

Venice: a library for the world

Davide Gabriele

Abstract

The following article derives from a research born with the study initially aimed at the construction of the thesis “Venice: a library for the world. A cultural laboratory for the city” coordinated by the Prof Sara Marini and the teaching contribution of Prof. Mauro Lena: the discussion took place in March 2017. I tried to unveil the pulsating and lively layer of the historical center of the city.

I ventured into a research on the library as both a spatial device and a cardinal site of the city, deepening also the organizational and social aspects. I collaborated on the architecture of the books, dedicating a first moment of work to the study of useful texts to deepen the knowledge of the library and its management, a second moment of research was dedicated to the process of mapping, of photographic survey and of acquiring the knowledge of library assets and problems in the historical center of Venice, using the precious instrument of the interview enriching the methodologies investigation.

The libraries in the historical center of the city are more than thirty-five and the total of their library heritage amounts to more than three million specimens and it is a quantification by default since in almost no case the process of quantification of the volumes present has been concluded.

A third chapter of the work was dedicated to a comparison between the Venetian libraries and those present in the Manhattan Peninsula, (this part was followed in particular by Professor Jason Vigneri-Beane - Pratt Institute) through a period of deepening of the US case, in the month of November 2016 in which I also had the opportunity to relate my study to other research methods. Finally the last part of the work was dedicated to the development of a project proposal aimed at defining a new artefact in Venice, an ark capable of carrying out all the problems encountered in the libraries of the city and offering itself as one connecting point of a polycentric system. Venice proves to be a library for the world and is prepared to be a common operational horizon between institutions: the aim is to highlight the library as a example matrix for the creation of a network of synergies that constitute a program that involves more components and can create a positive return to the city. The research wants to map and analyze libraries and some precise places of culture in order to underline the important task of being a cultural propulsion for the city. The city has been studied and revealed as a large open laboratory that matches the scenario in which it is possible to plan individual interventions that facilitate the growth of creative thinking and the relationship with the documents of man’s memory.

The city: analysis of an archive of knowledge

The theme of the city as an itinerary of active discovery of the book heritage is inherently dense with many interesting natures and features: the city is a great archive of knowledge and the documents deposited inside it characterize its essence. The documents and books deposited are the initial and always new codes that make the cultural life of the city interact: this cultural life must take into account the archive as a dynamic tool of knowledge and the book as a tool for investigating reality. The complexity of the social and technological challenges of contemporary society and their controversies require advanced analysis and research tools that I believe can come from the study of the library as a place able to play the role of interpreter of new research

methodologies based on innovative experimentation, and interweaving of different languages that need to meet each other on the same ground of the exploration of new methods of intellectual activity.

The change to the city in our approach needs to be monitored through key places of human memory: libraries are existing places but also laboratories, places that must exist as communicative processes of social and cultural construction of knowledge; the library is the exemplary matrix useful to understand the city and the man's needs in the contemporary era.

A fundamental aspect of the research wants also to be the contemporary semantics of the tourist behaviour and of the realization of the tourist product as a cultural product according to libraries in society and to the use of the archives. The study of the phenomenon of contemporary tourism alongside the process of development and change of cultural life can provide useful tools for the gradual formation of proposals within the planning of library activities and can give rise to new synergies for collaborations between libraries and cultural institutions related to tourism.

New scenarios of experimentation and network construction: the research aims to provide and to propose individual targeted interventions at individual library sites taken into consideration as exemplary cases to build useful scenarios of experimentation and an example of a substantial network, a useful flywheel and a matrix dynamic for cultural life in the contemporary city that can take on new conjugations based on the places and institutions considered.

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Linking the restoration workshop with the main activity of the library, that is to encourage interaction between the activities of the library itself with the restoration of the book: an open laboratory in which visitors discover the elements of library archaeology and know the city through the history of the library heritage not yet fully catalogued. The absence of a large book restoration station in Venice can be one of the main starting points for conceiving this shortcoming as necessarily related to the needs of the new library and the new cultural center.

A series of virtual exhibitions take on their own meaning when compared to a more tangible context, that of the restoration workshop that becomes an “open” place based on specific cycles of cultural international events for the city: to plan the activities of restoration of books means to create a coordinated action and process of involvement of public opinion and its sensitivity that is solicited in new and varied ways.

