

**Recovery and refunctionality of the ex Brick-Kiln in Villafranca d'Asti: an ecomuseum realisation**

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The subject of our final dissertation is the project of recovering and reusing of an old bricks kiln ( the Furnace) sets in Villafranca d'Asti, in Piemonte.

The factory complex, today completely dismissed, had many changes and important transformations during the passed years; nevertheless the buildings, about 140 years old, still now keep the original appearance.

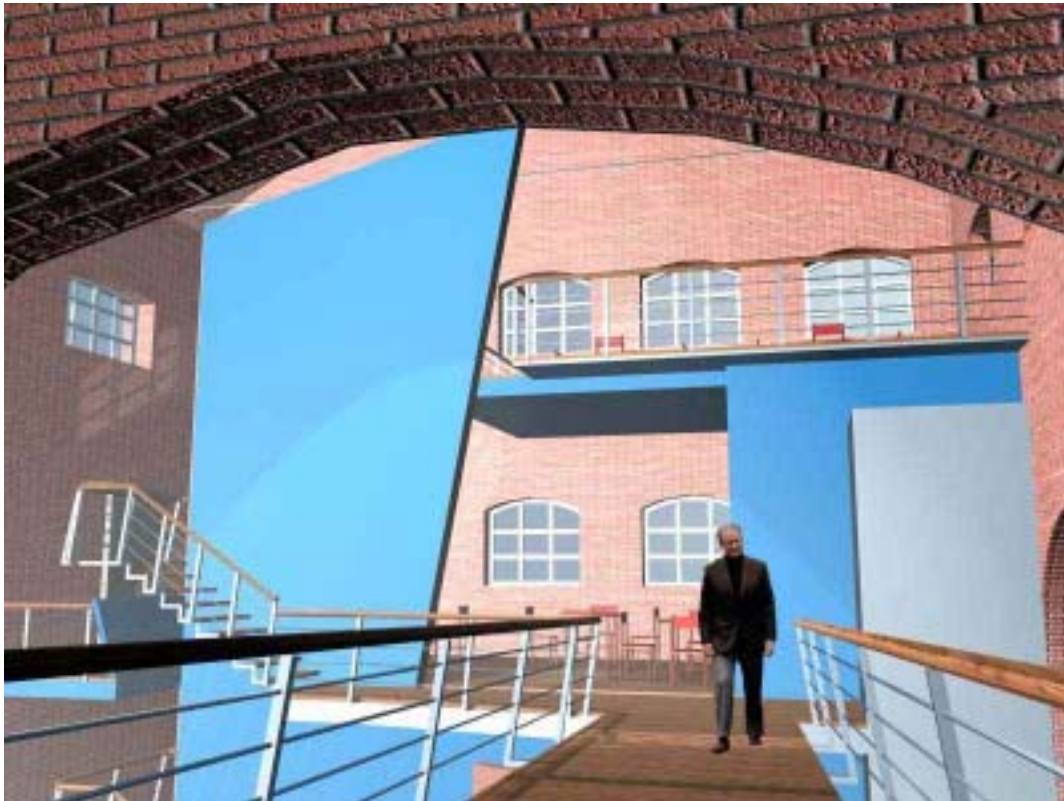


Since 1948, when the Furnace became part of the RDB group, the industrial production has increased constantly and the bricks factory has become a kind of symbol that more and more grows the link between the people living in Villafranca and the local environment.

Workers and employees of the Furnace feel themselves as a part of the factory, they are used in living with the bricks-kiln, because it doesn't produce any pollution but good opportunities of work, richness and much of bricks.

The factory ended the production of bricks in 1994 and today it is used as a huge storage of products and selling point for the RDB company.

The importance in the past of this factory-site was the guide line of our project aimed to the re-qualification of the area and the reuse of the buildings, following the indications and the lines of the Regional Law about the creations and development of Ecomuseums dating 1995.



The word "ecomuseum" , fist appeared in France in 1971, refers to a new kind of museum entirely dedicated to the environment. That museum will became a very important means to better understand and preserve the environment itself.

Among so many definitions of this word the one that conceives " the ecomuseum as a mirror where people can watch and better recognise themselves and where is able to look for important values in which they are settled" is fully explanatory.

The experience of eco-museums in Italy is quite recent; for that reason the regione piemonte encourages and promote the formation of new eco-museums able to give more and more value to each different subject of the environment and to integrate one another.

A very important realisation is the Ecomuseo Basso Monferrato Astigiano that involves 72 villages settled on the northern part of the Asti district, including Villafranca d'Asti itself.

Our project of Ecomuseum starts from this important statement: we don't want to create a traditional museum, thought as a place where collecting local works of art, traditional or industrial objects and so on; but a structure or system of organised activities able to continuously develop. The main objectives of the project are:

- knowledge
- interpretation
- communication

the Villafranca Furnace has, in our opinion, all those possibilities; because with its huge mass it is like a "cathedral in a desert"; a survived symbol of the factory work, now suffering a great crisis all over the world.

The project aimed to re-using the buildings of the factory, for its characteristics and dimensions is likely to become the ideal headquarter to host the Ecomuseo BMA. The building complex develops on 4 different levels for a total surface of 6600 sm. (not computing the more recent buildings).

The entrance hall leading to the reception services, where all the activities will be organised are set, in the general project on the ground floor. There will be also a large area for temporary exhibitions, a conference room with about 200 seats and an area for the permanent exhibitions on the production of bricks.

A second area hosting a permanent exhibition about the 44 villages named Villafranca around Europe is set on the first floor linked to the first one by an aerial footway.



On the second floor there will be a library, a carto-fonothec and different laboratories with class-rooms served by a new designed staircase.

On the third floor there will be the main offices of the three companies that will have to organise and manage all the cultural and economic activities of the museum: the Management Company, the Scientific Committee and the Association of the Ecomuseo.

The most important activity of the Ecomuseo will be the opportunity to show to anybody interested the studies about the local environment.

The building will have a new value ; no more a factory but a symbol of a refund value of our own memory, with the complexity that memories always have.

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