



Abstract

Maison Valentino's fashion show event, staged on the Palatine Hill in Rome, is an opportunity for the enhancement of three sites that are today prevented from public visits: Domus Augustana, Palatine Stadium and Severian Arches.

Conservation and Enhancement are two fundamental themes in the field of cultural heritage, although they may be related yet they are distinct. The project area highlights this division of concepts: the Palatine Hill, located in the heart of Rome, is a demonstration of how preservation prevails over valorization. As much as the lighting system-looking at the hill from the southern slope-provides a majestic image, to date the archaeological site is strictly limited to the public. The walkway is granted only to the upper elevation of the domus complex, depriving public access to important archaeological artifacts such as the lower peristyle of the Domus Augustana, the Palatine Stadium and the Domus Severiana complex.

Haute Couture, in the last decade, has amply demonstrated its interest in the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, examples of which are the numerous interventions on heritage: Grand Palais in Paris (Chanel), Trevi Fountain (Fendi 2016), Temple of Venus and Rome (Fendi 2019), Temple of Concordia in Agrigento (Dolce&Gabbana 2019), Spanish Steps (Valentino 2022).

The thesis therefore investigates, through the design of a fashion event, a possible enhancement of the archaeological site of the Palatine Hill by identifying areas to be set up with ephemeral and reversible structures. The project is structured in order not to burden the archaeology but that it can last beyond the fashion show event in support of other exhibitions and to the understanding of the archaeological site.

Mirabilia Romae

Major fashion events and heritage enhancement

Edoardo Frascini



Politecnico di Milano
Scuola di Architettura Urbanistica e
Ingegneria delle Costruzioni
Architectural Design and History
A.A. 2022/2023 - sessione ottobre 2023
Relatore Prof. Pier Federico Caliarì
Co-Relatori: Prof. Federico Bucci, Sara Ghirardini

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on the cover: Roma: Stadio Palatino
on the back: Valentino, collection "Mirabilia Romae", Fall Winter 2015

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I grandi eventi della moda e la
valorizzazione del Patrimonio

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Sara Ghirardini, Stefano Tremolada

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Introduction

I always start everything with a drawing - that's my way of thinking - long before I touch a pattern or cut fabric. All my ideas come from the pencil
- Valentino Garavani

With these words Valentino responds to an interview by Drusilla Beyfus for the renowned fashion magazine Vogue. We can already understand from here how fashion, like architecture, finds the first spark of an idea in the sketch. The sketch is born in the almost unconscious act of hand gestures, it does not consider the material, but the form; the details come spontaneously, the more natural the idea, the more easily flowers, sequins and windows find their place in the design; only at the end come the materials, with their respective textures. Fashion and architecture therefore require a similar initial creative effort, as will be explored in the following chapters, the closeness between these two fields is highlighted by the fact that both are influenced by the historical context and the place where the idea is born. This response to one's own time leads to the consequent ageing of the idea as it passes, a more rapid passage in fashion than in architecture, but nevertheless inevitable for both. On this subject, in 1946, the architect and professor at the Milan Polytechnic Ernesto Nathan Rogers wrote:

Fashion is the contingent expression of taste as well as the technical is an aspect of reason, and it is very difficult for contemporaries to distinguish the transient from the durable. An invention of the previous generation is considered old, and lapses into the game of existence whereby sons are pitted against fathers. Then, it becomes old and, having undergone the sifting of judgements, reappears. The bad thing is that exhumations are themselves a matter of fashion, so despite everything, the real resource of art is the risk of invention.

The term fashion in this case is to be understood not as couture but as trend, general trend of common interest. Although Rogers gives the term a negative halo, in the fashion sphere it is indispensable for the success of the collection as the trend is determined by it. The interest of this analysis is to demonstrate the potential that architecture can offer the world of couture, as a function of it and not as two separate entities acting in the same context. This demonstration will start from the latter, identified in the cultural heritage, which will be placed as the third fundamental protagonist.

The enhancement of cultural heritage

The perception of antiquity

Before proceeding to a historical analysis of how the use of cultural heritage came into common use for major events, it is necessary to understand when this interest arose. In human history, the view of the ruins of the ancients and of archaeological sites has changed considerably; this is also due to the fact that archaeology as a discipline emerged during the 18th century, in conjunction with the development of anthropology and the natural sciences. Previously, ancient artefacts were often regarded only as objects of curiosity or valuable evidence of historical wealth. With the advent of archaeology, people became interested in scientifically understanding the interpretation of the ruins of our past.

Before archaeology, therefore, ruins were elements that were part of the urban fabric and the everyday life of man. There was no question of reconstructing the history of ancient civilisations, shedding light on the ways of life, cultural habits, religious practices and social interactions of the people who had preceded them. Thus, the past began to be lost in the accumulation of layers that each historical period left behind in its expansion, covering, damaging and sometimes demolishing pre-existences, leaving no evidence of them.

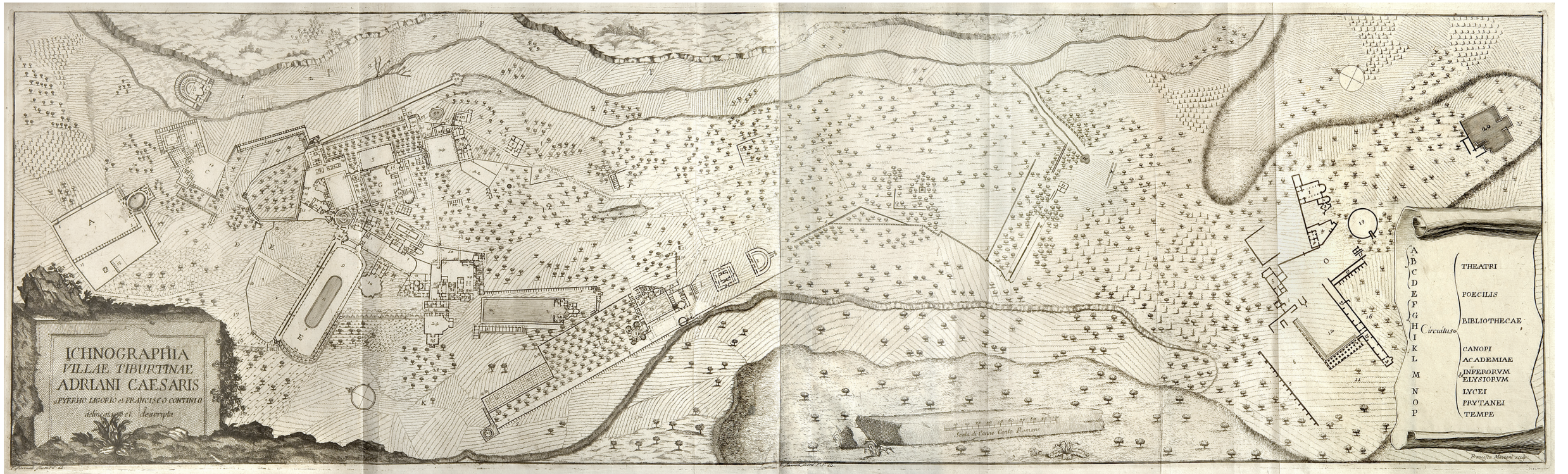
The first interests arose during the Renaissance, with the ambition to surpass the ancients, ruins began to be analysed stylistically and formally. A few painters are an example of this: Pinturicchio, Filippino Lippi and Signorelli who, in 1480, descended into the cavity of the Oppio hill to go and admire the ancient pictorial decorations of the buried Roman environments. The same testimony comes to us from Raffaello (1483-1520), who went - by candlelight - into the rooms of Emperor Nerone's Domus Aurea.

However, to observe a real archaeological analysis, one has to wait half a century with the studies of the architect Pirro Ligorio (1512-1583). As early as 1540, he began to approach archaeological research (these preliminary

next pages:

above: F. Contini, *Plan of Hadrian's Villa*, 1634-1668

below: G. B. Piranesi, *Plan of Hadrian's Villa*, 1781



studies have however been lost) and six years later he was present at the discovery in the forum of the Arch of Augustus (also destroyed during excavations). It was from the mid-16th century onwards that Ligorio's work predominantly marked the study of the ancients, with the three plans of ancient Rome drawn as true archaeological reconstructions, based on the work of the humanists and the direct vision of the ruins. In addition, through painstaking studies of ancient Roman coins, he studied and succeeded in deriving the location of some monuments. Between 1550 and 1560, he also worked on the work *Delle antichità di Roma*, consisting of 10 manuscript volumes. It is a veritable archaeological encyclopaedia. Winner calls it 'the first example of an illustrated encyclopaedia of antiquity by a single individual of the 16th century [...]'. His alert faculty of synthesis and his artistic imagination often enabled him to complete fragmentary ancient monuments, to invent them and then to provide the appropriate inscription "1.

A turning point in the birth of modern archaeology was the systematic approach introduced by figures such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) and Auguste Mariette (1821-1881), who introduced the method of controlled archaeological excavation and the accurate cataloguing of finds. Accuracy that the pensionnaires of the Villa Medici - the residence of the French Academy in Rome founded in 1666 - also applied for their archaeological studies. This prestigious institution hosted many prominent French artists, scholars and intellectuals over the centuries, offering them the opportunity to immerse themselves in the artistic and cultural

environment of Rome and to further their studies in archaeology. Many Villa Medici pensionnaires conducted in-depth field research and contributed significantly to the knowledge of ancient Rome. They devoted themselves to the study of ancient monuments, ruins and archaeological discoveries, often collaborating with Italian scholars and local institutions. They had the opportunity to explore numerous archaeological areas in Rome and Latium; they conducted excavations, documented and analysed finds, and studied the architectural structures and history of ancient Roman cities, contributing to the reconstruction of daily life in ancient Rome and the understanding of the different historical phases of the city and its monuments.

The popularisation of these great archaeological discoveries fuelled interest in the discipline and began to capture the imagination of the public. Imagination that was further spread by the travel writings and paintings of the ruins of Egypt and the Holy Land by David Roberts (1796-1864) and a century earlier by an engraver, architect and archaeologist: Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778). Best known for his engravings of extraordinary views of ancient Rome and Hadrian's Villa in which he depicted the monuments and ruins of ancient Rome with great detail and precision. His engravings, together with his writings, have inspired archaeologists, art historians and philosophers all over the world in their exploration and understanding of the ancient world.

below:
Charles Louis Boussois, *Reconstructive proposal of the architectural landscape of Hadrian's Villa*, 1909-1913



Cultural Heritage as Scenography

During the 17th and 18th centuries, an interest in the depiction of ancient ruins was nurtured, culminating in Piranesi's engravings. From these, one can see what were the predominant features in the depictions of the time.

Taking the engraving *Veduta degli avanzi del Castro Pretorio in Villa Adriana* a Tivoli of 1770 as a reference, one can see how architecture is the pivotal element of the representation, in its harmony and magnificence and shown in the landscape in its full depth with the other ruins of Villa Adriana. Stilobates, columns and stone slabs resting on the ground partly compensate for the disorder of the piles of earth and vegetation on the monuments. This view - as with the other engravings - is brought to life by the figures, which are only limitedly attributed the function of conveying content; this is mainly left to the ruins, which assume the role of a majestic ancient setting experienced by man.

