test sessions; while the second group of activities are hands-on and aimed at gathering information, data and feedback from on-field tests.

Six main activities define the general structure of the project:

→ **Phase 1. Institutional interpretation (Research)**

The first phase consists of the defining of the curatorial structure of the project and in setting up the first user test.

→ **Phase 2. Authoritative and multicultural content gathering (Experimental action)**

The second phase consists of establishing a prototype to conduct a test with experts and specialists in the field of intercultural dialogue, religion, art history and interpretation with different cultural backgrounds. The aim of the test is to get feedback about the prototype and to gather content, as well as interpretation or merely hints from experts in the field.

IMG. 1.52 — Five 18th century paintings of the “Sala della Confraternita del SS. Sacramento e S. Caterina” in the Museo Diocesano, Milan, representing various miracles about the Eucharist. Courtesy Museo Diocesano di Milano. From left: *Saint Peter Martyr unveils the false Holy Mary* (Filippo Abbiati), *The Communion of Saint Stanislaus Kostka* (Gaetano Dardanone), *Saint Bernard frees a possessed woman with the Eucharist* (Federico Ferrari), *The miracle of the child returned unharmed from the furnace for receiving the Communion* (Carlo Preda), *Saint Catherine of Siena sees out a flame from the consecrated bread* (Giovanni Battista Costa).

→ **Phase 3. Data analysis and content selection (Research/Reflections)**

The third activity comprises the evaluation of the prototype in the light of the expert users' feedback and the selection and re-arrangement of their contributions in order to build a multi-vocal interpretation for the artworks.

The following phases are an iteration of the previous ones:

→ **Phase 4. Design of a multi-vocal interpretation/narration (Research/Envisioning)**

In this activity, the contents created in the first phase are discussed and implemented on the basis of the user-generated content (Phase 2). The role of museum curators is highly relevant here, in order to build up a coherent multifaceted interpretation of the artworks.

→ **Phase 5. Performance and social-oriented intercultural experience (Experimental action)**

The fifth activity is based on a second on-field experimental action and involves non-expert users (e.g. second-generation immigrants and foreign communities resident in Milan). The second test is meant to evaluate the ability of the designed interpretive model to encourage intercultural dialogue and direct social engagement.

→ **Phase 6. Data analysis and envisioning (Research/Envisioning)**

The last phase comprises a critical evaluation of the project in the light of the second user test, aimed at evaluating whether the proposed model actually stimulates and enhances the intercultural dialogue and confrontation.

→ **GENERAL FRAMEWORK: EXPERIMENTAL ACTIONS AND DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION**

This experimental action framework was created in order to define a process that can be tested by real users in a real context. After designing the whole framework it is necessary to verify the hypothesis through an empirical way and achieve a repeatable model of study. This model presents two different meanings:

- the first one is about a museological approach, focussed on the relationship between works of art and improvement of the knowledge of the content;
- the second one is about a museographical approach, focussed on the relationship between exhibition devices and visitor.

In projects like this, it is very important to integrate into the design process the verifying of requirements through tests and specific sessions of discussion.

The potential feedback by visitors is a central point of the project, allowing us to correctly set the whole direction of the project attitude. It

is useful not only to verify the coherence of the development but also to understand the further potentialities of the visitation system.

The experimental actions are intended to be conducted in two different steps, conceptualised and tailored for different visitor targets: expert users and a general audience.

The first test involves experts and specialists in art and/or religions (e.g. art critics, art historians, museum curators, people with a deep knowledge of their own religion: priests, theologians, rabbis, etc.). This test was designed to verify and review the efficacy of the interpretative tools in enhancing the visitors' experience and to improve the displayed content. Through user-generated content (UGC)—a collection of different expert opinions and a wide range of religious beliefs—the aim is to increase the potential multi-vocality of the narrative. Having collected different religious points of view, the issues addressed to the second test—individuals will be improved by the feedback obtained from this first test—individuals.

The second test involves general users, non-specialists, but those personally interested in the intercultural exchange (e.g. second generation immigrants and foreign community residents in Milan). This step allows us to add new content to pre-empt the next steps, while also understanding whether the intercultural model of socialisation through performative and connective technologies is functional or not.

Each path mentioned, namely specialist (to expert users) and non-specialist (to general audience), proposes six dynamics of interaction: contemplative, interpretative, contributive, explorative, performative and connective.

Contemplative: visitors are invited to look closely at one of the five paintings showing different aspects of the miracle in the “Sala della Confraternita.” A tablet is given them. This device must be pointed at the painting in order to reproduce the image on the screen and with that, the video starts. Visitors watch a video on the tablet which—through some visual effects and an audio-narrative—highlights specific elements of the painting useful to understand the composition, the symbolic meaning of the objects therein, the gestures, the sacral clothing and accessories. The idea is to increase the observation experience through digital technologies, amplifying and enriching temporal and spatial horizons of vision, and also showing not so obvious links among the works.

Interpretative: visitors are encouraged to relate information achieved via the proposed video, together with the visitor's own previous knowledge, by answering a questionnaire on the device at the end of the video narrative. This questionnaire proposes some issues around the subject of the painting but also about crucial topics emerged starting from the painting. Technology itself acts as a facilitator, providing the user with different interpretations of the subject and stimulating critical reflection.

Contributive: visitors can add a personal contribution directly to the tablet's folders (i.e. a literary, historical, philosophical or artistic reference; links to other topics or objects and their meanings; the imaginative representation of their religious view or expression of their culture).

This kind of dynamic contribution involves the direct participation of the user called to provide a personal interpretation of the work, and a visiting experience embracing previous knowledge, cultural references or relevant quotations. Therefore a sort of “basket of religious references” is enriched by the contribution-to-contribution approach—thereby enhancing future visits.

Explorative: visitors explore intersecting paths and intercultural meanings thanks to technological devices and/or intervention by cultural mediators. Each painting offers visitors several levels of reading and interpretation. Besides this, they can discover several links between objects represented in the paintings and other ones in the museum collection, or those diffused in the region. Therefore, one has a model of cultural experience consisting of a visit in situ and external references, beyond the museum.

Performative: one of the aims of the project is to introduce performative (or gestural) action through digital technologies. The general user (non-specialist path) is able to activate some content on the tablet with gestures and actions consistent with different cultural practices, avoiding standard interactions with the technological tools and stereotypes of interaction (i.e. touch, click, move and drag). Introducing the gestural experience means to aim to the memory of the visit through the memory of the body. The theme of these paintings has a strong ritual content, therefore the introduction of the gesture in the visit is coherent with the framework of the expected cultural experience.

Connective: digital technologies connecting people to the cultural heritage (community building) act as a facilitator for social relations. Community-building processes come as a result of direct social involvement, or through a consistence presence of technology, allowing a better knowledge of the other cultures. The museum should have this aim: to increase the intercultural dialogue through a transcultural practice. In this way, one supposes this “connective” dialogue continues beyond the museum visit in order to implement the knowledge of intercultural contents through artistic material.

For the five paintings chosen, the visitor experience has been composed by different possible activities (not meant to be performed in a chronological order or necessarily all together) corresponding to six interaction dynamics:

- **to listen and watch:** listen to the explanation about the painting while watching a short video on the tablet (or projection) highlighting some specific elements;
- **to interpret:** interpret while answering the questions at the end of the video (by means of digital devices like tablet or smart phones);
- **to contribute:** suggest some literary, historical, philosophical or iconographic-artistic references and add links about the painting topics and objects, or write a comment starting from your own culture, religion and experience;
- **to explore:** look for and discover the intercultural paths and content

in the painting (by means of digital personal or collective devices, interactive table or by means of a cultural mediator);

- **to perform:** activate content through gestures and actions consistent with cultural practices, using 3D digital models or other technological system able to multiply content;
- **to share/to link:** connect people and share content with them, also connect the content of the paintings with other objects and meanings.

For the specialist users test, addressing the gathering of authoritative and multi-vocal and multi-perspectival points of view contents, the relevant interaction dynamics are (see table): to listen-interpret-contribute-link.

1ST TEST OCTOBER 2013	Users: experts - Objective: authoritative & intercultural contents gathering			
	Level 1: LISTEN	Level 2: INTERPRET	Level 3: CONTRIBUTE	Level 4: LINK
CULTURAL CONTENTS	Artistic and historical info on the painting; “narration” of the miracle	Contents on specific critical topics/issues related to the painting	New interpretative paths on specific proposed topics associated to the painting	Connections with other issues and works of art of the museum
DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION	Passive: listen to the audio and watch the video animation	Active: answer to a structured questionnaire on “fiction issues”	Active UGC: serious interpretations, tags, references to other works of art or literature in the personal culture/ religion	Active UGC: link with other cultures

TABLE 1.01 — First user test: summarising schema.

For the second test, addressing the general audience, the relevant interaction dynamics are (see table): to listen-explore-perform-contribute-share.

In this experimental action, the multicultural storytelling (created by overwritten content) multiplies the narratives about the painting. The intercultural dialogue is activated thanks to a multi-level cultural experience and transcultural practice is facilitated through the performative and contributive approach.

This format of cultural experience is focussed on variable features in terms of specific works of art in the museum involved and on constant elements repeatable in other contexts. In this case the variable features are the specific pieces of the Museo Diocesano’s collection, their content, and the suggestions useful to create links and topics. The constant elements are in the format of the framework, in the structure of the dynamics of interaction, in the design of the relationship between visitor and contents through several ways of knowledge and interaction.

TABLE 1.02 — Second user test: summarising schema.

2ND TEST SPRING 2014	Users: generic audience - Objective: contents performing & intercultural sharing			
	Level 1: LISTEN & LEARN	Level 2: INTERPRET & EXPERIENCE/ PERFORM	Level 3: CONTRIBUTE	Level 4: LINK & SHARE
CULTURAL CONTENTS	Artistic and historical info on the painting; "narration" of the miracle	Contents on specific critical topics/issues related to the painting	New interpretative paths on specific proposed topics associated to the painting	Connections with other issues and works of art of the museum
DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION	Passive: listen to the audio and watch the video animation	Active: "perform" specific contents	Active: add your comments on similar experiences, tags, rating and reference to your culture/religion	Active: share and link with other people for confrontation

→ PERFORMED ACTIONS: FIRST TEST WITH EXPERT USERS

The first pilot test took place in October 2013.⁸ A path for the evaluation of content was offered to 15 specialists (such as museum curators, theologians, priests, religious of different religions, cultural mediators): their contributions helped to verify the hypotheses behind the project, by offering an eminent interpretation of religious values related to intercultural integration within the Museo Diocesano.

Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design with ITIA-CNR presented historical and artistic content in relation to the artwork included in the project through a tablet, using both the form of narrative description and an interactive questionnaire.

The test consisted in a guided experience concerning the five paintings selected within the "Sala della Confraternita del SS. Sacramento e S. Caterina." The experience was supported by video animation and a digital platform. Both these digital tools were designed to stimulate multifaceted interpretations, to enable comments and contributions, and possibly to encourage confrontation among the visitors.

The tablets were set to recognise the paintings and, by simply approaching and framing the artworks, to activate their related content. These devices guided the expert users through three out of the six steps composing the experimental model and considered the most pertinent and appropriated for a specialist audience: to listen—to interpret—to contribute.

Initially, the expert users listened and watched the video animation and finalised the narration of the miracles. Secondly, they were invited to conduct a personal interpretation of the associated topic of the painting. And finally, they were invited to complement their interpretation by providing references to other works of art, literature or iconography. Furthermore, experts were also asked to provide comments and look for parallelisms and analogies or, eventually frictions, with their own beliefs, and to support them with appropriate references.

The use of technologies, even if currently limited to the development of video animation on tablet, offered an interesting opportunity to make the paintings more eloquent than the short printed captions currently providing the museum's only interpretative apparatus. Nevertheless, the application of digital technologies has to be observed from an in-progress perspective. These tools may become more effective in addressing the social and virtual dimensions and the gestural interactive dynamics, which could activate multiple and augmented religious content by adding further meanings to the museum environment and experience.

Tablets are currently the tools being utilised, but an interactive-digital-desk could also be another instrument to facilitate interactions among visitors, allowing multi-participation at the same time.

The results of the first test have been examined and the critique by experts became a guideline for following development of the project. For example, some positive (and controversial) aspects arose, like the idea of the video narration. On the one hand, few experts considered the video as a disruption from the real view of the paintings, on the other hand, the majority of them affirmed how effectively videos capture and focus the attention of an audience on the subjects, by highlighting contents and messages.

Moreover, the first step was useful also in terms of collection of cultural contents, associated with specific elements of the paintings.

The experimental project has some weak points as well: in particular the need for a better connection between the topics (e.g. disease and faith) and the miracles presented in the paintings has been highlighted. Another aspect underlined by the invited professionals is the idea to make the topics more social, dialogical, and closer to the daily life of visitors. The topic of heresy could be a useful example. In fact, in order to talk today about heresy, we need to dissociate it from certain the 17th century meanings and beliefs, linking it to contemporary issues. Even more, experts suggested a stress on the relations between a user's personal past experiences and the theme represented in the paintings. The focal aim is to allow a personal identification with the theme expressed in the artwork, in order to facilitate a deeper comprehension of it.

The experts' contributions were useful also for the technical setting of the digital devices. As far as this point is concerned, the impossibility adding arguments about the expressed opinions in the structured questionnaire (multiple choice questions) and the difficulty of fostering discussion and confrontation around the topics was underlined.

8 <http://www.mela-blog.net/archives/3021>, accessed 21st December 2013.

IMG. 1.53 — Expert users using tablets in front of the artworks during the first user test. Photo by Davide Spallazzo.



IMG. 1.54 — First user test session. In the foreground some experts are adding a personal interpretation on the desktops (level 3—contribute and level 4—link) while in the background other super-users are experiencing the use of tablets (level 1—listen and level 2—interpret). Photo by Sara Radice.



IMG. 1.55 — Screenshots of the video animation: highlighted some details in the artwork. Courtesy of Museo Diocesano di Milano. On the left *The Communion of Saint Stanislaus Kostka*; in the centre *Saint Peter Martyr unveils the false Holy Mary* and, on the right, *Saint Catherine of Siena sees out a flame from the consecrated bread*.



The experts' contributions were therefore important in connecting curatorial content with cultural, artistic, literary references and to link them with multicultural themes.

Some remarks on the five sample paintings follow:

- *The Communion of Saint Stanislaus Kostka* represents the saint during his journey to Rome receiving the Holy Communion by an angel. The story of San Stanislaus presents the topic of pilgrimage, an element that is commonly considered a way of separating from the secular and approaching the sacred in many religions. The experts focussed on issues such as journey, hermitage, voluntary reclusion, and, of course, the Eucharist. Some connections with other cultures emerged such as the Kumbh Mela—the mass Hindu pilgrimage in which Hindus gather to bathe in a sacred river. Other suggestions regard the objects presented in the paintings.
- *Saint Peter Martyr unveils the false Holy Mary* is instrumental in dealing with the dichotomies: truth/deception and orthodoxy/heresy. The experts suggested some symbols or figures able to represent this ambiguity between good and evil, as the mythological figure of Janus Bifrons. The interpretation of this theme suggested also a reflection about illusion in artworks (*trompe l'oeil*). A lot of iconographic references have been associated with this painting: for example the same subject is in fresco in the Cappella Portinari in Sant'Eustorgio Church. This specific painting favours a wider dialogue about transreligious topics that can sometimes cause frictions: the concept of martyrdom while extremely actual may vary depending on the religion.
- *Saint Catherine of Siena sees out a flame from the consecrated bread* suggested different issues about liturgy, ecstasy and faith. Moreover, this work surfaces a reflection about similar ways of participating in ceremonial services; the specific use of ritual objects proper of each religion; liturgical dresses and objects. The museum collection has a section of liturgical jewellery which will become relevant in the second phase of the experimental action when the connection between paintings, museum works and other religious objects will be used to define the interreligious dialogue.
- *The miracle of the child returned unharmed from the furnace for receiving the Communion* offers the opportunity to speak about the rites of passage that are common to several cultures and about the blessing of saints or of other holy figures. One of the experts reported the example of Ceylon houses, where a wood mask is hung after the childbirth to keep away the Evil. Many artistic references were suggested regarding the Holy Mary as an intercession figure (i.e. Lady of Mercy).
- *Saint Bernard frees a possessed woman with the Eucharist* speaks of the presence of evil that can be rejected through the intercession of a person or of an object. Moreover, the practice of exorcism is not a catholic prerogative, but it is also present in other religions. The

Eucharist, at its essence, is nourishment and therefore also a common point amongst other cultures and religions.

The test was designed to develop a participatory model aimed at the acquisition of authoritative and possibly multicultural content generated by the users' contributions. This content was analysed and critically evaluated in collaboration with the museum's curators, and will be used for the second pilot test addressed to an intercultural public.

→ FORTHCOMING ACTIONS: SECOND TEST WITH PUBLIC

The final activity to be performed is the second pilot test with the general public.

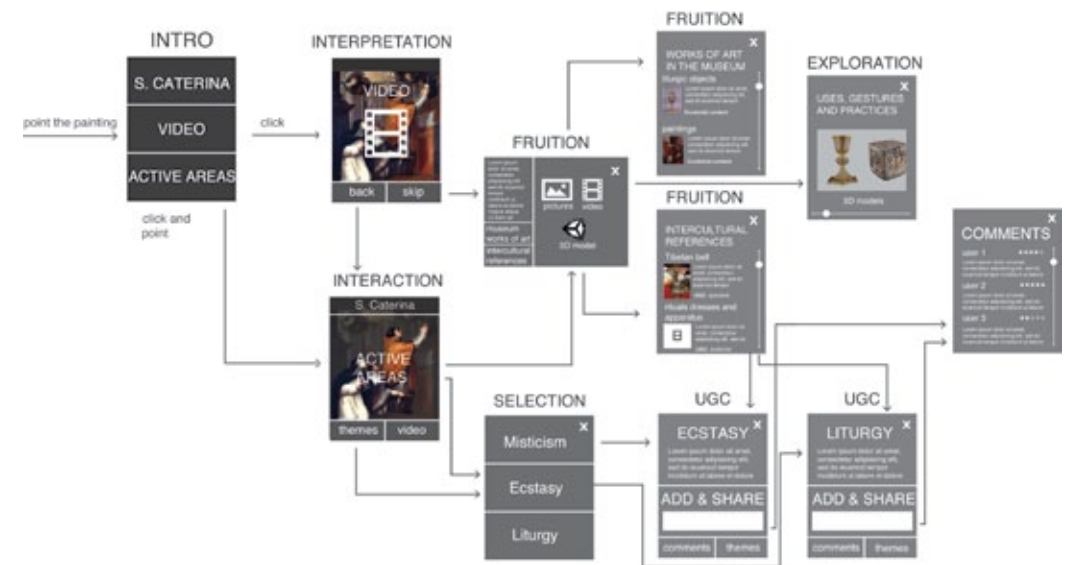
During the second test, expected to be concluded in Spring 2014, is conducted with the intention of increasing the use of technology devices (with the introduction of tools based on augmented reality, characterised by the three-dimensional reproduction of museum works, and the use of social networks). Capitalising on the content gathered during the first test with a specialist audience, the second phase will verify the dynamics of interaction and steps of experience conceived as more appropriated for a non-specialist audience: explore-perform-contribute-share.

The experience will therefore be designed to offer augmented and multiple points of view on the religious content and topics, using the intercultural suggestions and references provided by the experts—looking for a more active, social and participative interaction. By exploiting the technologies, visitors will be able to: access and explore parallel interpretative paths along the same painting, or details linked to different cultures or religions; browse content and media (video, pictures) related to other religious heritage, such as objects and works of art within the Museo Diocesano or other religious museums; enjoy additional virtual contents like 3D models; activate all that content by performing and simulating gestures and actions that may be consistent with the religious content; to better understand rituals and beliefs (e.g. using ritual or liturgics objects, etc); and finally to share opinions and connections in real time with other visitors.

These exchanges will be amplified by using the museum social platforms in the context of a live event that will be launched in order to stimulate the online participation of museum followers.

Currently, the meta-design phase of this second test is ongoing. The research team is discussing different hypotheses and tools (analogue and digital) for creating a new visitor experience (addressing the non-specialist audience) that will reach both the scientific objective of the research and the aim of valorisation within a heritage and museum sphere.

In particular, concerning the research objective, this second test will provide feedback especially useful for assessing the effectiveness of ICT in mediating the multi-vocal and multifaceted contents' understandability (UGC level), as well as the accessibility and engagement of "perform"



and "share" dynamics: these experiences have not been explored enough in terms of successful intercultural dialogue.

Regarding the use of digital devices, the "explore" dynamic can be supported by tablets or interactive tables; the "perform" dynamic by tablets or gesture capture and projections; the "contribute" by portable devices (such as smartphones and tablets) or interactive tables; the "share" one by portable devices (again, smartphones and tablets) or interactive tables. The "explore" and "share" dynamics can be supported analogically by cultural mediators too.

The visitors will be guided in two phases experience, the first part of which will be digitally based, while the second will mix analogue with digital tools. This combination will allow us to really understand how the experience and interaction among users is affected by the use of digital devices.

For the first phase, the test will be conducted individually using digital devices, by viewing the short video introducing the features of a selected painting (of St. Caterina) and the related transcultural topic, exploring, through a specifically designed app, the multi-vocal contents and references, triggering questions, which stimulate personal comments and experiences. In particular, at this stage of design of the app, the aforementioned multi-vocal content, curated by the museum curator together with the design team, has been organised into a kind of architecture, which includes:

- Institutional curatorial issues (artistic and historical info);
- Details of elements represented in the painting (divided into characters, gestures and objects) and possible related intercultural issues;

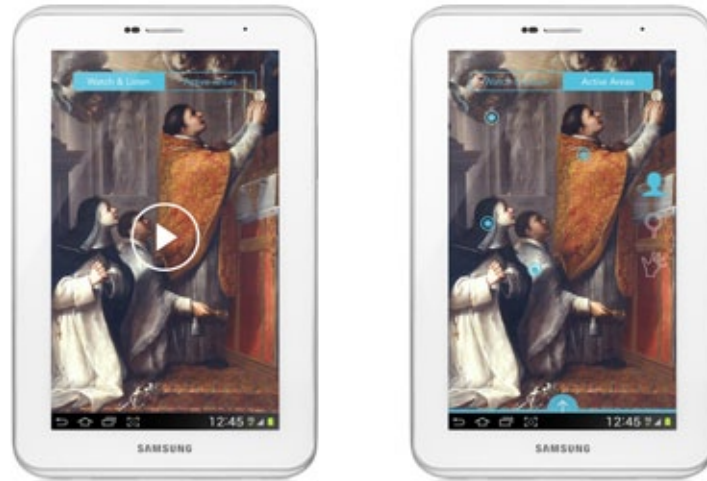
IMG. 1.56 — Initial user experience flow chart. This visualisation aims to path the users' actions through the interface from the first level; pointing the tablet to the painting, to the following tasks; such as fruition of information, exploring intercultural references and comments. Visualisation by Davide Spallazzo.

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IMG. 1.57 — Visual simulations of the first application area. With the division of the tab on the top, the user has either the possibility to follow a narrative video about the painting as a linear fruition, or land to the active area section. Here, he can deepen information depending on his personal interest, related to the subjects in the painting, their gestures and the objects they interact with. Visual design by Ece Özdil.

IMG. 1.58 — Visual simulations of the navigation system. Other than the information pinned on the painting, with the use of the hidden menu, the user can learn more about the painting and its related themes. Visual design by Ece Özdil.

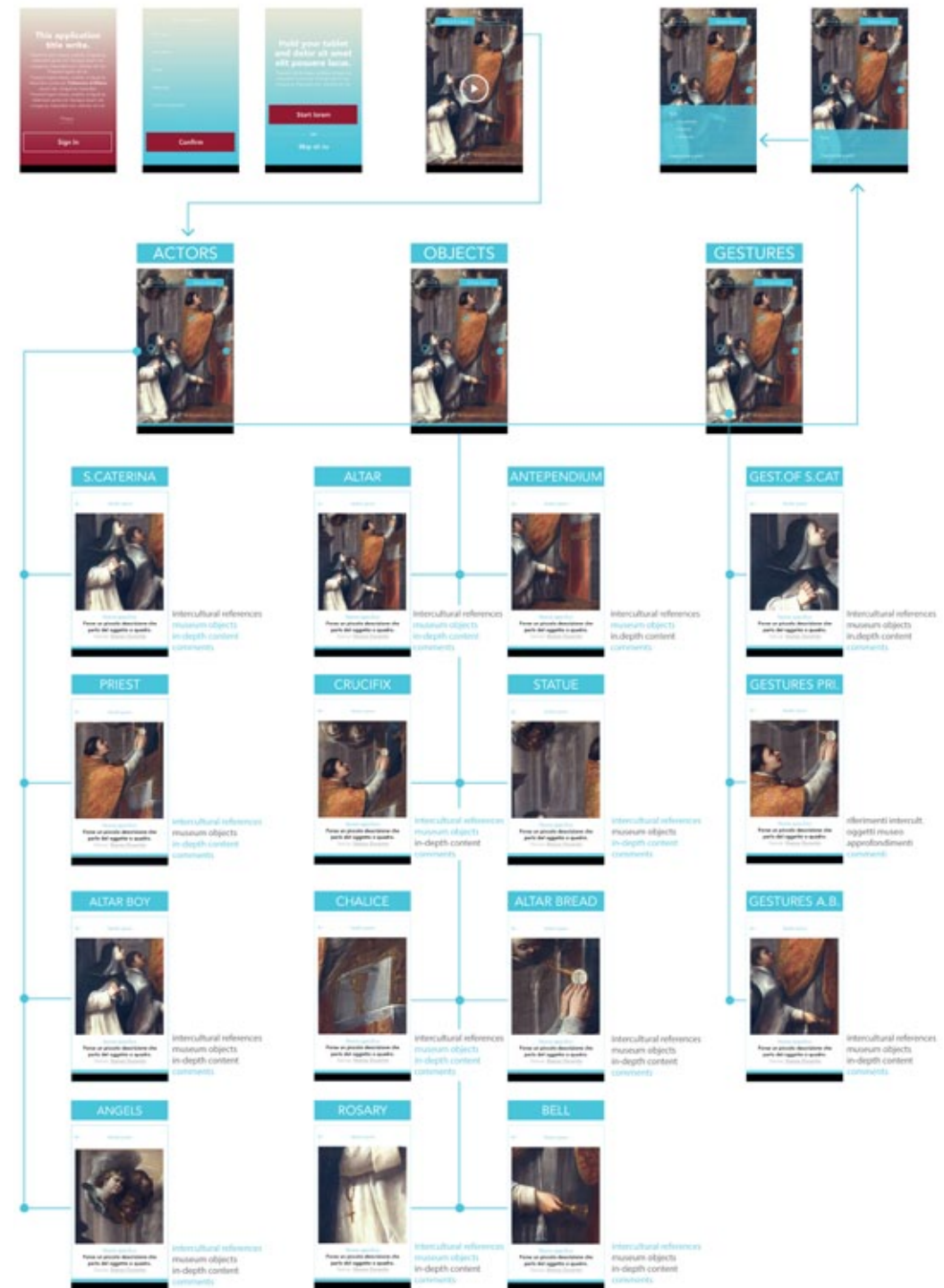
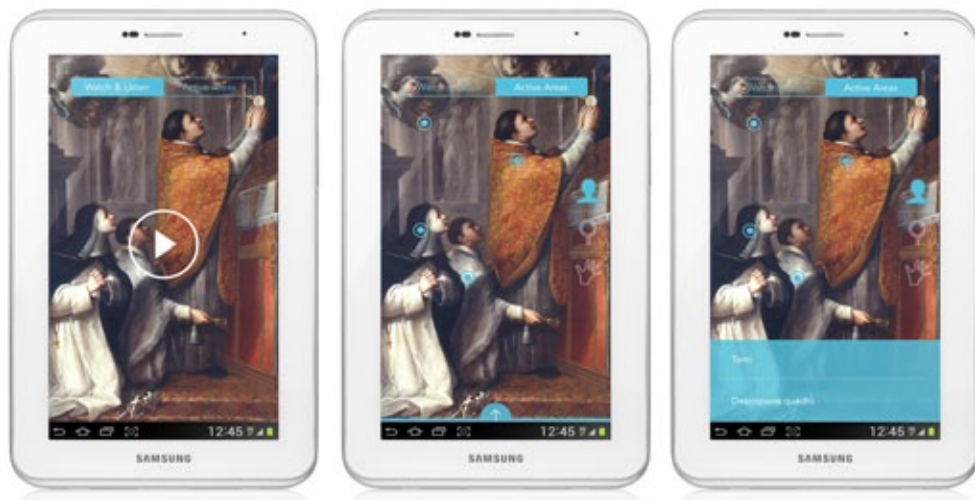
NEXT PAGE, IMG. 1.59 — Final user experience flow chart with a detailed view of the user's possible actions in the active area section. This visualisation also maps possible additional information such as: related objects from the museum's collection, intercultural references and themes. Visualisation by Davide Spallazzo and Ece Özdil.



Watch & Listen
The visitors can use the tablet to watch and listen a narrative video about the painting.



Active Areas
The visitors have also the possibility to deepen some information through the themes of the painting, related to the subjects in the work, their gestures and the objects they interact with.



- Intercultural users generated content;
- Links to other museums' works of art.

During the second phase, visitors will be invited to contribute to a collective discussion by way of a physical mood board. In addition, an educator or mediator will propose some of the topics of the app, especially the ones that have resulted from the test which invite further comments and raised controversial opinions.

Contributing and sharing will be increased and implemented by real time storytelling of the event on the museum social networks (i.e. Storify), in an attempt to engage the public from a remote distance in an online dialogue by interacting with them using questions and comments posted in the social networks.

The concrete actions planned are (the final design choices of this second test will be affected by time and the budget constrains of the research project):

- Choice and recruiting the audience: the age (probably secondary school) and the cultural background (second generation immigrants and foreign community residents in Milan) are still to be decided;
- Definition of the content architecture: a preliminary architecture format, suitable for each painting, has been designed as an empty frame to be filled with specific content and adjusted to the necessities of the specific work of art (i.e. number of links and layers related to the painting);
- Curation of content for each painting, which will include, as a format, all of the following typologies of contents: multi-vocal interpretation (the crossreligious issue selected for the painting, contents related to elements such as objects and gestures represented in the painting, the intercultural contents generated by the "super-users" UGC); links to other museums' works of art; links with works of art in the region; links with other themes;
- Definition of the final test modalities (structure, mode- analogue/digital, individual/group, mixes of the above, educational activities);
- Prototyping of the tools (digital, such as 3D models, interfaces, apps, as well as analogue);
- Conducting the test with the audience;
- Evaluating the results and possible implementations/envisioning (re-framing the conceptual framework and strategy for designing intercultural experiences in religious museums).

→ CRITICAL EVALUATION: WEAKNESS, STRENGTHS, FIRST RESULTS

One of the assumptions of this experimental action is the possibility of improving the intercultural and interreligious dialogue within museums

through an experience augmented by digital technologies. This assumption is based on the fact that the contemporary digital technologies and devices are the most commonly used to engage audience participation, collaboration and sharing in museums (Allen and Lupu 2012). Indeed this was, and still is, a crucial question.

Many scholars, when it comes to the proximity of religion and technologies, become very critical. Through new media, religious behaviours and beliefs have entered in the mainstream of global culture: in the "age of digital reproducibility" the sacred and the religious experience too are diffused, reproduced and repeated by means of digital technologies (Groys 2010). The temporary exhibition "Medium Religion", held at ZKM between 2008–2009, demonstrated this "medial aspect" of religion that moved

from the private sphere of personal belief out into the public sphere of visual communication. In this, religions function as machines for the repetition and mass medial distribution of mechanically produced images. (<http://www02.zkm.de/mediumreligion>)

One example is the art installation, *bios [bible]* (2007) by Robotlab,⁹ which, in the discourse of freedom of faith, raises the question of reproducibility of religion by new digital technologies (Groys 2011). The work performs the religious ritual (handwriting) by mechanical reproduction in order to deliberately provoke reflection.

So the question remains open: are religious heritage, rituals and practices enhanced or diminished (maybe oversimplified or even profaned) if represented or mediated by the use of digital technologies?

This has been also one of the biggest worries of the museum curators and educators of the Museo Diocesano and the main challenge of the research team.

Consequently, some leading considerations have been taken into account for the realisation of the experimental action, in order to positively distinguish its approach from the medial one above presented. The first one is issue derived from the understanding the relevance of differences between religion and religious heritage, in term of their functions and therefore possible re-interpretation.

Catholic cultural heritage can represent elements of religion with catechetical functions, in many cases didactic.

This religious function usually gets lost when religious heritage and objects are presented in museums only as works of art or as objects of material culture with an artistic or ethnographic approach due to, in addition to their displacement from the original context, the interpretational and curatorial choices (Capurro 2013; Minucciani 2013; Roque 2011).

⁹ Rotolab is a group with members Matthias Gommel, Martina Haitz, and Jan Zappe. In *bios [bible]*: "an industrial robot copies out the Bible in handwriting. It performs calligraphic precision-work with a quill, like a monk in a monastery's scriptorium. In this way, two fundamentally different systems are related to each other: the formal noting of information and scripture as a basis for religion—scientific rationality and faith." (<http://www02.zkm.de/mediumreligion/>, accessed 21st December 2013)

In addition to this secular approach to the treatment of the religious there are also many concerns in terms of conservation (Minucciani 2013, 12), as well as ethical issues:

A concern with regard to the public display and the provision of wider access to objects of living religious heritage is the extent to which these activities are accepted by custodians of sacred places. The latter can often be reluctant or negative because they may deem the placement of an artefact within a museum context or merely behind a glass-case as inappropriate treatment or as an act of deconsecration. (Alextopulos 2013, 2)

So the ambitious aim of the experimental action is recovering the original function of religious art in the contemporary world of multicultural society empowered by digital technology, trying to facilitate an interreligious dialogue and to avoid the risk of disrespectfulness and simplification.

For this reason the content of the experimental action is not religion tout court, but religious heritage, that is the result of a process of “heritagization of the sacred” (Meyer and De Vitte 2013, 277). To the works of art however (beginning from the five selected paintings on the Eucharist miracles, but to be hopefully extended to other religious objects in the museum), have presented associated topics aimed at opening Christian Catholic religious themes to a wider cultural sphere: for example pilgrimage, disease, faith, pain, safety, intercession, etc. This shift from theological dogmas to religious beliefs, rituals and liturgies, considering religion as a “living culture,” may open a discussion on less “sacred” but nonetheless relevant topics for activating an intercultural experience and confrontation among diverse religions. This process may help in bringing the educational purpose of religious heritage actual in the contemporary life.

The second consideration is derived from the opportunity of mediating religion by technologies giving to the audience an active and not a passive role of spectator. In doing this, the *mise en scène* of religion is intended not as a mechanical reproduction or representation but as a critical action enabling various levels of experiences such as interpretation, performance, practice and the technology is the powerful enabling tool and not an end to itself.

Active experiences (such as performing and practicing) are the most suitable to really understand a heritage made of rituals, liturgies and living behaviours like such as those in religious circles. Digital technologies, in this case, proved to be the most effective in order to make more approachable such intangible content.

This position is based on the evidence that religious heritage is a mix of tangible and intangible aspects, that are strongly intertwined: “beyond the idea of a simple opposition of materiality and signification” (Meyer and De Vitte 2013, 276–277). And they raise many museographical questions:

Whilst we have developed highly sophisticated theories and techniques, in respect of the object’s physical conservation, we can say that we have still not managed to conserve its significance (and its meaning) and we still do not re-

store the intangible. The heritage of a religious nature seems to represent these issues to the highest degree: for example the lack of liturgical or ritual usage reference could lead to total mutism some objects. If the rite now belongs to the past, then the problem is more pronounced. (Minucciani 2013, 11)

The liturgical or ritual usage can be profitably compared within the concept of performance of Schechner, that according to his *Essays on Performance Theory* (1977), belongs to intercultural tradition: Schechner connects the performative activities of the western world to the oral cultures of tribal societies in a model that goes beyond the idea of theatre, pushing forwards the concept of representation to the one of rite-event that can be *actualised* and *restored* from the past to the present time, in a process of continuous re-interpretation: from performance to performativity.

Consequently, an innovative use of ICT should change the museum experience from interaction to interactivity, that means to a performative environment that goes beyond a merely theatrical experience:

this goal can be obtained in a performative environment. (...) For objects that don’t need to be displayed in an enclosed, protected space, museography can become analogical to the construction of a theatre set. (Roque 2011, 9)

As this creates a dialogical approach and context of conversation as “a dialogic museum is one wherein the narrative is developed entirely through the diverse stories and perspectives of those who lived it” (Kuo Wei Tchen 2011, 83). Here, the dialogue and the performance mutually support each other in an eminently open-ended and inclusive way for creative users’ interpretations, as stated by Kester, “dialogic projects unfold to a process of performative interaction (...) with a collaborative relation with the viewer (Kester 2004, 10). Kester also says “the performative process-based approach, is a context provider, rather than content provider.” (Kester 2004, 1)

Therefore our hypothesis is that digital technology can enhance religion in museums and does not necessarily impoverish or trivialise it, especially if technologies are focused on the intangible aspects and didactic functions of religious heritage, without merely mechanically reproducing it, but an active engagement with the cultural material.

Performativity and technologies seem coherent and appropriate means to reach the aim of the experimental action of enabling experience and practices at the intersection of diverse cultures.

However, differences that happen from the (ideal) theory and the (real) practice have to be taken into account for a serious critical evaluation: in an ideal research all the potentialities should be explored to verify the project assumptions; but in reality budget and time constrains already strongly impacted the experimental action, especially in terms of the availability of digital and technological devices and tools. The restrictions of certain media could also critically affect the final results and with that, the extensive and complete evaluation. In any case, this factor cannot be ascribed to the researchers and, as mentioned in the general framework,

the project basis of meta-design and envisioning activities, that are, complementarily to the experimental actions, aimed at establishing a conceptual framework and paradigm for designing an intercultural experience within religious museums, that will go beyond the specific applications, in a theoretical perspective.

Finally, given this response as far as our perspective on the technology concerns, the last critical element is the successfulness of intercultural and interreligious dialogue by ICT: peoples' interaction and collaboration is made easier by ICT but this does not necessarily imply a mutual understanding being established among cultures. In order to accomplish this objective, substantial and sensitive topics (i.e. controversial questions) will be carefully selected as subjects for dialogue and conversation, triggering frictions as discursive strategies and, at the same time, evaluating the influence of the use of technology in creating empathy or, on the contrary, detachment and animosity. In any case, the positive conclusion of this plan can be evaluated only at the end of the second test.

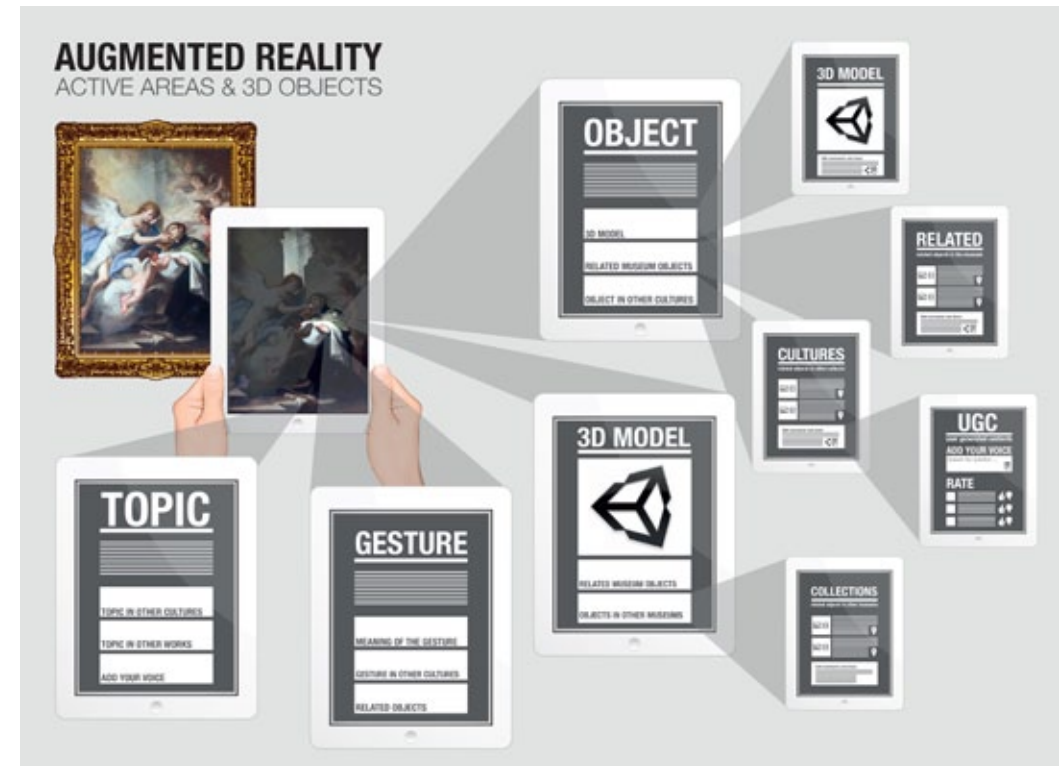
Nevertheless there are real results that have already been obtained even at this preliminary stage: these are on the level of the scientific (hypotheses, methodology, process and tools) as well as on that of valorisation (content produced and visitors involved).

On the scientific level, the first test demonstrated that it is possible, beneficial and appreciated to propose a parallel narration, superimposing it onto the historical and artistic interpretation of the museum without drowning out the original stories. The visitors' comments also suggest that well selected and informed topics are not perceived as being far away from the religious heritage displayed and allow a certain degree of actualisation of religious values in a crosscultural perspective.

Concerning the use of digital media and devices, the comments of visitors reveal a keen understanding of technology: as described in the first test, they were fascinated by the video, which was effective in capturing and focussing the attention of the audience, performing a more dialogical and social experience than just responding to a structured questionnaire. Conversely, the technology has played a supportive role in creating serious interpretations by allowing users to generate content, to add references and comments on the tablets and through internet searches.

Concerning the methodology, a process structured in six phases has initiated a theoretical framework composed of six different interaction dynamics, still to be fully developed.

On the level of valorisation, new cultural content were produced: ranging from the thematic audio-visual of the paintings, to the UGC from the specialist users (mentioned in the description of the first test), to the frictional topics that emerged from the questionnaire. This production results from a co-curatorial practice that is relatively innovative for the Museo Diocesano. In addition, even at a basic level, the technology apparatus of the museum was enhanced, widening the cultural offer to their audience, with a glimpse of contemporary interactive technologies.



Lastly, but more important, the first experimental action (hopefully, the same will happen with the second) has brought a new public to the museum, made up of different religious and cultural groups. Additionally, a new format of guided tour and visit has been tested with them.