The international and current character of the conservation of the book heritage: Venice, historical deposits and the present.

The comparison with the present determines the ability to see the book heritage as a cultural resource capable of bringing together and interacting multiple cultures among themselves. Only analytic comparison can allow the extraction of individual social and cultural identities. The technological development related to the cyclical updating of conservation systems and the updating of the modalities of fruition of the documents produced by man turn on a dutiful reflection on the inevitable deep link that exists between the evolution of human technologies and the documents produced by man that constitute a fundamental parameter for the sense and direction of the first.

The costs of conservation and their management reflect the essential consistency of a collaboration between different places and institutions of the city: conservation is an act of knowledge and intervention in the contemporary.

Another point that strongly links the past and the future is the reality of temporary events: these are often the only organizational modality that allows parts of the archive to be able to “move” and interact with other places, with other bodies. The international character of these events gives power to the memory of man because it is urged by different “forces” in time and in the form and place that meet with what has allowed its birth. Moreover, the international opening of these events and their planning increases the visibility of the collections and their usability, their increase, management and archival organization.

The proposal of a book restoration laboratory is connected not only in a conceptual but also in a practical way to some reflections and proposals for the cyclical regeneration of collaboration and cultural propulsion.

The city is a common operational horizon because it is able to express a network of synergies that constitute a program where everyone is involved in a positive return to the city.

The library is an example of matrix able to generate a network of synergies that constitute a program where everyone is involved and that can create a positive return towards the city.

Digitization allows us to reconstruct a mapping of codes, of stories that link cultures and peoples to each other through knowledge. The future of the book is the knowledge of the book itself and its communication. Communication allows the production of projects, interpenetration of resources, contamination and integration of cultural and urban fabrics for the creation and reintegration of economic resources. Evolution is an international need that must be managed and guided by projects to update the methods for enhancing knowledge and its documents.

The return of the library to the city can mean identifying in a new place, in a large venue a flywheel for the knowledge of the individual features of the city that welcomes the public. The architectural project is a project for man in the city. The library is a wealth management project for the cultural offer of the city and the world for the world.

The librarian holds the expression of knowledge organizer: the international perspective of documentation and research that the user needs in order to create his information platform needs to be calibrated, directed and accompanied by librarians: the librarian covers a project of architecture of a library and of a cultural center a fundamental role. It is in effect an indispensable “place” to refer to. The project makes a wealth of knowledge accessible; the librarian makes an essential contribution to the making of this heritage accessible. The opening of the research path to European projects that work on the same level is one of the main future objectives, as possible concrete expression of aggregation and network of cultural entities and that enter into a different and new contact between them, a contact that must always be updated. To this perspective it is necessary to link a relationship with the precise examples of an unveiled heritage that has been dislocated from the original site

and which needs to be accessible. The research project itself must be a social methodological experiment of connection, collaboration and study of the man in the city according to his needs in relation to contemporary culture and knowledge: the man as the expression of a wealth of knowledge that assumes his deeper sense in relation to its ability to connect with many other archives that over time are supported by paths and interaction. Books and collections of books are experiences and testimonies of the organizational expressed by their need of being coordinated by principles of solidarity and proportionality: this means that progress, in the management of the book heritage, needs to be characterized by a coordinated orientated action, designed and integrated by the experience of managing individual assets.

The library, declined as a critical theory, and in a constant dialogue with perspectives and approaches such as cultural studies, provides the fundamental analytical framework for the production of a theory and a geography able to propose vocabulary and methodologies useful to grasp and represent the territories in which the investigated phenomena occur.

Libraries are experiences of connection and are the laboratories where the city has the opportunity to reflect itself in order to improve itself. The conservation of research energy as a process of intellectual and human re-sewing and as a collaboration between different bodies is one of the themes that characterize the project itself, understood as the opportunity for the establishment of an open laboratory consisting of several people and places and where the research puts in a concrete connection a series of free and related languages. The library, the archive and the repository are sources of extraordinary discovery, places open by definition to the future. They are sources of inexhaustible discovery. But they are also precarious, delicate sources: the libraries contain the secret of Venice, an invincible but very delicate city, where the man himself is put to the test against the work he created and can no longer pretend not to see. Venice is the city of the present. Each library is a library of time as for its own structure characterized by unique artefacts, aggregates of stratifications deliberately made visible or not, monuments that invite to the discovery starting from their intrinsic genetic code. It is possible through the libraries in Venice to relive History, to enter in the most significant anecdotes, the pearls of a necklace worn by this city, which return in silent dialogues to make it shine with its own light, inside the palaces.

