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**Pausilypon: The places of archeology as renewed ‘strongholds’ of Mediterranean cities and landscapes**

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 Architettura e paesaggio archeologico  
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AIÓN

«Tutto è nell’infanzia, anche il fascino che sarà avvenire».  
 Cesare Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*

With the publication of *Pausilypon. Architettura e paesaggio archeologico*, Renato Capozzi, Gaetano Fusco and Federica Visconti offer the results of two international design workshops organized by the DiARC - Department of Architecture of the University of Naples, as part of the Master “Archaeology and Museum Design. Innovative Design and Management of Archaeological Heritage” of the Adrianean Academy of Architecture and Archeology<sup>1</sup>.

As stated by the same title of the volume, the subject of this collective work is the Archaeological and Environmental Park of Pausilypon, recipient of a series of projects developed by Italian and foreign students for the buildings of the imperial villa, built by Publius Vedio Pollione on the basis of the beauty of a place able to offer relief - *παύσις* - from the worries of everyday life - *λύπων* -, and for its park.

They are ‘difficult’ projects, those shown in the pages of the book, for various reasons, first of all because the extraordinary beauty of the place, and perhaps even its very uniqueness, would risk placing them within a very particular condition, perhaps unrepeatably projected on its proper and concrete characters. The present work, however, escapes this risk by constantly manifesting in the reflections, in the projects and in the contributions that compose it, an evident tension towards the generality, which can be seen from its very beginning in the conscious interpretation of the object of study as a paradigm of the multiple places of archeology that dot the cities and landscapes of southern Italy and more generally of the Mediterranean basin.

The villa of Pausilypon, for the authors of this work represents a condition, usual for some aspects, in which the existence of places characterized by the presence of archaeological ruins highlights a conflict, extended on several levels and often unresolved, between these and the contemporary city, originating from the transformations that have affected the landscapes in recent years.

Originally conceived as a villa d’*otium*, built in an intimate formal and semantic relationship with the place that host it, and able for this reason

to make its most authentic beauty shine, this complex architecture reaches us now in the form of sumptuous vestiges and a park located within the metropolitan area of Naples. Despite the offenses that this architecture and its landscape have undergone from the most recent buildings, as Capozzi, Fusco and Visconti recognize, the fascination that this still exerts is not only linked to the grandeur of the ruins and their relationship with the landscape, but also to the its dual condition of buildings belonging to a bygone era and of buildings that could potentially belong, at least in virtue of their physical proximity, to the contemporary city.

The recognition of this double condition constitutes a particularly significant passage, since it clarifies how the objectives of this work are not so much identifiable in the ‘musealization’ of the archaeological area and in the determination of the physical limit between the ancient vestiges and the living city, as much as rather in the possibility of identifying with greater fullness the sense of their presence within the contemporary city and of highlighting their belonging to its life, through the redefinition of formal and semantic relations ‘of things’ and ‘between things’.

Clearly, the pursuit of this objective implies a radical change of the paradigm of thought – heralded by Capozzi, Fusco and Visconti already in the subtitle of the present work: *Architettura e paesaggio archeologico* – which affirms the need to heal the archaeological heritage from a precise point of view, that of Architecture, to give the vestiges a dignity of form, and to operate on them through the only instrument which the discipline provides so that these could be ‘living’ forms: the architectural project. Architecture and Archeology, as Capozzi states, «confront each other in the study and possible transformation of the architectural monument that is the place and via of this relationship and re-establishes the center of an urban system in which it is inscribed through a purely architectural system of relations»<sup>2</sup>.

They are ‘cultured’ projects, those shown in the pages of this book, since their experimentation is not only grounded in a profound knowledge of places and buildings, but also requires an authentic education in knowledge and an awareness of the tools necessary to pursue it.

As Visconti underlines, «a project that “faces with the ancient” must first of all deeply know the monument [...]. This is possible only by using the specific tool of drawing, of survey, which is not only a technical activity but immediately becomes ‘critical rewriting’ and selective reinterpretation. In measuring the ancient stones, in understanding the underlying metrics, the geometric and spatial relationships to be revealed, in this cognitive activity – as the architects of the Renaissance knew – there is already the first ideational act»<sup>3</sup>.

Only through this exercise of rewriting is it therefore possible to reach that profound knowledge, capable of unveiling the reasons that explain the very existence of these architectures, the meaning relationships with the elements of the same reality they still belong to, their most intimate syntactic links and their own compositional principles.

