



DOI: 10.21005/pif.2019.40.E-01

AN EXHIBITION OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE “PROSPICÈRE *LOOKING FORWARD*”. RATIONALIST SQUARES IN VARESE AND BRESCIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper highlights how the exhibition of design of urban rationalist spaces in Varese and Brescia called “Prospicère” tackled the topic starting from an idea coherently up to the results, inviting to 'look ahead'. This attitude not only as a physical action, but also as a stimulus to encourage the entrance of research on urban representation into the new channels of digital communication and networking, in order to transform architectural exhibitions into the tools for a cultural dissemination of architectural design. That is the path to join architectural heritage, communication and digital tools.

Key words: communication, exhibition, design, research.

1. INTRODUCTION: PRESENT AND EXHIBIT HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE

Classic communication channels, especially in the context of the dissemination of cultural events, today only partially supply the dissemination of the wealth of knowledge underlying the creators. Organizing and giving life to exhibitions such as Prospicere, starts from the will to look beyond the physical and mental barriers .That prevent us from recognizing the value of some introspective portions of the world around us, mean going beyond the economic and commercial objectives.

The exhibition *Prospicere*, held at the Camera di Commercio of Varese in May 2017, is the daughter of a path with deep roots. It grown over years of research ,carried out by the authors, to support the development of advanced techniques for relieving architectural artifacts, and then their restitution in the form of documents, useful for preserving architecture for future generations.(Fig. 1)



Fig. 1 Poster front / back of the exhibition. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

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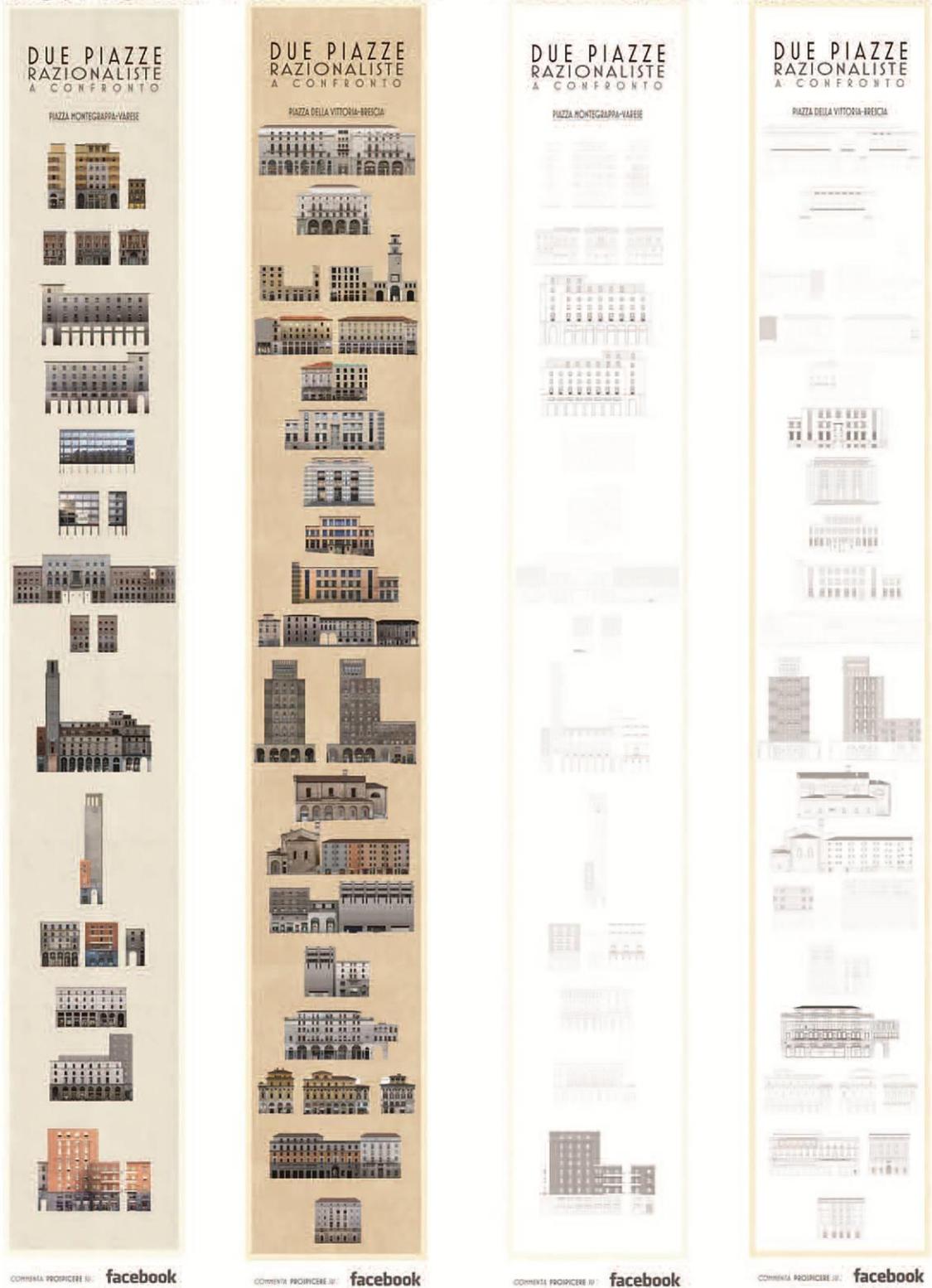