As mentioned above, Piranesi's engravings were the pinnacle of this period and define the *modus operandi* of these depictions and how "architecture can be a complement, explanation and extension of the theme of a historical painting and the popular life depicted in the genre painting is set within it, when it is not simply offering the viewer an additional attraction"². Among these artists are Jean Lemaire, Claude Lorrain, Viviano Codazzi, Michelangelo Cerquozzi, Marco and Sebastiano Ricci, Alessandro Magnasco, Giuseppe Galli da Bibbiena, Bernardo Bellotto, Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni, Giovanni Battista Lusieri and Giovanni Paolo Panini. Although several years separated these painters, another common element was the frequent division of roles, with equal collaborations between the artists: some worked on the figures, others on the landscape and others on perspective. There were of course no exceptions as Lemaire and Panini excelled in all these roles. In particular, Lemaire, who "adorned ancient architecture with couples from ancient mythology or simply with figures dressed in the old-fashioned way or with figures pointing to or detaching from the architecture depicted, emphasising its antiquarian interest and artistic value"³.

on the right:

above: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *View of the remains of Castro Pretorio in Hadrian's Villa*, 1770
below: Bernardo Bellotto, Canaletto, *The Colosseum and the Arch of Constantine from the West*, 1740

next pages:

Alessandro Magnasco, *The rest of the bandits*, 1720







Fascinated by Piranesi's engravings, the figure of a German humanist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), stands out. This attraction led him to visit Italy in September 1786, only to return in May 1789. From this experience he wrote a book with the character of a travel description. Here, Italy is depicted as a place where one can experience classical beauty and be conquered by the *Zeitgeist* ('spirit of the times') of antiquity. I

In Italy, Goethe sought instruction in drawing but perceived literature as his primary source of 'representation' of antiquity, conveying the views with the words:

On the Palatine Hill, among the ruins of the Caesars' palace, resembling great crags. None of this can be rendered in words! In truth, up there one does not know what littleness is; even if one finds here and there some reprehensible or awkward aspect, it has also become part of the overall greatness. If I now concentrate on myself [...] I discover a feeling that gives me infinite joy, a feeling that I even dare to communicate. He who can look seriously at these things and has eyes to see must strengthen himself, must acquire an idea of solidity such as he has never had so vividly. [...] I at least have the impression that I have never appreciated the value of the things of this world as I do here, and I rejoice in the favourable consequences that I will draw from them throughout my life. [...] I want to immerse myself in the study of this greatness, I want, before I turn forty, to instruct and cultivate my spirit.⁴

Hence a relationship with antiquity defined by understanding but above all by a strong passion, transmitted in his travel writings. A line of thought very close to his contemporary painter Johann Heinrich Füssli as depicted in the sepia and sanguine drawing *The Despair of the Artist in Front of the Ruins*, dated 1778-1780, where a naked figure pines for the ruins of the hand and foot of the Colossus of Constantine. The desire to understand ancient works - common to scholars of the time - in Füssli did not provoke a sense of stillness, or excitement as it did for Goethe, but rather a sense of inferiority and loss.

on the left:
Johann Heinrich Füssli, *The artist despair in front of the ruins*, 1778-1780

In 1786, Johann Heinrich Wilhelmina Tischbein (1751-1829) immortalised him in the famous portrait *Goethe in the Roman countryside*. This painting is an excellent representation of the fictional vision of antiquity: Goethe, lying among the capitals and friezes of a ruined temple, towers above an imaginary landscape of a Roman countryside dotted with the ruins of aqueducts, towers and ancient walls. Although Goethe is the main subject here, the scenic appearance of the ruins of antiquity remains unchanged. As do the reduced pieces of ancient buildings on which the subjects rest and among which they lead their lives. So the modus operandi, observed above, persists and will persist as in Goethe the poet and artist with Vesuvius in the background, of 1826 by Heinrich Christoph Koberle. Here too, the ruin is inescapable: either in the foreground as capitals or friezes, adjacent to the subject, or in landscapes expressed in the form of decaying temples (existing or not) or as architectural whims.

The interest in cultural heritage at that time, however, was not limited to two-dimensional representations. An important testimony of a concrete use of heritage for events is provided to us by Joseph Wright of Derby in *Firework display at Castel Sant'Angelo* of 1774. The fortress, once the funeral mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian, becomes the site of the spectacle, interfacing with St Peter's Basilica, which is also illuminated for the event.

In contemporary times, the cultural heritage has retained this choreographic and scenic aspect for large spectacle events or temporary installations. In 2016, Francesco Venezia set up a temporary exhibition in Pompeii recounting the suggestions evoked by the archaeological site on artists and in the European imagination. Part of the installation included the Roman amphitheatre itself; in one of the two foci of the ellipse he created a new tomb, pyramidal, for the casts of the victims of the eruption of 79 a.D.. The great pyramid, although at first glance unusual for the archaeological area, is actually a reference to the temple of Isis also found in Pompeii, an architecture that contributed to the spread of Egyptian taste even before the Napoleonic campaigns. The intervention is a continuous confrontation with archaeology:



on the right:
 above: Johann Tischbein, *Goethe in the roman countryside*, 1786
 below: Joseph Wright of Derby, *Firework display at Castel Sant'Angelo*, 1774

next pages:
 Pompei, *Anfiteatro e Piramide*, photography by Andrea Jemolo



from the modern to the ruins, from the massive grandeur of the pyramid to the fragility of the ancient, from the monochrome to the heterogeneity of Pompeii's colours. Thus conservation and design, excavation and exhibition design, come together in a successful combination that allowed for a longer stay for a subsequent exhibition.

In July of the same year, guitarist David Gilmour performed in the Roman amphitheatre, returning to the venue where he performed with Pink Floyd in 1971 for the documentary-concert film *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii* directed by Adrian Maben. If the first performance they limited themselves to playing with only a few instruments in the centre of the ellipse, for this second performance David Gilmour organised a real concert, bringing the audience back to that amphitheatre empty since 79 a.D.. The set design was highly iconographic: behind the guitarist, a large circular screen projected a series of red and white lights, all emphasised by the fumes emanating from both the upper ring of the amphitheatre and the stage, to simulate the colours and atmosphere that resulted from the of the eruption.

In general, it can be seen that ancient amphitheatres and theaters are the main types to be restored and used to host new events, performing a simple act of returning to the use for which they were built. Examples include the Arena and theater of Verona, the theater of Taormina and the theater of Segesta. The discriminating factors in the choice for an event between amphitheater and theater, especially in the case of Verona, are two: the capacity of the audience and the need to make installations of a certain size, as in the case of plays.

An exceptional case is that of the Baths of Caracalla, where the ruins take on the role of a majestic stage backdrop; it is particularly with the performances of *Aida*, however, that this site finds its greatest expression. The Baths have hosted *Aida* since 1939; for this first edition, an enormous Egyptian structure as tall as the ruins themselves was set up, finding a combination of parts that would enhance the theme of the opera without annihilating what is the uniqueness of the archaeological site.



on the right:
above: Copertina video David Gilmour live in Pompeii
below: Teatro di Taormina

next pages:
Nicola Benois, *Aida*, Terme di Caracalla, 1939



The film industry is also strongly attracted to cultural heritage to emphasize its scenes. Among all, an exemplary film is *La Dolce Vita* directed by Federico Fellini in 1960. The Oscar-winning film depicts postwar Rome and its elitist society with its rituals, neuroses and dramas. Iconic is the scene of Marcello Mastroianni joining Anita Ekberg in the Trevi fountain. The sensual and sweetly naive personality of the American actress bewitches the protagonist in the water, forming a picture of the innocent lightness of living. The pathos of the scene is further emphasized by the use of Black and White, which dramatically accentuates the lights and shadows of the monument.

In the scene before-place from which Ekberg escapes-the setting is that of the Baths of Caracalla; a fictitious inn is set up within the large spaces of the monumental ruin. The furnishings, such as canopies and pedestals, are embroidered with decorations of ancient Roman taste, while on the sides, near the walls, are the large ruins of the statue of the Colossus of Constantine (already found in the Füssli painting mentioned above). Between the joyous dances within the baths, the film gives us an overview reminiscent of the paintings of the 17th and 18th centuries: The sublime space of the ruins offers, in the telling of themselves, space for new scenes of contemporary life.



above and below:
Federico Fellini, *La Dolce Vita*, 1960





Cultural Heritage in Haute Couture

Finding a particular interest in cultural heritage is the Haute Couture sector. At the beginning of the 20th century, the staging of fashion acquires characters of spectacularity and leaves the walls of ateliers, transforming fashion shows into real events that need spaces and contexts appropriate to the collection.

In the massive artistic-stylistic production of fashion events, the industry increasingly finds an interest in what is cultural heritage. In 1951, the famous French haute couture designer Christian Dior chose the Greek Acropolis to do the photo shoot for his last fashion collection. Dior's models posed in front of the Caryatids, reflecting their grace and taking their cues from their impressive dresses. Thus this was not yet a heritage-related fashion show event but a photo shoot aimed at reviving fashion at the end of World War II.

A first use of heritage for an event also finds a second record as the first real fashion show organized in Italy. This was the Giovanni Battista Giorgini fashion show that took place on July 22, 1952 in the White Room of the Pitti Palace. With 300 guests-all buyers, many international-Italy was showing itself to the world on par with French fashion. The "real" novelty, however, was not just the fashion show but the organization of a fashion event as we still understand it today: the fashion show was followed by a gala ball in the majestic Boboli Gardens of the Pitti Palace. Of the event, fashion journalist Fay Hammond wrote in the Los Angeles Times:

The world's finest venue for fashion shows is the magnificent Renaissance residence of the Strozzi's greatest rivals. Buyers and press, traversing the enchanting City of Flowers to the Pitti Palace, where Fashion passes in a quai uninterrupted parade of collections, have the opportunity to see the models up close and have an overwhelming example of unparalleled Italian hospitality.⁵

The success of the fashion show depended not only on the spectacularity of the site or the novelty of the event but also on the coherence between the collection and the venue itself. The clothes were conjugating practicality, utility, and elegance as well as the great Renaissance public works of Florence.

on the left:
above: Christian Dior, Acropoli di Atene, Atene, 1951
below: Giovanni Battista Giorgini, Palazzo Pitti, Firenze, 1952

Palaces, like museums, are increasingly found as the ideal venues for these events. On the one hand they offer a covered space, the main source of risk for the event itself, and on the other they offer those criteria of beauty and majesty that are indispensable for collections that aspire to the same qualities. Two examples of this quest for beauty in art are Louis Vuitton's Fall/Winter 2017-2018 runway show at the Louvre in Paris and Gucci in the Capitoline Museums in Rome in 2019. Both collections drew inspiration from the different historical eras that those places preserve, both in terms of the content, such as statuary, and the container, namely the museum itself. The collections find their conjugation between classical art and contemporary art, a middle ground between the works displayed in the halls and the guests sitting on the opposite side of the catwalk wearing clothes from the maisons' previous collections.

Over the years, some fashion houses have found ideal sites to the point of making them a permanent location for their fashion shows. Since 2011, the Prada group has been sealing an agreement with the Cese (Conseil économique, social et environnemental) with the Miu Miu fashion show; the agreement allowed Prada to organise cultural, artistic and fashion-related projects in the Palais d'Iéna, designed by architect Auguste Perret. This agreement, the proceeds of which are used to maintain the palace itself, is in line with the intentions of the fashion house, which for years has been promoting the protection of cultural heritage and art-related initiatives. Looking at one of the fashion shows held here, the spring summer 2016 one finds, in a play of corrugated reflections, a way to emphasise the spatiality of the palace. The OMA studio, which oversaw the design of the event, invaded the space with monumental shimmering geometric shapes in gold and silver, creating a spatial play in the building's colonnade. The existing architecture was partly concealed by the volumes and partly revealed by the same rough and irregular textures of those metallic 'ruins', in stark contrast to the concrete of the building.

Similar to the relationship between Miu Miu and the Palais d'Iéna is the link between Chanel and the Grand Palais in Paris; an imposing single-nave building built for the 1900 Universal Exhibition as a tribute to French art and for which the Parisian fashion house was the exclusive sponsor for its renovation. The large, free interior space allows for the design not only of fittings but of complete, elaborate and spectacular sets. The numerous

on the right:
Miu Miu, Palais d'Iéna, Paris, summer spring 2016

next pages:
Chanel, Grand Palais, Paris, fall winter 2018





fashion shows organised by the fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld include huge globes (aut/inv 2013-2014), merry-go-rounds (aut/inv 2008-2009), solar panels and wind turbines (prim/est 2013), forests (aut/inv 2013-2014), a launch pad (aut/inv 2016-2017) and a gigantic reproduction of the Eiffel Tower (aut/inv 2017-2018). Analysing the latter, we can observe once again how place, setting/scenography and clothes are in close relation to each other; in a garden at the foot of a 30-metre high reproduction of the Eiffel Tower, the collection reinvented in Parisian style is presented. Françoise-Claire Prodhon, about the fashion show, writes: “Karl Lagerfeld chooses this imposing setting to present his vision of graphic elegance based on silhouettes with simple lines, long or tubular, flared A-line, and cinched in at the waist”⁶. Thus, the characteristics that marked the success of the two monuments of the respective Expos can be found in the lines of the collection itself.

As previously written, the choice of an indoor venue avoids the unforeseen weather, yet there are multiple instances of outdoor fashion events. In 2022, Alessandro Michele organised the Gucci Cosmogonie fashion show in Castel del Monte. The vault of heaven with all the constellations is projected onto the monument, causing the castle to fade into the night. The clothes here, too, are the conjugation of all these elements: the transparency of the fabric studded with decorations and complemented by accessories with a medieval flavour. The Gucci fashion show, however, brought to the public's attention the increasingly frequent desire of maisons to tie themselves to places of art and monuments.

As noted above, fashion in general has often invested in the restoration and preservation of cultural heritage. Francesca Venturoni, for *Vogue*⁷ traces the beginning of this process in Italy to the introduction of the Art Bonus by Culture Minister Dario Franceschini in 2014, to encourage cultural sponsorships in exchange for tax and advertising benefits. Among these beneficiaries we find the case of Fendi, which in 2016 under the leadership of Karl Lagerfeld and Silvia Venturini Fendi allocated two million euros for the restoration of the Trevi fountain followed by a fashion show. The event, also celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Fendi Maison, does so “in an unforgettable spectacle where elegance becomes a platonic idea and beauty is total”⁸. During the fashion show, the models seemed to hover over the water, supported by a transparent plexiglass catwalk, mounted directly in the fountain with an articulated path but without altering the perception of the fountain.

on the right:
 above: Gucci, Castel del Monte, Andria, *Cosmogonie* 2022
 below: Fendi, Fontana di Trevi, Rome, 2016



The same maison also became a sponsor of the Colosseum Archaeological Park in 2019, financing the restoration and enhancement of the Temple of Venus and Rome. With an allocation of 2.5 million euros, in little more than a year the temple, built under Emperor Hadrian and the largest in Rome, was completely restored. To celebrate its opening, Fendi published a book entitled *The Temple of Venus and Rome*, explaining the reasons for these exceptional architectural and historical initiatives. In addition to the archive photos in the book, there are also photos taken after the restoration was completed and those of the Fendi fashion show held in the temple itself in July 2019 in honour of Karl Lagerfeld. The fashion show presented 54 dresses, one for each year that the designer worked for Fendi. As much as it was a commemoration, the principle of tying place and event in the clothes that evoke “atmospheres through the 70s look, or the marbles of ancient Rome taken from Raniero Gnoli’s publication *Marmora Romana*, which become the ubiquitous patterns of the 54 creations - it is the location that perfectly frames the mood of this collection, which is all about modernity breaking into antiquity. And on eternity that renews itself”⁹.

