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AESTHETICS OF RUINS AND ETHICS OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: NEW INTERVENTIONS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the relationships between archaeological ruin and architectural design in their complex implications on contemporary landscape construction. Starting from the definition of “significance” and “value” for the vestiges, it investigates reasons, necessities and intervention criteria in archaeological sites, in relationship with the settlements’ entity and with the society and environment cultural factors.

The text lays the foundations to overcome, epistemologically, the idea of design as “transformation”, recuperating a “gadamerian” interpretative approach and demonstrating how the aesthetic value of architecture is linked to its dialogic dimension, and how this, prior to configure as strategy of ethical legitimacy, is a condition that intrinsically and specifically qualifies the cultural landscape and, as such “archaeological”, is inherent the nature of the place.

Keywords: Architecture, Archaeology, Landscape, Design, Dialogic

1. Introduction: topics and purposes

The modern debate on the relationship between archaeological pre-existence and new architecture has its source in the post-war, when architects, historians and critics start coping with the problem of reconstruction of monuments and destroyed cities. Nevertheless, the discussion is till limited to the territory of the restoration’s discipline. The first architect who, in the Fifties, from a theoretical and critical point of view starts defending the role of design trying to overcome the dichotomy between new architecture and ancient context is Ernesto N. Rogers who, recognizing the complexity of historical stratification in ancient monuments, underlines the continuity of historical process which at the same time “old” and “new” belong to, that is the antithesis of an attitude that opposes present to past.

In the Sixties, Aldo Rossi, who shares with Rogers the analogical approach in the relationship between new interventions and ancient contexts, moves away from his positions that consider the historical town as a environmental “*unicum*”, defending an idea of the city as a system of “urban facts”, not formally but typologically related between them.

In the Eighties and Nineties, the necessity to regenerate historical urban areas, left to their fate by a conservative approach that prohibited any form of implementation, takes many scholars and critics to organize congresses and seminars and reviews to dedicate articles on this topic; the discussion starts officially in 1980 with the first Architectural Exposition at the Venice Biennale entitled “The presence of the past”, directed by Paolo Portoghesi, and in 1984 the review Casabella publishes a special issue entitled “Architecture as modification”: from there, many authors (among others N. Himmelmann who publishes in 1981 the book “Utopia of the past”) start studying the relationship between history and project from a new perspective.

In the last decades, for a long time the main approach has been “puro-visual”, an outlook toward the archaeological finds that produced mere contemplation and “prohibition of doing” for fear of damaging them, because based on principles of aesthetic preservation without any ethical and social reflection: this has been one of the main cultural factors that brought archaeological sites to fall into very serious conditions of abandonment and decay.

The relationship between archaeology and architecture, as field of study independent of the more general topic referred to the dichotomies “ancient/new” and “history/project”, in the last years has been developed in many ambits (academics and/or professional), demonstrating its importance as fundamental problem in the architectural investigation of today. The attention for this topic in the architectural discipline has grown up besides the historians, restorers and archaeologists’ point of view and through internationally acknowledged design experiences whose high quality has outlined a possible trajectory in the definition of ethical approaches to the cultural landscape’s transformation processes.

In general, the actual purpose of architectural investigation on the topic of archaeological heritage is to define possible evaluation criteria in projects’ ethical aspects and, in general, in disciplinary praxis: a

new critical approach comes to define new methods of inserting the “new” in ancient places as actions able to establish a dialogue with the different actors constituting the archaeological context and as possibilities to recuperate the intrinsic aesthetic value of the site, bringing it from a potential dimension to a real condition. In particular, this new attitude takes concrete form by:

- Recuperating and restoring the aesthetical values of archaeological ruins for contemporary society;
- Defining a new system of interdisciplinary ethical values for architectural design;
- Individuating the different modalities of historical and social interaction that mark it out and distinguish the new interventions in their relationships with spatial and temporal specific context.

The resultant will be an approach based on a dialogue at different levels: between times, identities, limits, degrees of abstraction, cultures, etc., that will expand the concept of “dialogic” to a new idea of “dialogical multiplicity”.