Fig. 2 Images on the totem at the entrance to the exhibition. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni,

Faithful to these assumptions, Prospicĕre is born on the model of Palazzo Te in the mirror: an exhibition between classicism and avant-garde for the dissemination of architectural heritage, based on Palazzo Te's surveys. The exhibition in Mantova consolidates years of study, where the conservation of architectural artefacts has become a key objective, in which the will is "to create a door to the future of the architectural design related to photography, the digital world and the survey for architectural heritage". (Filipovic A., Troiano W., 2013; A. Bianchi, *Palazzo Te allo Specchio: an exhibition between classicism and avant-garde for the dissemination of architectural heritage / Palazzo Te in The Mirror: an exhibition between classic and avant-garde for the diffusion of the architectural heritage*).

Starting from these premises, extracted from the interview 'Piazze Sorelle' by Stefano Martinelli (Martinelli S., 2017, p. 20), the founding characteristics of two of the most famous squares of the Italian rationalist period were analysed. Both created at the will of Duce, at a moment of a profound change in the concept of the city and society.

The studies conducted by the research group had focused on the analysis of the public space identified as a synthesis element of urban politics of the first half of the twentieth century, the public squares and their meaning starting from the assumption that Palazzo Te and Prospicĕre are the beginning of a series of events. They will contribute to the spread of Italian historical architecture in a wider panorama, in favour of the restoration of goods and cultural dissemination through the new channels of communication, and the intention of the authors is to stimulate the reflection on this topic in a new way, among heritage, communication and digital. (Fig. 2)

2. PROSPICĔRE: BETWEEN MEANING AND COMMUNICATION

Istuc est sapere, non quod ante pedes modo est videre, sed etiam illa, quae futura sunt prospicĕre. (Terenzio, Adelphoe, Actus III, 355-434)

Subject, object and sign, the three vertices that make up the so-called 'semiotic triangle', where the union of form and content, the relationship between signifier and signified, defines the sign.

In this way *Prospicĕre* takes shape, and translating the signifier into *looking forward* understood as a *see beyond*. Outlines both the physically felt plane of expression evoked by this word and a recognizable sign whose ultimate meaning lies not only in literal translation. More like the idea of looking beyond what lies ahead, opening our perspective on the future in the most concrete form possible..

Based on the idea of the gaze, of overcoming what is in front of our eyes. Seeing beyond the actions that govern our daily life, we have outlined the conceptual framework that constitutes the foundation of the exhibition, held inside the marble walls of the Chamber of Commerce of Varese. The desire to want to freeze the current image of a building, adapting this image to the exact measures and proportions of palaces symbol of a bygone era, and then move on to preserve this artefact, devoid of the intention to distort the image that shows of itself with respect to the function that it hosts. (Fig. 3-4)

Palladio demonstrates how the study of architecture through direct survey can bring greater 'truth' to the construction of architecture, and argues that relief must be understood as a practice of knowledge for the project rather than documentary material for archives. (Palladio, A., 1994)

The conference as part of the exhibition 'Palazzo Te allo specchio' brought to light numerous aspects of the problem. Multidisciplinary vision, from the project, to history, to restoration, to representative techniques, to external partnerships, raising the spirit of sharing our work with civil society, in the present inevitable need to return to the comparison of different economic and cultural entities in this territory. (Palladio, A., 1994; Filipovic A., Troiano W., 2013)

