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THE MACHINE, INDUSTRY AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE

The selection presented was strongly influenced by the theme of the international conference, "The Challenge of Change". Indeed, two buildings were inserted which have, for some time, been included within the DOCOMOMO International Register; Fiat Lingotto and the Olivetti ICO workshops. Passing over the motives for which the two industrial complexes are hailed as "icons" of our architectural heritage, we re-propose the two examples because they represent, at the beginning of the Third millennium, significant solutions to the challenge, on the part of modern buildings, to maintain a precise identity, in the face of variations of use and updating of physical structures.

Change and continuity are the boundaries linking the work of the architects involved in the reconversion of these two giant buildings, after the original industrial production had ceased. Thus, in Turin, the site of the most important Italian automobile company, FIAT, houses a highly valued polyfunctional centre, which serves the city. In Ivrea, meanwhile, spaces wisely designed for the production of writing and calculation machines now hold apparatus for visual and verbal communication.

The same destiny, decommissioning, links the third work to be included in the selection. The Pozzuoli works are also a Southern interpretation

of the same philosophy which had inspired the ICO workshops: the idea of "Community", to which Adriano Olivetti called the most important Italian architects to give form, between the Thirties and the Sixties. While these three complexes followed the same route, the Solimene factory enriches the selection with a profoundly different example, on a figurative organization level, but equally on the level of the relationship between manufactured building, architectural expression and productive cycle.

coordinator of the survey Marina Sommella Grossi



FIAT LINGOTTO

1916-1930

Torino

Giacomo Matté Trucco

The original Lingotto complex is the fruit of subsequent designs, modifications, expansions, and completions. The principal buildings are the Sorting Workshops, the New Workshops, and the Office Building "Palazzina". The two principal factory bodies which make up the plant, the single-floored hangar of the Sorting Workshops and the multi-floored New Workshops - each belong to a very different industrial building typology, despite having been designed almost at the same time. The structure of the works was conceived to function according to the ideals of Taylorism, in which work was distributed according to the construction chain. The New Workshops building has five floors, topped by the automobile test track. In 1982, when the works closed, it was Fiat itself who raised the "conservation" issue, and in 1986, Renzo Piano was selected and given the responsibility for the reconversion of the factory into a new, focal point for the advanced tertiary industry, with exhibition spaces, a conference centre, a hotel, shops, offices, and training facilities.

fiche reporters Marina Sommella Grossi, Anna Maria Zoragno



SOLIMENE CERAMICS FACTORY

1953-1956

Vietri (Salerno)

Paolo Soleri



The factory lies on a trapezoidal shaped plot, flanked on one side by the mountain which overlooks Vietri. The plot is orientated along a west-east axis, which was levelled out expressly for construction. The section which belongs to the Soleri project is made up of a full-height area, illuminated by a skylight, onto which overlook three levels of terraces, which are used as workspaces for lathe turners and decorators. The production cycle of ceramic proceeds from the top level to the bottom: this greatly influences the spatial lay-out of the building. The highest floor is dedicated to lathing and modelling; the first stage of cooking took place in the vertical oven (now removed) which connected to every level of the factory; transport along an inclined floor on the lower floor, used for decoration; then the second stage of cooking, and finally the showing and sale on the ground floor, via a second ramp. The side which faces the mountain is entirely blocked, and, on the ground floor, was designed as an internal driveway, for the loading and transportation of ceramics. Today, it holds the horizontal oven which is currently in use. The only view of the factory is outlined, on three sides, by the curving profile of Via Madonna degli Angeli, and is shaped by a partition, itself as tall as the building, and made up of upturned cones of polychrome ceramic, alternated with glass semi-lozenges. This continual line of ceramic and glass lies on a cement basement, which provides a level base for the cones, conforming the view from the street. The basement is moreover decorated by plates and ceramics plastered directly in the concrete, which add an element of advertising.

fiche reporter Luciano Cardellicchio



OLIVETTI ICO WORKSHOPS

1934-1962

Ivrea

Luigi Figini, Gino Pollini with Annibale Focchi,

Eduardo Vittoria, Marcello Nizzoli, Ottavio

Cascio



The Olivetti ICO Workshop complex is made up of a series of buildings, built at different stages during the period 1934 to 1962, to complete the original red brick factory, which had been built by Camillo Olivetti in 1908. Figini and Pollini were entrusted with the project, while other architects worked with them on later extension interventions. The central building, constructed gradually over the course of about ten years, is a factory unit 12 metres deep and four floors high. It forms a large, rectangular block, which faces onto Via Jarvis for over 100 metres, with a facade made entirely of double framed glass, turns west at a right-angle with Via Montenevale, then south towards the service areas, and finally towards the east. Internal spaces are structurally simple, based on a free floor plan, and functional for the installation of the construction lines. The complex was later almost doubled by the 1955 extensions (New ICO): a large courtyard block, with doubled windows, which also overlooked Via Jarvis. In 1958, the New ICO courtyard was covered, by Eduardo Vittoria, with a modular steel structure holding twenty large square skylights. Between the first and second glass bodies, a vehicle underpass leads to the dining hall and research centre, onto which the buildings' sunlit fronts face. These are characterized by articulated sun-screen structures, and, for the New ICO, by the technical towers, covered in yellow ceramic tiles.

fiche reporters Patrizia Bonifazio, Giorgia Feraudo, Paolo Scrivano, Marina Sommella Grossi



OLIVETTI FACTORY

1951-1955

Pozzuoli (Napoli)

Luigi Cosenza

The original complex, designed together with the neighbouring residential settlement for workers, is made up of four sections. To the south, lies the entrance portico and two attached buildings; to the west, the dining hall, library, and a step-shaped infirmary; then the cross-plan factory, office building, changing rooms and other technical volumes; and finally, to the north, the shops, deposit block and thermal centre. Luigi Cosenza interposes the portico between the factory and the street, as a form of filter. The cross design is the key to the entire complex's planimetric system, also allowing the possibility of gradual or sudden expansion, and creating an equidistance between the individual working areas and the compulsory security and sorting passages. This arm of the cross is on two floors: the workshops on the ground-floor, service platforms mid-way, and, on the upper floor, assembling, testing, checking and storage of final pieces. To the front and rear of the arm are two green areas, the first for protection, the second intended for extensions, while, on the west side, the tank designed by Pietro Parcinai. Access to the factory is from the western side of the centre of the cross, and is reached through a covered passage, marked by atriums and porticos. Four volumes close the heads of the arms of the cross.

fiche reporters Rossano Azzarita, Marina Sommella Grossi