IMG. 1.60 — Graphic representation of a possible interaction with tablets for the second user test. Different kinds of contents are activated through augmented reality that highlights active areas in the painting. Graphic elaboration by Davide Spallazzo.

→ PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION: ENVISIONING NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

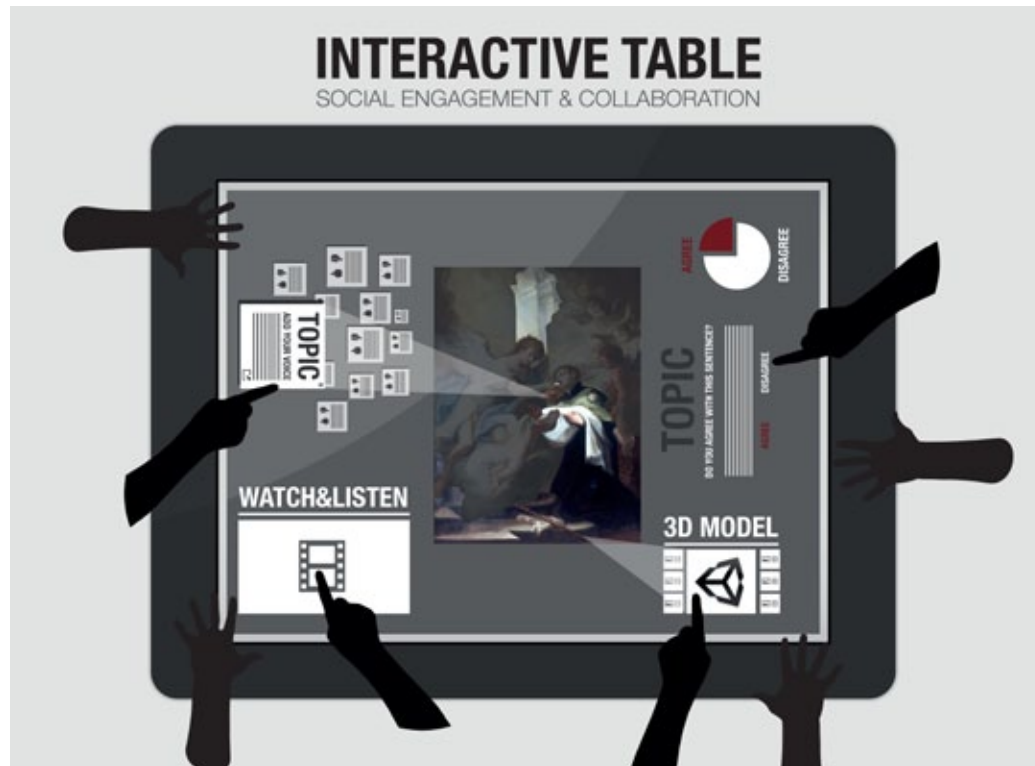
It is evident that “when museums and religion collide”¹⁰ a critical museum practice is needed to make the postcolonial approach evolve in a living manner, always closer to the audience, where neutrality is impossible.

In a scientific project, this ethical position, which questions political issues such as gender and nationality, turns into the research issue of challenging representations of religions and the sacred within museums.

The museological and museographical model here conceived in terms of methodology, technologies and contents defines a basis for further envisioning, that will necessarily be informed by the critical evaluation and feedback received during the completion of the project.

The expectation by the audience of an intense emphatic engagement

¹⁰ See: “Religion in Museums: When Museums and Religion Collide,” <http://religioninmuseums.wordpress.com>, accessed 21st December 2013.



(identification and personal past experiences), as well as a dialogical and social experience, are not in contradiction with the idea of performativity and multi-vocality/multiculturalism striven by the project, but rather reinforces them. The four dimensions constituting the visitor experience: contents, gestures, space and sociality (Allen and Lupo 2012) can converge together in a meaningful experience system wherein the direction (in the sense of directing function) is committed to design and technologies. In fact, there is a margin in religious performances for a bigger contribution from interaction and technology.

In our vision performativity requires that we pay attention to meaningful and consistent gestures in spaces (those that simulate religious ritual practices or simply metaphorically evoke them) to activate content. While multi-vocality and multiculturalism must rely on the dialogical, participative and social experience enabled by technology.

It is crucial not to create any touristic or spectacular effect, due to the sensitive topic of religion. Rather this process aims to make the subject more familiar and habitual. Paraphrasing Agamben's concept of profanation (Agamben 2005), we could say that religion needs to be "given back to the free use of men," avoiding any "separation" and "subtraction" of sacred from life.

Finally, even if this applied research project will probably be developed only up to the level of a prototype, and not implemented as an everyday offer for visitors by the museum, the market feasibility leads us to assume its scalability and likelihood.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank the researchers of the ITLA-CNR team for their contribution to the work and the director of the Museo Diocesano with all the museum staff.

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IMG. 1.61 — Graphic simulation of a possible interaction with an interactive table. Several visitors use the table at the same time, activating different contents and sharing information. Graphic elaboration by Davide Spallazzo.

IMG. 1.62 — Simulation of a gesture based interaction. Users can interact with the contents simply using their body. This performative approach could activate the memory of the body and visitors could perform gestures and actions consistent with different cultural practices. Graphic elaboration by Davide Spallazzo.

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Seeing Yourself in the Museum

Experimental Actions and Methodological Potentials for Walk-through Studies in Exhibition Contexts

→ JAMIE ALLEN, JAKOB BAK, CHRISTOPHER WHITEHEAD, DAVID GAUTHIER

Yet this seeing which comes before words, and can never be quite covered by them, is not a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli... We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach—though not necessarily within arm's reach... We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are.

(Berger 1972)

→ INTRODUCTION

The museum space is a site rich in potentials for investigating the interrelation of individual, subjective perspective and objects within a designed environment. In the museum, cultural objects and dynamic information are staged as experiences, and for interpretation, in a relatively curated and constrained fashion. Combined with visitor expectation, movement through a museum space is a usefully restricted laboratory of human experience, allowing an occasion for the deeper examination of relationships between people and things in environments and contexts. The culture of museum design puts increasingly more emphasis on

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 1.63
— Museum of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. Detail of the schema for the treatment of qualitative data arising from recorded “walkthrough” video. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Catherine Descure.

self-selected pathways and open planning, involving a re-examination of prior assumptions of how museum itineraries can and should be sequenced. This shift, along with desires to refrain from the extrinsic “tracking” of museum visitors in order to evolve an understanding of how visitors compose, or recompose the space of an exhibition, creates the need for expanded reflexive tools for user studies.

Our intended direction towards the use (or misuse) of technologies-of-capture is to invert the perspective of an “omniscient” and “omnipresent” observer to a single viewport of the subject engaged into a locomotive-scope experience of the museum. On one hand, the use of time-based video recording provides us with a representation of the “locomotive-scope” ordering of experience—a representation of spatial, chronological, visual and audible accounts of movement and encounters through space. On the other hand, the digital material produced by such recording is used as building blocks in the re-sequencing of events according to a given narrative construct. Through the subject’s interaction with the recording of his/her recent experience it is held that his/her reflexive process is assisted towards the building of a narrative orientation towards *making sense* of an experience.

The technological intercedes in our archival and immediate awareness and knowledge of ourselves. Media are interruptions “of all feedback loops between a body and its doubles,” (Kittler 2010, 181) revealing behaviours physiological and otherwise, through the deterritorialisation of perspectives. The recording of images, and apparatus of the camera, imply the oscillation between the composition of an objective historical, visual archive, and the immediate represented or suggested body of the photographer or photographed. The contemporary proliferation of technical imagery has done much to foreground and decompose more unified versions of history, subject-object relations, and nationalist narratives. In this we witness an inversion of much of the 20th century histories of photography, or photographic histories: where nationalism was used to concretise and cultivate singular narrativities and national iconography. In Michel Foucault’s time, history “transforms documents into monuments,” our sense of contemporary transforms monuments, first into documents and then again into the first-person *moments*—on the personal “stream” of a Facebook feed or Tumblr Blog (Foucault [1972] 2012).

Moving image recording devices have recently reached a scale small enough to be mounted on the body, inverting many aspects, affects and cultural metaphors of photography and moving images. From the use of phonographs and daguerreotypes, to film, video, and today’s higher resolution digital audio-visual recording systems, researchers in ethnography and anthropology have employed advanced technologies to capture experiences inside and outside the museum. As such, the work presented forms part of a tradition of technological archiving of the body in locomotion; an addendum to Eadweard Muybridge’s chronophotographies, from the inside-out. Combined with a computer scientist’s view of the potential of algorithmic treatment of images, we furnish a further

example of what Mark B. N. Hansen has called the postphotographic agenda, with its “deterritorialization of reference.” Also imperative is the highlighting of the technical image, regardless of its perspective, within a “generalized and extended condition of visibility”—machinic vision—in which the task of processing information, that is, perception, necessarily passes through a machinic circuit.” (Hansen 2001, 60)

Using technology to capture experiences in museums is a field of rich study within Human Computer Interaction discourse and research. The project described herein relates to and has been inspired by a number of seminal works that deal with auto-biographical and auto-ethnographical tools for a variety of purposes. SenseCam (Hodges, Berry, and Wood 2011) is a wearable photographic device with sensors enable researchers to capture events from daily life with regular intervals and triggered by special occasions. Special software let the user review the pictures to aid (autobiographical) recollection of past events (Doherty, Moulin, and Smeaton 2011). StartleCam (Healey and Picard 1998) uses a similar approach but is triggered by measurements of a physiological reaction (skin-conductivity) to experiences, and thereby intend to capture moments that induce an elevated (physiological) response (startle).

The advent of the above technologies spurred research into a more general “quantified-self” related area known as “life-logging” (Bell and Gemmell 2010). The idea is to employ technologies to capture events and combine these with computer-accessible data from contextual sensor and other interactions with digital communications systems, such as email, calendar items, documents, etc.) to create a “lifetime-store” to facilitate recollection and personal information retrieval (Gemmell et al. 2002). Abigail J. Sellen and Steve Whittaker voiced a critique of fundamental assumptions in this approach to “life-logging” and proposed a set of design guidelines for system developers, including seeing lifelogging “store-items” not as memories in themselves, but rather cues to trigger recollection of memories—a view shared and expanded upon by our museum walkthrough work (Sellen and Whittaker 2010).

What has become known to the authors as “walkthrough” research, is a first-person perspective video recording by museum visitors, with subsequent video data analysis, using a head-mounted cameras. We point to the possibilities and values in this work through examples in the museum space, as potentials for the study of behaviour, physical movement, meanings and memories. The set of methodological potentials outlined here result from fieldwork conducted between the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design and the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (Newcastle University), at a number of partner museums in Europe. Researchers have devised experimental actions through fieldwork using head-mounted cameras, interview protocols, and digital image processing. The work bridges new work in digital ethnography and qualitative display analyses insights. A main focus of the research is on the reflexive experience of museum goers, that is, what it is that paying witness to a document of one’s own experience in the museum can bring

to the discussion of a visitor's identity and behaviour. Further, the work provides an opening to expanded work studying ambulatory experience and its effects on identity, as a critical companion direction for pursuits in urban planning, architecture and spatial design more broadly.

The focus of our walkthrough research is not the recollection of events from a more distant past, but reflection on rather recent experiences using the mediating nature of the tools employed to see those experiences in new perspectives, helping to construct new understanding through evolving reflexive interviews and discussion. The work of Lisa Gjedde and Bruno Ingemann has been an inspirational analogue for our work with using head-mounted recording devices in exhibition spaces and combining it with interviewing techniques (Gjedde and Ingemann 2008). Using relatively simple video and video analysis technologies, mounted on the head or body, it is possible to give an impression of visitor experience that is bottom-up, but is derived more directly from individual perspectives of people. This is an inversion of the more common modes of digital user-study methodologies, which usually employ a top-down structure of either visual (closed-circuit television cameras, detecting "visitor flow") or informational omnipresence (Wi-Fi tracking to monitor presence in rooms).

The intention is to allow for a reflection on experience and memory, and avoid deterministic characterisation of exact movements or visitor intention. These deterministic tendencies are unfortunately more common than they should be in user-studies and design probes involving information technologies. Beginning with an understanding of the ambiguity which always lies between quantitative and qualitative information, our investigations are tailored to avoid the assumption of more definitive characterisation that we project on technological capture of any event or process. Instead, the question we set for ourselves becomes one of developing profiles, traces or imprints which serve as a reflexive point of departure for both researchers and visitors alike.

→ EXPERIMENTAL ACTIONS IN THE MUSEUM SPACE

Museums can be thought of as "places for defining who people are (...) how they should act [and] places for challenging those definitions" (Karp et al. 1992, 4) Museums remain powerful didactic spaces, as well as self-reflective, self-composed and increasingly dialogic experiences, shaping identity and relations to meaning. This, while their design and physical fixity keeps them from being wholly penetrable and recomposable. This tension—between the composed space of the museum and the improvised path of the visitor—is as old as museums themselves, if not as old as the built and structured environments of cities and architecture. There is no resolving these tensions, but there may be better ways of representing and characterising them for visitor, museum studies researchers and museum designers.

One way of understanding museum space that informed thinking about this research is the notion of the museum as map (Whitehead 2009;

2012). In this view, museum displays are spatial representations of knowledge that are intrinsically capable of charting relations between things. This capability is a result of technological operations such as the spacing, ordering and juxtaposition of objects, or how they are labelled and "scaled" through techniques such as positioning or lighting, in such a way as to create what Wolfgang Iser called "response-inviting structures" (Iser 1980). In this sense the museum acts as a form of cultural cartography. However, the ontology of the museum means that this is a form of cartography that is also intrinsically capable of organising narratives, for example, about the history of art, or about the history of migration into a region. This is because of the spatio-temporal ordering of the visit—the set-up of a temporal logic of staged encounters with objects and information for an imagined visitor moving within architectural and designed space. In this sense, curating can be understood as a kind of mapping, leading to the production of a map that is intended for others. (In many cases it can be said that many "maps" are produced: a number of cartographies often exist in one space as a result of the layering of curatorial efforts both synchronically and diachronically, leading to representational ambiguities and complexities). Visiting, it follows, is an engagement with a "map" or set of maps. This is at once and necessarily a personal process of cognitive and affective remapping that is made iterative through memory processes ("remembering," "recollection").

This research allows us to make some sense of visitor engagements with the cultural cartography of the museum, which may not involve the kind of seamless transfer of information associated with "effective" reading of the "useful" map. More frequently, we find that visitors' experiential remappings are based on dispositions, affective responses and references to personal histories that are unpredictable and unknowable from the curatorial viewpoint; for example: the way in which a museum object may trigger a personal childhood memory; how a fleeting reference in a display to a person once known by a visitor can come to dominate the experience and memory of the visit; or even how a visitor's vegetarianism leads to purposeful non-engagement with a particular artwork. One thing that this research can offer is a view of the potential for difference or cleavage between the museum display as map and visitors' own remappings, where the "contents" of the map, their scaling, or position within narratives can appear quite different. Our qualitative data collection, as well as our development of specific metrics based on assumptions (e.g. that dwell time is an indicator of directed attention to an object), can be seen as experimental means of "tracing" of visitors experiential remappings that is itself an ulterior cartographic action.

Key to the experimental actions described here is the notion of reflexivity, of two types. The first is of the museum visitor on the museum space, providing tools and methods to allow them to recognise that the material is not just there; that it is staged, and how (Clarkin-Phillips). Secondly, we seek to express self-reflexivity of the museum visitor, their own accounts of personal experience, narratives, references, and memories. These reflexivities are precipitated through a set of post-walkthrough

voice-interviews, where the visitors are asked to constructively review and discuss their own experiences. What results is at once visitor-exhibition documentation, and a reflexive evaluation of the museum experience. Digital head-mounted video recording technologies present a means for the reflection of experience back on itself, attempts at avoiding the problems or claims of such capture totalising experience.

Conducting quantitative and qualitative ethnographic research in the museum context constitutes attempts at understanding how cultural objects (physical or otherwise) are interpreted and reflected by subjects moving through these sites. The designed environments presented to museum visitors are in constant interaction with kinesthetic, somatosensory and affective aspects. Complicated through the addition of dynamic and interactive objects, and the dynamics of subjective interpretation and identity, the potential for the inventive use of technologies of digital media capture seems great.

There are a panoply of methods that attempt to capture and analyse the experience of people in museums. The majority of these are not empirically tested, and fall into either intersubjective techniques (surveys, interviews, focus groups) or into analytical-topological methods which aim at numeric accounts of visitor numbers, exhibitions, tickets sales and satisfaction-survey results. As museums have long been presumed as sites of pedagogy, many studies are geared towards the evaluation of informal learning. Shifts in the mandate, focus and design of 21st century museums points to increasing focus on institutional-personal relationships, as the museum is called increasingly to deal with issues germane to the communities in which they are situated. These shifts reveal the inadequacy of (both intersubjective-qualitative and analytical-quantitative type) methods to evaluate newer models of complex exhibition and engagement in the museum (Borun 1977).

The experience of the museum space is, generally speaking, an ambulatory one—that is, framed by the motion and location of bodies, at the pace of walking. The activity, although formalised by the overall circumstance implied by visitor and institution (e.g. “Natural History Museum,” “Museum of Modern Art,” etc.) constitutes an encounter that is deliberate and delicate balance between visitors’ personal intents and goals and the constraints imposed by the museum space. Increasingly, museum design communities are shifting their attention to exhibitions which allow for open paths, visitor-selectable journeys and serendipitous moments of discovery. These motivations towards purported “democratisation” of the visitor itineraries lies in tension with the historically and architecturally firmaments of the modernist, and pre-modern museum. Most such buildings are designed to “look best” on floor plans and diagrammatics, symmetrically arranged for aerial, horizontal cross-sectional views as if to emphasise beyond doubt the cartographic function. It is the context of these spaces that has helped evolve useful critiques of the possibility of curatorial or designerly objectivity of this “god’s eye view.”

Bringing the perspective of museum visitors into play is difficult, not only for reasons of tradition and custom in museum study practices, but because of how this modernist tradition informs documents used to create, manage and build these institutions’ structures. Design, planning and study of museum or exhibitions gives obvious preference and importance to all kinds of “top-down” planning documents: there are architectural rhythms and harmonies that can go largely unnoticed by the museum goer; experiential and spatial schema may leave visitors unwitting, unaware or even confused as the scale of the map they inhabit is not their own. Within the ecosystem of physical structures, practices and design documents, it becomes of concern how we might render present more vivid first-person accounts of visitor experience through digital media. What are the bottom up, ground-level, “walkthrough” views of the museum, and how could these be considered on-par with the constellation of plans, materials, reflections and accounts within museum design, museum and (national) identity research, architectural and design practice, and studies of visitor experience and learning? How might we use readily available and future-facing multimedia techniques to investigate the experience of museum and exhibition goers, in a reflexive and insight-driving way? And what can we learn from these techniques regarding the composition of space, experience, memory and identity in a museum space?

We can use data-rich multimedia documents, such as digital video derived from recorded museum visitor itineraries, as quantitative and qualitative reflection for the discursive analysis of museum experiences. Digital video allows for the creation of documents which are interestingly, and inherently, somewhat quantitative and qualitative in the same moment. The temporal, representational form of video always re-composes a narrative, or re-performs experience to some degree. These aspects of digital video within ethnographic practice are open to various hermeneutics and depict, illustrate and spur further analysis. The discourse and history of the use of ethnographic video shows it to be subject to interpretation much in the same ways that textual and linguistic descriptions are, and so helpfully an immutably qualitative in nature (Pink 2009). All this, while the random access, indexed and data-based character of digital video gives us a numerical and quantified sample set of a visual field, which can be algorithmically treated by computers and image processing software. Here we have the decidedly “quantitative” aspect of digital video, markedly new in terms of its integration within traditional ethnographic practices within humanities research fields. With relatively simple image processing techniques we can create a set of useful metrics from head-mounted camera video, which augment the reflexive power of the video document created. They include devised metrics such as “eye miles” which give a relative measure of the amount of eye-movement the visitor undertook during a museum visit. Also algorithmically determinable are more familiar museum user studies metrics such as “dwell time” and “number of dwells,” which give a time-measure of and numeric count, respectively, of the moments during a museum visit where a visitor *appears* to pay prolonged attention to an element, object or display.

IMG. 1.64 — Museum of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. The walkthrough experiment: a museum visitor wearing the head mounted camera. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Jakob Bak.



Of course, mediating between the representative impulse of video-as-narrative and the more intrinsic, data-derived analyses in a way that helps researchers and visitors, theorists and practitioners derive their own understandings, presents a significant challenge. A subsequent question becomes, how do we fuse this dual character of audiovisual documents such as digital video? The aesthetics and diagrammatics of presentation and summary documents need to show the dual, quantitative and qualitative, character of these tools at once, and in appropriate ways. The “walkthrough” should result in multimedia, and more statically publishable documents, that create visual overlays for these complementary types of data streams. As pointed to in forgoing discussions of creating documents that inform the practice of museum design as well as museum studies research, our investigations are from the outset invested in the idea of creating boundary documents for the translation of individual experience in a museum to multiple stakeholders and disciplines. This type of work is an example of practice-based Interaction Design Research, a sophisticated melding of complex *types* of data as conjoined precis, for further discussion and divulgence.

→ REMEMBERING AND REFLECTING

The museum *itinerary* refers to a route which is perambulatory, that is, it requires visitor locomotion through museum space. At the same time, narratives and subjectivities are created between people and objects, people and other people, people and meaning structures, individuals and the institution (to name just a few). Each itinerary is an composed remapping, a tracing of understanding that comes about through the dynamic interaction between the structuring physical space of the museum (Whitehead 2009, after Bourdieu) and visitor dispositions, needs and choices, and that manifests as a specific, ordered encounter with cultural objects. Rather than conceive a given exhibition or museum space

as single, totalised whole, representing a single event or forming only one cartography (which in any case it rarely, if ever, is, because of the complexities of cultural production), the notion of an itinerary serves to account the dynamic relationship between things, meanings and people as constructed by visitors engaged in coordinated acts of locomotion, sensing, reading and viewing. Museum visitors do not experience “the museum,” they experience a set of subjective affinities drawn between cultural objects and other encounters, rather than dictated and organised according to the planning or curation of the museum.

This complex relational experience cannot be rationalised or determined completely, although there is much we can know about routes and dwell times, levels of enjoyment and information retained through classical user study methods. To research the subtleties of an individuals’ experience in the museum, however, is to research his or her memory of that experience. Museums are the site of an encounter between cultural memory and personal memory, where material and medial dispositifs are presented which reflect and challenge tastes, values and selfhood. What post-visit user studies often lack is such a reflective dispositif for the remembering and reconstitution of museum itineraries, by and for visitors.

In ethnographic practices there is always a gap between “what we do” and “what we think we do.” These gaps, far from being foreclosable, are interestingly disjunctive, a productive aperture for allowing people further insight and understanding of how the museum space effects and affects them. The walkthrough is a processual link, attaching the “map,” as general, concrete, top-down and stationary, to the “itinerary” as idiosyncratic, dynamic, bottom-up and recomposed. The modes of remembrance are here referred to those suggested by Giorgio Agamben’s in his contrasting modes of historic remembering at Auschwitz: “One is the history that comes in the flesh, that is somehow embodied, as the figure of the witness; and the other is the history that has a tendency to become property or something that is petrified in, for instance, the form of an archive or a collection of documents.” (Szymczyk 2014)¹

Head-mounted video self-analysis provided for by walkthrough research gives support for personal recall, where the “living memory” of the walkthrough is enlivened as a distributed set of mediated activities, the threads of which may be recalled, discussed while associated contents are presented again. The relatively immediate memories whose recall we are concerned with enabling are for the most part highly informal, and make no claims or auspices toward objectivity. They are mainly related to an individual’s voluntary interests and pursuits in the museum, and lie outside of functionalist or didactic goal orientations. As such, decision making is reflected upon in a holistic and subconscious manner, eliciting responses along the lines of “I’m not sure why I went that way... maybe it was because...” or “I didn’t realise I stood in front of that painting for so long,” instead of more rational or specific descriptions of tasks or intention.

¹ See Ibraaz: Contemporary Visual Culture in North Africa and the Middle East. 2014. “Adam Szymczyk in conversation with Omar Kholeif.” Accessed March 15. <http://www.ibraaz.org/channel/7#author106>.

IMG. 1.65 — Museum of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. Studying the museum from the user's perspective. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Dionísio Soares Paiva.



This approach proceeds via a set of narrative orientations informed by theoretical work of Jerome S. Bruner and Mieke Bal (Bruner 1990; Bal 2009). In contrast to our observations of current literature on autobiographical and mnemonic technologies (Charness, Best, and Souders 2012) rather than conceiving experience as a deposit of events, from which an autobiographical capturing system is accounting for, we take a constructivist perspective of experience and memory where it is conceived as mediated through reflexive thoughts constructing stories of past events (whether factual or imaginary). Hence the focus of our design is to develop methods and technologies which focus on the production of (abstract) narratives; a sequential ordering of events, mental states, and encounters

involving museum visitors (subjects) as characters. Our aim is to provide technologies and methods for a subject to construct their own narrative. Of key importance here is the notion that events can be in logical and/or chronological order which may not be indexed to a linear notion of time, that is not necessarily bound to the captured media time (here video sequence), nor has it to be indexed to the linear notion of space (here the museum's floor plans). Narratives can function in relation to, in ignorance of, or simply against these two linear notions. In this sense, a thematic "cartography" or "schema" supported by our technologies and methods can support narrative construction where sites of meaning embodied into museum's cultural objects (physical or otherwise) can be or pulled into conceptual and diagrammatic territories and in turn account for their "lived" genesis, morphology and stated context.

The experimental actions we have devised are methods and techniques for addressing modes of *reflexivity* (as contrasted with recollection for example) on past events and cultural encounters which took place in the museum. This aspect is of prime importance as the focus and value is less about recall than it is about self-identity, meaning-making and knowledge. In this sense, abstract, suggestive and constructive methods are employed in order to represent and manipulate captured and mediated observations of museum experiences.

→ WALKTHROUGHS: AN EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

The methodological experiments we have developed consist of an experience capture phase followed by a subsequent interview-guided reflection, partly facilitated by the previous capture. A museum visitor (and in a few recent experiments, visiting couples), are asked to make a short walkthrough of a selected part of an exhibition wearing a pair of glasses embedded with a high definition camera. The equipment captures audio from the surrounding environment and video in the directions the visitor's head is facing during the walkthrough. This gives a near first-person perspective recording of the visitor's audio-visual experience of the exhibition elements and their route between them.

After the visit to the exhibition, the visitor is asked to sit with a researcher running the study, where two immediately following interviews take place. The first is a normal semi-structured interview (the Normal Interview) where the visitor is asked to recall his/her experience of the exhibition, the researcher guiding the conversation towards the visitor's account of what caught their attention, what they thought and felt while in the exhibit, as well as their recollection of their itinerary. The conversation is recorded on video.

The second interview (the Video Interview) uses the video recording as a prompting tool to guide a subsequent semi-structured interview. Here the visitor and researcher watch the capture from the camera glasses together, allowing the first-person recording to elicit discussions of the visitor's itinerary choices, emotions, thoughts and environmental factors

IMG. 1.66 — Museum of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. Second part of the experiment: interview following the visit, based on the head-mounted footage. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Catherine Descure.



IMG. 1.67 — Museum of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. CIID researchers investigating museum visitors. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Jakob Bak.



as situations in the recorded material (dwelling at an object, quick movement, etc) prompt either visitor or researcher to question/elaborate on a given subject. This Video Interview is recorded as a screen capture of the playback of the original walkthrough recording, capturing the conversation prompted during playback and any pausing/fast forward/rewind.

The method prospectively outputs a set multimedia documents:

1. A first-person perspective audiovisual capture of the visitor's itinerary in the exhibition using a head-mounted camera, mounted in a set of eyeglasses;
2. A video recording of the Normal Interview;
3. A screen capture of the Video Interview, which is essentially the secondary recording of the first person video created in step 1, but with "commentary track" and capture of pauses and other transport activities;
4. An "algorithmically" augmented video image, with metadata composited above the original footage;
5. A summary document giving various visitor metrics and statistics from the video image (prepared offline, and including statistics such as "average dwell time," or average light temperature).

Observation

The first (observation) phase uses a small head-mounted audio-visual recording device to capture a near-first-person perspective of the itinerary a subject trace through a museum exhibition. The second (reflexive) phase consist of an interviewer interviewing the subject while the latter is actively engaged in watching, manipulating and re-ordering the recording of his recent itinerary.

Interview

The interviewer conducts a semistructured interview based on a set of preconceived topics of interest to the overall study, but lets the interviewee and himself be guided by the recorded material and the discussion that arise from watching it together. Discussion on the subject's thoughts, actions and motivations for tracing the exhibition as he does is encouraged, prompting the subject when he (in the recording) deviates from his route, dwells at certain exhibits, move a lot or fast, or when seem to lose focus or attention on the exhibited objects.

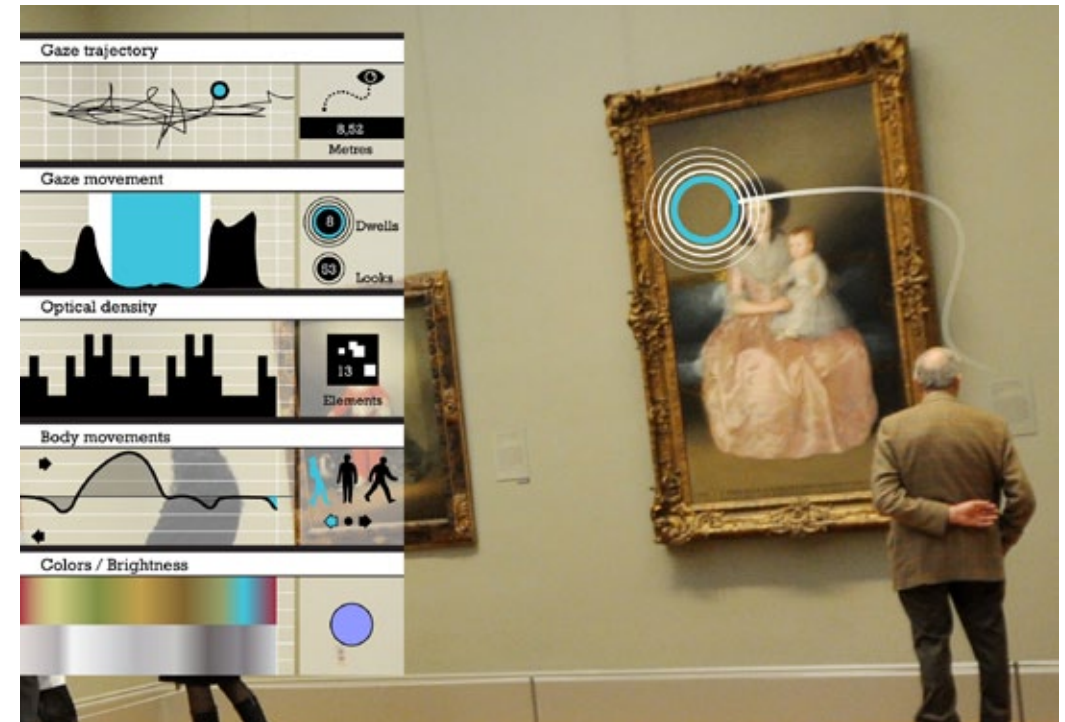
This interview, mediated by the recorded recent experience engages the subject in a reflexive sense-making activity which, through commentary of his or her own dynamic understanding of his experience, is recorded. Combining these materials to synchronise them provides a multimedia reflective document which relates to the techniques of more traditional qualitative analyses directed towards the topic of museums.

Digital Image Processing

Additionally, the video is processed by a set of simple video-processing algorithms that allow both summary data to be evoked from the video and audio streams (in the form of a static data visualisation), as well as real-time “metadata” to be displayed via graphical interface element on the stream after processing and re-rendering (in the form of a summary video). As example, the system is able to process and automatically catalogue the number of “dwell” times which occur during a museum visit. We are inspired in by methods and techniques employed in notable work in the field of “life-logging” (Whittaker et al. 2012), passive photography toward “reflexive technologies,” or technologies that help unearth aspect of subjective experience and contexts.

Our video recordings present a single uninterrupted shot of the walk-through (which can be up to an hour long, as an approximate average). In order to automatically segment and index video data into smaller fragments, forming the referential “building blocks” of the narrative, we extract dwells (movement pauses) and related motion transitions (movement) out of the recorded itinerary. Motion dwells are understood as moments where subjects engage with cultural objects and/or social encounters and can be extracted from video feeds using motion analysis. (The other metrics derive are shown in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3, which also shows three versions of the interface design for the combination of these analytics and the original video footage.)

The software created for the walkthrough work, in its current version, tracks movement of the edges of objects in a given frame (“optical flow”) to determine the motion of the camera’s point of view, and by doing so, inferring the movement of a person’s head (wearing the head-mounted camera). The system is based on using lateral optical flow readings to distinguish and filter head movements, implying changes in the visitor’s central field of view and are tightly associated to eye movement. These movements are those of horizontal (Yaw) and vertical rotation (Pitch) of the head around the neck, which filter out longitudinal movements of the body and head tilt (Roll), which don’t imply change in the object of focus. With this motion in mind, a two-axis vector is generated that represents the head movements that affect gaze direction, the yaw and pitch dimensions. Some sense of the observation state of the visitor is then suggested by the “stability” of this vector. The proportion of “stable” frames over an average amount of head movement, thus normalising for “fast moves” and “fast moving visitors.” Similarly, gaze “distance” (or the amount of distance the eye travels over the visit to the museum) and trajectory are computed from the same vector, together with an estimation of the path of the eye, globally (yaw and pitch movements). Body motion is inferred by taking into account the difference between the optical flow of the right and the left side and of the frame: if the left and right handside of the screen are moving in the same direction, the head alone is likely moving; if the left and righthand side of the screen are moving in opposing directions, the visitor’s body is likely to be moving through space. Strafing



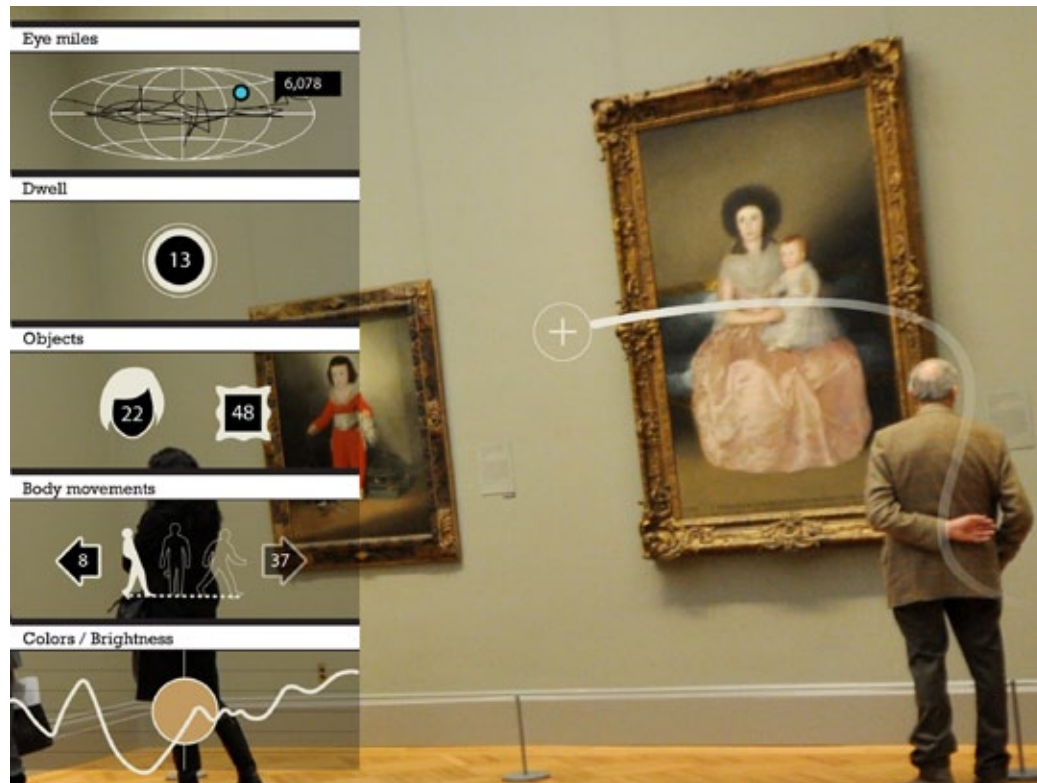
(moving the entire body in a sidelong-direction, as in video gaming, was not found to be a common mode of movement amongst the walkthrough videos we collected).

A further metric, the “average colour” of the scene is calculated by averaging the signal of each of the RGB channels across the frame (normalised for luminosity). Similarly the scene luminosity is calculated by averaging all the RGB values across the frame. Finally, “optical density” is a relative measurement of the number of contiguous areas in the current frame, measured via standard object-bounding algorithms.

Digital Document Preparation and Rendering

These digital production elements, provide design-research outputs and investigations into the communicative forms that such work should and could take. Informing more traditional documents of museum planning and study is a particular goal. How might we assure the inclusion of the outputs and insights derived from our walkthrough methods enter the ecosystem of data, graphics and texts used to understand and plan museum experiences? The computer science of image processing, applied to digital ethnographic approaches, produces rich observations and representations of complex subject-object experiences as they unfold in-situ. The development of the methodology described herein is a truly interdisciplinary endeavour, augmenting the user-study of museums as a combined qualitative and quantitative study, where focus is directed towards enabling reflexive interpretations of museum experiences.

IMG. 1.68 — The image includes a schema for the treatment of qualitative data arising from recorded “walkthrough” video. The upper left hand corner of the illustrative display indicating the “eye miles” of optical space traversed through the walkthrough, followed down the left column by a number and type of dwells, followed by a measure of the number of objects and/or faces in the immediate scene, a measure of forward and aft body movements, and relative measures of colour and brightness. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Catherine Descurie.



IMG. 1.69 — Schema for the treatment of qualitative data arising from recorded “walkthrough” video. Alternative view. Courtesy Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). Photo by Catherine Descure.

→ DIGITAL DOCUMENTS OF MUSEUM SPACES

The raw video which results from the experimental processes outlined above shows promise for digital ethnography methods development as the recorded elements serve as a prompt for further discussion, not as an attempt at total description of the event. The study of display and exhibition design derives early insight from the process in areas related to how memory, knowledge and identity of the museum visitor is composed by a walk through the space (in contrast to what a designer, architect or curator might have supposed or intended this composition to take place). Exposed through the digital video document are the rhythms, juxtapositions, frustrations and individual pathways allowed for by an exhibition and its artefacts, in individual and a potentially in aggregate (as a topology or average of multiple visitors). Highlighted and, to some degree, captured through the self-reflexive narrative are those “things we do, but don’t know we do,” in the controlled environment of the museum. One example of these sorts of insights includes the “micro-investigations” which people undertake when in a museum space, composing their itinerary to fulfil an ad-hoc informational, experiential goal, such as finding all mentions and representations of women in a display, or the oldest artefact in the room. This activity may be prompted by moments of confusion or frustration, for example where a visitor reads in a text panel that the theme of a display is women, but this is not immediately obvious to

him/her from a first look at the objects and labels on display. Alternatively, it may be prompted by curiosity or the feeling that particular displays can respond to one’s personal history and interests.

The graphical interface shown (with alternates) in the figures give good indication of our aforementioned intent to presentation summary documents with dynamic appeal, which show multiple kinds of information in appropriate ways. These images are dynamic animations on the video document of the walkthrough and have been designed not only to present requisite data of interest, but to do so in a way that is intelligible and culturally acceptable to museum researchers and everyday museum visitors. Colour schemes and line styles reference the language of planning and schematics, while the summary elements of “objects” and “faces” allow for quick and simple reflection on what is being communicated, without expert knowledge. At the same time, the function of the algorithmic results represented are specifically chosen to be easily understandable, and not “high level” computer vision metrics.

→ CONCLUSION

The purpose of these experimental actions is to provoke insight into the development of more reflexive and critical methods for museums studies, as well as the understanding the design of spaces as relational and individually composed. Future publications and methods development are intended to expand on these initial investigations, toward a developed protocol for field investigations, standards for coding, and image and audio processing techniques, as well as output format that fit the processes and practices of museum researchers and practitioners alike. The potentials for the technique as a user-perspective-driven account of the composition of both meaning and identity in the museum space have excited much interest in the area for further deployment in museums and exhibitions, as well as other areas of investigations where walking and the memory of experience meets the assumptions and proscriptions of designed public environments.

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Research by design



Museums of Cultures

→ GENNARO POSTIGLIONE

→ THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

Created as an embodiment of the rhetoric of the power of knowledge, the museum—or its precursors such as the *cabinets des curieux* or *wunderkammern*—and its forms, have followed a development which has led to a gradual opening up of their limits and a change of their objectives, according to a process which has, over the centuries, resulted in an increase in the number of patrons, from a restricted and privileged group to the masses (Bennett 1995). Nonetheless, even if its borders are less insurmountable and its role has been transformed, the museum has remained an architecture for the public manifestation of political power, a privileged place for the exercise of a control which no longer represents segregation—for a long time prisons and museums have shared the same category—but rather that of the foundation of a national identity with which to identify (Karp and Lavine 1991). The message associated with this identity is aimed, in different ways, to the members of the community and to outsiders; the former are invited to share in a symbolic well-being and the latter to act as observers. This kind of articulation, whether national, regional or ethnic, collects, celebrates, commemorates, evaluates and sells a way of life. It is a process that sustains the existence of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983).

As a consequence of our postcolonial condition, a historical-cultural revision of the ideas and forms on which museums are based, as well as the techniques of their expansion, is needed, since every representation inevitably involves the other, the foreigner, not only as user but also, and simultaneously, as object and subject (Bhabha 1994). This is why:

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 2.01 —
Passengers waiting at the
Gare de Lyon, Paris, France.
Photo by Claudia Brivio.

