


Adaptive Reuse and the Museum: installing a museum in a preexisting shell

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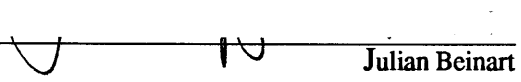
Submitted to the Department of Architecture
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Abstract

The thesis deals with the complexities involved within the conversion of an old building to an art museum. The restoration of a building is by itself a complicated problem, conjuring up questions about the relationship between the old and new parts of the structure. The reuse of the old building as a museum of art adds a new set of relationships, multiplying the interactions and enhancing the complexity.

The analysis of the problems is structured in two parts:

The first is a theoretical discussion of generic questions and issues linked with the museum as an institution on the one hand, and with the preservation of the built environment on the other.

The second joins the two fields of the above discussion together, by referring to the particular kind of building: the museum within an old structure. This is done by means of analysis of selected examples. An artificial separation of the two fields is again used as a tool for the analysis. The discussion focuses on the concrete expression of specific choices in both of the fields, from which, in conclusion, general deductions are drawn.

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Agis Ikonomidis-Doumbas

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INTRODUCTION

A broad definition of a museum could be that it involves the collection and display of any selected objects, from a stamp album or the bibelot assemblage in a bourgeois parlor, to the city itself as a collection of people's artifacts and statements. When thinking of a museum as a building, the way in which we perceive it in our everyday life, what instantly comes up is the old theme of 'a doll within a doll': a museum within a museum. The museum building becomes both a place for displaying and a displayed object in itself. This leads to the perception of it as a shell, as an envelope, and opens various questions on its relationship with the exhibition within it. How do we deal, then, with this relationship?

Such a viewpoint can be applied to any museum building; however, in the case of preexisting buildings, this notion comes to the foreground. Having been emptied of its previous function, its previous 'self', the building emphasizes its perception as a shell. By installing a museum in such a shell, does the old building become a 'frozen' display case, does it become a carcass? Does it lose the meanings and memories it used to carry? If not, how do these, in turn, affect the new function? How do they affect the exhibits?

It is my intention to first go back to generic questions in both of the two areas implied, the Museum and the preservation and revitalization of the built environment. An understanding and a critical position on the issues raised by each one

separately is a prerequisite for enquiring the above relationships.

However, such questions cannot be examined in the form of theory only; the use of concrete examples is required for clarifying the issues involved, and making them more comprehensible. Thus, in the second part, where the discussion focuses on the particular kind of building —the museum within an old structure, I will constantly refer to built examples, and mainly to three selected buildings, which are documented in an appendix for the reader who is not familiar with them. However, it is the examination of my questions and assumptions which I'm placing in the foreground, and not the criticism of the particular buildings.

Finally, I have to make clear that, while being aware of the different approaches -in both the issues of the museum and preservation- around the world, I will consciously limit my research within the European context. I will particularly focus on and use as a point of reference the evolution of the Italian museological tradition since the fifties, which is inseparably linked with that of restoration.

PART A
Theoretical Considerations

The Museum: Institutional Changes over Time



Fig. 1. *L'Aurore*, Paul Delvaux,
Oil on canvas, July 1937.

The word 'museum' can signify different notions, can convey different meanings, according to the definer's use of it (to its particular usage). By its origin, it immediately recalls the "muses" of the Greek mythology, the nine deities inspiring artists, poets, musicians. In the period of the Ptolemies, an institution founded in Alexandria and called "Museum", was a place where a court of sages, philosophers and men of letters was held. Containing a library and collections of artifacts, the museum of antiquity was a place for study, an academy. Although this is not the kind of institution that the word signifies today, the museum still carries an immediate relation with the arts and the "muses", and is again held -at least by its promoters- to serve educational purposes, even if in a different manner. In 1539, Paolo Giovio for the first time writes of his collections at Commo as his 'Museum', and in 1543 the word appeared prominently in an inscription on the building.¹ The use of this word today conjures up the idea of the museum building, a place for the preservation and display of certain objects. The museum is related to the notion of collection, and it is in fact the collections from which the 'modern' museum stems.

Art collecting, anticipating the museum of our days, goes back to the Italian Renaissance, when a sense of interest in history and heritage was developed, followed by an enthusiasm for the



Fig. 2. The Earl of Arundel with his sculpture gallery: detail of painting by Daniel Mytens, 1618 (Duke of Norfolk Collection).

products of classical antiquity. One can also think of examples in the Hellenistic and Roman periods that saw the founding of private collections through the search for antiquities. However, the direct predecessor of the museum as we conceive of the term today, are the galleries for paintings and statues, which had become a frequent adjunct to palaces in European countries, since the sixteenth century.

What characterized the early galleries², the *Kunst- or Wunderkammer*, or *Cabinet* of curiosities of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, was the fact that they displayed a mixture of paintings, statuary, and even objects of natural science. It was Enlightenment which brought specialization. This is one of the changes which the eighteenth century imposed upon these princely and royal art galleries, the other being their gradual opening to the people, so that the public art museum has emerged. The first realized project for a separate museum building — which in fact was museum and library combined, and from the beginning open to the public— was the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, built in 1769-79.

Although things seem to have changed a lot throughout this evolution, the museum of our days shares a lot of common features with its antecedents. We shouldn't let the 'public' and 'private' labels mislead us. While the royal or private gallery testified to royal power or private wealth, the public museum of our days relates to the modern state, an abstract entity representing in theory all the people of the country. A visitor to a



Fig. 3. "*Le Louvre des marionnettes*",
Paris 1844.

private royal or prince collection gave honor to the collector's virtue taste and wealth. Today, the visitor of the public museum is supposed to be a shareholder in this collection. "It is open to anybody, it belongs to everybody." In this sense, the museum is another means for cultivating the illusion of a classless society. But, falling in its own trap, it completely fails in this goal. The museum is such a perfect expression of the dominant culture, that everything in it, down to the smallest detail, keeps away "both the sort of person who relates himself to a 'different' culture , and also the person who has neither the intellectual ability nor the desire to embark upon it."³ Museum space is exclusive. It is limited to a certain social elite; and it is perfectly articulated to accommodate the prejudices and enhance the self-image of this group. "The museum is the site of a symbolic transaction between the visitor and the state. In exchange for the state's spiritual wealth, the individual intensifies his or her attachment to the state."⁴

There is not much distance between the aspirations of the eighteenth century gallery creators and those of the contemporary public museum's advocates. In France, even before the Revolution, it was proposed that the Louvre should include an art gallery open to the public. At the same time in Germany, there were private collections that had been already opened to the public. These certainly were not neutral actions; it was a way of reacting to a new spirit of equality and, moreover, to a threat of eruption of discontent population. The gradual withdrawal of restrictions in admittance to the

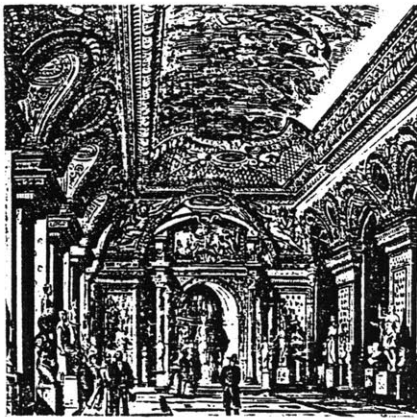


Fig. 4. "Salle des empereurs"



Fig. 5. "Salle des muses"

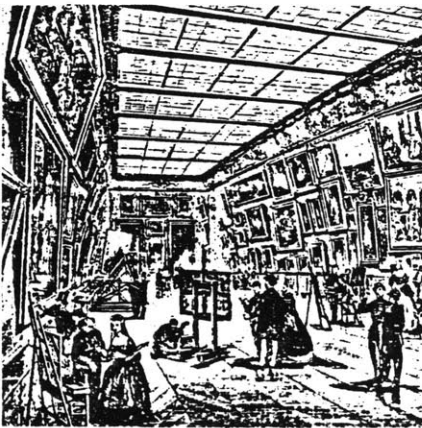


Fig. 6. French Academy Gallery

galleries was a way of cleverly appeasing peoples' claim for participation in accumulated wealth. Art collections were used in order to present a coherent set of historical and cultural values that distinguished the new ruling class, the ascending bourgeoisie, with whom the old nobility had thereafter to share social preeminence. Education and art would be important means for maintaining a social balance. Art objects would no longer be defined by pure aesthetic judgements; they had to be linked with art's relation to society, with social classes, with prejudices and presuppositions, with art history. In the old regime, possession by nobility conferred cachet upon the work; in the bourgeois world it is the other way around. The museum institution has always been -and still is, rather more conspicuously than ever- one cog in the overall mechanism of the state. It should not be simply viewed as a repository for the preservation and exhibition of art; one should think of further implications consciously or unconsciously hidden behind such a definition.

The recent increase of interest in museums raises a wide range of issues. From the opening of the first private collections to the public, we have come to the museum mania of our day. One has only to take into account the great museums in the United States or in Europe, in order to get a sense of the force of this 'museum machine'. Furthermore, the aspirations of the advocates of the Mass MOCA proposal, calling for the "biggest museum in the world, ...a 'real mecca of world culture' "5, clearly reflect how the contemporary museum factory



Fig. 7. The "Experts"



Fig. 8. "Sunday visitors"

justifies such an institution by the number of its visitors.⁶

The opening of museums to an increasingly wider public is not necessarily a positive sign, or evidence that they are functioning properly. On the contrary, the paradox is that the more attendance increases, the more decisively the museum becomes separated from the visitor.) Museums have become places for crowds, to spend hours being entertained by the variety and excitement of what they see and the knowledge that what they are doing is an experience to be shared. New functions, new 'needs' have emerged. Not only bookstores, but stores selling any kind of 'goods', as well as restaurants and cafes, have arrived a stage of being considered essential for 'today's cultural centers. Curators and directors seem not to be worried by that. On the contrary, we read and listen to claims filled with proud for the success of museums which are "not cemeteries, but cheerful places to be in."⁷

Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the "Beaubourg effect", written about a decade ago, has certainly not lost its validity. Whether it is in the Pompidou exhibition spaces of those days, or in the galleries of a permanent character in the post-modern museum of Stuttgart, or even in the new arrangement on the fourth floor of the former in traditional modes, art's perception has been transformed into a kind of mass consumption. The art work has become a commodity to be consumed by the crowd; and the museum its marketing site. Rémy Saisselin has written on a transformation of the work of art into a superbiblot calling for super prices.⁸ He makes a

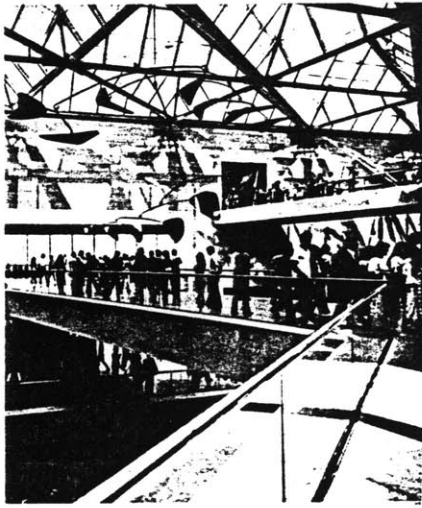


Fig. 9. The East Wing of the National Gallery of Art in Whashington. D.C.

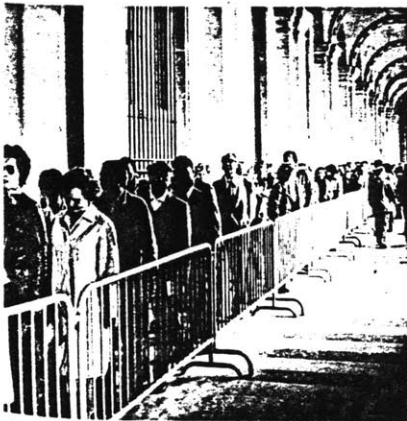


Fig. 10. "Standing in the queue."

parallel between the art museum and the department store of the nineteenth century⁹, arguing for remarkable similarities between "an attractive consumer object sold in a department store or in a boutique, and the objet d'art, which might or might not be in a museum."¹⁰ If one is not quite convinced with such a notion as consumption of art, one should turn to the 'goods' we can buy in the contemporary museum-mall (reproductions and all kinds of bibelots).

For Walter Benjamin the museum contradicts itself from its very heart. He has argued that there is a polarity between distraction and concentration. And, according to him, art demands the latter, whereas "masses seek distraction."¹¹ Hence, the very fact of publicly exhibiting becomes a self-destructive action. "The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses."¹² "The mass is a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art issues today in a new form. Quantity has been transmuted to quality. The greatly increased mass of participation has produced a change in the mode of participation."¹³

Is then the museum institution sentenced to its self-destruction? Valéry's metaphor seems to have been prophetic: "[Museums] like casinos, cannot lose, and that is their course."¹⁴ There is an apparent paradox here; on one hand, the modern



Fig. 11. "The stroll"

museum-mall is indeed calling for mass participation, and on the other, the institution is based on the authenticity of its exhibits. If, as Benjamin argues, technical reproduction has led to the loss of the 'aura' of the work of art, the museum is its last defender. Rather than calling for the attitude of the wanderer, the *flâneur*¹⁵, the art museum demands and evokes a ritual behavior in front of the *original* objects of art; it's one of those spaces, which provide scripts to be performed by those who enter them. If we think of our own experience, we will agree, that in art galleries, "as in churches, one does not speak in a normal voice; one does not laugh, eat, drink, lie down, or sleep; one does not get ill, go mad, sing, dance, or make love."¹⁶ Moreover, their architectural treatment clearly embodies and enhances such a perception of the exhibition space. Art galleries are "constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church."¹⁷ Today, even within this museum-mall, the ritual of the attendance is not only retained, but celebrated as well, for it is the hold of the institution's existence. As Saisselin effectively argues, the 'aura' of the art object not only survives but triumphs as well: it is marketed; it has regained its strength and is celebrated. Thousands line up for hours to enter a Cezanne, Monet, or Picasso exhibition.¹⁸ The irony is that all we finally experience is the object's 'aura' and not the object itself. Wandering among original works of art, all we 'perceive' is the *authority of the original*, but not the objects themselves; we forget to 'really see' them. It is no longer the perception of the object, the

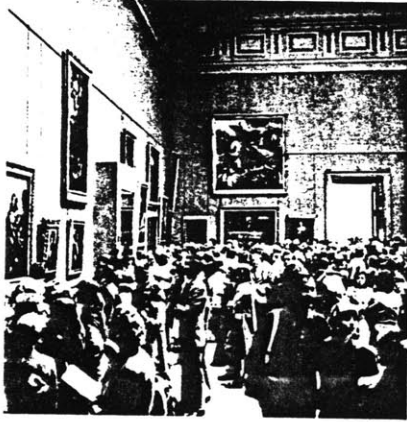


Fig. 12. "Viewing the *original* "

image we receive, what strikes us. It's very first message is to be found in its authenticity. The significance of the display of the original reduces the work of art to *the original of a reproduction*. In fact, we didn't go to the museum in order to see the art piece; the important thing is that we went there, where the original was on display.¹⁹ Then, at home, we have the chance to 'see' and 'observe' them through the reproductions of the museum catalogue. The catalogue becomes then a more effective display of an art piece; the 'original's aura' might be absent, but, on the other hand, the object is more exposed to us.

"Museums certainly emphatically demand something of the observer, just as every work of art does. For the *flâneur*, ..., is also a thing of the past, and it is no longer possible to stroll through museums letting oneself be delighted here and there. The only relation to art that can be sanctioned in a reality that stands under the constant threat of catastrophe is one that treats works of art with the same deadly seriousness that characterizes the world today"²⁰

¹Pevsner, N., "Museums", in *History of Building Types*, 1976, p.111

² So frequently were galleries used to display statuary, that the word *gallery* became a synonym of the word museum.

³ P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel quoted by Hubert Damisch in, "The museum device: notes on institutional changes", in *Lotus* 35, p. 9.

⁴ Duncan, C., and Wallach A., "The Universal Survey Museum," in *Art History*, v.3, n.4, Dec.1980, pp. 448-69.

⁵"For Krens [the main advocate of the proposed project], MASS MOCA is not just another museum; it is, rather, the solution to the museum crisis, a model for the future." Ken Johnson, "Showcase in Arcadia. The MASS MOCA," in *Art in America*, July 1988, pp.102.

⁶"Well, here we are in Massachusetts—a tourist area. In summer the sun always shines in the purple valley, close to New York, close to Boston, relatively good links. It could be funded like the Olympics. Not as big, but done the right way. ...You've seen a revolution in the Olympics, since Los Angeles. They call it the marketing of the Olympics. ... If we've got MASS MOCA under our belts and we approach it the right way....If it were the biggest art exhibition in the world, you'd probably come. I think people would come from everywhere." From an interview with Thomas Krens, by Ken Johnson, in "Showcase in Arcadia. The MASS MOCA," in *Art in America*, July 1988, pp.97- 98.

⁷ A note by Francis Cachia, in an interview with Hansgerd Hellenkemper, Director of the Römisch-Germanisches Museum in Cologne. In "Communication and the Museum", by F. Cachia, in *Museum* 36, p. 8-11.

⁸ Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot*, Rutgers Univ. Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1984.

⁹ Already preceded by Walter Benjamin: "there are connections between department stores and the museum, and the bazaar represents one of the linking elements.", Walter Benjamin, quoted by Frank Werner in: "On the typology of museum of the eighties. The experience of the German Federal Republic", in *Lotus* 55, 1987, n.3, pp. 39.

¹⁰ Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot*, p. 41.

He remarkably adds that the similarities are such "that an entire department store could easily have been turned into a museum by simply freezing its operations and letting it exist as a monument of a particular moment of our civilization. In fact the true museum of the nineteenth century might well be a department store rather than a specialized exhibition space reserved for nineteenth century painting and sculpture." *Ibid.*,

p. 42. Drawing further such a notion, the store catalogue might be considered as the museum of the future —if not that of our day, if one thinks of its expanded use today.

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, Edit: H.Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1969: p.239.

¹² Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, p.234.

¹³ Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, p.239.

¹⁴ Theodore W. Adorno "Valery, Proust and the Museum", in *Prisms*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, p.177.

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin wrote in the thirties: "The concentration of works of art in museums is not so different from the display of merchandise which, presented to the passer-by 'en masse', create the impression that he must be entitled to part of them", quoted by Frank Werner in: "On the typology of museum of the eighties. The experience of the German Federal Republic", in *Lotus* 55, 1987, n.3, p. 39.

¹⁶ Thomas McEvelley, in the Introduction to the *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, by Brian O'Doherty (The Lapis Press, Santa Monica, San Francisco, 1986), p.10.

¹⁷ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, p.15.

¹⁸ Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Bourgeois and the Bibelot*, 1984.

¹⁹ This becomes more evident with art pieces considered as classic; the visitor of their exhibition 'knows' the exhibit pretty well before entering the museum (through any kinds of reproductions, or even by having seen it before in another museum), but now, he will confront (or re-confront) the authentic.

²⁰ Theodore W. Adorno "Valery, Proust and the Museum", in *Prisms*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, p.185.



Fig. 13. *Venus and Mars*, Botticelli.

The Museum is often thought of as a kind of cultural warehouse, where human artifacts are stored, and, furthermore, taken out of their natural context, classified, or better *reclassified*, and exhibited. I have already argued that there is an oversimplification in such a definition, for there are other aspects overlooked—deliberately or not. What I want to add here is the institution's relation to art itself. From this point of view as well, it is a naive judgement to think of the museum as if it was a neutral display case with the pure function of preserving and exhibiting.

Art museums do not simply satisfy these needs, but affect art at its very heart. Walter Benjamin writes of a polarity between *cult-value* and *exhibition-value* of the work of art.¹ The more art is emancipated from ritual—hence: the more the art object is stripped from its cult-value—the more its exhibition-value is enhanced. He then argues that "its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature."² Today, "by the absolute emphasis on its



Fig. 14. "Le Louvre des marionnettes",
Paris 1844.

exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental."³

Established socially, the museum institution does not only preserve art objects, but it has also become a refuge for art itself. The museum has become an asylum for the work of art, in which the latter is here most of all protected from any kind of questioning.⁴ It instantly promotes a work of art to a status, a mystical value out of doubt. "So powerful are the perceptual fields of force within this chamber, that, once outside it, art can lapse into secular status."⁵ In addition to that, it enhances its economic value, since by establishing an art piece — and art generally— socially, it assures its exposure and consumption. But at the same time, the Museum, by being a refuge for art, turns to be a limit for it as well; its 'altruism' instantly becomes a limiting frame. Even if it seems a paradox, it nonetheless is a reality of which the viewer and especially the artist should be aware. "Whether the place in which the work is shown imprints and marks this work, whatever it might be, or whether the work itself is directly —consciously or not— produced for the Museum, any work presented in that framework, if it does not explicitly examine the influence of the framework upon itself, falls into the illusion of self-sufficiency -or idealism."⁶ Thus, if the walls of the gallery cannot be 'surpassed', they have at least to be taken as an existing assumption. It is imperative for every artist to be aware of this *context-content* , and of what it does to his or her

work. Exactly as in the history of the easel painting one can perceive various ways of responding to the frame —accepting it, taking advantage of it, denying it, or trying to break it, in the history of the museum institution one is confronted with different attitudes towards the limiting forces of this art container.

The museum space is no more neutral than a book, and the notion of 'neutral museum is a contradiction in itself. An art piece cannot be placed beyond any time or space. Besides the limits imposed by the broader framework of the institution, it is also true that even the juxtaposition of two objects cannot avoid a set of governing rules or values. There is no way of placing works of art together independent of a particular logic. That a certain statement is being made by the arrangement is unavoidable. The way art pieces are arranged makes assumptions about what is offered; and the strength of this truth is such, that an 'internal' history of art can be —and often is⁷— correlated with, or even replaced by the 'external' history of how it is exhibited. Even without realizing it, the visitor sees according to choices that have been made on his or her behalf, by curators, directors, designers, or architects. A pre-decided order is always there, and the setting of a work of art influences, if not determines -to a certain extent- the way in which it is appreciated.

In *Vers une architecture* Le Corbusier has argued for the need for an essential solitude of the art piece. In his ideal museum, paintings should not be hung on walls, competing with one another, and creating relationships that assert strong statements.

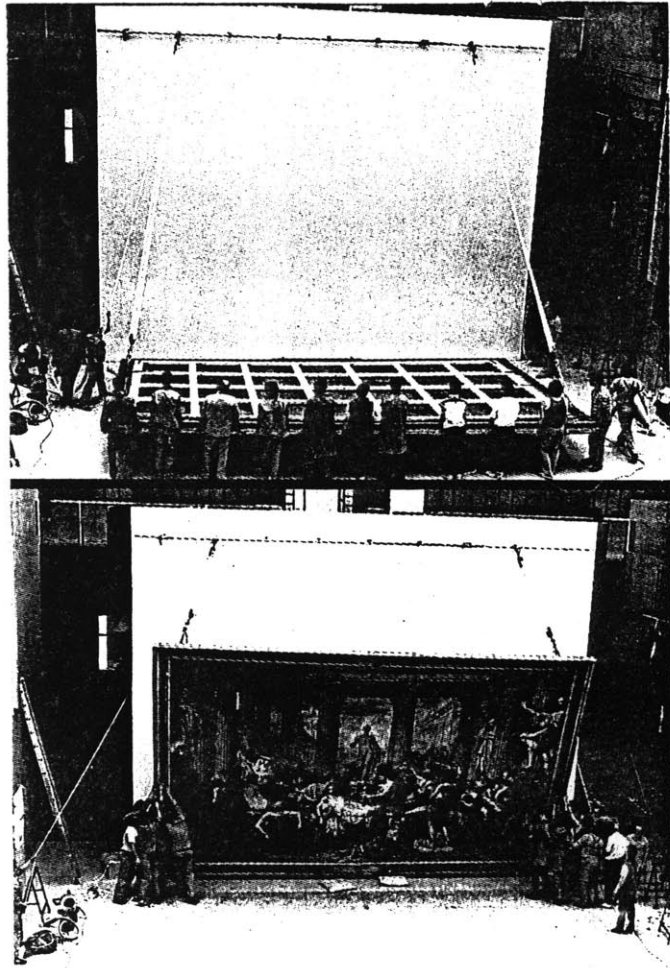
"The true collector places his paintings in a 'casier', and only hangs on the wall the one he wants to look at"⁸. In this way, the enjoyer can only partake of one particular object excluding all others. Le Corbusier seems to have shared the same concern with Valéry, who had seen in the juxtaposition of works of art —believed to be unique— the creation of a 'chaos', leading to their own destruction.⁹ But he responds to that, suggesting the avoidance of confrontation 'on the wall', as if it was a just a matter of spatial juxtaposition; there is an oversimplification of the truth here, which lies in the very heart of such a thesis. What should worry us is not the "organized disorder" of this realm of "incoherence" which Valéry spoke of, but, on the contrary, its *organization*. Traditional art history and the museum institutional order assume a relationship of interdependence, which has an unavoidable impact on our reading of art. Art galleries, by adopting an historical order and being organized according to art historical rules, testify to the validity of these rules, taking them as trans-historical truths, and thus, have a direct impact on people's reading of art.

Art is not free, the artist does not express himself freely —he/she cannot. The cultural frame and the museum itself are such strong limits that they constitute both the points of departure and arrival of art. The former cannot leave out the artist, and the latter is not the neutral place it would like us to believe. It is the ignorance of these limits or the wish to mask them that presents art to us under the many guises of a 'pure masterpiece'.