Increasingly recurring in recent years are the Cruises, ‘journeys’ of the fashion house around the world with a sequence of fashion show events. These stopovers, often in sites of great cultural interest, are carried out with fittings limited to lights and seats, without significant scenic interventions, already supported by the locations. One exception, however, is the 2021 Dior Cruise Collection in Apulia. The creative director, Maria Grazia Chiuri, presented the collection in Piazza del Duomo in Lecce. The fashion show, held without the physical presence of the public, was a tribute of the fashion house to the place. The clothes are thus a combination of Apulian craftsmanship, local tradition but also the place itself, with the colours of the stones and architecture of Lecce Cathedral. The illuminations, typical local decorations, were not only taken as a reference in some garments but were set up to adorn the entire square where the event took place.

The pinnacle of this kind of event, however, was reached by Dolce & Gabbana’s 2019 fashion show in Agrigento, in the Temple of Concordia in the Valley of the Temples. A majestic homage to Sicily with ‘mythology couture’. The fashion show transcends time and space, making the statement by artist Maurizio Nannucci even more concrete: “All art has been contemporary”. Selena Oliva for *Vogue Italia* writes: “Haute Couture creations evoke the timeless myths of classicism, which for centuries have fascinated poets,

on the right:
above: Fendi, Tempio di Venere e Roma, Rome, 2019
below: Dolce&Gabbana, Tempio della Concordia, Agrigento, 2019





painters, sculptors and stylists. And just as those artists never tired of reinterpreting them in their masterpieces, so the skilful hands of the Dolce & Gabbana seamstresses have painted, embroidered and sewn them onto clothes. The unrivalled power of those myths has conquered the uniqueness of Haute Couture, just as the unique beauty of Sicily had seduced the imagination of the Greeks thousands of years ago¹⁰. The creativity of the stylists masterfully completed that picture of exceptional beauty of the Valley of the Temples. A conjugation of place, event and fashion that transmuted the models into divinities of beauty. This objective was also achieved thanks to the skilful direction of Giuseppe Tornatore, Oscar winner for *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*. Thanks to a temporary catwalk that remained available to tourists even after the event, the models, moving between the inside and outside of the temple, finally posed, staturally, on pedestals placed in the peristyle of the temple, appearing as ancient muses.

on the left: Dolce&Gabbana, Tempio della Concordia, Agrigento, 2019

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As noted, to hold a Haute Couture event, the requirements are to combine the location of the event with a storytelling that emphasises both the monument and the dress or, as it is more appropriate to argue, the brand of the maison. The identity image is in fact the cornerstone around which the great maisons have found their success, as well as exceptional quality in tailoring. The importance in one's identity provides an almost institutional value that increases the value of the fashion house itself. It is therefore not surprising that the last few years have seen the maisons opening up to other sectors, such as Armani and Prada, which have opened up to the world of interior and accessory design. This ability to sell a brand above the accessory itself was criticised by Georges Perez in 1989:

Fashion would consist in what distinguishes as in what brings together: division of a higher value, happy few-ism, etc. Basically, all understandable. But at the risk of coming across as aristocratic, I persist in wondering why so many people are so proud to sport bags and purses with the manufacturer's monogram. That one attaches importance to having one's initials on the objects one loves (shirts, suitcases, napkin rings, etc.), why not: but to a supplier's initials? For me, this is just too much.¹

The work of the architect therefore becomes fundamental in this field; and if for fashion retails and museums - which are becoming more and more common - architectural firms can come up with a more lasting image centred solely on the brand, for fashion show events the place also takes over, which is impossible to circumvent in the design. The risk is to obscure one or the other or, in the most frequent situations, the collection itself, which often takes a back seat. An example of this is the spring/summer 2020 collection of Jacquemus; for its tenth anniversary celebration, it paraded among the long rows of lavender fields in Provence. The simplicity of the event, defined by a simple parterre for the models to walk down the runway and with no lights but that of the sun, marked the collection's near 'sinking'. The memorability of the site and the low environmental impact were certainly an added value to the brand's identity, yet they overshadowed the focus on the fashion content per se. So much so that in an article for Vogue.co.uk, entitled Jacquemus' 10th anniversary show is the reason why Instagram was created, Julia Hobbs wrote: "with this catwalk, some will only remember the lavender"².

next pages:
Jacquemus, Provence, spring-summer 2020



The Indispensable Relationship Between Architecture and Fashion

The enhancement of all elements can be seen in none other than a designer who trained as an architect: Gianfranco Ferré. For the designer, presenting the dress was a true project looking at the relationship between the collection and the space in which it moves. Everything is aimed at enhancing the dress itself as the absolute protagonist, without which everything else has no reason to exist. Every element is to be taken into consideration³: from the use of lights, to solicit the emotional involvement of the audience, to music, to mark the rhythm of the fashion show; from hairstyles to make-up that refer to the dress, if not to the entire collection, and to enhance the features of the model who is also the protagonist and not mere “moving mannequin”. Ferré’s fashion events were meticulously supervised by him in every detail and he studied, for each fashion show, a scenic background in dialogue with the collection presented; similarly the locations were symbols of elegance and refinement such as the Milan Triennale and the palace of Via Postaccio 21 in Brera, two places where the designer mainly organised his fashion shows.

This relationship between architects and fashion designers is not new, however; Henry van de Velde extended the scope of his activities to women’s clothing in 1896. He applied the principles of rational design - already applied for architecture, furniture lamps and other furnishings - to clothing as well, in order to make them harmonise with the man’s environment. He concluded this experiment in 1898 with an exhibition of the clothes and designs he had designed for his wife and wrote about it: “fashion is fickle, unfaithful, prissy and untruthful by nature; but it at least admits these flaws of its own, which ultimately constitute its fascination and attraction”⁴.

In 1925, Le Corbusier published the book *L’art décoratif d’aujourd’hui*, which was republished in 1959 with a preface in which he explained that the book’s investigation was intended to answer the question “where is architecture?”⁵. In this book, Le Corbusier makes an investigation of the blank wall as an answer to the question and in doing so contrasts a sequence of images by also examining objects of everyday life, particularly clothing. Mark Wigley, commenting on the book writes: “It is no accident that clothing is the first thing we know of modern man, the first evidence of his elevation from the degenerate stage of the senses to the stage of pure vision”⁶.

A similar investigation of the comparison between architecture and fashion can be found in James Laver’s book *Style in Costume*: “scrutinising with a magnifying glass the bulge above the knee of the Elizabethan breeches and the same bulge in the legs of the court tables; observing, with a glance

through time, the metallic roundness of the crinoline and the dome of the Crystal Palace; comparing the straight silhouette of the 1928 women’s dress, buttoned up, with the skyscrapers, buttoned up houses also, houses without belts”⁷.

These investigations show that fashion, art and architecture go hand in hand, finding a common style in all historical periods. Laver stops at 1928 and Le Corbusier at his field of interest, but if we were to investigate the contemporary, we could find similarities between the three fields, as they evolved influencing each other. In this regard, Charles Baudelaire wrote in 1863:

*If an impartial judge were to leaf through all French fashions one by one, from their origins to the present day, he would find nothing shocking or surprising in them. The transitions would be arranged there as in the scale of the animal world. No gaps, therefore, no surprises. And if he were to add to the illustration representing each epoch the philosophical thought by which that epoch was most troubled, a thought whose memory the illustration inevitably suggests, he would see what profound harmony governs the limbs of history*⁸.

Every style therefore has an epoch, the outcome not of an effort by a single discipline but from a collaboration of the whole epoch itself, including in the way society lives. One should therefore not make the mistake of believing that fashion, art or architecture are the architects of each other’s style, but rather that they proceed in the same direction, more or less consciously. Regarding this trend, Edoardo Persico wrote in 1930: “Aspects of time are a kind of secret evocation and style is born rather out of sudden adhesion to a plastic mystery than out of specific research. The smallest trace of research is an error: a line in the gesture of a figure, like a word in a speech, cancels the style forever. It is not so much the material, or the will, that determines form; but the secret agreement with things as they present themselves in reality: it is mostly an exchange of conventional signs. It is only through this agreement that form can seal a living content, because style is an effect, not an end”.

As we return to fashion events, we can better understand the reason that led Ferré to meticulous research even in the models’ hairstyles. One can now see how the storytelling of the exhibition must go far beyond understanding the fashion house, with its collection, and the site. It must interface correctly with the style of the era in which it is created.

Maison Valentino

Among the maisons that have managed to capture the style of the place they were inspired by very well is the fashion house Valentino. Under the long-standing direction of its creator Valentino Garavani for 45 years, the designer's clothes brought Italian fashion up to par with Parisian haute couture. When he debuted in the Sala Bianca in Florence in 1962 - at one of the fashion shows organised by Giovanni Battista Giorgini - success was immediate. Eugenia Sheppard of the International Herald Tribune in 1967 described it as 'the Rolls Royce' of fashion. The big news is that Valentino competes with Paris. His style has the same qualities as the greats like Dior, Jacques Fath and Balenciaga. It is intangible, like beauty or sex appeal, but it makes all women want to buy'. Since then, the standards of the fashion house remained high and a symbol of elegance. The clothes took inspiration from the 'glamour of French couture' but, as stated by Valentino, infused them with a 'Latin languor'. Drusilla Beyfus for Vogue explains his elegance in her monograph: "a modern, upmarket glamour was his touchstone. paragon, graceful, sophisticated, romantic and exotic"⁹. Valentino knew how to understand perfectly the lives and tastes of the women he dressed, bringing innovation and staying modern but at the same time he was inspired by history.

As modern, streamlined and easy to wear as his clothes may be, they always evoke the idea that there is a maid behind the scenes... they give off the scent of rococo, of the ornamental detail that ornamental detail implying a highly orchestrated way of life.¹⁰

After all, the clientele attracted to Valentino's was among European royal families and film stars, but also the Roman aristocracy and upper middle class. So in the 1960s Valentino abandoned the group shows at Palazzo Pitti in Florence and returned to Rome. The collections were presented in the salon of the 18th-century Palazzo Manganelli, where the stylist had moved and where is still based there today. The Haute Couture collection closed the week dedicated to Rome, which had become now a major social event.

The brand caused a stir at the premiere of Stanley Kubrick's film Spartacus, when Kubrick's film Spartacus, when actress Elizabeth Taylor wore one of his dresses. went around the world. It was the first of a list of clients that was destined to grow but, according to Giammetti, there has never been a 'Valentino Woman' in the sense of a particular muse, with the exception of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. except for Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who

on the right:
advertising campaign: "la Dolce Vita", 1994



was as sophisticated and elegant as the maison's clothes. Already a widow, she met Valentino and has remained faithful to the designer ever since, wearing exclusively clothes designed by him and leading him to success.

However, as Consuelo Crespi¹¹ argues, the perfect marriage of Valentino's talent was with the aforementioned Giancarlo Giammetti. The latter, initially trained as an architect plays a fundamental role in the fashion house as he is responsible for the Valentino Group's activities. Dealing with finance, advertising and promotion, what boutiques should boutiques and the management of fashion shows. The fundamental presence at the Palazzo Pitti was thanks to him, as was the decision to move the fashion house to Palazzo Minganelli. As he himself explains, his role "consists of studying Valentino's image and defining the right one". and, Crespi continues, "there has always been the right amount of exposure, but also a mystique carefully cultivated". He also played a protective role towards the designer. Vogue claims that Giammetti allowed the company to remain modern also thanks to the advertising campaigns, in particular it mentions the 'groupage', a series of multi-page articles dedicated to a single designer Valentino to be present on even twenty pages when on average appeared in one or two. Of these campaigns the most notable is that of 1994, where photographer Arthur Elgort recreated the famous sequence of the Trevi Fountain from the film *La dolce vita*. The image of the maison grew considerably and, as a further sign of institutionalisation the advertising motto 'made in Valentino' was born, comparing itself to an entire country.

This brings us back, then, to the issue of branding as an element of distinction. As the designer states: "I have always thought that when people spend money they have to get something to show it" and this explains why in 1968 it led the designer to use a monogram as a decoration for a dress, as well as a symbol of the brand. What stood out was the use of the logo, with its decorative qualities, as an integral part of the design of the model: on belts, to indicate the opening of a pocket or as the closure of a bag, going so far as to create an entire collection dedicated to his initial, the V.

