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## **HISTORICAL, INDUSTRIAL, TOURISTIC TURIN THE MANY SEASONS OF A CITY**

### **1. Birth of the symbol of a city: the Mole Antonelliana**

On March 17th, 1861 in Turin, at the seat of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Sardinia, King Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoy assumed the title of King of Italy and the Parliament solemnly proclaimed the birth of the Kingdom of Italy. Turin was the capital of a Kingdom, which contained the entire Italian peninsula, with the exceptions of the Veneto, that was annexed in 1866, at the end of the Third Italian War of Independence, fought against the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the Papal States and Rome, conquered by the royal army in 1870; Trentino and Trieste, acquired at the conclusion of World War I, together with Alto Adige, a German-speaking region of Austrian tradition.

In 1861 Turin was a city of 173,000 inhabitants, with an elegant historical centre in and around Piazza Castello, which was the nucleus of the Roman camp that developed into a town called Augusta Taurinorum.

The proclamation of Turin as the capital of the Kingdom of Italy was enthusiastically received, resulting in numerous changes to the city, including its architecture. Yet the most visible transformation took a very long time to accomplish and had the Jewish community of the city as its

main protagonist. The Statute of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy in 1848, granted equal rights as ordinary subjects of the kingdom to Jews and Waldenses, the latter being members of a protestant movement originating in the Piedmont valleys on the French border. This granting of political and civil rights came as a result of the new European climate of openness and tolerance towards religious and cultural minorities and also allowed Jews and Waldenses to publicly practice their religion, to exercise any profession, and enabled men to join the army and, whatever the census requirements, to actively and passively participate in elections.

These new liberties, that were conceded after centuries of repression and discrimination, were also reflected in the construction of religious buildings in the heart of the city, thus finally placing them as of right in the local cultural panorama. The Waldenses, who in the past were prohibited from residing in big cities, commissioned the construction of their temple on the tree-lined boulevard nowadays called corso Vittorio Emanuele II, that leads from Porta Nuova railway station to the Parco del Valentino (Valentine Park) on the left bank of the Po river. This temple, built in the Gothic Revival style typical of English protestant churches, was completed in 1853, eight years before the unification of Italy, and the same year was open to the faithful for religious celebrations.

The Jewish community had more ambitious plans, seeking to build a synagogue in the heart of the old city that would become part of the urban structure of Turin, albeit with some elements of originality. When Turin assumed the title of capital of the Kingdom of Italy, the time seemed to be ripe, and the city was filled with an air of enthusiasm and transformation. Realization of the synagogue project was assigned to the famous architect Alessandro Antonelli, the author of the Basilica of San Gaudenzio. The construction work began in 1863, in the Vanchiglia area, on a plot of land near via Po, that was purchased by the Jewish community immediately after the civil rights Statute of Carlo Alberto. The initial plan envisioned an edifice measuring 47 meters in height with a square base, an impressive central hall, and a pronaos with its neoclassical colonnade.

The following year, in 1864, the city of Turin took a battering. It was decided to move the capital to Florence, in order to be closer to Rome, which was still part of the Papal States, but was already destined to become the definitive capital of Italy.

Many citizens of Turin gathered in a central square to protest, and violent riots broke out against the decision to transfer the capital. The prime minister Marco Minghetti resigned following the riots, that caused 50 deaths, and was replaced by Alfonso La Marmora.

Construction work on the synagogue proceeded with less enthusiasm, and the first structural difficulties started to appear. Antonelli modified the original plan, deciding to endow the building with an enormous dome, that brought the total height to 113 meters. In addition to the changes made, the particular design, “the structural mesh on an orthogonal grid with a honeycomb structure – the Antonellian system of isolated fulcrums – extending from the base of building, over the perimeter of the main hall and interconnected to the pavilion vault above” ([www.museotorino.it](http://www.museotorino.it)), and the increasing costs greatly upset the Jewish community, who in 1869 suspended the building work. In 1873 the municipality of Turin took over both the land and the building. In exchange the Jewish community received a piece of land in San Salvario area, close to the location of the Waldenses’ temple being constructed. The community successfully commissioned the construction of another synagogue, completed in 1884 in suggestive Moorish style.

The synagogue of Turin, located in Piazzetta Primo Levi, formerly via San Pio V, was heavily bombed during World War II and was rebuilt according to the original design. The postwar period saw several additions to the main building: the offices of the community, the Jewish community center, library, nursery, primary and secondary schools. There was a smaller synagogue constructed in the basement, dedicated to weekly services, and another, even smaller, for gatherings and prayer. The main synagogue opens for the principal Jewish holidays that are attended by a substantial part of the community.