Art is made for the museum; art is produced to be consumed within the museum. There is a relation of interdependency, of mutual affection between art and the institution which houses it. One requires and presupposes the other. Douglas Crimp has related the museum to Foucault's view on the "modern institutions of confinement", such as the asylum, the clinic, and the prison; as it is these institutions that produce the respective discourses of madness, illness, and criminality—not the other way around, it is the museum which is the precondition of what we call modern art.¹⁰

Fig. 15, 16. "Art is produced to be consumed within the museum."



¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, Edit: H.Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1969: p.224.

² Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, p.225. Benjamin is referring here to the effects of technical reproduction upon art, but this shift can also be seen out of the latter's influence. The author himself adds 'later': "...the crisis of the painting ... was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography, but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of works of art to the masses." *Ibid*, p.234.

³ Benjamin compares this fact with the situation of the work of art in prehistoric times, "when, by the absolute emphasis on its cult value, it was, first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art." , p.225.

⁴ Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum", in *Five Texts*, 1976.

⁵ Brian O'Doherty, "Notes on the Gallery Space", *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, The Lapis Press, Santa Monica, San Francisco, 1986, p.14.

⁶ Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum", in *Five Texts*, 1976, p.61.

⁷ Brian O'Doherty, "Notes on the Gallery Space", *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, p.24.

⁸ Le Corbusier, *Vers un Architecture*, Paris 1923, as quoted by Hubert Damisch, "The museum device: notes on institutional changes", in *Lotus* 35, p.11.

⁹ For Valéry, a beautiful picture "kills the ones around it". Theodore W. Adorno "Valery, Proust and the Museum", in *Prisms*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, p 177.

¹⁰ Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum Ruins", in *October* 13, Summer 1980, p. 45.

The Activity of Collecting

At this point, I'd like to go back to the deepest root of the museum, the collection, but leave apart the historical and social aspects which have already been discussed, and deal with the collection *per se*, with the notion of "collecting" itself. What lies behind the collector's passion, behind this 'need' for accumulating objects? The question is related to both the act of collecting and the objects themselves.

Possession, preservation, choice, order are notions which are instantly raised pervade the act of collecting. Preserving reflects our resistance to world's impermanence. It is our fight against death and against 'nothingness', against the feeling of vanity to which the transience of our world leads us. Everything seems to be seized by a continual oscillation between being and nothingness. Our need to give our lives permanence, to perpetuate our experience is satisfied by the accumulation of memories and images in the 'concrete' form of a collection. Our need to possess can reflect our need to present ourselves to the external world, by means of our belongings. This is certainly an aspect hidden behind the 'need' for collecting; however, there is an even deeper and mysterious relation to ownership in collecting.

There are many ways an object can come under our possession, which are certainly reflected upon it; it could be a gift, inherited, purchased. But even if it was given to the collector as a present or inheritance, which means that the actual choice of

the particular object was made by someone else and not the collector, it is always the latter's own choice and decision to preserve it and, in a way, 'save' it that gives it its irreplaceable value; it is the collector's 'discovery'. In other words, by collecting, we are expressing ourselves indirectly by means other than our language codes, by means of a creative act, similar to the artist's or the writer's effort. The choice of a particular object, the decision to include it in our accumulation and preserve it, is an act of self-expression. Let me quote here Walter Benjamin, whose words, rather than being just an expression of self-consciousness, reflect the collector's pride and self assertion: "For such a man is speaking to you (he is speaking about himself), and on closer scrutiny he proves to be speaking about himself."¹

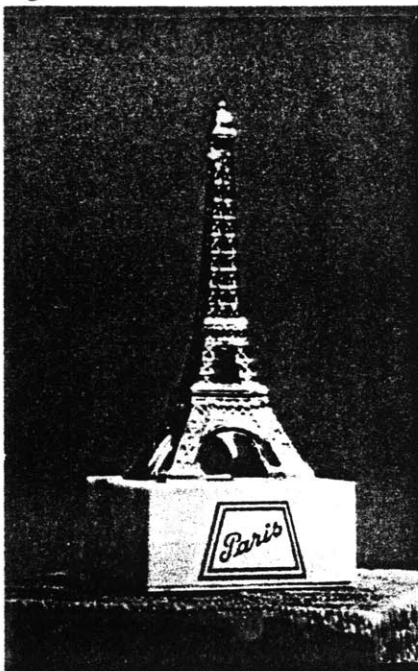


Fig. 17. Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his private picture gallery, by Teniers (1582-1649).

Fig. 18. *Portrait of Dante*, L. Signorelli.



Fig. 19. Eiffel Tower souvenir, 1950's.



The relationship of the collector to 'his' objects is one that does not emphasize their functional or utilitarian value, i.e their usefulness, not even their artistic value. "And you have read all these books, Monsieur France? Not one tenth of them. I don't suppose you use your Sevres china every day?" Besides the mingled feelings of possession and security of an invulnerable intimacy, it is also the study and 'love' of the object's fate that is hidden behind this 'mania'. "One has only to watch at a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired."²

"The phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. ... Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter. ... For a collector -and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be- ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them."³ It is this truth which differentiates the 'honesty' of the private collection from the 'dishonesty' of the museum.

Theodore Adorno argues that "the German word *museal* has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the need of the present"⁴. And he

continues: "Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchers of works of art."⁵ Even if "needs of the present" can be interpreted in various way, it is this "vital relationship" which is present between the collector and his 'children', and which the public museum lacks.

The notion of 'order' comes into our mind as well, for it is unavoidably linked with the notion of collection. Any collection, any accumulation of objects cannot avoid the existence of an order. It is also here that the passion of the collector can be found: in one's effort to establish one's own personal order. The uniqueness of the latter, the collector's unique intimacy is one of the for the collector's efforts. It is a disorder in relation to the known and established order of types and kinds. But this 'disorder' has its own order imposed by the collector partly consciously and partly unconsciously. Benjamin relates it to intimacy, arguing that "it is a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order,"⁶ and adds that in the collector's life "there is a dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder."⁷

Gustave Flaubert, in his last work, *Bouvard and Pecuchet*, created the two perfect figures of the collecting mania. Bouvard and Pecuchet wander through the garden of culture surrounded by dictionaries encyclopedias manuals, books that contain all knowledge: religious, pedagogical, scientific, medical, political , philoshophical and



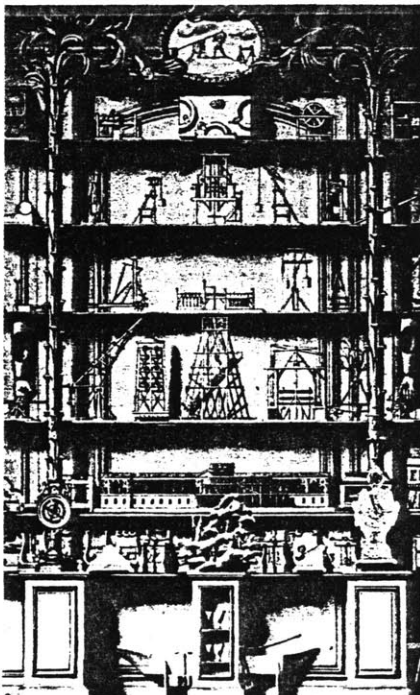
Fig. 20. Lucas Samaras, *Bedroom*, 1964, courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York.

literary. But precisely because there is no criteria, no value which can make it possible to select and decide, they collect and implement every single thing and every idea. Nothing can withstand their mania for collecting and doing. And the novel ends with the desperate gesture of preservation without qualification. Bouvard and Pecuchet limit themselves to transcribing and copying from books whatever can no longer take on any form, "what therefore remains as 'epithet', without any noun to which to attach itself, relate itself, unite itself"⁸:

"They copy papers haphazardly, everything they find, tobacco, pouches, old newspapers, posters, torn books, etc.(real items and their imitations. Typical of each category). Then they feel the need for taxonomy. They make tables, antithetical oppositions such as "crimes of the kings and crimes of the people"— blessings of religion, crimes of religion. Beauties of history, etc.; sometimes however, they have real problems putting each thing in a proper place and suffer great anxieties about it.

— Onward! Enough speculation! Keep on copying! The page must be filled. Everything is equal the good and the evil. The farcical and the sublime —the beautiful and the ugly— the insignificant and the typical, they all become an exaltation of the statistical. There are nothing but facts —and phenomena."⁹

Fig. 21. J.Courtanne, Physics Cabinet of Bonnier de la Mosson.



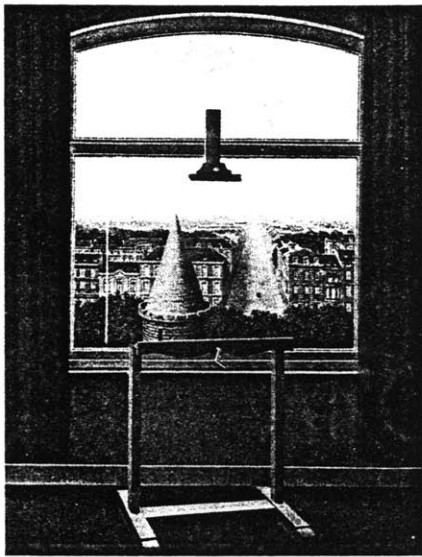


Fig. 22. *Les promenades de Euklide.*,
R. Magritte.



Fig. 23. *I Museo di Ferrante Imperato*,
Napoli 1599.

¹ Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library" *Illuminations*,
Edit: H. Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1969: pp. 59.

² Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library" *Illuminations*,
p.61.

³ Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library" *Illuminations*,
p.67.

⁴ T. W. Adorno, "Valery, Proust, and the Museum", in
Prisms, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, p.175

⁵ T. W. Adorno, "Valery, Proust, and the Museum", *Prisms*,
p.175

⁶ Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library" *Illuminations*,
p.60.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library" *Illuminations*,
p.60.

⁸ Franco Rella, "The vertico of the mëlange. The collector's
fight against time", in *Lotus* 35, 1982, p.56.

⁹ Gustave Flaubert, (*Oeuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert*
(Paris: Club de l' Honnête Homme, 1971), VI, 607), as
quoted by Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes
Towards a Conceptual Reading of Bouvard and Pècuchet",
*Textual Strategies. Perspectives in Post-Structuralist
Criticism*, ed. J.V. Harari, Cornell University Press, Ithaca,
New York, 1979, p.214.

The Museum's 'Order'



Fig. 24. *Picture Gallery of Cardinal Valenzi Gonzaga* , Panini.

In the first section, discussing the institution's evolution through time, I've argued that the shift from the private gallery to what we call public museum, should not be taken as a total transformation of the institution's heart , as a *refoundation* of it. It was a reflection, or better an adaptation to the political and social changes.

More significant than the 'private to public' shift has been the change in the way works of art are displayed. Paintings and statues are no longer accumulated objects giving pride to the owner, but are now organized in a specific order. Enlightenment brought specialization. A classification according to genres was the earliest type of systematization. In Museo Pio-Clementino arrangement was by subject matter, culminating in the rotunda as the room for the major deities. In

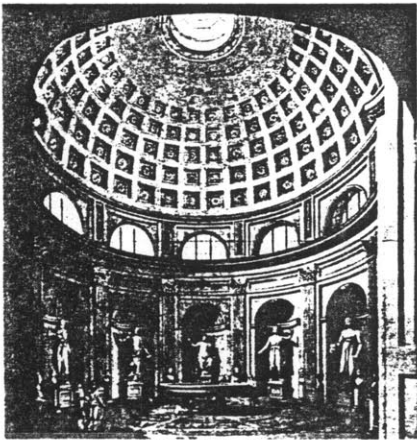


Fig. 25. Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican, by M. Simonetti and G. Gamporesi, 1773-80.

1779, the imperial catalogue in Vienna was rearranged and displayed in the Belvedere in terms of schools, indicating a change from entirely aesthetic to historical functions. "Such a large, public collection intended for instruction more than for fleeting pleasure, is like a rich library in which those eager to learn are glad to find works of all kinds and all periods."¹ A historical arrangement of the works of art, from room to room in a sequence of time and by schools, was adopted. In the glorious museums of the nineteenth century, such as the Munich Glyptothek and the Altes Museum, the collection arrangement had become a visible history of art.² A history of art however, as viewed by the creators of the museum. The bourgeoisie had spelled out the history of art and civilization in their own reading of art, in terms of national schools and individual artists. "The idea of civilization became identified with the history of high culture and high culture was taken as tangible evidence of a virtuous government. In the museums, art history began to supplant the history of state."³

It is interesting, however, that as early as 1785, a Viennese nobleman named Von Rittershausen criticized the ordering by periods and schools adopted in the arrangement of the works in the Belvedere palace: "If you want a history of art you can go to a museum but the sensitive man should be kept away from it."⁴ This "sensitive man" is one who doesn't go to a museum to 'learn' but to get spiritual enjoyment, and who will find greater pleasure in the sometimes incongruous

juxtapositions produced in "old fashioned" collections rather than in a rationally ordered space.

Preoccupied with the museum's artificially established order, we are almost unable to conceive it without it; the museum's *raison d'être* is maintained only as long as it gives, by the ordered display of selected artifacts, a coherent representation of human reality and history. Let us consider for a moment museum objects detached from their labels, and from the order that the museum has given them. The museum is transformed into a container of patterns shapes colors and sounds. The visitor moves then among a changing panorama of suggestive things, things stripped of their primary use and natural context but laid out in such a way that they suggest other things, which are indeed partly predetermined by their arrangement, but partly open to personal readings as well. Subjective perception, even if historically determined, suggests some extent of individuality in the viewer's reading. Despite the effect of the museum -both mentally and physically- upon the relationship between a piece of art and the viewer, there is always an unpredictable gap in this relationship. Even though a visitor to a museum is supposed to be reassured that objects exhibited are praiseworthy, and to read things in a certain way, there is always personal reading involved. I'm not arguing that the individual is entirely free in reading or interpreting what he/she perceives.⁵ But within a frame of limiting forces, there is always a variety of possible alternatives, not only among different individuals, but even for the same person, whose

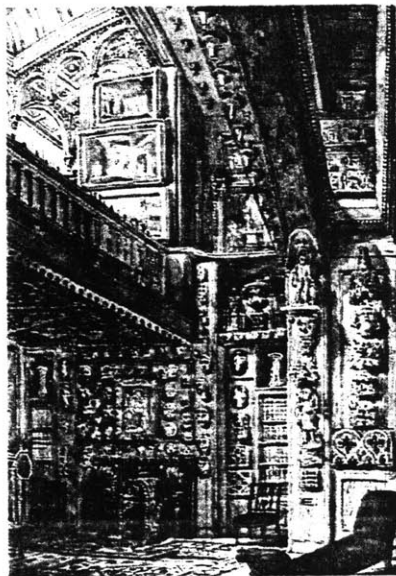


Fig. 26. *Fragments of the antiquity*,
Leo von Klenze.

'world' is not stable. As Proust had argued, the work of art is a kind of optical instrument offered to the reader in order that he makes self-discoveries not otherwise possible.⁶

Eugenio Donato has seen in Flaubert's tragic figures of Bouvard and Pécuchet the ideology that has governed the museum in the nineteenth century down to the present: "The set of objects the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe. The fiction is that a repeated metonymic displacement of fragment for totality, object to label, series of objects to series of labels, can still produce a representation which is somehow adequate to a nonlinguistic universe. Such a fiction is the result of an uncritical belief in the notion that ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments can produce a representational understanding of the world. Should the fiction disappear, there is nothing left at the Museum, but *bric-a-brac*, a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects, which are incapable of substituting themselves either metonymically for the original objects or metaphorically for their representations."⁷ "Museum is heterogeneous in its nature," writes Douglas Crimp. "The whole history of museology is a history of all the various attempts to deny this fact and reduce it to a homogeneous system of series."⁸ It is this blind faith in an existing and unquestionable order that distinguishes the institution from the earlier "aimless collection of curiosities and bric-a-brac, brought together without any method or system."⁹ Such a 'world', as a reflection, and moreover, a representation of the 'outside world' —of reality and of its uncontrolled relationships and

Fig. 27, 28. Sir John Soane Museum-house: Picture room and Monk's parlour.



contradictions— is, at least, honest, in contrast to the organization of the museum, which is an artificial 'order' arbitrarily accepted as universal.

There is no such thing as 'universal order'. There is only one's own imposed 'order', characterized by both its individuality and its transience. Furthermore, any 'order' is self-denying, since it instantly calls for the existence of another, which defies the former. It is our faith in the possibility of order, and the denial of a 'bric-a-brac' universe that is reflected in our museums. Bouvard and Pécuchet had "begun with the dream and hope of a total, finite, rational domain of knowledge," and have "come to realize that not only is knowledge as a given totality unavailable, but that also any act of totalization is by definition incomplete, infinite, and everywhere marked by accident, chance, and randomness."¹⁰

Let me close with Adorno's words:

"That the world is out of joint is shown everywhere in the fact that however a problem is solved, the solution is false."¹¹

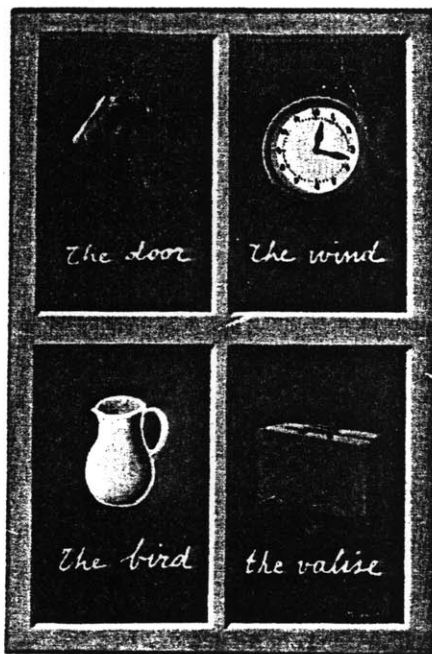


Fig. 29. *The Key of Dreams*,
R. Magritte.

Fig. 30. A student's study room.



¹ From the introduction to the exhibition's catalogue, as quoted by Helmut Selig, "The Genesis of the Museum", in *Architectural Review* 141, Feb'67, pp.113.

² Although the Enlightenment put into question the 'magnificent chaos' of the 'Cabinet' and founded a systematization and classification in the arrangement of the exhibits, nonetheless *quantity* has persisted as a characteristic of the museum throughout the whole nineteenth century. It is within the twentieth century that this was questioned, and care for the specific object emerged.

³ Carol Duncan, and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum". in *Art History* , v.3, n.4, Dec.1980, pp. 462.

⁴ Quoted by Hubert Damish, "The museum device: notes on institutional changes", in *Lotus* 35, pp. 6.

⁵Not only are the collection's arrangement as well the spatial features and interrelationships always pre-decided for the viewer, but the preconceptions one carries with him (on art, on the museum institution, etc.) unavoidably affect one's experience.

⁶ Theodore W.Adorno, "Valery, Proust and the Museum", in *Prisms* , The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, p. 183.

⁷ E. Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes Towards a Conceptual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet", in *Textual Strategies. Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J.V. Harari, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1979, p.223

⁸ Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum Ruins", *October* 13, Summer 1980, p.50. Crimp is using and referring to Donato's reflection on G.Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet* ("The Museum's Furnace: Notes Towards a Conceptual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet").

⁹ Lord Balcarres (trustee of the National Portrait Gallery) in his critique of the early museums, as quoted by Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes Towards a Conceptual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet", in *Textual Strategies. Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, p.222.

¹⁰ Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes Towards a Conceptual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet", in *Textual Strategies. Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, p.214.

¹¹ Theodore W.Adorno, "Valery, Proust and the Museum", in *Prisms* , The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, p. 176.

Subjective perception

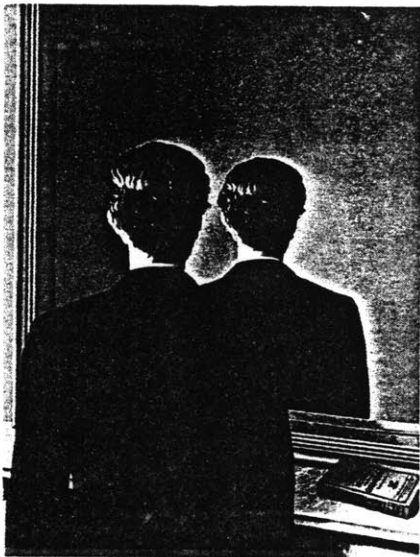


Fig. 31. *La Reproduction interdite*,
R. Magiite

The contemporary museum institution, being a successor to the museum of the Enlightenment is in a way premised on the establishment of classification; it is a reflection of the Enlightenment's model of knowledge. Within that frame, the institution was conceived as a paradigm of knowledge for the domain of art. But first and foremost, the underlying hypothesis was the objective character of the way art was to be read. Only object-oriented perception could sustain the criteria of order and classification.

The shift to subjective perception put into question the very essence of the institution. The impossibility of an objective conception of reality, a concept linked to Kant's theory of knowledge, suggested a focus on the perceptual structure of the receiver. At a moment when classical ideas of beauty, harmony, order, and proportion were unable to encompass the seeming complexity and diversity of artistic phenomena, the whole Semperian logic of object production came into question. General aesthetics came to be replaced by an analysis of artistic production by means of the perceptual criteria of the subject. Neo-Kantian art theoreticians came to establish the subjective origin of the work of art and the need to refer to the different forms of sensibility of the subject. The shift from the object to the subject, from the stylistic condition to the laws of visual perception has been a radical change in the end of the nineteenth century,

which strongly influenced the conception of art held by the twentieth century avant garde.

However, subjective perception had been interpreted and developed in different ways. The methodology of pure visibility led to a radical formalism, which represents a closed and independent structure from which nothing can be inferred. The formalist's museum was a museum of pure visual stimuli, which provoke a diversity of responses in the viewer, but without any meanings beyond themselves. As an alternative to this, an historicist attitude had emerged, which, regarding pure formalism as insufficient, tried to link the gap between idealists and materialists. The characteristics of the object were, in a way, returned to the vision that perceived them; a complex and mediated relationship between object and subject was established, which allowed itself to be understood historically as a special kind of vision, dominant in a particular epoch. Vision was understood to have its own historical character.

One can locate this attitude in Winckelmann, who had already sought criteria by which individual works might be the catalysts of a historical-stylistic analysis, which would go beyond the works themselves to propose a vision interior to every period and artist, and hence embedded in the artwork.¹ Alois Riegl was a significant contributor to this perception of a 'history of vision'; in introducing the concept of 'Kunstwollen' (artistic will), he attempted to overcome the strict separation of pure formalists and historicists.



Fig. 32. *The Knight, Death and the Devil*, A. Dürer.

In such a linking of history and art, where the former is perceived as a continuous evolutionary scheme, which generates its own changing values, artistic perception is under continuous transformation throughout historical time. Art theoreticians managed to go beyond the pure and diverse stimulation of the senses, and have instead an historicist attitude, where the production of meaning results from the interchange between subjective and objective worlds. It is, indeed, the subjective that determines the perception's content; but, at the same time, the perceiving subject is not self-dependant.

It is within such an historicist framework that I want to place the perception of buildings of the past. Buildings, like works of art, are human artifacts. Our attitude towards them, our respect or disregard, depends on our own criteria and values, on our own perceptions.

Alois Riegl, in discussing the perception of pre-existing buildings and the issue of *monumentality*, argued for the strongly varying roles that old artifacts play at different times in history. The very idea of the monument is at once historically determined and relative to the values of each period. By introducing *relative* art-value, he advocated that history has not only given rise to different kind of monuments, but also exposed them to widely varying appreciation throughout time. From such a point of view, every building, like every artifact of the past, "everything that has been", constitutes an

irreplaceable and irremovable link in a chain of development..

¹ Vidler, A., "The 'Art' of History: Monumental Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Quatremere de Quincy", *Oppositions* 25, Fall 1982.

Attitudes towards Buildings of the Past

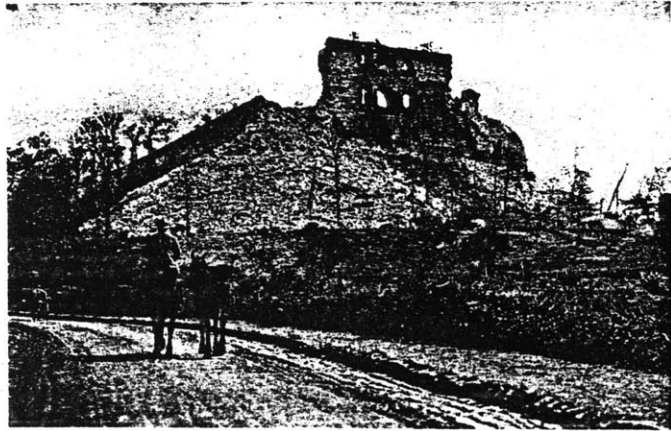


Fig. 33. Coucy-le-Château, Aisne (Photograph,1918).