Looking beyond is not just a past vision, or a closed and circumscribed approach to be used exclusively at the academic level on the subject of conservation, but also concerns the way of seeing beyond the traditional channels of transmission of knowledge. Exploiting the means we have available today, as *an opportunity to extend usability by overcoming geographical boundaries to reach the riches of art where we could not arrive with traditional channels, since multimedia can*

allow an 'active' communication [...] intense and revealing compared to the passive action of 'watching' only. (Bonacini E., 2011)

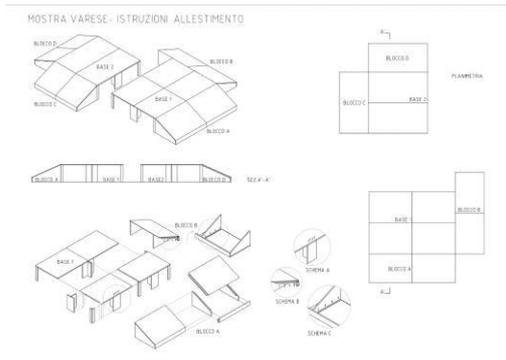


Fig. 3 Layout plans for the exhibition at Salone Campiotti. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

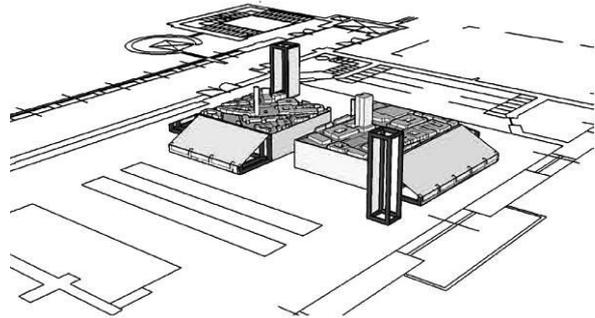


Fig. 4 Perspectives cad about preparation of the exhibition at Salone Campiotti. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

The involvement of the media and local institutions - the Municipality, the Chamber of Commerce and the Tourist Information and Reception Office of Varese -, the inclusion of social media and new media as a scientific and communication tool, becomes a means by which knowledge and culture are disseminated in the field of information, which is no longer transmitted solely by publications, but uses an instrument that today has more catching power and speed .

These non-places have become real *virtual communities that give life to a platform that allows individuals to participate on equal levels of importance and thus increase opportunities to contribute.* (Cataldo L., Paraventi M., 2007)

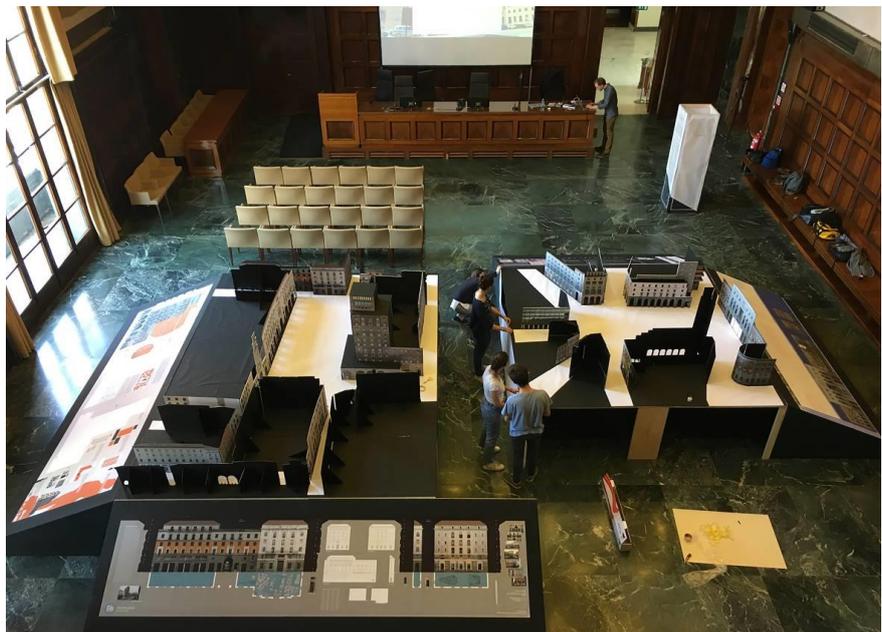


Fig 5. Exhibition at Salone Campiotti. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

