

Like the *hibakujumoku*. Notes for a widespread museum of fortifications in the Nera Valley

Stefano D'Avino

University of Pescara, Department of Architecture, Pescara, Italy, sdavino@unich.it

Abstract

The Nera River Valley, in Umbria, is characterized by the presence of numerous defensive structures placed to guard the villages, in close integration with the context; a heritage that, like the *hibakijumoku*, the trees that resisted the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has shown a high resilience to seismic events. Today it's necessary to think of a different and new approach to these architectural testimonies, identifying them in the territory, reinserting them in a contextualized historical critique and inverting the practice of reconstructing situations, events and places, in a symbolic container. Instead, it will be necessary to design a 'widespread museum of fortified architecture', characterized by a significant virtual component that allows users to be provided with contextual information that can facilitate the historical understanding of a site. The use of new technologies allows the recontextualization of the work on a symbolic-reconstructive level. Through the network, links can be established with other architectures or different contexts; in this way each testimony will be returned to its context, not limited within predetermined cultural references, but rather inserted into a 'fluid' critical framework, variable and extendable without interruption according to a structuring network of logical, chronological relations between the different architectures and the context that will contribute to the preservation of the memory of the places.

Keywords: *hibakijumoku*, fortified architecture, widespread museum.

1. Introduction

The valley crossed by the Nera river in Umbria is a land of passage, between the borders of strong political entities and at the same time divided internally between municipalities; it still shows today with its numerous defensive architectures the signs of its troubled political history. A history of harsh offenses and strenuous defenses denounced by the dotted distribution of military structures built to guard the villages and the territory, which can be retraced today in an itinerary that involves the entire area; in particular, the region shows extraordinary examples of that singular typology of defensive architecture typical of the Renaissance age, the 'rocca', garrison of small garrisons of armed men, which here identifies an exemplary laboratory.

There is no doubt that in our country the collaboration between museum institutions and the territory is particularly close, although, in some cases, this is less evident. It is no coincidence that André Chastel defined Italy as "the place par excellence of the natural museum", a great 'open-air museum' (Chastel, 1955); an integration which also extends to the entire cultural heritage, not only the architectural one.

2. The widespread museum

Over time, in Umbria a path has been undertaken to outline a network of widespread museums (just think, for example, of the Museo Diffuso dei luoghi del Perugino, in Pegaro as well as the Ecomuseo della Dorsale Appenninica umbra in

Cerreto di Spoleto; or the Museo Diffuso Naturalistico in Torre Colombaia, in the municipality of Marsciano). Similarly, in Valnerina a system could be established capable of drawing attention to all the fortified structures scattered, and more or less legible, in the landscape (landscape that is part of this widespread heritage) or incorporated into the various urban fabrics; architectures that, like the *hibakijmoku*, the trees that resisted the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, show a high resilience to seismic events. But these emergencies, scattered along our daily routes must be recognizable and legible also in relation to the places in which they are located; that is, they must be returned to the broader historical and monumental contexts to which they belong. Such a program requires a preliminary project for their restoration and conservation, and a subsequent process of preparation and enhancement; they can thus become witnesses of the history and artistic heritage of the territory, arousing lively attention. Recently, questions have been raised about the possibility of a different and new approach to architectural heritage: the 'diffused museum', or the idea that the territory can be considered as an immense deposit of traces of the past that must be brought to light and interpreted in their specific meaning and in their relationships with the local context and, more generally, with history. The expression 'diffused museum' defines a concept that, at least in Italy, is relatively recent; coined to express the close relationship with the territory that naturally characterizes museums, it was then reworked by Fredrik Drugman at the beginning of the 21st century (Drugman, 2010). Inverting the process of introduction to history typical of traditional museums, it proceeds from the particular to the general, renouncing any process of mimesis, that is, the practice of reconstructing situations, events, places in a symbolic container. These will, rather, be sought in the territory, recovered for historical criticism and connected to interpretation and documentation centers, through an approach that we can define as 'decentralized'; the museum thus becomes the reflection of a conception of heritage that proceeds by progressive selection, aiming to critically conserve the material and at the same time the history of the monuments. It starts from the assumption that an effective mediation of the interest in history of an undifferentiated public can be constituted by the exploration of the territory in which it lives and the subsequent

'recognition' of the signs (voluntary, but also involuntary, according to Riegl's definition) of the past. It seeks to stimulate, that is, the fascination that travel in space and time exerts, bringing to light the history of places, communities, as well as architectural testimonies that are little known or known only in their current function and appearance, according to an approach that leverages the relationship between subjective emotions and environment.