There are various perspectives from which one can view restoration and adaptive reuse. Besides the aesthetic choices immediately associated with them, there are other issues involved, such as financial circumstances, urban development plans, and so forth. However, my interest here remains on the physical and psychologic aspects of restoration, on the ways ideas —cultural, ideological, aesthetic— are embedded architecturally in the physical environment and particularly in single buildings, and on the ways ideas can be attached to concrete elements. It is not my intention to pretend to cover the range of issues involved, since even their examination and analysis is strongly dependent on the uniqueness of each case, and cannot be determined in a theoretical essay, but only in creative practice. My aim here is to raise questions and issues to which one should be sensitized when dealing with the challenging goal of modifying a

building, so that it can house a new function, different from the one for which it was originally built for.

The very first question to be raised is the following: Should we preserve the built environment, and why? Why should we try to accommodate new uses in old shells if we can replace them with new structures, frequently in an equal or lower cost? One can get different responses, stemming from different points of view. And, moreover, each case is unique, and only the analysis of the particular issues it raises can provide with answers for its appropriate treatment.

In relation to the way I dealt with subjective perception in the previous chapter, I would first say that a person's attitude towards an old building is a sign of his or her attitude towards the past. An old building does hold in storage an assembly of stories of real and imagined events of the past, just as the individual stores his or her own experience in the unconscious. It is a container of presences that includes memories and images of the past. Ambiguity about our present, uncertainty about the future, make us feel the need to keep or recreate links with the past. The physical environment is a tool, a support in such an effort. Its careful treatment, its preservation gives a sense of continuity, and provides us with a feeling of security, as a contrast to the alienation produced due to rapid changes occurring nowadays. We can only achieve that by changing our attitude towards built environment, by perceiving it as a living organism, by being sensitized to the *life* of buildings.

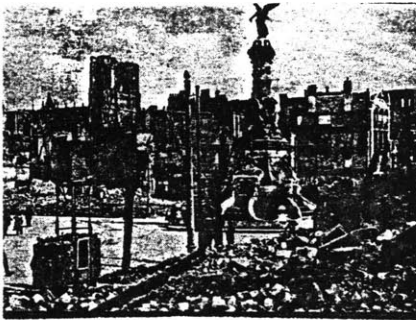


Fig. 34. Reims, World War I devastation

The past is partly experienced in our present. As Aldo Rossi puts it, buildings, as urban artifacts, persist throughout time, are *permanences*, i.e. a past which we are still experiencing.¹ But it this experience, and modes of perception that change. Buildings surviving the disruptive forces of time constitute memory and testify to collective values. It is this *persistence* of an urban artifact that makes it to become identified as a *monument*.

One can define some differences in the appreciation of such persisting monuments. There are buildings that had been produced the way works of art are; part, if not the whole, of their *raison d'être* is to make statements and convey messages by certain aesthetic choices. And there are buildings that weren't meant to distinguish themselves, and whose *persistence* is a result of their appreciation throughout time. Index of time adds value to an old structure. It is the appreciation of its age that gives value to it, what Riegl has named *age-value*². Here, the value of the artifact as memory, does not interfere with the building as a work of art as such, but springs from our appreciation of the time which has elapsed since it was made and which has burdened it with traces of age. Of course, a strict border line would, in a way, be arbitrary, for age-value can be attached to any structure on one hand, and every human artifact carries statements embedded in it on the other. Nonetheless, there are significant differences in the ways we evaluate different kinds of surviving elements of the built environment, which *are* linked with their origin: were they ment to be perceived as monuments or is

it our perception of them which gives them value?
³as well as our appreciation

We certainly cannot call for the preservation of each and every testimony of the past around us. Resistance to change cannot be the rule. Needs and values change; our perception of the world changes. "Change and recurrence are the sense of being alive -things gone by , death to come, and present awareness. The world around us, so much of it our own creation , shifts continually and often bewilders us. We reach out to that world to preserve or to change it and so make visible our desires. The arguments of planning all come down to the management of change."⁴ There are choices to be made, priorities set. We select those 'parts' which we want to make part of the living present, and leave the rest apart. We dispose of physical evidence of the past for the same reason that we 'forget'; and we save old buildings which still keep the ability to communicate with us, even if they have lost their links with the surroundings, because of the latter's substitution by new structures.⁵

Besides the memories retained and the messages conveyed, a building's response to current needs is instantly raised. Without any practical utility would a building satisfy an advocate of age value? Is appreciation of the passage of time enough to give value to an old structure within the fabric of a contemporary city? The answer we would probably receive is a negative one. A building's current use is usually considered to have the first word; we do not accept 'dead' buildings, structures whose functions do not satisfy current needs any more. I would

argue against not the truth of such an attitude, but against its absoluteness. For there can be cases, where the appreciation of a building's embedded values is enough to keep the structure alive. And then, the function that is housed in it —because, indeed, buildings *have* to be, and always *are* used, in one way or another— receives a different appreciation.

In any case, whether a building was meant to distinguish itself at the time it was built, it is our perception and our appreciation of it that turns it into a monument. Thus, any intervention upon a preexisting building reflects a subjective attitude towards built environment and towards the past in general. A restorer cannot avoid making statements which reveal certain positions. Is the 'patina of time' to be retained or removed? How do we deal with decay caused by nature, and how with the results of former interventions? We argue often for the preservation of a “masterpiece of architecture”, while we ignore the fact that it is itself a hybrid mixture of architectural interventions in different periods of time. Among the several layers, which do we expose and which try to conceal ? Furthermore, our intervention is an additional layer. Should it be marked as such? Should we or leave a trace of our modern times to compete, even if harmoniously, with the myriad traces of the past?

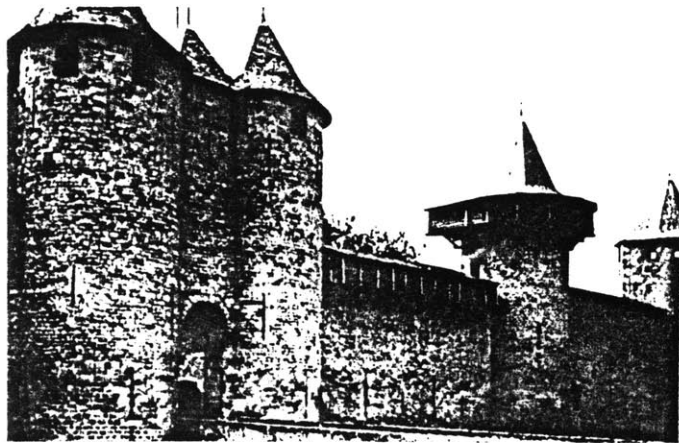
Interventions can follow various paths, reflecting different choices, made according to different ways of appreciating the existing situation. In conservation with the strict meaning of the word, i.e. maintenance work, the old structure is restored

according to its present condition. The aim is to save and protect what is still there, not to bring the past back; changes through time cannot be taken back. "One cannot and should never attempt to put the hands back, or even to stop the clock , by arbitrarily selecting one stage of the process of the long transformation; preservation should aim at doing no more than maintaining a building in a state in which it is still capable of being subject to its long transformation."⁶ The acceptance of time's disruptive forces pushed to the extreme leads to the position that a building should be left to lead its own life. It is precisely its age that gives significance to the structure. Traces of time should not be concealed, for they are associated with events of the past, with memories to be retained. Completely opposed to this attitude is the advocacy of the restoration of a building to its original form, if this is possible. Such an attitude assumes that all the traces of time —both those caused by nature and by human interventions — should be eliminated, so that the authentic work of art will come to the foreground.

The process of decay can be reversed, slowed down, or let free. There is no easy answer to be provided. Choices depend on the priorities set, suggested by the unique nature of the problems in each case. However, they are also a result of the restorer's point of view, and it is his or her attitude in dealing with the past which has to be examined as well. Priorities can be set according to completely different values, whose relationships are not fixed. The same set of values can be in affinity or under

conflict, depending on the different parameters of each case. The deeper restoration issues are examined and the better their understanding is, the more it is made clear that there are no rules to be applied and followed successfully in any case. Each case sets up its own problems which suggest its own response; any attempt to generalize would be in vain.

Fig. 35. The Ramparts of Carcassonne after the restoration by Viollet-le-Duc.



¹ Rossi, A., *The Architecture of the City*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1982.

² Riegl, A., "The Modern Cult of Monuments. Its Character and its Origin", *Oppositions* 25, Fall 1982, pp. 21-51.

³ Riegl defines the difference by naming intentional the formers and unintentional the latter. Riegl, A., "The Modern Cult of Monuments. Its Character and its Origin", p. 24.

⁴ Lynch, K., *What Time is this Place?*, MIT Press, 1972

⁵ An issue raised, of course, is what is to be communicated or promoted, and by whom are the choices made (state's or ruling's class power).

⁶ Pevsner, N., *The Future of the Past*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976.

PART B
Old Buildings Converted to Museums

The Complex Relationships of Three Actors

In a restoration project, the relationship between the 'old' and the 'new' is in itself a complex issue. The change in the building's use adds a third layer, and raises a considerably greater number of problems in this threefold interaction. And if the new function is that of the museum, complexity is enhanced by the fact that what is inserted is a collection of objects which carry their own meanings and interactions.

What should be raised first, however, is the significance of the change in the use of a building by itself; having been vacated of its original functions, the purpose for which it had been brought into life, the building has been emptied of its inner 'self', thus emphasizing the perception of it as a 'shell'. The original structure, which used to serve different functions, is still present but has been modified in order to incorporate a 'new world' within it, the exhibition of an art collection. The relationship between the building's original purpose and its new use as a museum comes then into the foreground. Whether it is one of affinity or juxtaposition—if we take the two extremes—the interaction is always strong and should not be overlooked.

Buildings prove to be more durable than their function, surpass it and live their own life. They are read, then, as self-sufficient objects, and can be appreciated as objects *per se*. However, there is an interesting paradox here: they do not deny their

original use, are not rejecting their past, but on the contrary emphasize it. Although they are now related to their new function and to their new context, by being perceived as distinct existences *per se*, they still carry images and qualities of the past. That means that they are read in both of these two ways, not in one *or* the other exclusively: in relation to their contemporary reality, *and* as independent objects.

If such buildings manage to surpass 'time', they should not be considered as standing 'out of time', for, on the contrary, they bring up the notion of time more than anything else. What is highlighted is their persistence, their continuity throughout time. We confront such buildings, use them as they are supposed to be used in the present, and appreciate them or not in relation to their new function. But, at the same time, we appreciate each building's own life as an object, feel the passage of time on it, read 'life' on it. The latter, this kind of perception of built environment is the fruitful feedback we get by preserving images of the past.

The very fact that the 'inserted' function is that of the museum, brings the building-object into a different 'world', results in another kind of transformation of it. 'Next' to the collection of objects, that carry and convey a complex system of meanings (of their own and of their interrelationships), the building enters the world of the exhibits, becomes another fragment of this whole. Just like the contained works of art which have now reached the stage of conservation and exhibition within a museum, the building affirms its

'self' as a testimony to the past; it loses its functional links with the present, and is reduced to a testimonial fragment. An interesting point is that the perceiving subject, the viewer, observes then the displayed object from within. Additionally, the old theme of the "doll within a doll" comes into the foreground. Valéry's words come on my mind:

"I go out ... and the magnificent chaos of the museum follows me and mingles with the bustle of the street ...: we are and move in the same vortex of *mélange* as we inflict as a torment on the art of the past."¹

The above issues become clearer when enquired by means of concrete examples. The reader should consider my continual use of references to some examples not as a narrow minded approach focusing on some and leaving apart other cases of such museums, but as a method of examining and clarifying my questions, assumptions, and hypotheses.

I'll name here some more or less known examples, so that the reader can get a sense of the kind of museum I'm dealing with. The time of the original construction of each building is provided within the parenthesis, and, out of it, lies the time of the latest intervention.

-Palazzo Bianco Museum, Genoa (early sixteenth century), 1951, by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

-Palazzo Rosso Museum, Genoa (1670's), 1959-61, by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

-Palazzo Abatellis Museum, Palermo (late fifteenth century), 1953-4, by Carlo Scarpa.

-Castelvecchio Museum, Verona (1350's), 1958-64, by Carlo Scarpa.



Fig. 36. Palazzo Rosso Museum, Genoa, 1959-61, by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

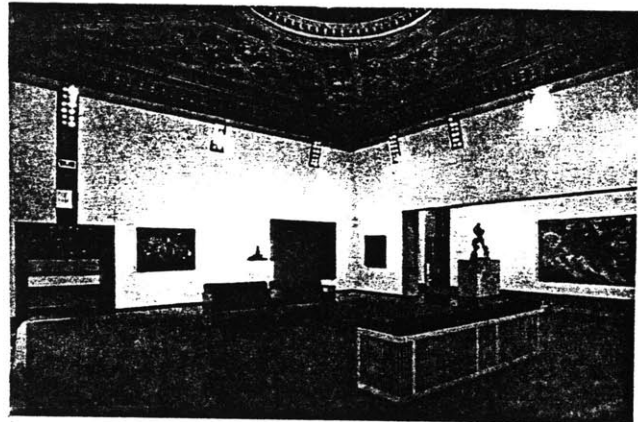


Fig. 37. Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1985-6, by Gae Aulenti.

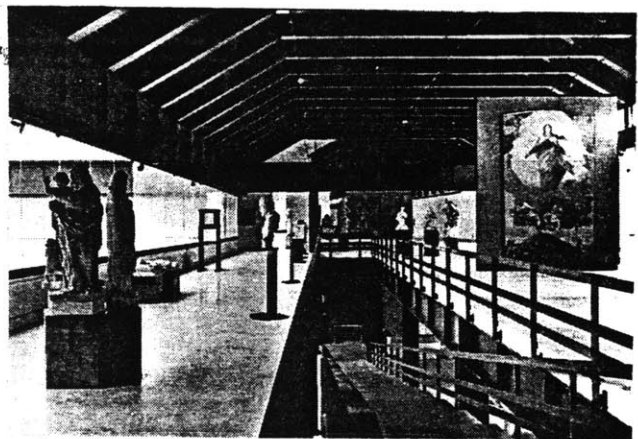


Fig. 38. San Agostino Museum, Genoa, 1977-86, by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

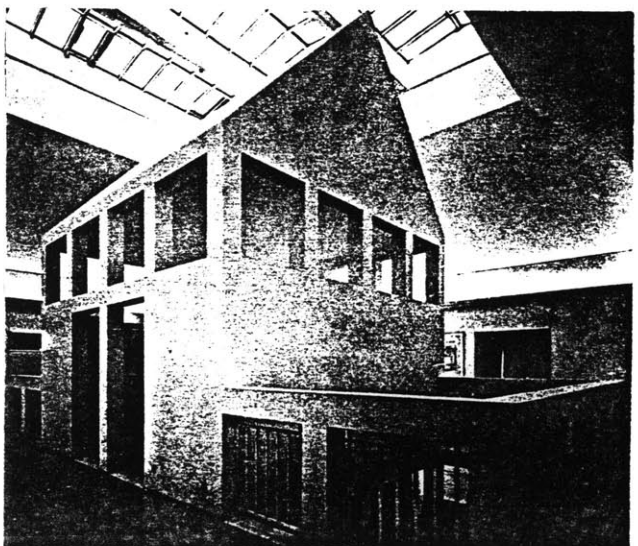


Fig. 39. Architektur Museum, Frankfurt , 1984, by O.M. Ungers.

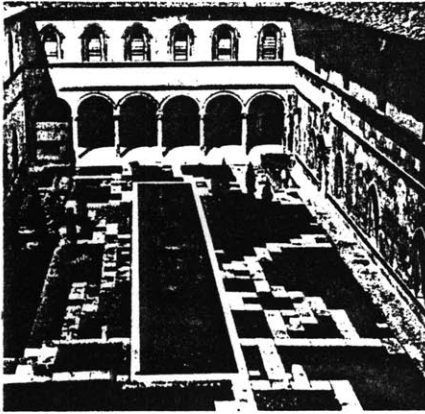


Fig. 40. Castello Sforzesco Museum, Milan, 1954-56, by Studio Architetti B.B.P.R.

-Castello Sforzesco Museum, Milan (1450's), 1954-56, by Studio Architetti B.B.P.R.

-National Gallery in Palazzo della Pilotta, Parma (early seventeenth century) 1970's, by Guido Canali.

-San Agostino Museum, Genoa, 1977-86, by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

-Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux (1820's), 1979-84, by Andree Putman.

-Les Halles des Boeufs, La Villette, Paris, (1820's), 1979-84, by Reichen and Robert.

-Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux (1820's), 1979-84, by Andree Putman.

-Musée Picasso, Paris (1650's), 1983-5, by Roland Simounet.

-Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1985-6, by Gae Aulenti.

-Musée d'Orsay, Paris (1898), 1986, by Gae Aulenti.

-Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux (1820's), 1979-84, by Andrée Putman.

-Architektur Museum, Frankfurt (1902), 1984, by O.M. Ungers.

However, it is hard to draw a strict line, and leave out museums such as the National Museum of Modern Art within the Center George Pompidou, and the Louvre in Paris, or even the Gardner Museum in Boston and the Sir John Soane Museum in London.

Although, in some cases, references to museums I haven't visited might be legitimate, I hold that there is no substitute for one's personal experience of a place, if one wishes to deal with issues such as 'presence of the past', 'death',

memories and feelings evoked. Thus I will mainly refer to buildings I have had personal experience of.

There are three museums which I will analyze elaboratively and will repeatedly use as references for making certain points more comprehensible. These are: the Palazzo Bianco Museum in Genoa, restored in 1951 by Franco Albini and Franca Helg; the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona, restored in 1958-64, by Carlo Scarpa; and Gare d'Orsay in Paris, converted to a museum in 1986 by Gae Aulenti. To the choice of the above examples I was drawn by my interest for the Italian tradition linking 'restauro' with exhibition design, as well as its influence upon museum architecture in Europe. In the order presented, they form an expression of a development through time, from the fifties until today. Palazzo Bianco, at the threshold of the fifties, has been a strong statement and a point of reference for the successors; Castelvecchio, at the threshold of the sixties constituted a paradigm, opening a path to be broadly followed in the seventies; and the recently converted Gare d'Orsay has raised many questions on both the fields of architecture and museology. The three museums share both differences and similarities in the ways restoration and exhibition design issues were approached, and they provide us with different answers to the questions raised here.

The chosen buildings are documented separately in an appendix, where I limit myself to just describing the buildings and their history. A critique of them, as well as an analysis of their reflections on and responses to the issues I'm interested in are

used in the main core of the essay, so as to provide concrete basis for the issues raised. However, I have to emphasize that it is the examination of my questions and assumptions which I'm placing in the foreground, and not the criticism of the specific buildings.

In the type of museums I'm dealing with, one is confronted with a complex interaction of three relationships:

- between the old and the new parts of the building
- displayed objects in relation to their environment
- relationships among the exhibited objects

Although these relationships are listed here separately, one has to hold in mind their interdependencies; for it is these which, finally, lead to one or another reading of a building. Analyzing the restoration work on the old structure, one has to continually remember and refer to the change of use and the museum function. In turn, relations established between the displayed objects in an exhibition cannot completely be set apart from their interactions with the various elements of the surrounding environment, especially if one adopts the startpoint of the modified building as an object of display as well.

However, obtaining different viewpoints might prove a useful tool in examining the subject. Separated from each other, the issues involved will be highlighted one at a time, and thus better clarified. The buildings will be approached from two points of view, each focusing on certain questions, but still, not ignoring the other: first, they will be examined in relation to the choices made in the

fields of museum architecture and exhibition arrangement; and, second, in relation to their architectural treatment and the reflected attitude towards conservation and adaptive reuse.

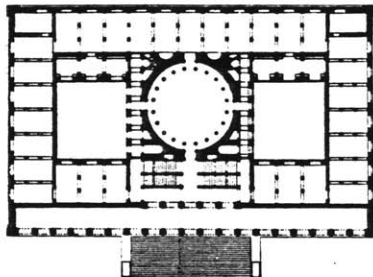
¹P. Valéry, ("Le problème des musées," Oeuvres II, pp.1290-12), as quoted by Rella, F., "The vertigo of the mélange. The collector's fight against time", *Lotus* 35, 1982, pp. 57.

Analysis of such Buildings from the Scope of Museum Architecture and Exhibition Design

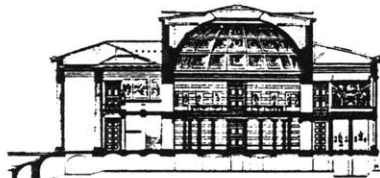


Fig. 41. Museum Fridericianum,
Kassel, 1769-79

Fig. 42. Altes Museum, Berlin,
K.F.Schinkel, 1823-1830.



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Although what interests us here is museums installed in preexisting buildings, we have to remind ourselves of the path which museum architecture has followed, for designs for new museum buildings reflects attitudes towards ways of exhibiting, which interests us here.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century that architects started coming up with plans for an ideal museum. The main path opened in the eighteenth century and established throughout the nineteenth can be said to start with Algarotti's prophetic plan for the Dresden Museum in 1742; in this, of which we have unfortunately only a description, the idea of a centralized building with a large courtyard is met for the first time; it then runs through Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, the first realized project for a separate museum building (1769-79) Museo Pio-Clementino in Vatican (1773-80), and the unrealized proposals of Boullée and Durand, to Leo von Klenze's Munich Glyptothek (1815-30) and K.F.Schinkel's Altes Museum (1823-1830), both serving as paradigms for museum architecture in Europe and in the United States throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, a period in which a considerable number of new museums and galleries were built.

Architectural explorations at the turn of the century could not leave out museum design. On the contrary, the latter had been a fertile site to

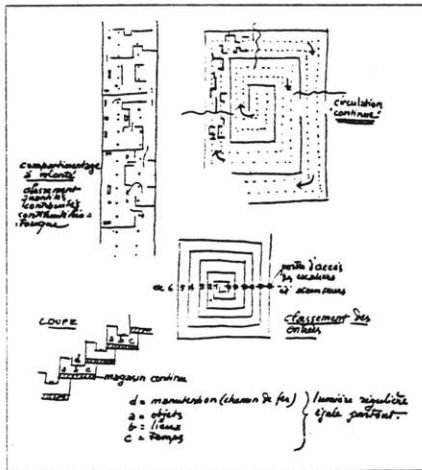


Fig. 43. Le Corbusier, Mundaneum, Genève, 1929,

Fig. 44. New National Gallery, Berlin, Mies van de Rohe, 1962-68.

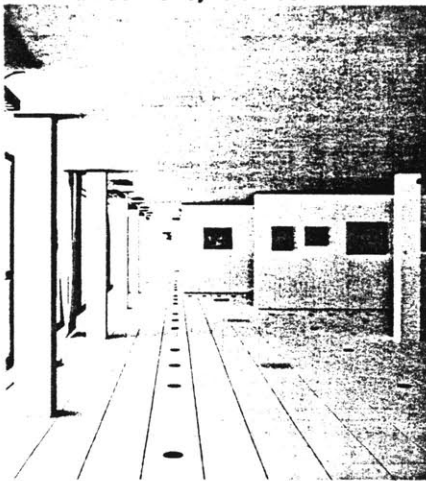


Fig. 45. The Pompidou Center in Paris, (1972-77) by R.Piano & R Rogers

experiment with the new ideas in the field, as well as to respond to the challenges emerging with a new interpretation of the work of art. Le Corbusier took to the extreme the notion of the itinerary established throughout the nineteenth century, coming to designs such as that of the 'Mundaneum' (1929), and the 'Museum of Unlimited Growth' (1939). F.L.Wright's Guggenheim museum (1943-59) reflects an effort to continue with this same idea, but at the same time breaking its rigidity; the itinerary is still there, but lateral routes and spaces are established, and at the same time the unity of the whole is achieved by the large central space, serving as a constant reference. Mies van de Rohe, in his project for a 'Museum for a Small City' (1942) proposed a fluid space providing flexibility under a single roof, an idea eventually realized in the New National Gallery in Berlin (1962-68). Open plans are reflections of the search for a neutral and versatile container, which respond to the idea of temporary installments, and offer the possibility of a flexible itinerary. The Pompidou Center in Paris (1972-77) by R.Piano & R Rogers is a perfect example of the new attitude towards exhibition design, in which the museum is conceived as open shelves equipped with the infrastructure required to house and display exhibits.

Open plan museums, promising for flexibility and neutrality, proved unable to provide convincing responses, not even in so far as strict accordance with their very purpose: rather than in a freedom of display options, the elimination of all spatial constraints results—in an apparent paradox—in an

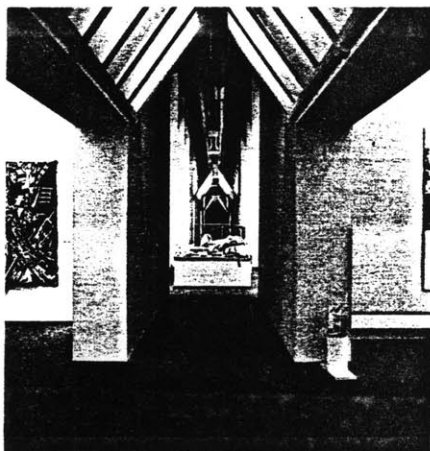


Fig. 46. Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, G. Aulenti and I. Rota, 1984-85.

