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Can the architectural project offer new ways of interpreting, reading, and understanding heritage and the patrimonialization process?

What are the investigation tools and design actions useful for strengthening the relationships between heritage and context?

How can heritage sites best be valorized, while defining ways to sustainably use heritage and actions for its protection?

Starting from an idea of heritage seen as a *sense of time and a sense of place*, this book poses a hypothesis: that the perspective of the project, at architectural, urban and landscape scales, can be taken as an interpretative key through which to analyse potential and critical issues related to the tourist valorization of heritage.



Between Sense of Time and Sense of Place



# Between Sense of Time and Sense of Place

edited by  
Mauro Marzò  
Viviana Ferrario  
Viola Bertini

Designing Heritage Tourism Landscapes

The series brings together a number of studies dedicated to the phenomenon of heritage tourism. A driving force for territorial regeneration processes and, at the same time, a factor in the alteration of the nature of places, this particular form of tourism represents a field of investigation for a vast number of disciplines.

Open to dialogue with different fields of knowledge, the essays of the series present research focused on the relationship between heritage, landscape and architecture. In this regard, the essays presented in the texts and the project case studies respectively are assumed as lenses through which to read the potentialities and the critical issues related to the touristic use of material and immaterial assets. Can architectural design offer new ways of knowledge and interpretation of heritage? What are the analytical tools and the design methodologies useful for establishing a dialogue with that sense of past and sense of place proper to the concept of heritage itself? The series answers these questions by illustrating the results of research, teaching experiments and design explorations which, in light of the complex problems posed by tourism, address the relationship between heritage, landscape and the historical city, the transformation of landscapes, and the delicate balance between protection and the use of heritage.

Brazil, Rio de Janeiro from the Corcovado viewing platform, 1934. Fondazione Mazzotti photographic archive cod. RAS1 - Foto Archivio Storico Fotografico della Provincia di Treviso





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# BETWEEN SENSE OF TIME AND SENSE OF PLACE

DESIGNING HERITAGE TOURISM

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*edited by*

Mauro Marzo

Viviana Ferrario

Viola Bertini

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# Museums and musealization

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Heritage is one of the main drivers of contemporary tourism. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) estimates that 40% of global travel is cultural in nature, i.e. 'a type of tourist activity in which the visitor's primary motivation is to learn, discover, experience and enjoy the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourist destination'. The very definition of a museum dates back to the post-war period with the foundation of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the first UNESCO General Conference held in Paris from 16 to 20 November 1946.<sup>1</sup>

Some authors argue that the concept of heritage relates to the ability to situate the contemporary within a historical perspective that can evoke a sense of place, that is, to explicate the value and significance of heritage in relation to its geographical and cultural context. However, the definition of what this concept encompasses also stems from historical and social conventions, since it is the result of an understanding, an agreement to collectively recognise precise cultural and identity values, to the extent that any significant change in the perception of these values also entails their renegotiation.

Heritage therefore relates to our sense of community: it is a collective asset, a shared inheritance received from our *fathers* and temporarily *ours*, before being passed on to future generations. Rather than being an *oil field*, as it is too often defined, considering its economic utility from an exploitative standpoint, heritage is a field of *humanitas*: a repository of traces, stories, knowledge and experience which in turn, writes Montanari, 'serves to increase and develop our humanness'.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, the phrase 'heritage of humanity' takes on the double meaning of belonging to humankind and containing it.

Since cultural tourism is more or less consciously driven by the pursuit of this *humanitas*, intelligently fostering the development of tourism can contribute to revitalising the sharing and knowledge of heritage, triggering a virtuous circle that benefits conservation of this heritage.