MUSEUM	TYPE OF CHANGE	OLD NAME	NEW NAME	DATE OF CHANGE
Castello D'Albertis Museo delle Culture del Mondo, Genoa	New institution in historical building	Castello D'Albertis	Castello D'Albertis Museo delle Culture del Mondo	1991 – 2004
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam	Permanent exhibition renovation	Koloniaal Museum (until 1950)	Tropenmuseum	1995 – 2009
Louvre, Paris	New department		Pavillons des secessions des arts premieres (Non European art)	1996 – 2000
Musée du quai Branly (MQB), Paris	New institution and new building from two different museums, new name	1. Musée de l'Homme 2. Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie	Musée du quai Branly. Arts et civilisations d'Afrique, Asie, Océanie et Amériques	1996 – 2006
Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM), Marseille	New institution and new building from two different museums, new name	1. Musée de l'Homme (European collections) 2. Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris	Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée	1996 – 2013
Rautenstrauch-Joest- Museum Kulturen der Welt, Cologne	New Museum in new building exposing an old collection		Rautenstrauch-Joest- Museum Kulturen der Welt	1996 – 2010
British Museum, London	Relocation and change of name's department	Museum of Mankind	Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas	1997 – 2001
Världskulturmuseet, Gothenburg	New institution and new building – correlated with the existing National Museum of Ethnography Stockholm	Gothenburg Ethnographic Museum	National Museum of World Culture	1999 – 2004
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford	Structural renovation			2007 – 2009
Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt	Building extension			2010 – ongoing
Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale (MRAC), Tervuren	Permanent exhibition renovation – Building extension	Musée du Congo (until 1960)	Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale	To be closed in 2013 – reopening in 2015
Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève (MEG)	Permanent exhibition renovation – Building extension			To be re-opened in 2014
WeltMuseum, Wien	Project of renovation – New name	Museum of Ethnography (Volkerkunde Museum)	World Museum (WeltMuseum)	2013 – 2016

ethnographic museums and those with important non-Western collections must, more than any others, chart their way through the complexities and ethical compromises that globalisation is unleashing before they can truly understand and answer audiences that are increasingly made up of people they once considered part of their objects. (Shelton 2001, 222)

This is what Anthony Shelton states in his essay *Museums in an Age of Cultural Hybridity* (Shelton 2001) to highlight the relevance of ethnographic museums in the contemporary museums debate. Similarly, Camilla Pagani, in a previous work edited by the MeLa group at Politecnico di Milano, also affirms that by surveying the actual situation, there emerges—as a common thread—the need for these kinds of museums to liberate themselves from their colonial legacy (Pagani 2013, 153).

It is therefore evident that ethnographic museums have been the more responsive and subject to changes than any other heritage institution in the last ten years, however, “the challenge now is to reinvent the museum as an institution that can orchestrate new relations and perceptions of difference” (Bennett 2006, 59). And this is what has happened to many of those sites that have re-defined themselves critically, as reported in the first volume of the MeLa trilogy *European Museums in the 21st Century: Setting the Framework* (Basso Peressut, Lanz and Postiglione 2013) and summed up in the following scheme (Pagani 2013, 162), where it is evident that the clear intention to take a distance from the past by a change of name—where usually the word “ethnography” is substituted by the word “culture”—is a cue for opening towards a globalised humanism without a centre, apparently. This is the case for The World Museum in Vienna, previously Museum of Ethnography; the Museum of Mankind at the British Museum in London, now renamed Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas; and we could continue to list all the names, finding smaller and bigger changes: from the foundation of a completely new museum, as the case of the National Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg to the re-arrangement of an old collection in a new building, as is the case of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum—Kulturen der Welt in Cologne.

Accepting as true the assertion that a city, with its works and its good museums, today finds itself in the middle of a theme involving the construction of a modern civic community, the MeLa experiments-by-design intend to overturn the idea of museum as a place of consolidation, conservation and transmission of the identity of a dominant social group, as well as the traditional relationship between this institution and the civil society it represents, in order to define new museological and ostensive strategies for the multiethnic and intercultural metropolis (Karp et al. 2006). With this purpose, changing the concept of “contact zone” formulated by Mary Louise Pratt (Pratt 1992), as a place in which geographically and historically separate persons come into contact/contrast among them establishing mutual, interactive relations/frictions, one may reconsider the identity of the museum. In a manner that is in some aspects utopian, museums are in the cases which follow are being

TABLE 2.01 — Overview about current projects of renovation in major European museums of ethnography and world culture(s). Table by Camilla Pagani (Pagani 2013, 160).

reconsidered as public venues for collaboration, shared control and complex translation; places of power turned into places of cultural integration. It is clear that a vision of this kind appears, to some extent, utopian due to the history of museums and their relationship with national contexts, however the current hybridisation of contemporary culture calls for a profound revision.

→ CHALLENGING THE DESIGN FOR FOUR NEW MUSEUMS

To verify the effectiveness of MeLa key-issues (*Pro-active spaces, Empathic experiences, Exhibiting new objects, Temporary layers, Beyond the museum, Museum architecture: a quest for identity*) as described in the introduction of this volume (see pages 9–16), they have been used to guide and revise the work produced by different teams involved in MeLa experiments-by-design either for new museums of culture (The Liquid Museum of Mediterranean Culture, The New Oslo Kulturhistorisk Museum, and Multiethnic Milan) or open-air museums (“Border Memories: Re-enacting the Difficult Heritage in Venezia Giulia” and the Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori). The results presented in the following pages act as testimony of how relevant it could be to set out appropriate key-issues and to sketch what could be called the museum of the 21st century.

The Liquid Museum of Mediterranean Culture

The project deals with the process undergone beyond the conceptualisation and the design of both a migrating museum and a Mediterranean museum in the framework of what has been defined as a postcolonial era. Starting with the critical studies on Mediterranean Sea developed by several scholars over the last decades, and its definition as a “liquid archive” by Iain Chambers (Chambers 2007), the museum’s design process has engaged the challenging idea of finding new ways to represent Mediterranean cultures, the interpretation of which has been strongly contaminated by each other. Moreover, the proposal—taking into account the MeLa in-progress findings—elaborates on how to express the open and multifaceted nature of the Mediterranean Sea that has collected migrating histories of people, goods, cultures, and their mutual cultural influences along the centuries.

On one hand, the design process has been focussed on avoiding the structure of museum institutions typically closed to addressing the challenge of an open archive. These institutions are seen not only as a place for preservation—as the mission of museums set by ICOMS states—but also as a place of research and, above all, of production: a place where the contamination of cultures is not only taking place but is in fact strongly promoted and even boosted. Actually, this is the very specific character of what we have called The Liquid Museum: an active platform for promoting intra/cross-cultural dialogues within the Mediterranean area.



On the other hand, the proposal deals with the migratory character required by such a structure, due the fact that cultural encounters happen in relation to migration, which can be seen as the movement of people, goods, stories, etc.: that is actually what the whole story of Mediterranean cultures is about. A story of migration. Navigating around the Mediterranean Sea and its coasts, therefore, became an integral part of the design proposal brief, stressing even more the main concept of an open archive and of a performative character: a place that is permanently and constantly under construction, endlessly enhanced by intertwined histories and networks collected during its stay in different ports.

The mobile structure used to build up The Liquid Museum is a dismissed oil-tanker ship—symbolic of a world of exchanges, meetings, trade and commerce. The ship is implemented with mobile platforms floating out from it, building up an archipelago of events and experiences related to art, music, food, literature and architecture—disciplines all hosted in the Liquid Museum’s research departments and archives.

IMG. 2.02 — “The Liquid Museum: Culture Hybridisation through the Mediterranean Coasts.” The ship Liquid Museum could be considered as a no man’s land, it has no a particular national identification but it belongs to the “Mediterranean region” in general. Collage by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.



IMG. 2.03 — “The Liquid Museum: Culture Hybridisation through the Mediterranean Coasts.” Chrono Program. Diagram by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.

IMG. 2.04 — “Museums in an Age of Migration: The new Oslo Kulturhistorisk Museum.” New Museum Manifesto by Rachele Albini.



The New Oslo Kulturhistorisk Museum (KHM)

The project consists of the reconfiguration and extension of the Kulturhistorisk Museum (KHM) in Oslo—one of the most important cultural institutions in Norway—and in a rearrangement of its buildings, exhibition layout and curatorial programme in order to update it to a 21st century museum that would better serve the new multicultural society around it.

The presence of a wide ethnographic collection and the particular role the museum might have in handling different cultures and minorities, largely present in the Norwegian capital, give the KHM a fundamental role in the production of public culture. For this reason there is a need to propose new interpretations of their collection and to convey it with a new multiperspectival approach.

A new postcolonial, neutral and non-authoritative museum model is architectonically reflected in the new portion of the building with a new way of exhibiting, new tools, narrations and strategies. Flexible, semi-permanent exhibitions (to be changed every five years) and shorter-term

exhibitions (lasting up to one year) substitute the permanent displays; the geographical approach that now groups exhibited items by origin, which risks giving too strong a definition to different ethnic groups, is abandoned in favour of a thematic, universalistic approach that answers some general questions on Aesthetics, Death, Mobility, Religion, and Technology through a comparative analysis of the populations of the world; more empathic exhibitions generate physical and emotional involvement of the visitor, through the use of digital technology and stratification of the information; the inclusion of contemporary objects such as recent artefacts, works of contemporary artists or currently used items, increase the number of contents in the museum and better represent the multicultural society of today.

Multiethnic Milan

The nature of contemporary societies is increasingly multicultural, since they are characterised by a rising intensification of the interrelations between different ethnic groups. Wandering in a big city involves more and more often making a journey among various micro-landscapes, smells, colours, sounds and signs that refer to diverse and coexisting worlds; thus, it means witnessing to a history of recent migrations, especially immigration from the developing countries.

Milan is no exception. People crossing some of its neighbourhoods experience a distinct feeling of being elsewhere. They can hardly recognise the distinctive features of the city, especially if they gaze at the ground floor of buildings, shop windows, persons walking in the street or staying in a square. Some people experience a sense of disorientation, a sort of loss of the codes they have always drawn upon to interpret their everyday life in Milan, which are now challenged by the superimposition of different characters (inscriptions, anthropic environments, forms and modes of trade, ways to cultivate the relationships with others).

Though the current living conditions in Milan are not reminiscent of the ethnic north American clusters at all, or marginal “urban ghettos” isolated from the context such as the French *banlieu*, Milan can be definitely considered a multiethnic city. Immigrant populations are responsible for widespread micro-transformations affecting the urban fabric, a different use of covered and open-air public places, the new appearance or character of the neighbourhoods they live in.

Is cultural integration successful in the city of Milan, that is traditionally used to living multiculturalism and being affected by the phenomenon of migration? What does actually integration mean?

To integrate does not imply to eliminate differences, or undergo processes of re-acculturation and incorporation within a dominant culture. It rather implies the chance for each group to find a suitable living space with its own peculiarities, within a social reference system that does not get rid of diversity but instead, enhances and recreates it in a richer and multifaceted framework.

This project proposes the creation of a new museum in Piazza della Repubblica in Milan, made up of spaces that display the uses and customs of the ethnic communities residing in the city, as well as the influence they have on Western culture, that can be perceived in fashion, cuisine, architecture, rites, ceremonies, etc. In particular, the idea focuses on the Chinese culture. Moreover, the study suggests an extension of the model to a citywide network of museums that spotlight other non-European cultures. The exhibition centres could be located in sensitive places that are particularly strategic for the high flow of people in transit. Key locations, in this sense, may be the urban underground and railway stations, symbols of movement and travel, as well as contacts that, albeit instantly, can influence—and over time change—the lifestyle of the inhabitants.

Cultures are, in fact, fluid and constantly evolving. People actively interpret their own traditions renewing them in order to adapt to the changes that relating with others entails. Nevertheless, the emphasis on differences has increasingly diverged from a rightful affirmation of diversity, to eventually come to the negation of the dimension of universality of human experience, that is, the postulation of an essential incommunicability, separation, isolation of human experiences and cultures (Jabbar 2012). That is the reason why mutual understanding and better integration policies are definitely to be encouraged.

Border Memories: Re-enacting the Difficult Heritage in Venezia Giulia

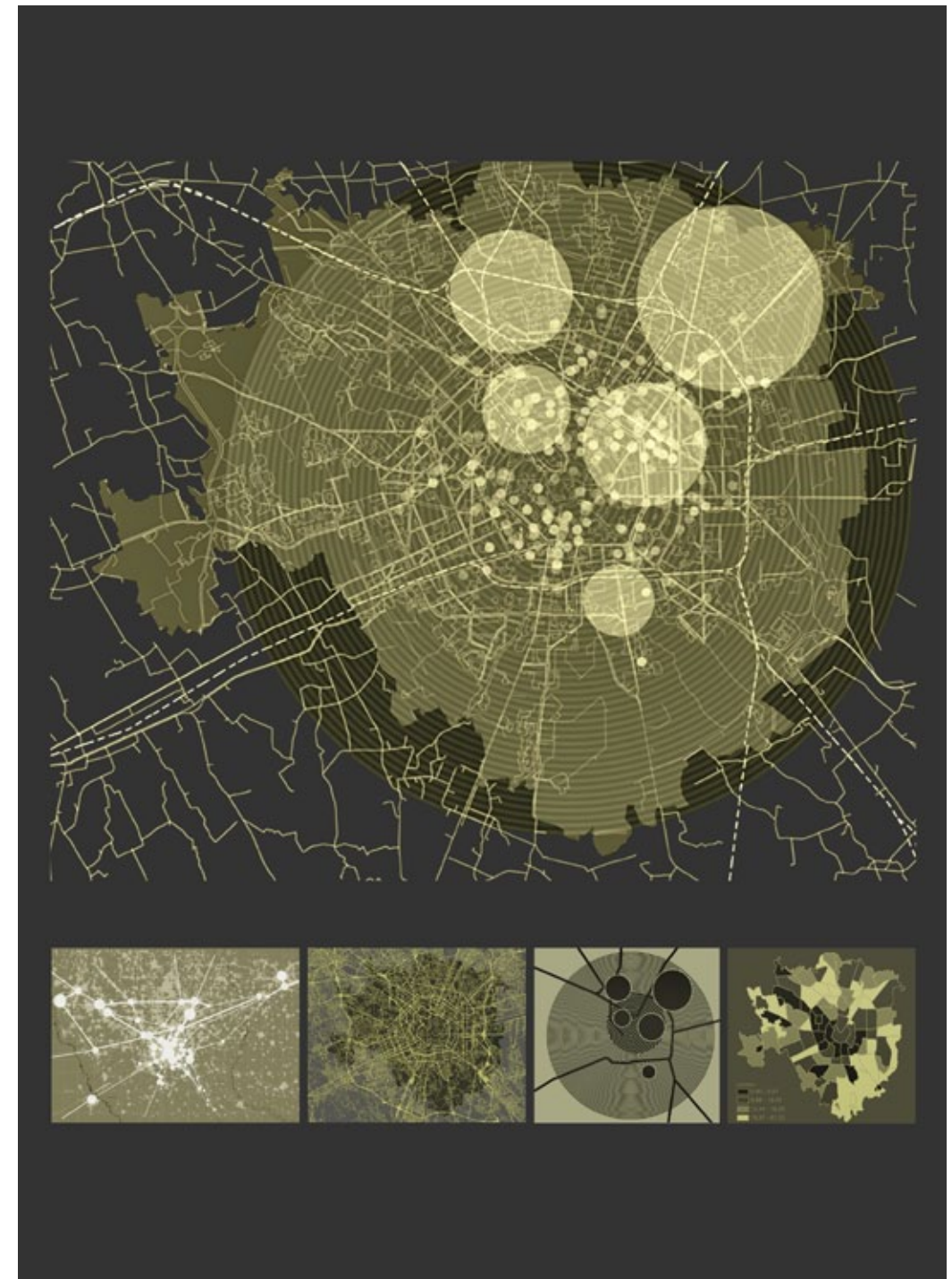
The 20th century was characterised by wars and genocides that left indelible signs in the European landscape, constituting a traumatic heritage difficult to manage and relate to. Since the last witnesses are disappearing, how can we pass on the memories of the past?

The project aims to re-discover the past of the transnational territory called Venezia Giulia, shared by Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, where the ethnic fights between the Italian and Slavic population left numerous traces fixed in the ground that need to be re-activated. The memory of that dark period had been, sometimes consciously, sometimes involuntarily, removed and never re-elaborated.

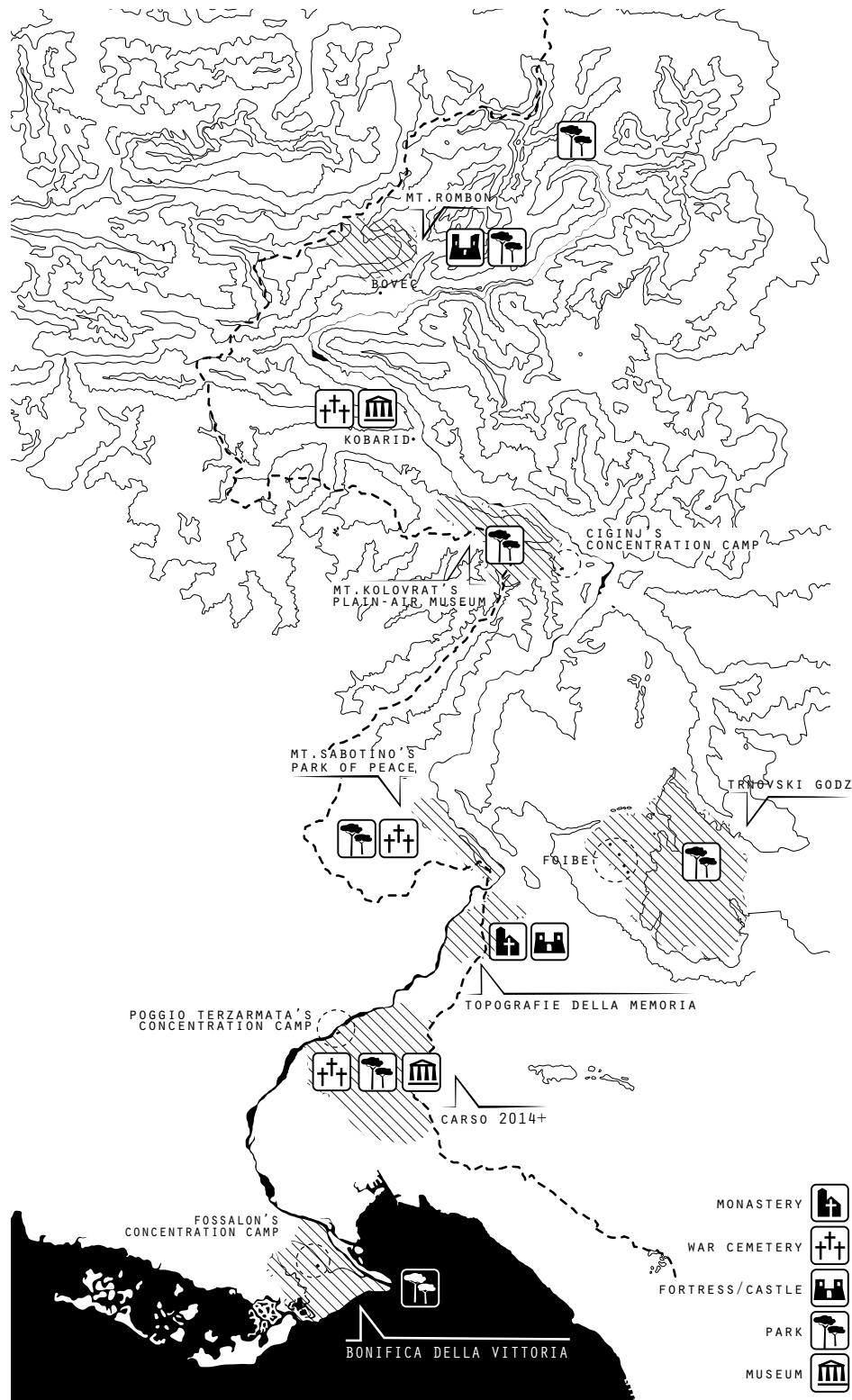
The purpose of the project is to re-activate the difficult heritage, including concentration camps and *foibe*,¹ going beyond the classic commemoration, fostering the reappearance of the sites in the territory's life cycle and directly involving the people to interiorise and overcome the trauma.

As the project is situated in a border zone, its purpose is to favour an intercultural dialogue and exchange on the European scale, building shared memories and thus creating a diffused museum as an instrument of re-appropriation of the territory's past.

¹ The term *foiba* indicates a natural underground cavity derived from karstic phenomena. The opening is not wider than three meters and, seen from outside, it appears to be just a hole—still its profundity can exceed 60 metres. Between 1943 and 1945, many Istrian and Julian foibe were used to kill opponents of the Yugoslavian regime.



IMG. 2.05 — “Multiethnic Milan.”
Conceptual maps of Milan analysing the
settlement of non-European communities.
Elaboration by Sara Borghi.



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PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 2.06
— "Border Memories: Re-Enacting the Difficult Heritage." Map of the itinerary along the Isonzo river with cultural/touristic/heritage sites. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.



IMG. 2.07 — The Strait of Sicily. Photo by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.

The Liquid Museum

Culture Hybridisation through the Mediterranean Coasts

The tanker *Liquid Museum*, travelling around the Mediterranean Sea, could be considered as a “sponge” that absorbs all the stories it encounters from one shore to the other, re-proposing them via its archive, research and meeting spaces. The *Liquid Museum* tries to give evidence, through a physical apparatus such as a museum—though a special kind of museum—the Mediterranean Sea as a location of migrating histories, of diverse meetings and currents. The *Liquid Museum* is therefore considered, in all of its parts, with reference to the fundamental premises of MeLa Project studies and findings: the idea of the centrality of migration; of culture plurality; of people’s participation; and of new conceptions of archiving and communicating museum collections. These elements have influenced and determined every design choice. Together with our ideas and design approach, and following the technological aspects of the maritime world, we arrived at the final configuration of the *Liquid Museum* as an architectural project that seeks to respond to all the critical and theoretical challenges of the MeLa findings.

The *Liquid Museum* travels along the sea, docking at different shorelines, with the aim of showing the multiple Mediterranean identities and—at the same time—the elements shared by several Mediterranean cultures. Music, food, and art practices will be the vehicles to represent the various cultural characteristics of this very large and complex cultural area.

The Mediterranean stories will be narrated and expressed in three different, but equally important, parts strictly linked to one another: the “Archive” is meant as an instrument of collection and multimedia narration; the “Performative Area” is presented as a place for actions and exchanges; and the “Research Department” will be a space for understanding and studying Mediterranean culture. With its open spaces

for events, concerts, performances and market activities, the *Liquid Museum* will become also the scene of new hybridisations; and these will be recorded in order to become part of the *Museum* collection, continuously enriching it in a circular relation between the archive, the research and the performances.

The Archive is open and permanently under construction. It is dynamic and increases through new hybridisations, and consists of two different parts: the Multimedia Library and the Sea Memory Museum. The Multimedia Library collects digital objects and its intangible global collection offers interactive and immersive experiences impossible to have in a standard ethnographic museum. The Sea Memory Museum is designed, on the other hand, as an open and flexible never-ending space (the structure can be increased allowing the museum to grow over time) where objects found in the sea are exposed as keepers of memory and story.

The Performative Area is the more vital and dynamic part of the museum. With its performances it expresses—and hosts—contemporary migrations and contaminations taking place on its stage, which will later be stored in the Archive. It is a platform that reflects the Mediterranean’s character as an open and flexible surface containing, hosting and suggesting different activities at one time: from a very large food market—expressing the Mediterranean culture of trading and food—to different spaces for performances and exhibitions.

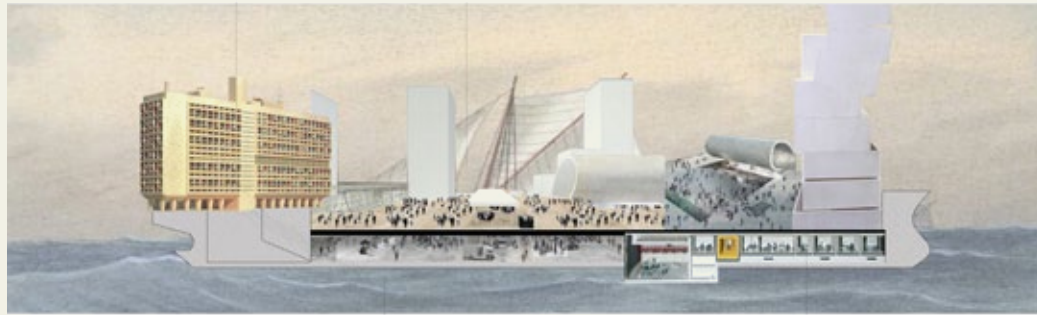
Finally, inside the Research Department people can discuss, study, experiment and research the Mediterranean basin. The research has multiple and different focal points, supporting the liquid archive. The department’s spaces are more closed and fixed and are used by researches, students, artists and members of a general audience



SERVICES



ACTION



RESEARCH



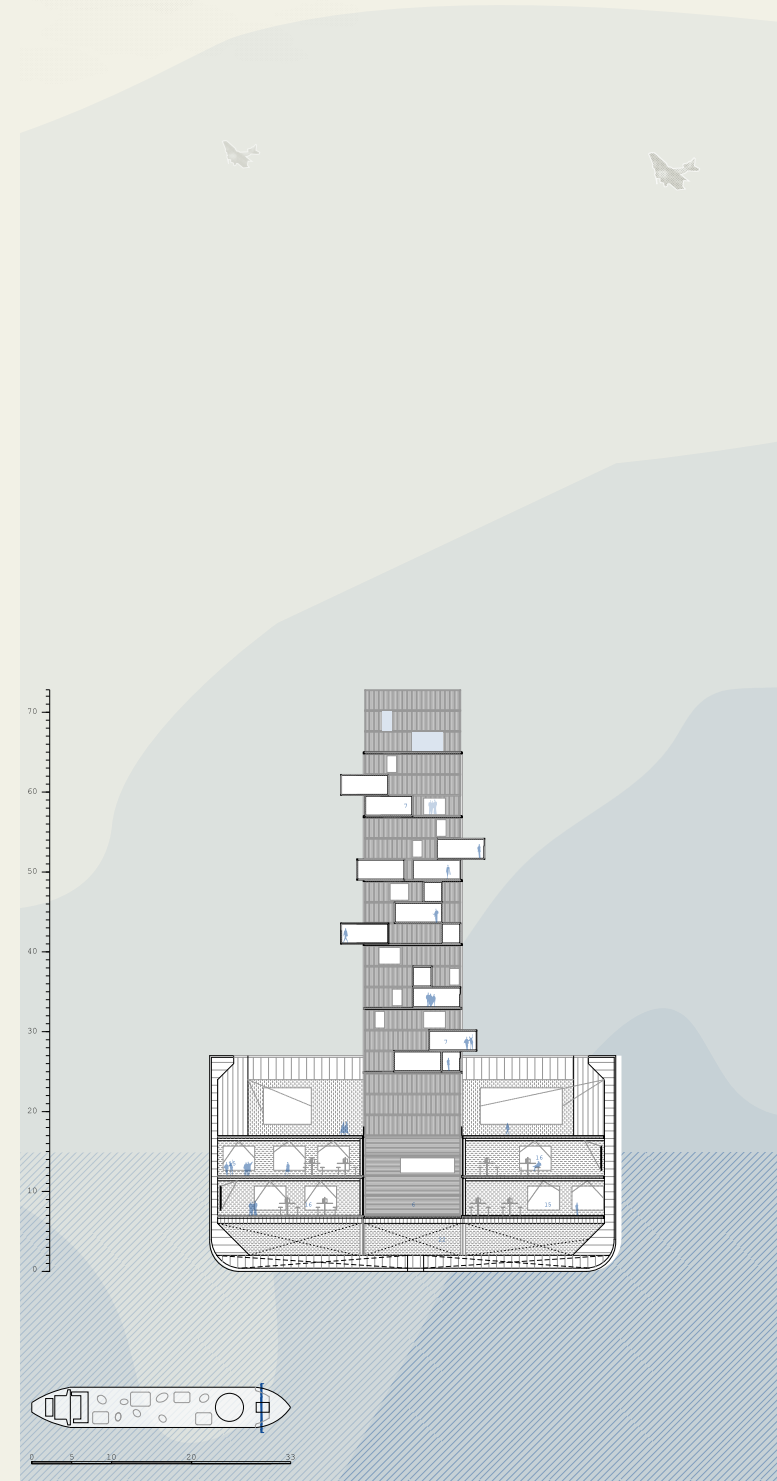
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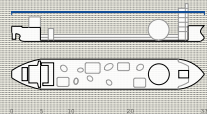
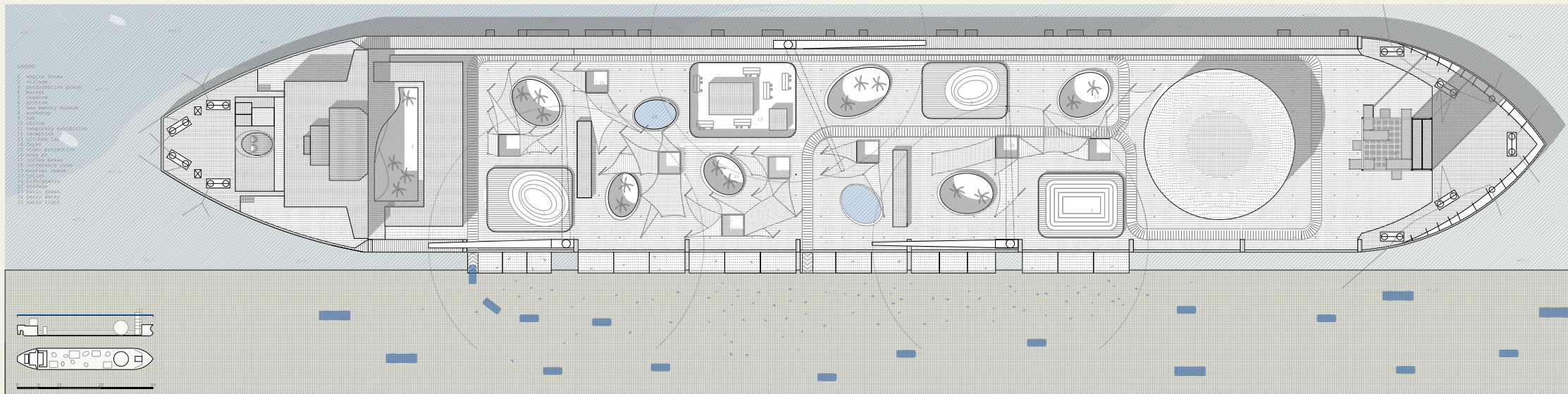
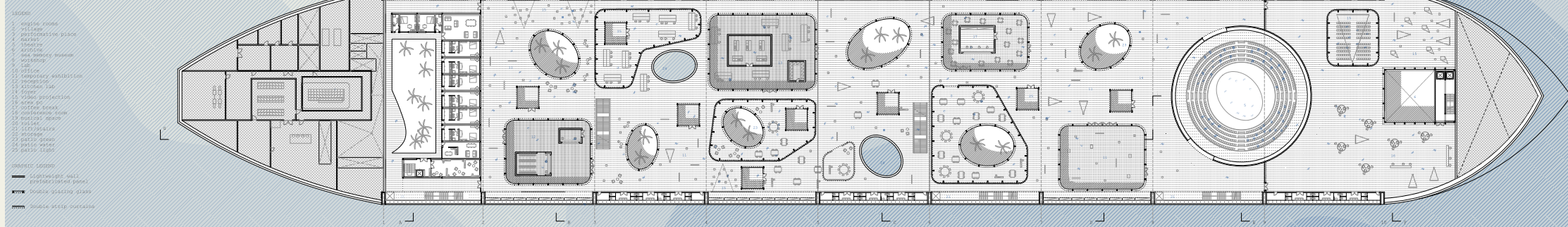
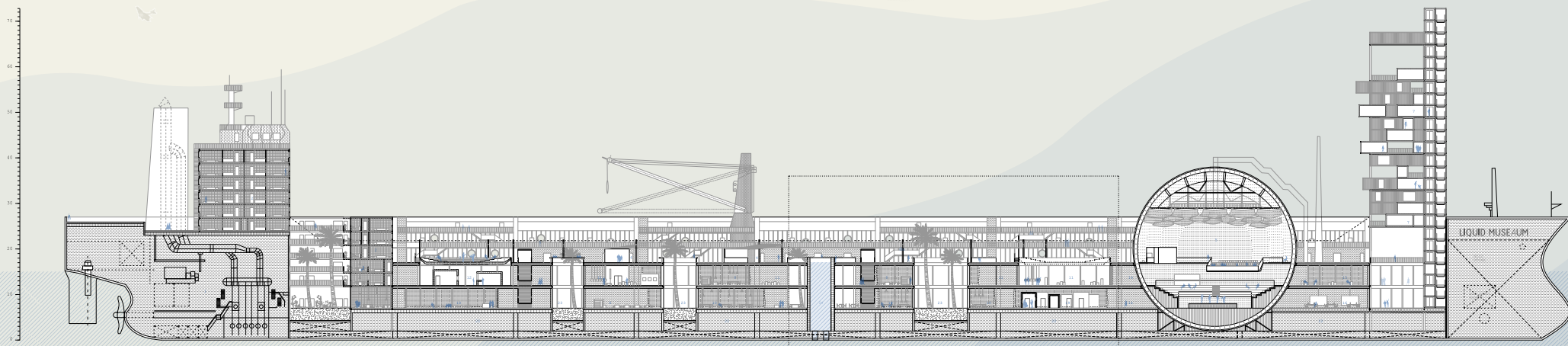


PREVIOUS PAGE, IMGS. 2.08–10 — Concept images illustrating the Liquid Archive, the Liquid Museum layout and functional program. Collage by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.

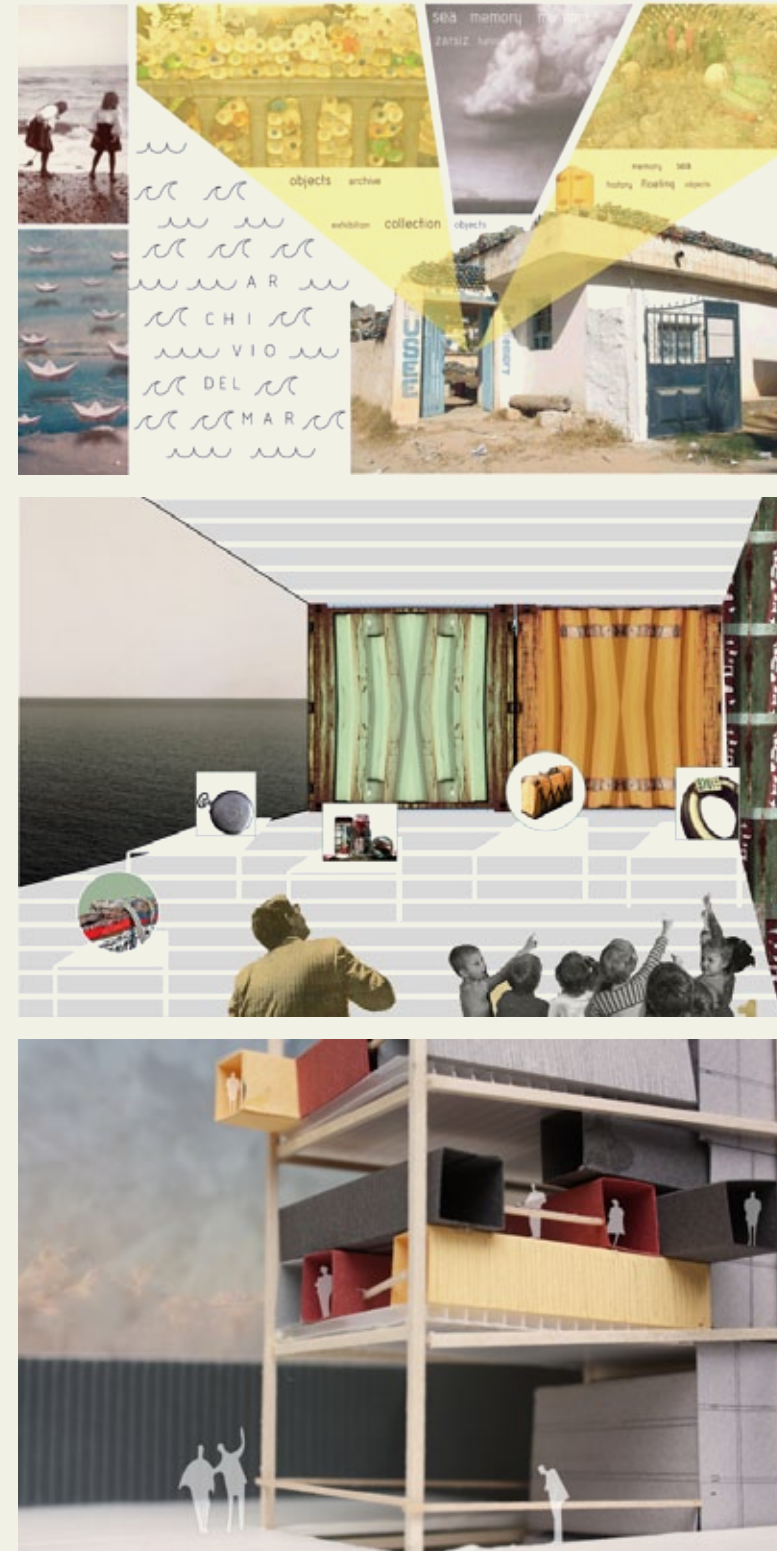
THIS PAGE, IMG. 2.11 — Section of the Liquid Museum boat. Project by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.

NEXT PAGE, IMGS. 2.12–13 — From the bottom to the top, general plan of the Liquid Museum boat, showing the market and the area for performances; plan of the level -1, with spaces for research and laboratories; longitudinal section. Project by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.





IMGS. 2.14–15 — Concept images illustrating the Archive: the Multimedia Library. Collage by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.



IMGS. 2.16–18 — Concept images illustrating the Archive: the Sea Memory Museum. Collage and picture of the maquette by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.

IMGS. 2.19–20 — Concept images illustrating the Research Department. Collage by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.



IMGS. 2.21–22 — The Research Department. Picture of the maquette and graphic elaboration by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.



IMG. 2.23 — Concept image illustrating the "Village." Collage by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.

IMGS. 2.24–25 — The “performative area.” Collage and picture of the maquette by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.



IMG. 2.26 — The Market. Graphic elaboration by Chiara Baravalle and Giuseppe Biscottini.



interested in experimenting and investigating Mediterranean hybridisation. These activities will act as support for the research conferences, lectures and workshops that will take place in the Liquid Museum spaces, transforming it into a system that simultaneously discovers and produces new cross-fertilisations.

The experience in the Liquid Museum changes depending on whether you are a visitor, a researcher or a crew member. It can be visited for just a few hours, or for some days—maybe even weeks. The onboard researchers may conduct their studies for long periods that require their presence on the so-called “Village.” The Village is conceived in this case, taking into consideration the migratory phenomenon typical of the Mediterranean region. In fact, in a utopian way, the large ex-oil tanker interacts with this very relevant emergence of Europe, designing apartments on board that give hospitality to migrants or families that can work as “crew” on the boat.

For what concern the final configuration of the project, the Village, the Archive, the Performative Area and the Research Department are unified by a slab of two floors. The slab is located inside the hull of the ship and, starting from the lowest point, spread over two floors, which finally reach the level of the sea. All the activities linked to the Research Department, such as the laboratories, workshops, lectures and conference rooms, are situated on the two floors of the slab. The Research Department is designed as an open space where the different rooms and functions are divided by movable walls or curtains that, whether closed or open, modify the perception of the space. The area may therefore vary from the more private to the very open. Additionally, the Archive is located inside the slab with the Multimedia Library however, different from the Research Department, the Archive is arranged on several floors, as an almost never-ending building made up of ship containers.

The Village is situated on the stern of the ship, and it consists of two buildings: the superstructure present in all the oil tankers that from the level of the stern rises for six floors, and another

volume designed in order to store more apartments and that from the first level of the slab rises at the level of the hull, 20 metres above the sea level.

The Performative Area is located on top of the slab, on the sea level. It is designed as an open air space hosting all the performances and exhibitions; it also becomes a common ground for a periodic ethnic food market. From this level it is possible to access the tank-theatre and listen to Mediterranean music performances. Balconies above the level of the sea allow people to have different views of what happens on the Liquid Museum.

The slab—characterised by the presence of numerous patios that, with different dimensions and shapes—has the function of connecting the floors using a typical Mediterranean architectural device. Some of them, defined by fluid shapes, host trees, and vegetation, evoking the medieval *hortus conclusus*. These enclosed gardens are a way of bringing light inside the slab, as the Research Department cannot receive natural light, being under the level of the water. These types of patios reach different floors: the smallest ones are just one floor in volume, the biggest carry the light to the lowest floor of the slab. Their dimensions allow people to receive natural light even in the lowest decks, and have the sensation of being outside, surrounded by typical Mediterranean vegetation. Others have the function of bringing salt water inside the ship; in this case the hull of the tanker is perforated at the bottom allowing a liquid passage.

In some cases, thick walls surround the more regular patios, hosting market activities. And in others the thickness of the roof is shaped in order to become an open theatre for performances and concerts. Performances take place also on barges located in the ship that can be removed and launched into open water when the Liquid Museum is not on course. Once the barges are on the water, the performances can reach the coasts or can even take place on the water itself.

Chiara Baravalle, Giuseppe Biscottini



IMG. 2.27 — View of the Kulturhistorisk Museum main front on Frederiks Gate, Oslo, Norway. Photo by Vidar Iversen.

Museums in an Age of Migrations: The new Oslo Kulturhistorisk Museum

The new museum complex, incorporates two existing buildings, the current Kulturhistorisk Museum and the Nasjonalgalleriet, linked through an underground addition that covers the whole area of Tullinlokka, hosting all the functions that the museum requires to fulfil its roles of exhibiting, preservation and research, as well as a platform for new spaces of meeting and participation designed in line with the MeLa principles and findings.

This new scenario takes into account that the Nasjonalgalleriet is to be relocated and realistically envisions the two old buildings which serve the KHM, both destined to contain mainly permanent collections and offices, while many of the new additional functions and a new ethnographic exhibition are located in the new underground extension.

