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Sessions

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Venice - with Places & Stories' Workshop 9-13 September 2012 - aula 02





## Venice WWII ‘Places & Stories’

### Selected sites

**1. Marinaretti**  
**Ex Convento della Celestia, Scuola allievi meccanici delle Regia Marina**  
**2737/F Castello**  
**September 1943**

Since the annexation of Venice to the Kingdom of Italy, the former convent space adjacent to major shipyards of the Arsenale housed the school for non-commissioned mechanical officers, managed by officers and staff of the Navy. Many teenagers from all over Italy attended the school. The first German occupants in Venice, in the Autumn 1943, considered the ‘sailor’ students as soldiers because of their uniform, and decided to deport them as IMI (Italian Military Internees). But during the walk from the Arsenale to the station, many Venetians reacted, urging the boys to escape. Arrived at Holy Apostles Church, some indicated safty ‘Calli’ where to slip out of lane. At the Ponte delle Guglie, women in the market began to scream to escape, many children ran to the Ghetto or along the foundation of Cannaregio, taking off their uniform and throwing it into the canal. Eleven entered an open gate and were saved, hidden by the inhabitants of the house.

**2. Nazi calle arrow**  
**Platzkommandantur,**  
**Calle Renier (Dorsoduro 3656)**  
**September 1943**

Only one sign of Nazi orientation system still remains in Venice, in a narrow calle near one of the most popular place of the city: campo Santa Margherita. The arrow showed the way to the “Platzkommandantur”, that is the Nazi command located in Piazza San Marco, where a Nazi flag flew constantly. Many prisoners had to pass here to reach the Nazi main head quarter since the little calle is also on the way from railway station to the central square on Venice. Just a step from Campo Santa Margherita, now new yellow signes suggest other paths to reach the station or Piazza San Marco and the Nazi arrow remains, almost illegible, on the crumbled plaster of an old house, as a melting memory.

**3. Harry’s bar**  
**Calle Vallaresso 1323 (San Marco)**

Venice, a town filled with romance and mystic, a city with a dedicated and unique local “Kitchen” influent by century’s commercial trade with the East. This local kitchen is also unfolded at Harry’s Bar – a high class restaurant and at the same time a really spectacularly bar. Through history Harry’s Bar has been a meeting place for big personalities; artists, models, royalties and other celebres. This sounds as an adventure. But everything has not always gone smoothly. Around WWII where fascism was in power, fatal rumors were spread about Harry's and the owner Giuseppe Cipriani, i.e. that he was a guardian that shamelessly defied the Jewish segregation laws. When World War II broke out, Cipriani was obliged to put up a big sign that said: "Jews not wanted here". In October '43, the fascists installed a mess hall for their sailors at Harry’s Bar.

**4. Anti-raid shelter**  
**Campo Junghans (Giudecca 494)**  
**1940-1945**

Usually during the aerial bombings people protected themselves in underground shelters: this is impossible in Venice. So, the municipality started to construct air-raid shelters at the center of main “Campi”, or near factories, schools, hospitals. Often they were constructed in hurry and with very poor materials: the concrete was made by sand, little stones, pieces of wood and fragments of bricks. Actually Venice was never bombed, but the presence of these structures disseminated in the Venice Laguna still remind of the time people was rushing out from homes looking for safer places where to recover.

**5. Operation Bowler**  
**Santa Marta Harbour (Dorsoduro)**  
**21 March 1945**

After years of war, at the beginning of 1945 the road and rail network of North Italy was damaged and unusable. Consequently, the Germans used for their supplies the Port of Venice and the system of canals that branched off from here in the Po valley. The Allied command decided to bomb the port to stop the enemy activies, despite the risk for Venice and its immense

Cultural Heritage. Therefore, the operation was planned in detail to avoid any hitting to artistic and architectural heritage. Soldiers who should have made any kind of mistake, would be removed from service, returning to civilian clothes, hence the name "bowler" for the action. The dive bombing of RAF fighters was actually correct, just hitting stores and ships, while some residents climbed on rooftops to watch the attack. However, the shock-wave invested and distryed a house in Santa Marta, where 25 people died.