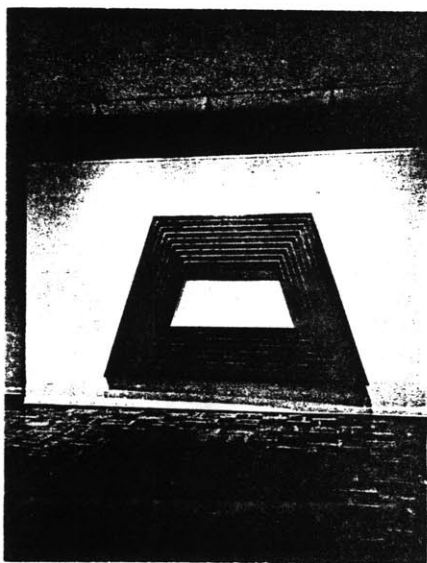


Fig. 47. Frank Stella, installation view, 1964, courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

excessive rigidity. They were soon questioned, and a return to the enclosure of the rooms and galleries of the traditional museums came to the foreground. The case of the Pompidou is again indicative; Gae Aulenti and Italo Rota remodelled the interior of its fourth floor (1984-85), by returning to the traditional layout of defined rooms and the idea of specific display for specific works of art.

However, we should avoid confounding the notion of 'open' plan with that of the abstract (not 'neutral') environment of the 'White Cube'¹. Although they are often found together, the former regards the exhibition's layout (flexibility or lack of a strict route), whereas the latter has to do with the architectural elements (walls, mountings) in relation to the exhibits on display, and can also be found in the traditional *closed* museum of a sequence of rooms and galleries.

The 'white wall' was considered as a means for eliminating the distracting features surrounding the object on display. But the irony lay in the fact that at the moment the white wall was perceived as a carrier of certain qualities —suggesting elimination of any context, at that same moment it becomes content itself. If one thinks of the wall as an architectural element and its effect on the exhibits, one will conclude that the walls of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Salons, obsessively filled with easel paintings, were a much looser background than the white wall of the twentieth century gallery. The latter is more a participant rather than a passive support for the art².



Fig.48, The eighteenth century Grande Gallery in the Louvre.



Fig. 49. Study gallery in the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

In the exhibition space, each of the two interacting worlds, that of the displayed objects—if not of each object—and that of the building, carries its own meanings and messages. The visitor to the museum receives them and, consciously or not, associates the images with knowledge or memories stored in his mind, reads messages which the architects and the artist respectively wanted to convey, or even gives the perceived works his/her own meanings, unforeseen by the creators. Furthermore, consciously or not again, the viewer creates links between these two worlds of associations, for he can't isolate him/herself in one of them. We are constantly receiving messages from our environment, whether we like it or not. It is this fact that the architect has to be aware of; one has to make choices and can't avoid making one's own statement and effecting the exhibits with the environment one creates.

The debate between the architect and the artist on principles of museum architecture is not only a problem of our day. As early as 1816, for example, Leo von Klenze, the winner in the competition for the Munich Glyptotech, had to defend his interiors against the objections of Jochan Martin Wagner, a painter, sculptor, and archaeologist, who was asked for his opinion by Ludwig I, then crown prince of Bavaria. Wagner suggested that there should be only one large hall, for the sculpture of Aegina, and that the rest should consist of small rooms, each for three or four pieces, and arranged iconographically. Architectural treatment should be modest, so as not to disturb the exhibits. "If you visit a collection of

ancient sculpture you go because of the ancient sculpture." Thus, "any [architectural] ornament, anything gay in color and glittering does damage to works of ideal art." The architect's response was that "a museum is not a place for artists' training, an *akademischer Kunstzwinger* , but a place in which to show a number of treasures of art to all kind of visitors in a manner worthy of the objects and to create pleasure in them. [It should be] more an institution for the nation than for the student of art, suited to divert art into life and mix it with life."³ The same battle took place between Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Aloys Hirt for the Altes Museum.⁴ In both of the above nineteenth century cases, the winner was the architect.

Architectural decoration in the museum's interior was to be questioned in the twentieth century. But this doesn't mean that architects lost the 'war'. The white wall established could not create the neutral environment it was advocating. Moreover, architecture was not at all pushed into the background; on the contrary, we have come today to museums which can be said not to need any objects to be exhibited within them.

In Italy after the second world war and in the fifties, architects like Franco Albini, Ignazio Gardella, Carlo Scarpa, and B.B.P.R. created a 'school' of thought on the subject, so that one speaks today of a very specific Italian museological tradition. As a reaction to the abstract container, they revived the notion of *ambience* ⁵. Architecture becomes the mediator between works of art and the

viewer, and should be treated so as to favour this communication. The display of each work of art is carefully studied and elaborated (position, support, lighting), so that it evokes the condition for concentration and maximum appreciation of it. It is this highlighting of the environment's relations with the viewer which is a significant contribution of Italian architects in museum architecture. The position they shared and developed is that architecture has to be concerned with and related to the visitor's culture, his/her modern actual life, his/her understanding and ways of perceiving. Architects, instead of trying to create a surrounding for an object, should try to create an appropriate surrounding for the viewer, so that he/she will be able to appreciate the objects.⁶ Subjectiveness is conjured up, and furthermore, art is seen as a perceptive experience.

Palazzo Bianco was to be the first of a series of museums buildings and exhibition designs which Franco Albini and Franca Helg would subsequently be commissioned.⁷ The architects and Caterina Marcenaro, who was responsible for the collection arrangement for most of them, shared two fundamental positions: first, exhibits should be few in number, so that they do not confuse the viewer by overloading him/her; and, second, the architectural language of the surrounding environment should be familiar to the viewer, so as not to distract him/her from the real objects on display, the works of art. In relation to the former, Marcenaro has asserted: "In the interest of education, the present solution [she is referring to



Fig. 50. Palazzo Bianco, Genoa.

Palazzo Bianco] is based on considerations of quality. Some of the former exhibits have been withdrawn, on the ground that they were not of the finest quality, were negligible from the standpoint of visual education, and liable to confuse the mind of the uninformed visitor. They have been replaced by others, which are qualitatively and technically of greater interest. ... The palace concept was abandoned, and the museum criteria strictly adhered to. ... A museum should not be a haphazard exhibitions of relics and objects of value; this would lead to confusion and mere proliferation, to random acquisition of exhibits rather than critical selection, to imparting information rather than real knowledge, and so failing to discharge the museum's specifically educational task."⁸

An historical sequence has been adopted in the arrangement of the collection. Works of art have been placed in chronological order and grouped according to country and school, "so that the rooms follow one another like the successive chapters of a pictorial anthology. ... To give an individual character to the museum, pre-eminence has been given to the displays devoted to the Flemish, Dutch, Genoese, and Liguarian schools."⁹ On the first level, the museographic route, confined by the preexisting plan which was respected, is discontinuous. The visitor has to leave a group of rooms from the door he or she entered. On the contrary, on the piano nobile the sequence of rooms and galleries is uninterrupted, forming a closed route.



Fig. 51, 52. Palazzo Rosso, Genoa.
 "Albini's interiors seem to be treated as laboratories for the study of display methods ..."

The care given to the storage rooms is another reflection of the emphasis on the educational task of the museum. Works of art on display are few—and should be so, according to Marcenaro—but the rest of the collection should be accessible to scholars, students, and artists. In Palazzo Bianco, the space given to storage is even larger than that offered to exhibition, and in Palazzo Rosso, at the other side of the street, each floor has its own mezzanine where stored works are classified and available for study.

Technical issues are certainly a significant variable in museum architecture, and the Italian school was keenly aware of them, as a means for providing, both the condition for the most effective appreciation of each work of art, and a flexible system of display. Especially Albini's interiors seem to be treated as laboratories for the study of display methods, lighting conditions, and environmental control. Marcenaro has stated that the aim was to evolve a thoroughly flexible system of display, so that one or more works could at any time be added, removed or transferred.¹⁰ Paintings on the walls are hung from visible iron shafts, which are easily movable along iron slideways. In the storage space, paintings are suspended on wires that run across the rooms, and can be glided for examination in much the same manner as one would turn the pages of a book. To save space, double-sided panels have been introduced, fitted with iron rails to which the shafts supporting the pictures are hooked.

Special methods have been adopted for the display of pieces considered exceptional. For

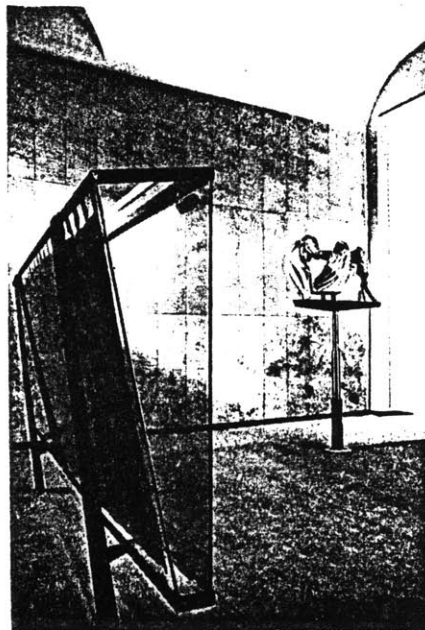
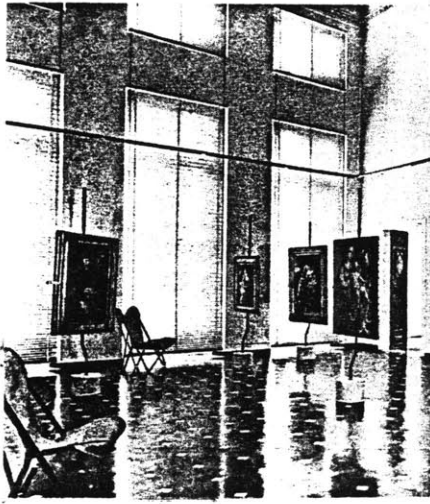


Fig. 53, 54. The display of paintings in Palazzo Bianco.

instance, a fragment from the tomb of Margaret of Brabant by Giovanni Pisano, exhibited in Palazzo Bianco, has been mounted on a cylindrical steel support which can be raised, lowered and swivelled as desired. Certain paintings stand mounted on iron supports fixed into the capitals or bases of Roman or Gothic pillars. Except for the search for an appropriate display for each art piece, an evaluation of the works of art is also expressed in this way.

Movable chairs have been preferred to fixed seats, for, according to Marcenaro, the latter force the visitor to look at a work of art from the angle chosen by the curator. It is doubtful, however, whether a viewer would ever move a chair, for the interior is more likely to be perceived as rigid and fixed, rather than give the viewer the feeling of possible 'participation'.

In the Palazzo Bianco museum, the works of art constitute the only objects from another era from that of the observer, in accordance with the architects' position that the surrounding environment should be contemporary, in order not to distract the viewer by confronting him/her with other unfamiliar elements. Furniture—that is the few chairs placed in the center of some rooms and in the landing-hall of each level—are modern, and the exhibits' supports are detached pieces, used as intermediate and separate elements to enhance the distance between the works of art and the surrounding environment. As Marcenaro stated, "works of art were treated not as the decorative part of a given setting, but as a world in themselves, sufficient to absorb the visitor's full attention. To

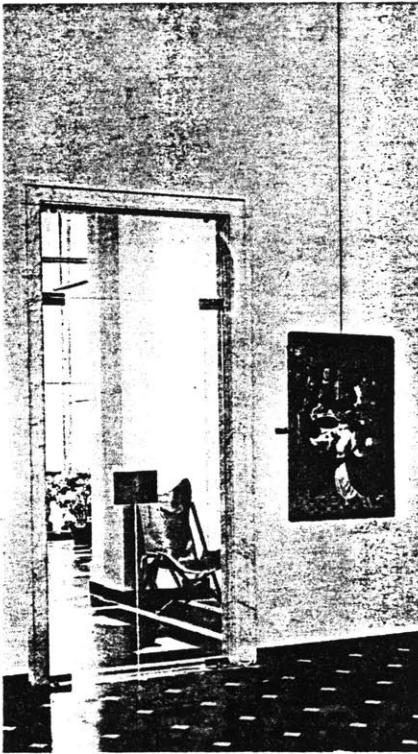


Fig. 55,56. Continuity of space and historical sequence: "the rooms follow one another like the successive chapters of a pictorial anthology."

avoid distracting that attention, care was taken when arranging the rooms as far as possible to dispense with all embellishments either in material, form or color- the intention being to provide the tranquil visual background that is desirable."¹¹ However, it is questionable whether the innovative supports and mountings are, indeed, familiar to the viewer just because they are contemporary. One's attention certainly is drawn towards these, so that an exhibition of Albini's design skill takes place here as well. Nonetheless, strangely enough, they do not disturb the atmosphere of the whole, and it is rather the feeling of a tranquil and, moreover, 'frozen' environment that dominates.

Albini's skill is evident in the way he treats the museographic route, using the sequence of rooms and galleries of the preexisting plan which was respected. Breaks of space are concealed, and instead underlying are the elements which accentuate continuity. The floor runs in an unaltered pattern throughout all the rooms and galleries. Massive wooden doors which one would expect to see in such a place *are* there, but are left widely open, having a decorative role, and letting glass doors serving the function of dividing rooms. The latter doors are open when continuity in the series of exhibits is emphasized, and closed when concentration on a specific artist or school is preferred. And the result is quite powerful; one feels the continuity of space where the glass doors are kept open, and one feels isolated when standing between two closed doors of this sequence. Even in the openings, which are not part of the route but are



Fig. 57. The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

closed, the use of glass partitions enhances the sense of continuity of the route, orients the visitor within the building, and provides for a perception of artificiality of the environment, emphasizing the modification of the palace and the destruction of any illusive contextual link.

Palazzo Bianco's interior conjures up certain thoughts about abstract and uniform exhibition environments. No attempt is made to recreate the original context of the works of art on display, but, at the same time, exhibition space is not what I would call "indifferent". It is following a rational attitude of exhibition architecture by not offering a variety of experiences which might have disturbed the exhibits, but it has qualities which most of the 'MOMA kind' of interiors lack.¹² The architects have claimed that they have created a contemporary environment, in order to leave the exhibits 'untouched'. But there is no way that this can happen; effects on the exhibits them can be avoided. There is no such thing as *neutral* environment. There is only *quality* of the environment reflecting awareness of and sensitivity to the interrelationships. And I would say that display rooms in Palazzo Bianco favour the concentration on the reading of works of art, by being at the same time objective but not indifferent, and pleasant but not disturbing.

Carlo Scarpa's most original contribution to the field has been his method of placing exhibits in relation to surrounding space, surfaces, colors, and light. Whereas Albini stayed on a more abstract

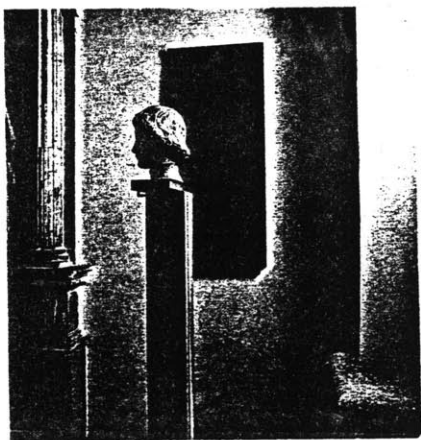


Fig. 58,59,60. Exhibition layout in the Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo.

level, expressing his —and Marcenaro's— statements in a uniform and coherent whole, Scarpa came closer to the objects themselves (both the exhibits and the architectural elements), to their materiality, and looked for an affinity —not contextual, but visual and textual— between them. Whereas Albini and Helg 'played' with innovative techniques, in order to detach the object from its container —still this detachment is a certain relationship—, Scarpa saw art pieces and the building's parts completely supplementing each other, and established a unique dialogue between them.

Scarpa said in an interview that his intimacy with art was fundamental to his achievement of correct and robust museum planning.¹³ Even if this intimacy is vague, because it is a reflection of a subjective world, it is indeed revealed to the visitor, expert or layman. Variations of materials and mountings, the exhibits' layout, their interactions, the composition as a whole reflects Scarpa's unique care.

In the Castelvecchio, as in Albini's interiors, works of art are also treated as detached elements. Sculptures are placed on concrete stands or slabs, which are also detached from the floor.

Pictures are framed in wood or iron and colored baige that clarifies the spatial limits of the image, but at the same time blends in with the qualities of the light and the construction materials. But their interaction with architecture is articulated in an rarely sensitive way. It might seem an exaggeration, but one not far from the truth, to argue that the care

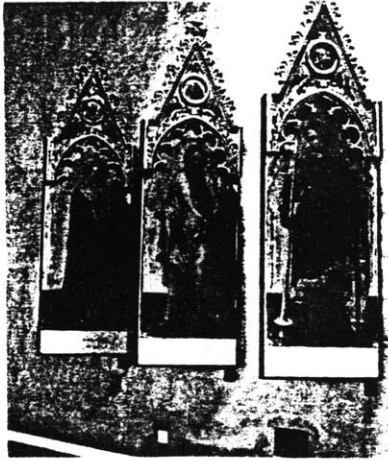
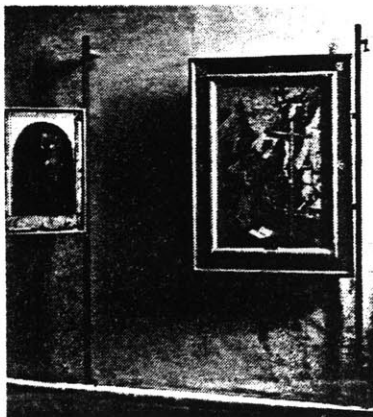
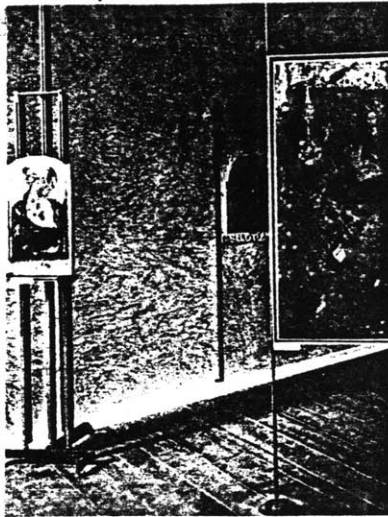


Fig. 61,62,63. The display of paintings in the Castelvecchio Museum, Verona.



which Albini's group bestowed upon certain exhibits, which they considered exceptional, is met in each and every single object on display within Castelvecchio. Scarpa produced unusual designs for showcases, supports and easels for many exhibitions, which he used throughout his career. He took great care to vary the relationship between the work of art, its support, and its light source. In regard to lighting, he maintained that natural light was the best for the museum space, especially in relation to sculpture, since by its movement it avoids any negative effect on it. Rough plastered walls provide a background for sculpture; light generates subtle variations and is diffused harmoniously.

The feeling evoked in the galleries of the Veronese museum is that everything is placed in such a way that even a slight movement of a part would destroy the composition. Exhibits and architecture are strictly complementary.

In a way, the post war Italian museological tradition has opened a route to be followed in contemporary exhibitions. Gae Aulenti is one of those who followed this path. Besides in the case of the Musée d' Orsay, she has dealt with the theme of installing a museum within an existing structure in the transformation of the fourth floor of the Centre Georges Pompidou (1984-5), and in the restoration of Palazzo Grassi in Venice (1985-6). There is certainly a continuity between the works carried out by the Italian architects from the fifties to the seventies, and those by Aulenti in the eighties. The Musée Nationale d' Art Moderne in the Pompidou

reveals a continuation in display principles; and Palazzo Grassi's conversion is close to Albini's and Helg's attitude, as expressed in the Genoese palaces. In her work in Gare d'Orsay, however, Aulenti clearly tries to make a strong assertion of her own. But, in doing so, she seems to have made a step backwards from her two earlier efforts.

If Scarpa looked for an intimacy between the objects on display and the architectural elements, Aulenti, in searching for the expression of an active interdependence, has persuaded herself to create a competitive situation, in which the surrounding architectural elements are disturbing to the perception of the works of art. "Everywhere, the architect's presence is intrusive, upstaging the art, conscripting it as an aspect of the decor"¹⁴ In writing about her work, Aulenti has asserted that "attention was focused not on the artistic quality of the facilities, but on their materiality as objects, namely their shapes, dimensions, colors and textures."¹⁵ Architecture is on display as well, another 'object' to be observed.

Although a museographic route is suggested, the visitor will most likely lose it and follow his/her own itinerary in the more or less chaotic whole. The scale is vast, for the museum includes three levels and is divided into seventy sections. Interweaving of artistic styles and different media (painting, sculpture, architecture, decorative and applied arts, photography and the origins of the cinema, print and drawings) also contributes to this complexity and the confusion created in the visitor's mind; the experience is quite tiring and not "adventurous" as it



Fig. 64. Aulenti's architectural language in the Musée d'Orsay.

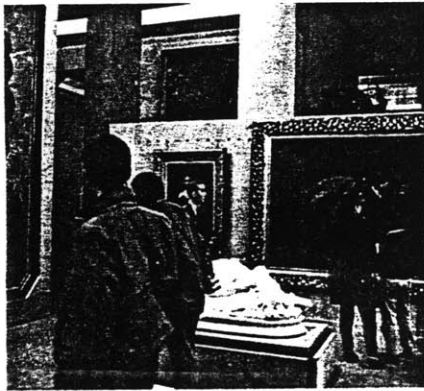


Fig. 65. Within the central exhibition space of the Musée d'Orsay.

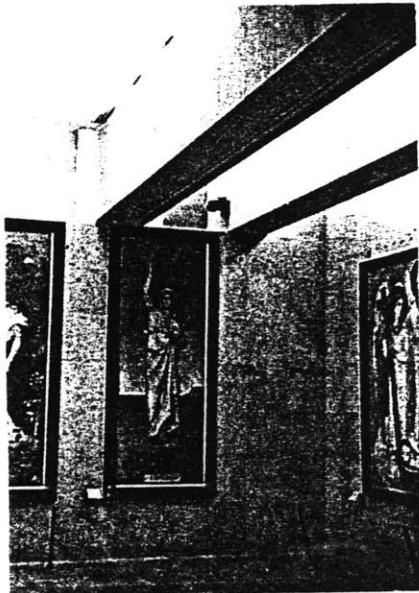


Fig. 66. "...their ceilings also effect the paintings badly, by weighing tightly down on them, and creating disturbing perspectives "

has been argued.¹⁶ Subsequent changes of space and scale, accompanied by the use of corridors, ramps and stairs, as well as continual changes of visual impressions turn out to be a fully subtracting tissue here.

More specific questions arise also in regard to the grouping of the works and the suitability of many of the spaces' choice and shaping for the display of specific works. If I feel incapable of asserting well-rooted positions on such issues¹⁷, I can certainly argue that the self-assertiveness of the architect's design, and its lighting are a constant impediment to the easy visibility of the collections. The lateral spaces behind the heavy structures of the sculpture 'yard' create real difficulties for the perception of the paintings they house; they are quite small and at times open to the raised corridors behind them, so that often large pictures are hung right below a balustrade. Moreover, as they follow the incline of the central alleyway, these galleries are punctuated by steps throughout their length, and some pictures are hung alongside flights or steps; their ceilings also effect the paintings badly, by weighing tightly down on them, and creating disturbing perspectives "At no point can a group of pictures be seen in a simple, clear-cut space, without an intruding column or a change in level, or a break in a screening wall, or some other interruption."¹⁸

Lighting is also unsuccessful. A certain amount of daylight finds its way into most parts of the building, but artificial lighting is the main source, and it suppresses nature's fluctuations; even

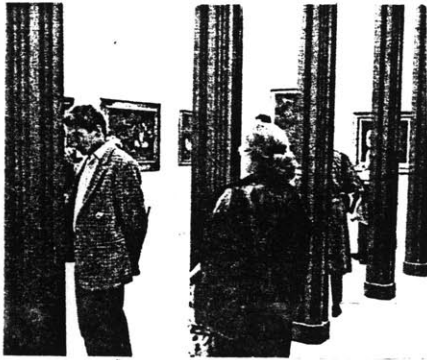


Fig. 67. "At no point can a group of pictures be seen in a simple, clear-cut space, without an intruding column or a change in level, or a break in a screening wall, or some other interruption."



Fig. 68. The Musée d'Orsay is a place for crowds.

sunlight, diffused by the vaulted glass roof of the main nave, makes surprisingly little difference to the quality of light down on the sculpture yard.

The vast central space is visually overloaded. The building has ended up becoming a mall, with art galleries along its sides. It might have been more appropriate for this central space to have been left empty, as an entrance hall to the lateral exhibition spaces. As it stands now, the Musée d'Orsay is a place for crowds; one would have the same feeling, even if one stood in it by him/herself. Claude Levi-Strauss's claims that the place gives him migraines.¹⁹

Musée d'Orsay brings into question the absoluteness of the argument that "any space can be adopted to any use." Such a statement is an arbitrarily generalizing one, and its validity should be questioned and examined for each case separately. The re-use of the Parisian station as a museum of nineteenth century art has proved quite questionable.

The relation of the original function of the restored building to that of the museum comes into the foreground. Consciously or not, we associate a building with particular meanings, and we do not easily accept any new use for it. The metal-frame structure of Laloux's station does not match our associations with easel paintings, but rather creates an awkward juxtaposition. Whether we accept it in theory or not, we feel much more comfortable to view paintings within Italian palazzos, where, in fact, the easel paintings were first exhibited.