Museums and sites subject to musealisation are by definition places for the transmission and preservation of an area's memory and identity. Heritage tourism, by its very nature, focuses on them, promoting their enhancement in the case of established institutions and fostering their emergence where tourism is a more recent phenomenon, stimulating multiple design considerations relating to the conservation of physical remains, the protection of intangible values and the definition of the local landscape, understood in its complex nature as a built, imagined and perceived entity. However, it was only in 2019 that ICOM rewrote its definition of museum. The proposed amendment, drafted by an advisory committee, suggested that museums should be 'democratic, inclusive and polyphonic spaces geared towards critical dialogue about the past and the future'.<sup>3</sup>

There is no denying that setting up a new museum or musealising a site means shaping the destiny of an area from an economic and cultural standpoint. It means mapping out new tourist routes that can ease the pressure on large art cities and, finally, it means being able to contain and govern the consumer component of tourism. Designing for heritage tourism therefore means designing the future of places, sometimes saving them from abandonment and oblivion.



The theme of the museum as a place of memory and identity is currently central to important reflections by art historians, curators, philosophers and anthropologists who question the value of the museum in contemporary society, sometimes warning against the risk of an indistinct and ineffective accumulation of traces. Art historian Édouard Pommier remarked that one only need look through a dictionary of nouns and check for the existence of the relevant museum (cork, iron, cardboard, etc.): ‘if it does not exist, it is certainly in the pipeline’.<sup>4</sup> Joël Candau<sup>5</sup> believes that we are in the midst of a collective mania for conservation that reflects our current inability to accept the fleeting nature of time and to overcome our fear of its inexorable passing. Instead, the museum should be a *free port*, sheltered from the swirling flow of the present, a place where fragments of long history slow down and even stop time, giving us the feeling of being part of a reassuring *whole* (history, a land, a people) that transcends and dilutes our short individual existence. However, Candau recognises in the uncritical accumulation of traces a potential risk of memory loss due to the impossibility of transmitting a plethora of heritage. This section of the book addresses some crucial questions concerning the issues mentioned so far: how to combine, in a museum or in musealisation practices, conservation and sharing, science and dissemination, learning and tourist appeal? How can we communicate cultural heritage? How can we make intangible heritage readable? How can we attract the public to museums? What is worthy of conservation and what can or should be erased forever? What meaning should be attached to a museum within a city or community? And last but not least: what role can or should architectural design play in these processes? The answers, even in the inevitable partiality of the illustrated case studies, often raise stimulating questions, rather than proposing definite solutions, which is probably what constitutes the real interest of the papers presented here.

Together, the reflections in this section offer a multi-faceted picture of the subject, which has therefore been observed from various points of view and approached with different methods. Many of the papers, however, are based on the shared assumption that the museum, which has now become a central place for transmitting heritage, is no longer a simple container, but rather a complex and structured institution which, as well as exhibiting *traces of humanity*, is also a venue for cultural production, a research centre for scholars, an educational site for schools, a restoration workshop (preferably open to the public so as to communicate the fragility of the heritage and the commitment to care), and possibly an open ‘public’ space. Due to this heterogeneity and overlapping of roles, we must think of a museum as a flexible tool, attentive to the needs of the public, but rigorous in its contents, capable of transmitting, communicating and interpreting, at various levels of complexity, cultural heritage that otherwise risks being incomprehensible and insignificant in most people’s eyes.

More or less explicitly, all the papers reveal the centrality (and also the responsibility) of design in selecting and relating, quoting or omitting, bringing together or separating; this is the same for both architecture and landscape. Heritage, writes Montanari, is a ‘discontinuous palimpsest, full of voids and fragments: heritage is a place of absence’.<sup>6</sup> Design is required to responsibly make sense of this absence.

In the extraordinary heterotopia that constitutes a museum, a hub connecting places, eras, tangible traces and intangible memories, narration is of paramount importance, that is, the way content is conveyed and presented, in relation to which architectural design can become the structural framework of the entire discourse, the direction of a performance in which the public is also an actor because it is invited to have an experience. Marco Russo, for example, presented two different museum spaces in which contemporary architecture accommodates intangible heritage. Both located in the Basque and Cantabria regions of Spain, these spaces appear to be places of experience and social encounter.