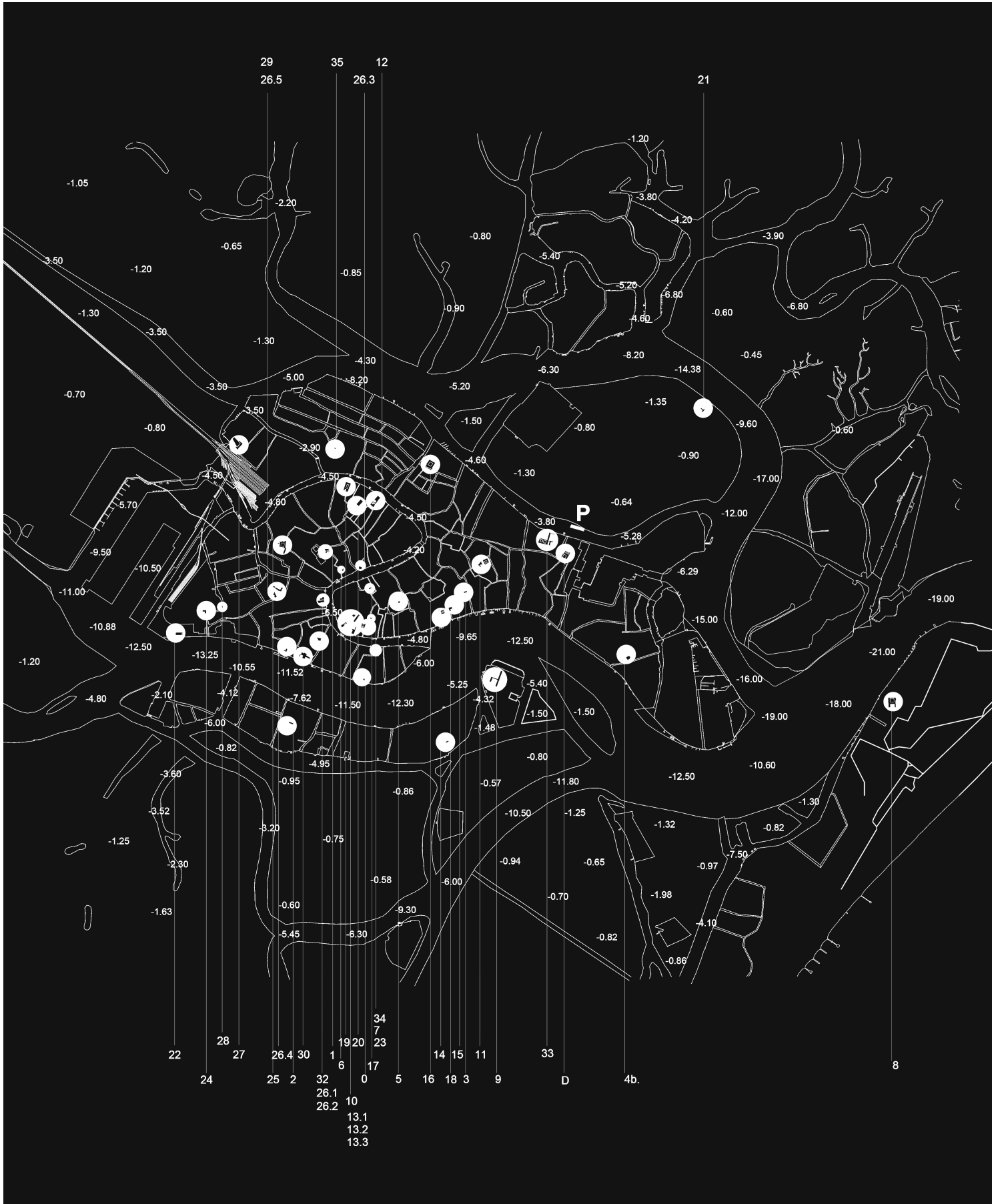
The treasure enclosed in these chests is often book material shared between different institutions but beyond the institutional appearance there is actually a cultural bridge that links these vessels to worlds and people who communicate with each other. This link sees in the proposed project its structure, a place where to allow the different components of the heritage to interact with each other temporarily in a large ark where the restoration activities and the other functions of this cultural laboratory flank and interweave with a modality new fruition dedicated to citizens and tourism.