2. Aesthetics of ruins

2.1. The concept of ruin

Archaeological sites are places with a particular position and configuration, made of natural and artificial systems of elements with typological, cultural and chronological differences which reveal themselves in form of emerging or subterranean architectures in urban or suburban landscapes. We can make reference to them in terms of process as well as results of that process, being the products of natural or intentional sequential transformations that have been modifying their original configurations. At first instance, is necessary and important to clarify the definition of “ruin” and the different possible interpretative declinations of its meaning: we are talking about systems of ancient objects having a double character: physical, as materials in a continual process of transformation and degradation, and mental, as bearers of ideas and cultures linked to the environment and to specific historical periods.

From a physical point of view, as George Simmel wrote in *Die Ruine in Philosophische Kultur*, the ruin has a kind of fascination that stands in the fact that is “*A man’s work perceived ultimately as a product of nature*” (Simmel 1911); in this sense the ruin mitigates the gravity of being a relic and a witness of its own fall being absorbed and assimilated by the natural environment.

From a mental point of view, is possible to use the definition of the Polish Historian Krzysztof Pomian who defines the ruins as “semiophores”, that means “objects with significance”: ruins don’t have intrinsic, unique and static communication skills, but they represent messages produced by combinations of parameters like space, time, energy and information, that the changing generations use to fill with always different meanings (Pomian 1987). It’s about elements that indicate at the same time a presence and an absence; they show an intersection between visible and invisible, between time and history, having a double value in themselves and as metaphorical references in conditions related to different temporalities (Settis 2004).

Otherwise, being tangible testaments not only of the ancient world disappearance but also of its intermittent and rhythmic return to life, they put back the idea of “classic” expressed by Ernst Howald in *Die Kultur der Antike* in the middle of the last century, like the rhythmic form of European cultural history that, in turn, constitutes a peculiar character of the western world identity.

The ruin, then, could be intended not as what remains of an artwork produced in the past, but as a work equipped with a new unity, specific features and, above all, with an own spirituality. But also as a simple product of excavations that, after its finding, is faced with new meanings, new orders and new hierarchies; actually, at first, immediately after its finding, ruin is a fragment (or a system of fragments) belonging to an ancient settlement, with a value that is purely documentary and notional: only in a second moment it acquires a significant essence through a process that is interpretative and epistemological (Torricelli 2002).

In an ethical dimension, values and meanings of an object in general depend on the forms that it uses for its relationship with other objects; in this sense, regardless of any different and possible interpretative declination, is always possible to recognize the ruins as parts of the place’s identity with its historical values, aesthetical qualities, functions, uses and traditional and/or innovative aspects.

The link with the place makes the ruin, in its individuality as historical sign, a “fragment of the past” with a universal character; right at a time when the ruin passes from an individual to a universal dimension, it binds to its context with all its material and spiritual world whose signs are precisely the “fragments” (Cavaciuti 2006).

A sign is also a trace and, therefore, also a bond in the prefiguration and materialization of new possible configurations: this double valor of the ruin (its dual character of “sign” and “residue”) requires with no doubt the recognition of its meaning, but also practical actions on it that could introduce new

conditions which, starting from the new needs of contemporary society, make possible the creation of new traces overlapping the pre-existing ones (Quilici 2002).

Ultimately, it's important and essential to underline how ruin's acquisition of significance is always the result of a cognitive process that, due to the lapse of time with its original configuration, could take it to enrich the present towards the future instead of closing it into an immobilizing heredity; a process, in other words, able to build around the ruin a cultural character that could set it free from the idea of "junk" and put it in the middle between "memory" and "history" (Tortora 2006).

2.4. The aesthetics of ruins: from a potential value to the real value

Has the ruin, irreplaceable figure of the human culture, an aesthetic value? What does, in general, the value of an archaeological settlement consist of? And as for the architectural project, should the introduction of the new follow an existing aesthetical value, recover a lost one or create a new one?