However, it is the interest in artistic heritage, both ancient and modern, that marks the maison's image. Attention is drawn to the classical cultures of Egypt and Rome, but also Art Deco, Pop art, Etruscan friezes, Chinese ceremonial robes, the Viennese Secession artists Klimt and Schiele, as well as the architect Josef Hoffmann. The Wiener Werkstätte, founded by Hoffmann in Vienna in the early twentieth century is-as Vogue argues-the inspiration for "one of the designer's most extraordinary collections, starting with the scenic character of black and white and geometric designs"¹². Inspiration often leads to holding the fashion show event in the places from which it originated. An example is the fall/winter 1982 collection; at the

invitation of Diana Vreeland, the fashion show was held in the Grand Hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York with 800 guests with ties to the world of fashion, art, and high society. The event ended with 300 of these guests at the gala dinner set up in the large glass hall that houses the Temple of Dendur, an ancient Egyptian monument saved from the waters of the Aswan Dam.

In 2007 Valentino left the artistic direction after 45 years at the head of the fashion house. For the occasion, the Italian capital lent its historical riches. The celebrations dubbed "Valentino in Rome: 45 Years of Style" took place with an installation inside the Ara Pacis museum, based on Giammetti's idea. The building, designed by architect Richard Meier to house the sacrificial altar built in 9 b.C.. in honor of Emperor Augustus, became as a presentation of the haute couture and ready-to-wear designs created during the designer's career. The installation, curated by Patrick Kinmonth and Antonio Manfredi, was conceived-and so described even by the press-as "pure theater." Grouped chromatically, on the sides, on white stands, were the red dresses while in the center, fronting the Ara Pacis, were the white ones; among them, on a white pedestal, was a new dress, designed especially for the staging, with the words "peace" embroidered on it in seven different languages.

below and next pages:
"Valentino a Roma: 45 anni di stile" exhibition, Ara Pacis Museum, 2007





ALTA MODA PRIMAVERA ESTATE 1991
HAUTE COUTURE SPRING-SUMMER 1991



Theatricality is also pursued at the inaugural dinner held at the Temple of Venus and Rome. On the set design by set designer - Oscar-winner - Dante Ferretti, the temple regains the effect of its ancient architecture, with the elevation of its columns; with the backdrop of the nearby Colosseum, the scene is completed by an aerial ballet with costumes designed by Valentino for the New York City Ballet's fall gala collection. The grandeur of the event is marked by the attention to every detail: overseeing the kitchens, Valentino's personal chef; his favorite florist from London for the flower arrangements; tablecloths and napkins made of silk embroidered in India to the designer's design; the order of 3400 glasses in his favorite crystal in a burnished color; and finally, the guests' outfits for which, in the words of the designer, "I made the essence of my Couture [...] very glamorous evening dresses [...]. I made this collection with great joy. I put all my 45 years of experience into the dresses. I wanted to show what Couture really is. Many do it, few know how to do it."

In 2007, the creative direction of accessories passed to Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pier Paolo Piccioli while for the women's collection to Alessandra Facchinetti. From 2008, however, the latter is replaced by Chiuri and Piccioli who become creative directors in toto.

Under the new direction, the referential approach to heritage remains and is consolidated. The fall winter 2015 collection, titled *Mirabilia Romae*, confirms how Rome is the beating heart of Valentino's brand. Preceding the fashion show, a display is organized with the clothes from previous seasons hidden in the places - closed to the public - around the capital that inspired them.

on the left and next pages:
Valentino, *Mirabilia Romae* collection, Villa Adriana, Fall Winter 2015







It was one spectacular place after another. The Biblioteca Casanatense, a public library with thousands of books and a smell so evocative that it is hard to forget. A marble bath from 1840 in a palace still in private hands. A 3rd-century AD Mithraic cave discovered in the 1930s. Leaving the last stop on the tour, the painter Giorgio de Chirico's apartment turned museum, one wondered if the parade itself would live up to its importance.¹³

The fashion show is set up in front of Valentino's Roman headquarters: Palazzo Minganelli. A large wooden set with sinuous shapes recalls the hilly topography of the capital and welcomes the passage of the models and the collection.

The references to Rome are self-evident: from the great architectures such as the Pantheon and the Colosseum to the details of them, such as the ancient floors of the imperial domus; similarly, we move to the symbologies with the Elysian fields and the ancient handwriting icon. An eagle, a symbol of imperial Rome, clutches a red ribbon on the first dress in the collection. The same bird that restorers found on the ceiling of the atelier at Palazzo Minganelli during recent work. Finally, the same dresses are immortalized in a set among the same Roman ruins that brought the inspiration.

on the left and below:
Valentino, Minganelli Palace, Rome, Fall Winter 2015

next pages:
Valentino, urban exhibition, Casatanese Library, Rome, Fall Winter 2015





Of great media impact was the fashion show of the fall 2022 collection organized in Piazza di Spagna. Piccioli, in a pre-show press conference, described it as a personal collection as the history of the fashion house; The first atelier was located on Via Gregoriana, a narrow cobblestone street leading down from the Trinità dei Monti church, which sits atop the Spanish Steps. Piccioli wanted this fashion show to begin right where the original Haute Couture tailoring shop was located, with models bravely walking down the slippery travertine stairs to reach Palazzo Minganelli. He described it as “the closing of a circle”¹⁴. Given the majesty of the site, the staging of the fashion show was limited to the positioning of the seating and technical equipment: at the end of the staircase - as the most scenic point - the photographers’ stations; from here the models would quickly turn onto the catwalk, placed immediately to the right of the staircase, made of a white fabric to be quickly positioned at the moment of the show; along the route to the maison’s headquarters, on the other hand, the other seats were arranged for the guests and for the 150 university students in the fashion industry that Piccioli decided to invite to open the world of couture to the public.

on the right and below:
Valentino, Piazza di Spagna, Rome, 2022

next pages
Valentino. Università Statale, Milan, menswear spring 2023





This openness to the public, particularly to students, returned in 2023 with the spring 2024 menswear collection that took place inside Milan's Statale University. Staged on a regular class day in one of the university's courtyards, students were able to watch the fashion show from the courtyard loggias. The set-up, designed as a white catwalk, echoes the geometries defined by the courtyard garden, with the two large oak trees at two of the opposite corners, joined by an additional catwalk on which to perform the singing performance. On either side, monolithic catwalk-like seats intended for the audience complete the garden space¹⁵.

Similar in design is the fashion show that took place for the fall winter 2023-24 collection at the Château de Chantilly. At the heart of the fashion event: simplicity. The choice of site, then, was chosen for contrast, with the goal of "liberating the constraints of a walled and elitist life, opening the isolation of privilege: Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité"¹⁶. The models walked through one of the chateau's vast French-style gardens; the walkway led around a low circular pool of water, leaving the elegance of the 17th-century manor in the background.

Un luogo come un'idea - una rappresentazione, una metafora. Non lo Château, ma "Un Château" - un ambiente non ancorato a geografie o epoche, ma espressione di un'idea di vita, un simbolo che va analizzato, messo in discussione e poi ridefinito. [...] uno Château è, per il Direttore Creativo Pierpaolo Piccioli, un'entità metafisica, un contesto che può essere ricontestualizzato. Testimone di un'epoca passata, uno spazio porta con sé le tracce delle vite vissute al suo interno - già emblema di elitarismo e status, uno Château oggi può disconoscere la propria storia, per essere ricalibrato. Privo di nome e universale, uno Château può esistere come luogo per tutti, può diventare un forum per una nuova uguaglianza e una celebrazione della bellezza, dell'unicità e della libertà.¹⁷

This contrast is further enhanced by observing the dressing room area inside the Condé Museum, housed in the chateau. Models were prepared for the fashion show in the majesty of the Duke d'Aumale's art collection, then proceeding outward on the white catwalk symbolizing aspirational simplicity. "A tension between an environment and the figures within it is explored-people move from the grandeur of interiors to the freedom of nature, whose clothes are emblematic of the duality of this transition. Here, "Un Château" becomes an arena for amplifying ideas, an open and inclusive arena for all"¹⁸.

on the right:
Valentino, Chantilly Castle, Fall Winter 2023-24



The Valentino fashion house, therefore, despite the change in creative direction, maintains its desire to be inspired by cultural heritage. The maison has continued to organize fashion events in its historical headquarters and Roman palaces, always finding that bond with the past.

The aforementioned cases are exceptions that demonstrate an ever-increasing interest in opening up to the general public by using cultural venues as a means of transmitting an ideal, as well as inspiration.

Having demonstrated this interested relationship for Valentino toward heritage, one can proceed toward the design phase of a fashion event for the fashion house. Not having an unprecedented collection for the organization of a fashion show, the aforementioned *Mirabilia Romae* collection from the fall winter 2015 collection was selected. In the following chapters, a design area of cultural interest and in dialogue with the chosen collection will be identified; following the historical analysis, design choices will finally be made explicit to enhance both the clothes and the archaeological site proposed for the fashion event.

on the right and next pages::
Valentino, Chantilly Castle, Fall Winter 2023-24





Sources and Notes

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12. D.BEYFUS, *op. cit.*, p.97;
13. N.PHELPS, *Valentino fall 2015 couture*, in <Vogue>, 9 luglio 2015, <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2015-couture/valentino>
14. T.CARDINI, *Valentino fall 2022 couture*, in <Vogue>, 8 luglio 2022, <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-show/fall-2022-couture/valentino>
15. Thanks to the opportunity to attend the spring 2024 menswear fashion show at the Statale university in Milan, it was possible to observe some organizational peculiarities that define these events. The first is the "uncovering" of the catwalk a few moments before the show, removing a protective patina to maintain the impeccable cleanliness of the catwalk; the second is the beginning of the demolition of the same at the exact moment in which the designer - in this case Pier Paolo Piccioli - passes for the final greetings. These two phenomena make explicit the ephemeral nature of fashion events, inaugurated and dismantled during the duration of the fashion show;
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In the heart of Rome: the Palatine Hill

The homage that the chosen collection - Valentino's fall winter 2015 - offers to the city of Rome can only lead to the choice of the site that was taken most as a reference: the Colosseum Archaeological Park. The vast area, in addition to containing the Flavian Amphitheater, includes the Imperial Forum, the Roman Forum, the Circus Maximus and the Palatine Hill, enclosing in itself what was once the heart of Rome. Indeed, the collection is a continuous reminder of the heritage that the Park preserves, echoing both the most famous architecture and the details it conceals, such as the pavements of the imperial domus.

The choice of the project area was made taking into consideration two criteria: first, the need for an unprecedented site for fashion events, particularly those organized by the Maison Valentino; and second, the enhancement of a site in the archaeological park that is partly unvisited or difficult to access. Among the multiple areas to respond to these criteria, of interest is the one on the Palatine Hill, specifically the last part built in the imperial age: the Domus Domitiana, with the Palatine Stadium and the Domus Severiana, of which the substructures remain today; as of today, the two areas are both inaccessible, allowing observation only from above.



on the right:
Rome, *Palatino view from Circo Massimo*, 1880

next pages:
Rome, *Stadio Palatino*, photography by Federico Gangi



Roma quadrata: the deed of foundation

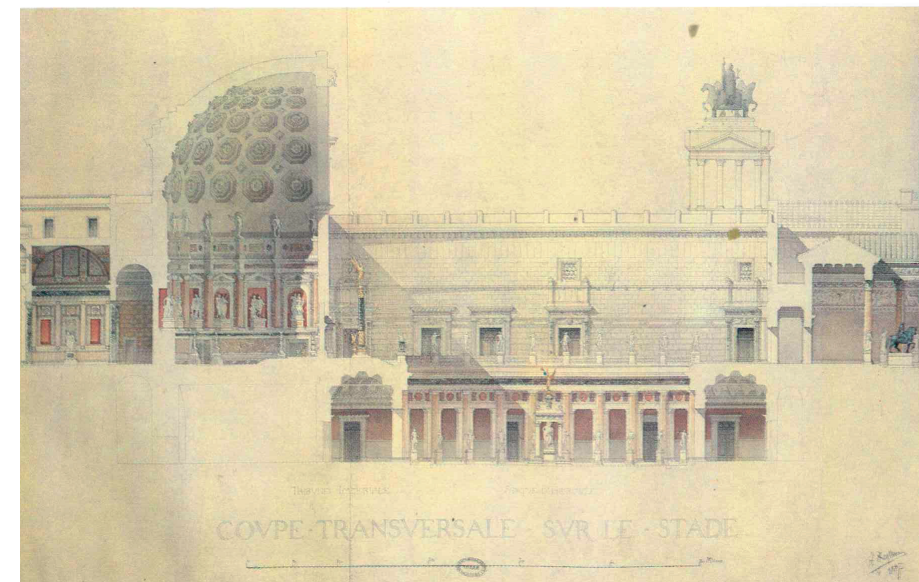
Among the seven hills of Rima, the Palatine is certainly one of the most important. Moreover, since it is the heart of the city, all the most significant historical events have marked their passage in the stratigraphy of the Hill starting precisely from the foundation of the Urbe. Although neither Tacitus nor Dionysius of Halicarnassus (two of the main sources on that era) have given us any idea of what precisely was the area occupied by Roma Quadrata, we do know-although rather vaguely-that, on April 21, 753 b.C., Romulus drew the square with a plow to mark the first boundaries of the nascent Rome; within it, the place where legend places the lupercal where Romulus and Remus were raised by the She-wolf: the Palatine Hill. It is important to point out that both sources refer to the ritual boundary of the city and not to the city walls of primitive Rome; what Romulus practiced, moreover, was a rite of Etruscan origin consisting of tracing a furrow with the plow around the new city and, among the various stages of the ceremony, sounding the lituus (from the Greek *lite*, "prayer") declaring the three names of the city¹. Following Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the adjective square in reference to Rome has given rise to several drawbacks. Indeed, Dionysius is the only source to report that Romulus described a square perimeter with a plow; nor is there any archaeological evidence. On the other hand, some ancient writers, for example Varro, suggest that the furrow traced by Romulus had a roughly circular course, while for Plutarch it was certainly a circle². However, this information in turn creates a number of difficulties due to the lack of historical sources or archaeological data about the founding of cities or other circular settlements within the Roman world.

