

CONSTRUCTION / RE-CONSTRUCTION? REFUNDING MEMORY AT DOM-RÖMER IN FRANKFURT

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The right bank of the River Main in Frankfurt overlooks the hill where the Cathedral rises. An Outpost of Roman origin placed to protect the ford on the river. The most extraordinary Gothic quarters once standing at the foot of the cathedral recall the experience of the European city. Goethe describes it in *Faust*: the tumult forced the bourgeois houses into the center of the metropolis, before the wide avenues and streets, here you have the narrow streets, the pointed gables, and a tight market of houses on all sides, and cabbage and turnips and onions and then the meat counters.

The city is built by types, two parallel walls distant the maximum of a light beam, some passages that aren't even roads for wagons. Just like in Venice!

Shaven to the ground in 1944 and poorly reconstructed in the post-war period with a large underground parking lot and public buildings, the area has been courageously demolished again in recent years and put out to tender (architectural competition) by Dom Römer GmbH, a company of public development.

Immediately after the war, the neighborhood rubble was cataloged and placed in a museum, as well as being sold by weight to private collectors. Now the City of Frankfurt has regained the old stones from collectors, finding many of the red sandstone house remains easy to work with and some pieces of the hoof in black basalt (black basalt rock) very trying.

Case history: The old quarter is being resurged due to a meticulous job being done on the plants of the old registers and the reliefs of the facades. Some houses were rebuilt as they once were, where they once were. Some other projects manufactured by a constant comparison with the old, are being done so without sacrificing the new (among others in the building-site Hans Kollhoff, Tillmann Wagner, Morger + Dettli, Berndt Albers, Jordi & Keller, Dreibund Architekten, Francesco Collotti who is reporting that experience here).

Building here is re-building without making a copy, but seeking out the old measure and the proportion of the Gothic town while looking for a new possibility of warm life between these walls just a few hundred meters from the European Central Bank tower.

Building here is re-building, allowing to experience a slower tempo.

At the edge of the new district ran the ancient route where the emperor's crowing procession was performed. An altitude jump, as an high step, still marking the topography in front of the Schirn Exhibition Centre. For this place, the old Krönungsweg, we propose monumental pergola in full stone blocks, properly armed and tensioned, cut in the red veined sandstone from the Main valley and rooted to the ground by shiny black basaltic lava blocks, the ancient

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route once lost has been rediscovered. Attempting to return its lost identity (both the projects, houses and pergola, with Anna Worzewski, Valentina Fantin, Ilaria Corrocher, Serena Acciai). The measurements, proportions and details of the pergola stem from our basic survey of the nearby cathedral. Ancient being the project construction material.

Focusing the question: I come from a land built on the ruins of previous cities.

For centuries, new buildings have been built on the ruins and foundations of previous works, using these materials in various ways:

- sometimes for spoliatio, redepoying flipped inscribed trabeations and tombstones in the foundations of Byzantine or Roman walls. All around the Mediterranean this is the experience Ravenna, Split, Zadar, Thessalonica, Constantinople, Amman.

- sometimes instead of giving new meaning to precise architectural elements within the new institutions that may also change the sign.

We're interested in this fragment as construction material for the project.

Buildings or projects such as the Orsini Palace built in Rome above the Theater of Marcellus, or the Cathedral of Syracuse, in Sicily, where the cathedral was built in the cell of the previous Doric ellenistic temple, all demonstrate the use of a building concept not far from that to rebuild and are an invitation to calmly consider the trauma or the events that over the centuries have altered the buildings.

Which space for the project in measuring oneself with the old, what is the relationship between old and new, which continuity, at what distance? These questions would be able to go beyond the dry and pretentious gap between restoration and project, in which the contemporary architectural debate seems entangled and confused.

On one side there are the supporters of total embalming implemented by mere restoration, and on the other we meet the unarmed prophets of that untidy and anything-goes free-for-all factor that seems to reduce the problem of the project to the task of the most varied and imaginative forms of functional clogging and irresponsible design.

Is it still possible to think of a second life for old buildings? How to use the old buildings to build new ones? And you can fight the current embalming project trend of the ancient buildings passed off for their conservation? In every project there is a necessary process of accumulation that our work from time to time composes and decomposes. And as if architecture must always work and only doing so with the same material (and this material is architecture itself).

