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The Vasari Corridor of the Uffizi in Florence

New monitoring systems for sustainable restoration

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I. EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The corridor designed by Giorgio Vasari to join the palaces of Palazzo Vecchio and Pitti, passing over the Arno, has recently undergone a important restoration, which will allow it to reopen to the public. One of the most significant architectures in Florence, as an integral part of the Uffizi, it was built in 1565 for the wedding of Francesco I de' Medici and Giovanna d'Asburgo. (1) The building has been the subject of numerous studies, especially on its historical aspects, and its history is known from its construction to its various transformations. Over the centuries, the building has undergone major transformations and alterations, in addition to the bombings of the Second World War, the flood of the 1960s and the Georgofili bombing, which compromised at least part of its original character. (2)

The transformations undergone during the second half of the 20th century, which until now had not been sufficiently investigated, were clarified during studies carried out by the Research Unit of the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence. Recent restoration work has opened up the possibility of further study of the corridor, through a process of continuous verification between the documentary sources, the materiality of the building and the theoretical positions of those who intervene and have intervened. (3)

The information and documents collected were organised in a digital database linked with its georeferenced digital twin. The database organised not only the historical documentation, but also the materials relating to the most recent restoration work, and in particular files recording the methodologies, techniques and materials used in the restoration itself.

The investigation of Vasari's corridor is therefore not a simple recording of material documents, but a critical acquisition of physical and paper documents organised in a digital tool that will be the basis not only for future restoration work, which respects the parameters of sustainability, but also for monitoring the building itself. Moreover, the knowledge phase has long since lost its role as a 'preliminary moment', as is now clear thanks also to the various disciplinary debates, to extend throughout the duration of the restoration site and well beyond with the verification and monitoring actions. (4)

The meticulous study work in the archives was combined with the laser scanner survey to create a georeferenced digital twin, which would allow the corridor's movements to be monitored over time and, through an alert system, preventative action to be taken. The work conducted emphasises once again how the historical-critical reading of the building, not only of the archival and documentary sources, as well as the iconographic testimonies and their complex historiography, but also of the material and structural aspects, (5) represents a delicate step when it is transformed first into a project and then into restoration site choices. The problem of how to structure an investigation aimed at bringing out clearly the physiognomy, the nature, the materiality, the characteristics of the building (in this case of an iconic work such as the Vasarian corridor), not without declaring any gaps and changes that may have emerged during the cognitive journey, is far from simple and, even today, represents a largely underestimated problem. (6)

REFERENCES

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[2] L. Baldini Giusti, *Il corridoio vasariano dal dopoguerra a oggi: cinquant'anni di restauri*, in S. Botti, F. Nante, G. Bossi (edited by), *1993-2003. Uffizi: oltre la facciata. Il restauro degli edifici pubblici danneggiati dall'attentato di via dei Georgofili*, Firenze, Edifir, 2003, pp. 55-62

[3] In March 2021, many newspapers, magazines and web pages reported on the start of the restoration works entrusted to the company Fratelli Navarra on a project by the Uffizi Galleries and the Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the metropolitan city of Florence and the provinces of Pistoia and Prato. At the same time as work began, the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence signed a research agreement, coordinated by the writer, aimed at drawing up "preliminary studies for the documentation of the restoration and site activities for scientific purposes".

[4] S. Musso, M. Pretelli, *Restauro: conoscenza, progetto, cantiere, gestione*, Roma, Quasar 2020.

[5] M. Ng, *The Renaissance Superstructure*, in «Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians», 81, 2022, pp. 320-341.

[6] S. Caccia Gherardini, *L'eccezione come regola: il paradosso teorico del restauro/ The exception as the rule: the paradox of restoration*, Firenze, DIDA PRESS, 2019.