Joseph Rykwert in *L'idea di Città*³ interprets *quadrata* with the meaning of "quadripartite" or "squared," that is, with a center from which four right angles thinned out, thus also a rectangular shape. Meaning that in it the *cardo* and *decumanus* were orthogonal to each other; giving the city "a regular arrangement, which inserted it stably and harmoniously into the universe at the center of which it was placed"⁴. Finally, he concludes by stating that, until the Republican age, the city was defined as square⁵ both because the urban territory was divided into four regions and because it enclosed the main institutional areas in which citizens gathered.

Imperial Rome: from the Republic to the fall of the Empire

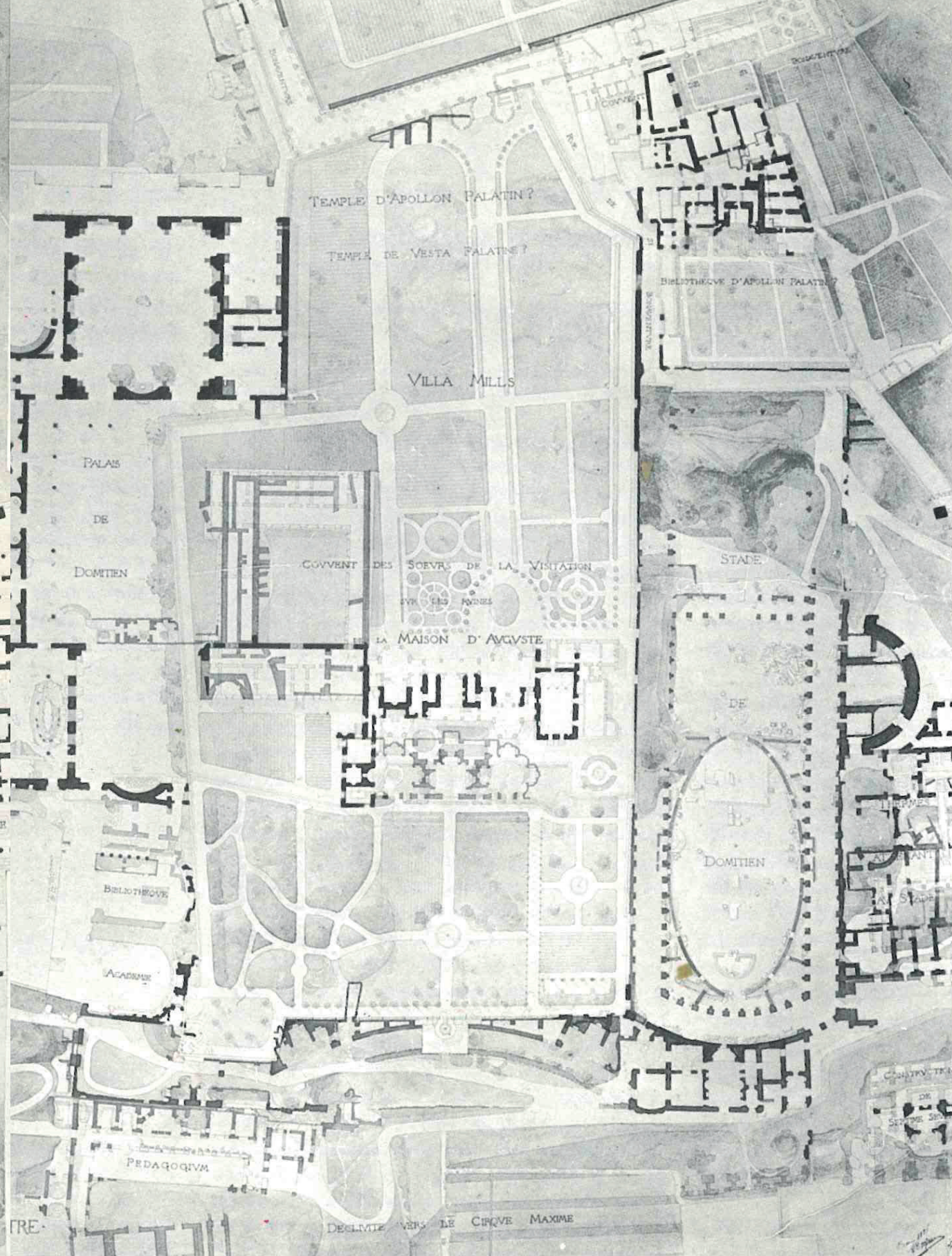
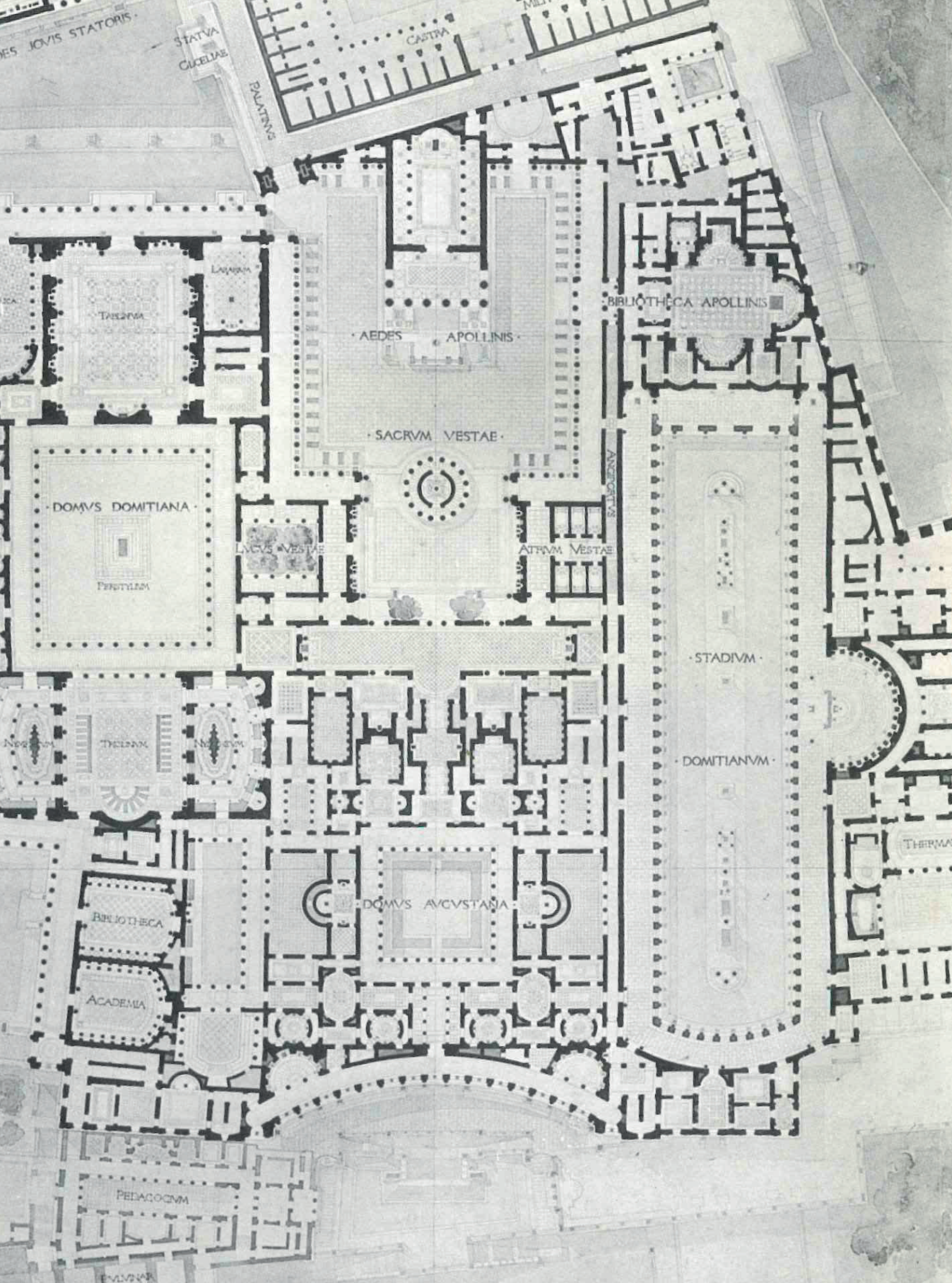
Beyond the interpretations, one fact is certain, in fact the holes of some very ancient huts have been found, huts from the Iron Age, so as early as the 8th century B.C., someone already lived here on the Palatine, even before Romulus and Remus. The Iron Age inhabitants chose this hill because from up here, and from the nearby Aventine, they overlooked the only crossable point of the Tiber in this area-a strategic location for the economy as well. So the Romans were not far wrong in imagining on the Palatine the founding place of Rome, the starting point of their power of the whole empire.

The term *palace*, intended as place of power, and also *palazzina*, where people normally lived, both derive from Palatine, the very hill on the which, since the history of the Roman Republic, began to be covered with dwellings and house the dwellings of the most important and influential figures, up to and including patrician families and senators. Republican dwellings are partially still visible or at least present below the layer visible today. Mosaics, frescoes, colonnades, and interior gardens decorated the republican dwellings; some of the most famous figures of the Roman republic lived here: from Cicero to Catullus to Mark Antony. Among the majestic ruins that still dominate the hill stand those of the Temple of Divus Julius, the first Roman to be deified upon his death, and inaugurated on 29 b.C. by his adopted son Octavian.



on the right:
Henry-Adolphe Auguste Deglane, Palatine Stadium transversal section: reconstruction, 1887

next pages:
on the left: Henry-Adolphe Auguste Deglane, Plan: Domus Cesarii reconstruction, 1885
on the right: Henry-Adolphe Auguste Deglane, Plan: 1885 state of the Domus Cesarii



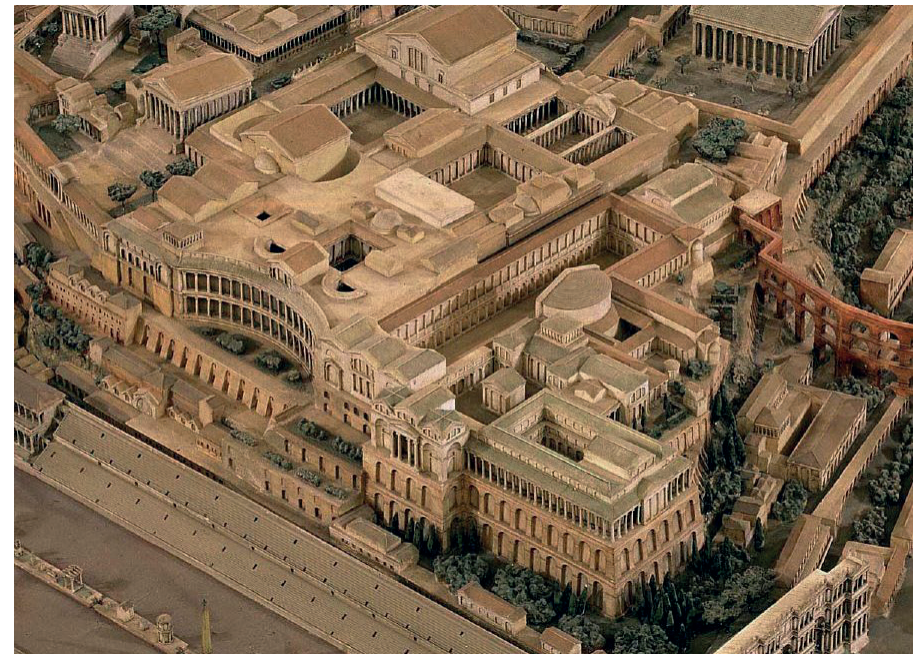
Two years later, in 27 b.C., Augustus, who was also born on the Palatine, founded the Roman Empire and, on the hill, decided to live there, buying some houses. Augustus' grand mansion is still visible, as is that of his wife Livia. The frescoes that adorned the walls show the simplicity with which the first emperor of Rome lived, praised even by the Romans themselves. However, his successors did not follow his modesty and, within three centuries, the Palatine radically changed its face until it became a single, majestic and vast palace. It was a gradual process but still legible in the imposing ruins that dominate the Palatine today. Emperor Domitian had a palace built and erected so large and sumptuous that it is still today the most spectacular core of the entire Palatine. Among these ruins is the emperor's private stadium, also called the Palatine Stadium. The huge structure is 160m long and 50m wide, yet we have no information about what function this space might have had; there are many hypotheses, either that it was private gardens with colonnades all around and plants of all kinds, or that it was used as the emperor's riding circus, but also as a stadium for exclusive gladiator fights.

below:
Ancient Rome reconstruction in Costantine era, detail, Museo della civiltà romana
on the right:
Rome, *Arcate Severiane*, photography by Federico Gangi



Domitian's palace, on the other hand, is located immediately to the west; the architect who built this huge complex, Rabirio⁶, built it in two distinct areas that are still visible today: The domus Augustana, to house the emperor on summer and winter days, and the official ceremonies wing, namely the domus Flavia, which, for three centuries after Domitian, remained the main imperial palace in Rome. Inside, one can still perceive the spaces of the basilica, where the emperor personally exercised justice, and the aula regia, the throne room, where audiences, meetings with ambassadors and so-called *salutationes* to the emperor took place. It can therefore be said that if Rome was the heart of the Empire, the Palatine was the heart of Rome and thus of everything.