3. THE CHOICE OF PUBLIC SPACES SUCH AS "CHARACTERS"

In the moment in which the basic foundations and the relative ideal structure were thrown to the basic thought, we moved on to the choice of the two subjects to be exhibited, a choice conveyed by the desire to find two places of evident historical, architectural and cultural. The choice fell on two symbolic squares, Piazza della Vittoria at Brescia e Piazza Monte Grappa at Varese._(Fig. 5-6-7-8)



Fig. 6 Perspective glimpse inside the large plastic models.
Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni



Fig. 7 Perspective glimpse inside the large plastic models.
Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni



Fig. 8 View from the entrance with totem in foreground. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

Piazza della Vittoria, Brescia

An integral part of the historic city is the result of the demolition of the ancient district to make room for bank offices, services and insurance companies, a design expansion plan for the center in which global reconstruction was planned a central area to restore the heart of the city.. The administrators of Brescia started, in 1927, a process of global renewal of urban layouts, immediately supported by the high hierarchies of the government and also by Duce Mussolini himself. A competition was held for the reform of the square that was won by the architect Marcello Piacentini. The fundamental concept of his project was to make the historical centre accessible to the new means, so as to make it a participant in the development and expansion of the city. The new square was officially inaugurated in 1932.

Piazza Monte Grappa, Varese

Strictly modular, it had to make the area in front of the Chamber of Commerce coexist with the central area of the fountain, the cafés and the roadways, becoming also the main monument to renewal and a place of strategic importance.

In 1928, the podestà Domenico Castelletti approved the plans of the Regulatory Plan. On the basis of these, the architect Mario Loreti (also roman as the Piacentini) and already author of the Palazzo del Littorio in Varese, won the second degree competition organized by the administration in 1934, demonstrating an architectural attitude that recalls the Piacentinian's school, and thus making clear a compromise between classicism and rationality.

4. IMAGE, SURVEY, REPRESENTATION: UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE THROUGH THE METHODOLOGY

"Architecture design and geometric survey find their contemporary dimension in the use of current techniques and technologies, based on the tools that have now become a habit: photography and photorealistic representation, CAD and its own multi-design specific layers. (Bianchi A., Invernizzi E., Zigo M., 2011)

Today the approach to survey and conservation needs the same adaptation, starting from a previous work of study and restitution through the use of common and uncommon tools. Step prior to the mechanical application of methodology that aim to the replica or an image that is an end in itself, or an objective and quantitative vision of reality.

Oscar Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* denounced the double face of beauty: eternal youth at the price of corruption of the soul. Nowadays, the risk befalling architectural heritage is the same: preservation of the monument at the price of its marketing. Which perspectives may arise from such a remark? Problems connected to the 70's methodologies of preservation appear now as out-of-date due to the cogency of a much relevant problem: the unavailability of the finances needed to carry out even the most ordinary maintenance procedures. The critical urgency is shifting from a cultural to an economical dimension and the present times are not favorable ones. therefore It is necessary, to make the management of the monument a previous step to its preservation, also for the reason that we understand that nowadays the economic management stands to preservation as oxygen to human life. As professionals in charge, as being cultural operators before being economic ones, we cannot afford to be deprived the coordination of the process, in order to ensure preservation to be regarded as a primary issue for architecture. How to carry this out? The purpose of the present exhibition is to create a doorway towards the future for architectural design linked to photography, to the digital world and to the survey for architectural heritage. The organization of exhibition and events might build up a flywheel for a marketing for historical architecture, Italian and world-wide, and it might become the main power source of fundraising for its preservation.

We must transcend the aid of canonical means, rely on the use of technological and informatics tools mediating reality through our personal sensitivity. Revealing that architecture of places that only photography and a synoptic view of representation can give back in the form of three-dimensional reproductions or in elaborate facts of paper and ink, in which complexity is reduced to

unity through a red thread guided exclusively by the operator, and by his willingness to find a role for the characters in his composition.