The debate on the aesthetics of ruins in the modern age starts with Denis Diderot: under heading "ruine" in the *Encyclopédie* (signed by Louis De Jucourt) there is the phrase "*les ruines sont belles à peindre*", but Diderot adds that the aesthetical meaning of the ruin does not consist of remembering the original monuments' image, but of its imperfection that makes it an aesthetically self-sufficient and self-referential object abandoned by time and partially recovered and reintegrated into nature (Pucci 2006). In this sense, the role of nature is decisive because the dialogue that is setting up between ruin and nature gives historical and aesthetical essence to both parties in a combination made of continuous mutual references.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi red the ruin through its contemplative meanings, that didn't come out from the fact that they were parts of something, but from their condition of ruins, understood as objects that win in the face of challenges of time (Gregotti 2002). The Piranesi's ruin, anyway, has also a realistic dimension because it shows its walls and vaults in section, the internal structure of its buildings, spatial organizations, constructive techniques and materials, and is "*a metaphor of the search of places where the exploration of the monuments' roots meets the exploration of the depths of subject*" (Tafari 1968). In the Piranesi's drawings, the ruin's physicality is also associated to a wonder, a charm for what the ruins can communicate under an emotional point of view, but their intrinsic aesthetic value is enriched by an interpretation based on their finding as new entities steeped in the strong subjectivity of each person that looks at them with curiosity and that read them through the drawings: the column of a building is the part of an idea and of a symbol, but this same column, losing over time its original configuration, reaches a different suggestive power that inspires in visitors a new sensibility (Fig. 1); this is probably due to the fact that the ancient construction, after its dissolution, when converted into a ruin, reveals its generating principles (Focillon 1934).



Fig. 1 G.B. Piranesi, Temple of Hercules, Cora, 1769

The ruin's aesthetic autonomy from the original monument is a cultural reference for many contemporary architects: beyond any functional connotation, for the architectural discipline ruin is the primary image of archetypal form, uncompleted object open to free imaginations (Anselmi 2002). As a consequence, the main interpretation within the architectural investigation is based on the recovery of ruin's emotional and aesthetical aspects, far from an idea of hidden track and specialized subject of study and an idea of touristic commodity.

In Francesco Venezia's reflections we can recognize an aesthetical value of ruins in themselves, independent from their original figurative unity, because from "part of something" they become autonomous objects with own identity: "an element's nuance" more than a building's value in its entirety (Venezia 1990). The ruin becomes a "fragment", material for construction, and architecture, accepting its uncompleted character, leaves behind the dichotomy conservation/reconstruction and regains a proper temporality and new own rules.

Also Franco Purini talks about ruin as a fragment and, specifying that this conception comes from the relationship between "part" and "entire" and between "entire" and "general", he defines the fragment as "*the height of a potential whole that aims to reach totality as transcendence of itself*", and the ruin-fragment as "*the highest symbol of this intrinsically continuous essence of construction*" (Purini 2006). The ruin is therefore fragment as a part of the entire, but only if it contains its concept; this interpretation, in terms of relationship between ancient and modern, influence the architectural design's dimension: Purini transfers that way the idea of ruin-fragment to contemporary buildings demonstrating that in order to meet the Vitruvian *venustas* is necessary to conceive it as element that, with its evocative energy, reveals the real constructive identity essence. The fragment becomes contemporary and is converted into the ontological place of construction, in which the constructive process is continuously deferred due to the different intervention options and the risk of meaning cancellation constitute paradoxically a guarantee against any possible dangerous unifying attitude.

From a figurative point of view, the ruin constitutes with no doubt a "loss" compared to the work from whom it's derived; but it may be that the original work didn't have any artistic value and that, on the contrary, the ruin, due to obscure reasons or uncertain facts, gets an own aesthetical dimension under totally autonomous mechanisms: an aesthetical dimension that comes "for compensation", generated as a result of processes of loss and acquisition at the same time (Pareyson 1954).

Consequently, not every archaeological find can have an aesthetic quality in the same way: in this sense, the problem of attributing an aesthetic significance to the ruins remains unresolved and certainly the role of the context becomes fundamental for this because its double dimension of "place" and "landscape", full of ancestral elements, easily can give a symbolic meaning to its constituent elements, ethically linked to the historical memory, even under an educational and pedagogical point of view (Fancelli 2006). Therefore, the ruin's aesthetic dimension is influenced also by the remembrance that itself represents and by the complex systems of symbols that make it up; the relationship between ruin's intrinsic aesthetics and contemporary territory through memory leads us to think about its links with human activity, but not in private and isolated forms, but in its external projection, that is referred to the relationship between man and other individuals. Is not possible to talk about aesthetical value of a ruin but in relationship with human activities, and this brings us to Josep Muntañola's reflections about the place that, making reference to physical aspects as well as to socials, link the aesthetical issue to the ethical problem, to mean that the aesthetic value of a place depends of its social use; as a consequence, when a place is excluded from human actions, it loses its aesthetical value that passes from a real condition to a potential dimension (Muntañola 1978).