Construction work on the building, that was intended to be the synagogue, was resumed in 1873 and financed by the municipality of Turin. It continued until one year after the death of Antonelli in 1888. During this time the project underwent additional significant transformations, and the final building then stood at a height of 163.5 meters. However, on April 10, on the occasion of the official inauguration, the statue of a winged genius was placed on the pinnacle, which brought the total height to 167.5 meters, making it the tallest masonry building in the world at the time. This grand edifice, which since then has been called the Mole Antonelliana (the word “mole” means huge mass), looks like a gigantic pagoda, soaring over the roofs and visible from various vantage points on the hills overlooking Turin. It soon became the symbol of the city.

Although, as we have seen, the construction was completed in 1889 by Costanzo, the son of Alessandro Antonelli, the interior areas of the Mole were already in use as early as 1878. That year an exhibition was organized inside, with the commemorative title “National Memorial for Vittorio

Emanuele II". This was the first seed of the future National Museum of the Italian Risorgimento. In 1884, on the occasion of the national exposition in Valentino Park, the exhibition was moved to a temporary pavilion. In 1899 it was moved again, to the Modern Art section of the Civic Museum of the city.

Finally, in 1908 the exhibition moved back to the Mole Antonelliana and the first Museum of the Risorgimento was inaugurated. The Museum remained in place for good 30 years. In August 1904 a violent cloudburst detached the winged genius from the pinnacle and threw it, undamaged, onto the balcony of the lantern below that connects the dome to the pinnacle. The following year the statue of the genius was replaced by a golden five-pointed star. Today the statue is in the atrium of the Mole, and the star is still in its place, despite another cloudburst. From 1928 until 1960, the Mole was reinforced occasionally, both for structural reasons and seismic activity. This has somewhat altered the perception of the original interior.

In 1938 the Museum of the Risorgimento was transferred for the last time to Palazzo Carignano, a baroque building that was the residence of the House of Savoy, and the seat of the first Italian Parliament, where the Kingdom was proclaimed on March 17, 1861. After thorough restoration in 2011, on the occasion of 150th anniversary of Italian unification, the Museum of the Risorgimento is nowadays the most visited destination for tourists, citizens and schoolchildren from Turin and beyond.

After removal of the museum, the Mole Antonelliana became an empty space, poorly illuminated at night, and used only occasionally for short exhibitions. Despite this obvious abandonment, the people of Turin continued to view the Mole as the symbol of their city.

In 1953 another serious downpour destroyed 47 meters of the Mole's pinnacle washing the debris down into the garden of the Italian Television station, situated right in front of it. There were 5 deaths and several injuries in the city, but the collapse of the Mole Antonelliana miraculously claimed no victims. Citizens were struck by the symbolism of the event. In the following years intense reconstruction work was carried out in addition to renovation.

In 1964 a panoramic elevator was presented to the public. It brings visitors up to the first colonnade, providing them with a 360° panoramic view of the city, the hills beyond the Po, and the imposing massif of the Alps.

At the beginning of the 20th century, despite losing the title of capital of the Kingdom, Turin became a national hub in various areas, primarily the engineering sector, the automotive industry, and the cinema.

Several of the masterpieces of Italian silent movies were shot in Turin. One of them is *Cabiria*, which was produced in 1914 in the film studio on the river Dora Riparia, and in the hills around Turin. The director was Giovanni Pastrone, and the script and subtitles are by the famous poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. The sets are majestic, and the movie proved to be an unexpected success both nationally and abroad.

In the following decades, the collector Anna Maria Prolo, aware of the artistic and documentary value of objects, posters, films, and sets related to the film industry in Turin, assembled and preserved in optimal condition the founding core of the future Museum of Cinema. The collection was taken over by the city of Turin, and in 1958 was housed in the historical Palazzo Chiabrese, near Piazza Castello. However, the Museum was closed down in 1985, and in the early 1990s there were lively discussions in the City Council, concerning the new home for the collection and the future National Museum of Cinema.