Unlike the purely conservative restoration and philological restitution, this kind of attention to the old (or towards any) may not be confined to finding the state of affairs of a recurrence rule without changes. While recognizing the authority of old foundations and certain alignments, it is an act of non-neutral transformation, not a mere continuation maybe already all written into the state of affairs. Creative Restoration?

Attitudes toward antique and old are interesting here to the extent that, with sufficient clarity, there is the possibility to ask questions about current transformation, the use return with available forms and shapes with the continuation of inner life, their new being factored in reality and recirculated. For some limited and exceptional cases you should even consider the possibility of a mere liberation of use.

The reconstructions of lost buildings by architects, disappeared or even incomplete are an aspect of the very special relationship between old and new. The interest in the composition and in the careful construction, beyond the accurate survey of the ruins, marks the work of Karl Friedirch Schinkel, quite different away from the archaeological ambitions of Haller Hallerstein.

Haller von Hallerstein, send from Nürnberg to Greece, measure of obsession with the remains of Greek temples or the traces of a classic theatre, the second, Karl Friedrich Schinkel,

although admired and respectfully, proposes a transfiguration of the beloved Italy reconstructing Potsdam and Berlin (in vain, perhaps, chasing the demon of the noon day light from the sharp shadows he had known in Sicily). Crucial here is the reflection of a particular world of forms and the cultural program which is recognized in this world.

And while it re-measured the antiquities, detected and reconstructed from walks of Roman theaters to the Villa of Plinius or at the thermas, it becomes a building material transmigrated north in the travel journals of Friedrich Weinbrenner, Carl von Fischer, Leo von Klenze, the physical presence of the ruin inevitably affecting the work of architects. In the case of the Italian Region Veneto, but not only, there is that obvious extraordinary ability to fertilize with the ancient architecture the world of forms for centuries long periods. Contaminated, processed, amplified, measured and reconstructed or re-used in a second life, the classical and lateclassical ruins of the upper Adriatic towns of Roman origin are the material on which the city is built in the following centuries. Giovanbattista da San Gallo, Giulio Romano, Andrea Palladio, Sebastiano Serlio measure, quote, detect and transfigure the Venetian and Roman antiquities of Verona in particular, the flock in their projects gives them a second life on the side or elsewhere. In a very special way the works of Michele Sanmicheli and Palladio are then unthinkable without the long continuity and the direct physical measurement with classical and late classical works that characterize the entire Upper Adriatic area.

The presence of the past produces project. Their works are also something other than projects of those models, they are a reinvention of antiquity, a possible reconstruction of that great program of territorial and urban transformations achieved in the manner of contamination that mark border construction (Porta Leoni Porta Borsari in Verona, Porta Gemina in Pula).

Within this same world are the exact walls that Plečnik rebuilt on a faint trace of ruins in Ljubljana. A fake, maybe! The relationship between design and ancient buildings here is also opportunity for graft and fusion between an archaic language and dignified speaking. The anxiety of Plečnik for rising up away from the local context, is compared to the cadence of the vernacular and, at the same time, with the invention of the origins of the town. The forgotten past of Ljubljana, which the architect unveils. The project grows constantly on the basis of the forged reversed memory of the artist, reconstructed on a plausible previous sign, but surely ahead of this. No repetition, but perhaps metamorphosis for fusion in another mold of the same material. The legendary walls of Emona, but even more so the stones of the Auersperg Palace included in the wall of the Library of Plečnik at Ljubljana, confer authority and gather roots, but at the same time are poured into a new project, they become something else and later compared to their previous life .

In the case of Ljubljana, the relationship continues with the old being re-established with a number of corrections and adjustments, however respecting those previous times of the settled city, for light deviations. The memory of urban facts, or even traces, which are likely to be lost is called upon to legitimize the present with that authoritativeness that we usually recognize the things already existing and experimented. The project is a kind of high maintenance that does not mind minimal markings.

Some operational guidelines about our work emerge from these considerations. There are places in the experience of the city and compelling figures to which the project's memory comes back every time the architects are called to give meaning and definition to giaciture landscape sites and topographies that over time have lost their relationship with the former city. Forever lost is that image capable of understanding anything that reflected a rational and analytical order, those constraints dissolved and those figures linked to a compactness and a continuity no longer passable, our ability to re-read the urban phenomena and sort through the project it is forced to survive in fragments. For fragments of plans, of architecture, of ideas,

lives the contemporary city (Ferlenga, 1990). For fragments we can still evoke tasks often forgotten for this profession, whose fate must not be to continue to build-up the city and landscape, relocating it with memory projection, as transfigured it may be.