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Honors Thesis

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Abstract

Superimposition. The reconciliation between memory and removal on the island of San Nicola alle Tremiti

Tutor/Correlator

Prof. Francesco Novelli
Prof.ssa Valeria Minucciani

Candidate

Gabriella Dalla Serra

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This work aims to give visibility back to the forgotten memory of the island of San Nicola alle Tremiti and highlight the presence of a dissonant heritage, witness to the dramatic period in which it was used as a penal colony, hitherto ignored by touristic promotion and enhancement policies. San Nicola is an ideal laboratory for analysing the concepts of heritage, dissonance and cultural selection because, while the memory of its past as a place of spiritual retreat is immediately tangible in the architecture of the abbey, evidence of the internment experience can be found almost exclusively in an intangible heritage, consisting of documents and testimonies that have been silenced so far.

Can the dramatic or despicable connotation of an event be sufficient reason to exclude it from collective memory? The aim is to provide visitors with the tools to reinterpret history through an alternative lens, in order to reconcile the memory of the "positive" history with the removal of the marginalised one and to encourage the coexistence of two different, but equally legitimate, narratives of the same heritage.

Just as in photographic jargon, superimposition refers to the overlapping of two images to obtain a single version while leaving both still legible, in the same way, two visitor routes are outlined: San Nicola, a "positive" itinerary, focused on the established narrative as a fortified abbey; The Other San Nicola, a "negative" itinerary, which interprets the island from the perspective of confinement, using the testimonies of prisoners as the backbone of the narrative.

A coherent system of installations, called Key Points, will be placed at strategic points along the routes. These come in three main types: Frame, Eco and Info. The installations are made from a basic element, the metal rod, which is combined to form more complex structures that are always light and non-invasive in the landscape. These structures incorporate informative panels and QR codes which, through two different colours, make the itinerary to which they belong immediately recognisable, with black lettering on a white background for San Nicola and white lettering on a black background for The Other San Nicola.

The project does not seek to impose the confinement perspective to interpret the island's heritage and therefore develops the parallel route The Other San Nicola according to the logic of minimal and widespread mark, avoiding any form of visual imposition. Visitors are guided by a discreet system of black tiles, integrated into the existing paving, which connect the main points of the visit.

The ideal point of reconciliation between the two itineraries is represented by the interpretation centre in the Torrione del Cavaliere di San Nicola, a space for critical reflection that encourages visitors to question the relationship between history, present and heritage.

The aim is to reconcile not only the dynamics of remembrance and oblivion that have affected the history of San Nicola, but also these same dynamics with visitors, in order to ponder how the past relates to, and sometimes interferes with, the present.
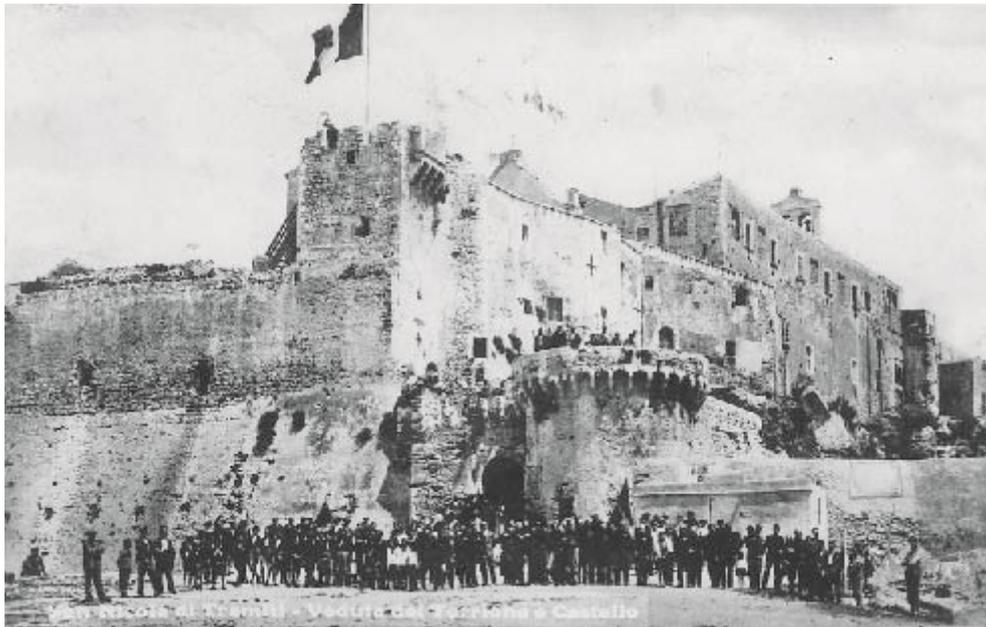
It is left to individuals to answer the final question: "What do you choose to remember?".

Photographic superimposition of Torrione di San Nicola

Aerial view of the island of San Nicola

1930. Fascist gathering in front of the castle entrance gate. Prisoners watch the event from the Angevin tower, section D of the penitentiary.