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Abstract

**Villa Catena De Laurentiis in Poli.
Memories of a Villa in the Agro Romano,
cinema, history and landscape**

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Villa Catena in Poli, only few kilometres away from Rome, is a meeting point between the urban reality and the extraordinary historical-artistic itinerary that characterizes the Roman countryside, embellished by famous aristocratic residences. The Villa is surrounded by a park of about 80 hectares, whose edge stands on a natural rock foundation. The most important buildings of the complex are Villa Catena, or "Palazzina", which represents the characteristic element of the whole park; "Palazzo del Papa", also known as Casino Torlonia and Case Gemelle, designed as stables, hay-sheds, house for the granary guardians and built to introduce to the palace of the Pope. Also "Palazzo dei Cardinali" or "Casilina" belongs to this group of buildings, although detached from the axis that connects the other buildings and the never completed church of Santa Croce.

The complex of Villa Catena, which has come to us largely degraded by time and events, is one of the most significant historical compounds of the Roman countryside. It was built as extra-urban villa by Torquato Conti of the Farnese family in the late 1500s, as a custom of noble families of the time. Right after the death of the Counts family, the Villa was inherited by the Sforza Cesarini family. Afterwards, the entire property was sold to the Torlonia family and then, in 1945, to the film producer Dino De Laurentiis and his wife, the actress Silvana Mangano, who used it as home, movie set and cultural salon. Today the villa, in evident state of abandonment and degradation, is owned by the company Villa Catena S.r.l. which is not interested to the recovery and the exploitation of the property.

Our project consists of an overall organization of the park in the respect of what Villa Catena was and of the landscape constraints that the park imposes. Moreover, this work aims at the enhancement and redevelopment of the entire area as a point of connection between the green and the built environment. The redevelopment of the complex has been based on the subdivision into three macro-areas: tourist-receptive, agricultural-didactic and cinematographic. The general strategy was aimed at preserving the existing structures, in the attempt to combine the new design solutions with the old ones, without causing dissonance of form and matter, trying to restore and enhance the historical heritage. Specifically, we dealt with Villa Catena assigning it the main role of Villa Catena CineApartments, around which all the other activities of the park take place. The intent is to highlight an important period that characterized Villa Catena, that is the one under the ownership of Dino De Laurentiis and Silvana Mangano. For this reason, the interiors evoke those of a house, from the large living room on the ground floor to the suites that maintain the divisions of the two owners' original rooms.

The intervention was not only focused on the revaluation of the individual parts, but also on the enhancement and redevelopment of the entire area as a connecting point between the green and the built environment: the villa and the park are indissoluble elements, determining the whole. Our awareness is that a great potential is encompassed in the reinterpretation of those forgotten places, heart of a civilization that can still be lived. The objective is to start a "virtuous circle" able to enrich the offer of services and to promote the culture, so that anybody could enjoy the beauty of this corner of Lazio, setting the conditions to improve the availability of the site, giving a decisive contribution to the improvement of the environment and recovering the use of a historical and architectural patrimony that will be valorized also from the economical point of view. In practice, the villa and park recovery and revaluation, both of great historical and cultural value, have led to

the regaining of their nevralgic role in terms of social aggregation, cultural rebirth, economic and tourist development.



Pic. 1. West view of Villa Catena De Laurentiis and the fountain of the "Cinque Bocche".



Pic 2. Project.Render of the interior salon.



Pic 3. Project. Render of the Royal Suite. The Gallery.

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