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The urban redevelopment of the Darsena area

Maurizio Cazzulo

In the last six years considerable public and private investment has been concentrated in the conversion of the port area that is focused around the area of the municipal dry dock, carrying on in this area the works begun in 1995 with the completion of the new School of Economics and Commerce. From the adoption of the 1998 urban redevelopment program that called for the re-habilitation of the Cembalo building, the realization of the public space of Calata Vignoso, the demolition of the Famagosta building, and the demolition and reconstruction of the Bacinetto building (future headquarters of the *Magazzini del Design*), a series of interventions was begun that lead to the realization of the Museum of the Sea in the Galata building, the rehabilitation of the Caffa, Metelino and Tabarca areas, as well as to a series of projects currently underway regarding Ponte Parodi, the new seat of the School of Engineering in the Hennebique building, and the new headquarters of the Nautical Institute.

The interventions

Cembalo. The Cembalo building, built as a warehouse for the old port, was enlarged over time in successive phases, but with the industrialization of port activities it fell into disuse. The recent transformation provided for its conversion into a residential building with various related functions. The principal north façade of the original building, facing the city, was saved, as well as part of the structure. On the south side the design proposed instead a light, continuous façade composed of sliding, light-filtering panels. The very placement of the building

with respect to the context presented two contrasting orientations: on the south side the view is addressed completely toward the port, the other side of the building addresses the city (1).

Museo del Mare (Museum of the Sea and Navigation). Since 2004 The Galata building, formerly the naval dockyard and port warehouse, was the seat of the new Museum of the Sea and Navigation. The designer, Vázquez Consuegra, took the occasion to legitimize the role of contemporary architecture in a complex historic fabric not yet redeveloped. The lack of a consolidated image of the building, object of successive transformations over time, and the radical change of use brought the designer to introduce a totally new image. A 'gap' was created between new and old by separating the new structure from the preexisting, purified of the interventions of the early 1900s. A continuous façade of steel and glass gives a glimpse of the historic building within, attributing to it the same status as an object in a museum. This skin that does not adhere perfectly to the body permits the insertion of a full-height atrium fitted to the new function: a 'jump in scale' necessary to define a space, still 'public' but 'external', that contrasts with the more domestic scale of the internal rooms. The logic of the scale changes demarks the internal space. The design called for the demolition, carried out in part, of a structural bay necessary for the placement of a galley complete with masts and the realization of a full-height space, containing stairs and ramps, that rises above the original level of the roof, culminating in a *belvedere* above the city, through which light may fall onto the preexisting stone stairs. Such solutions, beyond suggestively

articulating the path within the museum, ensure that the new structure establishes a clear relationship at the scale of the city. The building, positioned along the pedestrian course that runs along the Expo area to the intersection with the axis that unites the areas of the Darsena with the Ponte Parodi project, represents one of the most important links in joining the historic city and the port area. Purpose of project and site: realization of the Museum of the Sea and Navigation in the Galata building in the Darsena (2).

Caffa, Metelino, Tabarca. The original 1800s complex was composed of two equal buildings, Caffa and Metelino, connected on the longer side by a glazed gallery. In the 1930s an additional story was added that doubled the height to the line of the eaves. The project called for the conservation of the original part and the complete reconstruction of the added story. The north face, housing a display space in the Metelino area for contemporary art, plays on a suspended portico that makes a continuous path between the stairs to the west (also with security functions) and the external stair that continues to the covered area where sculpture is displayed in the open air. If the *sopraelevata* were to be demolished, the sequence of facades would assume a prominent urban role as a counterpoint to the seaward face of the historic center. The project of restructuring the Tabarca area, currently underway, completes the discourse of the redevelopment of all of these areas that confirms their comprehensive nature as an urban monolith (3).