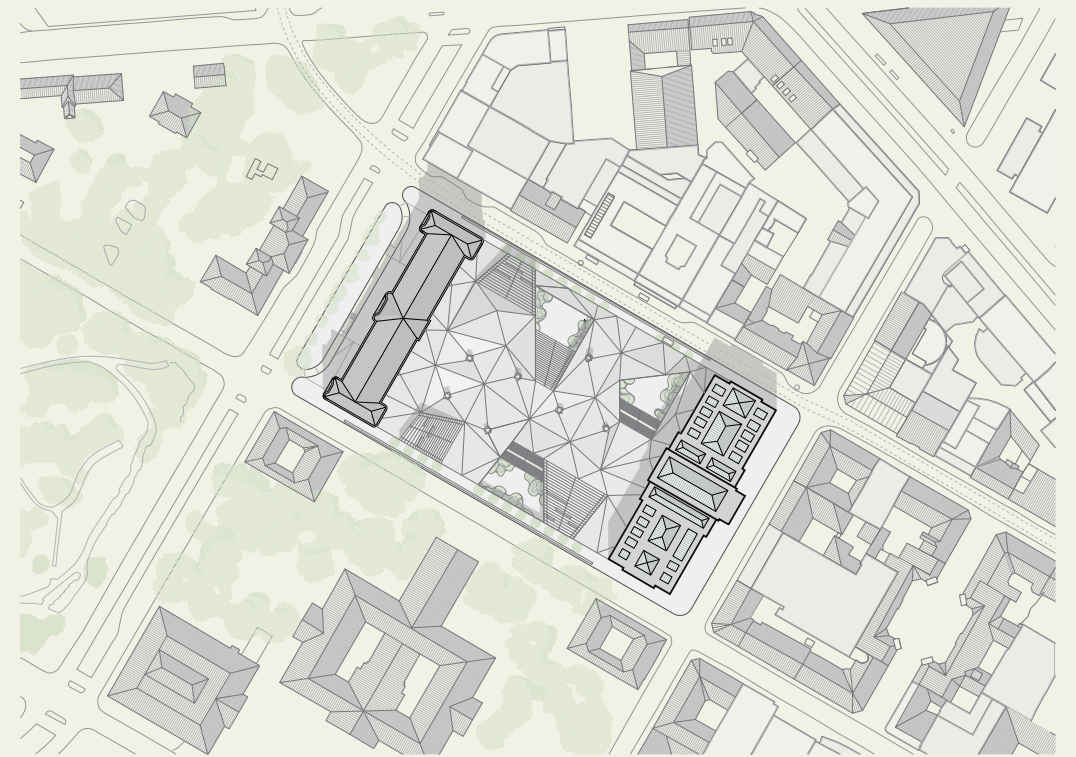
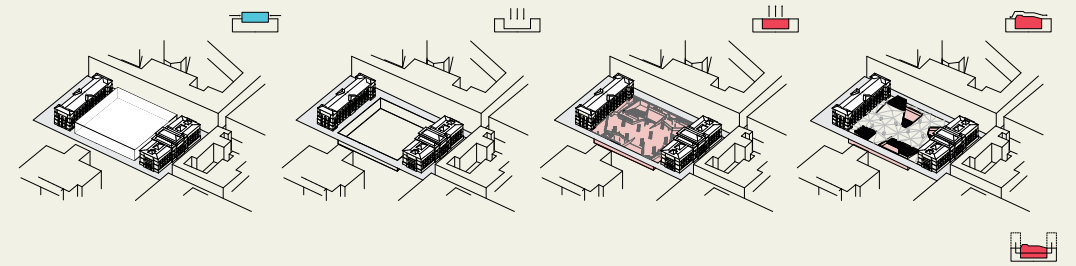
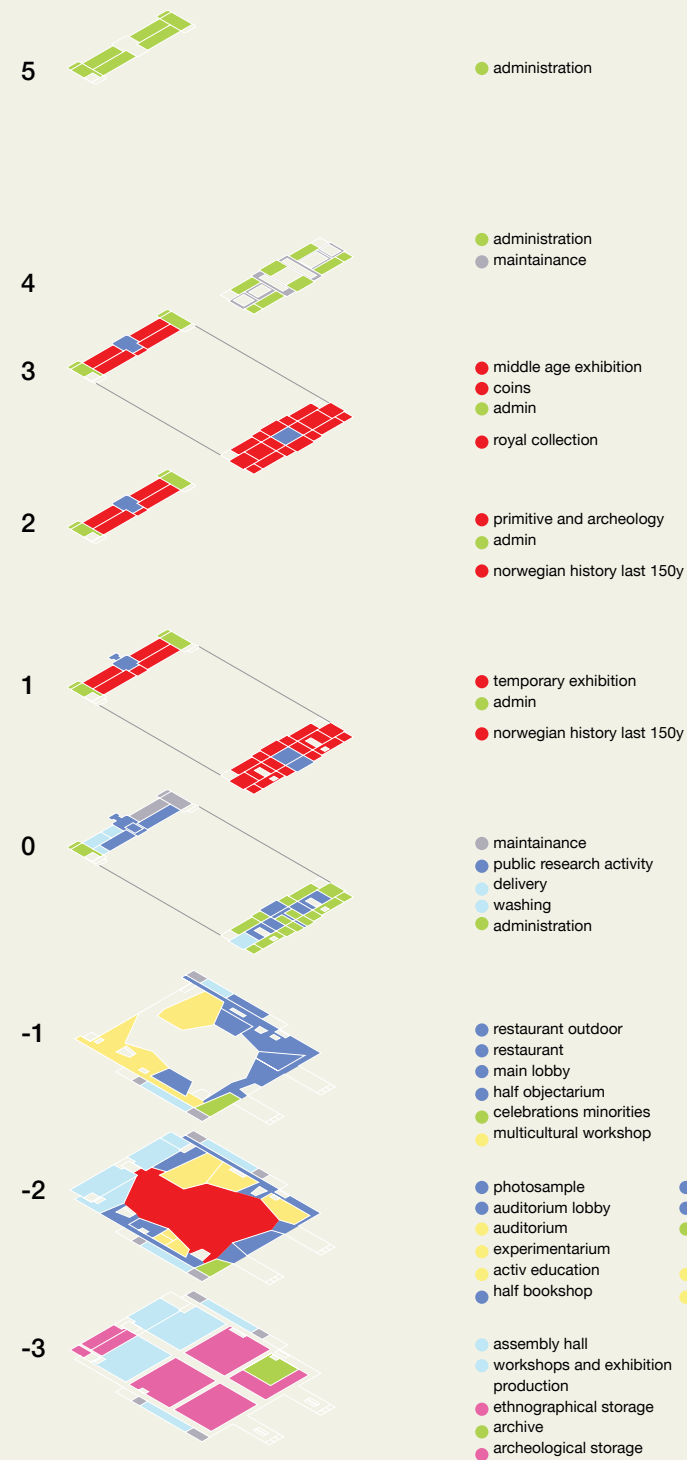
In addition, since this is a university museum, research is a major issue. The exhibition space therefore becomes a place of experimentation and research itself, a process of knowledge-in-the-making, which involves the audience in formulating new questions and becoming co-investigators themselves in the research process. There are four ways in which this phenomenon is intended to play out: “root exhibitions” (cross-disciplinary exhibitions generating questions that transgress individual cases); an “Objectarium” (digital storage where visitors browse through the collection catalogue and reflect upon which questions these objects may generate); “The Attic” (or “Experimentarium,” which is a place for exploring new ways of exhibiting in collaboration with external people); and “Special Exhibitions” (to focus on some particular cases).

The creation of brand new spaces for collaboration and participation is essential to make the museum an arena of encounter and debate:

the educational areas (auditoria, spaces for active education, where visitors learn by getting in contact with items, multicultural workshops, rooms for conferences or reserved to special events involving minorities, group rooms for research or study and classrooms); and the so-called “pro-active spaces” (very flexible and adaptable spaces, with a peculiar formal character, designed to host new practices that the museum should undertake more often, such as performances, talks and particular participative programmes).

In the end, a very symbolic role is assumed by the square as a public space that is activated from the museum, situated underneath it, and in close relationship with it. The Kulturhistorisk Museum becomes a symbol of a museum that you can step on and into; a museum that puts itself to the use of the public; an institution that is no longer hegemonic and powerful but usable and free. The square, having almost the same civic importance as the museum, brings people underground via multiple entrances and presents an opportunity for different ethnicities to perform, stay, rest, drink or eat. In this way the square is analogical to an exhibition of the social and cultural reality of Oslo, where the entire spectrum of the city’s inhabitants becomes visible, with all its mixes and minority groups.

The existing buildings, both very important historical monuments, being main elements of the 19th century urban environment of Oslo, frame the square on two sides and stand opposite each other. Their value lies in their external facades, decorated interiors, structural systems and in their communication links. Being designed separately as standalone monumental edifices, the buildings’ facades are expressive, deliberately shaped and lavish on all sides. For this reason, the choice of maintaining the extension under the ground floor indicates a respect towards the



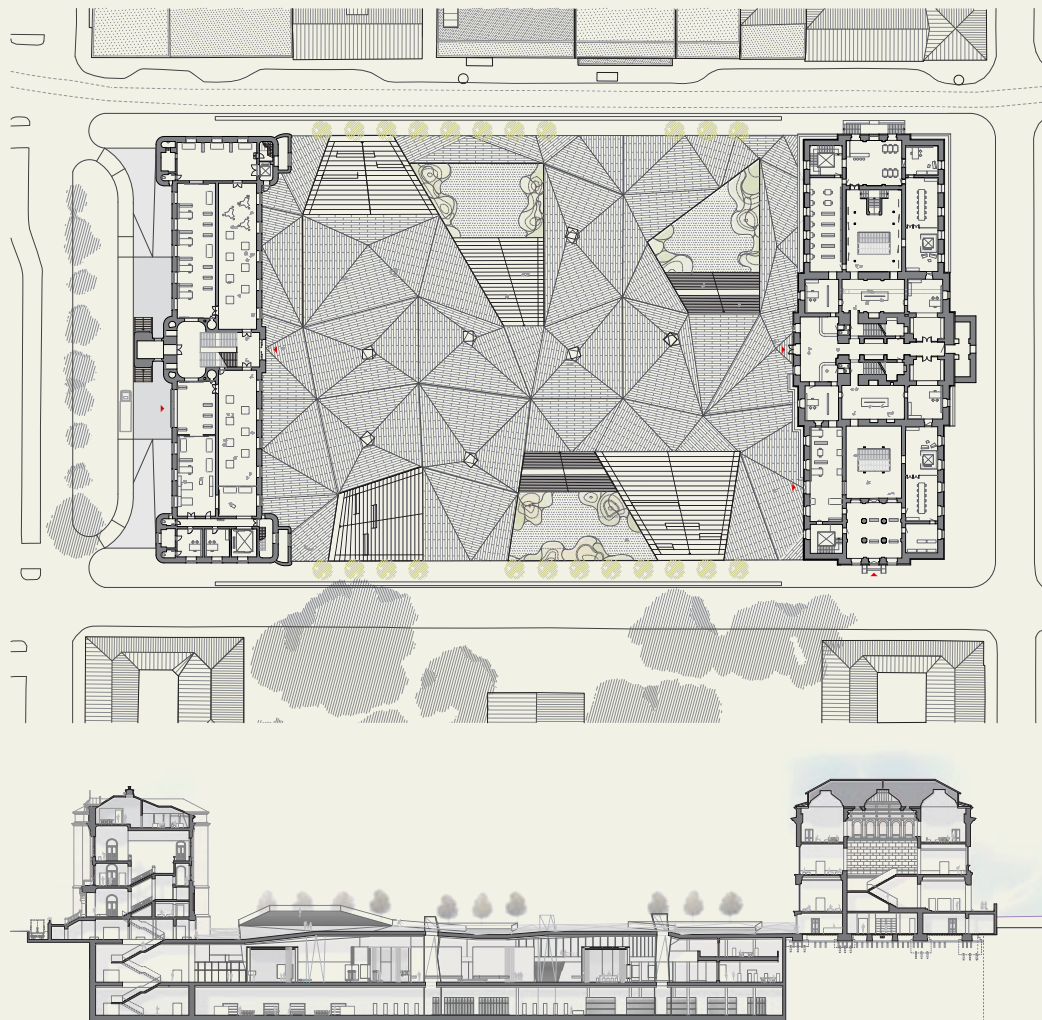
PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 2.28 — Functional programme of the existing buildings and the new addition. Elaboration by Rachele Albini.

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IMG. 2.29 — Architectural concept of the new addition. Elaboration by Rachele Albini.

IMGS. 2.30–31 — Plan and aerial view of the site project in Tullinløkka, Oslo. Elaboration by Rachele Albini.

NEXT PAGE, IMGS. 2.32–34 — Ground floor plan showing the new entrances on the square, transversal section and perspective. Project by Rachele Albini.



old constructions, the historical value of the area, and in its balanced relationship between solid and void.

Concerning the architectural character and distribution of programme; on the ground floor of both buildings the visitor can pause in some spaces dedicated to research and can actively participate through interactive devices. At the same time, some information is given on the different activities organised in the museum.

On the higher floors, one can visit the permanent collections. In the KHM building pre-history, archaeology, middle age and coins are displayed; while the Nasjonalgalleriet displays Norwegian history from the last ten years and the royal collection. The first floor of the central body of the KHM is dedicated to temporary exhibitions, while the lateral volumes, on all other floors, are destined to facilitate organisation of functions and staff, since they lack proper access or adequate dimensions to host large groups of visitors.

In the Nasjonalgalleriet, the offices are located mostly on the highest floor, with the exception of some on the ground floor. This results from the fact that rooms on the second floor are organised around some large light wells, which are narrow and badly connected to each other, meaning that these spaces are not easily adaptable for public functions.

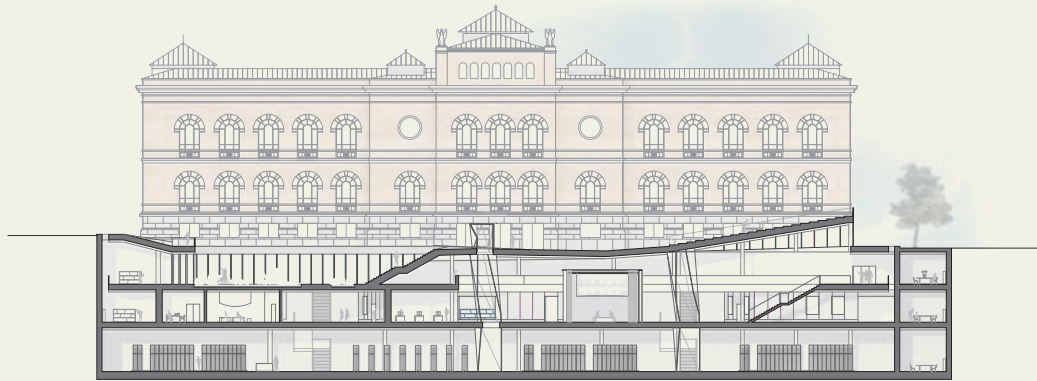
The new underground extension is organised on three levels, where functions are distributed with a gradient ranging from the most public functions on top (such as new exhibition spaces, activities and services); to more private functions on the bottom (storage, laboratories). The new intervention is designed in connection with the square above it, which is a public space geometrically articulated in a triangular surface, suitable for generating continuity among the different levels and to offer new opportunities to enter the building.

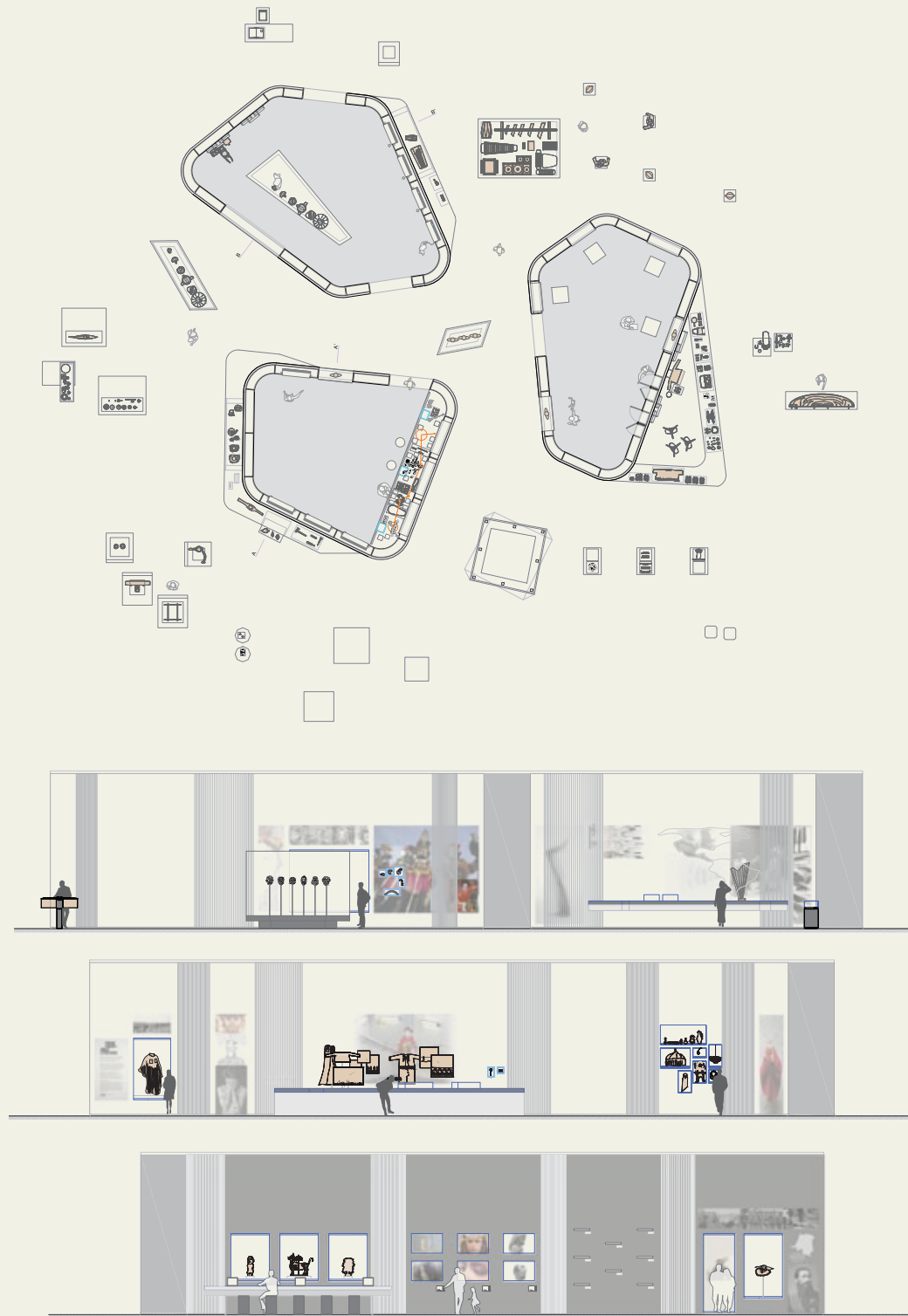
Two entrances to the museum complex are located in the ground floor of the existing buildings towards the internal square, thus overturning the original access structure. In this way the public is conducted, in a direct way, from the

square to the spaces of reception and to the vertical links that cross the historical constructions, creating continuity with the underground portion. Other access points, instead, are situated in the square, with the result of generating folds up and down that create emerging volumes and lowered courts, in an easy flow with each other. The plurality of access points thus realised reflects a new way of thinking and using the museum: a place that is open to the city's different communities and in which no one is obliged to follow determined paths. Every user can generate their own route, in line with their interests and curiosities.

The courtyards, accessible by stairs or ramps, lead the visitor in a very fluid and natural way to the first floor under the street level. Here the very public activities of the museum are located. The access points create protected and "wild oases" conceived as places for the execution of public activities sheltered from the wind and in continuity with the space inside. The emerging volumes, instead, identify the entrance leading toward the exhibition space and generate unexpected and unusual spaces for a pause by offering themselves as balconies in the urban space of the Nordic capital. These "ramp-volumes" give rise to a series of physical and visual relationships with each other and resemble small, diffused amphitheatres that articulate the mineral surface of the square, engendering a multiple diversity of spaces with different characteristics and atmospheres.

These articulations on the square level allow the natural light to reach the most internal and subterranean spaces of the museum. The structural solution thought to sustain the square contributes in a similar way: some prisms comprising bundles of metal tubular structures and glass partially emerge in the urban space on top, playing the double role of structure and light well. These *cannon a lumière*, implemented by neon and interactive screens, become "activator" objects in the artificial landscape of the square, communicating to those who spend time in the square the activities and the exhibitory appointments of the museum.





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IMGS. 2.35–37 — Plan of the level -1, section towards old Nasjonalgalleriet (centre), and section towards the old KHM (bottom). Project by Rachele Albin.

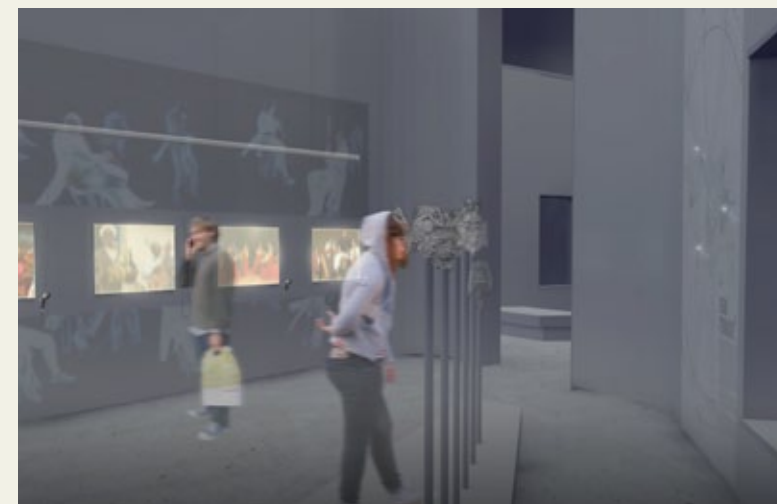


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IMG. 2.38 — Plan of the level -2. Project by Rachele Albin.

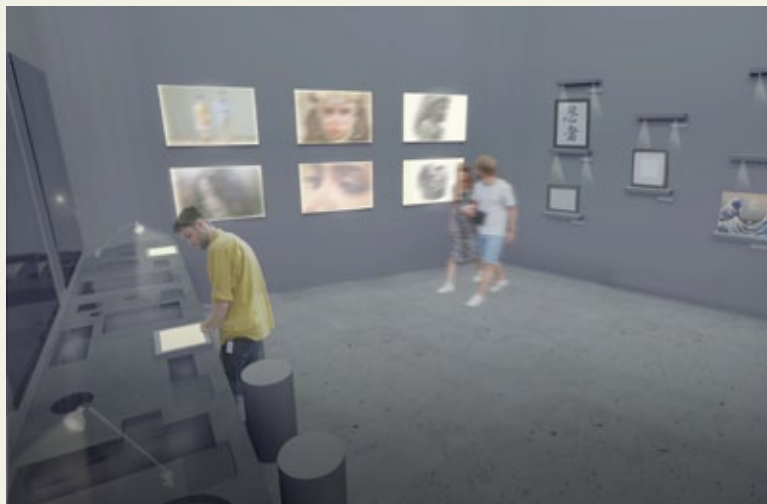
IMG. 2.39 — Rendering showing the square. Elaboration by Rachele Albin.

PREVIOUS PAGE
IMGS. 2.40–43 — Plan and sections of the “aesthetic archipelago.” The interior of each cell shows an alternative lecture on particular themes, through different tools, whereas the fluid connective space around hosts the semipermanent thematic exhibition. Project by Rachele Albin.

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IMGS. 2.44–46 — Renderings of the “aesthetic archipelago.” Project by Rachele Albin.



IMGS. 2.47–49 — Renderings of the “aesthetic archipelago.” Project by Rachele Albini.



Through the different entrances on the square it is possible to reach the mezzanine of the museum, which amounts to a large gallery that looks out onto the double-volume exhibition space under it, creating a visual relationship with the different places in which the space is articulated. At this level is a main lobby, a bar/restaurant, as well as a space to host new museum practices (particularly the ones intent on increasing the engagement of a multicultural audience and the experimentation on new themes); the Objectarium (a digital catalogue of the museum collection); and one of the entrances to the museum auditorium.

At the lower level, the “active boxes” accommodate a remarkable number of activities that are essential to multiply the roles and tasks of a contemporary ethnographic museum. Among these spaces, those with the strongest impact are the Experimentarium; the “active education rooms” (destined to hold the educational programme of the museum); and the rooms for multicultural workshops. At the same time, the perimeter walls of the “active boxes,” oriented toward the central exhibition space, play a pivotal role inside the system, displaying the results, the procedures or the progresses of the research or experimental activities that are practiced inside those boxes.

The other main generative elements of the new thematic exhibition space are the “cells.” Similar to autonomous rooms in the free space of the first level underground, the cells generate a net of thematic connections that is non-hierarchical and in which visitors can move freely. The archipelagos, or groups of more cells, correspond to the set-up of the gathered material on a specific theme. These themes and timings of exhibition sections are established by the curatorial staff of the museum. The different archipelagos—distinctive in the space due to their mutual distance and position—therefore present the thematic partitioning of the main exhibition in a cluster of in-depth analysis and interpretation. While the cells’ exteriors and the space generated between them helps to build a story linked to the items and collections of the museum, their interiors dis-

close some thematic and comparative in-depth analysis that open the collection to other interpretations and stories, offering an occasion for diversifying the museum’s master narrative and offering various starting points for critical reflection that go beyond those belonging to or hosted by the museum.

Rachele Albini



IMG. 2.50 — “Multiethnic Milan.” Concept image highlighting the multi- and trans-cultural nature of the project. Elaboration by Sara Borghi.

Multiethnic Milan

An Experimental Museum for Intercultural Dialogue

Like other European cities, Milan features an international nature and experiences all of the contradictions and uncertainties of globalisation, including the coexistence of many identities, cultures and religions within the city. Yet, this does not mean that its citizens are accustomed to dealing with diversity, so much so that they are often suspicious and advance resistance to accept and welcome migrants and foreigners.

The idea underlying the “Multiethnic Milan” project resulted from a careful consideration of the conditions entailed in living in a context where identities and cultural customs are actually confronted every day at school, in factories, in offices—in the centre as well as in the suburbs—but rarely in conferences and in seminars. How to face a contradictory situation in which, on the one hand, the inhabitants live in a cosmopolitan city while on the other hand, they are often scared of what comes from outside? Could Milan become a model for ethnic, religious, and cultural integration? Provided this is a realistic prospect, the model could never be obtained only through theoretical studies, but also by recognising the signs of a successful dialogue that are already visible in a few places where diverse realities coexist, although with frictions.

Some metropolitan fragments have evolved into highly multiethnic urban neighbourhoods: to name a few, Canonica Sarpi, the Lazzaretto, the area between Loreto and Via Padova. The change was prompted there by local factors such as the structure of the urban fabric, in addition to anthropological causes like the plans and actions of the immigrant population that settled there. These are historic and semi-central areas, characterised by a high density of middle-scale buildings and mixed-use developments including mainly social or middle-class residences and craft spaces. They are usually places of exchange

and trade, thanks to the presence of local markets and the proximity to major railway hubs.

Moreover, the non-EU populations that moved to these areas share a number of features. First and foremost, they all aspire to get a stable accommodation over time in order to maintain parental relations, sometimes as a prelude to a future family reunification. A second common aspect is the establishment and development of a social network among compatriots, so as to encourage the settlement and integration of newcomers.

In recent years, the aforementioned areas underwent a change, which turned them into a reference point for wider communities than the ones living just outside the city, and allowed supplying services to the immigrant population whether living in the city, in the province or within the region.

The project aims at planning a museum to foster and promote the intercultural dialogue in Piazza della Repubblica that is one of the main interchange hubs in the city. The centre consists of two new buildings and other underground exhibition spaces arranged along the passageways of the railway and the underground stations, set up so as to present—through images, artefacts, celebrations of feast days— uses and customs of the most populated ethnic communities in Milan. Residents and transit passengers are the estimated audience.

The proposal is not strictly related to studying the presence of immigrants in the neighbourhood streets, nor does it investigate the mechanisms that contributed to the settlement of communities in different areas of Milan and the specific forms of interethnic coexistence. It intends to highlight the mixture of ethnic and social groups, including the Italian population, that cross everyday at public transport and

EVOLUZIONE DEI PERCORSI D'INSERIMENTO

I fenomeni concentrativi e la presenza di alcuni gruppi nazionali prevalenti hanno concorso all'evoluzione di frammenti metropolitani in quartieri etnicamente connotati. I loro elementi distintivi rispetto agli altri quartieri della città non consistono solo nella concentrazione di popolazioni straniere della stessa nazionalità o appartenenti a gruppi etnici diversi. Si tratta piuttosto della modificazione dei modi d'uso dello spazio preesistente, della ridefinizione del significato di alcune parti del territorio urbano e della valorizzazione commerciale di alcuni percorsi stradali, specializzati nell'offerta di consumi legati a consuetudini e a esigenze culturali o religiose differenti da quelle della popolazione autoctona. Queste aree rappresentano generalmente luoghi di scambi e di commercio, per la presenza dei mercati rionali e per la vicinanza a importanti snodi ferroviari.

Ad esempio Canonica Sarpi, il Lazzaretto e Loreto si trovano nei pressi della Stazione Garibaldi e della Stazione Centrale, a ridosso delle antiche mura spagnole, con un tessuto residenziale molto simile a quello del centro storico, ma di minor qualità architettonica.

UN QUARTIERE MULTIETNICO DIFFUSO

Negli ultimi anni si possono osservare alcune nuove dinamiche sia commerciali che di carattere sociale e identitario, che possono far presagire nuove traiettorie di sviluppo del quartiere. La seconda generazione comincia a frequentare e ad usare gli spazi pubblici del proprio quartiere per incontrarsi. Un terzo delle attività insediato sono gestite da cinesi, in prevalenza negozi alimentari e trading e qualche nascosto laboratorio tessile; le popolazioni dell'Africa settentrionale, egiziani in testa, seguiti dai marocchini, gestiscono principalmente servizi di telefonia internazionale e macellerie islamiche, ma è interessante segnalare l'apertura di una prima libreria islamica, di un servizio di consulenza immobiliare, di parrucchieri. I peruviani e gli ecuadoregni negli ultimi anni hanno cominciato ad aprire ristoranti, piccoli alimentari e rosticcerie, rendendo così visibile anche commercialmente la loro presenza.

IL FLUSSO DI STRANIERI COMINCIÒ A PRENDERE CONSISTENZA VERSO LA FINE DEGLI ANNI '70, SIA PER LA "POLITICA DELLE PORTE APERTE" PRATICATA DALL'ITALIA, SIA PER POLITICHE PIÙ RESTRITTIVE ADOTTATE DA ALTRI PAESI. NEL 1981 IL PRIMO CENSIMENTO ISTAT CALCOLOVA LA PRESENZA DI 321.000 IMMIGRATI IN SUOLO ITALIANO, DI CUI CIRCA UN TERZO "STABILI" E IL RIMANENTE "TEMPORANEI". INFATTI LA CARATTERISTICA PRINCIPALE DEI PRIMI FLUSSI D'IMMIGRAZIONE ERA LA PRESENZA DI UN SOLO INDIVIDUO STRANIERO, CHE LAVORAVA PER UN DETERMINATO PERIODO IN ITALIA, PER POI TORNARE DALLA PROPRIA FAMIGLIA DISPONENDO DI UNA SITUAZIONE ECONOMICA PIÙ FAVOREVOLE. IN UNO SCENARIO SIMILE IL FENOMENO DELL'IMMIGRAZIONE NON COSTITUIVA UN PROBLEMA A LIVELLO SOCIALE, POICHÉ NON VI ERA LA NECESSITÀ DI FAVORIRE LA CONVIVENZA TRA POPOLI DIFFERENTI.

NEGLI ANNI '90 IL SALDO MIGRATORIO HA CONTINUATO A CRESCERE DIVENTANDO IL SOLO RESPONSABILE DELLA CRESCITA DELLA POPOLAZIONE ITALIANA. DA QUEL MOMENTO IN POI L'ITALIA HA ACCOLTO E CENTINAIA DI MIGLIAIA D'IMMIGRATI. QUESTA SITUAZIONE HA DETERMINATO UN ARRICCHIMENTO DELLA SOCIETÀ DI NUOVE ETNIE E CULTURE, PROVOCANDO I PRIMI PROBLEMI D'INTEGRAZIONE, SOPRATTUTTO LADDOVE LA CONVIVENZA FORZATA VENIVA RESA DIFFICILE DA LIMITAZIONI LINGUISTICHE, RAZZIALI E FORMALI.

THIS PAGE AND NEXT PAGE, IMGS. 2.51–52 — Studies of the presence and the settlement of foreign populations in Milan. Traditions and cross-cultural influences. Elaboration by Sara Borghi.

IL CAPODANNO CINESE IN PIAZZA DUOMO

Coloratissimi dragoni di stoffa a passo di corsa sono le icone del capodanno cinese a Milano. Il clou dei festeggiamenti sono i lunghi cortei, ormai celebri in tutto il mondo, con le immancabili maschere raffiguranti il drago cinese, i leoni, i suonatori di piatti e tamburi e i coloratissimi fuochi d'artificio. A Milano ogni anno la festa coinvolge non solo la comunità cinese, ma anche i milanesi e persone di varie nazionalità. Forse questa è una delle poche occasioni nelle quali la cultura cinese trova un punto d'incontro con quella milanese (e in generale con quella italiana), poiché è risaputo che, sin da quando arrivarono i primi immigrati negli anni Venti, non ci furono molti contatti tra queste due parti. Tuttavia, negli ultimi tempi, è possibile riscontrare un avvicinamento soprattutto con i cinesi di terza e quarta generazione che, probabilmente per il fatto di essere nati in Italia, sono riusciti ad assimilare molto della cultura occidentale.

QUARTIERE CANONICA SARPI

A Milano vive circa il 20% dei cinesi presenti in Italia. Il quartiere di Paolo Sarpi è infatti caratterizzato da un'antica presenza di immigrati cinesi: sono i lao huaqiao, i "vecchi cittadini cinesi all'estero", cioè coloro che sono arrivati tra gli anni Venti e gli anni Ottanta. I discendenti di quel centinaio di cinesi che durante la Prima Guerra Mondiale avevano lavorato in Francia nelle attività logistiche a supporto dell'esercito anglo-francese. Alla fine degli anni Venti, attraversarono le Alpi ed emigrarono a Milano per cercare un lavoro come venditori di cravatte o operai tessili. Così si stabilirono in quello che allora era un quartiere periferico e popolare nella zona Canonica-Sarpi.

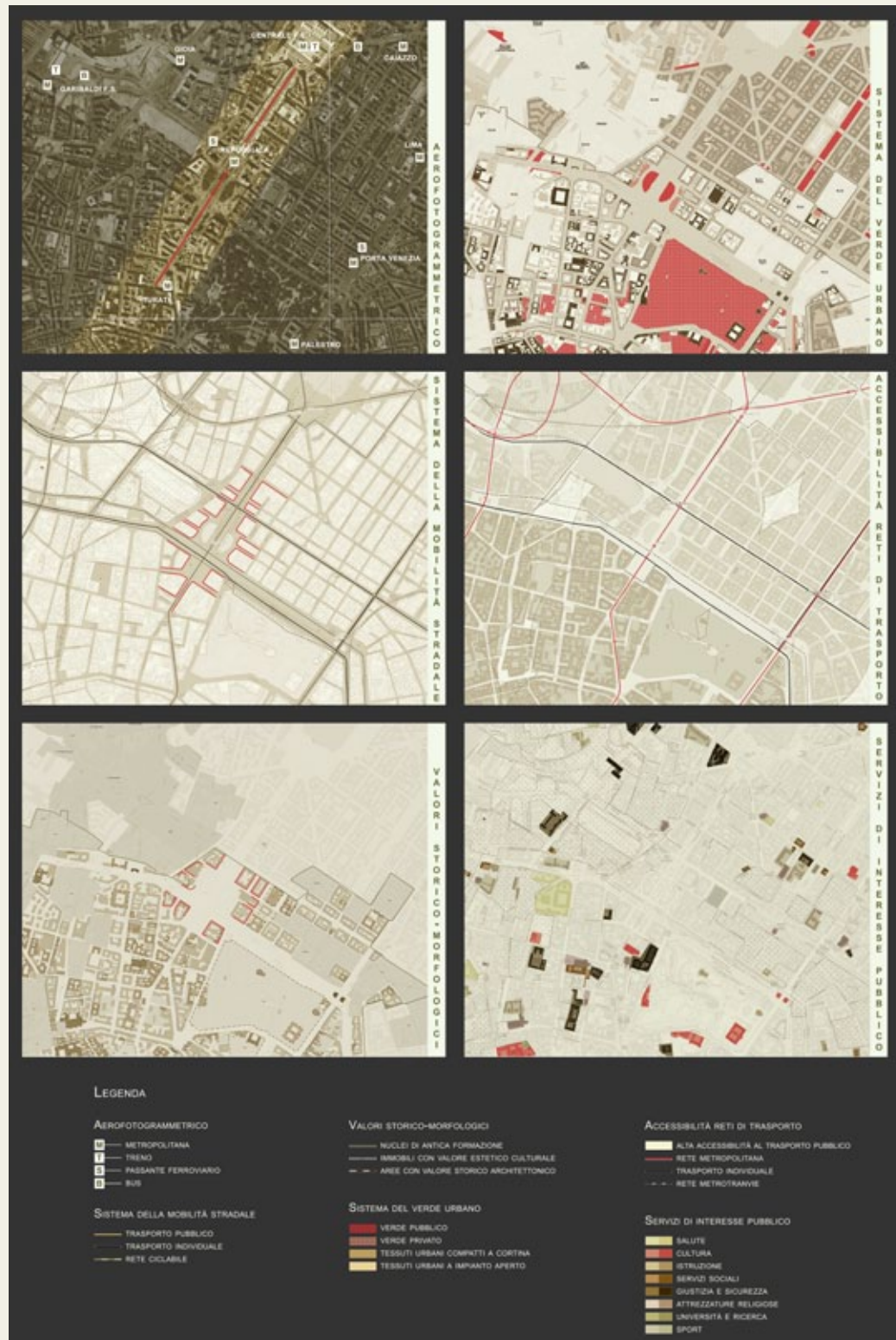
CHI FA PARTE DELLA RETE G2 SI DEFINISCE "FIGLIO D'IMMIGRATO" E NON "IMMIGRATO": I NATI IN ITALIA NON HANNO COMPIUTO ALCUNA MIGRAZIONE, E CHI È NATO ALL'ESTERO MA CRESCIUTO IN ITALIA NON È EMIGRATO VOLONTARIAMENTE, MA È STATO PORTATO IN ITALIA DAI GENITORI. LA RETE G2 INTENDE PERCIÒ L'IMMIGRAZIONE COME UN PROCESSO CHE TRASFORMA L'ITALIA, DI GENERAZIONE IN GENERAZIONE. QUESTI BAMBINI, RAGAZZI, ADULTI, SONO CRESCIUTI IN ITALIA, CON LA STESSA IMPRONTA DEI COETANEI ITALIANI, COSTITUENDO QUINDI UN POSSIBILE ANELLO DI COLLEGAMENTO TRA CULTURE DIFFERENTI, TRA PERSONE DIFFERENTI.

LIBERTÀ DI CULTO E DIRITTO ALLA CULTURA

Tuttavia oggi, questo quartiere diventato centrale, è soprattutto un "quartiere-vetrina" per i cinesi: con oltre il 90% di residenti italiani, non è un luogo dove i cinesi abitano, ma è per i cittadini cinesi il posto ideale per aprire attività commerciali "eticamente dedicate", dove collocare luoghi di svago e dove aprire agenzie, sedi di rappresentanza, servizi.

PAGE 158
IMG. 2.53 — Analysis of the urban fabric, the road system and the location of public facilities in the area of Piazza Repubblica. Elaboration by Sara Borghi.

PAGE 159
IMG. 2.54 — Experimental Museum for Intercultural Dialogue, Milan. Overall plan. Project by Sara Borghi.



trade hubs, and facilitate a relational exchange between different cultures in addition to that of the people living in the same area. The final purpose is to extend the project to the entire city, creating a diffused network of exhibition centres delocalised from the areas where each different cultural group represented is settled.

Railway and underground stations are often considered as transit places only, mere settings to the movement of people and goods, a sort of *non-places*, that are physical but not social spaces in which people systematically resort to perceptual strategies aimed at selecting what could facilitate—instead refusing any obstacle to—their passage. Nonetheless, stations are also poles for meeting and interacting. To give a

new energy to these areas would mean to confer them an important role in the city renewal.

The project is located in Repubblica underground station. The site was chosen, first and foremost, for the etymological meaning of its name: the term *Repubblica* (Republic) comes from Latin *res publica*, that means “public thing/affair,” considered in its original sense of “interest for the prosperity of the community, the city.”

Another key factor was the central position of the station and the extension of both its underground and outdoors spaces. Furthermore, the terminal was built below the square with the same name, that is right below an urban space traditionally devoted to trade, public life, and social relations, where culture, symbols, and



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IMG. 2.55 — Axonometric view of the intervention, showing the new structures, the arrangement of the park and the way in which they relate to the urban context. Project by Sara Borghi.

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IMG. 2.56 — First floor plan and aerial view of the project. Project by Sara Borghi.

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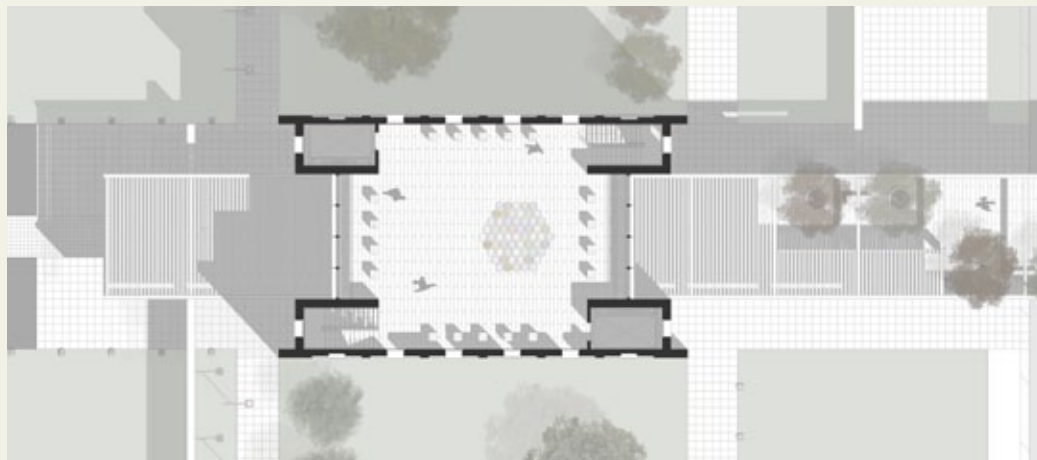
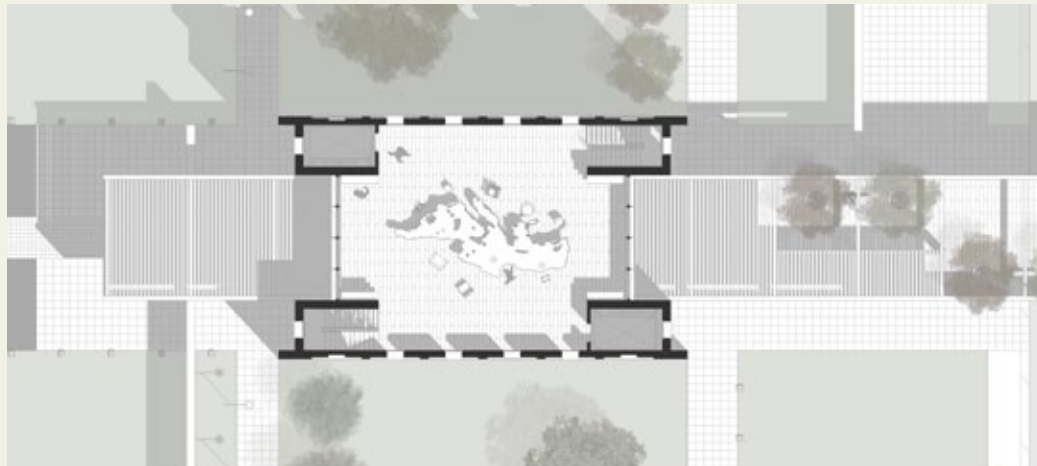
IMG. 2.57 — Section of the new buildings, the aerial walkway and the underground and train station. Project by Sara Borghi.

