

ARTESPRESSIONE

ARTIST INSIGHT



FEBRUARY 2021

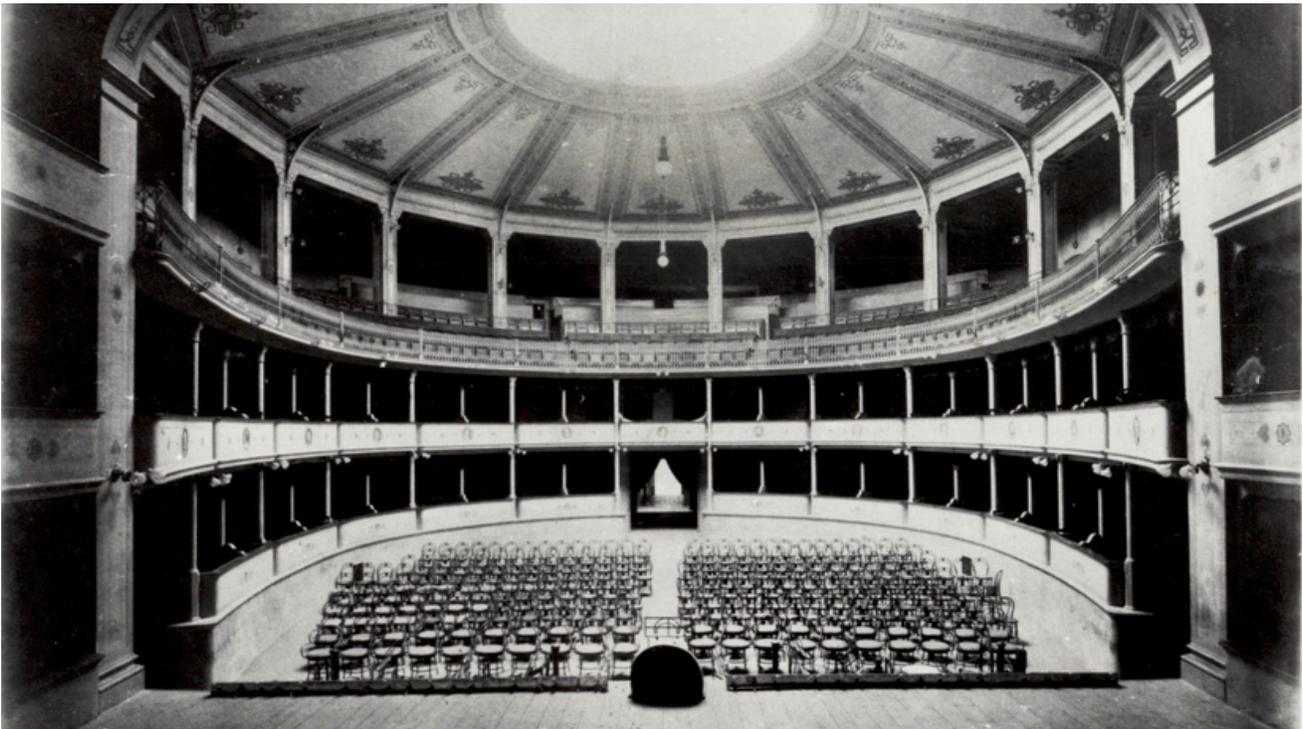
BUIO IN SALA

Matteo Pacini's latest book spotlighting abandoned cinemas in Perugia.

"BUIO IN SALA, rilevazione dei cineteatri storici Lilli e Turreno di Perugia in attesa di futuro" (Il Formichiere, 2021), with the introduction of Paolo Belardi and preface by Renato Covino, is an analysis of two historic cine-theatres in a state of abandonment in the historic center of Perugia.

In his book, Matteo Pacini gives importance and relevance to the cataloging and filing of architectural heritage - mainly industrial - as an indispensable tool for conserving and safeguarding the city and territory's identity. The ceasing of some historical activities is too often accompanied by the disrepair and deterioration of entire areas, which abandon their role of "workplaces" (e.g., old factories) or social aggregator (e.g., cinemas). Consequently, these areas experience long periods of neglect, leading to their transformation from an economic engine into a social problem. Yet, according to the author, these places can re-constitute an opportunity and provide resources for the whole community via their reprojection and requalification while preserving their characteristics and originality of historical interest.