3. Ethics of architectural design

The past is interesting non only for the beauty of what artists, artisans and architects were able to create (and that for them, at their time, was contemporary), but also for its condition of past in itself that is actually the real strength of its historical value. The same happens with present, because the pleasure we get from its representation can depend on its beauty but also on its essence as a new action never seen before.

From here, the historical value can be seen as a "source of historical information", depending of factors such as exceptionality, rarity, etc. and can be defined only with research and knowledge; on the contrary, in our contemporary world, dominated by a phenomenon known as "aesthetical democracy" that gives to conservation at all costs the idea of "cultural good", the concept of "work of art" is artificially extended to a too large number of object: using for this purpose history and historicism as weapons capable to transform each sign into a document, each print into an artwork, each act into a monument, each image into an icon, any object can actually and easily pretend to survive the historical disappearance (Pedretti 1997).

If assigning a value is possible only by means of knowledge, therefore is also possible to relate the value that we give to "ancient" to that is given to the "new"; this granting appears influenced on one hand by the characters' perception of the place and on the other hand by the parameters belonging to

the culture of a specific society, its feeling about the things and the distance between objective and subjective value that is attributed to it; an emotional (dynamic) value, then, which is added and is integrated to the notional (static) one, permitting an important integration to the concept of “place” that now becomes an “orientation for the action” (a notion) and a measure of the relationship with other elements or subjects more or less present or totally absent into it (an emotion) (Muntañola, 1978).

Behind a find, ruin or archaeological settlement, we can find many things with a great number of meanings, not necessarily linked to their materiality or their typologies, and the role of project would be actually to give various interpretations to the significance and to the symbols of their original culture as well as their actual cultural condition.

Now we have the problem of analyzing the criteria to define the architectural project's aesthetic quality and to evaluate its compatibility with the aesthetic value of ruins.

“In my view, above all is necessary to distinguish between these things: what always is and is not born, and what always is generated and never is? The first can be learned with intelligence and with reasoning, because is always in the same way, the other it is assumed with opinion using irrational sensations, because is generated and it dies but it's really never. Whatever is generated should be generated necessarily for a cause since for each thing there's no creation without a reason. When the architect, taking his eyes to what always is in the same way and using such an entity as a model, makes a form, everything he does comes beautiful. Is not beautiful what he does if he takes into account what is generated, using a generated model. The first condition is the model, that is intelligible and always in the same way, while the second one is the imitation of the model, that is born and is visible”. In this passage of the *Timeo* by Plato, there are two matters really useful because closely linked to the aesthetical problem: the idea of “beauty” and the concept of “necessity of creation”.

If the archaeological find is “what always is and is not born”, it will be also a consolidated part of landscape, inseparable from the place where it stands. The architectural project, as one of the possible solutions to the problem of aesthetic integration, will be “beautiful” if it will use the ruin as a model and in any case always after having obtained a deep knowledge of it through intelligence and reasoning. The aesthetic value of an architectural project, then, will be bound by using the ruin as a model and by finding out its intrinsic aesthetic value: work of the ancients was to transform materials into architectural elements, while task of contemporary architects is to put together elements having already a significance, but recognizing their new senses and accepting their incomplete condition and lack of unity, looking for a way to design a new common ground with analogue approaches (Gregotti 2002).

With respect to the necessity of intervention (whatever is generated should be generated necessarily for a cause), we have to specify that the insertion of the “new” in what already exists (especially if ancient) has to be done only when a real problem is detected, or where there is a physical, social and cultural break between ruin and human life, so to re-establish, though architecture, that lost relationship: to understand better this point, it could be useful to consider that if the conservation of ancient findings is an ethical obligation, this does not mean that the same occurs for its exposition into a museum because, being this a critical action, a clear awareness about “if” and “where” needs to be always defended as a preliminary *conditio sine qua non* (Ruggieri Tricoli 2004).

Even in the case of “new”, we link the aesthetic problem to ethical issues because, as Josep Muntañola reminds us, the terms in which architectural objects acquire aesthetic significance are defined through the poetry and being this the expression of the relationship between the same architectural objects and their living, physical and social context, the recognition of an aesthetic value in new objects placed in ancient contexts is necessarily linked to their capacity to build a dialogue with them: this power is a virtue and is, ultimately, an ethical virtue (Muntañola 1981).