IMG. 2.58 — Plans for the second and third floor of the exhibition centre, with Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Love Difference* (above), and Sonia Falcone's *Campo de color*. Project by Sara Borghi.

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IMGS. 2.59–60 — Views of the façade and section of the exhibition centre. Project by Sara Borghi.







traditions intertwine. Italian history reveals quite clearly the importance of the square as the vital centre of the city, a sort of stage unveiling the identity and the sense of belonging to a community. Squares were designed to accommodate crowds during public feasts, festivals or religious celebrations, markets as well as enable the citizens' everyday life.

The starting point of the plan was the redesign of the public square and the existing green areas, to create a park aligned with Piazza Duca d'Aosta and the monumental entrance to the Central Station of Milan. A road allows vehicles to circulate in Piazza della Repubblica and divides the green area into two parts, whose design was notably conceived for providing the residents and people who work in the nearby offices with facilities. The arrangement of the greenery and the urban furniture are exactly the same in the two areas and designed for a daily and evening use. There are spaces suitable to organise cultural events and set up shows, playgrounds and recreational areas equipped with benches and fountains, shaded by trees planted to alternate almost wooded spots with large lawns flanked by orderly rows of trees.

The main six-storey building is located right in the middle of the square. It is designed to house temporary exhibitions and art installations related to the theme of multiculturalism. The centre is organised into several levels, in order to meet and connect the multiple accesses for travellers (entrances on the ground floor, road and surface transportation stops, underground floors of the commuter train and the subway line).

A pedestrian walkway, equipped with benches, flowering shrubs and trees, overpasses the road (height +5,00 m) and turns towards Piazza Duca d'Aosta. It links the exhibition building with a two-storey structure, directly connected with the underground station and specifically designed to house a food court, which would periodically offer specialties typical of the various ethnic communities residing in the city. Both the aerial walkway and the underground passage aim to give continuity to the museum promenade, although the two green areas are separated by the road at the ground level.

The new structure harmonises with the surrounding architectural structures, by virtue of the allocation and the orientation of the vol-



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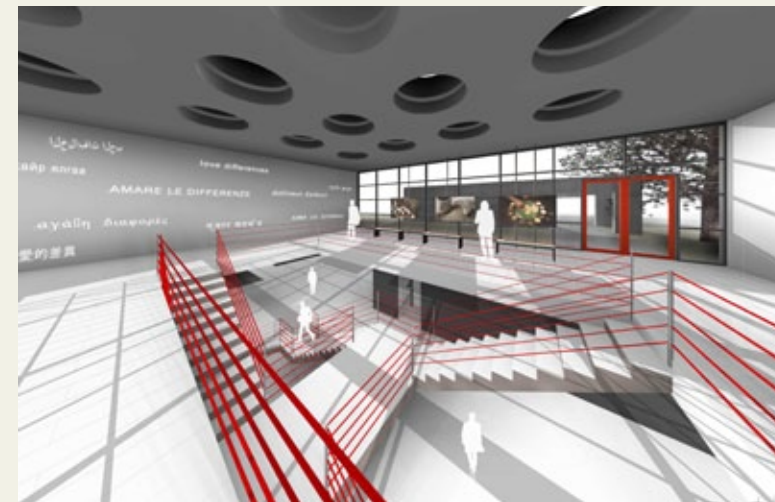
IMG. 2.61 — Detail of the section of the aerial walkway and the underground and train station, showing the exhibition display. Project by Sara Borghi.

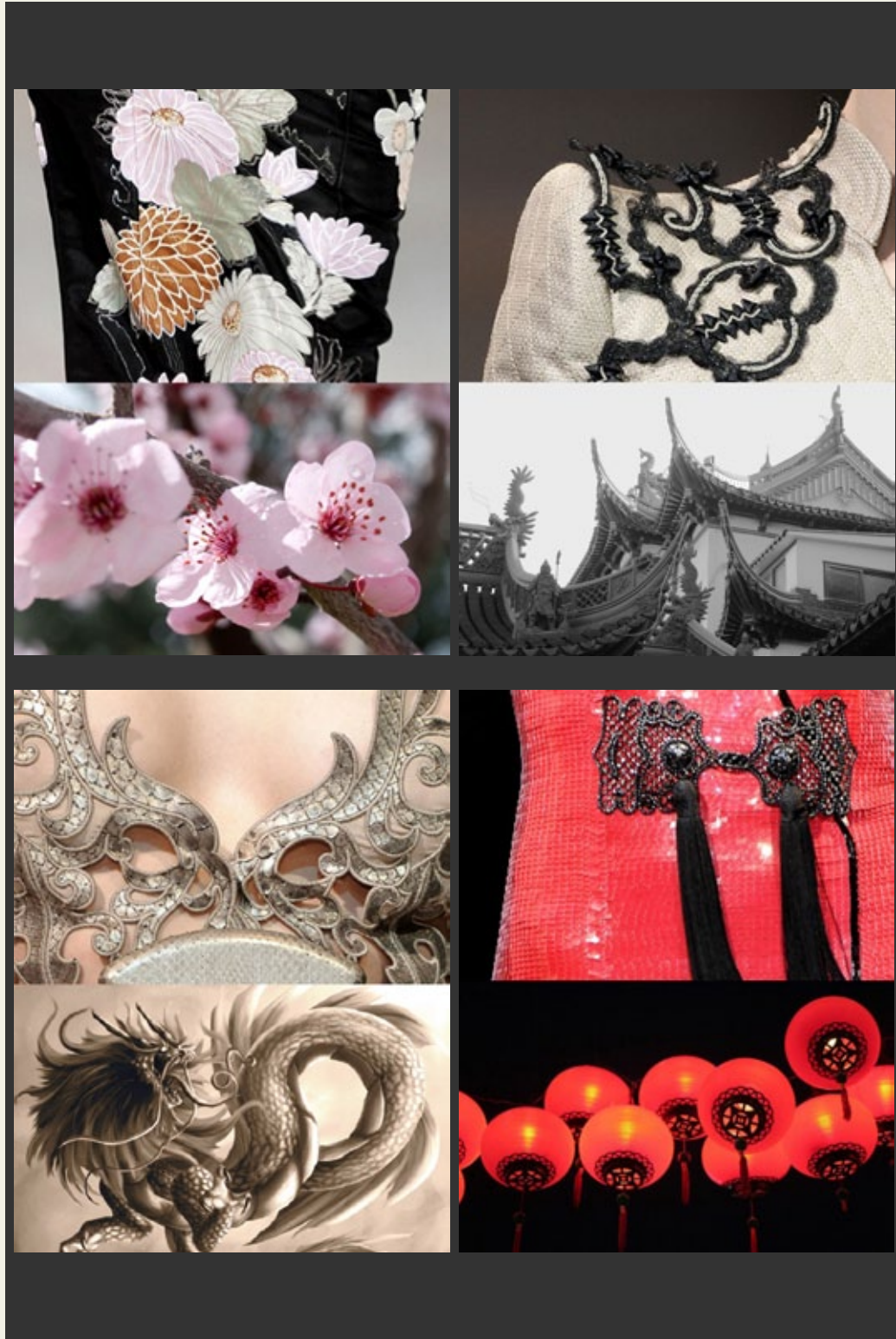
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IMG. 2.62–64 — Overviews of the walkway, the main building, and the room showing Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Love Difference*. Elaboration by Sara Borghi.

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IMG. 2.65 — Concept images representing the influence of traditions on fashion. Elaboration by Sara Borghi.





umes, the composition of the façades as well as the selection of materials. Moreover, the main building refers to the construction tradition of Milan, especially to Giovanni Muzio's architecture, who signed the nearby Bonaiti and Malugani house (1935).

Light installations, videos and timber structures are located along the walls of the underground floors. They are easy to assemble and remove and they do not obstruct the foot traffic to and from the train and underground platforms. These levels are included in the exhibition path to give a hint of the show to people who reach Piazza Repubblica by the underground public transport, while enlivening the wait of outgoing travellers. The curatorial project devised for the lower floors focuses on the Chinese culture, in consideration of its limited integration with local customs.

The artworks selected for the main building were carried out by international artists from different backgrounds. The first two floors include works by Michelangelo Pistoletto and Adrian Paci, such as *Love Difference* (Pistoletto, 2002) and *Centro di permanenza temporanea* (Paci, 2007), both aiming at combining the universality of art with the idea of transnationality. *The column* (Paci, 2012) is, instead, a video that deals with the theme of travel and its power to change people, communities, languages, memories and expectations. The column is a story in images, showing a sculpture produced on a boat travelling from China to Europe. It tackles the issues of work, the circulation of goods and ideas, the relationship between East and West, considered from the perspective of a *non-place* and *non-time*. The *90 Millas* installation, by the Brazilian artist Sandra Ramos, is a 10-metre long bridge featuring a series of aerial photographs taken between Cuba and Florida: its crossing is a metaphor for crossing the space which separates the two countries, breaking down the ideological barriers among them and providing a tolerance space for two opposing countries.

The artworks displayed at the upper-floor level involve diverse senses and offer olfactory, visual and auditory stimulations. *Campo de color*,

conceived by the Bolivian artist Sonia Falcone, consists of 88 clay vessels containing coloured spice powders used for centuries in the cuisine of East and West and historically traded. Their anti-hierarchical arrangement encourage people to reflect on mankind's culinary and, more generally, cultural richness.

Luca Vitone's sound installation *Sonorizzare il luogo* (1989) impresses the viewers through a set of cacophonous sounds and voices coming from several wooden blocks arranged along the perimeter of the room. Each box plays a popular song typical of a specific territory. The combination of these sounds brings about a sensation of dizziness, yet clashing with the ability to associate a geographical area to a well-defined identity, evoked by a particular witness of popular culture (the song) that is disappearing in the increasingly globalised and standardised world.

Cultural differences are at the core of the exhibition even in the last two floors of the building, where a selection of couture garments is displayed: a parade of dresses and fashion items reveals similarities, shared solutions, and mutual influences.

The museum path culminates in a collective photographic show, exhibiting images by Andrew Putter, Dorian Cara, Kikoko, Elio Villa, Shi Xinning, Roger Rosfer, and Yinka Shonibare. Their subjects are diverse—images of cities and urban fabrics, places of worship, water landscapes and rural areas, working and public places. Still, each shot can actively involve the audience, letting people lose themselves in the reality of the portrayed place.

The project tries to represent the actuality of contemporary societies and propose an open platform for meeting and favouring a multicultural dialogue, as well as a centre for the promotion and dissemination of culture. It suggests a museum inspired by the cutting-edge development of contemporary societies, that faces both the thorniest and most controversial social issues and those aspects of daily life that better mirror people habits, customs, and traditions.



IMG. 2.66 — “Border Memories: Re-Enacting the Difficult Heritage.” Concept image conceived for the site of the ex concentration camp of Fossalon. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

Border Memories

Re-enacting the Difficult Heritage in Venezia Giulia

The territory named Venezia Giulia is shared by three countries: Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. For centuries the Italian and Slavic populations lived side by side in a sort of pacific coexistence, till the moment when World War I broke out. From that period onwards the territorial border moved several times, upsetting the life of the Venezia Giulia’s inhabitants, who often felt like being strangers at home.

Italian and Slavic governments interchanged the control of the land, each one considering the other ethnic group enemy of the country and the result was, first the establishment of several concentration camps for the Slavic population during the Fascist domination, and later the use of the Istrian and Julian foibe—deep natural holes in the ground—to kill the fascist people by the side of the Slavic population.

These sites constitute a difficult heritage that need to be re-activated in order to elaborate and overcome the trauma, since the issue is still causing tensions and resentment among the countries involved.

The project began with the identification and location of the concentration camps and foibe that surround the Venezia Giulia. The subsequent step was to find a rule for connecting the sites.

Looking at the territory, what stands out is the presence of the river Isonzo which courses from the Slovenian Alps to the Adriatic Sea, crossing the border and flowing through villages and cities that in the past had double names—in Italian and in Slovenian—underlining the mixed nature of the land. The river can be seen as the thread that links not only the sites of difficult heritage, but also the other historical and touristic localities present in the area. Altogether they constitute the itinerary that ensures the narration and the exploration of this trans-border land.

Whereas the river is the connecting element and the metaphor of the border, the bridges are the physical entities that systematise the memories and the shared sites acting as introduction to something else beyond the bank (the heritage sites).

Therefore the project is constituted by the heritage sites (the shared memory) and the crossings (the introductive elements).

The design strategy for the project, defines a topic for each spot that is developed in architectural means. Every heritage site concerns a subject related to its specific past while the bridge develops a topic that introduces, in a general way, the specific theme of the site. Both spots (the bridge and the site) give only synthetic information, employing architectural means to induce sensations, optical and spatial effects that engender the topics. The aim is to lead people to think during a dynamic fruition of the space. The spots become infrastructures useful for the re-activation of memory in a subjective way: it is up to a single person whether or not to examine the topic in depth or just to use the infrastructure.

With regard to the bridges, the planning strategy is to flank each existing bridge with a pedestrian one, serving as a useful infrastructure in addition to the transmission of information.

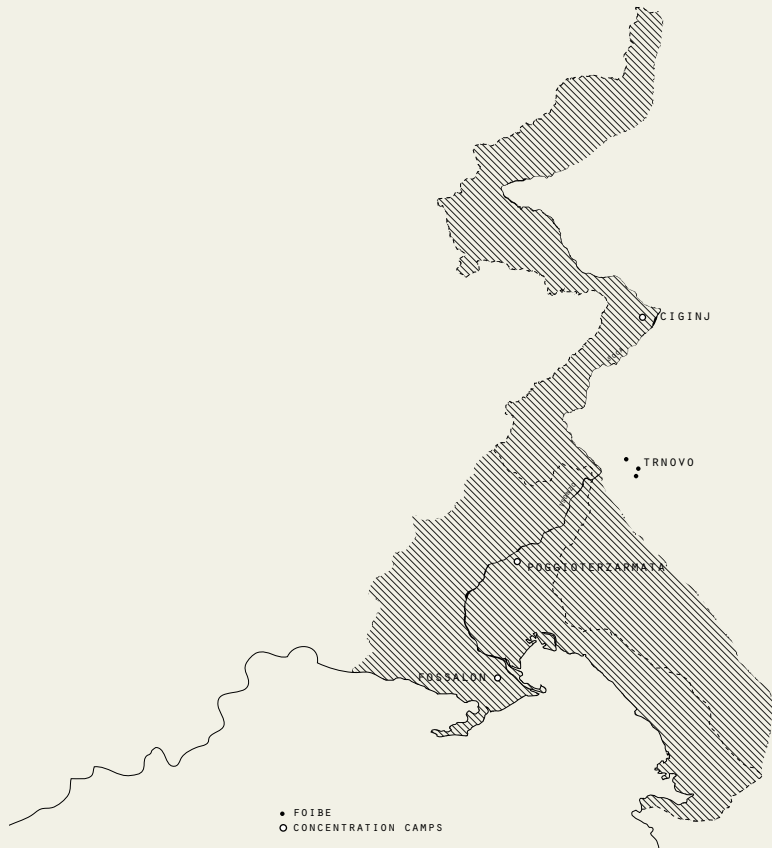
The first bridge within the project is situated in the village of Kobarid—38 kilometres from the Isonzo spring, and is connected with the First World War open-air museum situated at Mt. Kolovrat. The general theme applied here is “The use of propaganda in the field of war.”

War forces populations to fight against each other for economic, political as well as religious reasons, and not all the persons agree with entering into the war. Governments, to obtain the support of these people, use propaganda and

IMG. 2.67 — Map of the Venezia Giulia region. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

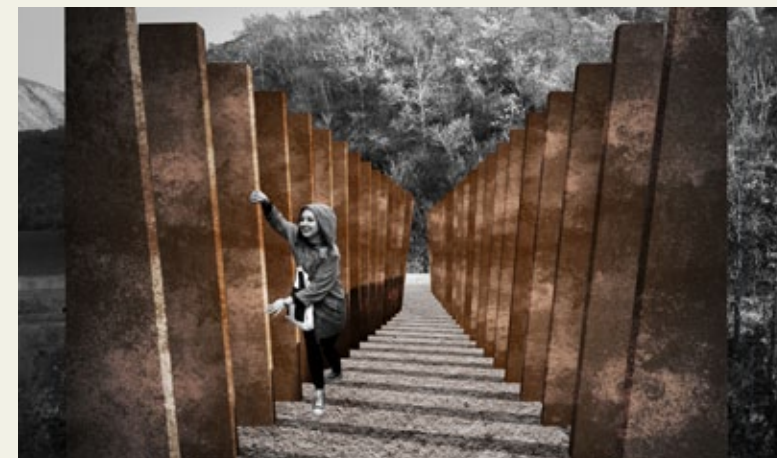


IMG. 2.68 — View of the project area including the sites of difficult heritage and the river Isonzo. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.



THE PROGRAM

GENERAL THEME	SPECIFIC THEME
BRIDGE	SITE HISTORY
KM 38 KOBARID PROPAGANDA	MT KOLOVRAT MT KOLOVRAT OPEN-AIR MUSEUM
KM 50 TOLMIN VICTIMS/PERPETRATORS	CIGNIN CONCENTRATION CAMP OF CIGNIN
KM 85 SOLKAN ELIMINATION OF THE DIVERSE	TRNOVO FOIBE
KM 100 POGGIO TERZARRATA SEGREGATION	POGGIO TERZARRATA CONCENTRATION CAMP OF POGGIO T. CARSO BATTLES
KM 120 FOSSALON FORCED/SPONTANEOUS MIGRATIONS	FOSSALON CONCENTRATION CAMP OF FOSSALON BORIFICA DELLA VITTORIA



IMG. 2.69 — Concept map with indication of the project sites, aligned along the river Isonzo. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

IMGS. 2.70–71 — Rendering of the design proposal for the Kobarid bridge. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

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IMGS. 2.72–73 — Rendering of the structure studied for the Tolmin bridge. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.



ensorship to influence their opinion—often distorting reality, giving false information and using strategic mottos to deceive individuals.

The architectonic concept to give the “impression” of the theme is “warping/distorting space”: when walls, ceiling, pavement do not follow a perpendicular system, the effect on the visitor is that of disorientation. A certain way of arranging the elements can determine an alteration of the feeling of the space around, challenging the viewers’ perception of their own bodies.

At a distance of 50 kilometres from the spring, the bridge of Tolmin stands, connected to the ex-concentration camp of Ciginj. The general theme here is “The contradictory role of victim and perpetrator that every community plays in the course of history.”

The role of the populations in the course of history is not easy to determine: during a certain period of time they might have been victims, in another perpetrators. If we look at history from a general point of view, we could see the cyclical changing of roles that erases every label. Who is victim now might have been perpetrator yesterday, and so on.

The architectonic concept to render the theme is the use of “periodic opposing paths.” Assume two periodic functions, one opposed the other (“opposite” in the sense that their curvature is contrary to each other); two points moving along the curves will cyclically change their positions with one always opposite the other—sometimes one point will be above the other (playing the part of perpetrator) and sometimes vice versa (playing the part of the victim).

The bridge of Tolmin acts as the introduction to the ex-concentration camp of Ciginj. The specific theme handled at this site is “The ignored and brief duration of the concentration camp”—which, in fact, was only used for two weeks. For many decades in the ex-Yugoslavia, the recalling of the fascist period was silently forbidden and probably for this reason the difficult past of the site is little known by the population. The theme is architectonically translated in a “fragmented-reflecting wall.”

Assume a fragmented reflecting surface: the reflected objects appear in pieces. The result is not a correct specular image. The aim is to represent the lack of certain parts of the memory of the site, stimulating an emotional response through a fragmented reflection.

The third bridge, situated 85 kilometres away, in Solkan, is connected to the foiba of Trnovo and the thematic focus is “The elimination of the diverse.”

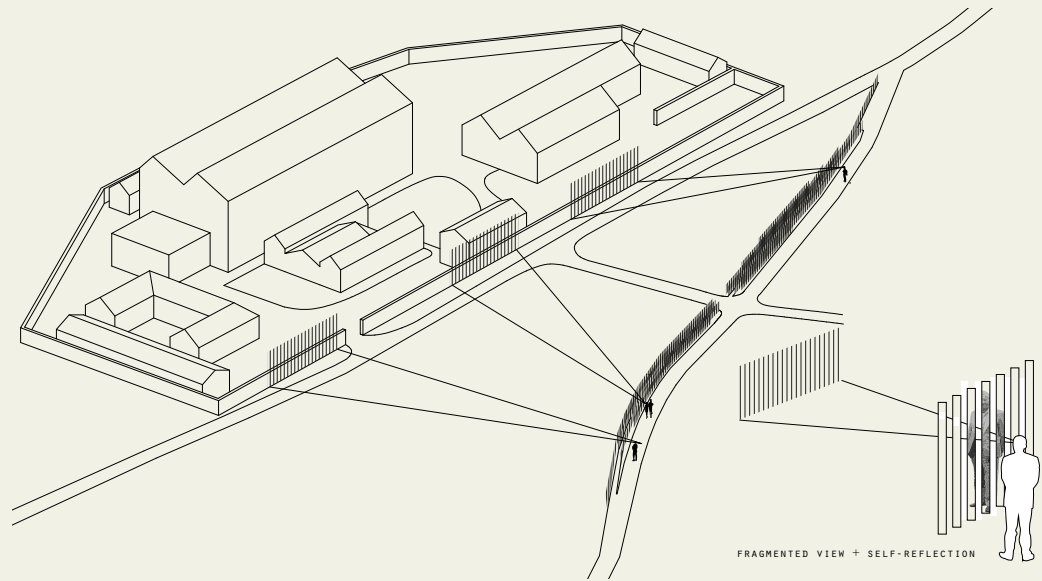
The composition of crowds or certain communities can involve “herding behaviour” that turns violent, particularly when confronted by an opposing ethnic or racial group. This behaviour is due to xenophobia: the irrational fear of the diverse that can elicit or facilitate hostile and violent reactions, such as mass expulsion of immigrants, pogroms or, in other cases, genocide.

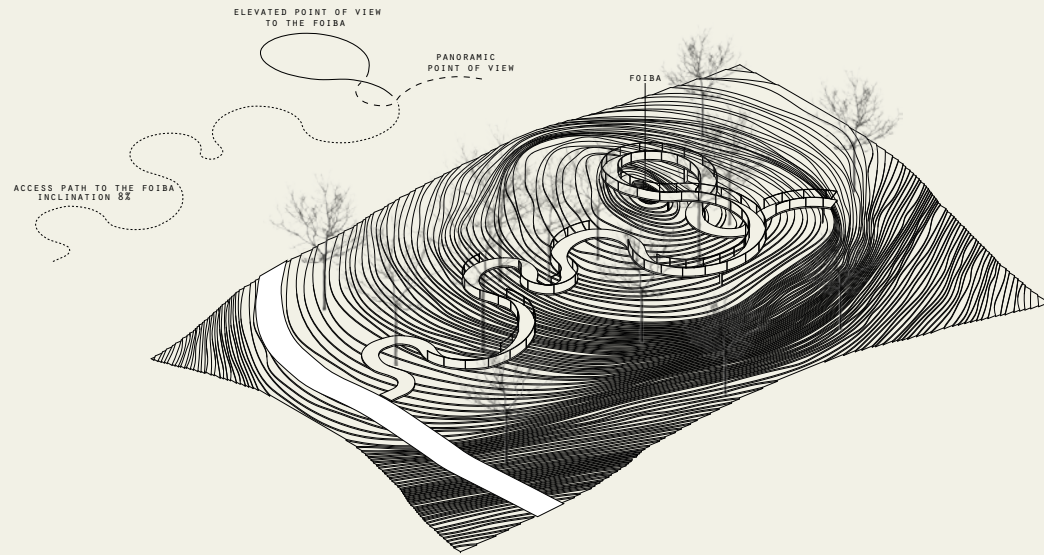
The architectonic concept at work here is the “filter.” Only the elements with certain characteristics can pass beyond the filter, the others are scrapped. Instead, only if the elements are willing to change their conformation, can they pass, after having adapted themselves.

The foiba of Trnovo is a deep karstic cavity that, between 1943 and 1945, was used to kill and hide the bodies of opponents of the Yugoslavian regime. That is the specific theme of the site. The foiba is situated in a forest, interesting because of its karstic rocks and vegetation. The aim of the project is to distance people from the painful emotions brought on by difficult heritage and to look to the past from a more general point of view. For this reason, a curved path moves among the trees reaching a high position above the foiba, ending with a cantilever towards the outlook.

One hundred kilometres down the river, the bridge of Poggio Terzarmata leads to the former concentration camp of the same village and to World War I open-air museum situated in the Gorizian Carso. The general theme in this case is “The discrimination of certain groups.”

Segregation is the practice of restricting people to certain circumscribed areas of residence or to separate institutions and facilities on the basis of race.





The architectonic concept conceived to render the theme is the “splitter.” The bridge is divided in two narrow paths so that the people walk alone, one on each side, separated.

The ex-concentration camp of Poggio Terzarmata was established between 1941 and 1942 in the village silk factory. The specific theme pertaining to the site is “The double level of memory: the building known as silk factory and the building known as concentration camp.”

The aim of this project is to link the two memories of the space, using ordered rows of poles representing the Slavic people imprisoned, and interwoven strings representing the product of the factory. The interlacing of strings and poles generate screens that hide/reveal parts of the building playing with their transparency and overlapping.

The last bridge, 120 kilometres from the spring, is situated in Fossalon and is connected to the Fossalon’s former concentration camp. The general theme framing this locale is “The forced and spontaneous migrations.” The theme was chosen because three different communities, coming from Veneto, Istria and Slovenia, cohabited in Fossalon.

Migration can be forced (when a certain group is compelled to leave by another group), or

spontaneous (when people freely choose to leave in search of better conditions). Both cases imply the shift of residence from one place to another, a change of habit, as well as adaptation to different locations.

The architectonic concept used in this case is to “vegetalise” the bridge. The idea around the theme of migration is to communicate the ability of people to adapt themselves to diverse environments, even when these are strongly different to their place of origin.

Fossalon is a reclaimed territory where different groups of people went to inhabit and work the land. From 1941 to 1942 one of the farms was used as a camp for forced labour for Slavic oppositionists. The specific theme here is “The ignored presence of the Slavic detained population.” Given that this history was ignored in the past as well as in the present, the aim of this project is to completely conceal the building from the outside, with a dense vegetation. Only when people are in front of the building can they actually see it.

In 1985, the Schengen Agreement was signed for the dissolution of the borders between Eastern and Western Europe. In less than 50 years we have experienced a shift from an impenetrable Iron Curtain to a more free “air curtain,”



as many people can move from one country to the other. Furthermore, the entrance of Slovenia and Hungary into the European Union in 2007 has brought down many ideological and political biases that were fairly strong during previous decades.

Nonetheless, tensions, reciprocal resentments and incomprehension are still present when dealing with the topic of foibe and fascist concentration camps—the dialogue among Italy, Slovenia and Croatia began quite late and foibe remain a thorny matter. Since the topics are—unfortunately—strictly considered political issues, an open dialogue often involves controversy.

The research done at the beginning of this project was not easy to conduct. The sources were sometimes contradictory and it was difficult to obtain specific information from the municipalities involved. For this reason, the intention of this project is to stimulate a positive debate, devoid of ideological/political implications, and concerns the simple re-activation of the sites. Europe, as a community, needs to heal the wounds of the past if it wants to look forward to the future it values.

Elisa Mansutti

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IMG. 2.74 — Concept image for the project conceived for the ex-concentration camp of Ciginj. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

IMG. 2.75 — Rendering of the project designed for the ex-concentration camp of Ciginj. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

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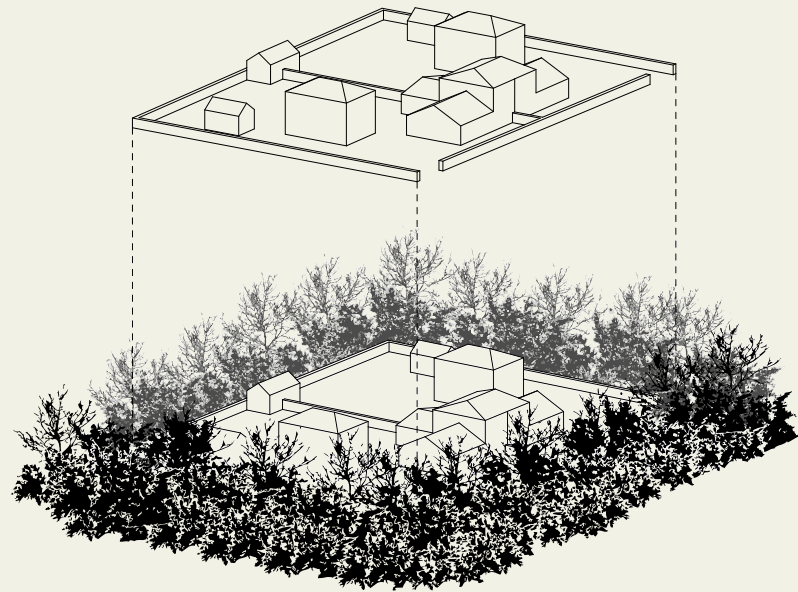
IMGS. 2.76–77 — Rendering of the new design for the Solkan bridge. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

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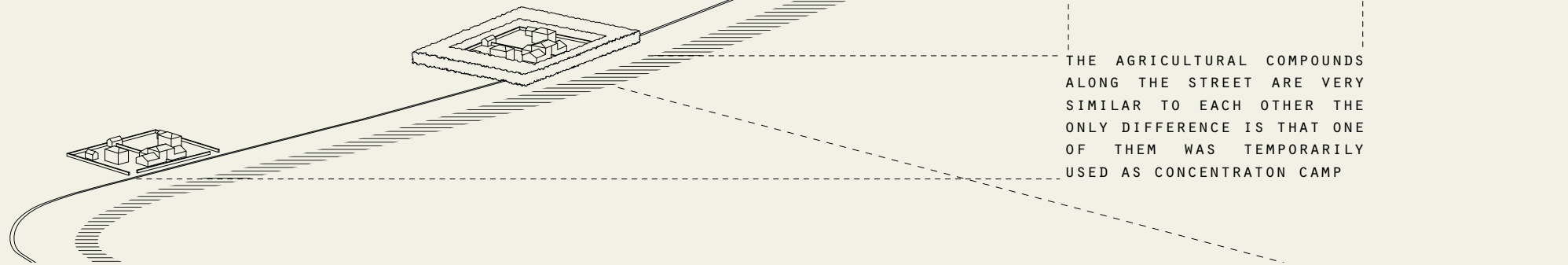
IMG. 2.78 — Concept image of the project conceived for the foiba of Trnovo. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

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IMG. 2.79 — Rendering of the project situated in the foiba of Trnovo. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.



HIDING BOUNDARY FOR THE TOTAL REMOVAL OF THE COMPOUND FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



THE AGRICULTURAL COMPOUNDS ALONG THE STREET ARE VERY SIMILAR TO EACH OTHER THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT ONE OF THEM WAS TEMPORARILY USED AS CONCENTRATION CAMP

IMG. 2.80 — Concept image for the project conceived for the ex-concentration camp of Fossalon. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

IMG. 2.81 — Concept image studied for the site of the ex-concentration camp of Fossalon. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

IMG. 2.82 — Rendering of the design proposal for the Fossalon bridge. Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.





Experimenting with a Holistic, Diffused and Networked Museum

Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori

→ CRISTINA F. COLOMBO, ELENA MONTANARI

Drawing on the strategic value of the ecomuseum institution as a democratic instrument for the conservation and celebration of diffused cultural heritage, the actions designed within the MeLa Project include the development of several experimental applications of this museum paradigm.

These proposals were intended to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of the ecomuseum's networked structure and holistic approach, verifying these on a specific area in the north of Milan, belonging to the Province of Varese. Such design practices—developed in an academic context—were conceived in response to a commission from local administrative and cultural bodies, planning the enhancement of their copious assets, which include natural, archaeological, artistic and cultural heritage.

The district is characterised by a multifaceted landscape (expanding among plains, hills and mountains, and hosting several rivers, lakes and peculiar ecosystems) and throughout the centuries it has been the stage for exceptional historical events. Now, the region houses a differentiated range of venues and findings, comprising four World Heritage sites. These elements are at the core of the present reflections concerning the implementation of the museographical and museological tools conceived for the definition, enhancement and more inclusive acknowledgment of the local identity.

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 2.83 —
The area of the Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori (initially referred to as Ecomuseo dei laghi Prealpini della Provincia di Varese), Italy. Drawing by Cristina F. Colombo.

→ HIGHLIGHTING THE POTENTIAL STRATEGIC VALUES OF THE ECOMUSEUM
PARADIGM IN THIS “AGE OF MIGRATIONS”

Among the institutions dedicated to the preservation and valorisation of the distinctive natural, architectural and cultural patrimony of a specific place, the ecomuseum is often described as a forerunner in advanced notions of heritage and identity. Building on its ability to catalyse innovative and inclusive identification, representation, education and management practices, the ecomuseum paradigm (networked, differentiated, participated and democratic) should be acknowledged as a reference model for the evolution of contemporary museums in the present “age of migrations.”

As highlighted by the theoretical apparatus which was built around its definition in the 1970s, the ecomuseum was conceived as “a mirror in which a population could seek to recognise itself and explore its relationship to the physical environment as well as to previous generations; also an image offered to visitors to promote a sympathetic understanding of the work, customs and peculiarities of a population” (Rivière 1989, 142); a composite institution including “a historical museum, a geographical museum (*musée du temps, musée de l’espace*), a field laboratory or workshop, branch offices or affiliations in the community, tours and suggested itineraries [whose project] as a whole would be managed by three committees (users, managers, and scientists) designed to ensure ‘mutual learning’ and the participation of all” (Hubert 1987); “a community-driven museum or heritage project that aids sustainable development” (Davis 2007, 199); a “hinge between a heritage and a population.” (Varine 2004, 6)

Despite the variety of their forms, missions and tools, in general ecomuseums focus their activities on remembrance (inventory of surrounding cultural material and immaterial resources), understanding (promotion of a deeper awareness of the specific culture and environment through research and education), joint management and development of the locale through the relationship between the inhabitants and a team of scientists. During the last decades, they have consistently participated in reshaping the social uses of heritage, fostering the shift in the museum focus from the collections to the community; moving their subject matter based on academic disciplines to an interdisciplinary view of local cultures; critically reforming and revitalising techniques of conservation, fruition, exhibition and communication; encouraging environmental and socio-cultural enhancement through direct action, and thus proposing an empowered role for museums in linking people, their heritage expressions and places.

Through the consolidation, diffusion and evolution of the original paradigm—the “plasticity” of this model allowed the adaptation to various contexts across different countries and cultures, triggering the development of more complex and hybridised forms of community-based experiences, and promoting the experimentation of a wide range of strategies and tools (Davis 1999; 2007)—ecomuseums have significantly

influenced the development of 20th century museums, setting the basis for what is formally known as New Museology.¹

Throughout the 1970s, the development of the ecomuseum model played a crucial part in the “second museum revolution” (Van Mensch 1995) which had been triggered by a massive socio-cultural renovation²: it played a role in the re-assessment of theoretical and practical aspects of the museum institution, and enhanced the evolution of more inclusive conservation, interpretation and education practices. Within the contemporary socio-cultural context, the role of museums is again being called into question by a series of ongoing phenomena—augmented mobility and demographic flows; the resulting layerisation and fragmentation of societies and identities; the impact of new technologies and media on the enhanced circulation of information, ideas and cultures; and the high degree of cultural encounters and cross-fertilisations. Yet, again, some of the distinctive features and values embedded in the ecomuseum paradigm seem to possess significant potential for fostering the renovation process of contemporary museums, driving a postcolonial evolution of their scientific programmes, offering a more inclusive representation of heritage and identity; promoting an advanced use of tangible and intangible forms of memory; and enhancing social change, mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.

In an age of accelerated global transformations, which have irreversibly triggered the modification and/or vanishing of common markers, the dilution of collective memory, and the shifting of identities, the museums drawing on the distinctive features of a place can play a crucial part in awakening a general consciousness of temporality and territoriality (Davis 1999; Varine 2002; Smith 2006). Through their efforts in preserving and valorising the material signs of history (the visible elements that are part of the physical and mental landscape participating in the construction of cultural identities) as well as the immaterial traditions (costumes, knowledge and know-how which are derived from it), such institutions as the ecomuseums seem to pose a resistance to some of the convoluted effects of globalisation, enhanced production, mass communication and augmented migrations. They stand against the standardisation of space and the homogenisation of tangible and intangible culture, weakened by the globally recurrence of materials, figures and forms, the acceleration of industrial production, and the world-wide diffusion of objects and goods, by contributing to perpetuate and emphasise the unique characters and values of local heritage—thereafter operating as strongholds for the distinctiveness of particular cultural sites, objects and manifestations. They

1 Though widely debated, New Museology can be referred to as the movement of criticism and reform which, from the 1970s, has fostered the recognition of an improved social and educational role of museums; the incorporation of new developments in the social and human sciences; the revitalisation of techniques of display, exhibition and communication; and the evolution of the traditional relationship between the institution and the public (Vergo 1989).

2 Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a general re-evaluation of societal goals, with renewed calls for world peace, ethnic harmony, civil rights and nuclear disarmament, led societies to examine and review their values as well as to question the role of museums, which started to implement new strategies in order to respond to a renovated socio-cultural context.

participate in the protection of special environments and tokens threatened by destruction or disappearance—acting as presidia of significant places bearing archaeological, architectural or historical values, or of dismissed traditions and artisanal know-how, which are collected, preserved and revitalised (e.g. through reconstructions, commemorations and educational activities). They fight the dispersion of individual and collective memories through the conservation of sites, objects, images, words and knowledge which bear witness to the human history ensuing from a specific environment, by collecting—as archives of memory—and teaching it, in the forms of learning centres and job starters. Furthermore, in a context of rapid movements, fluxes and changes in which identities are being reconfigured, “heritage arises as a particularly effective resource for asserting continuity and stability, which enables societies to define and anchor their identity.” (Anico and Peralta 2009, 63)

Through a steady historical configuration of artefacts and spaces, ecomuseums can oppose resistance to the disorientation caused by the dynamics of transformative processes, and support the re-appropriation of stable roots and the re-assessment of individual and collective awareness, by anchoring this search to the natural, aesthetic or symbolic features pertaining to specific territorial assets which possess a “neutral” character³ (Maggi 2001). Within the ecomuseum model, these strategies are complemented and enhanced by advanced research and education practices, and especially by the direct and active involvement of the population in the preservation of local heritage (e.g. the frequent campaigns aimed to save particular habitats or sites, not only raising money but asking for operative engagement) can turn into an important educative experience for citizens, fostering the consolidation of cultural bonds, sense of belonging and identity (Fitch 1990, 404; Smith 2006).

The ecomuseum paradigm is indeed connoted by a “bottom-up and culture-based approach that places community participation and self-actualisation at the core of its mission” (Kreps 2003, 122). Within this model, fostering democratic, participative and inclusive methods to preservation, collection, exhibition and management practices, local viewpoints and actions are not a footnote in a mainstream version of heritage, but rather a fundamental contribution. Not only do volunteers represent a fundamental task force but, in general within these contexts, the local population is assigned with significant responsibilities in the decision-making processes concerning the location; the raising and use of funds; the scientific programme; the educational projects and the display set-up (Varine 1991; 2002).

The links which ecomuseums are (expected) to enhance between people, their heritage expressions and places, is intended to disassociate these institutions from the idea of a static cabinet; to advocate the strengthen-

3 As pointed out by several scholars, the values embedded in the distinctive physical and material features of a place seem to be less affected by the relativity and ambivalence connoting other systems of cultural belonging (e.g. religion and politics).

ing of their engagement in reflecting the local population⁴; and thus to enhance their role as strategic cultural forces for contemporary society.

These purposes were particularly crucial in the original model of the ecomuseum depicted by George Henri Rivière (1985 and 1989), which was conceived within a progressive museological framework: in his vision, these institutions were designed to be run via a continuous dialogue with the inhabitants, and thus to be constantly upgrading their tasks and tools in parallel with societal transformations. By envisioning an endless renovation of the contributions by members of the community—operating as actors and authors⁵—Rivière imagined that the enduring nourishment of the relationship between ecomuseum committees and their contemporary society would engender an evolutive institution, to be revived from generation to generation. The continuous renovation of the active relationship between ecomuseum and local population would have entailed the progressive engagement of the new generations as well as of the different members of community. This model should have guaranteed an everlasting process of adaptation to the changes of the social, economical, political and cultural context; the capacity to mirror the societal transformations; the potential for shaping culture democratically within indigenous and ethnic communities; and the possibility to offer valuable awareness of the alternative histories gathered in the same territory.

This evolutive vision has not apparently been fulfilled. As highlighted by several scholars, ecomuseums have had difficulties in nourishing their relationship with the local population: the management practices as well as the promoted activities seem to remain quite exclusive, mainly addressing selected groups (especially individuated among the natives, and within particular categories i.g. the elderly), and thus failing to grow along with societal changes, including all the voices which issue from a multicultural society.

