



Recent Architectural Interventions

From the second half of the twentieth century, a thorough renovation of the palazzo and of the adjacent spaces acquired over time began.

Between 1959 and 1963 architect **Carlo Scarpa** (Venice, 1906 - Sendai, 1978) restored the portego on the ground floor, freeing it from its nineteenth-century additions and creating a space within it for exhibitions and conferences. He also reorganised the access from the ground floor and laid out the garden. A specific chapter is set aside for his rigorous and poetic intervention, considered an icon and a perfect example of the most cultured and aristocratic Italian architecture of the twentieth century. On reading the technical reports and the surveys

about the condition of the buildings that made up the Querini complex in the aftermath of Scarpa's intervention, we may be surprised by the extent of the work required: dripping, sagging or leaning walls, infiltrations of water even from the roofs, enormous spaces that could not be used. In the museum there was no electricity and so no lighting, no fire system, air conditioning or alarm systems. Despite this, the Fondazione was working at full tilt, with the number of readers and visitors growing steadily.

In the 1980s, work began on the reorganisation of functions and other important installations began under the direction of **Valeriano Pastor**. Working with Carlo Scarpa in the 1950s, Pastor arranged a

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redistribution of services that also affected the third and fourth floors, on which the offices are located. The most evident mark of this project is the new connecting staircase that takes the place of a secondary nineteenth-century staircase, encroaching on the nearby *cortesella*. The supporting structure is made of metal with steps of artificial stone. The wooden slats of the curved panelling that protrudes into the courtyard, and the small portholes that overlook it suggest the hull of a boat. Pastor also created a walkway that connects the Library to the new books deposit and placed a metal and wood door with the monogram of the Fondazione in the garden, which reflects the other door, designed by Scarpa. Meanwhile, a programme of static consolidation and regulatory compliance of the building was initiated and continued throughout the 1990s and beyond. With the artistic consultancy of Valeriano Pastor, Walter Gobbetto and Franco Geron designed the plywood "wall beam" for the museum. At this point the building had been made safe.

The Ticino-born architect **Mario Botta** completed the

redevelopment of the building, donating his project to the Fondazione in a gesture of tribute as he had been a pupil of Scarpa and had cultivated his learning in the subject at the Querini Library and the IUAV, the University of Architecture of Venice.

Botta focused on the new wing, in continuity with Carlo Scarpa's own restoration: there are explicit references to his intervention in the essentiality of the lines, in the juxtaposition or the contrasting of materials and colours: stone and metal, black and white, grey and red. The project began to take shape from the end of 1993 on the initiative of Egle Renata Trincanato, president of the Fondazione, and of the director Giorgio Busetto.

Botta moved the main entrance to campo Santa Maria Formosa, behind which the new acquisitions are now located, thus preserving Scarpa's work from any further changes. On the ground floor, he concentrated the services: lobby, ticket office, cloakroom, bookshop, cafeteria, auditorium, a third staircase, lifts. He organised them around a medieval court, restored to its original roofed dimensions, which became the fulcrum of the entire complex: a

↓ Valeriano Pastor, Staircase, interior view ↓



Mario Botta, Auditorium ↓



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unifying element, the hub of the public routes around the building and an internal piazza, a physical and symbolic meeting place, open to the city. The court, named after Giuseppe Mazzariol, the director of the Querini, opens out unexpectedly.

It offsets the compressed spaces of the adjoining rooms, which are reduced in height to raise the floor to a safe height above the average high tide line. The respect for Scarpa's project required a project for the light which, in the spaces and garden he designed, is diffused and reflected by the water. Here the light is screened and reverberates from a metallic veil, as if it were a canal turned upside down in the sky. Both the pale walls and the polychrome chessboard of the floor vibrate to such an extent in the light that the whole seems a tribute to Scarpa's foyer. The light that rains down from above is captured and conveyed also by the steel blade mesh of the staircase. Suspended in space, the bare stone and metal structure recalls the skeleton of some prehistoric animal. The auditorium has a capacity of 132 seats. More chairs, up to a maximum of 200 in all, can be placed in the adjoining spaces, equipped with a CCTV system. The excellent

acoustics also makes this a recording studio. The use of the same materials and the same construction methods confers uniformity to the complex. Between grafts and references, the relationship of the project designed by Botta with the Scarpa area adds to the appeal of the building.

In 2015 **Michele De Lucchi** was commissioned to restore the rooms on the third floor overlooking the canal, destined to host the art collections of the Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia that Intesa Sanpaolo loaned to the Querini Stampalia Foundation for a twenty-year period.

De Lucchi's project, work on which terminated in 2018, is a new, strong architectural intervention that dialogues with the history of the palazzo. The spaces, previously used as offices, have been freed thanks to partitions and additions, recreating that succession of spaces that characterise the historical Library and the House Museum on the floors below.

The rooms lead from one to the next with the doors aligned in a single visual perspective. The ceilings and floors regain their historical identity. The direction

Mario Botta, Corte coperta ↓



of the beams on the ceiling suggest something of how loads were distributed in Venice's buildings, erected on mud, hinting at all the creative genius and mysteries this entails. The Venetian seminato floor has been restored and the walls repainted. In the smallest room, the historical decorations have been restored after they were brought to light during the restructuring. The works of art and furnishings are displayed according to their period. The visitor can walk through the rooms in a historical and temporal excursus: from the sixteenth-century works to the twentieth-century sculptures, or vice versa. The pure and essential spaces progressively reveal more and more detail, with the colours of the walls inspired by the works on display, from the minimal grey of the twentieth century to the strong colours borrowed from the Old Master paintings. The project promoted by Intesa Sanpaolo and the Fondazione Querini Stampalia is a cultural operation that gives the city a new space open to the public, in a fruitful symbiosis with the will of conte Giovanni.

Michele De Lucchi, Collezione Intesa Sanpaolo, interior view ↓