The last of the extensions made in the imperial age is the domus Severiana, in the eastern area of the hill, adjacent to the Palatine Stadium. Of the huge palace commissioned by Septimius Severus, only the brick substructures remain today, on the southeast corner of the hill. These created an artificial platform at the same height as Domitian's palace, which had exhausted the available physical space on the hill. Also part of the palace were the imperial baths, located behind the great exedra of the Palatine Stadium, possibly built by Domitian and remade with the new construction. The great aqueduct that fed them is still partially visible today just to the north. On the side facing the Appian Way, in the far southeast, Septimius Severus had an imposing facade erected; the building was called Septizodium and its remains remained intact until the 16th century when it was finally torn down, leaving only the trace on the ground.

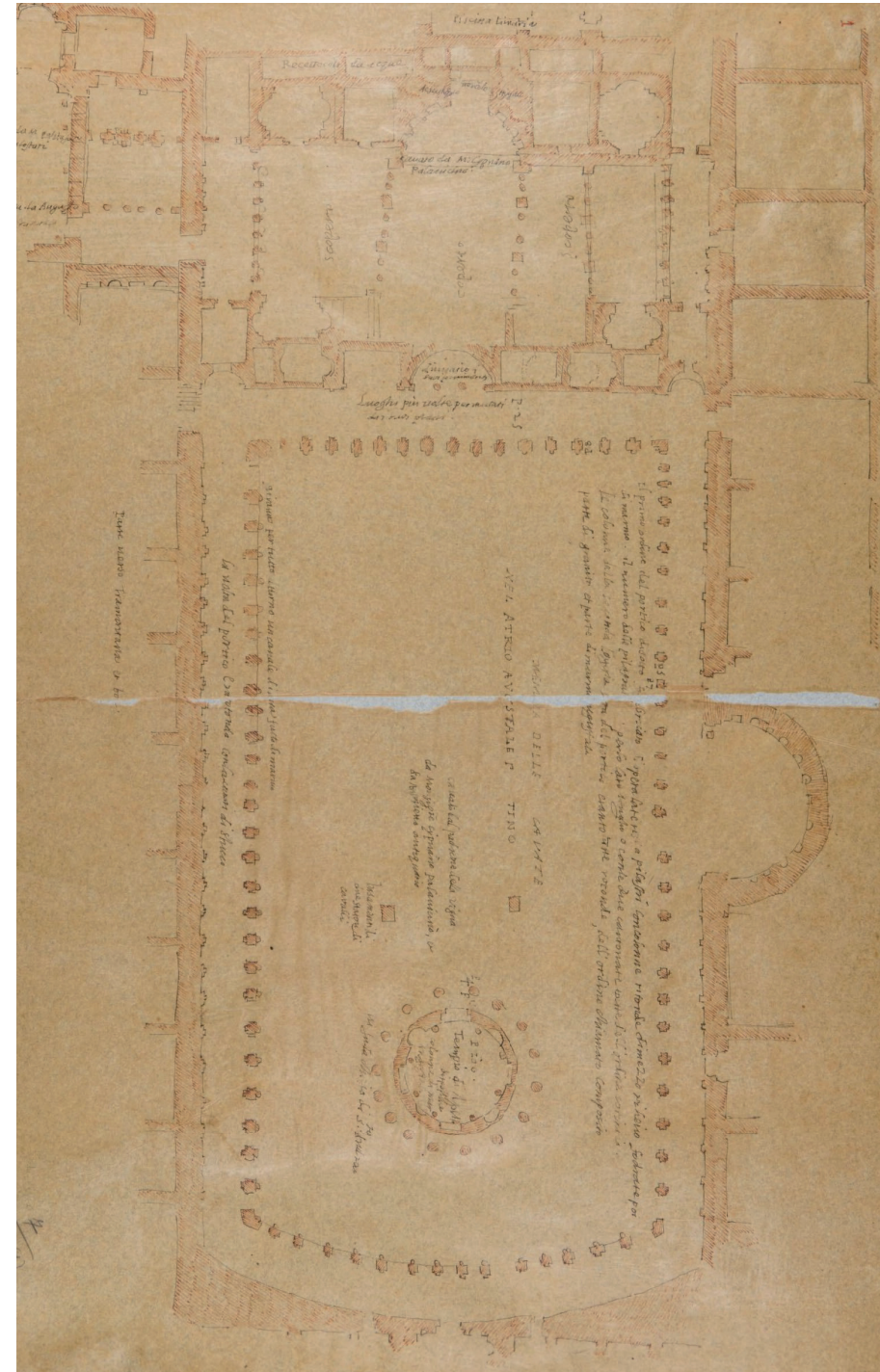


Post-imperial Rome: from the fall of the Empire to the contemporary

The Palatine had some continuity in antiquity through the Middle Ages because it was never completely abandoned, unlike the Roman forum and the area around the Colosseum. The very large area from the Capitol to the Aurelian wall was occupied by a series of early medieval churches that generally had small hamlets around them, like villages separated in some way.

The Palatine, even until Carolingian times, continued to be used. The imperial palace was always the property of the emperor: even if he was staying in Constantinople, it was his. They continued to regard him as the true emperor. The Byzantine historian Procopius describes the things that still existed in Rome: such as the temple of Janus and the ship of Aeneas, but also the system of barges that came from the harbor and towed up to Rome. we are just in the 6th century. The conquest of Italy was short-lived. The second half of the 6th century, with the Lombard invasion, closed this period. When a few Byzantine officials came to Rome-the emperors were no longer coming by then-they went to sleep in the Palatine Palace, which remained in good condition until the 7th-8th century with the end of the Carolingian period. This explains a number of churches at the foot of the Palatine such as St. Theodoric and Santa Maria antiqua, a 6th-century church that remained occupied until the 9th, when it was abandoned and moved to Santa Maria nova. The church of St. Caesarius on the Palatine still remains a mystery, the name is not accidental, it was a place where it was known that there was a shrine of the emperors, a private cult of the emperor that probably must have been the house of Livia, the church was to basically replace a cult. Some scholars think it even might have been inside the Palatine Stadium, the only certainty is that the ruins of the ellipse inside the stadium were Carolingian-era extensions.

To the Byzantine governors who came to Rome to maintain relations with the papacy, when the papacy was replaced by the Frangipanes, who fortified the Palatine and made it a fortified castle of which the Arch of Titus became the gateway, it was a time when the population had dwindled to a few tens of thousands. The various barons fortified various parts of Rome and the feudal period was born. The Frangipane were the most important family at that time, they built a large fortification where the popes often took refuge in cases of danger, at that time the popes stayed at the Farnesiano (and not in the Vatican) where there was also a church of San Cesareo there. We also know that some popes were elected on the Palatine. Beginning in the 12th century the area was gradually abandoned except for the churches that continued to live.



on the right:
Pirro Ligorio, Palatine Stadium plan, XVI century

Contemporary Rome: from the first archeological excavations to nowadays

Among the most celebrated archaeologists and scholars who examined the Palatine Hill were the Villa Medici pensionnaires. Their research, as with much of Italy's archaeological sites, is of fundamental importance to the field in that it not only provides us with the survey of the ruins they uncovered but also with the factual status of the sites during their excavations, thus conveying to us an additional historical stratigraphy now largely lost. Common practice and of particular interest was also to represent reconstructive hypotheses of the archaeological site by attempting to represent according to available knowledge even the portions of the site not yet found, guessing the location of some buildings mentioned in the writings of ancient historians.

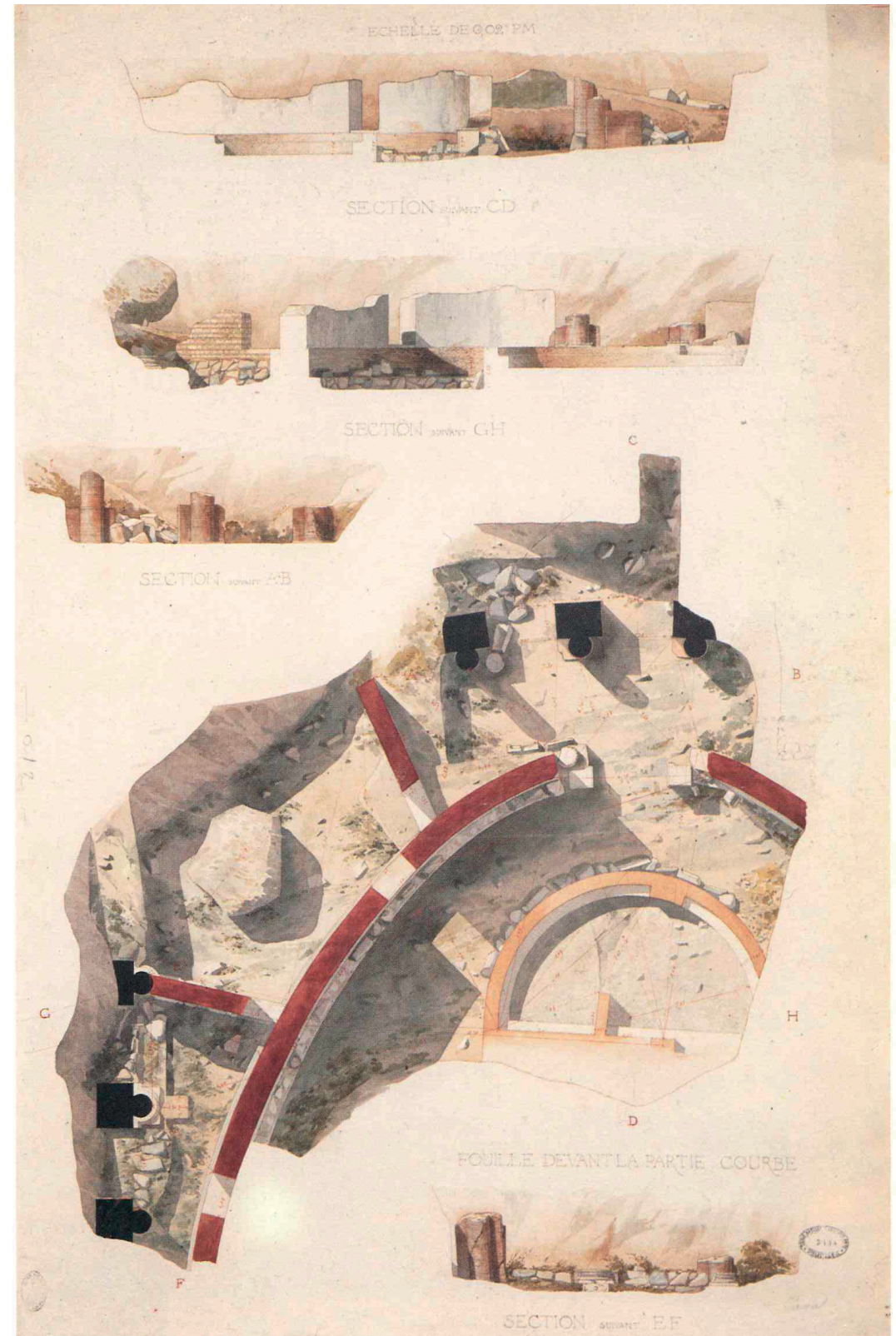
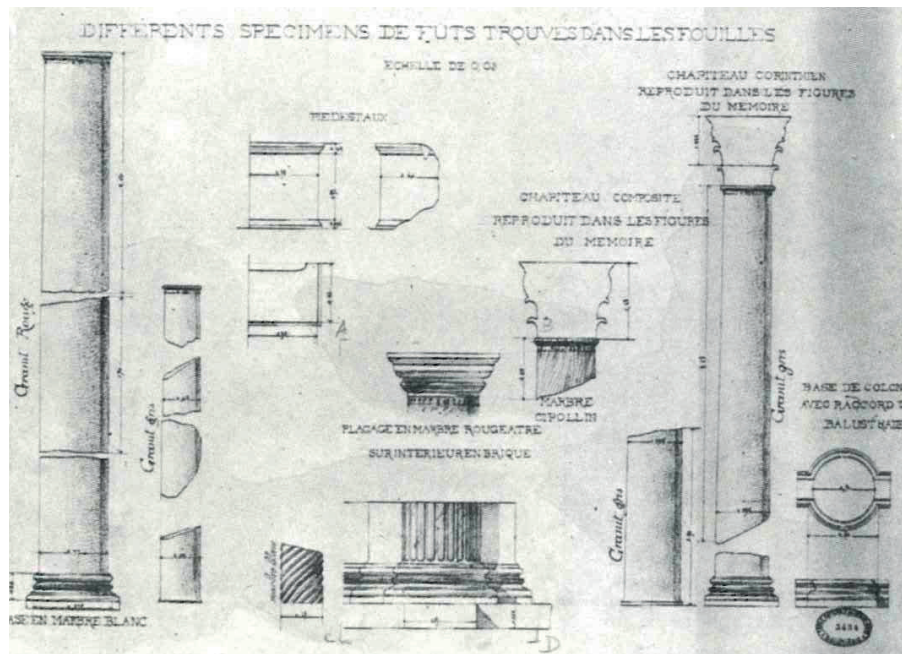
The excavation of the Palatine was continued by Bartoli in the 1920s-30s and yet without making publications about the excavations. In addition, many things were destroyed and restored without documenting them, making it difficult to see the parts that are restoration or ancient. As much as medieval frescoes were found in the peristyle of the Domus Flavia and the Palatine Stadium, they were systematically destroyed as medieval⁷. The ruins that can be admired today are therefore purely from the Republican and Imperial periods, including, however, the remains of Iron Age edifications.