4. New interventions in archeological sites

If architectural design's potentials towards archaeological heritage lies in its ethical and dialogic character and in its ability to recoup the semantic and aesthetic value of the ruins, which are the ways of this interpretative action? Which are the approaches and instruments selected and used by architecture so to correctly integrate the new interventions in the archaeological contexts?

From an operational point of view, we can detect two problems that the project will immediately face with. The first one concerns the relationship between “fracture” and “limit”: which are the place adaptation's requirements? Is there any correspondence between the original pathways and the new accesses and passing systems?

Designing the spatial/temporal limit between archaeological place and urban context, made with specific forms, materials and constructive system, the architectural project can enhance the aesthetic meaning of ruins and configure its own ethical dimension related to cultural landscape. The design's dialogic potentialities will be linked to the character acquired by ground and by the differences of altitude between the quotas and will materialize themselves defining concepts like “edge”, “limit”, “doorstep”, in two different specific conditions: that in which ruin is inscribed in contemporary

landscape further to its discovering, and that in which ruins remain in a hypogeous condition habiting simultaneously with more superimposed levels.

The second problem is about the relationship between “excavation” and “intervention”, which physical-spatial decisions depend on (with an impact on landscape configuration after intervention), as well as the programmatic-strategic ones (with consequent issues linked to the methods and use of space in future); in this perspective, the project builds a dialogue with context through mechanisms of “selection” of “diacronic” and “synchronic” relationships between corrals and limits of the different historical and architectural unities: a system of actions able to foresee the decisions about form and dimension of the excavations.

In the context of the general objectives as described above, there are here three examples of intervention in archaeological heritage analyzed in their different interpretative approaches to the problem of relationship between ruin’s aesthetic and design ethics: three experiences referred to different geographic contexts and to three different recent decades, that into the relevant existing literature represent three plausible strategies whose differences are measured in the framework of a common dialogic vision and social responsibility for architectural design: the Shelters for Roman Archaeological Site by Peter Zumthor in Chur (1986), the Museum of Roman Baths by Arriola&Fiol Arquitectes in Sant Boi de Llobregat (1998) and the Museum of the Sao Jorge Castle by J.L. Carrillho da Graça in Lisbon (2010).

The first study case is the Shelters for Roman Archaeological Site in Chur (1986) by Peter Zumthor (Fig. 2). Here, the architectural object uses traditional materials, elements and constructive systems with an innovative executive modality: simple techniques which produce an aesthetic dimension that, distinguishing the new construction from the low quality of the surroundings, design semantically an emotional bridge with cultural context, with natural landscape and with ruins. The project ideally rebuilds the volume of the roman *domus* drawing a new horizontal limit (made by the timber envelope that goes around the ancient walls), obtained slightly shifting the limit of the old constructions to the city. The original accesses are closed with big windows like fixed surfaces not accessible but rhetorically marked with big black metal frames, while the only entrance to the archaeological area is constituted by a small door that gives access to an elevated overpass: this door is at the level of the overpass and not at the street’s one, from which is separated through a little metal staircase that, being physically detached, doesn’t touch it, in order to virtually underline the importance of the action of “crossing the line”, as well as the role and responsibility of the architectural intervention in itself. In the vertical section, we can easily observe that doesn’t exist a clear baseline for the project: there’s no contact between the different ancient and modern elements (between the internal floor and the roman walls, between the ground and the metal staircase that gives access to the overpass, between the old walls and the external envelope, between the big skylights and the covering, etc.) and this condition, designing new limits, permits a clear identification of each element of the construction and shall facilitate, thanks to the architectural intervention, a dialogical common ground, establishing at the same time an “unfinished” character for the architectural organism, open to possible new further configurations.

