

GALLERIE D'ITALIA – TURIN

The project by AMDL CIRCLE and Michele De Lucchi

“Photography is the most up-to-date and efficient instrument for analysing reality, events, and for building a dynamic memory that favours the understanding of the future. A location devoted to photography is not only a place to admire the works of art of the great photographers, but is also a place to discuss the contemporary”.

(Michele De Lucchi, gennaio 2020)

For the museum site of Gallerie d'Italia – Turin, AMDL CIRCLE has designed a cultural space below ground, transforming the underground rooms of Palazzo Turinetti, previously associated with banking activities (archives, vault, meeting rooms, car park), into spaces to showcase and tell of works of photography and video-art. The project brings out the magic of hypogeal constructions and their capacity to catalyse reflection and introspection in visitors through the careful choice of materials and calibrated lighting. The use of multimedia applications enlivens the environments and creates participation in the story of photography, giving precedence to the themes, ideas and debates that the images may arouse.

The magic of the hypogeal space. The project regenerates the hypogeal space of the building, little used and known, inviting reflection on the potential of underground locations, which are usually considered as accessory spaces, and which in the work for Gallerie d'Italia – Turin are regenerated and fitted out as exhibition rooms. In these environments the possibility has been identified of expanding without affecting the beauty of the upper floors, adding a route below ground to visits to the building. The atmosphere of semi-darkness, cleverly illuminated by the project by the studio Ferrara Palladino e Associati, is ideal for an exhibition space that has the capacity to catalyse reflection and introspection in visitors. A museum below ground offers enormous advantages for the conservation of works, particularly of photographic materials, because it is possible to maintain the correct temperature and humidity along with significant energy savings.

The scenographic access stairway is also a meeting space. You enter the museum via a monumental staircase cut out in the internal courtyard, which accompanies you down to the rooms below ground. The stairway also acts as stalls and a place for socialisation: on the wide Luserna stone steps it is possible to sit, meet, participate in presentations and stop to admire the works on display as you descend. Natural light filters down from above through the steps and spreads into the entrance hall on floor -2, which is enlivened by the interplay of reflections produced by the installation of steel shading devices lining the walls, symbolically evoking the rarefied pixels of photographs. The opening of a circular skylight in the courtyard further amplifies the dialogue between internal and external light. The spacious hall welcomes visitors and provides them with information on the exhibitions in progress in the Galleries of Turin, Milan, Vicenza and Naples. Also present on the same level is a space called “Arena”, a location that introduces groups and schools to the visit.

The narration of photography between classical spaces and multimedia

applications. The visitors' route begins on floor -2, which includes the large "Sala dei 300" [Room of the 300] and its foyer, devoted to temporary exhibitions and the "Vaulted Gallery". Care is taken with the details of the spaces, which are neutral, treated with micro cement flooring and plaster, to enable the attention to focus on the beauty of the works on display. The choice has also been made to entrust the telling of the stratified history of the building to traces of reinforced concrete, to river pebbles, to the tiles of 19th-century origin present on the surfaces. The exhibition continues on floor -3, which hosts more than 7 million photographs from the Archivio Publifoto, a photojournalism agency that has been active since the 1930s. These heritage items are accessible thanks to the installation of a multimedia screen enabling visitors to browse through the historical materials, the delicate originals of which are conserved in the special drawer units. The "Multimedia Room" is a large environment equipped with 17 projectors, where visitors are involved in an immersive experience of images and videos. The "Long Sleeve" is a further space prepared for hosting art collections.

The project by AMDL CIRCLE has found a location for the photographic collections in unexpected spaces that acquire a new identity, preserving the historical value of the environments above that are able to host paintings, sculptures and tapestries from the 16th to the 19th century with naturalness, such as the Turinetti Room, so rich in decorations, stuccos and mirrors. The conservative intervention on the main floor has a twin value: the appreciation of the restored historical rooms and the exhibition of the collections. Particular attention has been devoted to the "Room of Masterpieces", which welcomes the nine canvases devoted to the life of St. Paul.

The museum as a space for knowledge and experimentation. The three teaching classrooms are flexible spaces characterised by a large glazed wall looking out into the "Room of the 300", generating a visual connection with the exhibition space. The movable partition walls covered in mirrors enable the three classrooms to be quickly transformed into a single large multi-purpose environment. The experience is concluded by going into the historical Santa Teresa hallway, now transformed into a bookshop, where the reflective metal shelves duplicate the perspectives, a homage to the photograph, to its meaning as well as its aesthetic value.

The internal courtyard is a new piazza. The quadrilateral of the court, at one time for the private use of the bank, plays a fundamental role in the project: it becomes the point of access to the museum, but also a piazza that is open to the community and an original pivotal point connecting Via XX Settembre with Piazza San Carlo. Looking onto the restored courtyard, among the arches of the porticos, are the San Carlo restaurant, the bookshop, access to which is free of charge, the Digital Lab for the digitisation of the historical archive and a branch of Intesa Sanpaolo.

The architectural symmetry of the quadrilateral is emphasised by the installation of a wooden colonnade in the left part of the courtyard, which takes up the design of the stone portico on the opposite side. The choice of wood, the favoured material for the projects of AMDL CIRCLE, for such an obvious architectural insert declares the desire to leave a sign and focuses the attention back on the authenticity of the stone portico. The wooden colonnade summarises the Circle's approach, which affirms its identity by creating a dialogue respectful of the existing and seeking to bring to the surface the wonders that already belong to the locations.

About AMDL CIRCLE

AMDL CIRCLE is a multifaceted studio that was founded by Michele De Lucchi. Internationally renowned for its humanistic approach, it works across many sectors providing its clients with expressive and strategic projects that embrace architecture, interiors, products and communication. AMDL's team of architects, designers and craftspeople have worked on projects for public and private organisations, collaborating with large corporations such as Intesa Sanpaolo, Deutsche Bank and UniCredit, and designing buildings and exhibition systems for Neues Museum in Berlin and the Gallerie d'Italia in Milan, Turin and Naples. The Milan based studio has also designed spaces, products and furniture for Alessi, Artemide, Cassina, Hermès, Poltrona Frau and Unifor.

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