below:

Jean-Louis Pascal, Parti di colonne rinvenute nello Stadio Palatino, pianta e sezioni, 1878

on the right:

Jean-Louis Pascal, Particolari dello stato attuale, pianta e sezioni, 1878





The history of the Palatine Hill thus stands still in time, consolidating its unearthed archaeology. On October 14th, 1945, however, a brief interlude revives those spaces that decided the fate of Rome in Imperial times. In fact, inside the Palatine Stadium, 120,000 people poured in for the rally called by the Socialist and Communist Parties, to give voice to the will of the people to speed up the vote of the assembly that was to establish the new democracy. The demonstration, conscious of its rights, however orderly packed the stadium, towering over and the ruins climbing over it⁹.

Access to the Palatine Stadium and Severian Arcades remains possible until 2017, with the conclusion of the Contemporary Art from Duchamp to Cattelan exhibition⁹. With this event, contemporary art and archaeology confront each other with more than one hundred works, including large installations, sculptures, paintings, and photographs. The exhibition takes place inside the Palatine Stadium, at the lower peristyle of the Domus Augustana, with its terraces, and in the Severan Arcades. There are three main themes: "architectural Installations in situ, an effective juxtaposition of archaeology and contemporary art; Hands, drawn, photographed, painted, sculpted, a communicative symbol and creative force; and Portraits, an identity trace par excellence and an artistic genre where the ancient Romans excelled"¹⁰. The exhibition is thus an invitation to reflect on memory, the meaning of ruins and visions of modernity. Invitation accepted by the Archaeological Park with the closure, still protracted, of the areas that welcomed the exhibition: the Palatine Stadium and the Severian Arcades.

on the left:
Luca Vitone, exhibition: "Arte Contemporanea da Duchamp a Cattelan", 2017
below:
Rome, *Comizio dei Partiti Socialisti e Comunista Palatine Stadium*, October 14th, 1945



Sources and Notes

1. The only ancient writer who describes the Etruscan ceremony as part of the founding rite is the Byzantine historian John Lydus: "impugned the liturgical trumpet, which the Romans call *lituus*, Romulus pronounced the name of the city... a city has three names: a secret, a sacral, and a public one. The secret name of Rome is *Amor*... the sacral one *Flora* or *Florens* [and therefore the foundation day was commemorated with the feast of Floralia]; the public one is *Rome*." The existence of a secret name of Rome is reliable since Pliny reports the death sentence of a magistrate, Valerius Soranus, who had revealed it;
2. Some historians attribute two foundations to Romulus: a square city on the Palatine is a circular air having for its center the *Mundus* in the *Comitium*, a ritual pit for founding cities;
3. *cfr.*, J.RYKWERT, *L'Idea di Città*, Adelphi, Milano 2002, p.109;
4. *Ibidem*;
5. Rykwert ascribes a third alternative meaning to *quadrata*. According to the scholar, the term would also have an ancillary meaning: it denoted the underground chamber in front of the temple of Apollo, "where auspicious things used in the founding of the city were or kept, and whose access was covered by a square stone." Other scholars, however, identify the place with a typical element of the ancient city and ancient rituals, the so-called *Mundus*;
6. Rabirio devoted himself to both the Palatine palace of Emperor Domitian and his extra-urban mansions in Albano and on Lake Paola. His work on the palace on the Palatine is also mentioned by Marziale: *Rabirio*, in *<le muse>*, IX, Novara, De Agostini, 1967, pp. 446;
7. A.AUGENTI, *Il Palatino nel Medioevo. Archeologia e Topografia (VI-XIII)*, l'Erma di Bretschneider, Roma 1996;
8. http://camera.archivioluca.com/camera-storico/scheda/video/i_tempi_della_politica/00043/IL5000094605/2/Roma-I-comizi-indetti-dal-Partito-Socialista-e-dal-Partito-Comunista-1945.html
9. *Da Duchamp a Cattelan: l'Arte Contemporanea sul Palatino*, Roma, Foro Palatino (28 giugno 2017-29 ottobre 2017);
10. *Da Duchamp a Cattelan: l'Arte Contemporanea sul Palatino*, in *<arte.it>* <http://www.arte.it/calendario-arte/roma/mostra-da-duchamp-a-cattelan-arte-contemporanea-sul-palatino-40755>

Having analyzed the relevance of the project area and defined the relative problems of the Palatine Stadium and Severian Arches, it is therefore possible to proceed with the design solution suitable for enhancing the archaeological site that is today unreachable to the public.

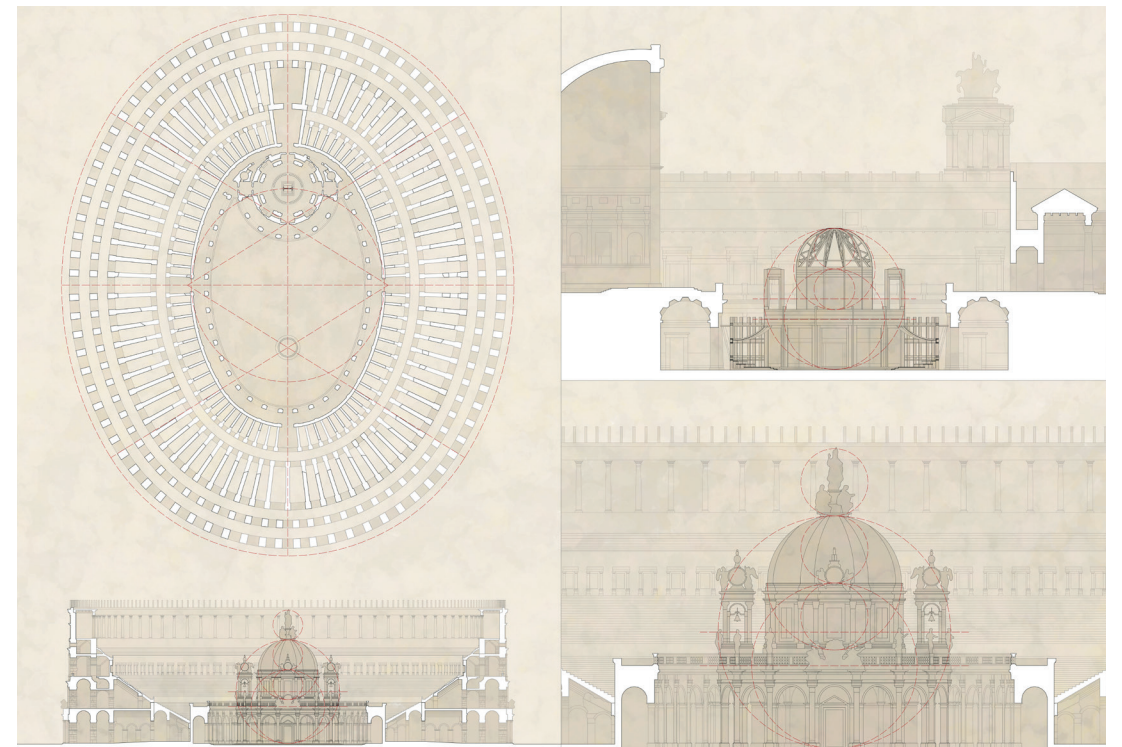
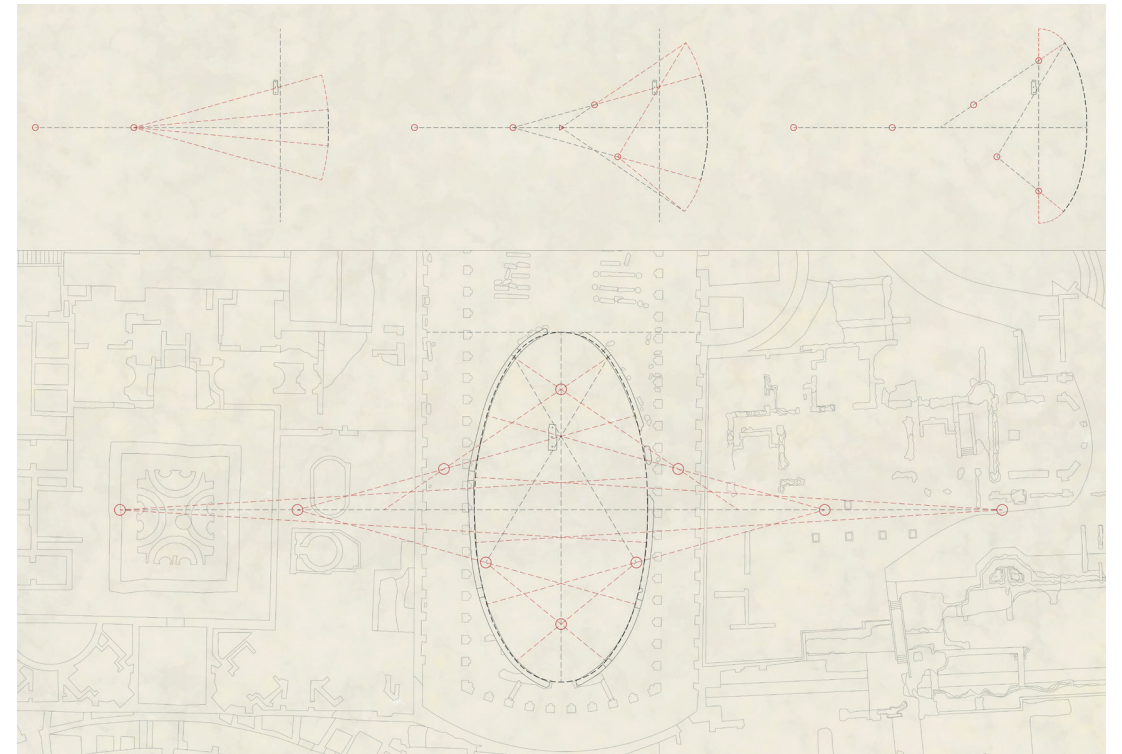
The case studies examined in the second chapter demonstrate how the High Fashion industry is not only inclined to finance the preservation of cultural heritage but also to its enhancement. Therefore, the project intends to find a design solution that provides an answer to this need by enabling a new, equipped accessibility to the chosen archaeological sites.