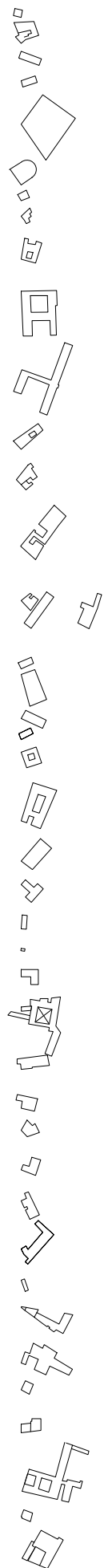
The city is a small hive made of complex joints, dense ligaments and endless possible paths to discover: the internationality cannot not be one of the delicate lenses for the discovery of an extremely important heritage, set in equally precious stones belonging to an open laboratory of knowledge: Venice, a library for the world.

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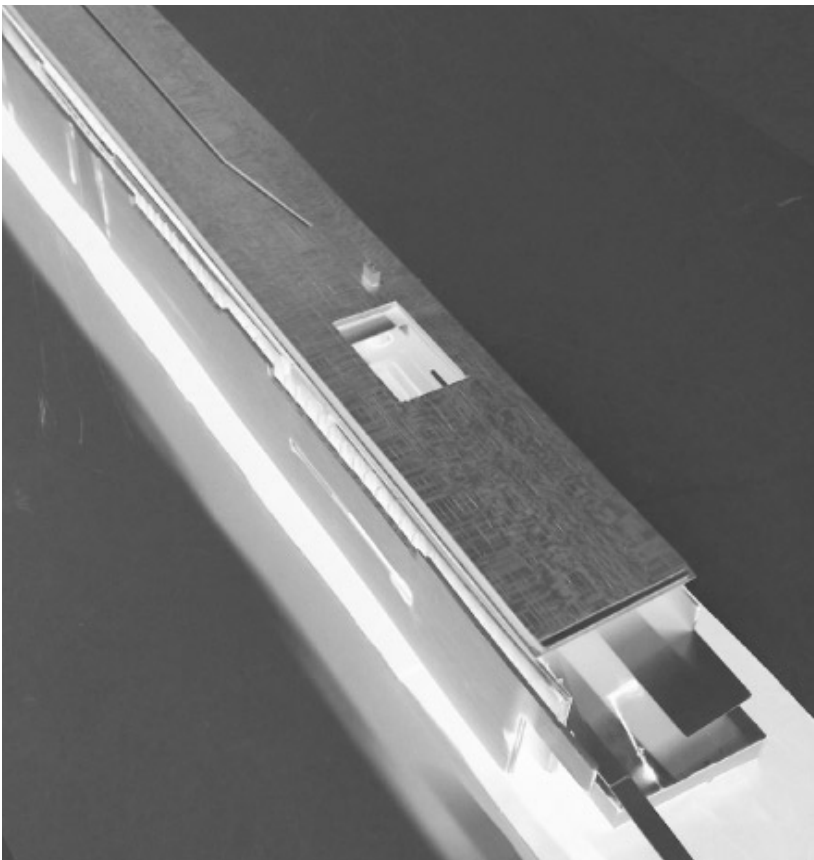
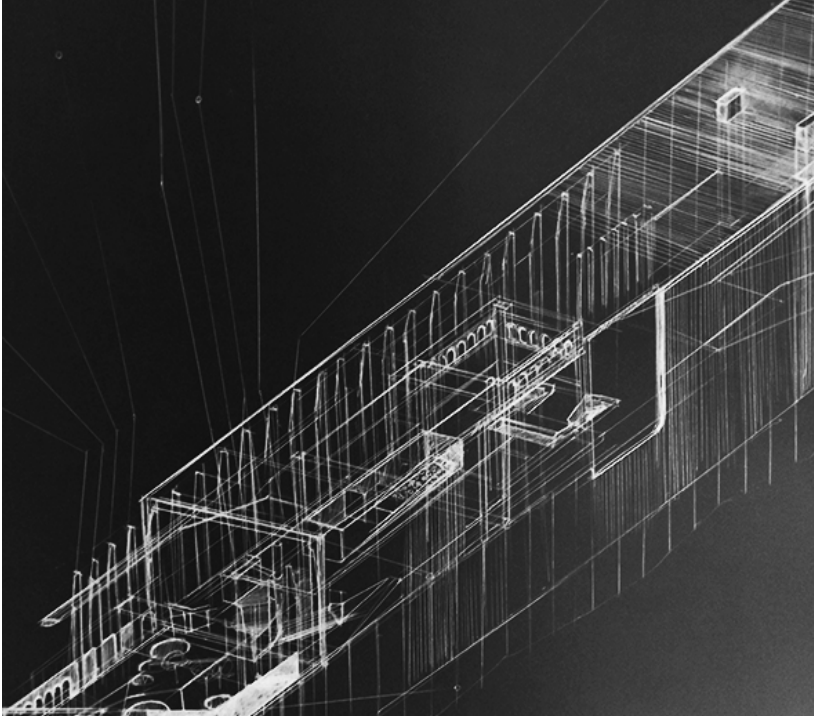