After lengthy debates about potential candidates and related costs, the Mole Antonelliana was chosen as the new location. Extensive reconstruction work was done. The structural building rehabilitation and façade reconstruction were carried out by the architects Paolo Napoli and Vittorio Nascé. Restoration was done by Gianfranco Gritella, and the exhibition set was the work of the Franco-Swiss scenographer François Confino. The National Museum of Cinema was officially inaugurated in 2000. The interior of the Mole Antonelliana is partially hidden by the exhibition, but the main hall can be appreciated in all its imposing magnificence. In the centre there is an elevator, that ascends apparently without support. In addition, there is a spiral staircase, suspended with the help of a ramp system, that provides a detailed and fascinating tour through the history of cinema. A gigantic statue of Moloch stands in the centre of the hall, as it appeared in the movie *Cabiria*.

These hefty investments soon paid off. As early as the first months after opening there were numerous visitors, and the numbers increased dramatically starting from 2006, when Turin and the Alpine valleys hosted the Winter Olympic Games. There were 532,196 visitors in 2008. During holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, there are long queues from via Montebello to the entrance to the museum.

## 2. Turin's industrial vocation

In the last years of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century Turin became heavily industrialized. Fiat was founded in 1899, a car manufacturing company that was to become famous all over the world. In the same period numerous other, smaller factories were built in the automobile manufacturing, spare parts and precision instrument sectors. Food production and paper manufacturing were developed. Many of these plants were situated in the outskirts of the city, alongside the rivers, because electricity was not yet widely available, and had to be generated on site.

In 1915-1916 Fiat, which was already a medium-sized company, acquired a 380,000 sq.m. lot in the Lingotto, an area in the southern suburbs of the city. The old workshops on corso Dante were no longer sufficient to cope with the increasing production demands. The engineer Giacomo Matté-Trucco was commissioned to construct a new building, which, according to the American model, combined administrative offices as well as all the stages of industrial production in a single structure. With a surface area of 150,000 sq.m., the new multifunctional plant was inaugurated in 1923, in the presence of King Vittorio Emanuele III.

However, even as early as 1921 foundries, forges, automatic ovens, and areas for car chassis production were fully operational, and in 1922 body-work and final assembly plant were added, as well as engineering workshops. The offices were completed only in 1926.

The final result was an impressive yet linearly simple building, built in reinforced concrete. It runs along what are called "Le Officine Nuove" (The New Workshops). The bulk of the building consists of five floors with a double-skin façade. At the ends of the building there are two strikingly impressive spiral ramps, which lead the completed automobiles to the rooftop test track, that is about 1.5 km long, big enough for the simultaneous testing of 50 cars. A very modern building called the Lingotto, according to the name of the area, was very positively received both by experts and the public. The world-famous architect LE CORBUSIER (1924) defined it as "one of the most impressive sights in industry".

In 1936 there were 16,800 production and office employees working in the Lingotto. The following year production of the famous car models Topolino, Torpedo and Balilla reached 54,931 units.

During World War II production did not stop, though it was mostly converted to production for military purposes. Having become a military

target, the Lingotto suffered heavy bomb damage in 1942. Nevertheless, it was also a meeting and organization location for the Resistance, and a place for protests against the war and the Nazi occupation. The workers came out on strike on various occasions in 1943, on March 1st 1944, and on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1945, several days before the liberation on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Immediately after the war the busiest production lines were moved to a more modern factory in Mirafiori, another southern suburb of Turin. It is still operative. Until the mid 1950s the Lingotto building was used for production of household electrical appliances. Later it was used as a subsidiary automotive workshop until 1982, when it was finally closed down.

The next year, the famous architect Renzo Piano was appointed to design the redevelopment of the Lingotto as a multifunctional centre over an area of 246,000 sq.m. The building underwent a great deal of restructuring, the interior being radically modified, and the exterior remaining intact. The main building, consisting of five floors with the internal courts and the two spiral ramps at the ends, was rebuilt to house a modern auditorium with a capacity for 1,900 spectators, a convention centre, built in 1993-1994, the "Le Meridien" Hotel, a garden, called "The Garden of Wonders", with exotic plants in the inner courts (1993-1995), and a multiplex cinema (1999-2002). The long corridors and connection areas were turned into a commercial centre, with shops, restaurants, coffee houses, banks and offices. The space immediately to the south was used to create a playground for children, modeled on public parks in urban squares. At the opposite end, the spiral ramp, reconstructed in 2002, functions as a pedestrian walkway, leading to the shopping mall, which is accessible also via numerous entrance at points along the length of the building. A part of the central structure of the Lingotto now houses the Turin University Oral Surgery Clinic (1999-2002) as well as the Centre for Automotive Engineering Education and Research of the Polytechnic University of Turin (1999-2003). The former shunting workshop, located in the southern part of the main building, has been transformed into an enormous expo center, hosting every year the famous Turin International Book Fair and the "Salone del Gusto" (Food Fair), the latter being dedicated to Italian and foreign food products, with recognized quality certifications.

