

Edited by
Maria Boștenaru Dan
and Alex Dill



WATER AS HAZARD AND WATER AS HERITAGE

Report of the European Geosciences Union
Topical Event in Rome, 13.-14. June 2016

Maria Boştenaru Dan, Alex Dill (Eds.)

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Photos front cover by Maria Boştenaru:
right: Flood mitigation in Bernburg, Germany, 2013
left: Water parterre at villa Gamberaia, Florence,
designed by Romanian princess Ioana Ghyka

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Heritage & Water: Symbols and Challenges in the Works of Carlo Scarpa

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Introduction

Certainly, water vivifies, irrigates the hearth and enables us to survive; but like any other natural element - like air, like fire, like hearth – water can also be our enemy.

It is true that Venice has always been living with water: water as an element of protection and as an element of threat; emblem of the truth of every true Pharmakon. Poison and medicine, at once.

Carlo Scarpa perfectly understood that there is no better defense than reception and shelter and – then – integration.

The symbol of the fundamental instabilitas of the sea water. But maybe of every kind of water – also the water of the rivers that “never stays”. This is Carlo Scarpa’s way of relating with water, caressing its dynamics and looking after its restless flow. It is not incidental that Carlo Scarpa embraced and sheltered water in all of his architectural creations. Waterways accompany Scarpa throughout his architectural path, roots of his creativity without limits.

Selected works

1952: Sculptures Garden – Gardens of the Biennale – Italian pavilion Venice

In 1952, Carlo Scarpa designed the Sculpture Garden for the Venice Biennale within a patio of the Italian Pavilion, originally designed in 1932 by Duilio Torres.

In his intentions, this place of passage, exposition and reflection, must present a dynamic character, related to the transit, offering at the same time well deserved rest for the visitors.

Three heavy elliptical columns support a canopy roof - shaped as if three circles would have been subtracted from a rectangle.

In his work, two apparently conflicting aspects – passage and pause - are combined in a canopy roof, designed as a sculpture, and in the underlying geometrical garden, which plays with light, shadow and water.

1954-56: Venezuela pavilion – Gardens of the Biennale_Venice

The garden patio – enclosed in the pavilion – is again pause, is a constructed garden, like any other part, and contains a basin with a gush.

For the first time, in a clear manner, all the characteristics of Scarpa's gardens take part in the project, a pleasant place, harmonically concluded, purposely created to stay, think and energize, like in a natural garden.

In particular, this garden of the Venezuela pavilion, with the bordering wall which enclose a cut of modulated light from the larger encircling garden and

which makes visible the tree canopy beyond, up to the lagoon, shelter and concentrates the transparent and luminous vitality of the water in the basin.

An oasis of amenity that with the beauty of its elementary shapes, the rationality of the architecture and the musicality of the water, represents an invitation to the joy of the understanding.

1955-57: Gipsoteca Canoviana – Canova Museum – Possagno Treviso

“Undoubtedly, having a white thing – a plaster as an example – to make it stand out, one should create a dark background: it is quite spontaneous thinking like this. On the contrary, not to be polemic against the traditional rationality, but more thanks to a sudden intuition, I’ve observed that it would have been better creating a white background...resorting to the water to make it vibrates on the piece of the graces, giving them movement.”

Carlo Scarpa

“The sun, moving on a sculpture, doesn’t produce negative effects, like, instead, when in a room it goes in certain points and not in others, enlightening only certain paintings, as far as there is nothing which makes the artistic works marvelous as the powerful sun light.”

Carlo Scarpa

1955-61: Veritti House – Udine

“Wright did not copy the windows from his neighbors, he introduced works of his own time; without forgetting that the essential element in Venice was and still is, water.”

Carlo Scarpa

The magic of the reflecting transparencies by which the water of the external basin mirrored the house façade, entering the living room through the wide glass wall and making everything enjoyable from the windows of the bedrooms located on the first floor overlooking the living room, considering that the rooms had sliding doors, which once open created a contiguous space from the first floor through the living room and the external water basin, through the full height glass wall.

1956-74: Castelvechio Museum – Verona

The decision to move the big fountain along the path, which leads to the main entrance, positioning it almost in front of the offices, stands clearly in all the drawings of the courtyard made by Carlo Scarpa.

Originally, the fountain was placed against the north façade, and Scarpa decides to dignify this piece of work, locating it in the center of a shallow basin, like those of the Arabian gardens. Scarpa, Venetian at heart, enjoyed very much exploiting the qualities of water.

In front of this basin Scarpa found another one and, jokingly, he put a drinking fountain in the middle, thus creating in a daily gesture of thirst-quenching, a small ceremony.

Only one person at the time can have access to the fountain, maintaining balance stepping on one foot at the time on the sole stand.

The shape of the two basins came from the observation of two large puddles on the nylon sheets laid down in the courtyard during construction.

1957-58: Olivetti Store – San Marco Square – Venice

The sculpture was realized in natural bronze and polished as a typewriter. Scarpa located the Viani's sculpture in a space which is only its own. He

located it in a reflecting shallow pool of black Belgian marble, thus gaining another depth dimension.

While giving the statue an extraordinary vivifying basement – unknown in any other modern sculpture - Scarpa also located it in the most strategic visual spot of the store, most inevitably, in the convergence point of all the internal and external, lateral and vertical views.