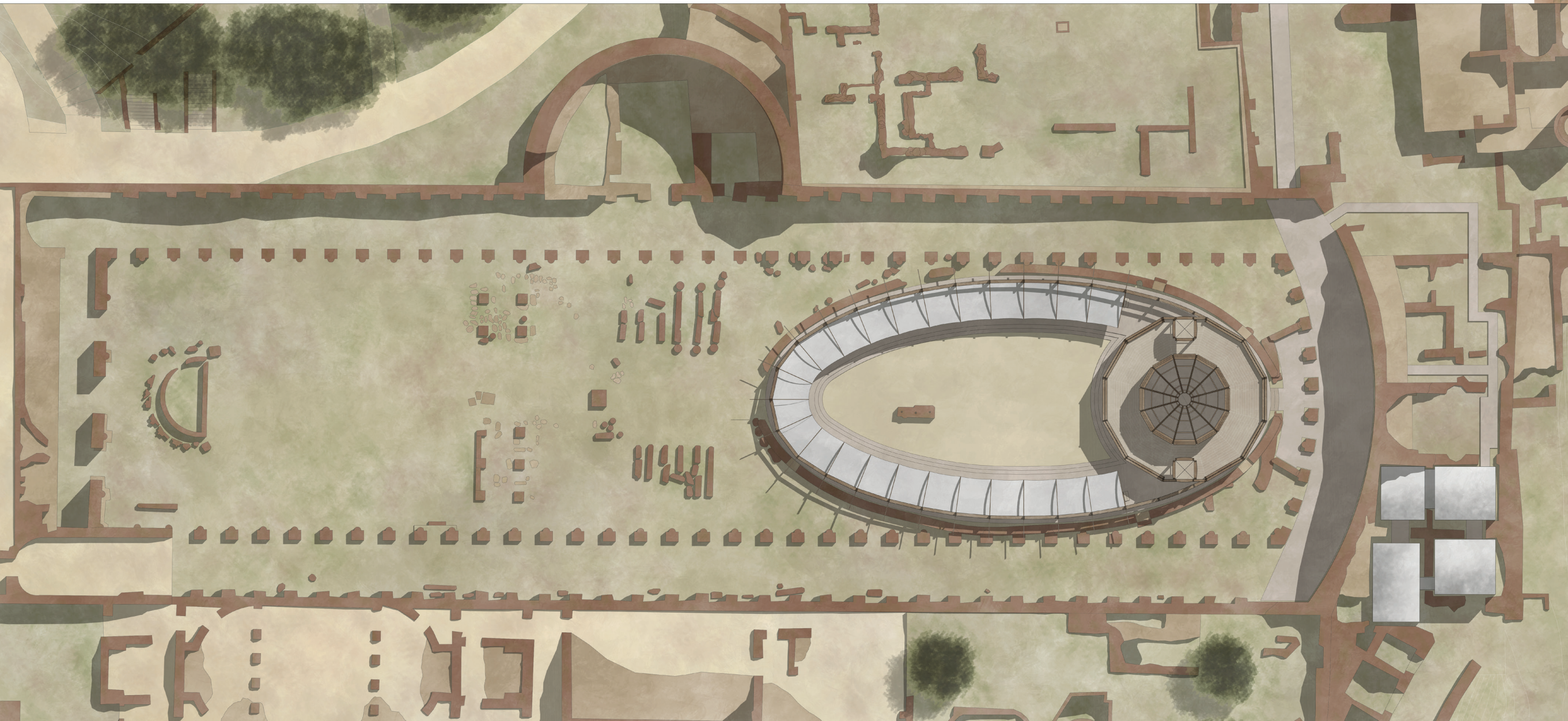
The project is manifested in a fashion event within the site. However, not being able to have an unprecedented collection, a collection of the Maison Valentino was identified that could find a correlation and derive a mutual enhancement benefit with the ruin. The collection is the Fall Winter 2017 entitled *Mirabilia Romae*, whose clothes find inspiration precisely from the ruins of the Parco archeologico del Colosseo. This event was therefore designed as a traditional fashion event, setting up: both an area dedicated to the fashion show, with the necessary related spaces, and an area dedicated to the next stage, namely the dinner gala. However, the project intends to address a third issue: in its total reversibility, to still ensure the possibility of permanence, even partial, of what has been designed, in order to be able to allow an easier visit to the archaeological areas inaccessible today and at the same time to provide new exhibition spaces of the archaeological finds or for any future events.

Palatine Stadium: site of the Fashion Show

The first part of the project aims to investigate a design solution to the fashion show. The site for this has been identified within the Palatine Stadium built for the Palace of Domitian. As analyzed in chapter three there are no certain sources as to what function this space was supposed to have, the most plausible hypotheses being that it could have been a garden, a riding arena or even a gladiator stadium, all three hypotheses of course exclusive to the emperor. The certainty is that, during the Carolingian period, the stadium underwent alterations: the construction of an ellipse interposed in the colonnade and a short portico that cut almost through the center of the stadium and formed a square area in front of the exedra. The project investigates these additions, highlighting them as successive stratifications. In addition, the narrative, also supported by Filippo Coarelli, of a church dedicated to St. Caesarius in the post-Carolingian period and reported to have been built above the Palatine, or, as some historians believe, within the Stadium of Domitian itself, is accepted. Whether a narrative or not, in the 16th century, Pirro Ligorio drew a plan of the stadium and, at the northern end of the Stadium, drew the circular plan of a Temple dedicated to Apollo, in the area where the ruins of the ellipse now stand. The project does not intend to prove the existence of either historical phase; however, it consciously welcomes them as remote possibilities to bear witness to.

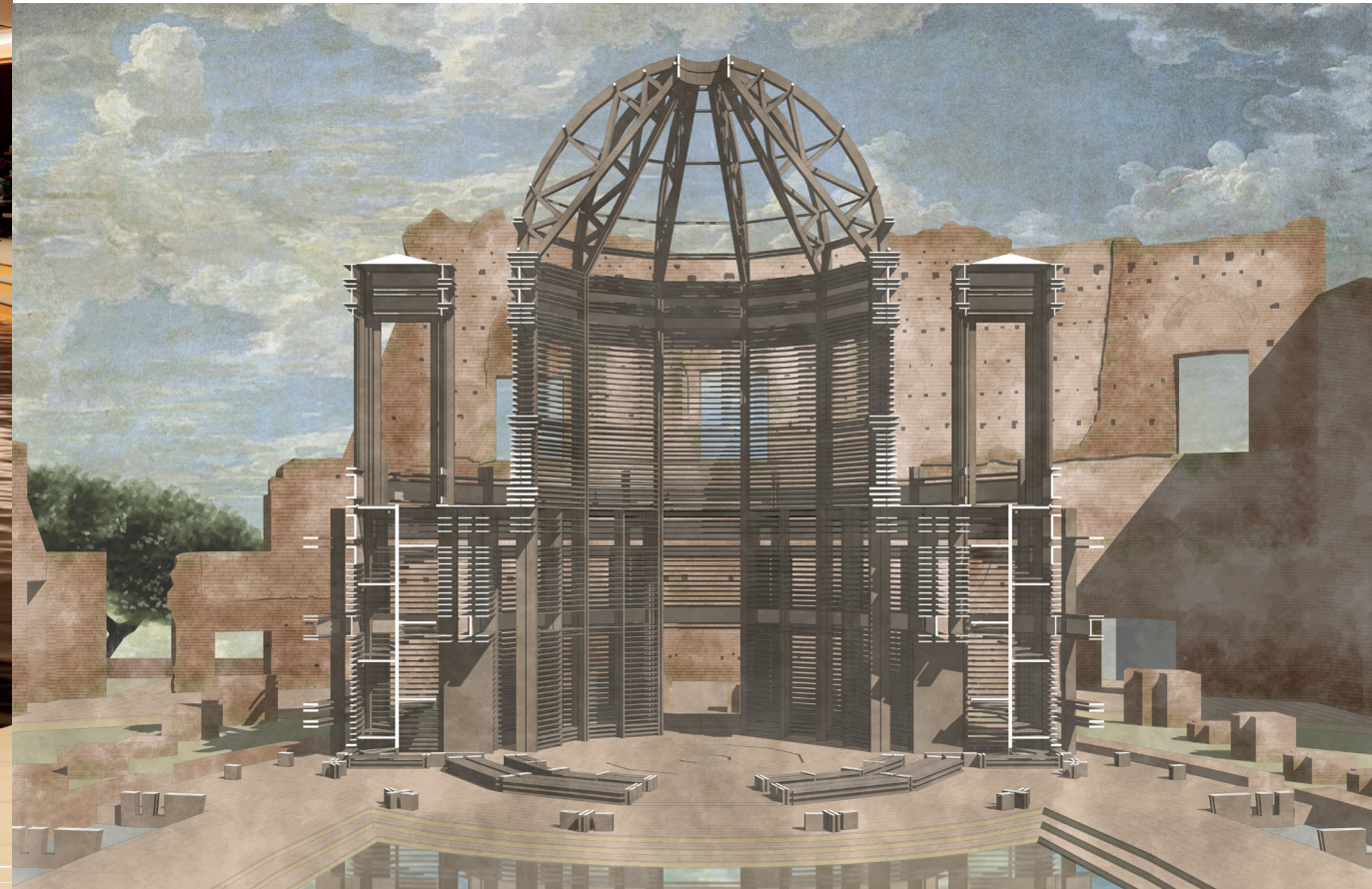
The event thus occupies two areas of the Palatine Stadium: the first, where the fashion show takes place, inside the Carolingian-era ellipse; the second where the dressing rooms and technical departments are set up, outside the stadium on its short side, open toward the Circus Maximus and Rome. For the first design part, a geometric study of the ellipse was made, this in fact, unlike the Flavian Amphitheater, it is not possible to trace it with four foci, the study carried out therefore identified ten, placed inside and outside the ellipse in specific geometric and non-random places. This analysis, carried out simultaneously with the Colosseum, found in the same, the main design referent: the plan for a church within the Amphitheater designed in the late 17th century by engineer Carlo Fontana. Such a church finds several similarities with the church in San Cesareo mentioned above. In fact, the idea behind both churches was to build a sacred building to take the place of the pagan one. The similarities also continue with the design intentions which, starting from the plan of the Temple to Apollo drawn by Pirro Ligorio, investigated the possibility of a building with a central plan in one of the two foci of the ellipse, exactly as Carlo Fontana's design addresses the interior of the Colosseum.







The project therefore is configured, with the elevation proportions adopted by Carlo Fontana, as a church with a central plan, visible from the bottom of the longitudinal axis of the arena; this is preceded by a portico that follows the entire perimeter of the ellipse, to give the impression that the entire area around it is nothing more than an immense atrium for the building, consecrated but fashionable. In the other focus, on the side opposite that of the “church,” the plinth that, presumably, was of the statue of Domitian is left lying on the ground. Finally, in the central area of the ellipse, a pool of a thin veil of Ligurian water reflects the design and the ruins that set the scene for the whole. The structure of the new “church” finds proportions in plan and elevation with the surrounding ruins, volumetry mind, not being in stone but in wood, finds its mass in the parallel placement of the horizontal planks, iterating it throughout the elevation and in all 12 facades. Finally, in order to find a further link with the Baroque forms from which it takes its inspiration, these planks are carved along the outer perimeter in order to generate a bourrimmo lano movement of the cornice or to simulate niches in the masonry, thus also generating exhibition spaces. Finally, in terms of the layout of the technical areas and dressing rooms, the conformation of the rooms that once resided in that frontal area of the stadium toward Rome was instead investigated. So, the project finds its form in the negative of those once barrel-vaulted spaces, providing a clear picture of what those spaces might have looked like in the time of Domitian.



Severian Arches: site of the gala

As reported earlier in chapter one, in 1952 Giovanni Battista Giorgini, with the fashion shows inside the Pitti Palace, introduced the fashion event as we understand it today, not only because of the peculiarity of the fashion show and being the first in Italy outside an atelier, but also because of the celebrations that followed with the gala dinner. Therefore, the project could not avoid making an area dedicated to this “new” custom as well. The area identified for such a celebration is that of the Severian Arches. As much as these were the substructures of the Severan domus, their grandeur generates a long, wide and airy space below them. The arrangement of the gala, therefore, attempts a linear approach that enhances the space of the arches by exploiting it in both length and height. To give a coordinated image with the parade venue, the style in which the staging is done is Roman Baroque but, while for the “church” the references included Borromini, for the gala table the reference is Borromini or, more to the point, the design that Giovanni Paolo Pannini sets up in line with Bernini’s Fountain of the Four

Rivers in the painting *Festeggiamenti per la nascita del delfino di Francia a Piazza Navona in 1729*. Here, Pannini depicts a sequence of architectural whimsy, including replicas of Trajan’s column, all aligned along the central axis of Piazza Navona with Bernini’s Fountain of the Four Rivers. After a careful survey of the volumes designed by Pannini, the gala table is proposed as a scale reproduction of the main volumes, including Bernini’s Fountain itself. Each cell between the arches houses one of Pannini’s capriccios while in the center of the table and substructures is the great Fountain. Each of these reproductions is differentiated by its materiality: designed in cedar wood, as with the “church,” the individual volumes are presented as a parallel sequence of sections, behind each of these is placed the blow-up of the respective portion of Pannini’s painting. Finally, outside, a large parterre is set up in front of the arches to house the gala tables; opposite the substructures are placed vases with the intention of simulating the plinths of the portion of the arches now lost.

below:

Giovanni Paolo Pannini, *Festeggiamenti per la nascita del delfino di Francia a Piazza Navona*, 1729







Beyond the final bow

As noted in the case studies cited in my paper, particularly in Chapter Two, every fashion event that takes place in a heritage space is not limited to the time required for the event to take place and to enhancement solely for the purpose of photography. Prerogative for these events is in fact the issue of long-term preservation or enhancement financed by major Fashion Houses.

Therefore, the project represents a synthesis of this: it is built without foundations but on large platforms designed to distribute the weight along the entire surface of the two fashion show sites, with the desire to place as little burden as possible on hypothetical ruins below but also to ensure reversibility. This reversibility is not to be interpreted as transience but as a temporariness extended over a period of time that the Parco Archeologico del Colosseo may deem appropriate, even considering the maintenance of a single portion of the project. The venues for the show, the Gala, and the dressing rooms are thus designed in order to ensure a facilitated visitation of areas now precluded to the public, but also for the accommodation of eventual displays of art or the archaeological artifacts of the Palatine itself.

'Beyond the final bow' is the correct phrase that sums up the intention of these events. Indeed, I believe it fully expresses the sense of reversibility and permanence sought by both the maison and those who manage the heritage itself; both gain lasting benefits from this collaboration, benefits that the citizen can also gather over time.

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