History, architecture and heritage (Milan/Mantua, 28–29 Oct 21)

Politecnico di Milano in Milan and Mantova, Oct 28–29, 2021
Deadline: May 25, 2021

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History, architecture and heritage: building the architectural identity. Milan, Europe (1796-1848).
International colloquium under the direction of
Elisa Boeri (Polimi), Pierre Coffy (Paris 1/UniMi), Francesca Mattei (Roma Tre).

Historiography has largely demonstrated how, from the middle of the 18th century onwards, the interest of collectors, architects and sponsors in Antiquity underwent a major revival, stimulated in particular by major archaeological discoveries. The success of the Grand Tour, an essential moment of training and social recognition through travel and the encounter with the artistic cultures of the past, also contributed to the birth of a new history of art, inaugurated by Johann Joachim Winckelmann in 1764.
Publishing and engraving, which increasingly contributed to the dissemination of ideas and architectural models and fed the academic sphere, generated numerous debates and polemics favouring the emergence of a notion of universal heritage. At the same time, there was a growing interest in the "local" artistic heritage, which was also gradually becoming more and more apparent. The latter, initially conditioned by the infatuation with the classical revival that strongly marked this period, rapidly developed a much wider range of references. While the first theoretical reflections on the concept of architectural heritage are emerging, it is nevertheless subject to numerous attacks, particularly at the end of the century with regard to the despoilments, depredations and transformations that it undergoes.
The notion of heritage, in its current terminology, thus seems to be the result of a long-term cultural process, the fruit of "a complex dialectic of conservation and destruction within a succession of forms and styles inherited from the history with which Western societies have endowed themselves" (Poulot 2006). Evoking architectural heritage in relation to the construction of a nation's identity therefore means accepting the ambivalent character of the term itself, between its material meaning, and the idea of a historical legacy as a shared memory.
At the end of the modern era, the use of existing buildings became a common practice. The pragmatic and economic reasons for this choice did not, however, limit a certain rediscovery of buildings reused in the name of urban modernisation. At the same time as the French Revolution, a time of so much destruction and cultural loss, the idea of a nation capable of drawing on its own regenerative force was born, recognising in particular the heritage as having the highest degree of moral and collective value. From then on, the threat posed by the confiscation and reallocation of city blocks, as well as the series of interventions between public and private interests, often with ambiguous results, soon gave rise to the desire to protect the heritage.

This contributed to the first measures to safeguard artistic and architectural heritage. This concept seems to be closely linked to the political upheavals in Europe, from Abbé Grégoire's denunciations of the "vandalism" perpetrated during the Terror, to the new History of Art through the monuments of Séroux d'Agincourt in 1823, which now testifies to the recognition of a universal value to a much more diversified heritage.
From the 19th century onwards, this notion assumes a determining value as it becomes necessary to construct or reconstruct one's own architectural identities. While it is true that the most obvious results of this movement are particularly identifiable from the second half of the century onwards, it is also recognised that scholars, artists and architects have been working in this direction since the end of the 18th century, in a process of cultural unification based on the systematic transmission of knowledge, to which increasing importance is attached.
In Milan, as the academy began to consider the city as a complex of "private architectures of public right" (Bossi 1805), architects rethought the urban space in relation to the cultural change around the conception of architectural heritage and the idea of identity. Thus, while the ancient city was being reinvented, the interest in Vitruvius, Palladio, and later Bramante alongside other major Renaissance architects, particularly fuelled the debate. Important figures such as Luigi Cagnola, Pietro Pestagalli, Gioacchino Crivelli and Pelagio Palagi contributed to transposing the debate to the built environment. And if Carlo Cattaneo, in his articles in the columns of the Politecnico in 1839, called for a return to "that quintessentially modern and Italian style, in which the genius of Bramante knew how to assimilate purely antique elements to our uses", the architects reflected in parallel on the idea of a heritage of "transmission", identifiable both from local examples and from a careful selection of external models. A heritage of filiation, therefore, on which the idea of nationhood is also built and which always implies a will to choose, whether it be traditions, models, or cultural relations, based on three fundamental values: identity, continuity and unity (François 2000).
In the light of these considerations, it seems interesting to approach heritage projects and interventions in a new way, also questioning the conception of heritage as a set of forms and models relating to a local or transnational tradition that is being consolidated during this period. This awareness reflects the desire to establish precisely the architectural tradition in question, whether it be local, national or universal, which quickly implies the need to establish the characteristics and limits of its own memory. This is done not only by having recourse to classical antiquity, but also by developing an interest in Medieval forms and Renaissance models in a broad sense. It is therefore possible to question the specificity of the modern "European capitals" of the first half of the 19th century, in which heritage becomes the protagonist of architectural and urban projects.
The international conference « History, architecture and heritage: building the architectural identity. Milan, Europe (1796-1848). » proposes a collective, transdisciplinary and transcultural reflection on the multiple meanings of the concept of architectural, artistic and cultural heritage in the transitional period of the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. The geographical scope is open to all the major Italian and European cities that were concerned during this period by this phenomenon of rediscovery and reuse of architectural and cultural heritage.
Promoted and financed by the ABC Department of the Politecnico di Milano and the Mantova Unesco Chair, this international symposium aims to explore the idea of heritage and its interpretation in relation to the history of architecture and the city in Europe. Starting from the case study of Milan, the subject of the multidisciplinary research programme FNS Synergy n.177286 "Milan and Ticino (1796-1848). Shaping the Spatiality of a European Capital", (2018- 2022, Swiss National Sci-