Nevertheless, the ecomuseum should still be acknowledged as a valuable introspective heritage mechanism. Through a bottom-up “dynamic approach to museums and heritage preservation that looks forward rather than backwards,” (Kreps 2003, 122) the ecomuseum is able to challenge the dominant view of the museum as a site of power relations, and encourage new relationships between institution and population through the promotion of participative processes⁶ which challenge the authoritative

4 The orientation of ecomuseums towards the community, expressed both in its specific geographical scope and in the emphasis placed on participation by the inhabitants, has been often illustrated through the formula proposed by René Rivard, comparing the definition of traditional museums—“Museum = building + collections + experts + public”—and ecomuseums—“Ecomuseum = territory + heritage + memory + population.” (Rivard 1988, 124)

5 The critical innovation of these initiatives, based on the shift in the main focus to the community, on an interdisciplinary view of community life and, in some cases, on the promotion of participation practices at different levels of the museums’ work, trigger the position of “the public [which] was capable of moving from the role of consumer to that of actor, and even author of the museum.” (Rivière 1989, 164–165)

6 The preservation role of ecomuseums is intertwined with their social tasks; the model was indeed conceived as a forum for community action, providing the population the instruments and a place where to investigate and debate about local issues (Kreps 2003, 124), involving the community at large with “learning through participation” practices, and thus fostering self-determination processes (Rivard 1984). “By ‘placing’ community at the heart of the museum enterprises (...) it will be possible to

position of heritage professionals.⁷ Accordingly—although a further effort to including all the members of contemporary communities still must be made—ecomuseums seem to be designed to potentially offer a more inclusive and multi-vocal approach to culture and identity representation.

The potential of the ecomuseum institution as a reference model for contemporary museums is also enhanced by its participatory, networked and diffused structure, which stands against the colonial “centre/periphery model” (Witcomb 2003, 88). Indeed, the ecomuseum is not simply meant to collect information or advice from communities, but to actually take into account community perspectives—thus radically altering traditional ways of operating through democratic processes, and developing an inclusive relationship with the territory, with all its assets and values. This paradigm is fostered not only by participatory practices but also by the development of a more interdisciplinary approach; a decentralised model; as well as a widespread⁸ and holistic interpretation of heritage⁹ and representational practices (UNESCO 1972).

The development of the interdisciplinary and holistic approach to heritage is a particularly important aspect of the ecomuseology experiences in Italy (Maggi and Falletti 2000; Grasseni 2010), where the ecomuseum paradigm was coalesced with local cultural assets to conceive a peculiar model—the so-called *museo diffuso*. For Fredi Drugman, this expression recalls “the image of a widespread organisation, a network of branched museum as a complex system of services (...). A museum that can no longer run out the conservation-information cycle within the old walls of a few building types, but that establishes itself in the strongholds of the territory.” (Drugman 1982, 24)

The implementation of the community-based experiences pertaining to this model, enmeshed in participatory and democratic strategies, have had a crucial role in social, cultural and economic regeneration processes. Through experimentation with alternative presentation, interpretation and management approaches, they have fostered a new networked conception of place-identity; enhanced the valorisation of the role of *liuex de mémoire* (Nora 1989) in strengthening or constructing self-awareness and sense of belonging; while also unveiling the connections between the different values of tangible and intangible heritage. Because

overcome the role [of museums] as hegemonic institutions. In giving voice to the powerless, a process of self-discovery and empowerment will take place, in which the curator becomes a facilitator rather than a figure of authority.” (Witcomb 2003, 79)

7 As widely explored, while traditional museums often tend to dismantle whole cultural systems and subordinate their fragments to the “authority” of heritage professionals, the ecomuseum model was conceived to respect a culture’s organic integrity through a holistic and participative approach (Poulot 1994, 75).

8 “Whereas formerly it referred to a narrow selection of the most remarkable tokens of the past, it now refers to the sum total of all traces of the past as past. The notion of heritage, that is, has cast off its historical, material and monumental moorings and embarked on an age of memory, society and identity.” (Nora 2011, X)

9 The suffix “eco” has been posited to denote an environment which “can be said to embrace both natural and human aspects within a very intricate and interconnected system. The network encompasses both biophysical features and those elements which have been manipulated, modified or constructed by man, as well as intangibles such as economic, social, cultural and political dimensions which are also an integral part of the human environment.” (Corsane and Holleman 1993, 114)

of their relationship with these assets, ecomuseums can be considered potential instruments for bridging the past and the future, defining a balance between local and global stances, and thus supporting the stability of questioned and evolving identities (Basso Peressut, Lanz, and Postiglione 2013).

The design actions promoted by the MeLa Project are developing within this field. By gradually verifying the efficacy of a networked model on the multi-faceted heritage pertaining the selected territory in the Province of Varese, these actions explore the application of the multifarious and fluid ecomuseum paradigm as a democratic heritage mechanism, fostering protection, valorisation and more inclusive awareness for the local cultural values—holistically encompassing landscapes, sites and artefacts, identified and celebrated as both tangible and intangible constructs.

The typical emphasis of the ecomuseum on the importance of the system of territorial assets as a whole and the interdependence of its parts, combined with a bottom-up and decentralised approach, allowed a coherent response to a context that is multilayered, in terms of existing and impending cultural values and heritage.

→ SETTING UP THE ECOMUSEO DEL CAMPO DEI FIORI: PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The proposal of instituting an ecomuseum in the area of pre-alpine lakes in the Province of Varese intends to support the museums already existing in that territory—numerous and various, but mostly consisting of small and little-known entities—with a broader network of historical, artistic, natural, and archaeological assets. None of the elements which form that heritage has the characteristics to become part of a traditional museum collection, but they are nonetheless essential for defining and preserving the identity and traditions of the local community (Rivière 1989; Varine 1991). The logic pursued for enhancing a similar patrimony consisted in preliminary studies and scientific researches aimed at creating a territorial museum that must be diffused (Drugman 1982), reticular, systematic, and non-sectorial.

Using a term coined by Maurizio Maggi and Vittorio Falletti—who in turn referred to the theories of Hugues de Varine and Georges-Henri Rivière—the project for Varese could be defined as an “ecomuseum umbrella.”¹⁰ The expression describes a museum spread out on a large geographical scale, involving several local authorities and embracing multiple sites interconnected by virtual networks and tourist routes. The “attraction” hubs of the system share marketing and communication

10 Maurizio Maggi and Vittorio Falletti define as an *ombrello ecomuseale* (“ecomuseum umbrella”) “an ecomuseum developed over a wide geographic area with a number of heritage items interlinked by a common history or common material practices. It occupies an area embracing different municipalities and generally has more than one proper museum site. The profiles for interpreting the heritage are both diachronic and spatial. The link between the different items is established not only on the basis of set itineraries, but also by a joint local government-community territorial development project. Community involvement thus constitutes a key aspect of this typology and makes it more than a mere culture-based territorial marketing initiative.” (Maggi and Falletti 2000, 25–26)

aspects and pertain to a strategy for a territorial development supported by both the government and the resident population.

The Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori (previously referred to as Ecomuseo dei Laghi Prealpini della Provincia di Varese) aims, in particular, at creating visitor itineraries that combine natural attractions with cultural heritage and offer people an overview on the activities typical of the traditions and actuality of the land. The model also refers to a concept of territory that goes beyond the simple allusion to geographical and ecological issues, to encompass every sphere related to the social processes that take or have taken place there, in a dynamic, evolutionary perspective (Varine 1991, 26).

A careful study of the material and natural resources present in the pre-Alps of Varese, carried out with the collaboration of different experts, is a precondition to propose concrete, feasible and sustainable initiatives to preserve, recover and enhance artefacts, traditional living environments, works of art and architectures, as well as to strengthen the process of recognition of this local patrimony, often ignored in the first place by the resident population. The participatory nature of ecomuseums suggests that the care of public heritage must come “from the grassroots,” from shared, respectful and virtuous models of behaviour. People must consider it first and foremost as a duty, rather than as a right guaranteed by law.

Sustainability, participation and identity are the conditions for a sustainable development nowadays. In the rediscovery of local identities, values and cultural heritage, in its broadest sense, are the conditions to reclaim and redefine the terms of a development that have to be sustainable, aware and culturally well founded. (Riva 2008, 29)

In line with the ecomuseum tradition, the local community is at the heart of the project. A primary goal of the Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori is, therefore, to understand the spirit of the place; to catch and effectively convey the collective memory of its inhabitants; as well as to document and communicate their history. The ecomuseum must also offer a synthesis between the features which are characteristic of the territory, together with its most modern and globalised aspects. Indeed, it would be unreasonable to restrict the target to a stubborn and anachronistic preservation of customs and habits already elapsed and unable to represent the current lifestyle of a society that has not remain closed and isolated over the years, but has been profoundly transformed by various socio-economic factors and waves of migration.¹¹

11 The search for stable and profitable employment brought waves of emigration during the 19th and 20th century, which reduced the number of inhabitants especially in the poorest and most remote enclaves of the province, such as the valleys of the Luino district. A radical change occurred in the decades following World War II, instead, with a significant immigration from other Italian regions, such as Veneto and later Southern Italy. More recently, immigrants come from other European nations, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa—in particular they hail from Romania, Albania, Morocco and Tunisia, though the percentage of arrivals is high even from Ecuador and Pakistan. Source: Osservatorio Politiche Sociali della Provincia di Varese (Observatory for Social Policies in the Province of Varese: <http://www.provincia.va.it/code/25286/Stranieri>).

Ecomuseums are founded at the behest of local communities to respond to the need each group feels to investigate its roots and to express its own peculiarities. Such an issue is particularly remarkable in a world that is moving in the direction of globalisation and standardisation.¹² An ecomuseum network can give an incisive contribution in establishing the authentic traits that distinguish a social group within a broader and shared cultural context (Riva 2008). The matter is even more critical in places like the area of Varese, which has been and still is affected by migration—in the absence of a strong sense of identity, migration can cause hostile reactions in residents, who often consider people with different cultures and customs as an alleged threat to the integrity of local traditions. The waves of arrivals of new inhabitants in the Prealps of Varese had, however, a moderate impact on the native population. They followed one another, leaving sufficient time to consolidate the presence of the last settled, without causing the strong “memory loss” that occurred, for instance, in the southern and the most industrialised areas in the province of Varese.

Early ecomuseums demonstrated that these organisations, if properly conceived and managed, have a strong ability to strengthen community bonds—a prime example is the Écomusée de la Communauté Urbaine Le-Creusot – Montceau-les-Mines (Varine 1991, 39–40). They emphasise the sense of social and territorial belonging of the inhabitants, as well as an awareness of their history and uniqueness. In fact, the wish to communicate what is typical of a place could be a powerful factor of social integration, even in the wake of migrations.

Contemporary societies are increasingly exposed to processes of cultural enrichment through cross-contaminations. It therefore becomes crucial to consider an ecomuseum as a means of keeping the peculiar characteristics of a place and, at the same time, handing down traditions to new generations of residents who have moved there only recently or are the children of migrants. These inhabitants have both the right and the duty to establish a bond with their adoptive country or the context in which they were born.¹³

A preparatory investigation had been carried out by the association Ecomuseo, which has taken a census of the most significant cultural and natural assets in the northern area of the province. It identified approximately 350 sites or artefacts worthy of being included in thematic itineraries, which had been catalogued and filed in order to make the

12 These concepts are consistent with the current trends in tourism, which is increasingly aimed at looking for alternatives to traditional routes. The new itineraries must integrate artistic excellences and cultural assets with those of wine and food, high quality craftwork, entertainment, landscape, and the possibility of practicing sport and going rumbering. The creation of an ecomuseum also allows the energy of several groups of volunteers to be mobilised and directed—groups who already organise small events, exhibitions, festivals. It allows an effective coordination of their efforts and ensures a programme of cultural and recreational activities during the whole year and a widespread circulation of information.

13 George MacDonald stated that if museums want to have an important function in a multicultural society—the issue is particularly relevant even in an ecomuseum, that points first and foremost to the community it represents—they have to be representative of the points of view of all the members of a society. Their perspectives can often appear contradictory, but if we accept the idea that no interpretation is really the ultimate one, since all are subjective, it would be easier to express a greater tolerance for anything that is not univocal or that is dissonant (MacDonald 1992, 176).

data accessible, at a later time, to the community and to a wider audience on a website. The association also begun an extensive search for editing a bibliography available to people who want to deepen general or specific issues about the territory and each of the selected sites. Six themes acted as a leitmotif for the systematisation of such a rich, and extremely fragmented, diverse heritage: “Water sign: fishermen and bogs farmers”; “The mountains itinerary: peace and rural culture of border populations”; “The mine of memory: on the trail of the Besanosaurus”; “Building in the green: one hundred villas and a garden city”; “A flower as a mould: the industry of Liberty”; and “The civilisation of the river: industrial archaeology.”

The multiple sites of interest emerging from these studies are aligned along many itineraries, which are highly customisable according to the interests and capabilities of the single visitor (or resident). The visitor routes are intertwined and include existing museums, which are regarded as repository archives completing the “ecomuseal promenade.” Visitors can move in search of what the Ecomuseum offers along several circuits, ranging from major roads to bike or walking paths. They can follow geographic routes, encountering heterogeneous realities, or thematic ones, travelling over larger areas.

The preliminary survey was followed by a series of studies directly coordinated by researchers from the Politecnico di Milano,¹⁴ including some Masters level theses in Architecture. Those works combined the identification of sites, material and cultural assets in defined areas of the Ecomuseum, with design proposals in line with the academic course undertaken by students. The essential starting point for each project was the acquisition of a strong knowledge of the context, developed through exploration campaigns, a direct interaction with local authorities, and finally by meeting the inhabitants, staff of local associations or site managers.

In an initial moment these interlocutors provided useful information to students and researchers for collecting documents, mapping sites and artefacts, identifying the actions and facilities needed. Once the work was completed, these persons became, conversely, the first target audience of the theses, which have the advantage of providing a scientific overview free from parochial or self-serving interests. The projects highlight the potentialities and criticality of each place and suggest respectful and sustainable models of transformation, although they may exceed in their design outcome, presenting hypotheses sometimes not sufficiently in line with the shortage of funds currently available for works of this kind in Italy. They are proposals “offered” to local communities and administrations to channel their attention and encourage them to reflect upon matters of public interest and good strategies to

14 A team of professors and scholars from the Politecnico di Milano, coordinated by Prof. Luca Basso Peressut and specialised in interior architecture and exhibition design, began in 2000 a collaboration with the Architectural Association in Varese (Ordine degli Architetti, Pianificatori, Paesaggisti e Conservatori della Provincia di Varese). Their purpose was the institution of an ecomuseum in the Pre-Alps of the province. The project has been supported by the Presidency of the Regional Council of Lombardy and later by the Province of Varese.

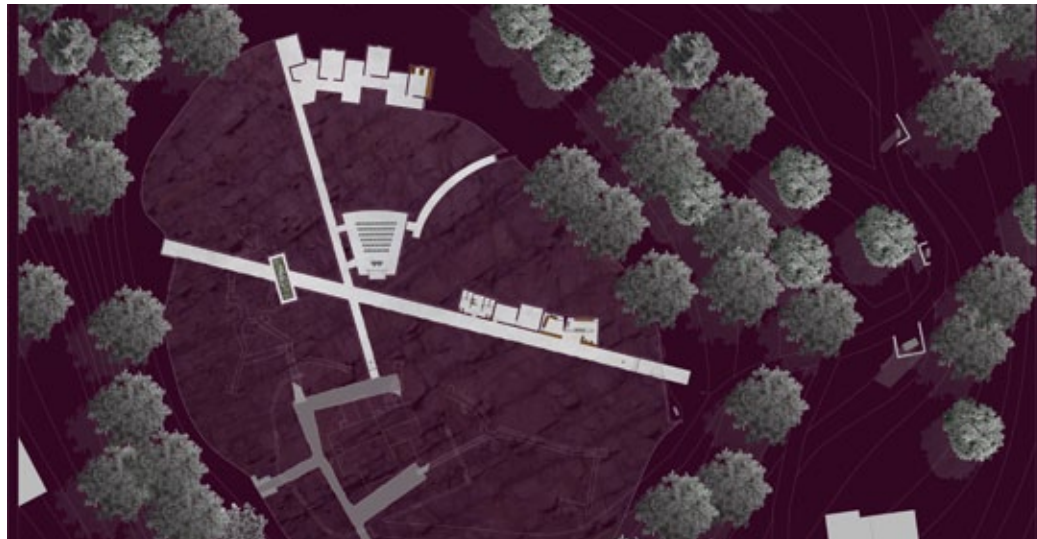
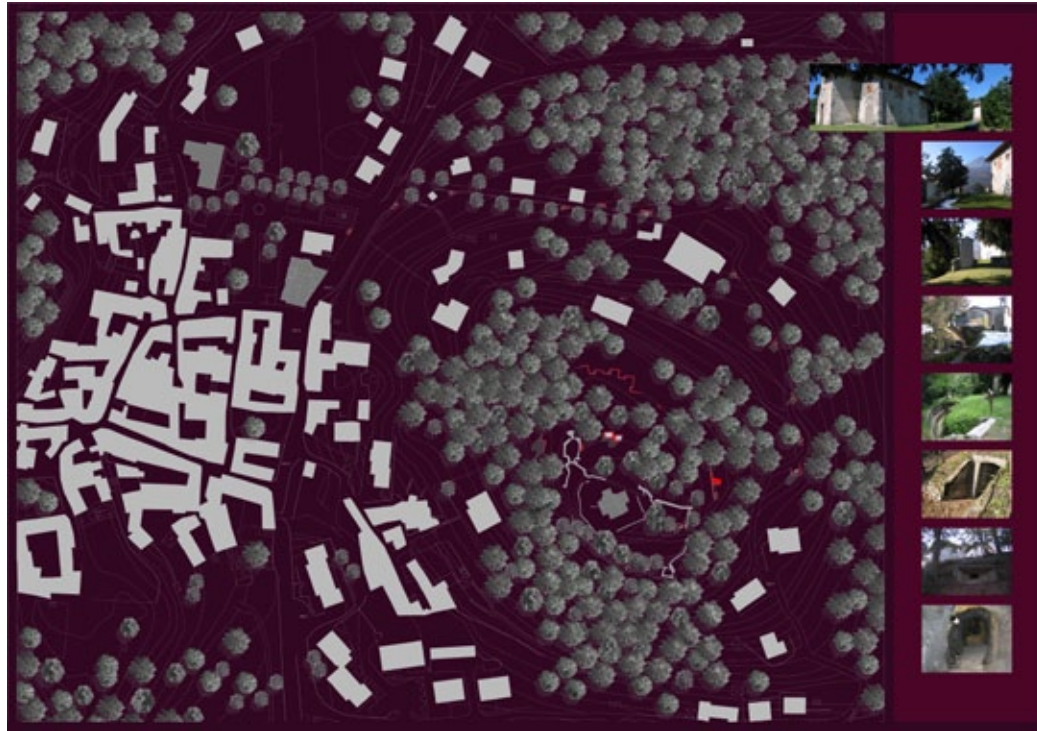


IMG. 2.84 — Concept map illustrating the thematic routes that characterise the Ecomuseo del Campo dei Fiori. Elaboration by Cristina F. Colombo.

manage cultural assets. The theses give, moreover, a voice to the needs of the population in its various components (Karp 1992, 12), meeting the demands of the strongest social groups as much as those of under-represented and minority groups.

→ M3V: VIA VERDE VARESINA DIFFUSED MUSEUM

The thesis presented by Cristina F. Colombo focusses on the theme “The mountains itinerary: peace and rural culture of border populations.” The title “M3V: Museo diffuso della Via Verde Varesina” (Via Verde Varesina Diffused Museum) was inspired by a renowned hiking trail—the Via Verde Varesina—that runs through almost the entire mountain area of the province. The path of the mountains involves a geographically



extended region and includes most of the sites mapped in the itinerary of waters, “Water signs: fishermen and bogs farmers.”

As stated previously, the first phase of work consisted of a study and analysis of the territory, directed at identifying the elements that could be included in a museum’s network and organised visitor paths. A planning phase followed, resulting in the design of three architectures. Seven sites, all intersected by the Via Verde Varesina, were then chosen as representative of different realities—ranging from industrial archaeology to religious, military and civil architecture, rock art and contemporary art, without forgetting essential tourist facilities.¹⁵

These sites are located along three routes, branching off radially from a main visitor centre situated nearby Cunardo, in a proto-industrial complex, housing the Laboratory of Ceramic Art of the Ibis Furnaces. The place could be deemed as the point of reference of the entire museum system of the mountains, providing information and hosting an archive, a database, and records related to the ecomuseum.

The first itinerary culminates in Ganna, where the Abbey of St. Gemolo lies. St. Gemolo is a monastery of Benedictine origin and an ancient place of hospitality for pilgrims founded between 1093 and 1097. It was

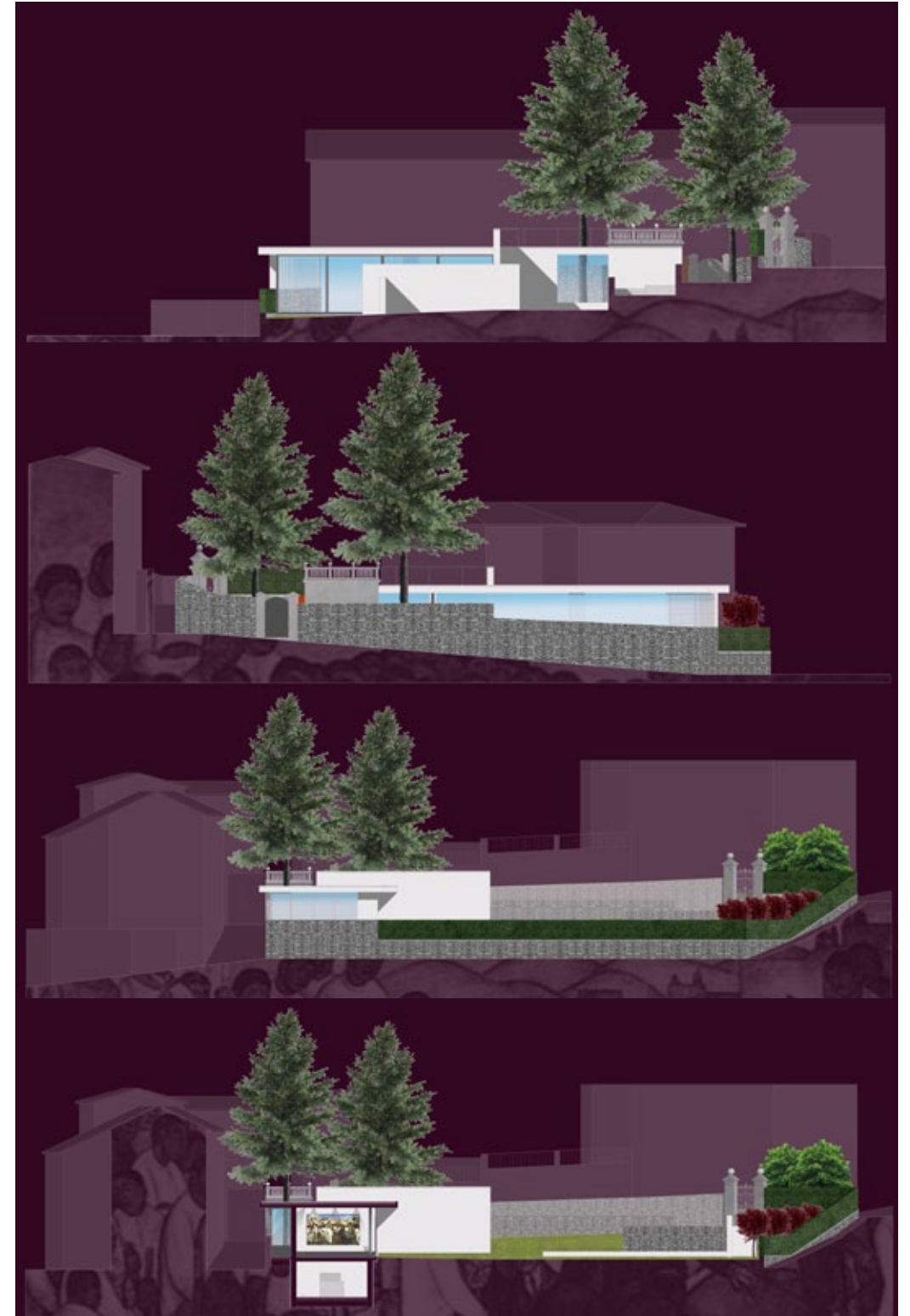
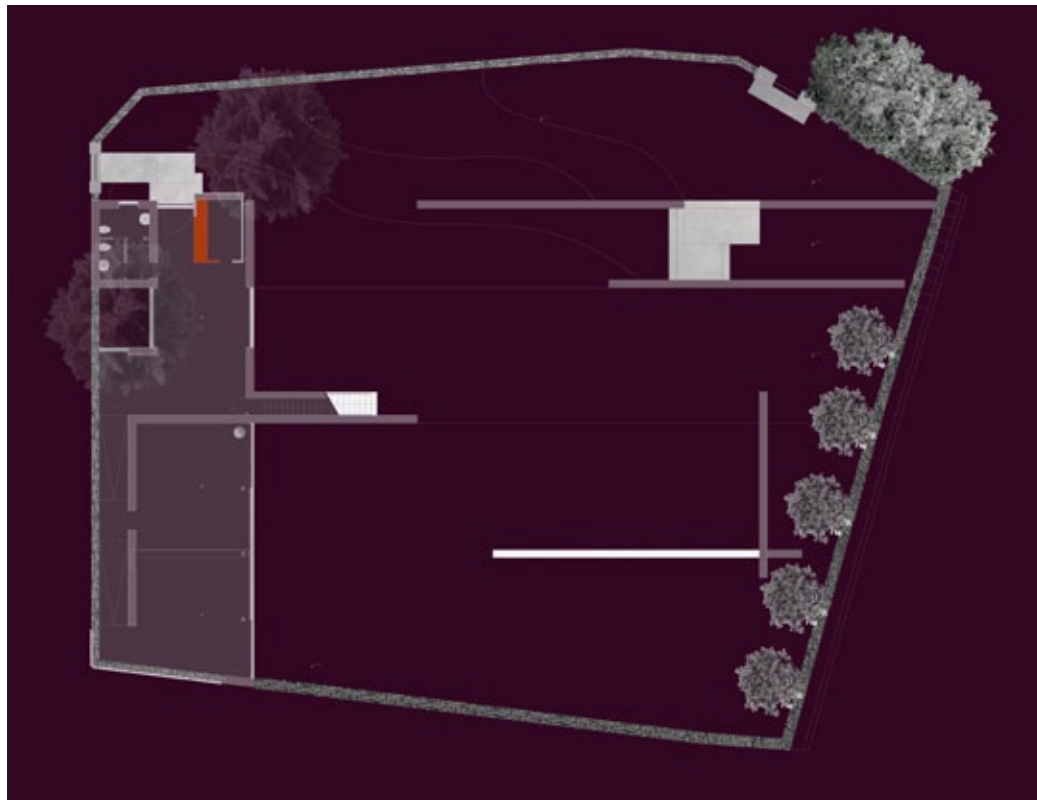
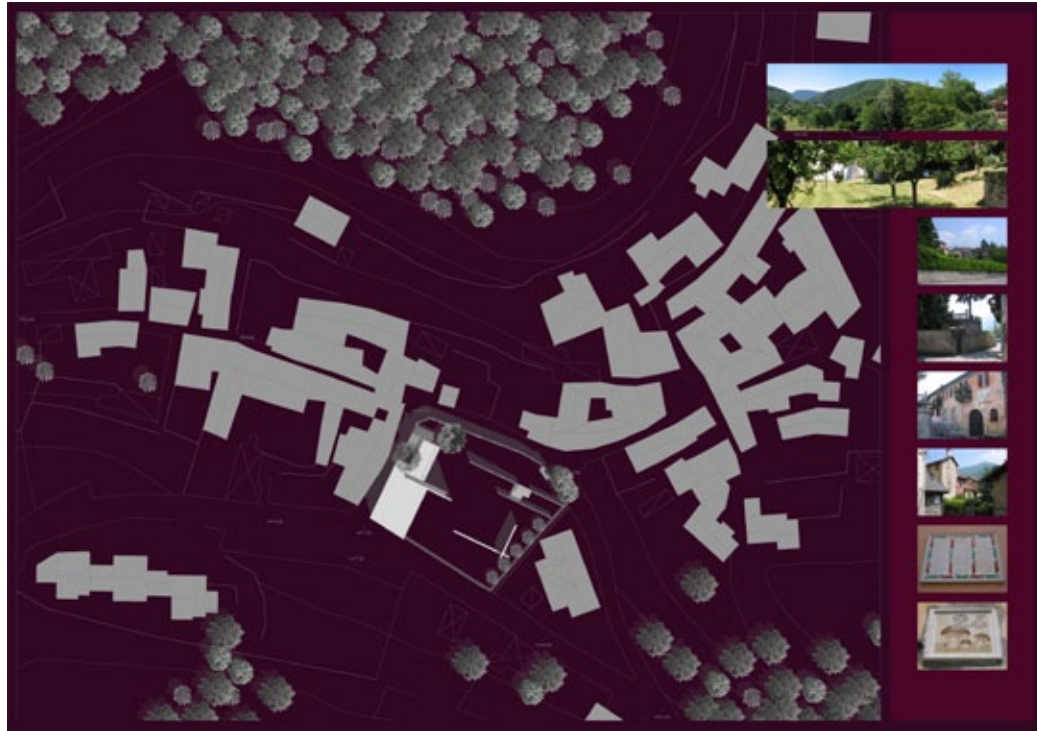
¹⁵ It is essential for an ecomuseum to establish a synergy with local companies and who produces specialties—people and enterprises working in handicrafts, fashion, agricultural and food industries—and the ones that deal with accommodation facilities. An ecomuseum path cannot disregard the gastronomic traditions of the territory, which are an essential component of the local culture worthy of promotion and protection.

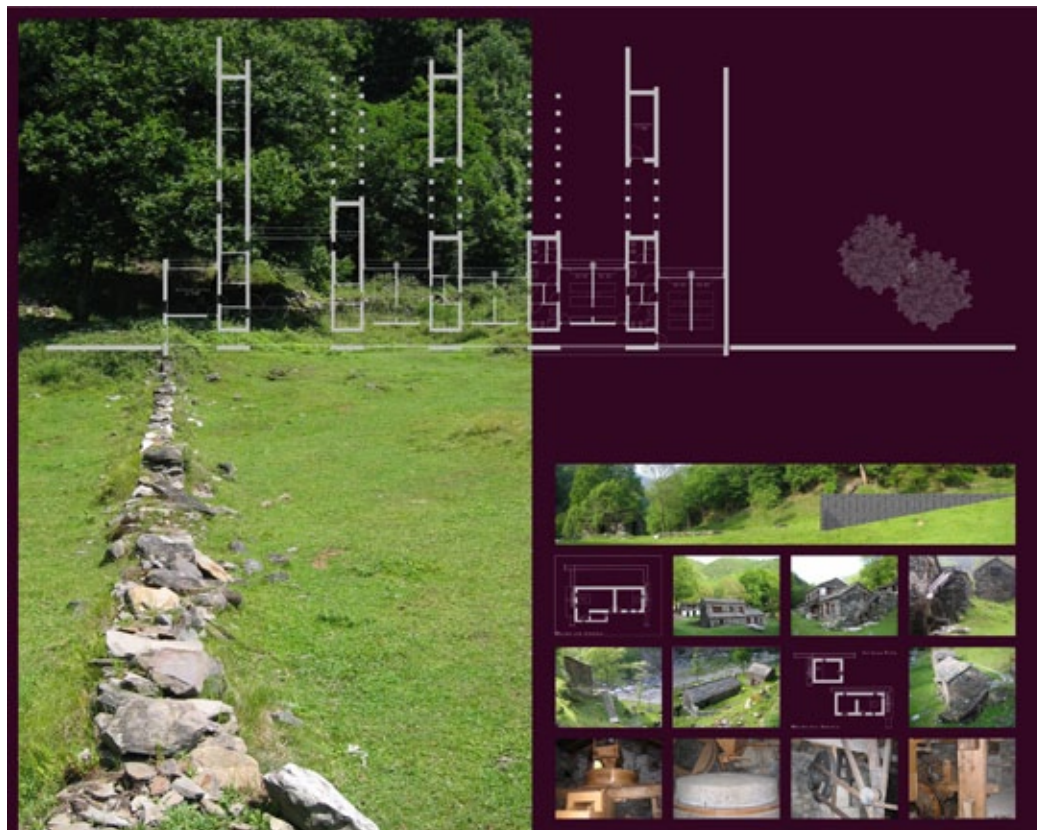
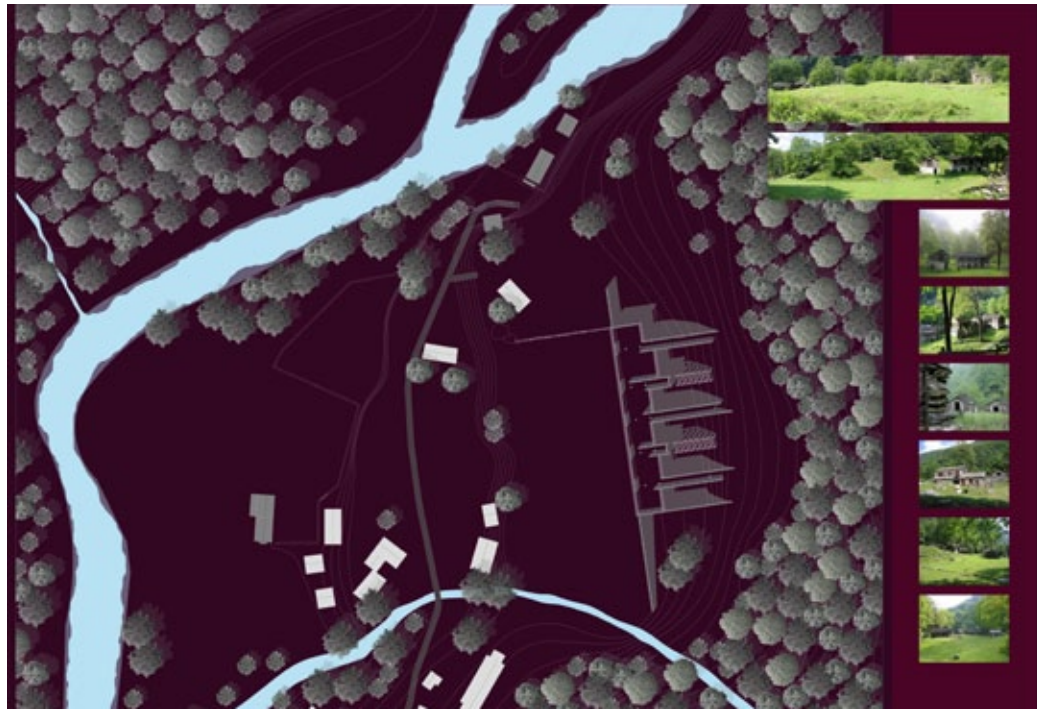
PREVIOUS PAGE, IMGS. 2.85–87 —“M3V – Via Verde Varesina Diffused Museum.” Cadorna Line Museum, Cassano Valcuvia. Project by Cristina F. Colombo.

Site plan with the new arrangement of the Via Crucis, section and plan of the hypogean museum connected with the existing military galleries.

THIS PAGE, IMGS. 2.88–89 — Views of the upper trenches of the Ridotto San Giuseppe, Cassano Valcuvia. Photos by Cristina F. Colombo.

The Ridotto San Giuseppe—built in preparation for the World War I—has been largely restored, secured and opened to the public by the municipality of Cassano Valcuvia, which proved to be particularly attentive in preserving and promoting this military complex, organising educational activities that include guided tours to tourists and students.





profoundly altered in the late 19th century but it retains notable and well-preserved parts. The intervention proposed aimed at reconstructing the original layout of the building not through a restoration that would be anachronistic and uncertain, but using floor-level installations that would show the location of the ancient structures.

The second route crosses the Valcuvia, with stops in Cassano Valcuvia and Casalzuigno. Cassano Valcuvia was proposed to house the Museum of the Defensive Line at the North Border—commonly, but improperly known as Cadorna Line (Colombo 2013; Trotti 2011)—a system of fortifications built in the alpine area along the Italian-Swiss border mainly in the years of the World War I. On top of a hill close to the village there is a little ancient church as well as the components of the Ridotto San Giuseppe (“San Giuseppe Redoubt”). Ridotto San Giuseppe is part of a wider complex, mostly easily accessible and well preserved, extended from the bottom of the valley to the summit of Monte San Martino, where there are observation posts, cave or armoured posts, communication and defensive trenches. A sequence of trenches encircles the summit of the hill and the church, which then connects with a system of underground tunnels dug into the rock, and some light artillery posts. Ridotto San Giuseppe has been largely restored, secured and made accessible by the municipality of Cassano Valcuvia, which proved to be particularly sensitive and attentive to the value of the complex. These characteristics and the completeness of the fortifications that form the Ridotto San Giuseppe make the site particularly suitable for building a museum promoting the entire Defensive Line. The widespread presence in the Prealps of Varese of the defensive system highlights a topic of great relevance: the preservation of the memory of controversial historical events, through the conservation of material traces left behind—an unusual patrimony identified as “difficult heritage” (MacDonald, 2009).

The mountains of the area known as Verbano were not directly affected by conflict, meaning that the fortifications have not suffered serious damages, apart from the losses caused by the natural course of time and years of neglect. These structures do not really carry the painful reminiscence

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IMGS. 2.90–92 — Laboratory for frescoes, Runo di Dumenza. Site plan, ground floor plan, elevations and section. Project by Cristina F. Colombo.

Runo is a village known for the frescoes that adorn its streets. In this place—now less visited and which suffered the degradation and loss of the best pieces of the open-air collection—a laboratory has been designed to be used for the restoration of artworks, educational activities, small exhibitions and as a meeting point for the local community.

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IMGS. 2.93–95 — Mulini di Piero Ethnographic Museum, Curiglia con Monteviasco. Site plan, ground floor plan and elevations. Project by Cristina F. Colombo.

The project suggests the realisation of an ethnographic museum centred upon the mills and the small buildings, constructed in stone with local traditional techniques, in the area of Mulini di Piero. A new building complements the existing structures, houses all of the ancillary services necessary to support museum activities and works as a guesthouse.

of people who lived for months with the anxiety of protecting themselves against a military invasion or risking their lives. This land, indeed, was not the scene of tragic events and it is not a source of traumatic memory. Rather, it is a complex landscape that evokes the anxieties and the climate of insecurity and fear of the “other”—the foreigner, the invader, the enemy—that has characterised the European history for decades. The remaining military artefacts also testify to the work and enormous daily sacrifices made by the men and women who built them, willing to accept unfavourable working conditions to overcome the poverty of that time and sustain their families. Moreover, this evidence attests to the technical competence of the planners and builders, the expertise and the military engineering knowledge of that period.

The fact that the relics have not seen the drama of the battle and the difficulties of their musealisation¹⁶ have doomed the “Cadorna Line” to a slow regression into oblivion and the indifference of the local population. For a long time the residents considered these artefacts as worthless—somehow awkward and cumbersome—inheriting, being unaware of their archaeological value and the impact their construction had on the lives of their own forefathers and predecessors. Herein lies the need to ensure the recovery and promotion of what still remains of this military heritage.

Villa Della Porta Bozzolo introduces the theme of monumental historic mansions. The building and its garden were donated in 1979 to the FAI (Fondo Ambiente Italiano, usually referred to in English as the Italian National Trust), which has provided for their restoration and opened them to the public. The thesis suggests the arrangement of temporary exhibitions focussing on local material culture in the stables, cellars and porticoed spaces.

The third itinerary runs northward in Valtravaglia, Val Dumentina and Val Veddasca along the ancient transit roads that linked the Po Valley with the Swiss territory and the Transalpine Europe. It addresses various topics: the traces left by the Celts who formerly inhabited the pre-Alpine valleys¹⁷; the phenomenon of painted villages, represented here by hamlet of Runo¹⁸; and proto-industrial archaeology with the settlement of the Mills in Piero.

16 The musealisation of wide fortification systems poses at least two orders of difficulties. The first one is the extreme spatial extent of these complexes, constituted by elements belonging to diverse jurisdictions. The second is that they are made by artefacts which can, by their very nature, only occasionally act as poles of attraction for a cultural tourism and can be easily reached by people without an adequate training: each of them is a single unit of an intricate anthropic landscape, branching off in the territory and comprehensible only as a whole. Although we should commend isolated works on sites of particular interest, because of their architecture, of the natural environment where they are set and of the historical facts in which they were involved, it is necessary to intervene on the single element and, at the same time, keep a much wider view.

17 The Prealps near Varese have a remarkable abundance of petroglyphs, which are attributed to Iron Age and Celtic civilisation who settled in these valleys. To date no systematic scientific studies have been done on these findings. It is therefore necessary and urgent to map these findings, educate the inhabitants to respect them and to take measures that stop their defacement or the removal of parts of them.

18 The tradition of decorating small villages with wall paintings and frescoes is widespread in Italy and worldwide, but it has a particular relevance in the Province of Varese, due to the high number of examples which counts on its territory: Arcumeggia, Boarezzo-Ganna, Brunello, Marchirolo, Masciago Primo, Maccagno, and Runo di Dumenza. These places must be considered almost as open-air museums.



→ AN IN-LINE MUSEUM ALONG THE VALMOREA RAILWAY

“The civilisation of the river: industrial archaeology” is the central theme of Margherita Pinto’s graduate thesis, “Museo lineare lungo la ferrovia della Valmorea” (An In-line Museum along the Valmorea Railway), which studies the valley through which the river Olona flows.

The particular morphology of the valley and the presence of a watercourse—the bed of which is quite small but easily exploitable for productive use—enabled the proliferation of manufacturing activities even before the Industrial Revolution. Between the woody slopes and the valley floor, next to sand and gravel pits, there were several mills, presses, crushers and grinders driven by the force of the waters of the river and its affluents. In the hills closer to the source, there were also several lime kilns. With the advent of industrialisation, exploitation became more intensive due to a high availability of labour. Larger factories were built: silk factories at first, later cotton mills, paper-mills, weaving factories, dye-works, and tanneries—private enterprises all related to the textile industry.

In the late 1970s a radical transformation of the industrial production processes led to an increasingly strong automation and a gradual delocalisation of the factories. This heralded the gradual closure of most of the

IMG. 2.96 — “An in-line Museum along the Valmorea Railway.” View of the Malnate viaduct seen from the Valmorea railway station in Malnate. Photo by Margherita Pinto.

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IMG. 2.97 — General plan of the three project sites in Malnate. Elaboration by Margherita Pinto.

IMGS. 2.98–99 — The new railway station in Malnate. Elevation and ground floor plan. Project by Margherita Pinto.