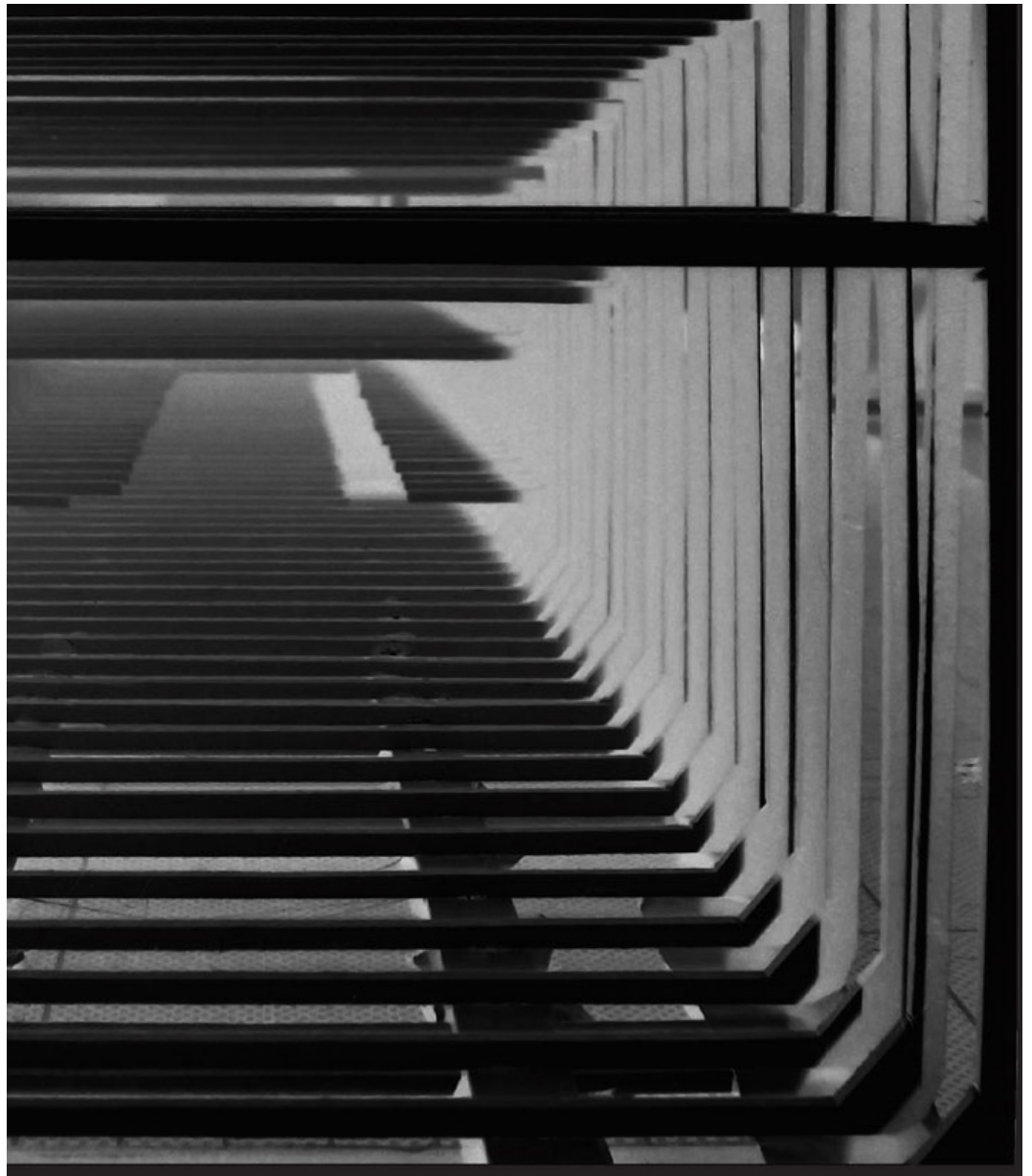


- 0. biblioteca dell'Accademia di belle Arti
- 1. Archivio di stato, Venezia
- 2. biblioteca archivio Luigi Nono
- 3. biblioteca dell'archivio storico del Patriarcato di Venezia
- 4. biblioteca dell'Asac / 4b. biblioteca della Biennale
- 5. biblioteca dell'Ateneo Veneto
- 6. biblioteca Carlo Goldoni
- 7. biblioteca del Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello
- 8. biblioteca EIUC; European inter-university Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation
- 9. biblioteca della fondazione Giorgio Cini
- 10. Fondazione Levi, biblioteca
- 11. biblioteca della fondazione Querini Stampalia Onlus
- 12. biblioteca di Ca' Pesaro
- Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti
 - 13.1 Palazzo Loredan
 - 13.2 Palazzo Franchetti
 - 13.3 Palazzo Minich
- 14. Istituto veneziano per la storia della Resistenza e della società contemporanea
- 15. biblioteca Nazionale Marciana
- 16. biblioteca del Liceo Ginnasio Marco Foscarini
- 17. biblioteca del Polo Museale Veneziano
- 18. biblioteca del Museo Correr