Fig. 1- *Valle di Narco, part.* (Roma, Vatican Museums, Gallery of Maps)

The contiguities and possible synergies between the discipline of restoration and museology aimed at recovering the historical dimension through the 'places of memory' (but above all the 'memory of places') are evident, although substantially still unexplored. The specificity of the widespread museum consists in its being an articulated system of tools that perform different and integrated functions. It has been observed that, in reality, all local museums that illustrate aspects of the territory should increase their contextualizing value, creating visit itineraries and educational supports that refer the visitor to a more careful knowledge of the place. The choice to leave the museum becomes a response to the curiosity that nevertheless exists on the part of the public towards the historical events that the museum intends to address; a cognitive process rich in continuous critical references. Designing, therefore, a 'widespread museum of the fortified architecture of the Nera Valley' means

establishing a method of use of the entire territory; this can be achieved through the activation of itineraries that favor destinations normally almost ignored by tourist flows, or itineraries that give unity to several coherent elements, spread throughout the territory; this path can make use of publications as well as innovative audiovisual and multimedia products. There are two primary components of the widespread museum: a system of routes that connect the emergencies and the places of scientific and cultural interest; a reference point where the specific essence of the museum structure can be concentrated (services to the public, a place of collection and documentation) also conceived as a permanent laboratory for the protection and enhancement of the landscape (a 'coordination point' that will network the various components, i.e. the sites distributed in the municipal territories).

The establishment of a widespread museum of fortifications implies inevitable socio-economic ties with the territory. It is necessary to overcome the opposition between the logic of protecting monuments and that of their valorization, defining new economic policy actions suitable for improving the valorization and enjoyment of that heritage, without losing sight of its primary nature as an asset to be protected. The widespread museum will therefore constitute the generating nucleus of cultural and economic development of the territory. Among the induced effects of its establishment, we must in fact include the yield of greater visibility to little-known places, a new eco-sustainable tourist attraction and the positive impact on the territory constituted by the creation of new economic and entrepreneurial realities (or the implementation of existing ones).

3. Real and Virtual

Therefore, a museum will be defined as one characterized by an important component of virtuality that allows, alongside the educational and exhibition tasks institutionally performed by traditional museum structures, to provide users with contextual information that facilitates the historical understanding of a find or a work. The use of new technologies allows (albeit in a virtual way) the recontextualization on a symbolic-reconstructive level of the work; through the network, links can be established with even distant contexts and the visual basis allows for

showing and not just telling; in this way the work is returned to its context in an 'open' way, not circumscribed within predetermined cultural references but inserted into a variable and extendable critical framework without interruption. Potential identified decades ago by Jaime McKenzie: "A virtual museum is a collection of electronic artefacts and information resources. It may also offer pointers to great resources around the world relevant to the museum's main focus" (McKenzie, 1995). By increasing the virtual component, the virtual museum becomes a system of interconnections of contents that offers the opportunity to maximize and recombine information following critically traced paths. The visual and interactive characteristics of information technologies and the new learning processes based on immediate and intuitive forms therefore contributed significantly to the growth and construction of one's own knowledge. In fact the virtual museum is based on a set of information that enhances reality, transforming itself into an active structure that interacts with users on the level of culture and knowledge (Ricci, 2006); its potential lies in the museum's ability to communicate something that is distant or that is no longer exhibited or unavailable, to create a digital memory that allows separate entities to coexist in time and space. The aim is not to recreate 'digital originals' or 'double originals' with the aim of preserving the perishable singularity of monuments but, rather, to determine a structuring network of logical, chronological relationships between element, multiplicity and contexts (environmental, historical and cultural); particularly through comparison with monuments, testimonies and congruent documents located elsewhere. A knowledge not limited within predetermined cultural references, but inserted in a 'fluid', variable and extendable critical framework without interruption, with the ability to express the possibility of analysis offered by perception, permitted by digital reality, to observe details that are otherwise normally invisible. The information revolution, in fact, forces us to rethink the modification of the place/object (and therefore also its conservation) uprooted from the physical space and transposed into a virtual extension where "the regulated substance (the monument) remains disjoined, but not for this contradicted, by the regulating form (the virtual project)" (Deleuze, 1985).