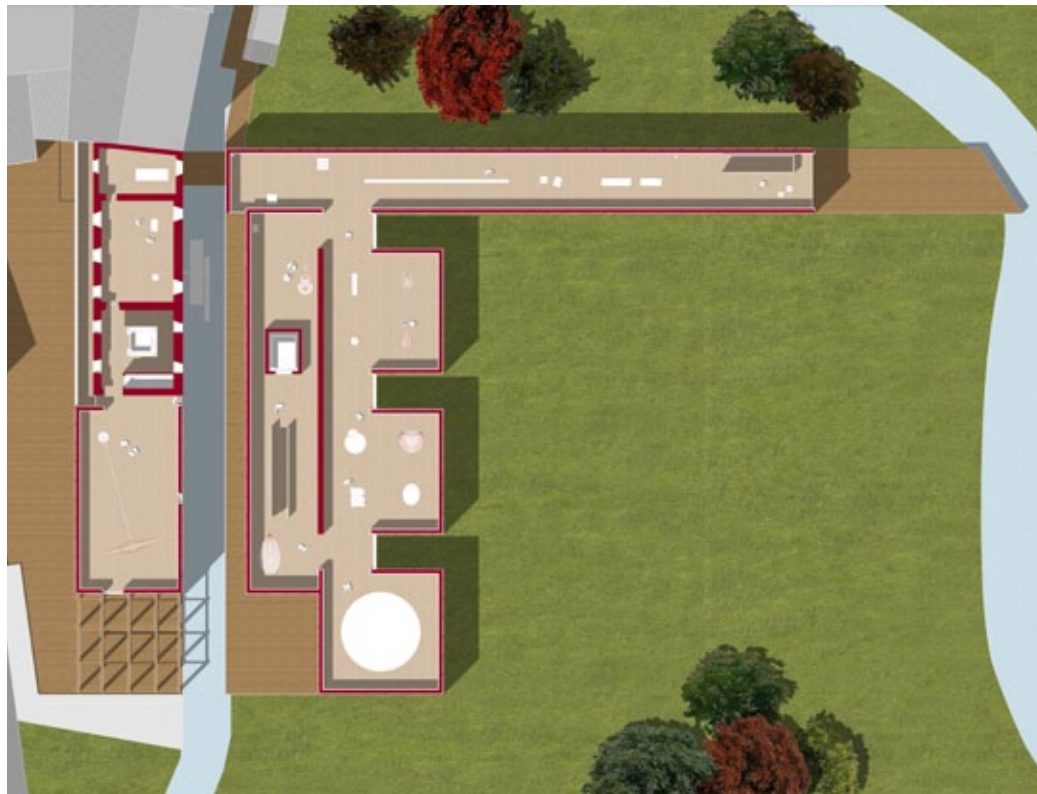
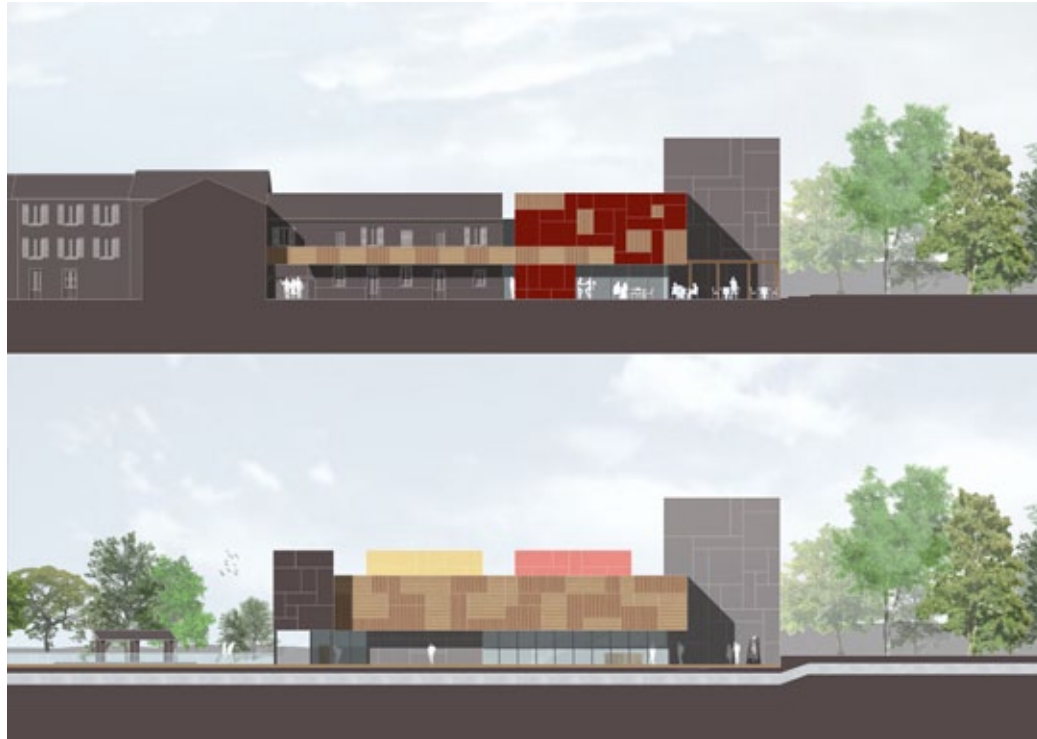
A new building replaces the original one, damaged by fire, and houses a visitor and info centre, supported by other facilities, such as a cafeteria and a bookshop specialised in local history publications.

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IMGS. 2.100–101 — An auditorium at the Maggi spinning factory, Malnate. Sections and ground floor plan. Project by Margherita Pinto.

The factory for the spinning of silk was founded in 1819 at Le Gere, in Malnate, and later enlarged in 1840. The industrial compound is now completely abandoned and in an advanced state of disrepair. The suggestiveness of the place and its isolation inspired the idea of turning it into an auditorium for musical performances, keeping intact the external skeleton of the building. Furthermore, a central courtyard is formed by a system of walls, flanked by small architectures: a greenhouse for tropical plants, an observation tower and a café.





manufacturing firms located in the valley. The lack of urban and economic policies able to facilitate the reuse of the structures and the objective difficulty of converting so large and decentralised buildings caused their abandonment and initiated rapid processes of obsolescence. In the absence of a widespread education on respecting public heritage, and as a result of the indifference or impotence of the institutions, it is no wonder that such monuments to material culture have fallen prey to vandals and lie like sad ghosts covered in graffiti, overgrown and attacked by vegetation.

The thesis retraces the evolution of the productive settlements that stood on the banks of the Olona, pinpointing the edifices or remnants that are still visible and the present condition in which this particular architectural heritage is to be found. It also suggests a map—rendered in an overview board and in a series of brief descriptive files—of places significant for the history of the communities that have inhabited these lands.

Industrial archaeology, however, does not exhaust the cultural resources of the area deserving to be part of a diffused museum. The territory of the Olona has a very ancient history and retains noteworthy memories of the past, that make it a place potentially rich in cultural attractions, which are still not adequately exploited and promoted.

Margherita Pinto put forward a hypothesis that combines the necessity of making the ecomuseum sites reachable by several means of transport, with the restoration of an historical infrastructure that originally accompanied the economic development of the Olona valley: the Valmorea Railway.

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IMGS. 2.102–104 — Museum of Wooden Art (MARL), Malnate. Elevations, ground floor plan and sections. Project by Margherita Pinto.

The Mulino La Folla, one of the best preserved mills in the whole area, was chosen as the site for a new museum of contemporary art dedicated to wood, in open dialogue with the Museum of Plastic Arts (MAP) in Castiglione Olona. The project maintains and integrates into the new museum the oldest wing of the mill, containing the grinder, and replaces the most recent parts with an addition leaning forward toward the railway and the river Lanza. The new volume, whose ground floor forms a wide portico, is very permeable and faces a large exhibition courtyard.

The Valmorea Railway was a private line with a standard-gauge single track, completed in 1926 along the Olona riverbed to join Castellanza—and therefore the territory to the North of Milan and the city of Milan—with the Swiss border and the St. Gotthard route that passed through Mendrisio. It could have never become a strategic transit route for international trade due to the non-stipulation of an agreement between the Italian and Swiss governments, meaning that it was completely disused by 1952. The restoration of the line began in the early 1990s by a group of volunteers gathered in the Associazione Amici della Ferrovia Valmorea (Association Friends of the Valmorea Railroad), founded to promote the recovery for tourism purposes. Their idea goes beyond the restoration of the artefact, aiming at revaluating, studying and enhancing the natural, architectural and immaterial heritage of a green area that is well suited to become a linear park easily accessible from the neighbouring municipalities—a valuable resource in a densely urbanised environmental context.

The project had an equal echo across the border, demonstrating how common some of the problems are in terms of actions and efforts to safeguard the heritage of the two communities who live in environments featuring many similar traits. These similarities include the uniformity of the geomorphological attributes, the high number of lakes, wetlands and streams, the common flora and fauna, the type of industrial settlements and even the presence in both lands of old defence systems.

The cessation of manufacturing activities and the start of the recovery of an ecosystem that had been jeopardised for decades by high levels of pollution have been essential preconditions for bringing the local population closer to a resource that had been underestimated for years or considered almost as an unpleasant presence. The valley, indeed, is proving to be more and more attractive for visitors coming primarily from neighbouring towns.

The three design proposals advanced by Margaret Pinto are concentrated on the Municipality of Malnate, where the running stretch of the Valmorea Railway, coming from Mendrisio, actually ends.

→ DIFFUSED MUSEUM OF FLORA AND FAUNA IN CAMPO DEI FIORI:
THE PATH OF THE FAUN

Natural resources are one of the greatest riches of the Prealps of Varese and are the main theme of the thesis presented by Luca Andrea Vetrano, “Museo diffuso della flora e fauna del Campo dei Fiori: Sentiero del Fauno” (Diffused Museum of Flora and Fauna in Campo dei Fiori: The Path of the Faun), who planned an itinerary focussing on the flora and fauna on the eastern side of the Regional Park of Campo dei Fiori.

“The Path of the Faun” stretches out along hiking trails which are still in use, connected to each other by disused, little known paths, still easily retraced and easily walkable. It goes through the villages of Ganna—where one of the two starting points is located—, Rasa di Varese and Brinzio. There are, however, many possible variations on the tour.



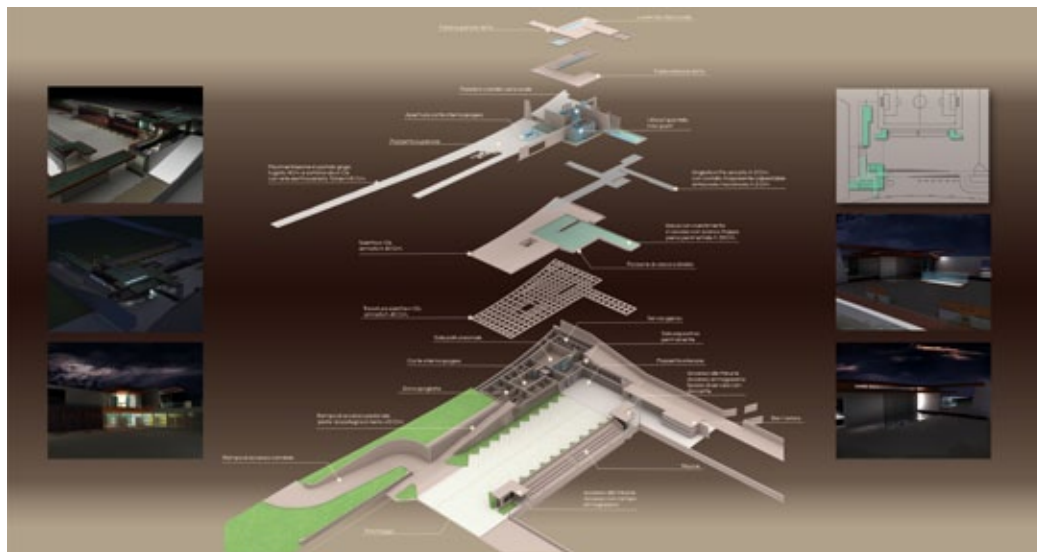
IMG. 2.105 — “Diffused Museum of Flora and Fauna in Campo dei Fiori: The Path of the Faun.” Winter view of the the Abbey of St. Gemolo in Ganna, with Mt. Mondonico on the background. Photo by Cristina F. Colombo.

The study of the local natural environment let Luca Andrea Vetrano identify a few sites that could be defined as *iconemi*,¹⁹ that is elements capable of expressing more than others the *genius loci* of a place. The points of interest that emerged were subsequently classified into three types: “*iconema* of the woods”; “*iconema* of wetlands and/or bogs”; and “*iconema* of dry grassland/arid grasslands.” Moreover, the research put forward an opinion on the real chance of recovering and protecting each of them.

The “gateway” to the Path of the Faun, located in the western outskirts of Ganna, leads to a small glacial lake and the peat bog of Pralugano—places both recognised as Nature Reserves in 1984 and as Sites of Community Importance²⁰ in 2004, due to the ecological interest in the rare floral and faunal species hosted within. The proposal has been elaborated on the basis of the needs expressed by the local administration and by the residents, aiming to offer the community a meeting point and leisure facilities. It recommends the creation of a pavilion nearby the Abbey of St. Gemolo, which includes a visitor centre, a cafeteria, a multifunctional hall and a storage space. The new building is also designed for providing support services to the nearby sports field, with the idea to use the area for outdoor shows and other public events.

19 As Eugenio Turri states, “*iconemi* are the elementary units of perception: images that represent the entirety of the reality, express its peculiarities, constitute its most distinctive and identificatory traits. In the sense above mentioned, *iconema* is a sign assuming—in the perspective of who perceive—a symbolic and functional value (the *symbolon*, a representative fragment of the whole, pursuant to the primary meaning), being elaborated and selected by the perceptive mechanism” (Turri 1998, 170). Translation and italics by the authors.

20 Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21st May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Eurlex 2013).



IMGS. 2.106-109 — Site plan, exploded view drawing and elevations of the visitor centre in Ganna. Project by Luca Andrea Vetrano.

The building is organised on two levels and takes advantage of the sloping ground to reduce the impact on the place and respect the presence of the nearby basilica of St. Gemolo in Ganna. Located near the main road, it is accessed from a pedestrian square that

A walkway realised using platforms of galvanised iron departs from the abbey and allows people to safely visit the bog and the lake. The project has been conceived as a reversible intervention, with a minimal impact on the natural environment.

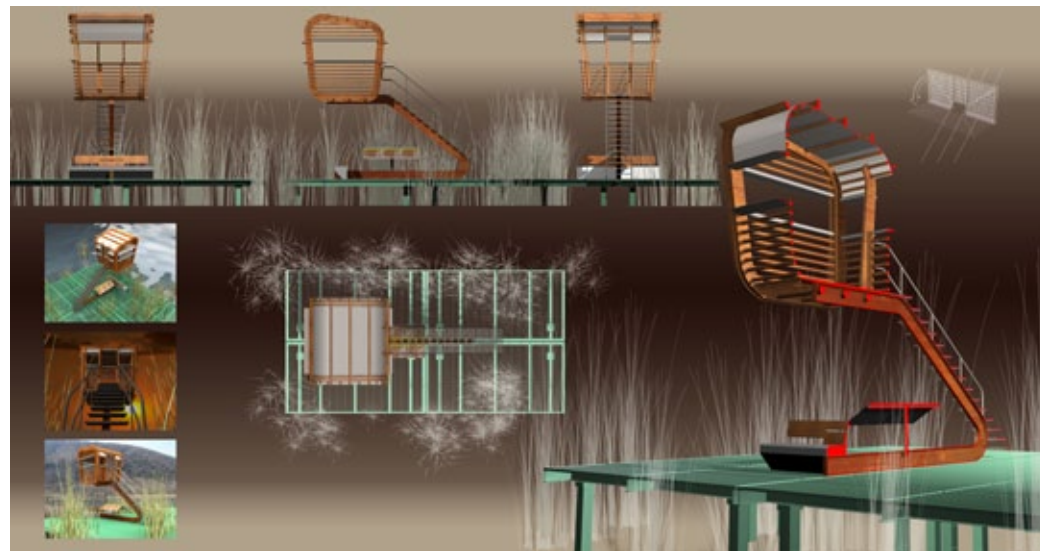
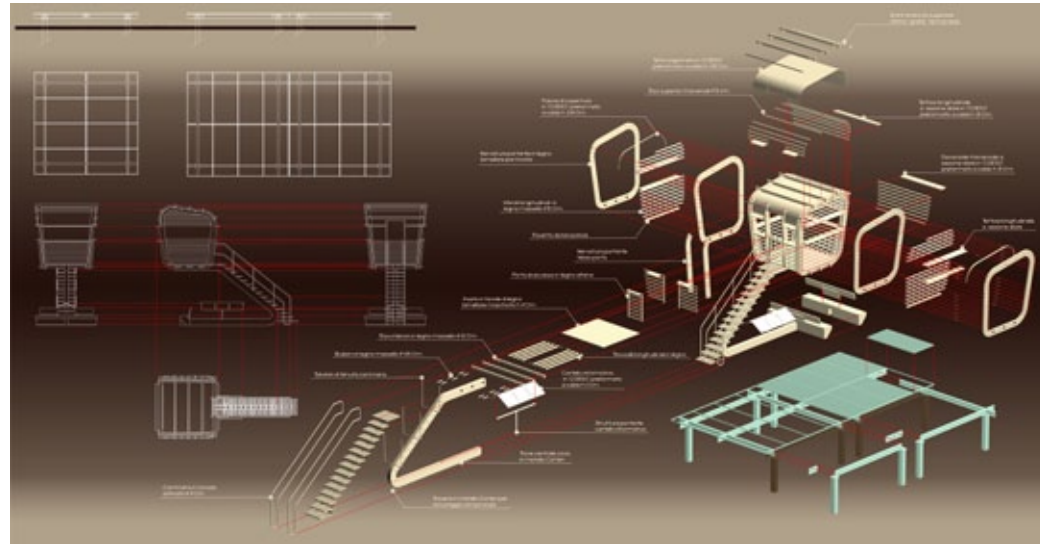
Passo Varro is the location of the Forest Pavilion, a small, unattended structure in wood and stone that serves as a rest area and shelter for hikers, additionally displaying educational panels describing concisely the ecosystem of the place.

The two installations related to the *iconemi* must be considered as prototypes to be used in various parts of the path, as well as in several locations of the Ecomuseum, thanks to the modularity of their structures, the flexibility of their assembly, and the possibility of adapting them to different



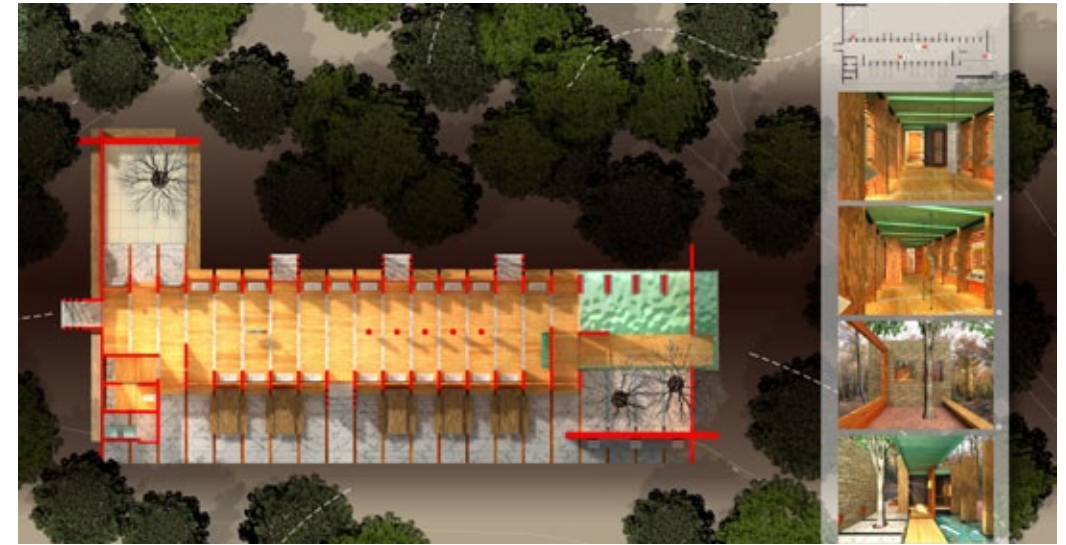
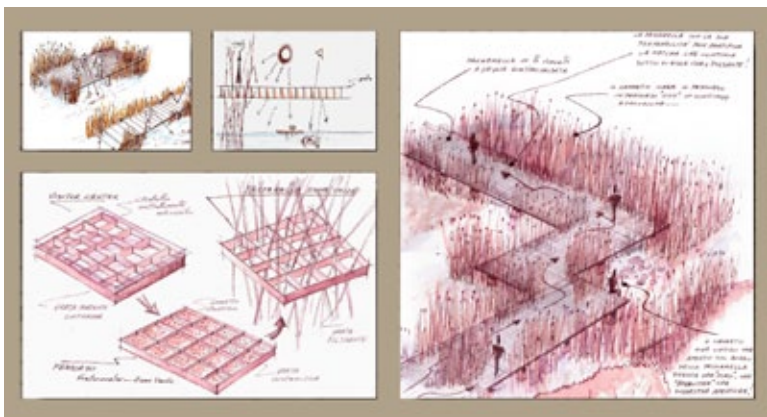
environmental contexts. An application on a quite large scale would significantly optimise the economic resources, ease the routine maintenance, make directional and informative marks more recognisable and uniform, and complete the provision of facilities for regular users as well as for occasional visitors. It would also contribute to a further development of the teaching and educational initiatives already undertaken by local schools, with the help of both public and private neighbouring organisations.

overhangs changing rooms and other facilities for the sport field. A reflecting pool and the use of local materials, like local stone and wood, combined with steel and concrete, help to harmonise the edifice to the natural and architectural surroundings.



IMGS. 2.110–112 — Exploded view drawing with architectural details of the observation towers in Ganna and concept sketches of the galvanised iron platforms that cross the bogs. Project by Luca Andrea Vetrano.

“Iconema of the wetlands and/or the peat-bogs.” The didactic paths that cross the wetlands in Ganna are scattered by a series of observation towers made of wood and corten steel, integrated with a bench and an information panel.



IMGS. 2.113–115 — Pavilion of the wood, Passo Varrò (Varese). Project by Luca Andrea Vetrano.

“Iconema of the wood.” Didactic pavilion providing facilities for hikers located at Passo Varrò. It has been designed to ensure those who enter a particular sensory experience, due to its permeability to the scents and sounds of the forest and the soft light that filters through the leaves, but preventing a view to the outside.

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The Digital Museum/Archive of Overseas Memories

The Contemporary Museum and the Representation of the Italian Colonial Heritage¹

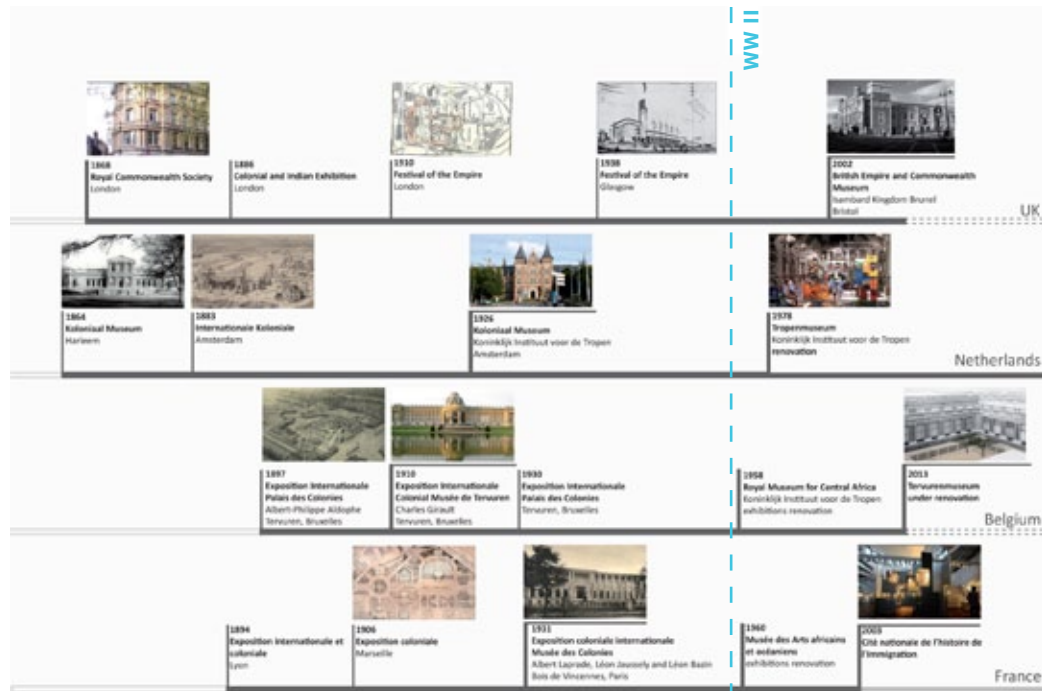
→ LUCA BASSO PERESSUT, ALESSANDRO RAFFA

Between the late nineteenth century and the beginning of World War II, a flush of exhibitions and museums sprang up, devoted to various issues in relation to the colonial adventure of that time, which saw all the major European countries involved in the practice of military and economic occupation of “overseas” countries. The purpose of such exhibitions and museums was essentially to inform citizens about the results of the European “civilising mission,” which the various nations had undertaken in their colonial possessions, especially highlighting the advantages and opportunities for economic development for the colonising countries.

Exhibition and museum narratives were thus developed by each Motherland for its own purpose, they were monologues designed to extol the nation state and consolidate the national identity through the idea of evolutionary superiority in the relationship between “self” and “others.” After World War II, the debate on colonial history became more complex due to some events of fundamental importance: the political process towards independence in Africa and Asia, the growing demand for social recognition on the part of minority groups in North America and in Commonwealth countries such as Canada and Australia. This historical acceleration and “democratization” revealed how the survival of the national framework was closely linked to the continuation of colonialism:

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— The architectural
postcolonial heritage.
Collage by Alessandro Raffa.

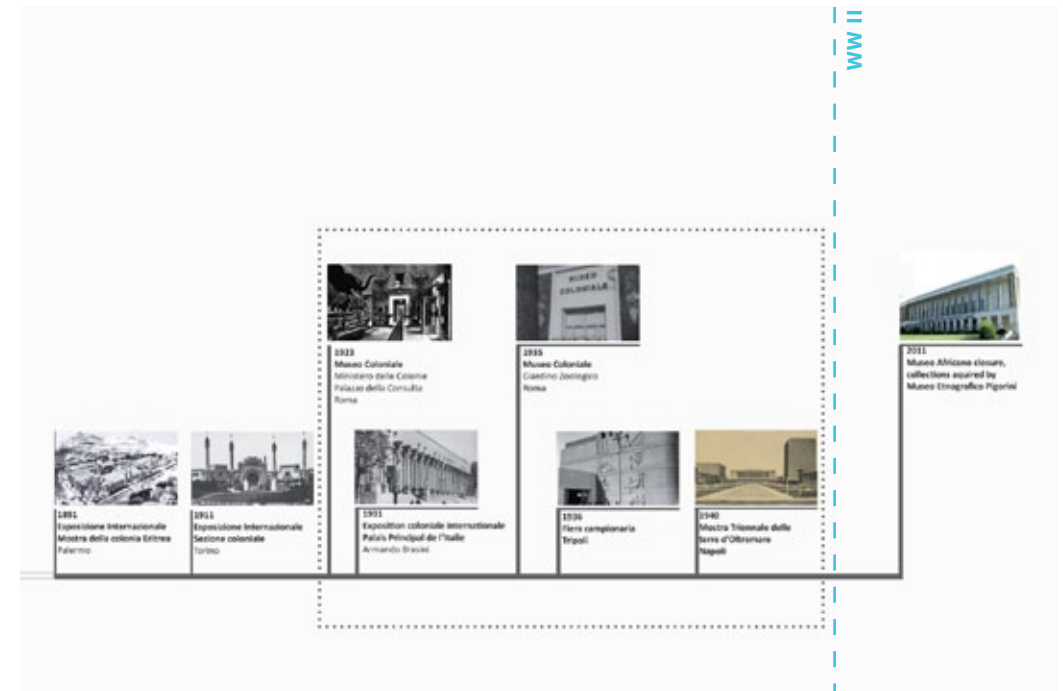
¹ This paper summarises part of a research carried out in the Ph.D. in Architectural, Urban and Interior Design at the Politecnico di Milano (Alessandro Raffa Ph.D. Candidate, Luca Basso Peressut Supervisor).



IMG. 2.117 — Phenomenology of the colonial museums and exhibitions: case studies. Diagram by Alessandro Raffa.

when it was called in question, the national paradigm weakened to the point that it was no longer possible to prevent other stories and narratives from becoming part of the official version hitherto dominant. Thus, not only did the end of the colonial order that had prevailed in the nineteenth and twentieth century bring along a global geopolitical shift, but it also started a process of identity redefinition in an era defined as postcolonial. This process has been recently accelerated by the intensification of migration flows to Europe, mostly from former colonies; these have brought along a change in the way “modernity” is being narrated, both today’s modernity and that which somehow looks at a past that no longer appears as before. As a result, museums, as institutions (and architectural structures) designed as means of expression for the political power and as foundation of the national identity, had to, and increasingly have to deal with this change, by calling in question and reconsidering which narratives should they represent through their installations.

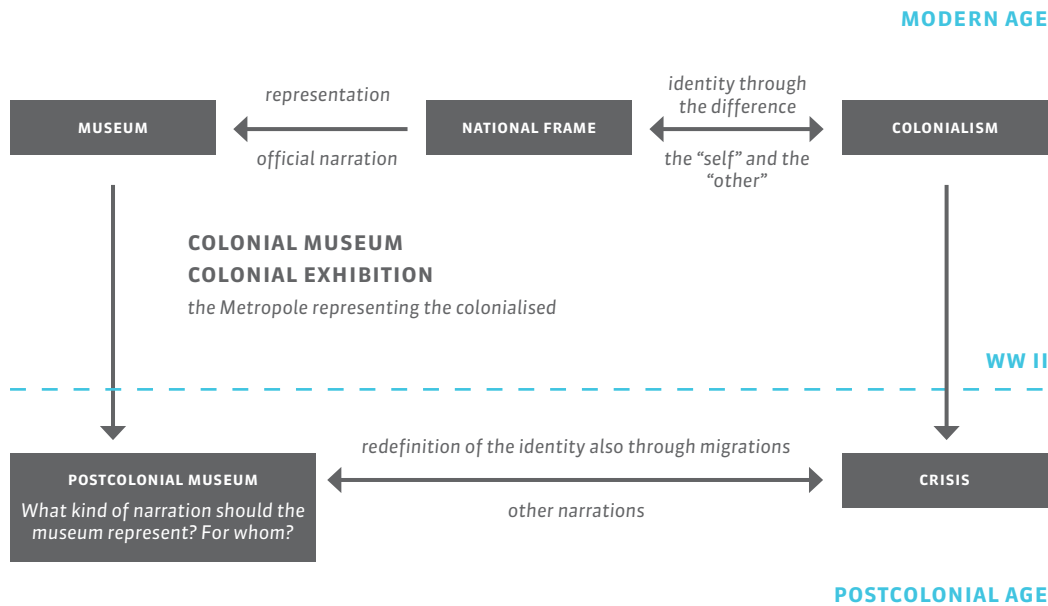
The decolonisation of museums, the recognition and representation of the different cultures that had been subjugated and which are now part of a multiethnic Europe, are therefore a central aspect in this process for the construction of a new European identity, not unlike the legacy represented by the material heritage in former colonies (Marschall 2008). The ongoing postcolonial transformation of ethnographic, anthropological and veritable colonial museums is related to a specific social stance concerning the message these museums should convey to a globalised audience, a stance that is now tending to overcome the Eurocentric vision



IMG. 2.118 — Phenomenology of the colonial museums and exhibitions: the Italian case, 1922–1940. Diagram by Alessandro Raffa.

of the world (Thomas 2010). If, as stated by Nélia Dias, “far from being ‘negotiated,’ ‘reinvented’ or ‘forgotten,’ the colonial past is just transferred and re-written into a present global concern” (Dias 2008, 309), the conception of a postcolonial museum in our age of migrations requires historical and critical reflections on museographic theories and practices.

In the Netherlands, after Indonesia’s independence in 1949, the Tropenmuseum replaced—while remaining in the same building—the Koloniaal Museum of 1864. In France, the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie (formerly Musée des Colonies and Musée de la France d’Outremer) was closed in 2003 and its collections transferred to the Musée du Quai Branly. At the same time, the decision to restore and maintain the colonial character in the architecture of Albert Laprade’s Palais de la Port Dorée (built in 1931 on the occasion of the international colonial exhibition of 1931), as setting for the Musée de l’histoire de l’immigration, certainly facilitated a dialogue between past and present on the controversial issues of the relationship between colonisers and colonised, while attempting to build a shared memory. In its “hybrid modernity” (Morton 2000) this architecture still shows clear signs of the past, particularly in its complex internal and external decorative works. The museum still has no section devoted to the history of the colonial exhibition, traces of which are still partially visible in the Bois de Vincennes, or to the history of the building, which the Expo had conceived as a single permanent element: such a narration would have made the dialogue between past and present more accurate and



What happened to colonial museums and exhibitions?

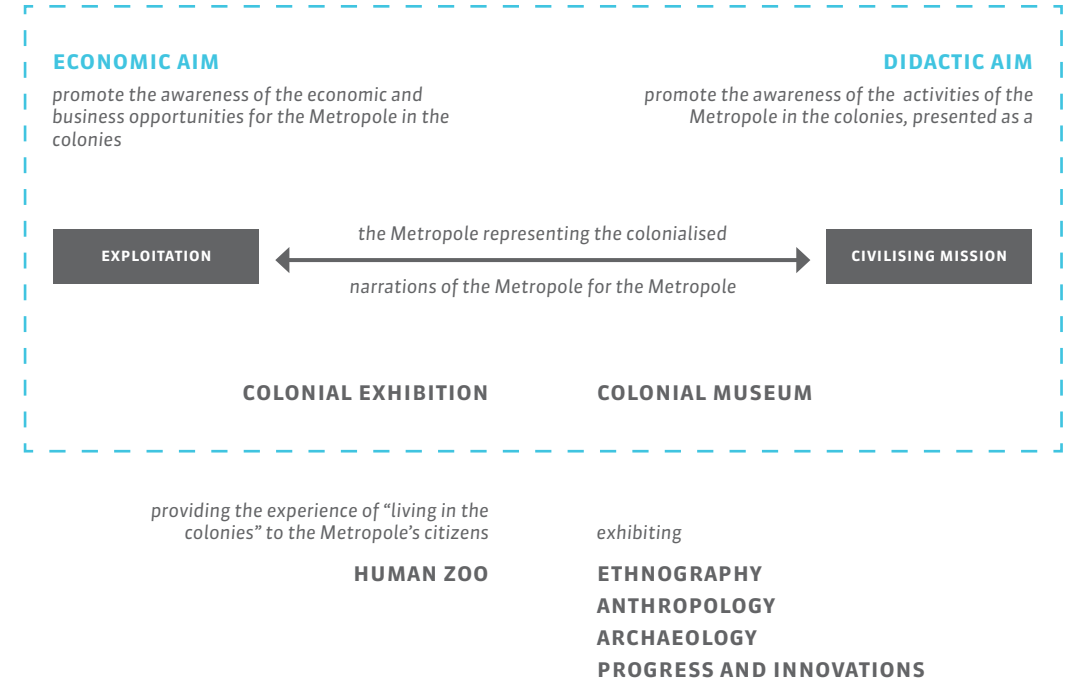
IMG. 2.119 — Phenomenology of the colonial museums and exhibitions. Diagram by Alessandro Raffa.

better documented. As recently pointed out by Camilla Pagani, this is perhaps symptomatic of the fact that the tragic events of that time are still subject to censorship and “in French cultural policies there is still no awareness of our colonial history.” (Pagani 2014, 343)

In Great Britain, in 2002, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum of Bristol was opened on the initiative of private entities; the only museum in Europe designed to present the centuries-old British colonial history and its legacy, was however closed in 2008.

In Belgium, the Tervurenmuseum, former Musée Royale de l’Afrique centrale, which is undergoing complete renovation, will reopen to the public in 2017, after years of debate on the need to modernise a museum narrative in which traces of colonialism can still be manifest. As part of this renovation project which provides for the complete preservation of the building and most of the original exhibition settings, the historic architecture and displays are becoming evocative of colonial memories—as a testimony to the museographic culture of the time. The physical distance this project leaves between the historic building and the new wing, containing the entrance and the spaces for temporary exhibitions, emphasises the critical distance between past and present, but does not erode the memory of the past.

So, is there a reticence to reorganise the museum narratives of Europe’s colonial history? Actually, the postcolonial museum issue cannot be separated from the assumption that, in one way or another, every his-



IMG. 2.120 — Phenomenology of the colonial museums and exhibitions: aims and contents. Diagram by Alessandro Raffa.

torical museum in the Western world is rooted in colonialism: occupations, dispossessions, acquisitions, marred by strongly unbalanced power relations, and so on. Contemporary museums (in general and especially those devoted to “other” cultures) suffer from the “original sin” of being institutions that were historically created and grown up in the shadow of colonial theories and practices that were developed both in the European states and outside of them, with respect to non-European countries that were conquered and colonised by force of arms (Barringer and Flynn 1998; Bennett 2004).

Certainly, the reticence that some museums have shown, and still show on an aspect of the European—cultural and political—history (that of colonialism), foreshadows a possible deletion of such an important part of our history (de L’Estoile 2007). The colonial era is certainly a complex subject, but the representation of the colonies and the colonisers-colonised relationship conveyed by these museums offered an insight of the policies and ideologies of an era. The postcolonial representation of the history of colonialism should maintain and critically reinterpret that narrative. In practice, the colonial museums reorganised from a postcolonial perspective should leave some room for preserving at least part of the original displays, as testimony of that past and the way in which it was trumpeted in Europe as part of an ideology we now abhor, thereby creating a sort of “museum of the history of colonialist ideology” within postcolonial museums. As stated by Susan Legêne, the colonial and ethnographic collections, in addition to being sources of information on

MUSEUM	TYPE OF CHANGE	OLD NAME	NEW NAME
Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris	New institution in a historical building	Musée des colonies Musée de la France d'outre-mer Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie	Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration
Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale (MRAC), Tervuren	Permanent exhibition renovation – Building extension	Musée du Congo (until 1960)	Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam	Permanent exhibition renovation	Koloniaal Museum (until 1950)	Tropenmuseum
British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol	Closed (active 2002–2007) In 2002 the museum acquired the Commonwealth Institute's collection	British Empire and Commonwealth Museum	British Empire and Commonwealth Museum
Museo Africano, Rome	Closed Colonial collection acquired by the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini (2011)	Museo Africano Museo Coloniale	Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico Luigi Pigorini

TABLE 2.02 — Colonial museums: new names for new narrations. Table by Alessandro Raffa.

non-Western cultures, can also be considered as “archives documenting how European societies and their ideologies were established and, in this respect, they may have a role to play in postcolonial societies.” (Legêne 2000, 101)

On the other hand, museums also represent themselves in the historical facet of their organisation and structures: indeed, they are a heritage that testifies the culture of an era, which has materialised in that specific “museum model,” its organisation, its exhibition devices, its *décor*, its type and architecture.

Therefore, why shouldn't these museums narrate the colonial past and the communication strategies used by colonialism at that time, perhaps also re-considering and re-interpreting their original displays? Wouldn't that be the best way to support a critical discourse on colonialism, on its heritage and on the contemporary forms of colonialism and imperialism, thus activating an intercultural dialogue without erasing the history of a representational model that is now considered obsolete? (Basso Peressut 2014, 151–155).

→ THE ITALIAN CASE

Since World War II, a policy of forgetfulness and general oblivion has prevailed in Italy with regard to our colonial history—Angelo Del Boca explicitly says that “colonialism has been removed from the culture of our country” (Del Boca 1992)—, despite in the last thirty years Italy has been

affected by migratory flows, especially from former colonies (Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Albania), which could have triggered positive processes leading to the re-writing of a shared memory.

The “Obelisk of Axum” is a case in point in explaining the dominant attitude with which we have looked at the testimonies of the Italian colonial past. The obelisk (actually an ancient funerary monument) was brought to Rome in 1937 and placed at the Circus Maximus, opposite the building of the then Ministry of the Colonies (now the headquarters of the FAO); in 2004 it was officially returned to Ethiopia, amid many controversies. Upon returning the stele, however, the desire to forget everything that the stele represented, in essence the colonial past, ensued; to date, there is nothing left to remind us of this important testimony.

This more or less conscious process of obscuring the Italian colonial past is also demonstrated by the evolution of our colonial museums (Surdich 2000) and, in particular, the African Museum of Rome, formerly the Colonial Museum. The Colonial Museum, initially set up at the stables of the Palazzo della Consulta in Rome, was inaugurated in the presence of Mussolini in 1923 “to raise awareness on the current production of our colonies and of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, Eritrea and Somalia” (Giglio 1923a, 640).² The objectives of the museum were:

to the extent possible, to make it a perfect instrument to spread knowledge on the economic potential of the colonies under our direct rule in North Africa and East Africa; to connect this instrument with other national financial, industrial and commercial bodies; to advise on the best ways to exploit the Colonies' resources, especially in terms of raw materials and to increase the imports of manufactured goods and domestic products in the Colonies. (Giglio 1923b, 421)³

In 1935, the impetus to the colonial conquests given by the fascist regime led to the transfer of the colonial museum's collections to a larger building, at the zoo in Rome. Furthermore, in those years of colonial expansion, the museum was the only one to receive artefacts from the African continent, thereby dramatically increasing its collections. In this regard, Guglielmo Narducci proposed a detailed description of the collections and their organisation into sections:

As soon as you enter the museum, you see a collection of interesting memorabilia relating to our most renowned travellers and explorers; in some rooms, there is a collection of various types of material from our first wars in Africa. In a large hall there is a Historical Exhibition with photographs and reasons for the colonial Gold medals, and a very interesting exhibition of various kinds of weapons used by the peoples living in our Colonies and those seized in the various colonial wars. (...) The ground floor also hosts rich collections of ethnographic material from our Colonies. On the upper floor, among various rooms, there is a large one devoted to gold and silver

² The article is also quoted in Castelli 1992, 114–115.

³ Ibid., 115.

IMG. 2.121 — Map of the Italian colonial heritage. Site network of the Digital Museum/Archive of Overseas Memories: Albania, Dodecanese Islands, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Italy, Libya, Somalia. Elaboration by Alessandro Raffa.



jewellery collections, true gems of their kind, and a remarkable numismatic collection, including one of Arab gold coins of great interest, relating to the various dynasties reigning in Libya over time. (...) Equally interesting are the merchandise exhibitions displayed in various rooms, where in addition to presenting the various raw materials sourced from our colonies, all the related applications and processing of those raw materials, in the industrial and commercial field, are also displayed. (...) The propaganda carried out by the Museo dell’Africa Italiana, which was named such upon the creation of the Empire, goes even further. Each Sunday, films of colonial inspiration are shown in a very wide hall, while the Museum’s photo library, containing several thousand photographs, provides photographic documents on our Colonies to Italian and foreign writers and journalists, a valuable example of colonial propaganda. (Narducci 1941, 140–141)⁴

In 1937 the museum was closed to reorganise the collection and did not reopen until after World War II. In 1941 the new museum regulation appeared in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* (Official Gazette of the

Kingdom of Italy); this was also the last attempt to reorganise the collection on the basis of thematic criteria, finally abandoning the regional criterion previously adopted.