- 19. biblioteca del Museo di Storia Naturale
- 20. palazzo Mocenigo
- 21. biblioteca Museo del Vetro di Murano
- 22. biblioteca del porto di Venezia
- 23. biblioteca della collezione Peggy Guggenheim
- 24. archivio progetti Iuav
- 25. Università Iuav, Biblioteca Iuav
- 26. biblioteca di Americanistica, Iberistica e Slavistica, Ca' Bernardo (Università Ca' Foscari)
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- 27. biblioteca di Area Economica (BEC, Università Ca' Foscari)
- 28. biblioteca di Area Scientifica, Bas (Università Ca' Foscari)
- 29. biblioteca di Area Umanistica (Baum) (Università Ca' Foscari)
- 30. Ca' Foscari Zattere, Cultural Flow Zone
- 31. centro di documentazione europea, CDE (Università Ca' Foscari)
- 32. Fondo Storico di Ateneo, biblioteca e archivio
- 33. biblioteca di San Francesco della Vigna
- 34. biblioteca del Centro Studi Germano Pattaro
_Deposito presso la Celestia
- 35. Biblioteca Archivio Renato Maestro

P = inserimento del progetto

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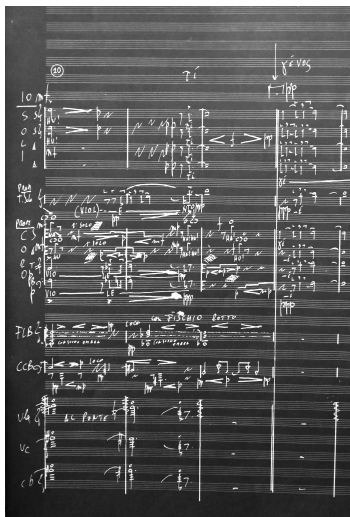