The test track remains intact, and can be crossed on foot by visitors to the so-called "Scrigno" (jewel box), completed in 2002. It is a glass and metal box, placed on the roof of the building, and intended to contain the art works of the "Giovanni e Marella Agnelli" Pinacoteca (art gallery) which also offers the public temporary exhibitions. The entrance to the Pinacoteca is located in the commercial centre. In 1994, a spectacular

conference room, again designed by Renzo Piano, was constructed, called the "Bolla" (bubble), also located on the roof, suspended at a height of some 40 meters and not open to the public. In the same year a heliport was completed, directly linked to the conference room. In 1998, thanks to the restructuring work of architects Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, the part of the building intended to contain offices, reverted once again to acting as the operational and administrative center of Fiat.

As a place designed for meetings, entertainment, and cultural interests, the Lingotto is, nowadays, a reference point for the residents of Turin, for young people, families with children, and the elderly. In 2006, on the occasion of the Winter Olympic Games, the olympic village was constructed on the former market area, facing the Lingotto, beyond the railway. A spectacular pedestrian bridge was also constructed, connecting the Lingotto to the village. Again on the occasion of the Olympics, in 2006, the first stretch of the only line of Turin's subway was inaugurated. This line was extended in 2011 as far as the Lingotto station, which is now even better linked to the city center, and hence is frequented by ever increasing numbers of people.

### **3. The season of major restructuring**

Turin's reputation as an industrial city came about above all in the 1900's and reached its peak in the 1960's, when Fiat employed about 50,000 workers, who mostly came from southern Italy.

Actually, even in the preceding century Turin could boast a number of achievements in terms of industrialization. In fact, it was here that the first Italian railway workshops were built at the end of 19th century, when the line connecting Genoa and Novara was completed. Previously there had already been construction and repair plants in the vicinity of the Porta Nuova and Porta Susa railway stations, which became insufficient, because of the growing residential buildings in the area and the development of the railway network. The Board of Directors of Ferrovie Alta Italia decided to construct a more efficient and spacious plant to be situated alongside the railroad in an area that is still sparsely populated. The chosen area was close to the Carceri Nuove (new prison), the city slaughterhouse and the cattle market. The plant, that was to be called the Officine Grandi Riparazioni (Major Repair Shops), was constructed between 1885 and 1895. The resulting construction was characterized by simple architecture



covering an area of 190,000 square meters, with linear brick decorations. The main building was massive, designed for assembling the very largest vehicles.

This plant continued to operate for over a century and was finally closed down in the 1980's. At the time of the decline of heavy industry, the Lingotto went out of production, and this meant a period of degradation and abandonment for the Officine Grandi Riparazioni. Projects and financing for the rebuilding and transformation of the area and the buildings arrived only in 2000. It was planned to use the ample space of the main structures of the plant for temporary exhibitions. Another part of the area was designated as an extension to the Polytechnic University of Turin.

In 2008, in the Officine Grandi Riparazioni, still only partially reconstructed, an exhibition was held, entitled "Turin 011. Biography of a City". This exhibition was dedicated to the transformations of the city that had taken place in the previous twenty years, and was among the events scheduled in conjunction with the XXIII World Congress of Architecture. The exhibition traced the changes taking place in four very important areas: the Lingotto, Mirafiori, where the Fiat plant still operates, the historical city centre, and the so-called four "Spines", referring to four urban areas around the Central Spine. The latter is an ambitious project, already partly realized by the architect Vittorio Gregotti. The intention is to unify the city by means of a long boulevard linking north and south.

Meanwhile, the preparation work on the project continued, and in 2011, on the occasion of the widespread popular participation in the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Italian unification, all the Officine Grandi Riparazioni (OGRs, as they are commonly called), were commandeered to stage a massive multimedia exhibition, entitled "Making the Italians, 150 Years of National History". This title comes from a famous phrase by a Savoy politician Massimo D'Azeglio, who in the immediate wake of national unification, realizing the difficulties, that such a culturally and historically heterogeneous kingdom would face, said: "We have made Italy. Now we have to make the Italians".