Isolating the internal visual condition – this is the reason of the adoption of the water, apparently inexplicable – so that one is forced to go around it.

1961: Veneto Pavilion “Italia 61” – Esposizione Italia 61 – Turin

Scarpa set up the Veneto pavilion with the materials and colors of the Venetian tradition. The poetic of “sense of color and water supremacy” is interpreted integrating the two themes evocating allusive images: the material exposed is quite limited, but of outstanding quality.

The crystalline cascade of the glass chandelier – designed by Scarpa and realized by Venini – mirrors, together with a mosaic of Mario De Luigi located on a wall, on the underlying water basins, which create precious scenic effects with the play of light.

1961-63: Fondazione Querini Stampalia – Venice

Carlo Scarpa in this specific work situates all the terms – essential and marginal – of his own interpretative and poetic discourse about Venice: the water, the light, the bright and unexpected colors – the singing of the gold in the shadow – but also the whispered tones, the unmotivated loosening of an initial tension without precise destiny. This is the twitch of the stairs, landing on the bank, run out in the telescopic view of the “portego”, half-

height, to which the green lawn of the garden on the background is the objective sight.

Conclusive episode of this Venetian itinerary, the small secluded garden with very high walls, housing between a pomegranate and a cherry tree *Cercis siliquastrum*, a wellhead of the old building and a gothic lion.

Two fountains bring the sound of water in the silent quiet of this Venetian corner: the drip of the spillover on the underlying mosaic water basin. Here is where the students meet to read and talk outside. The luminous silence of the small garden, from which the slow sound of the drop is intended for the evening sparrow, sipping in the precious marble bowl.

“Inside, inside the water, like in the whole city. It’s only a matter of containment, of management, of using it as a bright and reflective material; you’ll see the play of light on the yellow and purple stuccos of the ceilings, magnificence!

Without forgetting that the essential element in Venice was and still is the water.”

Carlo Scarpa

1966-77: Entrance to the University Institute of Architecture IUAV – Tolentini Santa Croce Venice

“The old door is laid down in a water basin, animated on the ground by steps, which run around it, forming a quoted level of a swamped landscape.”

Sergio Los

**1968: Monument To The Partesan –
Castello Gardens Venice**

The artist Murer imagined a body lying on the ground, marked by deep shadows. Scarpa taught that the best way to look at it from above would have been creating a floating iron and concrete pontoon covered with copper plates supporting the bronze sculpture so as to portray an image of a woman laying on the water surface.

**1969-78: Brion Monumental Tomb –
San Vito di Altivole Cemetery – Treviso**

39. The water wet stone is in the oriental art the symbol of the appearance of the mystery of life and this mystery is continuously remembered in the Brion tomb.

Not only in the evolution of the stone labyrinth, emerging from the large basin, which represents a fundamental sign of mediation among the different symbolic events, but also the continuous presence of the water as a confirmation of the centrality of the allegoric meaning, recognized to the coupling of this element with the stone.

Water flows towards the large basin, emerging from the same land where the arks have been positioned, protected by the arcosolium.

Emerging from the place of death, the water comes out circling the meditation island where the Scarpa pavilion is located, in his mind enriched by the presence of young women. The liquid element thus melts together with the images of the beginning and of the end, representing the first and the last combined.

The water is then the symbolic element of mediation among the various architectural elements. As such, it also plays the function of protecting the architecture, ritualizing the material texture.

The ground roots of the architecture are visible in the transparency, safeguarded by the water.

The architect entrusted the water the care of architectural foundations; the building is consecrated a maternal divinity, protecting people and things alike, against the aggressions of time.

WATER AS SYMBOL OF PERENNIAL LIFE!

Short profile

Registered Landscape Architect, Economist

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Dr. Maria Beatrice Andreucci carries out her professional activities in the fields of Green Infrastructure, landscape restoration and urban regeneration.

In parallel, her research activities are centered on the design applications of scientific and operative methods and tools for value creation in landscape transformation and requalification processes within the built environment.

Speaker at conferences, workshops and seminars, she presented papers and other works, such as projects, posters and videos in Italy and abroad (St. Petersburg, Rome, Florence, Turin, Moscow, Rio de Janeiro, Kos, Paris, Vienna, Bucharest, Tartu, Nürtingen) with interventions ranging from the evaluation of the architectural projects, landscape design and sustainability

of urban transformations, to Green Infrastructure and restoration of historical gardens and parks.

She is the author of scientific and educational publications and projects of landscape architecture, with has awards and prizes at international level.



Figure 16: Biennale Gardens, Venice, photo credits M.B. Andreucci.



Figure 17: Venezia alla Partigiana, Venice, photo credits M.B. Andreucci.

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Water as hazard and water as heritage“ was an international workshop which took place in the framework of the „Spazi Aperti“ (Open spaces) event at the Accademia di Romania in Rome, an event engaging international fellows in the capital of Italy. The workshop was a winner in the first selection of the European Geosciences Union co-sponsored meetings competition and as such participation was also multidisciplinary, from geosciences to archaeology, art history, urban planning and (landscape) architecture. The volume presents an overview of the dual element of water, as an aesthetic element of place, but also as a potential danger through the hazards it brings, as presented in the different contributions of the participants.

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