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Guido Lemmi Archive, The ancient Turreno Theater of Perugia in a photo of the late Nineteenth century.



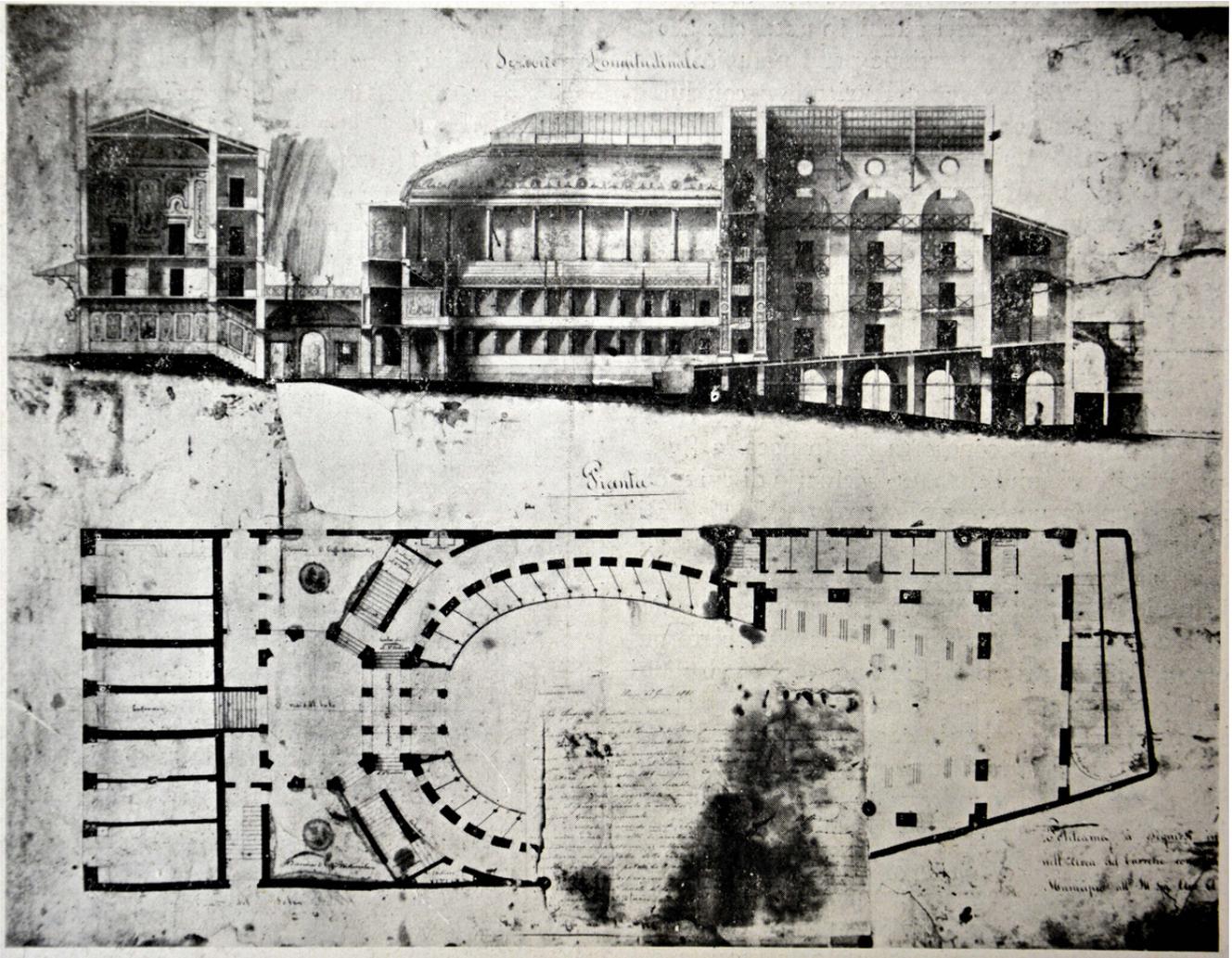
The entrance of the "Cinema-Teatro Turreno" of Perugia, 2018.