Capable of establishing conceptual connections while physically and visually linking the elements of reality, architectural design is a powerful device for narrating and transmitting knowledge: it can reveal the stratifications of time, contextualise or remove fragments, offer relics and works of art to admire, evoke the soul of places and develop an original reading of the existent.

In Riccardo Renzi's project for the new archaeological museum and service centre of the Rabaçal Roman villa in Portugal, the author describes a design approach that stems from a careful analysis of the traces and aims to recompose the spatial structure of the entire site. The new buildings, located outside the excavation boundary and arranged according to centuriation, have a courtyard that is a clear homage to the Roman *domus*.

Alessandra Carlini's reflection also highlights the importance of musealisation *in situ*, where urban archaeology becomes an opportunity for reintegration of a portion of building fabric and topographical reconnection, both in the urban context of Cartagena and in that of Cologne with an analysis of Peter Zumthor's Kolumba Museum building.

Elisabetta Matarazzo presents a research project in the field of design and restoration carried out on the San Marco Museum in Florence. One of the most interesting aspects of this project is the desire to strengthen the bond between the museum and the city through a series of interventions that have turned the former monastery into the hub of a network of illustrious cenacles in the historic centre of Florence. This idea is consistent with the concept of the museum as a public space already formulated by Giovanni Michelucci, who imagined the city as a continuous museum.<sup>7</sup>

The other papers in this section address particular musealisation practices.

Nikolia Kartalou, illustrating the National Museum of Scotland, presented a subtle reflection that aims to consider a museum framework as an ever-changing entity that transcends the boundaries of a specific established and predetermined heritage, and at the same time is able to elicit an idea of heritage locus, while eliciting an idea of the *locus of the heritage*.

Marianna Sergio analyses the work of the Azzurro firm, in particular the so-called 'sensitive environments' generated by video installations that turn the rooms of a museum or an exhibition space into narrative spaces, where spectators learn by participating with their own experience. In this case, the architecture of the container is subordinate, transfigured by the immersive scenarios of a machine that could be described as theatrical.

Finally, Ludovico Centis reflects on the controversial proposal to musealise the vestiges of the *Manhattan Project* (the American programme to build the atomic bomb) scattered throughout the United States. In envisioning the large, nation-wide park that Congress has so far rejected, Centis emphasises the need for a *porous* connection between the fragments of a difficult memory and the American landscape, as an alienating juxtaposition that can provoke conflicting, yet precisely for this reason effective emotional reactions in the public. The paper is very interesting because of the questions it raises about the practices of memorialisation and the essentially political choice of what memory to pass on to future generations and on what basis to construct the future of a country.

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## Notes

1. P. Ferrara, 'Tra Musei e Città: Il tempo del progetto', in M. Ferrara, J. Rocha & P. Ferrara eds., *Atlas Marrakech. Musei per la città storica*, Clean Edizioni, Napoli, 2020, pp. 63-70.
2. T. Montanari, *Istruzioni per l'uso del futuro. Il patrimonio culturale e la democrazia che verrà*, Minimum Fax, Roma, 2014, p. 51.
3. ICOM, *Definição de Museu*, Conferência de Jette Sandahl, 2019, <<https://icom-portugal.org/2019/02/28/definicao-de-museu-conferencia-de-jette-sandahl/>>, accessed 3 November 2021.
4. É. Pommier, 'Prolifération du musée', *Le débat*, no. 65, 1991, p. 138, cited in J. Candau, *La memoria e l'identità*, Ipermedium libri, Napoli, 2002 (1st edn Paris 1998), ch. IV, pp. 127-166.
5. J. Candau, *La memoria e l'identità*, loc. cit.
6. T. Montanari, op. cit., p. 47.
7. See R. Butini, *Giovanni Michelucci: fotogrammi del museo*, Diabasis, Reggio Emilia, 2007.