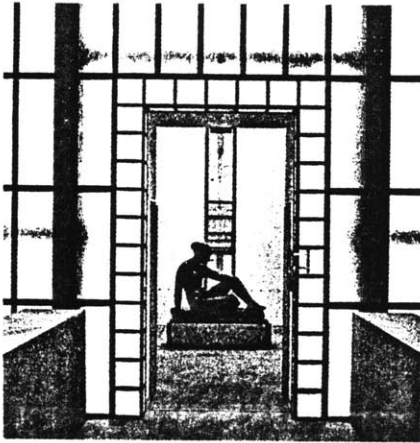


Fig. 69, 70.. Views of lateral exhibition galleries.

Industrial design exhibition would be more appropriate for the Gare d'Orsay ... ?

In addition to that, a significant part of the discomfort of the result stems from the program itself, from its scale and its complexity. Musée d'Orsay is one more cog in the contemporary museum factory; reflecting the significance given to attendance figures, the museum has destroyed any potential for a dialogue between the art and the viewer.

It is quite interesting that the "ACT Architecture" group, responsible for the conservation of Laloux's structure, claim exactly the opposite. They had found the "pre-existing station, with its vast space as propitious fact for the creation of a handsome museum; an entirely new building would hardly have permitted the creation of a sculpture gallery 35 meters high and 140 meters long. What the museum gave to the station by permitting it to be preserved, then the station returned to the museum in the form of extraordinary spaces."²⁰ The dominating perception of the museum is once more clearly evident in such a statement.

Aulenti seems to be more cynical in stating that, as always, certain conventions had to take place: "In order to start to make a project, it is necessary to accept a convention established by others and necessarily arbitrary".²¹ By this she referred to the museographic program, namely the collections and their arrangement defined by the curators, to the form and typology of Laloux's building, and, finally, to the project prepared by "ACT"

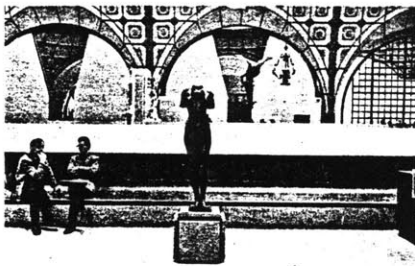


Fig. 71, 72.. Views of the central space.

Architecture". These, she argued, had been "given facts", fundamental to the development of the design. But if one can attribute problems to the program itself—and why not to the political decision itself to transform the station into a museum—nonetheless, Aulenti has not been a passive participant. On the contrary, she enhanced both the problem of scale and the the complexity of the museum; the perception of the exhibits is inhibited not by the effect of Laloux's structure on them, but from Aulenti's particular choices.

¹ I'm using Brian O'Doherty words (B. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, The Lapis Press, St. Monica, San Francisco, 1986.

² O'Doherty, B., *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, p. 29.

³ N. Pevsner, "Museums", in *History of Building Types*, Princeton U. Press, Princeton, 1976, pp. 124-126.

⁴ N. Pevsner, "Museums", in *History of Building Types*, pp. 127-128.

⁵ in Ital.: *ambiente*, as used by F. Albini in, "Funzioni e architettura del museo", *La Biennale di Venezia*, Apr/Jun. 1958.

⁶ F. Albini, "Funzioni e architettura del museo", *La Biennale di Venezia*, Apr/Jun. 1958.

⁷ Only in the city of Genova, they have been responsible for three more museums: the Museum of the Treasury of San Lorenzo Cathedral (1956), built below the courtyard of the cathedral, the Palazzo Posso Museum (1959-61), and the Sant' Agostino Museum (1977-86).

⁸ C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", *Museum*, v.7, n.4, 1954, p. 265.

⁹ C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", *Museum*, v.7, n.4, 1954, p. 266.

¹⁰ C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", *Museum*, v.7, n.4, 1954, p. 266.

¹¹ C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", *Museum*, v.7, n.4, 1954, p. 266.

¹² If we just recall some of the numerous museums around the Western world, in which the exterior has a particular architectural style of a certain period, whereas the interior is the abstract environment of the twentieth century art gallery, we would then agree that quality of such interiors can vary a great deal. For example, a comparison of the interiors of the Palazzo Bianco and the Harvard Fogg Museum in terms of their architectural qualities cannot but favor the former.

¹³ Crippa, M.A., *Carlo Scarpa. Theory, Design, Projects*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986.

¹⁴ Mainardi, P., "Postmodern History at the Musée d'Orsay", *October* 41, Summer 1987, p. 51.

¹⁵ G. Aulenti, G., "The Interior Architecture of the Musée d'Orsay",

GA Documents, n.19, Jan. 1988, p. 98.

¹⁶ R. Rosenbium, in *Art in America*, "The Musée d'Orsay: A Symposium", Jan. 1988, pp. 86.

¹⁷ For an analysis of these issues, refer to Mainardi, P., "Postmodern History at the Musée d'Orsay", *October* 41, Summer 1987, p. 30-52.

¹⁸ John C. House, "Orsay observed", *Burlington Magazine*, Feb. 1987, p. 69.

¹⁹ Claude Levi-Strauss, ("Le cadre et les oeuvres," *Le Débat*, p. 180), as quoted by Patricia Mainardi, P., "Postmodern History at the Musée d'Orsay", *October* 41, Summer 1987, p. 58.

²⁰ ACT (Renauld Bardon, Pierre Colboc, Jean-Paul Philippon), "The Restoration of the Gare d'Orsay", *GA Documents*, n.19, Jan. 1988, pp. 94-97.

²¹ G. Aulenti, "The Interior Architecture of the Musée d'Orsay",

GA Documents, n.19, Jan. 1988, p. 98.

Analysis of such Buildings from the Scope of Restoration and Adaptive Reuse

An old structure always carries memories and evokes associations —with particular periods of time or particular events. Throughout the building's life, some memories fade away, and others persist.¹ A building conjures up memories in two ways: first, by recalling people's knowledge of the building's life, of its history, and its previous uses; and second, on the perception level, by people's association of the perceived images with remembered images. The latter can happen in a conscious or an unconscious manner: on the one hand, the created link can be based on different kinds of knowledge (on the architectural style, materials, inscriptions etc); on the other, even if a building is vaguely perceived only as an old artifact, it can carry a valuable message about the past, by evoking a sense of the passage of time and an awareness of the preceding cultures which created it.

The architect cannot ignore these associations. On the contrary, it is here where the quality of an intervention will be mainly judged: on the restorer's sensitivity to the conveyed messages, on the level of consideration for these associations. The main challenge for the architect is to find an appropriate way to deal with this preexisting world.

There are several ways of dealing with the relationship between old and new parts of a building. This can take the form of:

Fig. 73. Les Halles des Boeufs, La Villette, Paris, 1979-84, by Reichen and Robert.

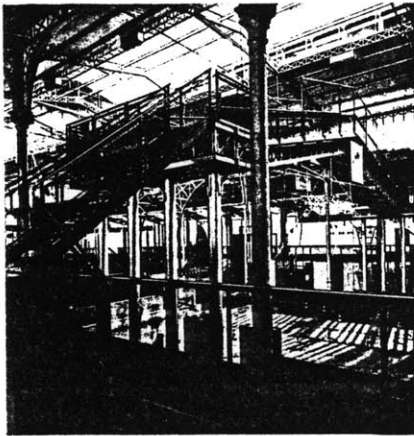
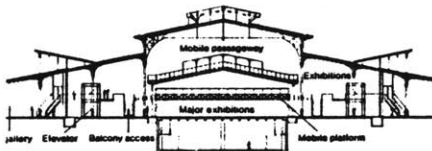
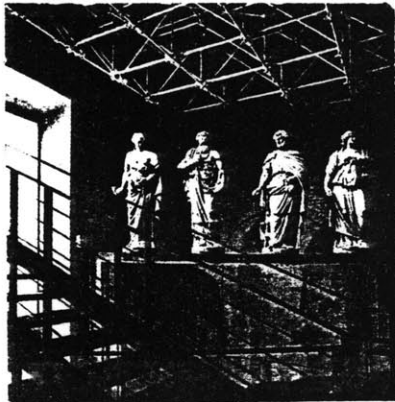


Fig. 74. National Gallery in Palazzo della Pilotta, Parma, 1970's, by Guido Canali.



a) assimilation of the new to the preexisting whole (mere conservation). The effort here is to maintain the building's main features, so that its substance remains unaltered, it keeps carrying and conveying its messages. New parts, needed to support the structure and accommodate the new function are hidden in the back.

b) a collage, created by the intentional juxtaposition of old and new parts. This can start from an attitude of honesty in material expression, simply differentiating the new structural elements and the secondary features that make the building serviceable in terms of its new function (Les Halles des Boeufs, La Villette), and go beyond the relation between primary and secondary parts to a dialogue between old and new parts. Their relation can vary from a peaceful coexistence (Castelvecchio, Verona) to a tense confrontation (National Gallery in Palazzo della Pilotta, Parma).

c) individualization of the new as a distinct entity. This also can happen in various ways. An extension to the existing building —a new structure adjacent to the old— is one of them; the creation of a collage of old and new volumes is another (Kleihues's Museum in Eichstadt). Both of these groups are not included in my research. In this third category, however, belong the cases —and these in the center of my interest here— in which the new entity is installed within the old; the theme of a new interior within an old shell. Exterior is preserved or restored, whereas interior is completely modified (Palazzo Bianco and Palazzo Rosso, Museum of Architecture in Frankfurt by Ungers, Palazzo Grassi

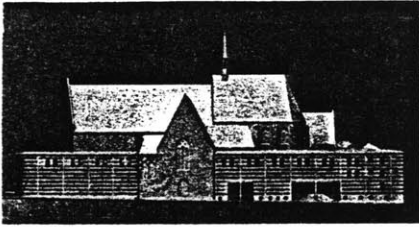


Fig. 75. Kleihues's project for the Museum of Pre- and Early History, Eichstadt, 1980.

and Musée d'Orsay, both by Aulenti, Picasso Museum by Simounet).

Let us hold in mind that such a classification simply helps us to make some distinctions, but cannot substitute for the clarification and the answers provided by the analysis of the specific complexities of a particular building. Hence, what follows is a critique on the same three museums already discussed in the previous section.

The Italian museological tradition has been closely bound up with that of restoration ('*restauro*'). Art museums are rarely built from scratch in Italy. The principal path followed is that of reconstruction and endless examples abound. Post-war Italian culture sought for an organic coexistence of the 'old' and the 'new', for a 'reassuring equilibria' between the past and the present, between heritage and invention.² This was naturally to be extended to the built environment, and to constitute the core of the architectural debate of the period. Licisco Magagnato argued for a significant change in the attitude towards the built environment of the past, a shift from an *illuministic* approach to a *historicistic* one.³ This shift, following that in literature and criticism (*historica*)⁴, can be found in Roberto Pane's writings who, as early as the late forties, had argued that any transformation has to be based on a critical evaluation of the past on the one hand, and requires a creative response on the other.⁵ The new attitude was clearly expressed in Giancarlo de Carlo's interventions in the town of Urbino. De Carlo maintained that to relate oneself to history is to deal with present problems, with contemporary

reality and not to look upon history *per se*. Hence, we cannot reuse an existing space except by *re*-designing it, which means going through an operation that *de*-structures it from its previous context and then *re*-structures it in the new one.⁶

The shaping of such an attitude by the Italians legitimized the entry of modern architecture into old buildings. On the other hand, it also anticipated the return to a concern with concretely productive work, i.e. materials, construction details, fusion of craftsmanship with industrial techniques. However, there were no fixed rules to be adopted. The common base to be shared was that any adaptation could not be seen as passive. Interventions had to give new life to old structures, not merely *re*-erect them. Hence, the actual expression of such concepts was not monolithic, and also underwent an evolution from the fifties to the seventies. The group of Franco Albini and Franca Helg has been a protagonist in this scene. Being part of this stream in Italy, they nonetheless established their own thesis, which also evolved in its expression through time.

Palazzo Bianco, restored on the threshold of the fifties, immediately constituted a point of reference in restoration and museum design. Restoration work sought to eliminate the traces of both natural aging and former interventions, and conjure up the formal characteristics of the original. The original plan and the masonry structure were respected, and all surviving portions and materials were retained, whenever this was possible. The courtyard was rebuilt, and its broken columns reassembled. Even the fragments of stucco which had adorned the

Fig..76. Palazzo Bianco, Genoa. All surviving portions and materials were retained, whenever this was possible.



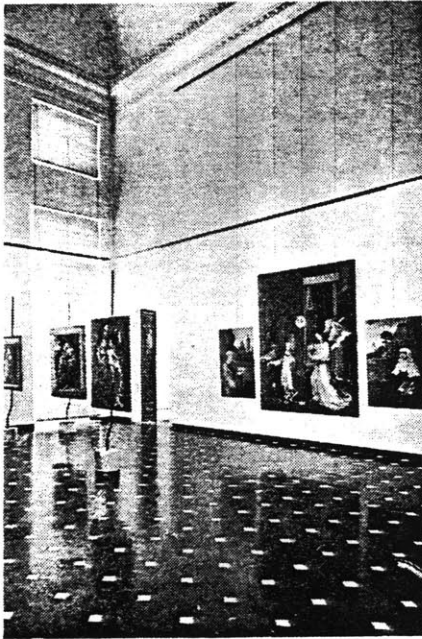


Fig. 77. The interior has been transformed into a completely modern environment.

ceilings of the second floor were put back, the missing pieces being reconstructed. According to the restorers, original documents and later photographs proved that there were never any wall paintings in Palazzo Bianco.

Then the interior had to provide for the needs of the new life of the building. Museographical positions by Albini and Marcenaro, as described earlier, transformed the interior into a completely modern environment. All the halls were treated equally, walls and vaulted ceilings were plastered and painted white. The floor was finished in black slate and white marble; running in an unaltered pattern throughout all the rooms, it significantly contributes to the sense of continuity and to the whole experience of the space.

Museum architecture was installed, carrying in itself the elements that structure and shape it: display surfaces and systems, lighting sources, environmental control systems etc. But, significantly, none of these affected the substance of the building, the life of the shell. One still feels the strong presence of the *palazzo*, even if, from the interior, it is totally concealed physically. However, it is not only this mental perception of a coexistence of past and present that contributes to the spatial experience. What imbues the whole environment is a rare tranquility, exactly as its creators have intended: "... care was taken when arranging the rooms as far as possible to dispense with all embellishments either in material, form or color- the intention being to provide the tranquil visual background that is desirable."⁷

There is however, a point where the shell 'suffers', where it has been insulted, and, ironically, this is at its heart, the courtyard. The architects' choice to transform the open vestibules of both levels into interior spaces, as well as to include within the museographic route the exterior gallery at the back on the piano nobile, was executed by the complete closing of the arched openings with glass walls. Although these permit the maintenance of visual contact, they totally extract the courtyard from the rest of the building and, consequently, from the visitor.⁸

This point is even more evident in Palazzo Rosso at the opposite side of the street. In its conversion to a museum, Palazzo Rosso's courtyard underwent the same operation.⁹ There is a garden behind the palazzo, which is accessible from its courtyard¹⁰; so, the galleries at the back of the courtyard used to be open in both sides. These, however, have been closed by window screens, in order to constitute a part of the museographic route. The experience is quite strange, and the feeling of an imposed separation from the exterior is even stronger here.

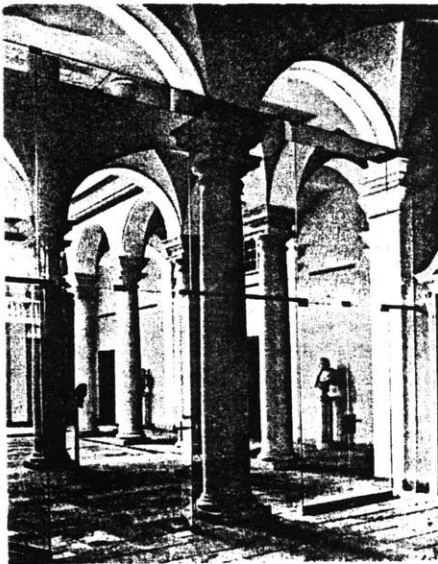


Fig. 78. Palazzo Rosso's courtyard.

In both buildings —less so in the former, more in the latter— the arched walls around the courtyard are now to be observed behind the glass screens. The palaces have become objects on display, objects behind the windows of display cases. And, ironically, in physical terms, it is the viewer who is in the glass case and the exhibit which is outside. The fragmentary quality of such buildings, as has been discussed earlier, is deliberately enhanced,

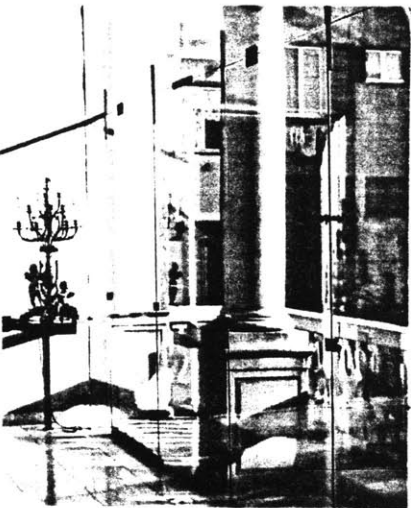
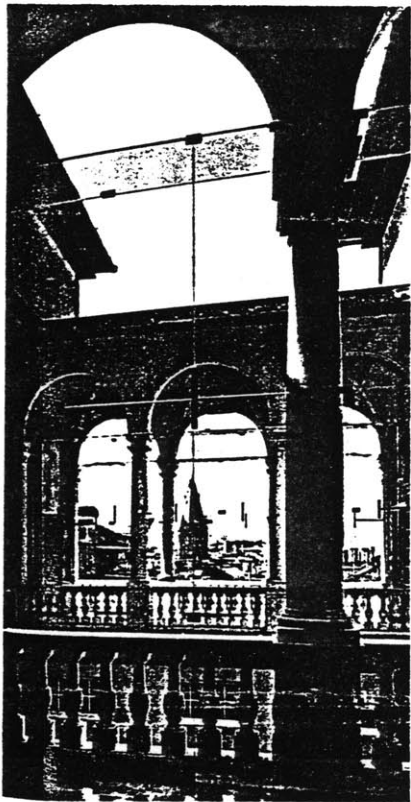


Fig. 79. The 'open' gallery on the second floor of the Palazzo Rosso.

however unsuccessfully; I'm saying deliberately, relying on Marcenaro's own words : "The greater the gap which separates us from the past and the more clearly we can detach an object from the age which created it, the quicker and keener will be our reaction and the better the contact established.

In a sense it is only because our understanding of the past is faulty that the past can be brought to life. If we understood the past in its full and authentic detail, it would be left 'as it was' and, therefore, be irretrievably lifeless. It is because the past is not merely fragmentary but 'extraneous' to us that it can supply the present with allusions, suggestions and meanings that it certainly did not originally put forth."¹¹

However, I would argue that you can perceive the building as a testimony to the past and as a fragment on display, without necessarily losing an intimate relationship with it. As a visitor to both of these palace-museums, I felt strongly alienated from the structure, and in need to 'break' these artificial limits, so as to totally appreciate the building's original spatial qualities.

Carlo Scarpa's intervention in Castelvechio, executed at the end of the same decade, provided a different response to the same challenging issues. His paradigm was to be extensively followed in the following decade and to establish the attitude dominating during the seventies.

Restoration works on the Veronese complex sought to bring to light the original lay-out and the former spatial and architectural qualities of the castle, which the various interventions had concealed under their layers. At the same time, reconstruction was

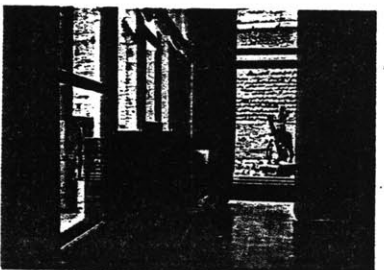


Fig. 80,81,82,83.. The confrontation between old and new parts of the structure constitutes a part of the museographical route.

executed in such a way that the visitor can see the traces of the various interventions. The architect brought out the points of friction and conflicting encounter between the different phases of construction and transformation of the wall, from the period of the Communes, of the Castello Scaligero and of the Napoleonic fort.

Scarpa and Magagnato agreed that the building's restoration should be carried out according to rigorous criteria distinct from the needs of the museum: "Our only point of agreement was on the need to get rid of all recent superfluous additions and go back to the old , to adapt the museum to the castle and not vice versa, so that the works could live within the restored palace."¹²

However, this doesn't seem to be the case; in fact, the result is much richer than what the above statement implies. Architecture and museography supplement each other. As I've already argued, building elements and art objects constitute a composition and by no means are the former imposing themselves upon the latter. Both components are rather treated with equal care and sensitivity, and in an intimate relation to each other. Moreover, the confrontation between old and new parts of the structure is connected to —or, moreover, constitutes a part of the museographical route. According to Magagnato, "the circuit ... [provides] the visitor with opportunities to emerge into the open and then re-enter into the tour of inspection, passing from a concrete perception of the various restored sections of the building to a leisurely viewing of the various sections of the collections."¹³ It is interesting that he also —

Fig. 84. The ground floor of the Napoleonic wing.

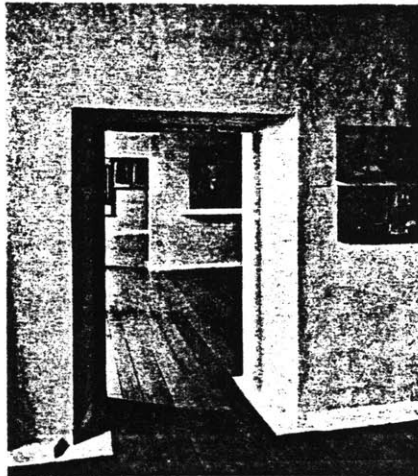
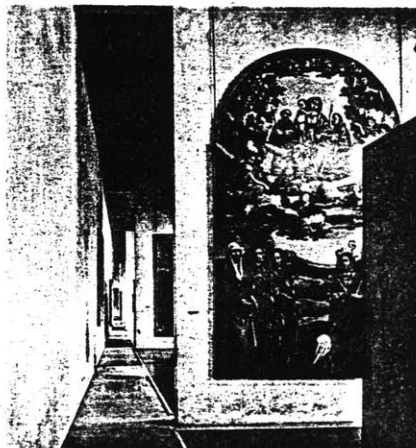


Fig. 85. The palace galleries.

Fig. 86. The upper level of the Napoleonic wing.



responsible for the arrangement of the collection—places equal if not more weight on the perception of the building itself, rather than on the exhibits.

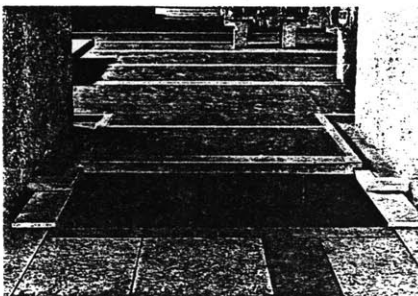
Interaction between old and new is taking place from the plan down to the very last details in the choice and use of materials. Scarpa's position, perfectly reflected here, was that "in the layout of a museum in a preexisting nucleus, the self-same principles that animate all planning interventions in ancient contexts apply down to the connective tissue of display areas, staircases, ramps, entry points etc."

The architect's plan is clearly visible to the visitor because, consisting substantially of a circuit which starts from and ends at the entrance gate after the castle's drawbridge, it continuously provides visual contact with points of reference within and outside of the complex. Within this clear museographic route Scarpa has created different environments. The various parts of the museum differ from each other, creating subsequent changes in the spatial experience. The dramatic tone given in the series of six rooms on the ground floor of the Napoleonic wing moderates in the halls in both levels of the palace; and the route ends with the modern environment of the painting galleries on the second floor of the Napoleonic wing. Throughout the whole experience, however, the architect's search for spatial compositions among building elements and works of art remains unaltered.

What has been significantly achieved is that the building is carefully treated down to its very last detail, and, at the same time, does not disturb the displayed objects. Variations of materials (stone,

cement, variety of light colored plasters, and iron), their meticulous elaboration, mountings and layout of the exhibits, all reveal the architect's rare sensitivity and care. His declared claim was not to overlook anything, to give even greater attention to what was out of sight than to what was there for everyone to see.¹⁴

Fig. 87. 'Old' and 'new' penetrate into each other.



Even if Scarpa's intervention in existing buildings is placed within the general stream of the Italian post-war tradition of 'restauro', his relation to the past is a poetic one based on intuition and sensitivity rather than on an a declared philosophical thesis. If Albini and Scarpa unfalteringly place the 'new' within the 'old', stating that we have to 'live our era', Scarpa tries to join the past and the presence in an harmonious coexistence. In contrast to a more rational approach of the Albini group, Scarpa's attitude is one of rare sensitivity to the building elements —expressed in his love for working on the site and making on-the-spot changes. It was a challenge for him to measure himself against the difficult task of the direct confrontation of his own formal language with the exhibited art . However, he competes with them peacefully, seeking a dialogue between the 'two forms of art.'