The exhibition traces the history of Italy from the times preceding unification to the present day. It illustrates both the moments of unity and those of conflict, the periods of war and the times of peace. This majestic chronicle of events is presented by the historians Walter Barberis and Giovanni De Luna by means of images projected on the old workshop walls, interactive videos, texts, photographs, talking busts, objects, military equipment, and industrial machinery. The exhibition takes us through 13 thematic islands, mirroring the course of history and leading visitors

through the crucial stages and salient aspects of Italian history: the rural world, Italy of the cities, education, the Church, migration and emigration, the Great War and World War II, political movements, the Mafia, factories, consumption, transportation, communications. The exhibition was an enormous success, and hence, despite being planned only for 2011, was reopened in 2012, with a new section, called "The Strength of Unity", which shows the transformations of a country capable of overcoming moments of decline and great difficulty on the road to cultural and economical growth.

The OGR complex was destined to host other temporary exhibitions alongside those held in the larger halls. In a few years the old abandoned workshops became a landmark for the city. Situated a few hundred meters from a subway stop, and easily accessible by other means of public transport, the OGRs are today an integral part of the city's network of cultural and touristic attractions. All this has turned Turin into a city of national and European importance, able to compete on a par with other major Italian tourist cities, such as Rome, Florence, Venice and Naples.

#### **4. A renewed vocation for tourism**

Today, Turin is capable of coping with the structural crisis of industry, which for more than a century has characterized the economy, social relations, and city planning. The city is capable of reinventing itself as a capital of culture, research, and tourism.

Almost all the historical museums of the city have recently been restored, or are in the process of being renovated. The most famous museum, the Egyptian Museum, has the richest and most complete collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts in Europe. It was the result of numerous archeological expeditions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite undergoing extension work due to be completed in 2015, it is open to the public. The collection, located in the Palace of the Academy of Sciences, built in the 17th century by the architect Guarino Guarini, consists of 6,500 exhibits on show, as well as an additional 26,000 in storage.

On December 23, 2005, Palazzo Madama reopened to the public after a long period of meticulous restoration. This building is unique of its kind, with its foundations resting on the site of the ancient gates of the Roman city of Augusta Taurinorum, present-day Piazza Castello. On December 15, 2006 the City Museum of Ancient Art also opened its doors.

Palazzo Madama has undergone several minor transformations throughout the centuries. It started as a defensive system, and then, after being acquired by the Savoy-Acaja, a secondary branch of the House of Savoy, it became an increasingly luxurious residence. Its current appearance is due to the unfortunately incomplete attempt to transform it into a baroque palace by Filippo Juvarra in 1721. It was the seat of the Senate of the Kingdom of Sardinia from 1848, and that of the Kingdom of Italy from 1861 to 1864. The particular name Palazzo Madama comes from Cristina di Borbone, the wife of Vittorio Amedeo I of Savoy, also known as Madama Reale, who chose the palace as her residence in 1637.

As from 2005, another building in Turin, which is much more recent, and has a completely different history, underwent radical reconstruction. This is the National Automobile Museum, inaugurated in 1960 in a modern building on the left bank of the Po. The museum was created specifically to house the fine collection of vintage cars belonging to Carlo Biscaretti di Ruffia. The architect Cino Zucchi was entrusted with the task of renovating the museum, and the exhibition design is the responsibility of François Confino, formerly curator of the Cinema Museum, who has managed to establish illuminating links between the history of automobile production and the evolution of Turinese and Italian society.

In recent years the panorama of museums in Turin has witnessed minor, but quite interesting new developments. In 2003 the Ecomuseum of Resistance, Deportation, War, Human Rights and Freedom opened to the public. Using multimedia, it leads the visitors through the various stages that Turin experienced during World War II. On December 5, 2008, near the historical Palazzo Mazzonis, the Museum of Oriental Art was inaugurated; in 2009 the collections of the "Cesare Lombroso" Museum of Criminal Anthropology and the "Luigi Rolando" Museum of Human Anatomy were created, appropriately and suggestively located in the Turin University Anatomical Institutes, along with the Fruit Museum housing Francesco Garnier Valletti's collection of artificial plastic fruits. Small and medium-sized industrial buildings in disuse are being fundamentally restructured; some are being transformed into commercial centers, others into libraries, schools, and community or entertainment centers.

Turin is a city that has clearly regained its vitality and is still in a state of profound transformation. It is changing its face, and yet seeks not to lose either its own soul or its history. It combines conservation and innovation and to this end employs its very best resources.

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