

Luigi Canonica and 'Imperial' language

A new study has been launched by the Archive of the Modern of the Academy of Architecture, USI-Mendrisio. Its focus is on Luigi Canonica, the Ticinese architect, a figure connected with the culture of architecture in France and Italy during Napoleon's reign. The research is conducted jointly with Centre Ledoux, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, and the Doctoral School of the Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Rome. The four-year programme also includes the organisation of a conference to be held in two consecutive sessions (2006-2007), an exhibition (2008-2009), the publication of two volumes and the digitisation of Luigi Canonica's drawings, preserved in several museums and archives.

The research project was initiated by the Archive of the Modern, of the Academy of Architecture (USI-Mendrisio), together with Centre Ledoux, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, in association with the Doctoral School in Cultures and transformations of the city and its environment of the Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Rome. Its objective is to study the period, striding the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which gave birth to modernity. Its main focus is on the figure of the Ticinese architect Luigi Canonica (1764-1844), who became a national architect during the Cisalpine Republic and was subsequently appointed Architect Royal during the Kingdom of Italy. He was the author, among other things, of Foro Bonaparte and the Arena in Milan.

Letizia Tedeschi, director of the Archive of the Modern and head (with Daniel Rabreau) of the research project, explains: "The Napoleonic era led to a break with the past: the state claiming much stronger control over urban space and environmental infrastructure. That coincided with the rise of architecture as a profession in its modern sense, the strengthening of the theme of cultural transmission and, incidentally, closer relations and exchange between two leading European civilisations (the Italian and the French). From here, it was only a short step to study Luigi Canonica, bearing in mind his training and education in Austrian-occupied Lombardy and the work



Jacques-Louis David,
Bonaparte crosses the Great St Bernard Pass, 20 May 1800, 1801-1802.

he conducted during the Restoration. We also learn more about his fruitful dialogue with the French tradition. Thus, the horizon originally assumed for the purposes of our research broadens to take in other specific issues, other figures and situations at work in a supranational context". It all started at the Archive of the Modern, where are stored a wealth of manuscript material and approximately a thousand drawings ascribable to Luigi Canonica and his workshop. This is what sparked off the survey of Canonica's works, as well as an analysis of other archival fonds and collections, preserved not only in Ticino, but also in Italian, French, Swiss, Austrian and US institutions. A first batch of the drawings studied will be presented during the first session of the international Conference (see box on this page) to be held in October 2006 at Ascona. This may be seen as a contribution to *Lineamenta*, a databank developed by *Bibliotheca Hertziana-Max Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte*, Rome, which became an active scientific partner in 2003. The present batch will therefore become accessible on line, whereas it will take till 2008 for the whole corpus of Luigi Canonica's drawings to be reconstituted in digital form from material scattered in different institutions in Ticino, Italy, France, Austria, and the United States.

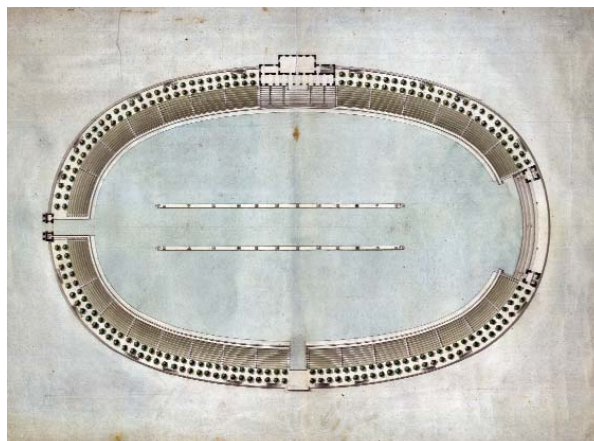
The Conference

The international conference represents an important stage in the research project. Entitled "Italian and French architectural heritage under Napoleon: professional practice and stylistic issues", it will take place at two separate events: 5-8 October 2006 at the Stefano Franscini Centre-Monte Verità, Ascona, and in October 2007 at the Académie de France, Villa Medici, Rome. It is structured in lectures and oral reports, liable to stir discussions, and it is meant for an expert audience. Open to the public, it is organised and funded jointly by the Archive of the Modern, Centre Ledoux, Paris, and the Académie de France, Rome, with the financial assistance of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF), Ticino's Department of Education, Culture and Sport, and finally the Sergio Mantegazza Foundation, Lugano.