It [the museum] aims to collect and display everything that relates to the conquests, the promotion of civilization and the enhancement of the lands of Italian Africa. (...) A Trade Fair is attached to the museum consisting of permanent collections of samples of raw materials, products and artefacts, to be used for the Italian colonial propaganda during Italian and foreign events. (...) The collections of the Museum are grouped into the following major sections: 1) prehistoric and archaeological; 2) military and historic; 3) coins and medals; 4) ethnographic; 5) economic and social; 6) artistic; 7) photography and films; 8) stamps. (*Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 1941, 736)⁵

After the final closing of the museum (1975) and the liquidation of the Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente (2012) to which the museum’s assets had been entrusted, the collection was acquired by the Ethnographic Museum Luigi Pigorini, in whose warehouses it is now kept waiting for a new museum narrative that will make it again accessible to the public (Gandolfo 2014).

Despite the collections frequent reorganisations, the eclecticism, complexity and, at times, the confusion with which the materials were presented, continued to be the hallmarks of the Colonial Museum. These characteristics showed how close the link was between the Colonial Museum and the numerous exhibitions and colonial shows in which sensational effects and exotic suggestions prevailed on scientific rigour, in order to meet the public’s interest. This abandonment by the museum of the scientific method developed within the context of ethnographic museums, also revealed the propagandistic approach that characterised this museum: the artefacts of the collection, decontextualised, helped create the setting necessary to extol the “civilising mission” that the Motherland had undertaken vis à vis the Colonies. Also, as mentioned previously, the paramount objective of the colonial museum, in addition to increasing the interest in and knowledge on colonial domains, was to show the citizens of the Motherland the development opportunities that the colonial enterprise would promote. This aim was a further point of contact with the many colonial exhibitions held in the Motherland as well as in the Italian colonies and in other European countries. To name a few: the Eritrea Colony Exhibition at the Palermo Exposition in 1891, the colonial section of the International Exhibition of Turin in 1911 and of the Colonial Exhibition in Genoa in 1914, the Colonial Pavilion at the Trade Fair of Milan in 1928, the three Italian pavilions at the Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1931 (illuminating examples summarising the fascist rhetoric ranging from archaeology, the “Roman world” myth and futurism),⁶ the Trade Fair of Tripoli, inaugurated in 1936, and finally

5 Ibid., 119.

6 “Taken as a whole (...) the Italian Section [of the Paris exhibition] testifies to the fact that antiquity was considered not only as a source of inspiration and justification, but also as part of the regeneration process inherent in the fascist utopia. Presenting reproductions of Leptis Magna and the medieval

4 Ibid., 118.



the “Mostra Triennale delle Terre d’Oltremare” (Triennial Exhibition of Overseas Lands), inaugurated in Naples in 1940. As we will see, the last one represents not only a summary of the debate on colonial architecture that spread across the Motherland in the 1930s, but also of the exhibitions on Italian colonialism (and not only) in Africa.

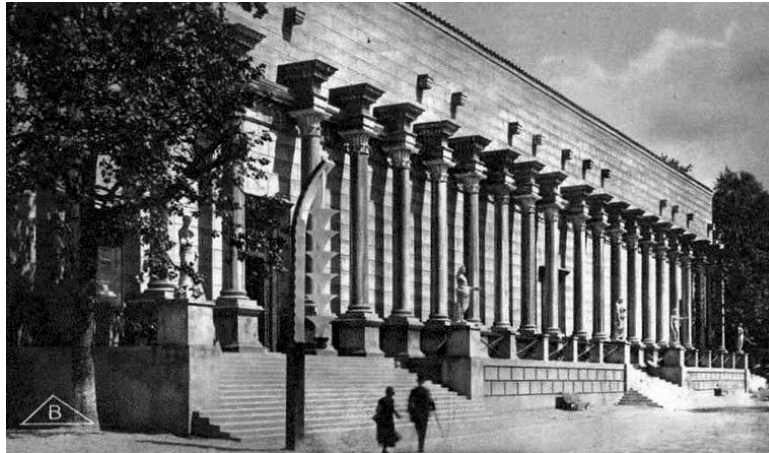
The Triennial Exposition of Overseas Lands was inaugurated in Naples on 9 May 1940 in order to meet the need for an outstanding economic, commercial and tourist centre focused on the role of Italy in the lands under its colonial rule. According to the plans of the fascist regime, Naples was to become the Empire’s gateway to the Mediterranean sea and the construction of the trade centre of colonial inspiration was supposed to strengthen the link between Naples and the overseas lands. The impact of this operation on the city of Naples is not only linked to economic and image factors. Indeed, originally, the exhibition was designed to be a large equipped park and the very centre of the future western expansion of the city as envisaged in the 1939 Master Plan. In practice, however, the construction of the exhibition grounds limited integration with the city and the new westbound expansion, from the point of view of public space. The site plan which, not unlike many of the cities of fascist origin, reinterprets the Roman urban fabric, is constructed through an orthogonal grid that is not immediately obvious. The design of the green areas and the positioning of the pavilions structures break the linearity of the paths and delimit spaces characterised by terminal elements which, from a perceptual point of view, recompose their fabric by the perspective (Carughi 2005, 46). As an example: at the intersection of the access path to the exhibition and that of the green area characterised by the evocative Fontana dell’Esedra placed at right angles to it, stands the Tower of the National Fascist Party, later renamed the Tower of Nations, which functions as central hub for the entire exhibition and for the urban expansion. The exhibition park, with a total area of 72,000 square metres, was completed in just three years (1937–1940), based on the spatial layout designed by Marcello Canino while Luigi Piccinato and Carlo Cocchia designed the open space and the greenery. It should also be emphasised that the green areas were completed with species of trees from the colonies which, together with the pavilions, should make the visitors experience “the perfect feeling of living overseas.” (Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti 1940, 57)

The exhibition was a complex narrative that included themes developed in previous colonial exhibitions and shows: the Italian expansionist and civilising mission, the continuity between the Roman Empire and fascist colonialism, the antinomy technological progress/backwardness and civilisation/barbarism, the comparison between the pre-fascist and fascist colonialism (Dore 1992, 52).

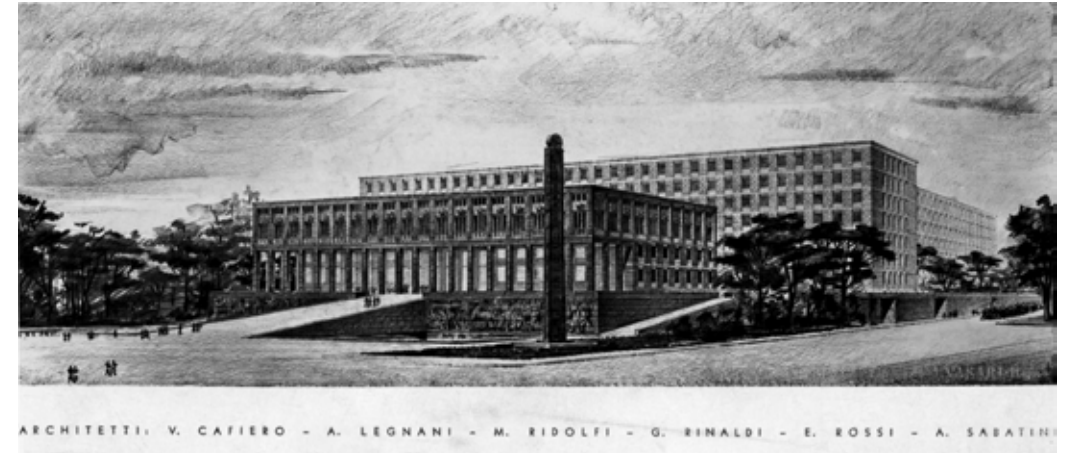
Rhodes side by side with a clearly futuristic construction, somehow suggested that Fascist Italy while aiming to revive the glories of the past, yet intended to reinterpret and renew the meaning of that past.” (Carli 2004, 232)

PREVIOUS PAGE, IMGS.
2.122–129 — Views of the exhibiting galleries of the African Museum in Rome in the late 1930s of the 20th century. © IIAO (Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente), Rome. Archivio IIAO.

IMG. 2.130 — “Exposition Coloniale Internationale” (International Colonial Exhibition), Paris, 1931. Exterior view of the Italian Pavilion. The building reproduces in a smaller scale the Basilica of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna, discovered during the Italian excavations in 1927 (Marangoni 1931, 239).



IMG. 2.131 — International Colonial Exhibition, Paris, 1931. Interior view of the Italian Pavilion. In the foreground the Venus of Cyrene, discovered in 1913 by Italian soldiers in Cyrene, Lybia (Guide officiel de la Section Italienne à l'Exposition Coloniale, 1931. Paris: Publicité de Rosa, pl. 7).



The architecture of the pavilions, characterised by multiple styles that document the various architectural experiences of the twentieth century, the design of the open space and the urban layout represent one of the last contributions to the debate on the character of modern colonial architecture in Italy that pervaded the motherland in the 1930s. After the destruction of the war and the decline of recent years, this interesting example of “colonial city in a Modern setting” has been the subject of a redevelopment project since the second half of the 1990s, with the aim of leveraging its environmental architectural and artistic heritage. In 2005 a petition was filed to include the Overseas Exhibition within the historic centre of Naples, which is already a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Overseas Exhibition, however, shows that, according to the propagandistic plans of the fascist regime, the city was intended as the most powerful tool to represent the Italian identity in the world. Indeed, especially between the 1930s and 1940s, architecture and urban planning in the colonies became the direct emanation of a specific project for the self-construction of the national identity, also aimed at obtaining international recognition for Italy as a colonial power.

Within this framework, major urban, infrastructure and architectural works were undertaken that involved the main colonial cities, including the Eritrean city of Asmara, which, due to the quality and quantity of public and private works carried out there, was nicknamed “Little Rome.” Asmara is undoubtedly the colonial city of Italian origin that is most well-known and studied at international level⁷; its peculiarity lies in having been a place of experimentation for all the trends that crossed the architectural culture of the 1930s in the Motherland (from historicist revivals to the Novecento, the Art Deco, Futurism and Rationalism), and

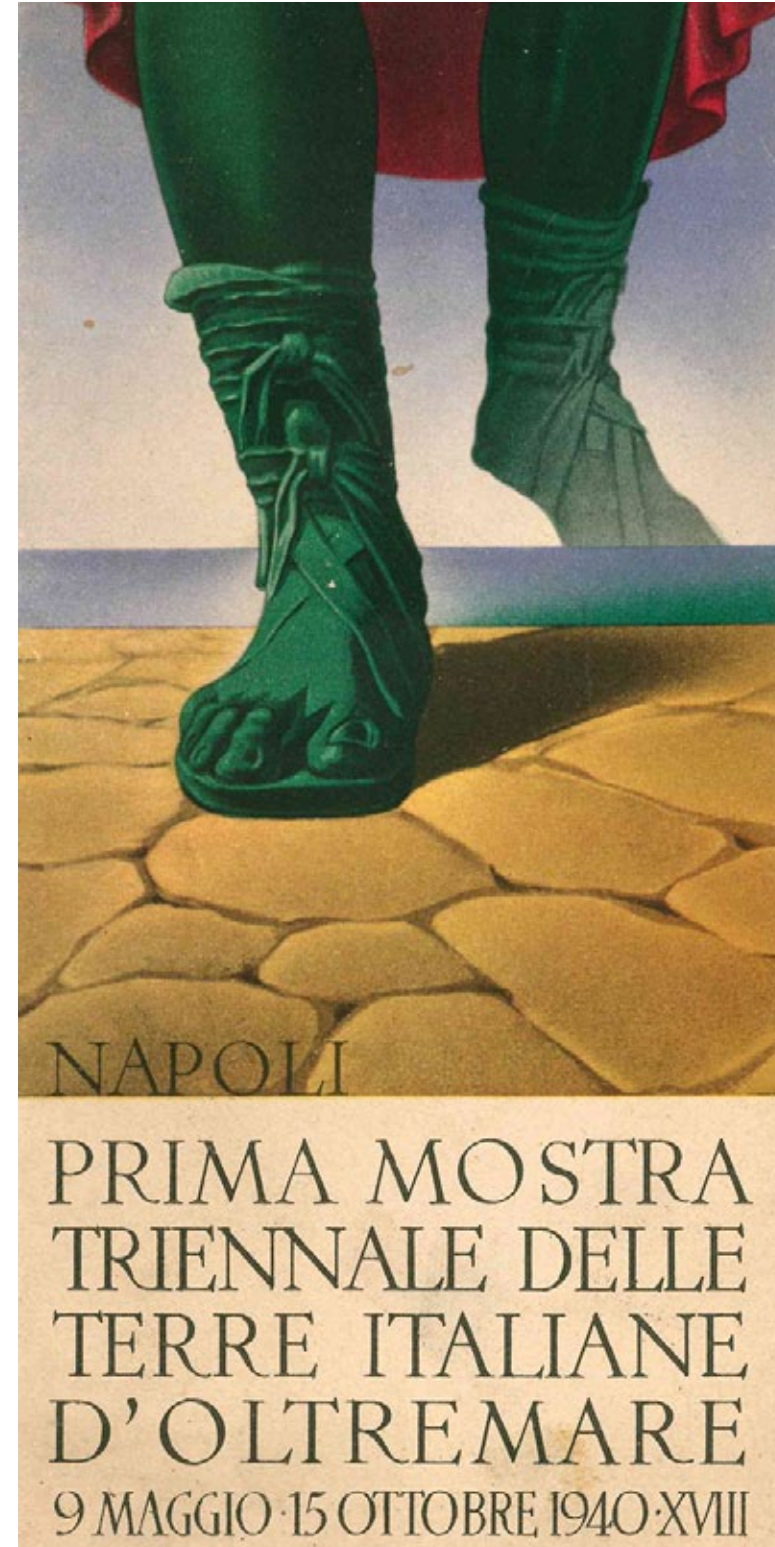
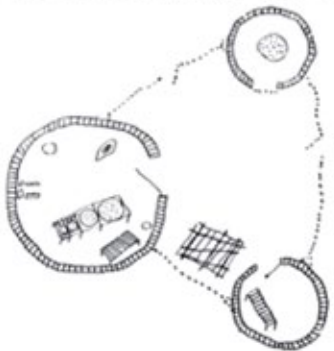
IMG. 2.132 — Mario Ridolfi in collaboration with Vittorio Cafiero, Giulio Rinaldi, Ettore Rossi (first and second level competition), Wolfgang Frankl, Alberto Legnani, Armando Sabatini, Ministero dell’Africa Italiana (Ministry of Italian Africa, now Fao headquarter) in Rome (1937–38; 1951), final project, perspective view with the Obelisk of Axum in the foreground. © Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Roma. Fondo Ridolfi-Frankl-Malagricci, CD.53.f10.

7 An important contribution to the dissemination of knowledge on the modern architectural heritage of Asmara built since the early 1920s, was given by the Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Project, which was launched by the Eritrean government in 2001, producing an inventory of about 850 buildings and the cataloguing of the related archival documents.

ROMA 754 A.C.-1935 D.C.



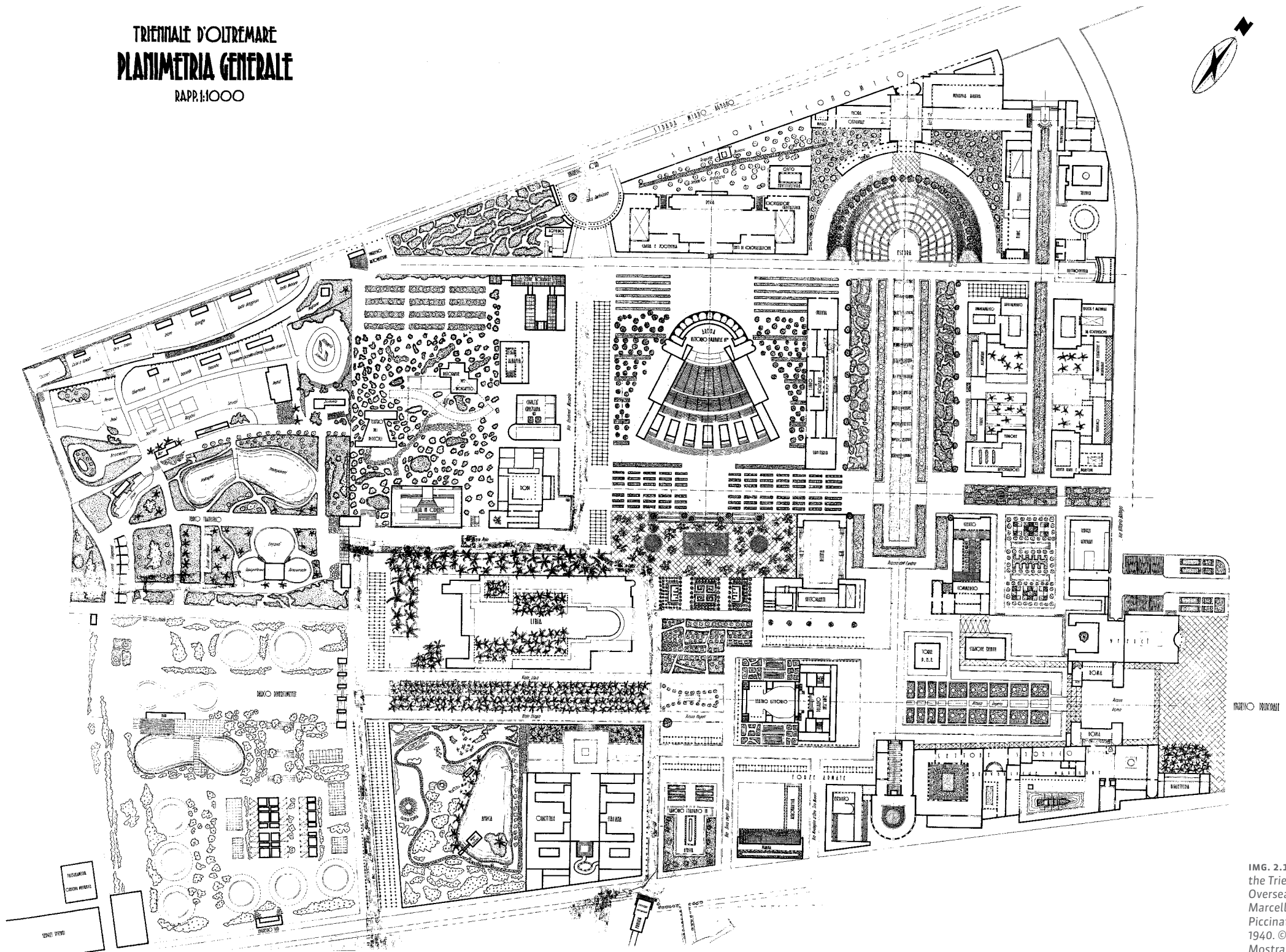
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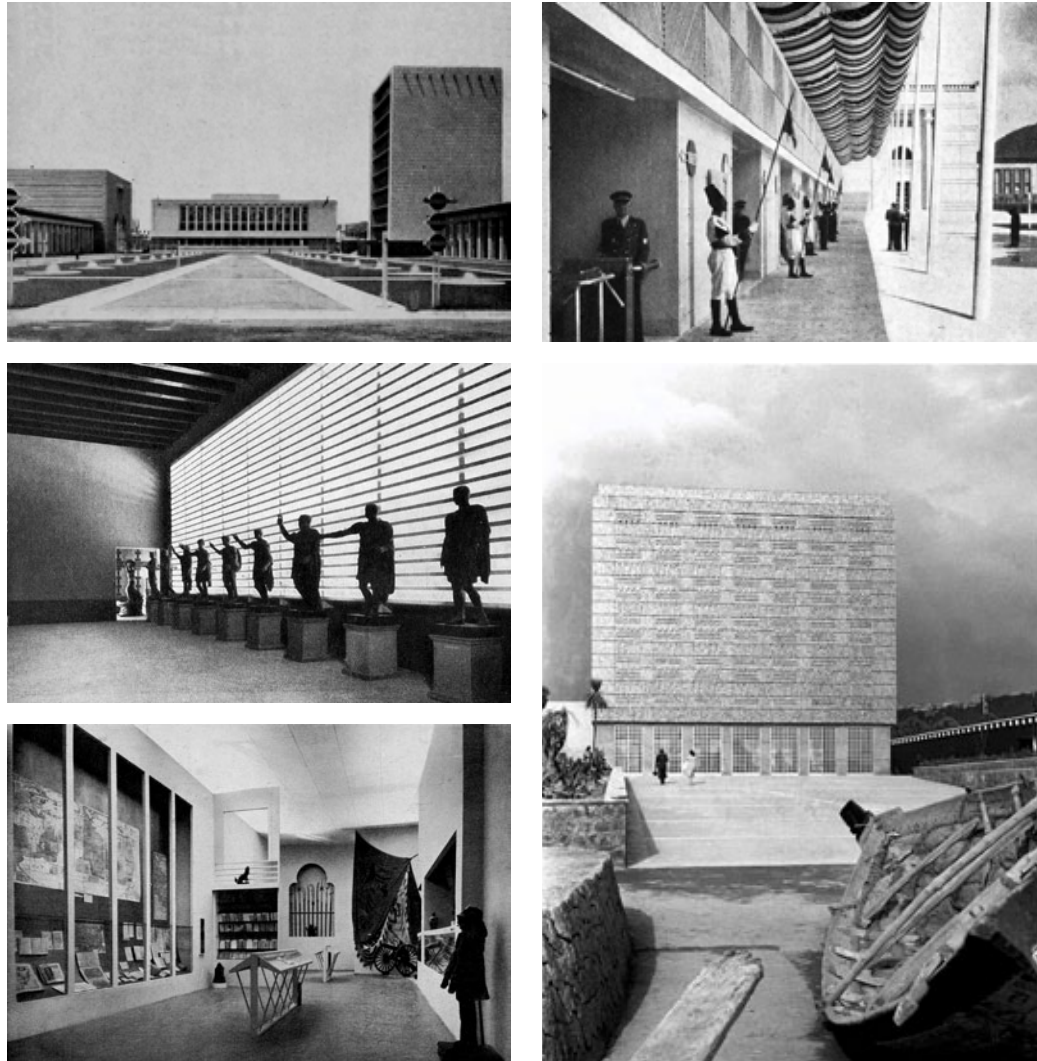
PREVIOUS PAGE, IMG. 2.133 — “Civilisation”. Image published in the editorial of the architectural magazine *Domus*, February 1936. The article proclaims a presumed superiority of the Italian civilisation over the barbarous Ethiopians (Levi Montalcini et al. 1936, 3).

THIS PAGE, IMG. 2.134 — Leaflet of the first edition of the “Mostra Triennale delle Terre d’Oltremare” (Triennial Exhibition of Overseas Lands), Naples 1940.

TRIENNALE D'OLTREMARE
PLANIMETRIA GENERALE
 RAPP. 1:1000



IMG. 2.135 — Site plan of the Triennial Exhibition of Overseas Lands, Naples. Marcello Canino, Luigi Piccinato, Carlo Cocchia, 1940. © Archivio della Mostra d'Oltremare.



IMGS. 2.136–140 — Views of the first edition of the Triennial Exhibition of Overseas Lands, Naples, 1940. Nove Maggio square (Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti 1940, pl. 2), above on the left; Pavilion of the Colonial Conquests (Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti 1940, pl. 1), above on the right; view of the exhibition “L’eterna tradizione dell’Impero di Roma” (The eternal tradition of the Roman Empire) inside the Tower of the National Fascist Party (Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti 1940, pl. 4), in the middle; Pavilion of the Italian Expansion in

also of interesting cases of hybridisation with local architectural tradition. Here the colonial architecture was the foundation for building a lasting urban identity, which generated a strong sense of belonging among its citizens (although at the time of the Italian rule the urban structure was rigidly segregative); this was followed by government protection programmes aimed at obtaining the inclusion of the colonial city in the lists of UNESCO Heritage.

Asmara and the Overseas Exhibition are definitely an exception in the immense colonial architectural heritage (consisting of infrastructure, public spaces and buildings, production areas, fair settlements, residential architecture as well as military facilities and segregation areas) which, having been forgotten, risks disappearing also due to the political instability in some of the former colonies.



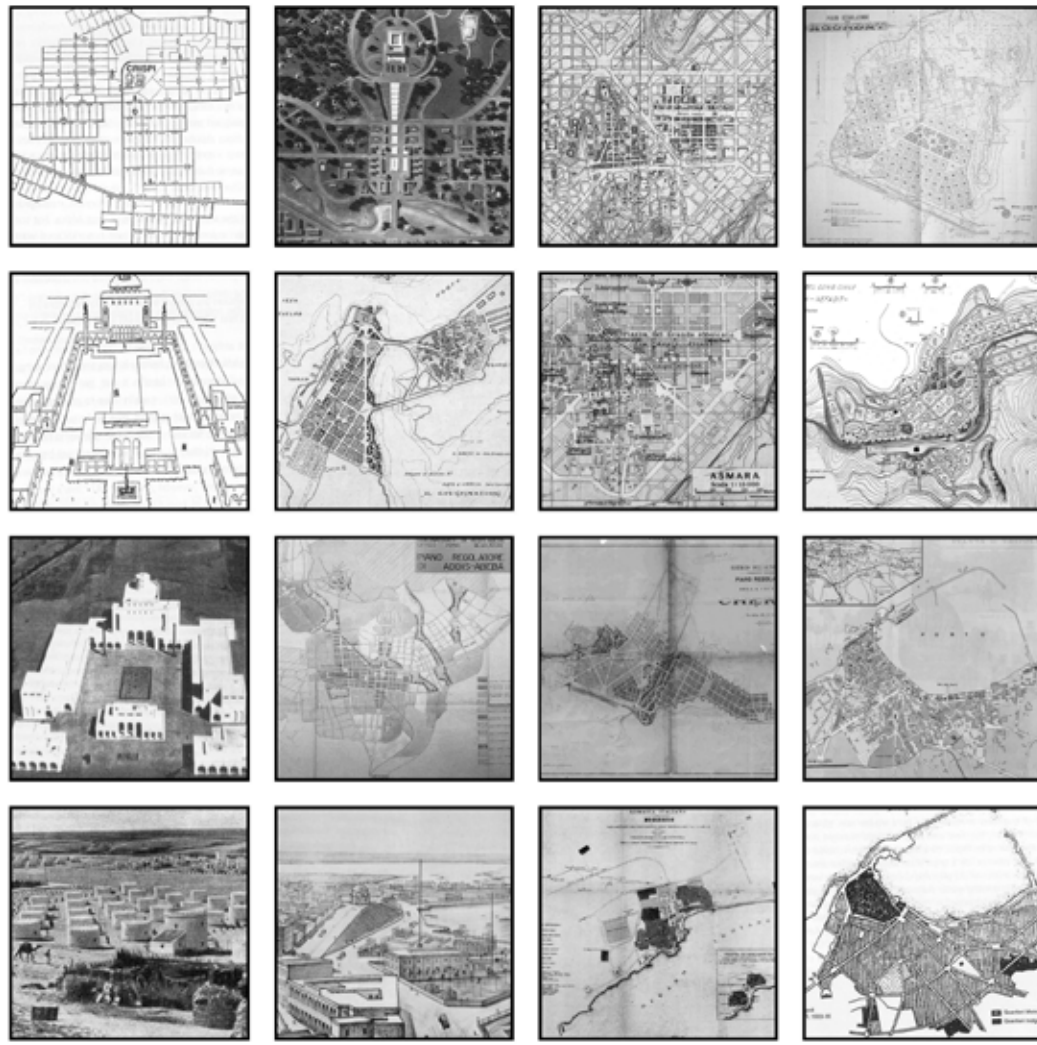
→ RETHINKING THE ITALIAN COLONIAL HERITAGE

Migration flows from former colonies to the Italian homeland, which in recent times have become increasingly tinged with dramatic motives, the numerous initiatives by some segments of the scientific community and civil society (both from former colonies and former colonising countries) aimed at a recovery of the colonial past, acknowledgment of the value of past testimonies (with a view to obtaining an effective and long-lasting international protection against oblivion and the troubled political vicissitudes of those places), make the process of re-memorisation of our complex colonial history no longer avoidable, as evidenced by recent studies (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012).

It is clear at this point that, now more than ever, the contemporary museum must take charge of the colonial legacy, in all its often painful com-

Orient (Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti 1940, pl. 40), below on the left; Pavilion of the Italian Oriental Africa (Golden Cube). Courtesy Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, fondo Patellani), below on the right.

THIS PAGE, IMG. 2.141 — Triennial Exhibition of Overseas Lands, Naples, 1940. Pavilion of the Italian Civilisation in Africa. Main hall with the bas-relief by Pericle Fazzini *The Missionary Fathers* and the map of the missionary expansion in Africa (Dal Pozzo Gaggiotti 1940, pl. 9).



IMG. 2.142 — *The city as a medium for representing the Homeland: new urban expansions, new towns and agricultural settlements. Elaboration by Alessandro Raffa.*

plexity, by compensating the “trauma of a truncated memory” (Chambers 2013, 276); it must also present itself as a place for building a collective and shared memory, from which specific identity dynamics should develop. The representation of colonialism opens up a number of important questions about museums: what kind of museum? how should we represent and share individual and collective memories? how should we collect, exhibit and protect a heritage that, due to its historic roots, is spread on a global scale?

The conception of a postcolonial museum in our era of migrations requires historical and critical reflections on museographic theories and practices. For example through innovative strategies of involvement and participation, considering that, when the “other colonised people” move to Europe, they become part of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities who claim their recognition as individuals who are part of society.



IMG. 2.143 — *Picture postcards from Asmara, Eritrea, printed when the city was an Italian colony. Private collection.*

From top left to bottom right: St. Joseph Cathedral, inspired by Lombard Romanesque architecture (arch. Oreste Scanavini, 1922); Gheza Banda fountain against the backdrop of the Cathedral (arch. Lorenzo Azzoni, 1938); Al Khulafa Al Rashiudin Mosque and the facing square (1931); Bièt Christiàn Coptic Church (known as Enda Mariam Cathedral. Arch. Ernesto Gallo, late 1930s–early 1940s); aerial view of Mussolini boulevard, later Avenue Hailé Selassié I; main façade of the Cinema Impero (arch. Mario Messina, 1937); residential buildings in Mussolini boulevard; Roma square and the Palace of the Banca d'Italia (1926).

The topics covered in the Conference on Italy’s colonial heritage, held in Amsterdam, April 20, 2012 are crucial in this regard:

- How does the population living in these once colonised territories look back on the Italian presence? Which traces of Italian colonialism can be found in the literature, art, official history, and architecture of these people or in whatever material and immaterial heritage is thought to carry the collective memory?
- How much has really changed in the Italian perception of the country’s colonial past since 1965, when Angelo del Boca began to reveal the atrocities hidden behind the image of “italiani brava gente”? What developments have there been in public opinion and in the literary, academic or political views?



IMG. 2.144 — Examples of different scale buildings constituting the colonial architectural heritage: infrastructures, public spaces, public buildings, manufacturing plants, private buildings, traumascape. Elaboration by Alessandro Raffa.

- Can expressions of a hybrid identity be found in Italy or in former Italian colonies that show a reconciliation between the assertion of a “local” culture and the recognition of an Italian influence?
- What significance is given to ancient ruins of the Roman Empire in the former Italian colonies where these have been found? In what way have these archaeological sites formed the image and the self-perception of the Italian colonisers and of the “local” population? (<http://www.dagmar-reichardt.net/sites/default/files/download/italian-colonial-heritage-conference-expose.pdf>)

An important part of this process for the definition of shared memories is the architectural and urban heritage created during the Italian colonial period and which still has a relevant presence in the “overseas lands,” albeit endangered by ongoing conflicts in those countries or by architectural degradation and neglect that more generally affect countries where poverty and economic crises are endemic factors.

As stated by Pauline van Roosmalen,

Conceived and realized at a time when European nations established empires around the globe by ruling colonies that were often far more extensive than the territory of the motherland, heritage from those days and regions bears witness to a former world order and its transitory character.

It belongs to the realm of tangible evidence of a past that, assuming colonialism as we knew it will not re-occur, has faded away forever. It is this

particular condition that gives rise to the need to determine whether it is “because of” or “in spite of” its colonial context that this heritage is of special interest and importance. (van Roosmalen, 123)

Quite a few studies and publications have been produced in recent years on issues concerning the physical heritage of the territories of former Italian colonies in Africa (Gresleri et al. 1993 and 2008; Besana et al. 2002; Lo Sardo et al. 2005; Fuller 2007), and the historical reconstructions of events related to the conquests and the political events of that period, marked by racism, violence, plunder (Del Boca 1976–84 and 1992). What is missing is perhaps a recap and an overall narrative enabling multiple and cross-cutting readings.

A “Digital Museum of Overseas Memories” may provide an answer to all these questions; a museum that could be part of a network structure of ongoing projects in Italy and in the former colonies, capable of holding together the tangible and intangible aspects of Italian colonial history. The objectives of this platform are: to shed light on the colonial events in all their complexity, to promote a multidisciplinary approach to the subject; to promote the construction of an “Archive of Overseas Memories”—in connection with other experiences (see the “Immaginari (post) coloniali” project, 2014)—through the collection of materials, their digitisation and organisation in order to ensure greater accessibility not only to scholars but also to all those who are interested in the colonial topic; finally, thanks to its open and dynamic structure, to become the main forum of debate on colonialism, in which visitors not only explore the various topics but also suggest questions and reflections.

This platform would give access to a web page dedicated to the colonial architecture; the idea is to make it a reference point for professionals or simply for anyone looking for information on the vast, and often forgotten, colonial architectural heritage of Italian origin. The collection of this virtual museum of Italian overseas architecture is, by its own history, spread on a global scale; such a transnational museum needs to be online in order to present and disseminate a collection, made up of buildings, public spaces, infrastructure, cities and new settlements, whether already built or just designed in the age of Italian colonialism. Thus, while the goal is to promote the knowledge and study of this sort of architecture, much work remains to be done regarding the building of an inventory and the cataloguing of the fragments that make up this “fragile” heritage. In fact, such inherent fragility is a direct result of the forgetfulness that often permeates it and which means that, day by day, this heritage is eroded, producing a memorial vacuum as well as a cultural loss. Thus, in addition to promoting the knowledge and study of the colonial architecture of Italian origin, this “museum” would also aim at increasing awareness of the importance of this heritage, so that positive mechanisms for its protection and enhancement, including at an international level, may be triggered thereby offering opportunities for tangible action.

Translated by Language Password

IMGS. 2.145–146 — Home page of MOM (Museum of Overseas Memories) website. Elaboration by Alessandro Raffa.



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Appendices

Index of Exhibition Places

Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines (CDMH), Dudelange, Luxembourg

<http://www.cdmh.lu/>

The Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines (CDMH), founded in 1993 in Dudelange, is a non-profit association that seeks to raise awareness about migration heritage (material and immaterial). It is supported by Luxembourg's Ministry of Culture and the City of Dudelange. The Documentation Centre liaises with regional and international associations and public bodies pursuing similar goals. It aims contributing by these activities to a better understanding of Luxembourg's rich and plural migration history. CDMH is located in the Dudelange-Usines train station, in the enclave "Italien." Located near the former steel mill and mining area, this unique *lieu de mémoire* of the Italian immigration to Luxembourg and of Luxembourg's working class in general, is today mostly inhabited by Portuguese immigrants. Its history and its peculiar architecture offer a unique testimony of the socio-cultural heritage of Luxembourg's Bassin minier. Today the district is valued as a museum without walls.

Discovery Museum Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

<http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/discovery.html>

Discover all about life in Newcastle and

Tyneside, from the area's renowned maritime history and world-changing science and technology right through to fashion through the eras and military history. The museum is bursting with interactive displays, which make it the perfect place to learn and have fun. Discovery Museum is managed by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums on behalf of Newcastle City Council.

Galata-Museo del Mare e delle Migrazioni Genoa, Italy

<http://www.galatomuseodelmare.it>

The Galata, a municipal museum, is part of the Mu.Ma network (Genoa Sea and Navigation Museums, also including the Maritime Museum in Genova Pegli and the Commenda di Pré). Both the Galata and the nearby aquarium—one of the most successful entertainment structures in Italy—opened in 2004, the year Genoa was European Capital of Culture. The building—the oldest in the Genoa harbour—was renovated by Guillermo Vazquez Consuegra, who transformed it into a transparent volume, open to the surrounding environment, thanks also to the presence of the mirador, the viewpoint on the top floor.

The Memory and Migrations (MeM) section, inaugurated in November 2011, occupies the entire third floor of the building, covering a

1,200 square metre surface. It was the first permanent installation to deal with the theme of the representation of immigration in an Italian museum. Since its opening, in order to reflect their new direction, the previous name “Galata-Sea and Navigation Museum” became “Galata-Sea and Migrations Museum.”

.....
GAMeC, Bergamo, Italy

<http://www.gamec.it>

The Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art opened in Bergamo in 1991. Situated in a former convent completely renovated by architect Vittorio Gregotti, it covers more than 1,500 square metres, and is dedicated both to its permanent collection and to temporary exhibitions. The GAMeC is partnered by the Accademia Carrara and the Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti, with the purpose of forming a hub dedicated to art in the city centre. Among the museum’s activities, a special effort goes into designing educational activities with a powerful outreach.

The GAMeC was the first Italian museum to organise a course for cultural mediators with a migratory background, and is considered a best practice and model for other institutions. Other activities promoted by the educational section involve the local prison, people with disabilities, teachers, children and teenagers, adults.

.....
**Museo Diocesano di Milano
 Milan, Italy**

<http://www.museodiocesano.it>

The Museo Diocesano, founded by the Church of Milan in 2001, is located in the cloisters of Sant’Eustorgio—an integral part of one of the most antique monumental complexes of Milan.

The permanent collection is constituted of over seven hundred works of art that span the period between the 4th to the 21st century. The Archbishop’s Painting Gallery holds the collections of the Milanese archbishops. In addition to the paintings from the churches of the dio-

cese, the museum houses an important group of liturgical objects. Furthermore, there is a gallery dedicated to gold leaf panel paintings, and sculptures and paintings from the collection of Caterina Marcenaro. Moreover, around a nucleus of sculpted works by Lucio Fontana, there are many works from the 20th and 21st centuries, which reveal a growing interest of the museum in contemporary works of art.

.....
**Museo Preistorico Etnografico “Luigi Pigorini”
 Rome, Italy**

<http://www.pigorini.beniculturali.it>

The museum was funded in 1876 by Luigi Pigorini (1842–1925) and built in the Palazzo del Collegio Romano, which belonged to the Jesuits, and since the 17th century has hosted the collection of antiquities and curiosities of Father Athanasius Kircher. Between 1962 and 1977 the museum was transferred in the Science Palace in the EUR neighbourhood, built anew under the supervision of architect Marcello Piacentini for the Universal Exposition of 1942. The building was designed in 1938 and completed in 1943 by architects Luigi Brusa, Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori and Alfredo Scalpelli, who formed part of Piacentini’s working group. The site symmetrically faces the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions.

The museum display is organised in two sections. One is dedicated to prehistory and the other to ethnography. Since the 1990s, the museum has undergone a radical rethinking of its layout, which passed by a critical reading of its history. The attempt to project the museum’s contents into the present and to have it react on contemporary society has given the museum a new impulse, suggesting new avenues of work. Temporary exhibitions, as well participation in international research programmes play an important role in this framework.

.....
Museum of Copenhagen, Denmark

<http://www.copenhagen.dk/dk/>

The Museum of Copenhagen wishes to kindle a desire for knowledge of the city, its past, present and future, by stimulating public curiosity and delight in discussing matters concerning the capital. The Museum aims hereby to present Copenhagen as a modern metropolis with a living, dynamic, relationship to its cultural heritage.

.....
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark

<http://www.smk.dk/en/>

The Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK) presents Danish art to the world and the world’s art to Denmark while taking our point in departure in the museum’s collection of more than 700 years of art. The SMK is Denmark’s largest collection of art experiences, operated by 180 members of staff. The SMK wants to contribute to redefine the museum as an institution and to help promote a creative and reflective society.

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MeLa* - European Museums in an age of migrations

Research Fields:

RF01: Museums & Identity in History and Contemporaneity

examines the historical and contemporary relationships between museums, places and identities in Europe and the effects of migrations on museum practices.

RF02: Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernity and Museum Practices

transforms the question of memory into an unfolding cultural and historical problematic, in order to promote new critical and practical perspectives.

RF03: Network of Museums, Libraries and Public Cultural Institutions

investigates coordination strategies between museums, libraries and public cultural institutions in relation to European cultural and scientific heritage, migration and integration.

RF04: Curatorial and Artistic Research

explores the work of artists and curators on and with issues of migration, as well as the role of museums and galleries exhibiting this work and disseminating knowledge.

RF05: Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions

investigates and experiments innovative communication tools, ICT potentialities, user centred approaches, and the role of architecture and design for the contemporary museum.

RF06: Envisioning 21st Century Museums

fosters theoretical, methodological and operative contributions to the interpretation of diversities and commonalities within European cultural heritage, and proposes enhanced practices for the mission and design of museums in the contemporary multicultural society.

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MUSEUM MULTIPLICITIES: FIELD ACTIONS AND RESEARCH BY DESIGN

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MUSEUM MULTIPLICITIES

FIELD ACTIONS AND RESEARCH BY DESIGN

The present book collects experimental works led by several research teams involved in the MeLa Project—presented in the first section of the volume, titled “actions”—and undergraduate students in Architecture attending the Politecnico di Milano—organised in a section called “Research by ‘design’”—whose common purpose is to challenge the traditional idea of exhibiting and introduce participative practices able to promote a better cultural integration and dialogue.

With contributions by: Rachele Albini, Jamie Allen, Jakob Bak, Chiara Baravalle, Luca Basso Peressut, Giuseppe Biscottini, Rita Capurro, Dario Cieol, Anna Chiara Cimoli, Sara Chiesa, Cristina F. Colombo, David Gauthier, Giulia Grechi, Eleonora Lupo, Elisa Mansutti, Elena Montanari, Gennaro Postiglione, Alessandro Raffa, Davide Spallazzo, Raffaella Trocchianesi, Christopher Whitehead.

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COVER IMAGE — “Border Memories: Re-Enacting the Difficult Heritage.” Elaboration by Elisa Mansutti.

MeLa—European Museums in an age of migrations



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