THE INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

The *industrial archeology* addresses this problem and is applied by Pacini to the film industry's terminal link: one of "product consumption", that takes place through the diffusion in the cinemas located in the territory. Since the 1990s, the historic city cine-theatres have suffered a profound crisis caused by the introduction of more comfortable and functional multiplex cinemas in peripheral shopping centers, which compelled them to close their doors. Furthermore, the damage caused by the unprecedented period of the Covid-19 pandemic has proven to be unbearable and risks filling our cities with voids.



"Cinema-Teatro Turreno", projection booth, 2018.



Section and plan of the ancient Turreno Theater of Perugia in a late Nineteenth century project

CINEMA AND ARCHITECTURE

Given the common foundation of "space arts," cinema has always sought and established a privileged relationship with architecture. The title *"Buio in sala"* refers to the famous short film by Dino Risi (1948), which reveals to be a tribute to the liberating rite of cinema's fruition. Leaving room for imagination and dreams, cinema represented the only way out from a complex and uncomfortable context such as the one of the post-war Milan. In that context, the choice of setting the cinematic location in Milan was determined by the fact that once entering a cinema, everything became possible, at least for a couple of hours. Simultaneously, the title's choice, besides the reference to this milestone of cinema history provides a fitting allusion to the darkness reigning once the cinema doors and activities are shut down, as in the case of the two cine-theatres in question.



"Cinema-Teatro Turreno" of Perugia, parterre and gallery, 2018.



"Cinema-Teatro Lilli" of Perugia, parterre and gallery, 2018.

CATALOGATION AND PHOTOGRAPHIC CAMPAIGNS

The instrument used for the cataloging is borrowed from the **Cartographic Model for Industrial Archaeology of the Umbria Region**. It represents a scientific file easily applicable on a national scale to attest the sites' historical relevance via the collection of bibliographic, iconographic, and archive sources. Furthermore, the model is complemented by a detailed photographic campaign of a site's current conservation state. The historical reconstruction avails itself of data and oral testimonies of those who personally and actively experienced the examined reality. All the information is reported in analytical frameworks whose employment conditions are defined based on appropriate compilation rules.

The characteristic stratigraphic analysis of the **Industrial Remains' Survey Form** allows for in-depth knowledge of a site due to a non-invasive criterion typical of the archeological methodology, finalized to collect all the available sources related to the object under scrutiny. The ultimate goal is to convey all the information into a unitarian instrument for the safeguard of the site's peculiarities, which can, in turn, be handed down to the future generations dealing with its requalification. In this regard, a crucial role is played by the **photographic documentation** of the sites, performed by the author prior to their renovation and reconstruction. In this sense, the documentation represents a precious photographic archive, central for documenting the features of interests in their entirety and originality.



"Cinema-Teatro Turreno", the stage, 2018



Guido Lemmi Archive, the "Cinema-Teatro Lilli" in Perugia in a photo from the 1960s



"Cinema-Teatro Lilli" of Perugia, 2018.



"Cinema-Teatro Turreno" of Perugia, parterre and stage, 2018.



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Matteo Pacini (1980, Foligno) divides his professional life between contemporary art curator activity and studying territory through the photographic documentation and cataloging of the abandoned industrial archeological heritage. He aims to preserve the memory of areas of historical, artistic, and social interest. Both the cataloging and the historical research are complemented by detailed photographic campaigns, carried out before recovery works could irreparably compromise the originality of the sites. In doing so, Pacini forges, year after year, an invaluable image archive of places describing our cities and landscapes, which also represents an important heritage for future generations. Apart from the curation of industrial territory exhibitions (*"I paesaggi dell'Industria,"* Milano Photofestival 2012, Galleria Artespressione; *"Appunti post apocalittici"* by Luca Centola, *Carona Immagina* 2017, Switzerland), Pacini dealt with the cataloging of Umbrian industrial mills and pasta factories (a study published in the series of the Regional Catalogue of Cultural Heritage of Umbria, 2011) and of the Tobacco Agency of Perugia, a structure that no longer exists attributed to Pier Luigi Nervi. In Milan, where he has been living and working for years, he has reviewed numerous "waiting for the future" sites, and has been published in magazines and blogs of urban planning and architecture.

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