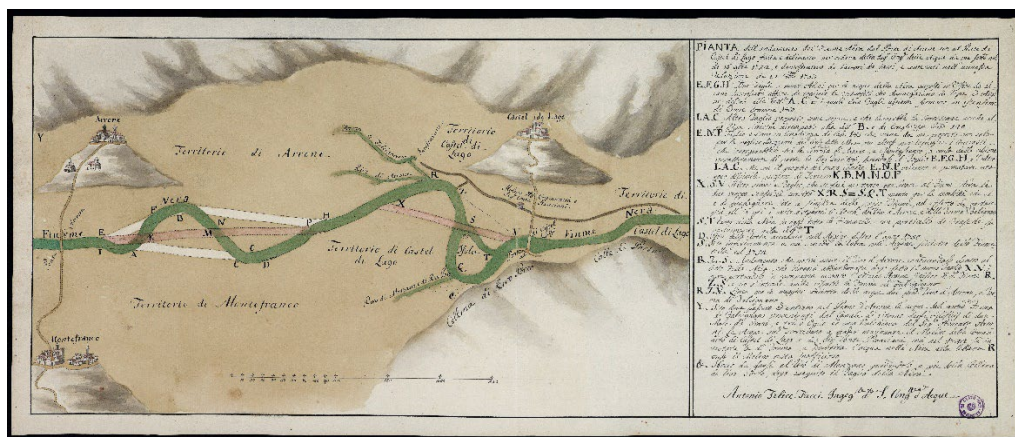


Fig. 2- Collezione *Disegni e Piante*, cart. 22, f. 31, *Pianta del fiume Nera dal ponte di Arrone a Castel di Lago* (Archivio di Stato di Roma, 1751)

4. Conclusions

Through the indispensable synergy between all the subjects active in the territory, this ambitious project of recovery, protection and safeguard, preparation and enhancement of the monuments can finally be realized; testimonies that can become representations of the history and of the archaeological, architectural and artistic heritage of the territory. Starting from the analysis of the territory, understood as a repository of traces of the past, we would thus be able to recognize and decipher these 'stone documents', understanding their meaning in the local context and establishing a relationship with history. Digital simulation can also constitute a valid solution to the problem of the inappropriateness of decontextualizing the object, a theme already raised by Brandi, since the virtual reproduction of the work, reintroduced into an environment (also virtual), enriched by hypertextual options, allows to resolve both the limit of museum fruition

conducted outside its original context, and the unacceptable progressive disappearance of the find abandoned to the environmental vicissitudes imposed by its context. Precisely because these are often places and buildings that subsequent events have erased, transformed or converted to other functions, rediscovering these places - often forgotten, sometimes unknown - can help to reread the historical events of the community to which one belongs, reconstructing its identity through memory. In other words, it is a question of questioning the memory of places. The impact with the diachronic dimension of places can therefore stimulate the connection between the present and the unknown past, between the particular and the general, and make tangible and visible things appear in a temporal dimension that still appears completely unexplored.

References

- Chastel, A. (1955) *L'Art italien*, trad. italiana di A. Banti (1983), Firenze, Sansoni.
- D'Avino, S. (2007) *Reale e Virtuale*. In Mezzetti C. (ed.) *Inserzioni Disegni*. Roma, Kappa, pp. 77-88.
- Deleuze, G. (1985) *Différence et répétition*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France.
- Drugman, F. (2010) *Lo specchio dei desideri. Antologia sul museo*, Bologna, CLUEB.
- Hohenstein J. & Moussouri T. (2017) *Museum learning: Theory and research as tools for enhancing practice*. London, Routledge.
- Levy, P. (1995) *Qu'est-ce que le virtuel?* (Collection *Science et Societes*), Paris, Éditions La Découverte.
- Maldonado, T. (1992) *Reale e Virtuale*, Milano, Feltrinelli.
- McKenzie, J. (1995) Virtual Museums. *The Educational Technology Journal*, vol. 43, issue 1.
- Quéau P. (1995) *La rivoluzione virtuale*, Roma.