ence Foundation, SNSF) and its exchanges, affinities or divergences with other Italian and European realities, this meeting is intended as an opportunity to reflect on various little-known aspects of the heritage policy undertaken at the end of the 18th century, during the Napoleonic years and the Restoration. In fact, often considered abstract and detached from the reality for which it was designed, the architecture of the first decades of the 19th century was in fact also accompanied by an important reflection on pre-existing heritage spaces (in the case of Milan, we can think of the Columns of San Lorenzo or the Piazza Duomo).
In particular, heritage will be considered as a pivotal element within the urban transformations and destructions that they entail during this chronological period. Participants will also be invited to present proposals limited to specific buildings or monuments, in order to question the process that contributed to their individualization as theoretical models and their survival over time.

Interventions may concern the following areas of study (not exhaustive):
1. Heritage and cultural debate in Europe: designs, models, theories.
2. Urban dialogues between public and private space.
3. For a modern capital: cultural exchanges and architectural models in Italy and Europe.
4. The city as a paradigm. Academies, engineers and architects facing the architectural heritage.
5. Architectural heritage: memory, destruction and conservation policy between architectural projects and legislative instruments.
6. The invention of tradition, use and knowledge of the past in architecture.
7. Representation of power, heritage and architectural project.
8. Architectural identity and national identity in architecture between the 18th and 19th centuries.

It is planned that the conference will be held in both face-to-face and remotely on the 28-29 october at the Politecnico di Milano in Milan and Mantova. Depending on the evolution of the international health situation, the organisers will endeavour to guarantee the best solution in compliance with national recommendations.

Proposals (in Italian, French or English) should be sent to readingheritage2021@gmail.com in the form of abstracts (300-500 words) and be accompanied by a short biographical presentation (150-200 words) by 25 May 2021.

The selection will be communicated by 15 June 2021 at the latest.
The results of the conference will be highlighted in one or more collective publications, after scientific evaluation.

International Scientific Committee:
Micaela Antonucci (UniBo), Federico Bucci (Polimi), Antonino De Francesco (UniMi), Jean-Philippe Garric (Paris 1), Michele Luminati (Universität Luzern), Carlo Mambriani (UniPr), France Nerlich (Inha),
Susanna Pasquali (Roma 1), Dominique Poulot (Paris 1), Francesco Repishti (Polimi), Letizia Tedeschi (Archivio del Moderno-USI)

Calendar:
Deadline for submission of proposals at readingheritage2021@gmail.com : 25 May 2021
Selection result: 15 June 2021
Submission of detailed abstracts by participants: 30 September 2021

International colloquium: October 28-29, 2021

Reference:

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