Ponte Parodi. The winning design of the international competition, developed by Un Studio, substitutes a 'piazza on the Mediterranean' for the grain silos, a gigantic 'out-of-

scale' structure demolished in 2001. In opposition to the emerging building a paradoxical fragment of an artificial hill in contact with the sea is introduced that establishes a rapport in a scale more regional than urban. There are approximately 83,000 sm of usable space distributed mainly on five levels, with a roof that offers 19,000 sm of urban park. In spite of the potential of the location in the center of the port area, the situation necessitates an 'attractor' of complementary functions, distributed through-out the day and for different categories of users. It is a place that is simultaneously 'destination' and 'docking' for other directions, in order to attract persons and give them reasons to stay. According to the programmatic process of cause and effect the designers attribute to the new piazza the ability to create a connective network among the attractions already in place, passing from a state of 'imbalance' and 'separation' between port and city to attaining a system in equilibrium (4).

Hennebique. The intervention for the conservation of the building designed utilizing the Hennebique system is still in the study phase. The design addresses one of the oldest buildings in reinforced concrete in Europe (1901), whose volumetric mass faces onto the sea with a continuous main façade, to be retained, of almost 500 meters. Its redevelopment will permit the urban connection between the Maritime Station of the Ponte dei Mille and the new Ponte Parodi project (5).

Notes

1. Cembalo. Purpose of project and site: rehabilitation of the Cembalo building, A. Dinegro quay, Genoa dry dock (project carried out in

accordance with the Genoa municipal Darsena Pru). Intended use: residential, commercial space, day-care and nursery school, and parking. Parties involved: Cembalo Cooperative (organizer and client); G. Terragna (building permits); studio Patrocchi (project execution); M. Malaspina (direction of works); E.D. Mona (Pru coordination); Liguria Construction Spa, Milan (construction firm). Schedule: work begins June 2000, work completed December 2004. Cost: 10 million euros.

2. Museum of the Sea. Intended use: spaces for temporary and permanent shows, with related services; approximately 12,000 sm covered area. Parties involved: Porto Antico di Genova Spa-Municipality of Genoa (client); Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra (designer); Vecchia Darsena, Galata Scarl (construction firm). Schedule: announcement of competition October 1999, work begun April 2002, work completed July 2004. Cost: approx. 18 million euros for construction, approx. 3 million euros for interiors and fittings; European Community financing through Urban 2, Compagnia di S. Paolo Foundation, Porto Antico Spa-Comune di Genova.

3. Caffa, Metelino, Tabarca. Purpose of project and site: rehabilitation of the Caffa, Metelino and Tabarca areas, reconstruction of exteriors. Intended use: commercial, offices, gallery of contemporary art, House of Music. Parties involved: Porto Antico, Vecchia Darsena Srl (organizer and client); E.D. Bona (comprehensive final design and execution of north facade), Studio Patrocchi (final building design, external building design with M. Malaspina); Vecchia Darsena Srl-Quartieri Darsena Scarl (construction firm). Schedule: work begins January 2003, work completed December 2004

for Caffa and Metelino, June 2006 for Tabarca. Cost: 16 million euros.

4. Ponte Parodi: Purpose of project and site: realization of a cultural and entertainment attraction; Ponte Parodi, old port of Genoa. Intended use: uncovered public spaces, covered recreational and commercial spaces; sport and cultural center, auditorium, cruise terminal, parking. Parties involved: municipality of Genoa-Porto Antico di Genova Spa (client); Un Van Berkel and Bos Studio (designers); Ati Ponte Parodi (organizers). Schedule: competition announced 2000, judging 2001, work begins 2006, work completed 2009. Estimated cost: 150 million euros.

5. Hennebique. Purpose of project and site: conversion of Hennebique silos, Santa Limbania quay. Intended use: new seat of the School of Engineering; teaching spaces and complementary functions. Parties involved: University of Genoa (client); City Engineering, Genoa (design); Stefano Boeri Studio, Milano (architectural design); Ati (Unieco, Carena, Cei, Serteco) (organizer).