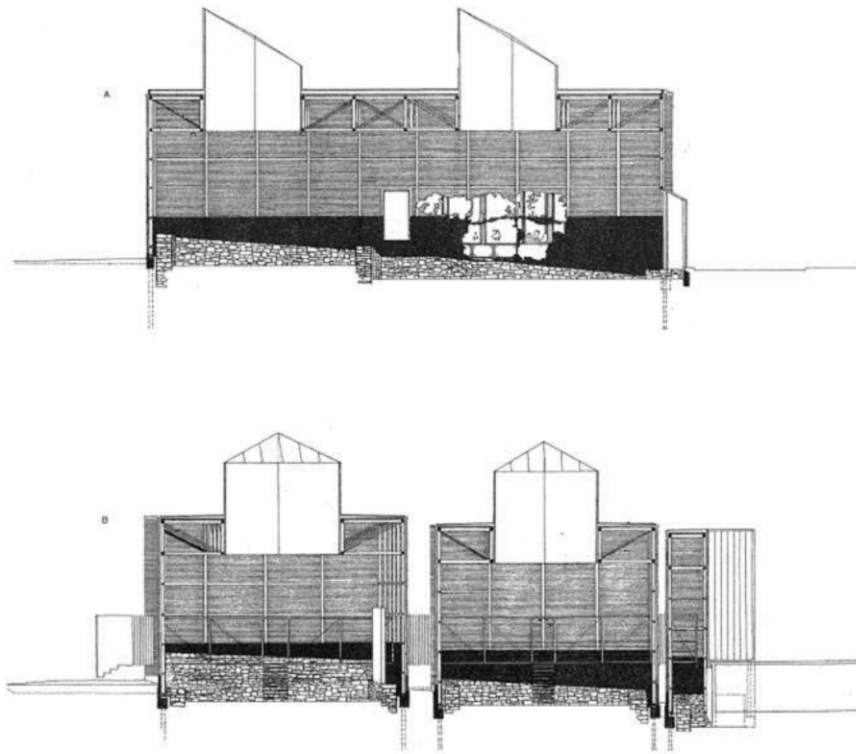


Fig. 2 P.Zumthor, Shelters for Roman Archaeological Site, Chur, 1985

The second project is the Museum of the Roman Baths in Sant Boi de Llobregat (1998) by Arriola&Fiol Arquitectes (Fig. 3). The building works with the principle of poli-materiality, using an abacus of technological and constructive solutions that “deconstruct” the building unit converting it into a system of different and separated parts: in this way the construction, by contrast, enhances the aesthetic value of the ruins in their massive, mono-material, firm and organic character. Even if the materials of the project are taken from the roman constructive tradition (the brick of the walls and the travertine of the floors), elements and constructive nodes, consciously tectonics, underline their belonging to the epistemological ground of contemporary architecture; the project gives back legibility to the ruins via its own autonomous characters as a “sign” (or, rather, “system of signs”) with an ability to point out and highlight other signs: those of the historical tracks. In the project of Sant Boi the limits between archaeological area and urban context tend to be dissolved: the external faces become independent walls that, creating a continuous system of full-height openings, define a condition of continuity between inside and outside; internally, the complex and differentiated system of courses (the bleachers that progressively go down to the archaeological level, the passage that permits to see the ruins from above and from different angles), and the system of translucent coverings, tend to delete the edges of the archaeological area and overlap the borders of the new building and of the city. The Museum entrance is through the *apodyterium*: this re-establishes the natural access to the Baths through the dressing rooms and the action of “entering” becomes a form of historical and social interaction because it permits the coincidence between the time of ruins and the time of contemporary city.



Fig. 3 Arriola&Fiol Arquitectes, Museum of Roman Baths, Sant Boi de Llobregat, 1998

In the third case, The Museum of the Sao Jorge Castle in Lisbon (2010) by J.L.Carrilho da Graça (Fig. 4), even is possible to identify elements belonging to the contemporary architectural language (the steel, the white volumes with no joints, the coverings made of polycarbonate), the action of “spatial reconfiguration” of the ancient constructions, the definition of the relationship with the findings (obtained by contrast) and lastly the use of “new sign” to control an make comprehensible the geometric complexity of the space, come from the landscape design aesthetics, result of the collaboration of Carrilho da Graça with the landscape architect João Gomes da Silva.

The project works on the limit intended as “form control device” and dialogic element of distinction/connection between the traces of different historical periods; then, the limit is converted into a “system of concentric strips” whose borders design and describe different historical-archaeological and landscape elements in the context. The outer “edge” is formed by the ridge’s contours, where the walls of the Castle of Sao Jorge are located: inside, a frame of trees defines the limit between the ridge’s perimeter and the pedestrian strip that separates the walls of the new archaeological fence: this, that “surgically” circumscribes and brings together all the ruins, internally contains zones delimited by clear and precise borders: the volumes of the Islamic houses, that of the Iron Age ruins, the covering of the mosaic of Alcáçova.

