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IL MOMENTO PRESENTE DEL PASSATO. SCRITTI E PROGETTI DI ARCHITETTURA

by Angelo Torricelli, FrancoAngeli Editore 2022, pp. 156, € 24.00.

The relation between old and new, the theme of restoration and how to deal with the difficult and always variable approach to architectures and spaces of the past, is the subject of this book. It presents a series of theoretical writings and programmatic reflections that Angelo Torricelli, architect, member of the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca and former Dean of the Faculty of Civil Architecture at the Politecnico di Milano, has produced over thirty years. It creates a close symbiosis between the practice of the project with a constant theoretical reflection that seeks in the building a sort of continuous verification. This enables us to grasp the significance of the sequence of texts, whose purpose, as the author writes, is to "entwine theoretical reflection with design experience and take a stand in the cultural debate that has developed between the different disciplines involved [...] in the controversy about restoration, valorization and, in general, the relation of the architectural

project to pre-existing buildings." Now that the comparison with the past has upset the idea of restoration as a fossilization of every pre-existence, and the recovery of each building is necessarily linked to its functional and compositional conversion – the latter undertaken with the greatest care, dialectical capacity and sense of history – the reading of these writings acquires a topical relevance and suggests the way ahead. Drawing on T.S. Eliot's insight in the essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919), Torricelli states: "The belief that the past is modified by the present reverses the more habitual view that the present finds its guidance in the past, and, at the same time, it defines the conformity between old and new as that original balance that the work of art, new by unequivocal statute, introduces into the order existing before its appearance." In the perspective that "one only restores to learn from it" (Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, 1768), that every project of comparison with the built and the old is transformed into a process of knowledge, we can quote to what Oreste del Buono wrote on the back cover of one of his famous novels: "The past was what it was, And the future will be what it will be. But how would the future be different, if I acted differently in the present, if I acted differently in the present, wouldn't the past be different as well?"



ANGELO TORRICELLI, COMPETITION FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRECINCT OF THE ANTIQUARIUM OF TINDARI (ME) 2020.

VETRA BUILDING - THE BUSINESS SQUARE

by M.A. Crippa, H. Marsala, F. Rovere, M. Tonelli, F. Zanzottera (Vol 1) – Artelia, Axa, Colombo Costruzioni, Il Prisma, Land (Vol. 2), Axa Investment Managers – Bams Edizioni 2022, 2 volumes, pp. 200 – pp. 136, € 45 - € 35.

The theme of the reuse of the urban artifact, the project that relates to the architectural fabric of the city and the existing building heritage, of 'building on the built' appears to be one of the increasingly crowded streets in the panorama of contemporary architecture internationally. The formula of the tabula rasa, the serial sequence of demolition / site clearance / new construction, of the late modernist heritage, practiced voraciously from the later post-war period to the end of the short century, appears antiquated and outdated. This is not so much an ideology or the creed of a school, but stems from objective issues and design opportunities that increasingly often well-known and lesser-known architects have to cope with. Adaptive reuse, retrofitting, and urban micro-surgery are just some of the terms that critics today use to describe the practices of contemporary restoration. Every big city has examples of this condition and Milan is obviously involved as a frame of reference for projects that 'build on the built', which have to cope with urban pre-existences, street blocks, historic buildings or post-war modernity, invariably finding different ways to transform spaces treated as resources. This is the case of the block of the former New Civic Tax Office in Piazza Vetra, designed by the Cariplo Technical Office, which entrusted the design of the external facades and interior decorations to Ferdinando Reggioni (as artistic consultant). The whole has been converted into the Vetra Building, an office complex in the city center with spaces redesigned for maximum flexibility and efficiency. The conversion project, curated by Artelia in the role of project and construction management and by Land for the landscape aspect, is described in detail in the second volume dealing with this project (*Philosophy and Technique of Redevelopment*), while the first volume (*History of an Architecture in the Heart of Milan*) presents the history of the origin of the building. Both combine a rich body of illustrations with texts in Italian and English.



COVERS OF THE TWO VOLUMES

by Matteo Vercelloni

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