RETRIEVING OF RURAL COMPLEX "CASE BEVACQUA", BASE POINT FOR HIKING IN THE ETNA PARK

Location: Monte Stornello, Piedimonte Etneo, Sicily, Italy

Project: Arch. Francesco Rapisarda with Eng. Francesco Parisi

Supervision of works: Arch. Francesco Rapisarda

Client: Etna Authority Park

Assignment: Public design competition

Financing sources: Sicilian Region - Department of Territory and Environment - PO FESR funds

Work history: 07.01.2015 start of works

30.10.2015 end of works

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THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

The rural complex of Case Bevacqua was been for a long time a vast system of houses and facilities productive, place to over 1000 meters above sea level. At the present time is situated in Zone C of the Etna Park between the areas aimed at increasing the hiking mountain. The history of this structure reflects emblematically that of the entire eastern slope of Etna, with a predominantly viticulture already since the early decades nineteenth century. An inscription engraved in the keystone of the arch of the entrance of one of the buildings shows the fact date of 1803. At that time Bevacqua houses has been the beating heart of a large area planted with vines, fact unusual specially to this higher levels of the volcano, which now are inhabit a vast forests of oak, chestnut and hazel. In the early '60s of the last century, when producing the wine was not been most advantageous and the people who worked had moved into the city, the complex had undergone several transformations until it is completely abandoned and of the ancient use had not remained trace, nor in the cultivation nor the places of production of the wine. The cellart and especially the "palmento", once grandiose environments, were buried under layers of earth. And these They would been remain according to a first proposal to use that ignored the existence of such architectural organisms.

THE PROGRAM

In fact, the initial program of the design assignment included only the creation of a base point for hiking, in order to transform existing buildings into lodgings with guesthouse and refreshment functions. The first step of the restoration project was instead the excavation, almost archaeological, of the old existing structures which has brought back to light environments and functions forget . Functions that have been part of the history of the same volcano, a tangible sign of a remote presence of the man that was able to live in that areas by exerting a natural environment exploitation without adversely changing the landscape appearance.

THE PROJECT

Starting from these considerations, the recovery of the Bevacqua Houses has found its first raison d'etre in restoring the spatial integrity of the existing volumes and the original characteristics of the site. The rural complex, in fact, with its two hundred years of history, is first of all a museum of itself, a coherent and accomplished architectural space where one can recognize the different functions and construction phases that, over time, have developed around the core originally constituted by the block of peasant houses up to all the other housing and production structures, such as the manor house, the “palmento”, the cellar, etc. If on the one hand the reuse program of the area proposed by the Park Authority, acting with a view to reuse, identified a specific functional destination, on the other the recovery project could not ignore the objective of give back to these places and to these spaces an identity that allows, at the same time, cultural as well as material survival. Hence the idea of setting up inside the main building, originally used as a millstone, a museum path that is divided into the rebuilt cellar and reserving the remaining part as a reception and guesthouse for hikers. Furthermore, in accordance also with the intervention criteria of the Community funding program which expressly provides for the "enhancement of cultural identities and landscape-environmental resources", the design method adopted has privileged, as far as possible, the punctual use of construction techniques traditional and systematic recycling of existing recycled materials.