I've already argued that Gae Aulenti is in a way a successor to the Italian school. If in terms of display issues her work in the Musée d'Orsay is more related to Scarpa's lessons (seeking for a complex of different interrelationships between objects and exhibits), when seen from the scope of

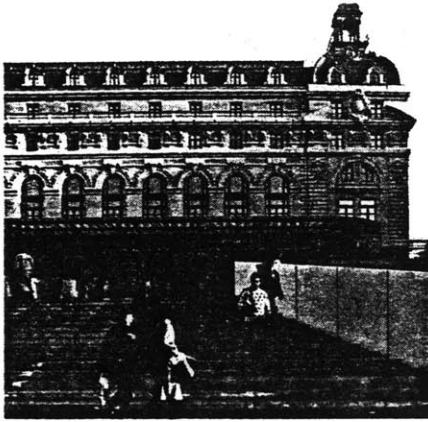


Fig. 88. Views of the new entrance in Laloux's building.

adaptive reuse, it shares more similarities with the Albini group. In the Palazzo Bianco and in the Parisian railway station, the installed architecture clearly distinguishes itself from that of the preserved shell. However, in the former, the container cannot even be literally perceived from within, whereas in the latter it is present and visible. And there is a paradox here: in the Genoese museum, even if you don't see the features of the Italian palace, you strongly feel its presence, you *know* that you are in a restored palace; in Musée d' Orsay, although the original structure is exposed to you, the installation is so competitive that it disturbs your perception of it, it almost rejects it. In the Palazzo Bianco the inserted museum is perceived as an ephemeral contemporary layer, detached from the shell, the *permanence* ; in Musée d' Orsay, the relation of the container and the installment, of the old and the new, is one of opposition, of offensive juxtaposition.

A central tenet of Aulenti's approach, according to her, is that a relation can be established between the respective materiality of objects, and not between their meanings:

"Neither value judgements nor interpretations entered into the design work. ... Laloux's building should not be judged moralistically; rather it should be analyzed in terms of his building's materials, i.e. its iron structure and its stone cladding. By the same token, in terms of the museographic program attention is focused not on the artistic quality of the facilities, but on their materiality as objects, namely their shapes, dimensions, colors and textures."¹⁵

It is exactly the execution of her intentions, her adherence to the above stated attitude, which has

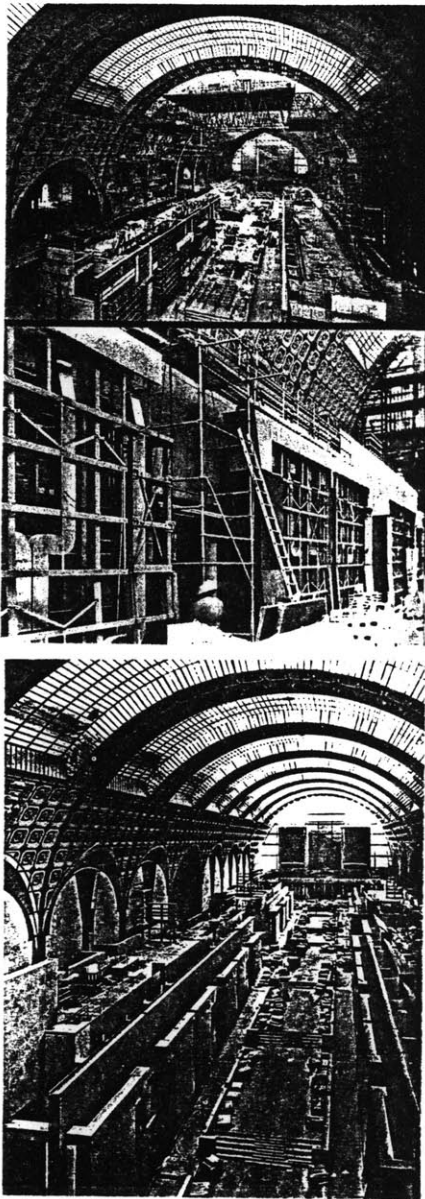


Fig. 89,90,91. Aulenti's installation 'coming into life' and imposing itself upon the old station.

lead to the discomfoting result. Space is certainly evocative, if perceived through this filter of 'materiality'. It is indeed clear that emphasis has been placed on variations in space, on shapes, materials, and colors chosen. The architectural game, as Aulenti saw it, was played with passion. The result is a 'toy' to be observed; perceiving it as such, the scene might be interesting. But is that the way the old station should have been treated? Aulenti's experience as a stage designer is apparent. Her installation, by its weight and complexity, violently imposes itself upon the light nineteenth century iron construction. The contrasts created between materials, shapes, and colors might be 'stimulating', but the actual result is extremely overloaded, and the old structure is arrogantly intruded upon.

Even if Laloux's structure is a hybrid, nonetheless, it reflects a central architectural debate of its period. It is an evidence of the Academy's attempt to exploit the possibilities offered by new building techniques, without rejecting their own principles; despite the innovative structure, making the plan absolutely new in its day, it is continuity with tradition that was celebrated. The station's value as a testimony to its age should have been appreciated, and not buried beneath arguments that the architecture of the building is full of contradictions and lacks honesty in material. However, the latter had been precisely the case in the evaluation of the Gare d'Orsay, and since the sixties, the building had been under the danger of demolition. It was the political decision to use the

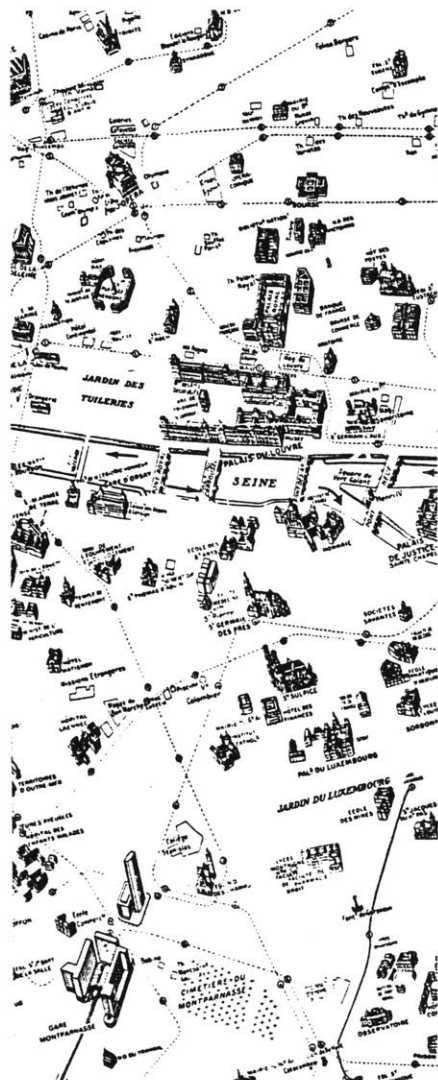


Fig. 92. The Musée d'Orsay fits into a larger program of museum planning within the heart of the urban fabric of Paris.

building as a museum that finally saved it; a decision which was part of a program of museum planning within the heart of the urban fabric of Paris. The Gare d'Orsay was 'saved' through the attractiveness of an institution which no other use could have had. Ironically, the new installment abuses Laloux's structure as much as possible, so that the *Gare d'Orsay* is not there any more; its place has been taken by the fancy *Musée d'Orsay*.

Fig. 93. Photographers might know how to use their cameras, but the image of the 'lithic trains' is not convincing. The Orsay station is not 'present'; the fancy Musée d'Orsay has taken its place.



¹It is interesting that what persists is not necessarily the building's origin, since subsequent events associated with the structure's life often appear to be stronger and manage to push the former into the background.)

² M. Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, Cambridge, Mass, The MIT press, 1989.

³ Licisco Magagnato, "Architettura e restauro", in *in Comunità* 97, 1962, pp.44-50.

⁴ Renato Bonelli, *Restauro e architettura*, Neri Pozza, 1960, Venezia, p.20, quoted by Licisco Magagnato, "Architettura e restauro", pp.46-47.

⁵ Licisco Magagnato, "Architettura e restauro", p.46.

⁶ De Carlo, G. and Nicolini, P., "Conversation on Urbino", in *Lotus* 18, pp. 4-41. I'm quoting De Carlo: "Urbino has a historic dimension of the very deepest sense not only because it has always existed, but because throughout history it has welcomed new and always meaningful changes" (p.25)

⁷ C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", in *Museum*, v.7, n.4, 1954, p.264.

⁸ The 'problem' of the courtyard in common in such museums and is usually solved with a glass roof enclosing the whole space (Harvard Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Gardner Museum in Boston e.t.c.). But the discomforting feeling of an imposed enclosure is here also present.

⁹ Here, the visitor can, at least, enter the courtyard and observe the building from within; but the experience is still quite different from that that existed before the glass enclosure was put in. The coexistence of interior and exterior space achieved within the courtyard is now lost.

¹⁰ Not at the time of my visit (January 1990), when it seemed completely neglected.

¹¹ C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", p.262.

¹² L. Magagnato, "Scarpa's museum: the museographic route of Catelvecchio, Verona", in *Lotus* 35, 1982/II, p.79.

¹³ L. Magagnato, "Scarpa's museum: the museographic route of Catelvecchio, Verona", p.79.

¹⁴ M. A. Crippa, *Carlo Scarpa. Theory, Design, Projects*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986.

¹⁵ G.Aulenti, "The Interior Architecture of the Musée d'Orsay", in *GA Documents*, n.19, Jan. 1988., pp.97-99.

EPILOGUE

In writing this essay —I prefer to call it an essay¹ rather than a thesis²— I did not intend to present the reader with a rigid position on the issues I dealt with, such as art, art perception, the complexities of the museum space, perception of the past, restoration, and adaptive reuse. Rather, what the reader has been confronted with is the expression of my thoughts, concerns, and questions on these subjects and, ironically, a fragile —if one thinks of my discussion on 'order'— attempt to put them together, so that they might be able to constitute some kind of coherent whole.³

Any conclusive comparison between such projects is inevitably limited in value, because of the uniqueness of the constraints imposed by the old structure and the museum program in each situation . However, my visit to such buildings enabled me to examine *in situ* my theoretical considerations, and to understand the sources of the qualities and the weaknesses of such transformed buildings.

I have endeavored in this essay to examine my perception of the buildings as shells which maintain some of their original qualities, despite the change in their use. The analysis of the selected museums has proved the depth of the interdependence between the memories which the restored structure carries and the associations of the new function.

The three buildings stand in the old core of the cities where they are located. Palazzo Bianco and Musée d'Orsay belong to a group of museums within the heart of Genoa and Paris respectively. But the issues of scale and program, as well as the architectural choices, result in completely different

readings of the buildings. Musée d' Orsay is one more tourist attraction, a significant part of an 'urban museum' being developed in the center of Paris, and testifying to the French democracy's glory and power. Seen as such, the Musée d' Orsay is much more 'a current museum of Paris which, accidentally, used to be a station', rather than 'the old station which is now used as a museum'. Palazzo Bianco, despite its dimensions and its former social position, stands today as a building quite modestly restored, a part of the whole within the old fabric of the city of Genoa; it doesn't distinguish itself to acknowledge any expression of its new function, and it strongly maintains the perception it has always had as a 'palazzo'. Castelvecchio is in the privileged situation of being located in a magnificently evocative environment, and having such a powerful conceptual exposure to the town of Verona (it is its old castle and a symbol of power) that it cannot easily lose its associated memories and values. The museum and the castle 'cohabit' in rare harmony; *Past* and *Present* coexist.

An old structure is often considered as an inappropriate space for the installation of an art exhibition, because, by exposing images of the past, it disturbs the 'pure' perception of the displayed works of art. As I've argued, the achievement of a neutral environment, of a lack of context, is an impossibility anyway. Thus, the issue moves to the sensitivity of the restorer to the interactions between the objects and the environment he or she creates. Although this applies to any museum design, what

is interesting here is that the architect is called to read and 'play' with preexisting meanings.

A position often shared within the architecture profession is that the constraints imposed by an existing structure are a helpful framework for the architect, whose task becomes much more difficult when designing a museum from scratch. The analysis of these museum buildings shows, on the contrary, how difficult and complex such a transformation is. Besides the physical qualities of the existing structure, which are going to interact with the restorer's own intervention, one has to be sensitive to the associations the old building evokes, to the memories it carries and the messages it conveys.

The other side of the coin is that the conversion of an old building to a museum is often considered as a convenient solution for providing a use to an old and some times abandoned structure. The installation of an exhibition seems to be an appropriate one into a building that has lost its links with 'actual life': 'frozen' objects within a 'frozen' shell. "Everything ends up on a wall or in a display case"⁴, says Valéry, mourning for the detachment of the objects from their original context and their meaningless juxtaposition within the museum. "Conservation is louder than in church, softer than in real life. ... Fatigue and barbarism converge. Neither a hedonistic nor a rationalistic civilization could have constructed a house of such disparities. Dead visions are entombed here."⁵ Next to the works of art, which are like "abandoned children"⁶, the building, an abandoned human artifact as well,

becomes a dead shell, a carcass. It is "destiny, which no human artifact can escape."⁷

I would argue that we can look at this "display case" from a different point of view. We can stand closer to Proust, if I can use Adorno's comparison.⁸ If for Valéry, "art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of life,"⁹ for Proust, "it is only the death of the work of art in the museum which brings it to life. When severed from the living order in which it functioned, its true spontaneity is released."¹⁰

We might not have to go so far as to see an object's life only in its death, but we can read it as a carrier of messages and qualities which persist, regardless of its present situation in 'actual' life. The museum of such accumulated objects is, then, not a display case of dead objects, but a carrier of memories and metaphors, an illusive world, but more real than reality, since, by overcoming reality, it conveys that the latter itself is an illusion. And the container itself, the building, an object on display in its own right, is no more a frozen display case, but a conveyor of its own messages and persisting qualities —truly, a *living* shell.

¹ In A.S.Hornby's *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*:

"essay: piece of writing , usu. short and in prose, on any one subject, or: attempt, or: testing or trial of the value of something.

² i.e. statement or theory, 'position'

³ The frequent quoting of other writers has been deliberate, and exactly a reflection of such an attitude.

⁴ P. Valéry, as quoted by Damish Hubert, "The museum device: notes on institutional changes", *Lotus* 35, pp. 5.

⁵ P. Valéry, as quoted by Theodore W. Adorno, "Valéry, Proust and the Museum", *Prisms* , The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967,p.176.

⁶ "Their mother is dead, their mother, architecture. While she lived, she gave them their place, their definition. The freedom to wander was forbidden them. They had their place, their clearly defined lighting, their materials. Proper relations prevailed between them. While she was alive, they knew what they wanted.", P. Valéry, as quoted by Theodore W. Adorno, "Valéry, Proust and the Museum", *Prisms* , The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, pp.177-8.

⁷ Hubert Damisch, "The museum device: notes on institutional changes", *Lotus* 35, pp. 5.

⁸ T.W. Adorno , Theodore W. Adorno, "Valéry, Proust and the Museum", *Prisms* , The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1967, pp.177-8.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.180.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.182.

APPENDIX

Palazzo Bianco Museum, Genoa, 1950-1951

architects: Franco Albini and Franca Helg

arrangement of the collections : Caterina Marcenaro

There is lack of documents on the early history of Palazzo Bianco, which was built in the sixteenth century and underwent considerable alterations in the beginning of the eighteenth century. What we know is that it was rented to a succession of private individual, until 1884, when, according to the will of Maria Brignole-Sale, Duchess of Galliera, it was left to the Municipality of Genoa.

The palace has been used as an exhibition space since 1892. The Brignole-Sale de Ferrari collection, given also as a legacy to the town of Genoa by the Duchess of Galliera, had been gradually enriched with donations. The first arrangement was followed by a second in 1906 and a third in 1928. The latter was maintained until the war. The palazzo was heavily damaged during a bombing raid in 1942, but enough survived to make possible the reconstruction by the Department of Civil Engineering in 1945. The existing condition is the result of this post-war restoration, followed by architectural modifications by Albini, so that the collection which had been kept in storage since war destructions, could come again into display.

Palazzo Bianco is located within the fabric of the old part of the city of Genoa, on a beautiful pedestrian street. Despite its dimensions, it is not dominating within the street of the old fabric. It is even likely that one might miss the museum walking besides it. Almost opposite to it stands Palazzo

Rosso museum, and adjacent to it is Palazzo Tursi, the Municipal Authority building of the city of Genoa, both renovated by Albini and Helg (1959-61 and 1952-61 respectively).

In rebuilding on the basis of what still remained, almost a heap of ruins, the original plans were followed and the original spacious arrangement of the interior reverted to eliminating the alterations, which, for reasons of convenience, had been made in the late nineteenth century, when the Galliera family decided to split up the building among a number of tenants (these additions had in any case been destroyed by the bombing). All surviving portions of the structure were retained; the courtyard was rebuilt, its broken columns reassembled; and even the fragments of stucco which had adorned the ceilings of the second floor were put back, the missing pieces being reconstructed. According to the restorers, it was proved by original documents and later photographs that there were never any wall paintings in Palazzo Bianco.

The exterior of the palace has been restored to its pre-war condition; the building's exposure to its surroundings hasn't changed. On the other hand, the interior has been completely transformed into a modern environment. All the halls are treated equally ; walls and vaulted ceilings have been plastered and painted white and left completely undecorated. "The palace concept was abandoned, and the museum criterion strictly adhered to."¹ The floor is finished in black slate and white marble, and runs in an unaltered pattern throughout all the

rooms, contributing significantly to the sense of continuity created and to the whole atmosphere of the space.

Direct natural light is softened by punched-metal curtains (which in fact substituted recently for the Venetian blinds with grey aluminium laths) ; artificial lighting is obtained by cold cathode lamps, refracting light and distributing it in a neutral way within each room, so that attention of the viewer is not drawn to particular exhibits.

On the first level, the museographic route, confined by the preexisting plan which was respected, is discontinuous. The visitor has to leave a group of rooms from the door he or she entered. On the contrary, on the piano nobile the sequence of rooms and galleries is uninterrupted and forms a closed route.

The exhibits, mainly 15th, 16th, and 17th century paintings, have been treated as detached objects on display. As Director Marcenaro stated, "works of art were treated not as the decorative part of a given setting, but as world in themselves, sufficient to absorb the visitor's full attention. To avoid distracting that attention, care was taken when arranging the rooms as far as possible to dispense with all embellishments either in material, form or color the intention being to provide the tranquil visual background that is desirable."²

¹C. Marcenaro, "The Museum Concept and the Rearrangement of the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa", *Museum*, v.7, n.4, 1954, p. 264.

² *Ibid.*

Fig. 95..Plan, first floor.

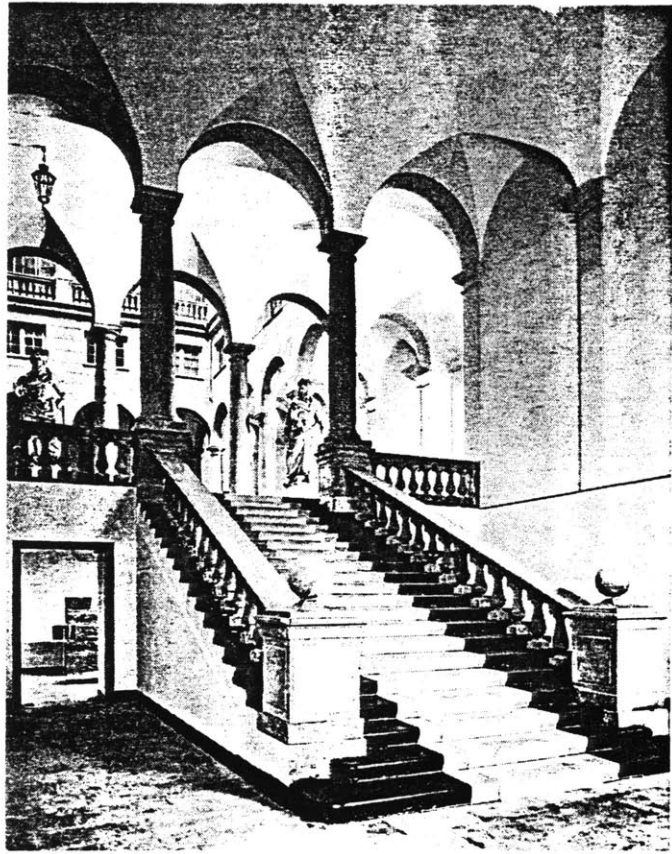
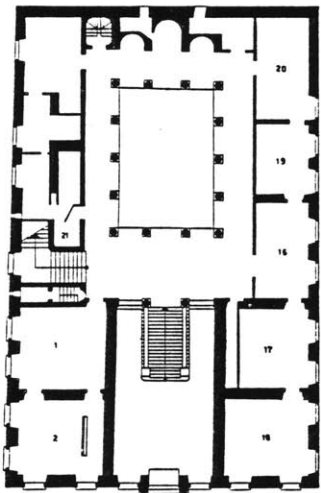


Fig.94. The staircase leading up to the first floor with the courtyard beyond. The first exhibition room is to the left of the top of the stairs.

Fig. 96 Plan, second floor.

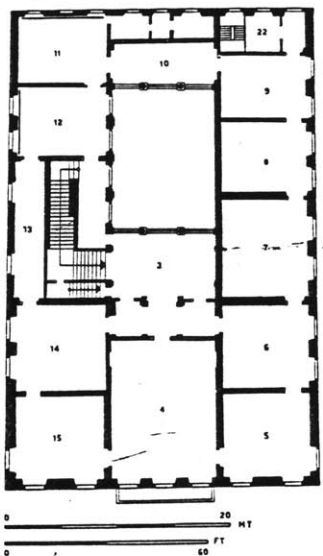


Fig. 97. The Palazzo Bianco as arranged in 1893.

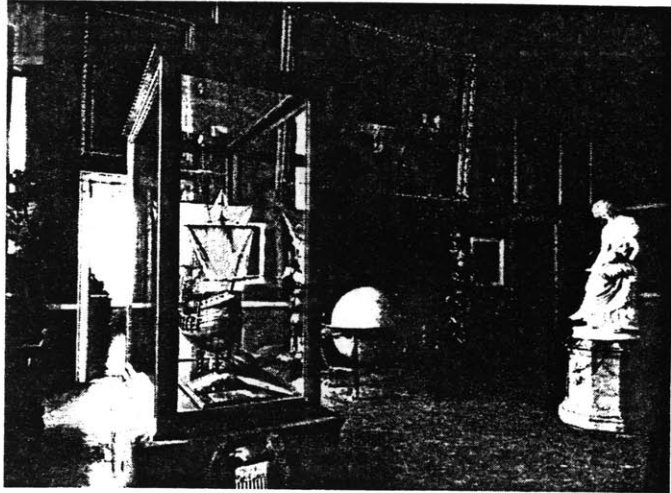


Fig. 99. The front hall of the second floor, with fifteenth and sixteenth century Flemish, French-Flemish, and Dutch paintings.

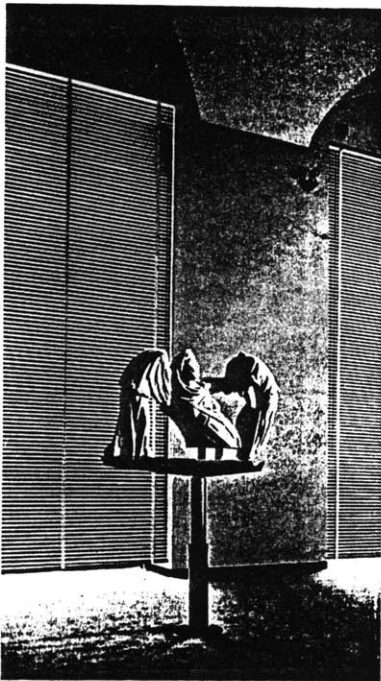


Fig. 98. The fragment from the tomb of Margaret of Brabant by Giovanni Pisano has been mounted on a cylindrical steel support which can be raised, lowered and swivelled as desired. Spotlights provide additional lighting.



Fig. 100, 101. In the Palazzo Bianco museum, the works of art constitute the only objects from another era from that of the observer, in accordance with the architects' position that the surrounding environment should be contemporary, in order not to distract the viewer by confronting him/her with other unfamiliar elements. Furniture—that is the few chairs placed in the center of some rooms and in the landing-hall of each level—are modern, and the exhibits' supports are detached pieces, used as intermediate and separate elements to enhance the distance between the works of art and the surrounding environment.

