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Interior architecture

Envisioning new identities: the reuse of *colonie estive*.

Thesis proposals will work, through the knowledge and the design of a historical building, on the **identity**, of a building and of a place.

The identity of an architectural object is a complex concept: every building, as every work of art, reveals itself and its identity as soon as the concept phase ends.

And identity, inscribed in the *form* of architecture, is created by multiple factors: shapes of the totality and of the single parts, materials of finishing and construction, light, colours, uses, ...

Every modification would slowly change not only the form of the building, but also its identity.

The same kind of process occurs to landscape, hosting changes due to nature or human hands.

The resignation deeply conditions the identity of a building: the sudden variation of uses changes the perception of architecture. Examples deriving from industrial disposal and following reuse can help in understanding the nature of this problem: can a place designed to host a hard, and often unpleasant work become a place for leisure and culture, such as it is frequently happening in European towns?

They will focus on the reuse and redesign of the former holiday camps for children **-le colonie-** were established in Italy by charitable Christian organizations in the late 19th century. Their main purpose at the time was to improve a child's health. Medical problems thought to be caused by poor light, air and malnutrition were treated with sunbathing, physical exercise, and fortifying meals.

In the 1920s the program of colonies was taken over by the new Fascist state and expanded. The treatment continued and was in effect extended but it had a new *raison d'être* in three distinct ways.

Firstly, the idea, derived by German theories, that people had to ensure physical superiority for new generations. Secondly the idea to transform young children into soldiers, physically and morally, typical of Balilla youth organization, having a clear paramilitary dimension. Thirdly the idea to indoctrinate and establish an emotional bond with Fascist regime.

Most of the buildings were designed in rationalist style, deprived from every democratic implication, and focused only on structural and spatial qualities.

The colonies were meant to translate the Balilla organization in an architectural form (to give an example, children were organized in 11 people squad (*manipolo*), so usually dormitories were based on rooms for 11 beds; three squads formed a *century*, so rooms were often connected in groups of three).

Buildings were based on the perfect functioning of a big group of people (all the hosts of the colonies), nearly ignoring the scale of the single child. Most of the activities were collectivized.

Functional areas were clearly divided in service areas (kitchen, laundry, administration offices, etc.) and areas for hosts (dormitories, living and dining rooms, etc.). Big attention was given to distribution parts (staircases, ramps, corridors, etc.), able to assemble and disperse people quickly.

The architecture of the colonies also served the Fascist regime as a political icon. Fascist symbols, emblems and propaganda motifs were widely represented in the buildings. Their design also functioned to keep political symbols and emblems omnipresent so that young visitors would always see to whom they should be grateful for their stay and to whom they were to be devoted.

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