A composite project, the result of several partnerships

The international symposium, in Letizia Tedeschi's words, "was devised as an unprecedented opportunity for genuine debate on the hybridisation of French and Italian culture during the Napoleonic era and a little beyond. The particular setting in which Luigi Canonica moved, the city of Milan, will be brought face to face with contemporary Paris, but also with other leading European centres. The comparative analysis thus constructed will fuel a rich theoretical discussion on issues at work in those crucial years for modernity". The first of the two events, to be held on 5-8 October 2006 at the Stefano Franscini Centre-Monte Verità, Ascona, will include presentations on the following themes: "Historiographical models and research themes"; "The city as laboratory: comparing cultural models"; "Natural landscape and manmade landscape"; "The past and heritage as a resource"; "New representations and new research frontiers". The symposium is organised by the Archive of the Modern, by *Centre Ledoux*, Paris and by *Académie de France*, Rome, in association with the Doctoral School in Cultures and transformations of the city and its environment of the *Università degli Studi Roma Tre*, Rome, *Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine*, Paris, *Museo Cantonale d'Arte*, Lugano and the Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Affairs of the Italian Government.

In 2008-09, the crowning achievement of the research will be a big exhibition, jointly organised by *Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine*, Paris and by *Museo Cantonale d'Arte*, Lugano. Concurrently, there will be the publication of two volumes. The exhibition will be set up under the



Luigi Canonica, *Arena di Milano*, 1805-6 c.

Luigi Canonica Fonds, the Archive of the Modern, Mendrisio.

patronage of the President of the Swiss Confederation, the President of the French Republic, the President of the Italian Republic, and will be supported by the Swiss Embassy in Paris and the French Embassy in Bern. The Exhibition will first open in Switzerland, at the *Museo Cantonale d'Arte*, Lugano and the Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio (October to December 2008), while a second edition will be held in Paris, at *Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine*, *Palais de Chaillot* (February to April 2009). The selection of over 350 exhibits will be entrusted to an authoritative international scientific Committee.

Concluding the research, two volumes will see the light, recording the survey of the period and Luigi Canonica's scholarship; in particular: a monograph encompassing the entire work of our Architect and a volume on the Italian and French architectural heritage at the time of Napoleon, published by Mendrisio Academy Press.

The Archive of the Modern

Under the directorship of Letizia Tedeschi (in the picture), the Archive of the Modern is an independent research institute affiliated to the Academy of Architecture, USI-Mendrisio, bolstering its teaching and scientific activity. Created in 1996, together with the Academy of Architecture, it was granted Foundation status in 2004 by Università della Svizzera italiana. Its objectives are twofold: on the one hand it proposes to acquire, safeguard and enhance the value of architectural, urban, engineering, design, art and photographic archives; on the other, it promotes scientific research in the following fields: history of modern and contemporary architecture, history of art, of design, of the environment and of civil engineering. Its research activity ranges from the Age of Enlightenment to our days.



For further details:

Letizia Tedeschi
 Archivio del Moderno
 USI - Accademia di architettura
 Via Lavizzari 2
 CH - 6850 Mendrisio
 Tel. +41 58 666 55 00
 e-mail: ltedeschi@arch.unisi.ch
 archivio@arch.unisi.ch

Web addresses:

Academy of Architecture: www.arch.unisi.ch
 The Archive of the Modern: www.arch.unisi.ch/ris_ist_archmoderno