The different altitude between the archaeological level and the external strip next to the Castle’s walls is resolved using the steel boundary as restraining element that “crops out” the archaeological ambit from landscape and makes possible to access through four little staircases at different points along its perimeter: this solution underlines the necessity to maintain a design control in the definition of dialogical relationships between old and new space-time elements and territorial context.



Fig. 4 J.L.Carrilho da Graça, Museum of the Sao Jorge Castle, Lisbon, 2010

5. Results and conclusions

The study of new interventions in archaeological heritage, like the three examples analyzed before, each with its own historical-social interaction and dialogical modalities and in relation to different necessities and time-space conditions, allows us to define some general observations.

First of all, when we talk about archaeological heritage intended as “monumental”, we refer to the relationship between old constructions and contemporary social context: any building begins as a monument, but it’s converted into it over time, in the moment in which it starts getting a “value of memory” for the community. This means that the physical evidences of the past are not memories in themselves until they are recognized as “significant” by every individual members of the society. In this sense, the attitude toward the monuments cannot but determine an independence from the past and must give a value through the way they are perceived today. That’s where architectural design comes in, because in this respect, seems clear how the only option to solve the problem of ruins’ exploitation is to put them “vividly” into the contemporary space-time, in the meeting point between reality and virtuality, memory and project: this comes specifically through the architectural action that, far away from mimesis or sterile replicas of the past as well as from virtual and indifferent constructions, protect the archaeological sites from any kind of transformation that could come from historical forms’ repetitions (false memory), stylistic collages (memory manipulation), repetition of the same forms (mechanical memory), total lack of formal relationships (loss of memory). Furthermore, the consciousness about the ruins’ potential identity coincides with an attitude that is not “from the traces” but “on the traces”, which instead of discovering them (task of the archaeologists), could enhance and make them comprehensible: a work on the traces that is vision of the past but not in terms of “constitution” or “reconstruction” rather than of “exegesis”: in other words, we are dealing with a condition that is a sort of “interpretation of the interpretation” (Tsiomis 1998).

Secondly, the development of archaeological ruins’ potential identity passes through the attribution of a new role for territorial space dynamics; this means intervention on the aesthetics of ruins, whose characteristics depend upon the identity value that each member of a specific community has been previously enshrining. In this mark, the role of architectural project, when limited to exclusively conservative interventions which *a priori* exclude “the new” to keep the memory intact, may not build any identity: on the contrary, if the project gets to exalt the archaeological site’s identity interpreting its potentialities with respect to the place, in this case its meaning will be linked indissolubly to that of the ruins, with regard to its internal reasons as well as to its bond with the context, because it will result from the merging of three instances whose meeting will produce a dialogue with cultural landscape in terms of identity: functions, aesthetics and symbols.

Thirdly, the interdisciplinary design approach, albeit necessary to activate dialogical mechanisms between new architecture, archaeological ruin and landscape, does not seem to be enough where the project doesn’t have a real role of coordination in the intervention processes; this role is not a condition that automatically rediscovers its importance in the valorization processes management, because it’s not up to the awareness of its potentialities rather than to the consolidation of a new *utilitas* resulting from the necessity/willingness to introduce “new uses” for its incorporation into the economic and touristic cycles. However, the acceptance of contemporary architecture forms always can bring the discipline to a renewed interest for the topic of ethical relationship between “theory” and design “practice”.

Lastly, on an epistemological plane, seems to be necessary on one hand to go beyond the definition of “project” as “transformation” because incompatible with a dialogic vision of the relationship with landscape and on the other hand to recover an “interpretative” approach in the architectural interventions (in gadamerian sense): if we considered the project as action of transformation, we would accept the idea that territory is permanently static until we put a “new object” into it, and we would as well accept that territory has a single reading perspective coincident with the that of the single architect. The territory, indeed, is transforming independently due to complex dynamics and processes whose actors are not only architects or archeologists, but the whole system of climatic, human and socio-economic factors; at the same time, the reading possibilities of the context are many and variables and each of them influenced by different cultures and visions of reality; a fusion of horizons, then, where the architectural design interpretation merges with that of socio-physical context together with all its present and past identity and historical characters, in a continuous and natural dialectic confrontation.

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