It is therefore the unavoidability of these passages and the need to conquer this depth of reading that is highlighted by the design exercise of Manuela Antoniciello, which significantly opens the series of projects developed by the students, and which sees the recomposition of an ‘analogous Pausilypon’ through the insertion in the site of a series of beloved architectures, coming from other times and other places, but belonging to the same cultural world; architectures capable of understanding and giving back

with renewed vigor the deepest reasons of the place and establishing with the vestiges of the villa a dialogue through which renew its meaning<sup>4</sup>.

The projects that follow this analogical montage focus each on an element of the villa, but they all invariably qualified by a common tension towards the definition of methodological categories for the architectural project in the places of archeology. As Fusco underlines, «working on the single architectural complex means not only measuring oneself with history, with form, with the building system, but also entering into the merits of relations with the landscape and urban context to identify a conforming dimension that in the change can express the concrete enhancement of the archaeological architecture»<sup>5</sup>.

With acumen, these projects recognize a formal principle already in the location choice of the villa, lying on a tuff spur which, dividing the area of the Phlegraean Fields from the city of Naples and turning towards a horizon crowned by islands and peninsulas, shows the 'monumental' nature of the Mediterranean landscape. They also recognize the intense relationship between the forms and the «space of nature and the system of the formal and spatial organization of the architectural structure»<sup>6</sup> of the villa, composed by parts – a pars publica, a pars privata and a pars maritima –, and these in turn of distinct elements – the theater, the odeion, the Seiano cave, the “Hall of marble”, the “Red house”, the submerged Park of the Gaiola, the baths –, placed and conformed in relation to the form of the soil, and in accordance with the different needs of light, ventilation, facing. Finally, they recognize the authentic sense of the buildings that make up the villa, whose recomposition, when necessary for their understanding and the re-definition of the right formal and spatial relations between the elements, avails itself, as Capozzi underlines, of «compositional techniques and procedures such as analogy and counterpoint to introduce recognizable and adequate/responsive forms to the existing ones»<sup>7</sup>.

Beyond the different techniques used by each of their authors, these projects are united, finally, by the reference to a common problematic horizon, which is determined with the aim of «re-injecting 'memories' into the living body of the city and the territory, avoiding to reduce the intervention to a simple perimeter and isolation of archaeological vestiges but working, starting from them, to find again the possible places of representation of the community, ordered according to different hierarchies, each with its own role, each able to recover its own value as necessary elements for understanding of the whole»<sup>8</sup>.

The ultimate value of these projects lies therefore in the possibility of demonstrating how the archaeological remains of the villa of Pausilypon can take on a renewed role in defining the form of the contemporary city. Through them, in fact, these can re-establish a 'metric' of the extended city between the Phlegraean Fields and the center of Naples, capable of regaining the knowledge of a further metric, underlying it, dictated by the geographical conformation. Through them, again, the spaces of the villa can be re-proposed as an authentic urban space, fully part of the civil, public and collective whole of the city.

For these reasons, therefore, the villa of Publius Vedio Pollione, despite its extraordinary nature, seems to want to constitute the pretext, or rather the concrete occasion on which to measure instances coming from a wider Mediterranean world and to verify the generalizable result of a new thought. Thanks to it, in fact, the Pausilypon park constitutes the field on which Capozzi, Fusco, Visconti and the authors of the projects pursue a

higher goal: to give shape to an idea of a peculiarly Mediterranean city, in which the vestiges of the ancient, returned to a to a new life, allow it to regain that archè towards which converge and from which depart architecture and archeology - the first to describe its origin, the second to build its destiny - and place themselves as renewed 'strongholds' of its form , in which to recognize, «in their stratification and complexity, still the 'fixed scene' of the life of men»<sup>9</sup>.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The two workshops took place respectively from 04 to 09 October 2015 and from 8 to 13 May 2016 at the Spirito Santo complex in Naples.

<sup>2</sup> Capozzi, R., "Il progetto per l'archeologia", in Capozzi, R., Fusco, G. and Visconti, F., (edited by), *Pausilypon: Architettura e Paesaggio archeologico*, AIÓN, Firenze 2018, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Visconti, F., "Archeologia, Paesaggio e Architettura del sito di Pausilypon", in *Pausilypon*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Antoniciello, M., "L'acropoli sul mare. Un esercizio di montaggio analogico", in *Pausilypon*, op. cit., pp. 38-43.

<sup>5</sup> Fusco, G., "Archeologia Autentica Antica Architettura", in *Pausilypon*, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Capozzi, R., "Il progetto per l'archeologia", in *Pausilypon*, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Visconti, F., "Archeologia, Paesaggio e Architettura del sito di Pausilypon", in *Pausilypon*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Visconti, F., "Archeologia, Paesaggio e Architettura del sito di Pausilypon", in *Pausilypon*, op. cit., p. 36.