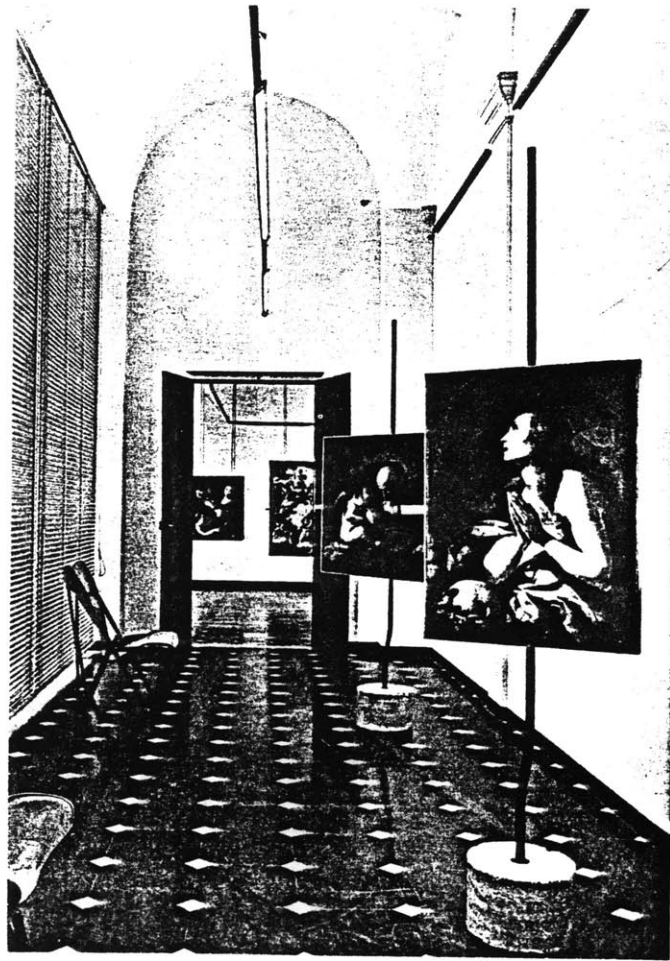
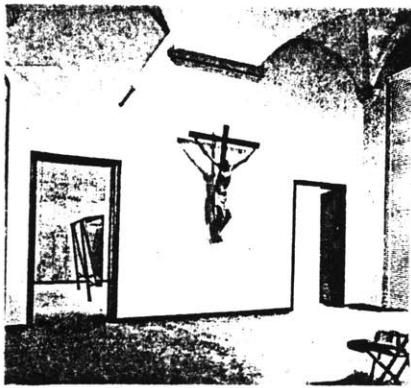
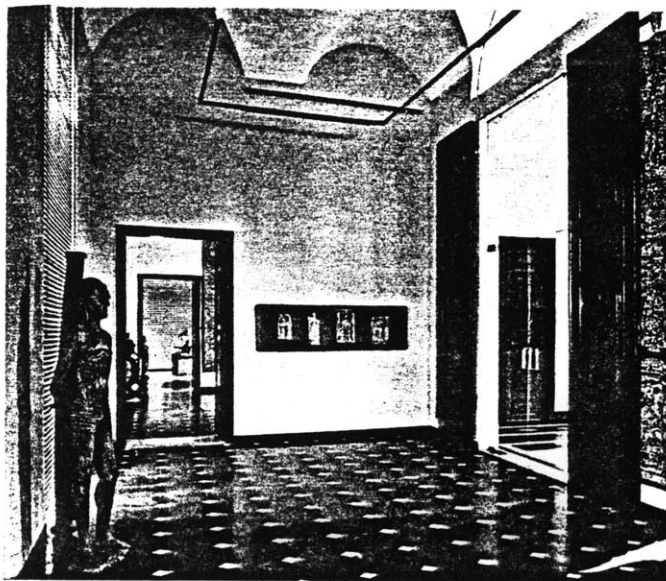


Fig. 102. Works of art have been placed in chronological order and grouped according to country and school, "so that the rooms follow one another like the successive chapters of a pictorial anthology."



Castelvecchio Museum, Verona, 1958-64
Restoration design and arrangement: Carlo Scarpa
Arrangements of collections: Dr Licisco Magagnato

The Castle of San Martino, given the name Castelvecchio, in order to be distinguished from the new castle of San Pietro built at the end of the fourteenth century, was erected in 1354 as an alternative residence of the Scaliger family.

The castle, on the bank of river Adige, was originally built by incorporating in its structures the city wall from the period of the Communes, in the twelfth century, partly restored in the thirteenth century after the rout of the Adige in 1284. Today, comprising part of the restored city walls and embracing an entrance bridge, it serves as a pedestrian link between the old and new part of the town.

Throughout its life, the complex underwent various interventions and changes of use. Due to its strategic position, it became a military edifice, and remained one until our century. Particularly in the Napoleonic era, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the French demolished part of the clock tower, and, on the river side, closed the defensive wall by an L-shaped structure. In the mid-nineteenth century the bridge was opened to the traffic. As a result, the two original units —the palace (the *Reggia*), which had been the residential section of the ancient structure of the Scala family, and the fort, which came to be known as the Napoleonic wing— became completely separated.

In 1924, Castelvecchio became a principal museum in Verona, exhibiting paintings, sculpture, and 'industrial art', from the Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century. In order to serve its new function, the castle had been demilitarized and the structures associated with the Scala family residence restored by the architect Ferdinando Forlati. However, responsible for this transformation was Professor Antonio Avena, director of the city's museums, and he provided for the fitting of the rooms, which were treated appropriately for a scenographic mounting of furnished interiors from the antique palaces of the city. Even the outer facade of the gallery was used as a support for balconies and Veronese palaces of the later fifteenth century.

Castelvecchio was hit by bombs towards the end of 1944. On the day before liberation, the bold arches of the bridge extending across Adige were ruined by the fleeing German troops. Between 1947 and 1950, the castle was restored to its prewar condition, through subsequent reconstruction directed by Avena in the beginning, and the architect Pietro Gazzola later.

During the fifties, changing attitudes towards restoration work and new trends in museum architecture brought up different criteria and values, from which Castelvecchio was not to be left untouched. Restoration work by Carlo Scarpa, starting in 1957 sought to bring to light the original lay-out and the former spatial and architectural qualities of the castle, which the various interventions had concealed under their layers.

Scarpa's work on Castelvecchio lasted from 1957 to 1973. Until 1962 he worked on restoring and adapting to museum the two floors of the old palace, as well as on the joint between it and the Napoleonic wing; he made a temporary setting for the sculptures on the ground floor of the barracks and built the door to the medieval walls. Between 1962 and 1964 he completely rearranged the gallery, created the setting for the Gragande statue, and worked on the garden, so as to better define the entrances. In 1967 he completed the library and the museum services; and in 1973 he finished the drawings for the reordering of last room on the gallery's second floor. The slow construction, due to lack of funds, enabled him to work on every single detail and help his ideas mature.

The cleaning of the palace walls revealed traces of medieval walls, but the most important discovery was that of the Morbio doorway in the old walls and in the last room in the sequence. Its reopening offered the possibility for the new route through the museum, determined by the passage-way discovered under the road leading to the top of the Scaliger bridge. This was to be the focal point for the whole restoration work. Passing now through the passage of the *porta del Morbio* the visitor enters significantly enough, what in this as in most castles, is its central point, the keep; and, from here, through a newly built staircase and along a catwalk, one moves to the next building, the old palace. Here, Scarpa removed all the 1924 repaintings which have surrounded the the fragments of the authentic fourteenth century frescoes, revealing his

attitude in restoration. He wouldn't mean to complete the missing parts and create an illusion of the original object, but, with a treatment of support, to favour a better vision of the remaining image.

The visitor's defined museographic path starts with the series of six rooms on the ground floor of the Napoleonic wing, which contain Veronese sculpture from the first to the fourteenth centuries. One comes out to the Morbio passage way and trough that to the two floors of the palace, where medieval and Renaissance sculpture and paintings are exhibited. The circuit ends with the gallery of the second floor of the Napoleonic wing, exhibiting fifteenth to eighteenth paintings. The route exits into the open and then reenters into the exhibition spaces, providing the visitor with the opportunity to observe the restored structure as well. Architecture is part of the exhibition itinerary. Particularly at the joint between the two buildings, where no exhibits are present, one is drawn into a perception of the architectural treatment and the dialogue between old and new parts. It is here where Scarpa has set the equestrian statue of Gragande, on a lofty cement plinth. A double beam faced with copper, supports a pavilion which shelters the statue. This complex set of elements is visible in constantly changing perspective from several points within the itinerary of the visitor.

Displayed objects in the Castelvecchio museum are part of the town's heritage. In this way, local identity is reasserted and celebrated. They have been chosen from among the very full civic collection, with care to reconstruct an epitome of the artistic

culture and history that emerge from the taste embodied in local collections. Paintings, sculptures, frescoes, and other objects are mixed together in a chronological order, forming a history of the city through the forms that the city has produced or sustained, from medieval time, down to the modification of Italy.

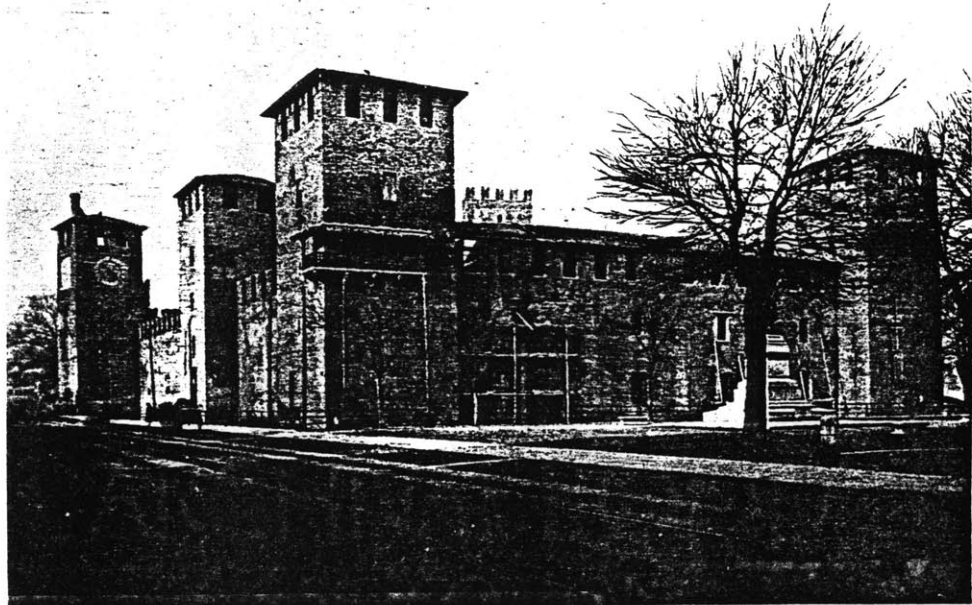


Fig. 103. The Castello Scaligero as restored in 1924

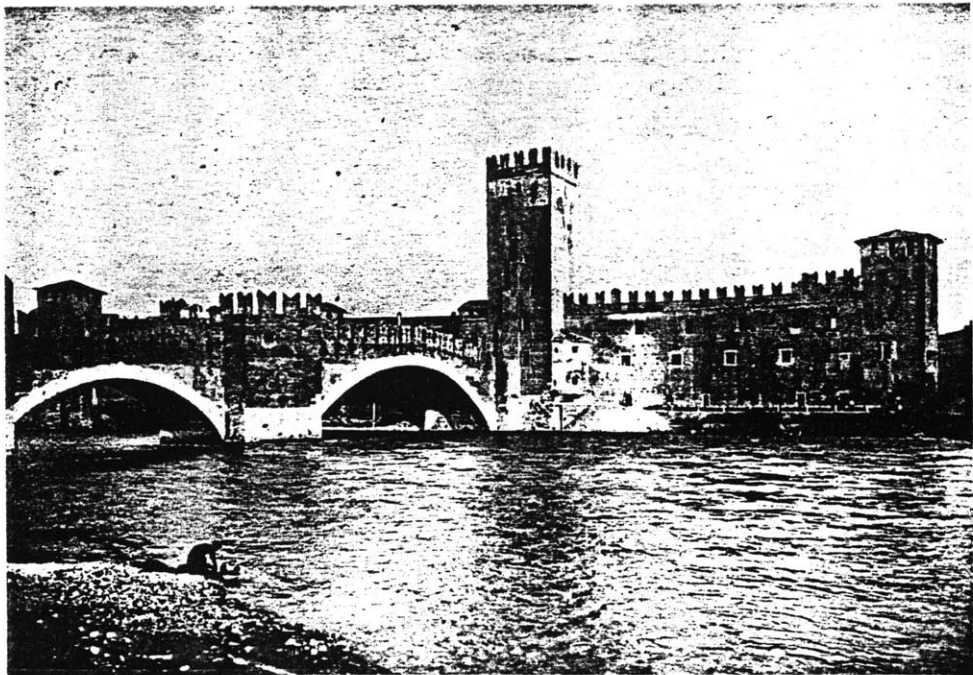


Fig.104. The Castelvecchio from the river Adige.

Fig. 105. The Napoleonic wing of the Castelvechio, before the restoration of 1924-26.



Fig. 106. The Castelvechio Museum, under restoration work in 1924.



Fig. 107 The Castelvechio Museum after the restoration of 1924-26.

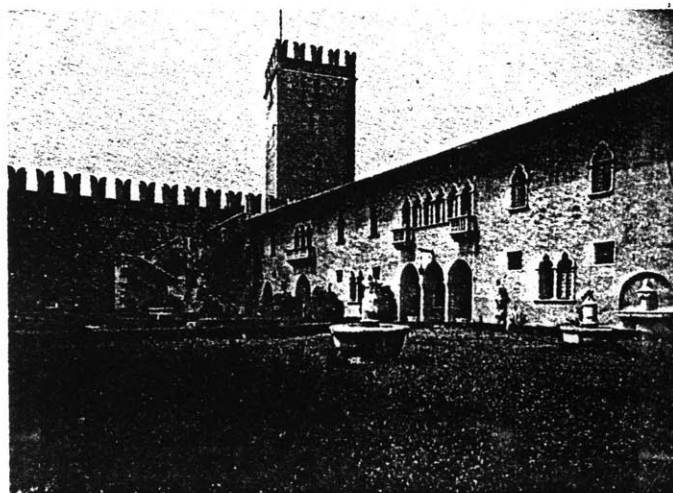




Fig. 108. The Castelvecchio Museum today.

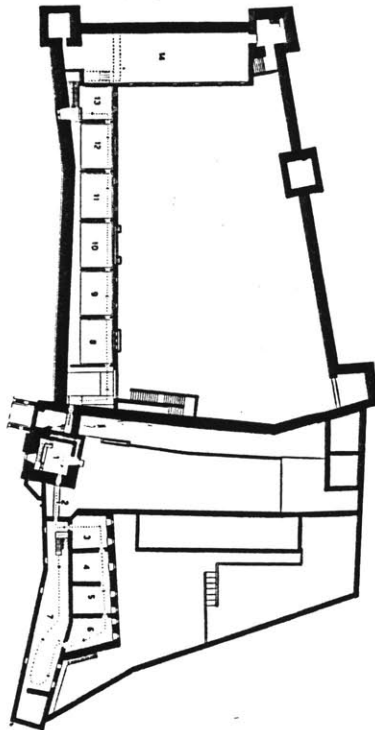


Fig. 109. Plan, ground floor.

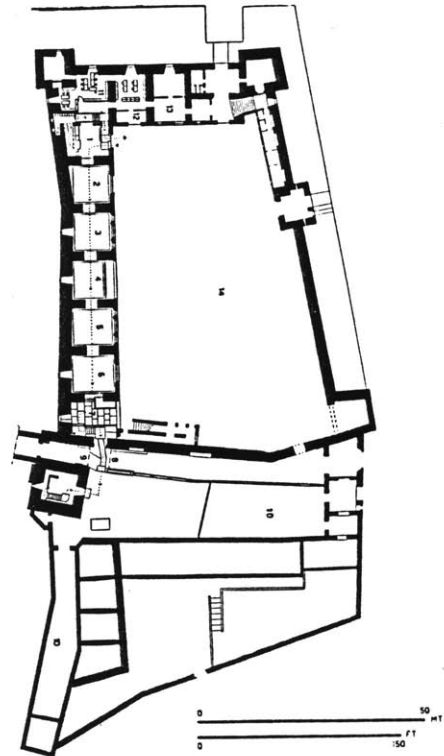


Fig. 110. Plan, first floor

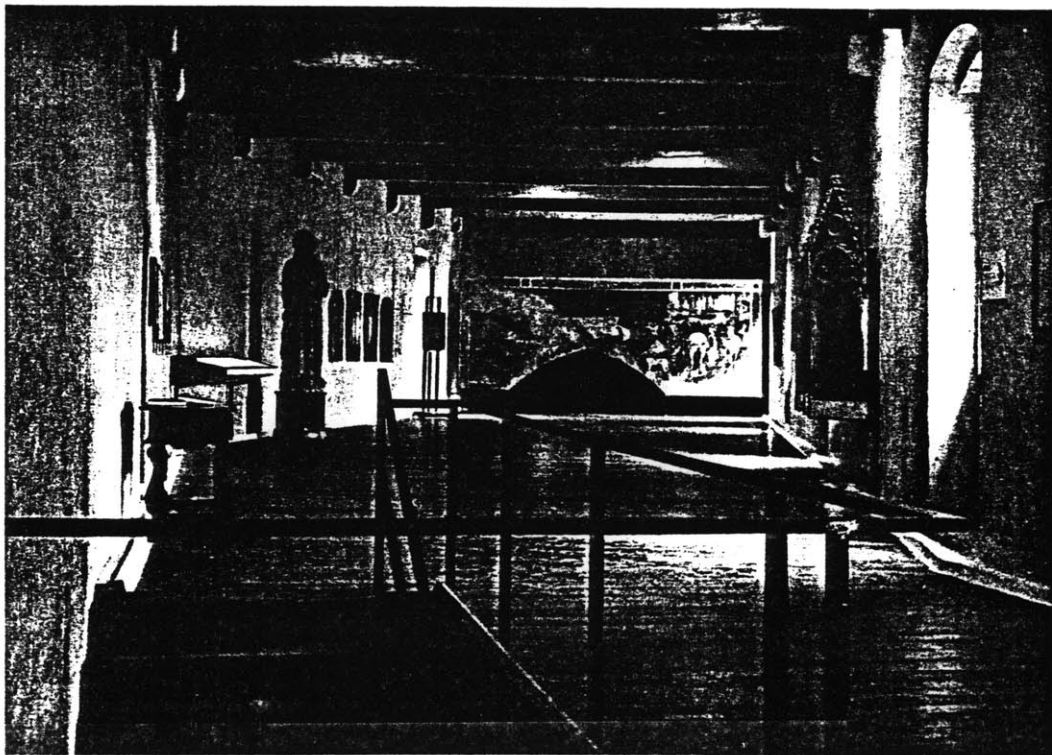


Fig. 111. The sculpture gallery on the ground floor of the Napoleonic wing.
Fig. 112. The second floor of the Scaligeri palace

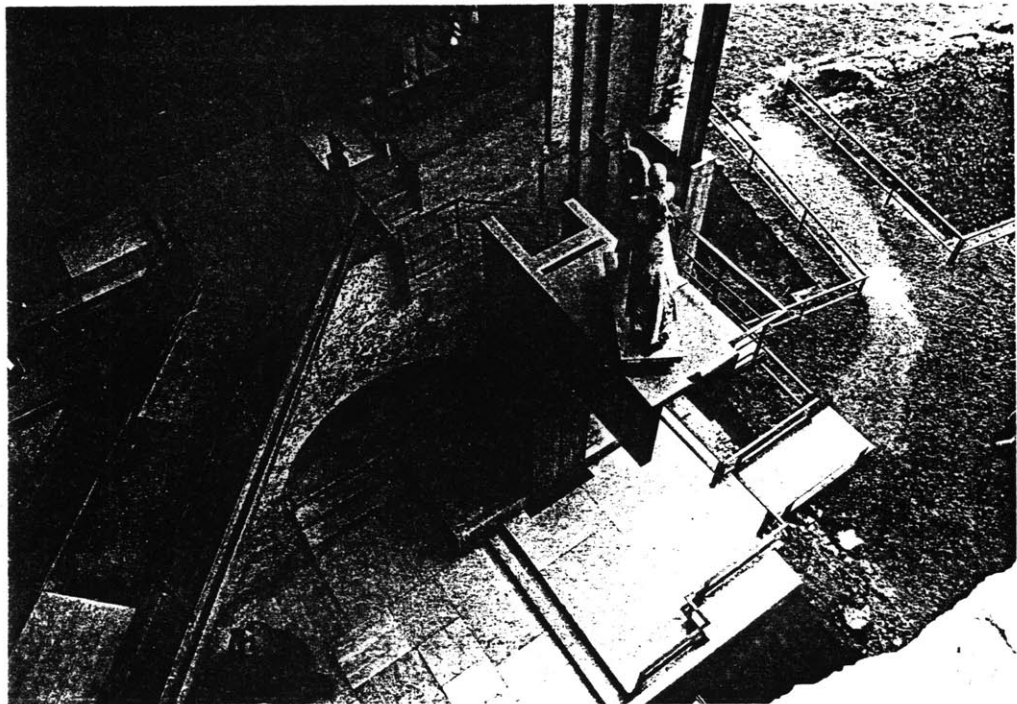
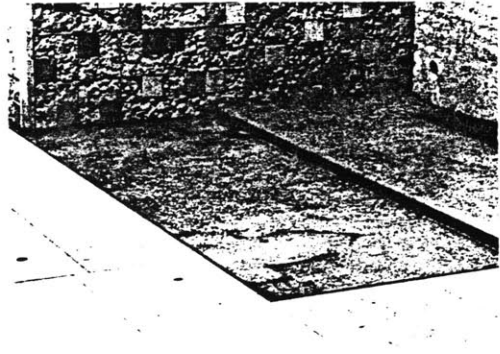
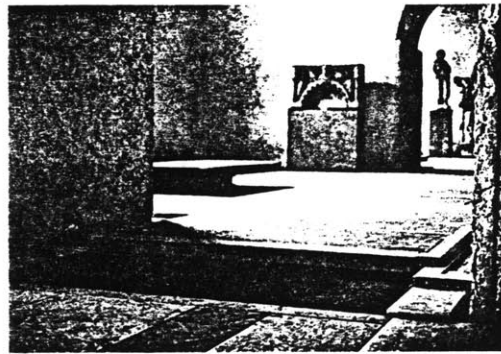
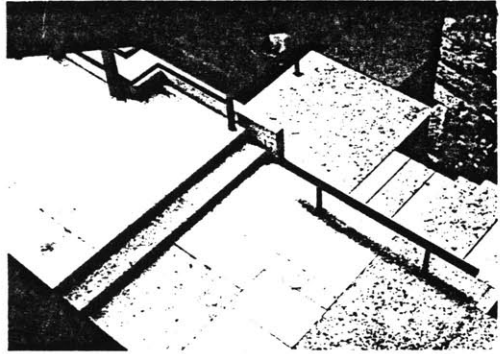
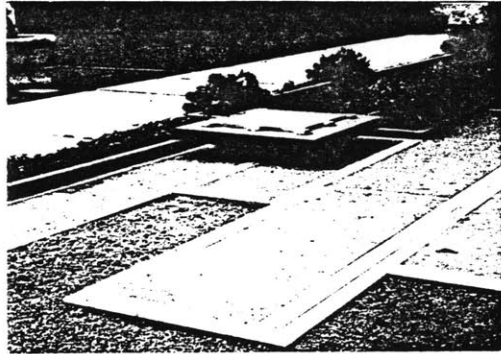


Fig. 113 Carlo Scarpa's "architecture in Details"
Fig. 114. View of the passageway linking the Scaliger keep with the upper floor of the gallery, near the statue of Cangande.

Fig. 115. View of the Cangrande area. The collocation of the equestrian statue was planned by Scarpa to be the pivot of the whole composition; the statue is visible in constantly changing perspective from several points.

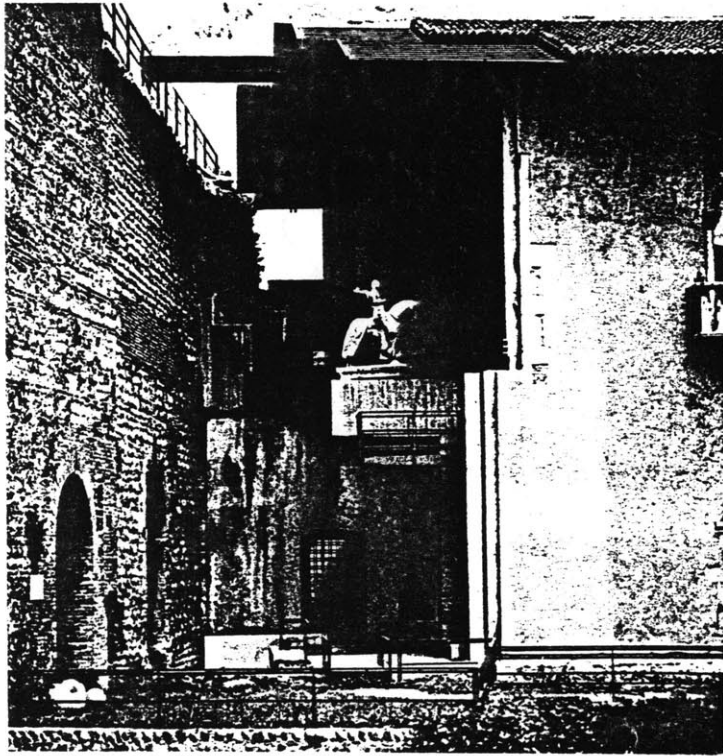
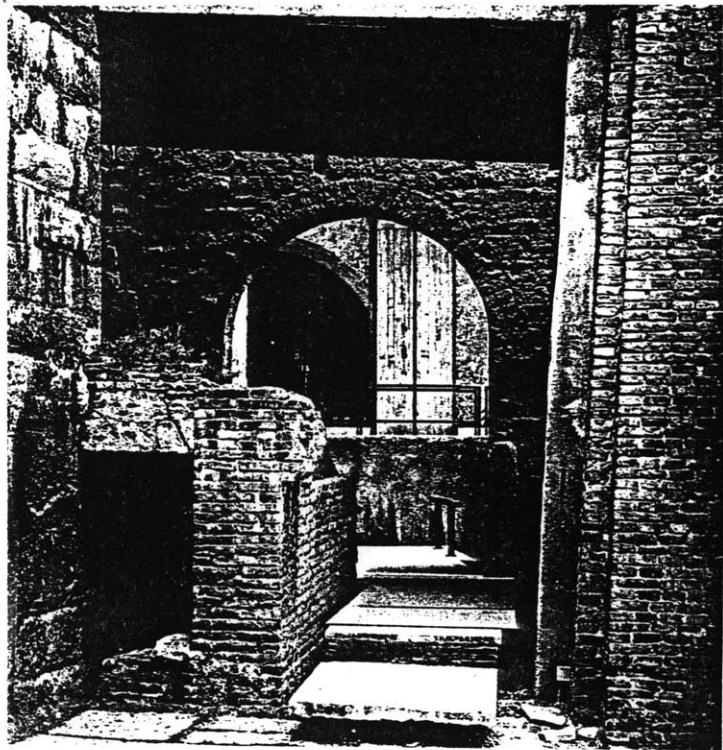


Fig. 116. The Morbio passage, as restored by Scarpa. The confrontation between old and new parts of the structure constitutes a part of the museographical route.



Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 1986

Restoration: "ACT Architecture"

Interior Architecture: Gae Aulenti

The Gare d' Orsay restoration involved two distinct interventions: the conservation of the old Beaux-Arts railroad station, redundant since the early fifties, and the insertion of a museum in this vast vaulted space. The "ACT Architecture" group (Renaud Bardou, Pierre Colboc, Jean-Paul Philippon) were responsible for the first part, whereas the museum installation was done by Gae Aulenti.

The Gare d' Orsay station was built in 1898 according to the design of the academician Victor Laloux. The composition is comprised of two parts: a) the long semicylindrical station hall, an iron-framed vaulted construction, clad in a grand stone facade of the Beaux-Arts tradition, and b) a hotel abutting the hall to west and south.

At the time the station was built, its industrial appearance was held not to be appropriate to its location on the bank of the Seine, facing the Tulleries. The iron framework had to be concealed under a grand stone facade, ornamented in the Beaux-Arts tradition. The Louvre's tall symmetrical pavilions framing the portico were repeated here on the entrance facade along the embankment. Laloux, not content with this masking of the structure, took advantage of the clause providing for the installation of a hotel. It was the best excuse and a quite appropriate way of concealing the vault, and avoiding an abrupt and visible from outside closing

of the glazed surface. The problem was successfully solved. All that one can see from the university district is a uniform facade of a long stone-clad building.

The great hall had the size of the nave at Notre Dame, and was functionally superfluous, since new electrified trains produced no steam or soot. On the other hand, the station soon turned out to be useless, for trains grew too long for its platforms. It was eventually abandoned, since by the late thirties it could no longer house the longer trains then in use. In 1939 it was integrated with the underground system.

In the sixties, it was suggested that Gare d'Orsay should be demolished, and replaced by a modern hotel/convention center. The destruction of the les Halles, of the prison of la Roquette, of the grand staircase of the Lafayette Gallery, followed by the controversy that surrounded these acts and the failure to find worthy replacements for them, focused attention on nineteenth century architecture and sensitized the state towards the conservation of such monuments. However, the danger of demolition was still there until the building was finally saved in 1973, by being declared an historical monument by Georges Pompidou. But it wasn't just a matter of magnanimity; Pompidou was certainly thinking of creating a museum here. But it was finally left to Giscard to crystallize the idea, and use Orsay as a pedestal for a colossal monument in honor of his leadership.

In 1978 a limited competition for the conversion of the building into a museum was

announced. Out of the seven invited projects, winners were the "ACT Architecture" group, who showed respect for the previous identity of the building. Despite the success of the basic concept of keeping the openness of the space and its longitudinal arrangement, treatment of the interior wasn't judged satisfactory. Therefore, in 1980, a final competition under the banner of "aménagement interieur" was announced, and the winner is Gae Aulenti and Italo Rota entry.

Responsible for the restoration, the ACT group restored the metal framed vault of great nave by removing and replacing all the cast plaster coffers, and reglazing the skylights with insulating glass. In the transformation of the interior into an exhibition space, Aulenti used an architectural language which is completely contrasting that of the restored structure. She adopted an abstracted historicizing style, recalling ancient Assyrian and Egyptian architecture, and 'played' with contrasts between materials, forms, and colors. Lateral space is organized as a sequence of rooms, galleries, passages and entrances, what is usually held as typical of 'traditional museum arrangement'.

Even before the execution of the project, the architectural literature had dealt extensively with the museum installation in Gare d'Orsay. Opinions varied a great deal ; there were favorable critiques and others quite disparaging of the actual result. But they all agree that Gae Aulenti has made a statement of her own which is in a direct contrast with the host structure, with Laloux's restored building.

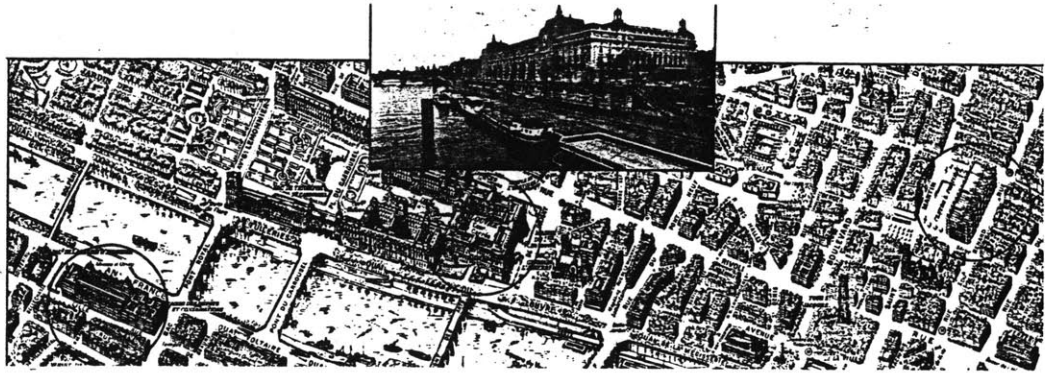
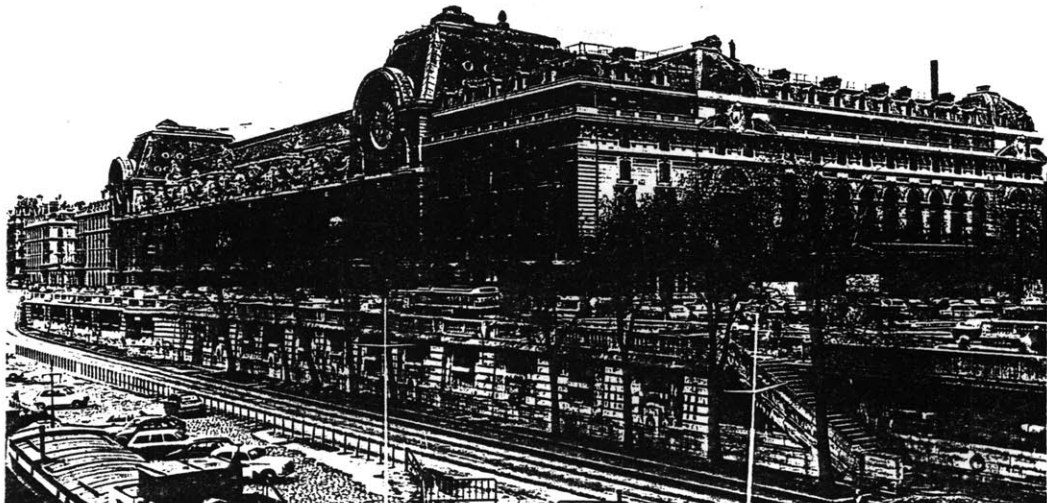


Fig. 117, 118, 119.. The Musée d'Orsay is not an isolated project. It fits into a program of museum planning within the heart of the urban fabric of Paris.



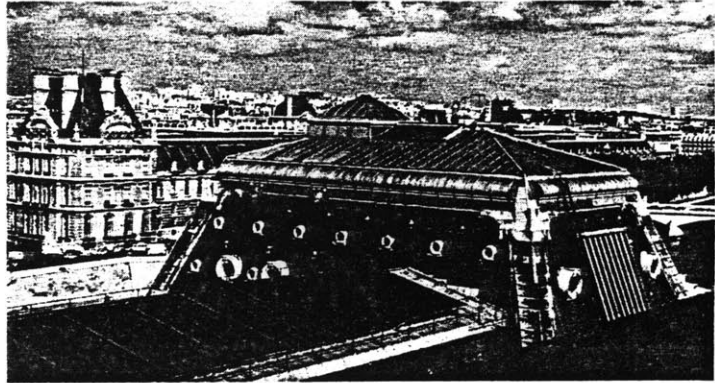
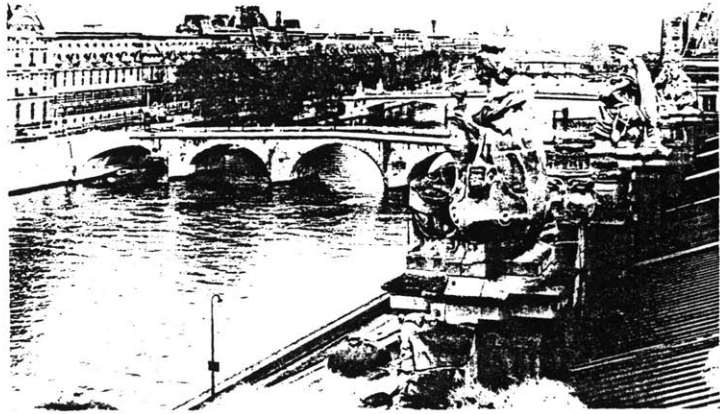


Fig. 120, 121, 122. The Louvre's tall symmetrical pavilions framing the portico were repeated here on the entrance facade along the embankment.



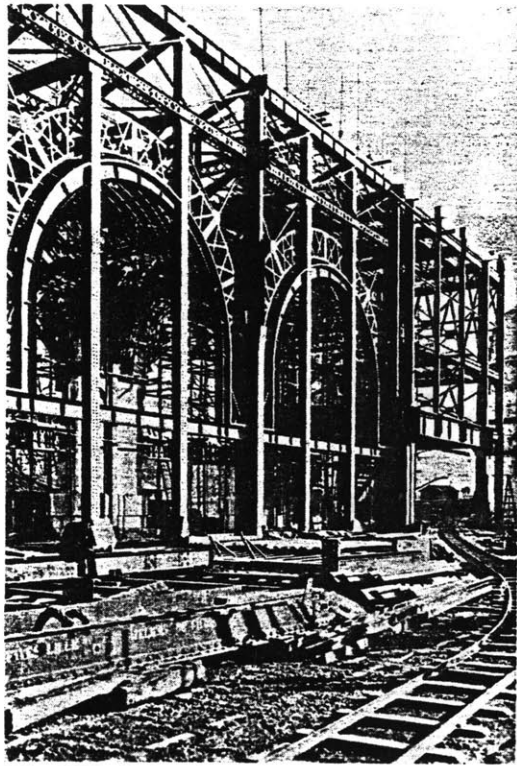


Fig. 123. Laloux's project under construction.

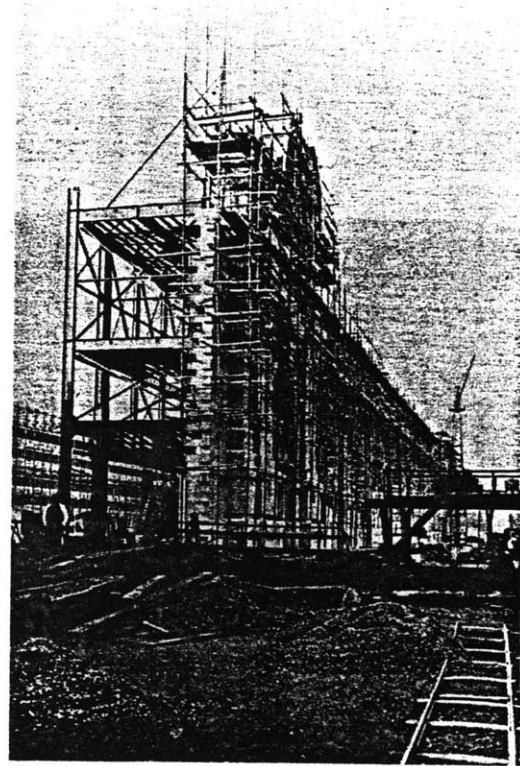


Fig. 124. The Gare d'Orsay.



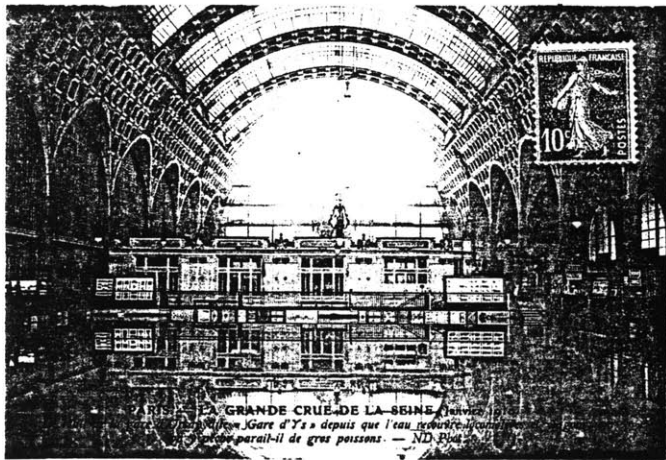
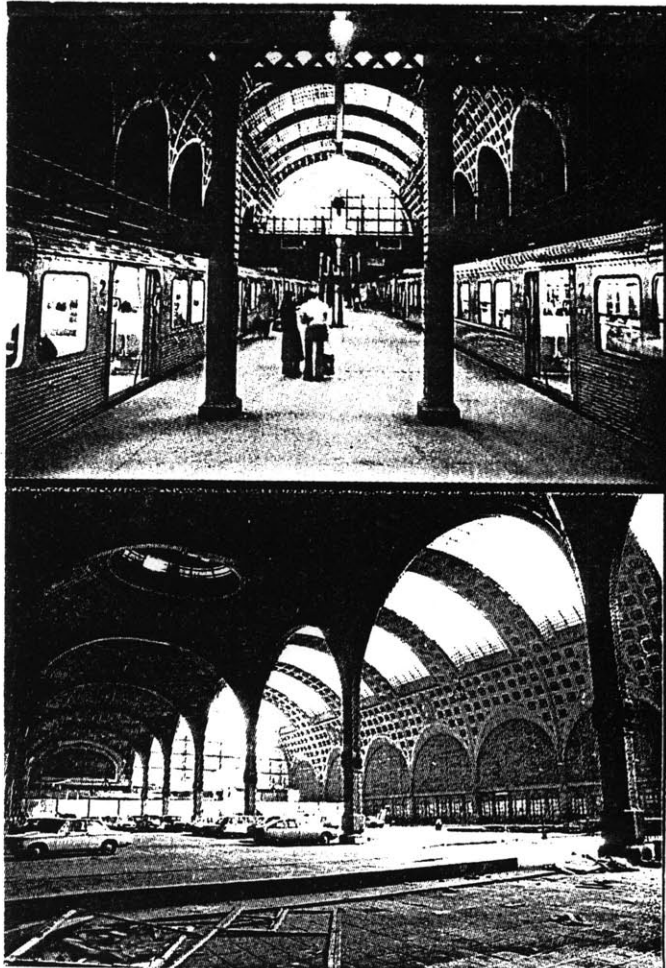


Fig. 125. The flood of the Seine in 1910.

Fig. 126. The Gare d'Orsay, when intergrated with the underground system.

Fig. 127. The abandoned station.



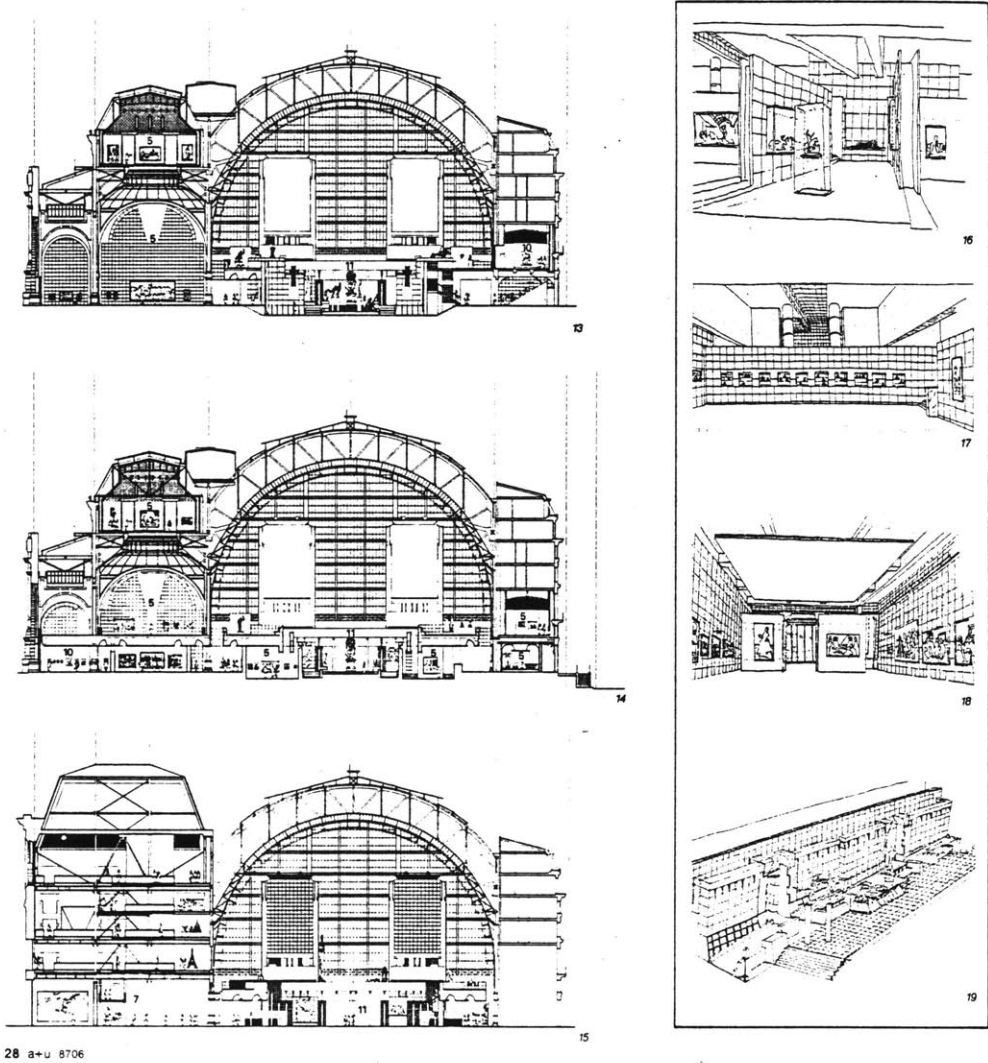
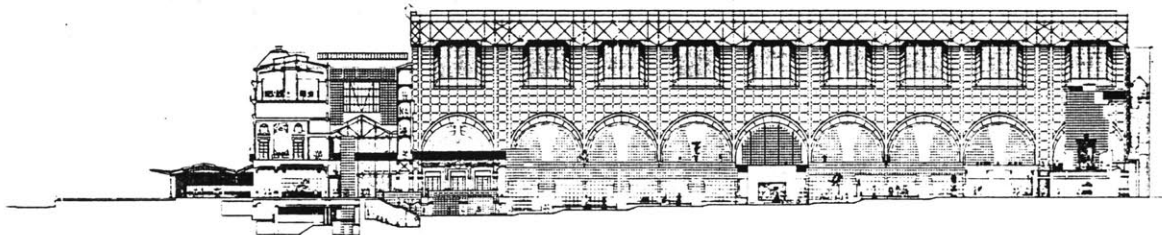


Fig. 128. Sections and study sketches for Gae Aulenti's installation.



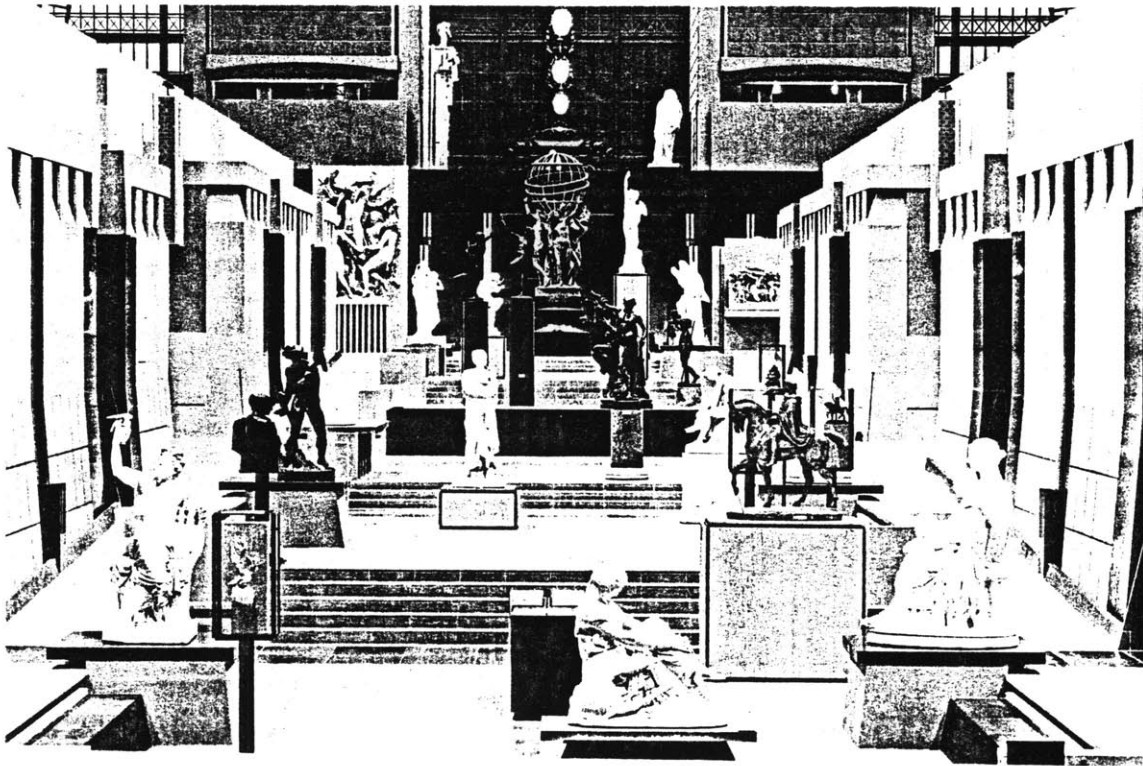
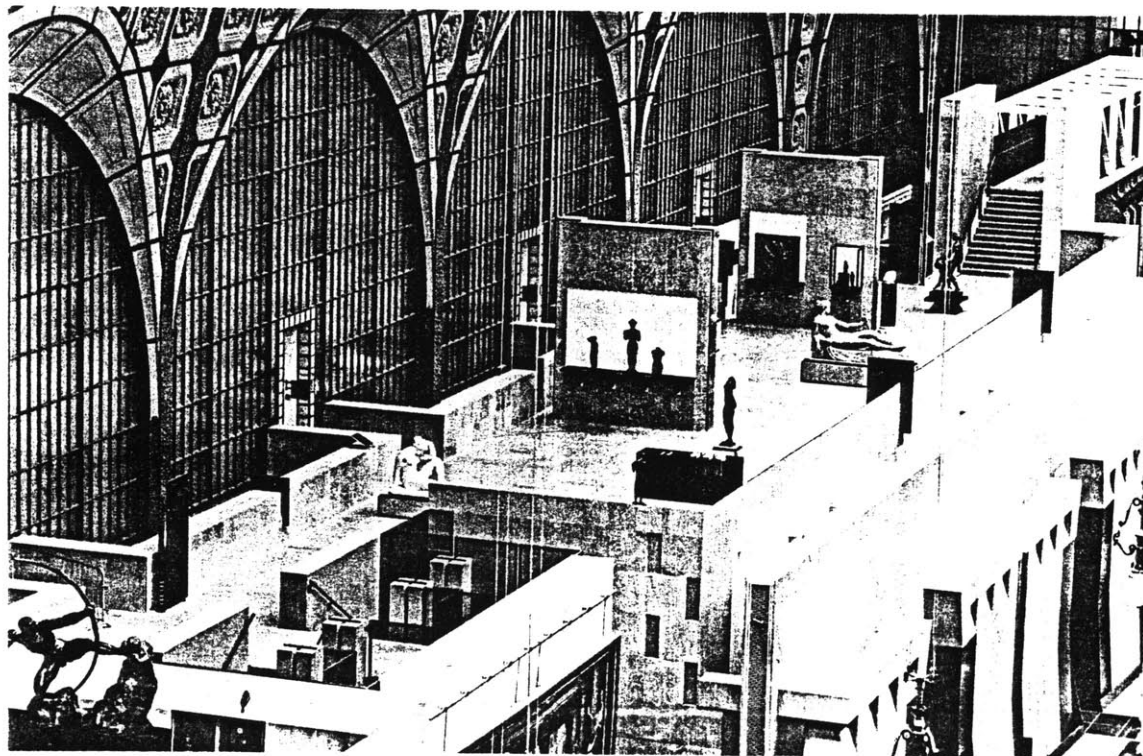


Fig. 129,130. Views of the model for Aulenti's project. (The architect's experience as a stage designer is apparent...?)



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