In the creative and production processes of the Varese exhibition, one of the fundamental pieces of the puzzle was the involvement of the internet and in particular of the students. First users of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, media-sharing networks such as YouTube, photo-sharing like Flickr and Pinterest and now also of the *geosocial networks*, like FourSquare, Gowalla and Facebook Places - *mobile social network system* (MSNS) - today became the fastest channels of communication. Participation and sharing information by means of verbal messages from the transmission of information goes to sharing them in digital form, a network society which also enlivens the exhibition's catalog in a completely new form., Constructed through the collection of interventions and the publication of images, as a sort of rooted photographic archive in the network, as the example of Europeana (Europeana, From the mission statement: *"We transform the world with culture! We want to build on Europe's rich heritage and make it easier for people to use, whether for work, for learning or just for fun."*) (Fig. 9-10)

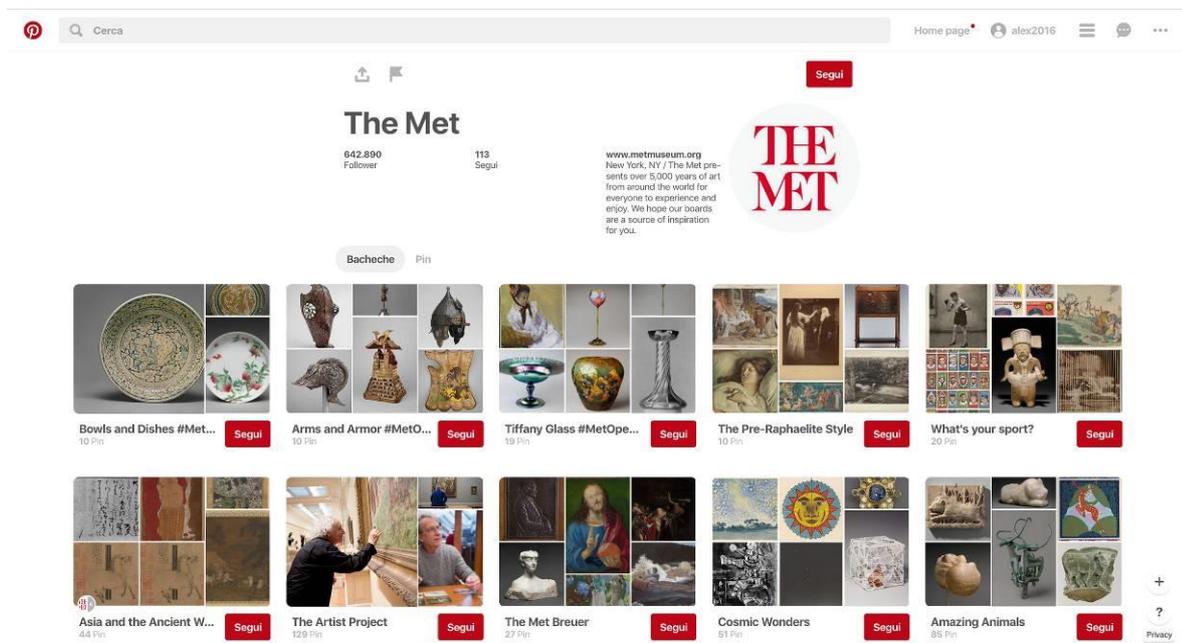


Fig 9 Website of the MET Museum of NewYork on Pinterest. Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

5. CONCLUSIONS

Look forward has become the warning that has fuelled every aspect of the exhibition, putting into play not only the architectural heritage and our way of seeing it, not only the image that the exhibition itself had to give of itself, but also paying attention on the role of the Internet, of Web 2.0, of social networking, of the Google search engine - with its digitalization and dissemination of the world cultural heritage through its specific softwares, including Google Earth, Google Street View, Google Books, Google Art Project - and the branch of cultural dissemination, in favour of a better understanding of the architectural heritage, in a form of revitalization of the cultural sector that passes through the new technologies of communication, information and collective involvement. (Castells M., 1996, p. 5: *Since our practice is based on communication, and the Internet transforms the way in which we communicate, our lives are deeply affected by this new communication tech-*

nology. On the other hand, by doing many things with the Internet, we transform the Internet itself. A new socio-technical pattern emerges from this interaction).



Fig 10 Website of the Portal Europeana.
Source: A. Bianchi, M. Belloni

The work done by the students first and then by the research staff after, has led to the development of a method of survey / return / communication (Gaiani, M., 2016), perfected over years of study in the field of theoretical and practical direct field, whose goal is to document the architectural heritage through the eyes of our time.

Prospicere therefore indicates an important step in the research on the communication of architectural heritage, the primary action of transfiguring a composition made of equilibrium, geometry and matter into something equally tangible and measurable through common and uncommon techniques, in a result that looks at the past, through today's eyes, between material and immaterial, and the tools of tomorrow.

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