Sketch and study models of the project

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Biblioteca di San Francesco della Vigna - The Library of San Francesco della Vigna
- The library meeting room and the cloister of San Francesco della Vigna convent



Archivio Luigi Nono alla Giudecca -
Luigi Nono Archive at Giudecca

- photographs to the author's notes for the preparation of the compositions; a page of Prometheus
- view of the central span of the Archive towards the main entrance

© Eredi Luigi Nono



- model of Renzo Piano's setting up for the execution of Luigi Nono's Prometheus inside the church of San Lorenzo on September 25, 1984 -
- reproductions of sketches for 'Prometheus. Tragedy of listening'

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- The reading room of the "Benedict XVI" diocesan Library (in the same complex there are three different institutes located in SBN: the diocesan Library (in the PBE pole), the Historical Archives of the Patriarchate with its adjoining library and the ancient Library of the Seminary (both in the VEA pole).
- View of the Church of 'Santa Maria della Salute'

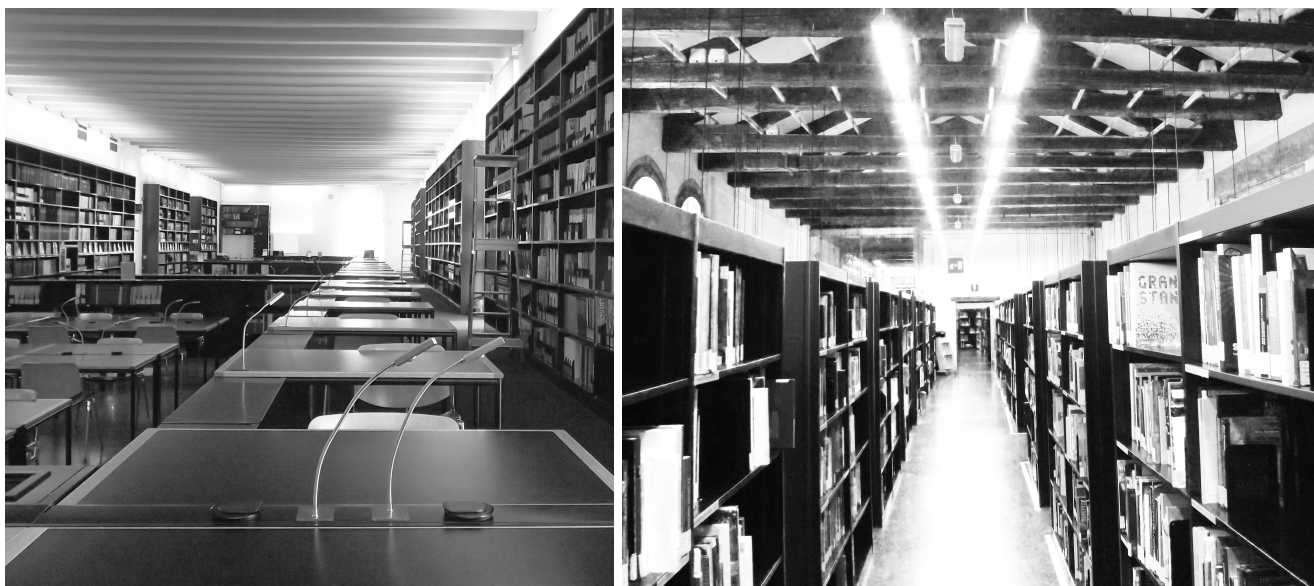


**La Biblioteca della Fondazione Giorgio Cini -
The Library of the Giorgio Cini Foundation**
- view of 'Nuova Manica Lunga'



La Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana - National Marciana Library
- view of the Reading Room

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The Library of the University Institute of Architecture (Iuav) at the Tolentini complex
- view of the first and second floor rooms



Biblioteca dell' Area Economica di Ca' Foscari a San Giobbe - The Library of Ca' Foscari Economic Area in San Giobbe
- view of the main entrance, of "Valeria Solesin" bridge that connects the library to the railway station and the interior



**The “Cultural Flow Zone” of Ca ‘Foscari
at Zattere**
- view of the reading room inside “tesa n.1” and of the
historical wooden beams that are integrated with the
modern steel structure of the mezzanine