**6. Jewish deportation**  
**Civic Hispital, Campo SS. Giovanni e Paolo**  
**(Castello 6363)**  
**7 October 1944**

Between the end of 1943 and 1944 the Jews of Venice were deported to the camp Fossoli, to be then sent to Auschwitz. In the city, men, women and children were rounded up in prisons or in other areas, such as Foscarini School, as a plaque posted in 2000 rimindes. Especially dramatic was the summer of 1944, when the SS command (leaded by Franz Stangl) moved to Venice. The machinery of deportation did not stop even in front of elders and sick people. In August 1944, seventy people were deported from the Elderly Care House of Israelite along with the hospital's chief rabbi who had refused to leave. While in October, the patients at city hospitals (Santi Giovanni e Paolo, San Clemente and San Servolo) were to be locked up in the chamber-room of the Main City Hospital, waiting to be sent first to Trieste, then to Auschwitz. Out of the 246 deported prisoners, only 8 returned to Venice.

**7. Piazzale Roma**  
**Piazzale Roma and Ponte della Libertà**  
**1933-1945**

Venice is connected to the mainland with a relatively recent bridge: realized in part by Austrian in 1846 (railroad bridge) and completed during the Fascism with the road part, in 1933 it was named “Ponte Littorio”. After the Armistice between Italy and Allied armed forces of September 8, 1943, the northern Italy remained under control by Nazi forces and by the new fascist Republic (RSI). In all the cities of northern and central Italy acted the Resistance. In Venice, the peculiar structure of the city made the underground resistance very difficult: the island could have been a trap. Who controlled the bridge and Piazzale Roma, controlled all the presences in Venice. After WWII the bridge became “Ponte della Libertà” (Bridge of Freedom).

**8. Ca' Giustinian**  
**San Marco, 1364 / A**  
**26 July 1944**

After the birth of theItalian Public Republic (RSI), the National Republican Guard settled its command in Cà Giustinian together with some German military offices. On 26 July 1944 a partisan bomb exploded in the building killing 14 people, but none of the GNR commander was among them. The retaliation came few days later, on July the 28th, when 13 supporters taken from the prison were shot on the ruins left by the explosion.

**9. Riva dei sette martiri**  
**3 August 1944**

Called ‘Shore of the Empire’ (Riva dell’Impero) because it was built by the Fascists, this portion of the Riva degli Schiavoni was the scene of major Nazi reprisal in August 1944. Some units of the Kriegsmarine were moored at the Riva: a German soldier disappeared the night between the 1st and the 2nd of August. Since in that summer the Allied were advancing and there were many conflicts with the Italian Resistance Units, the Nazi troupes thought it was an outrage by Partisans, and therefore it was given the order to shoot, as retaliation, seven antifascists. On the morning of August the 3rd residents and Arsenal workers were forced to witness the execution of the seven Partisans who were tied to lampposts on the Riva dell’Impero bank . Only a few days later it was discovered the sailor had drowned in the canal, were he died, probably because he was drunk.

**10. Ex Cinema Italia**  
**Campiello de l'Anconeta**  
**Cannaregio**  
**6 July 1944**

On July the 6th 1944, Sergeant Marina Bartholomew Asara was killed by a group led by the Chioggia shareholder Aldo Varisco. Soon the reprisal was activated: the Colonel Morelli(head of the GNR – National Republican Guard) on the night between the 7th and 8th of July killed five people suspected of anti-fascism who lived

near the site of the attack to Asara. The victims were Ubaldo Belli Luigi Borgato, Bruno Crovato, Piero Favretti, Augusto Picutti, while Joseph Tramontin was seriously wounded. In Ramo Colombina you can still see the plaque for Piero Favretti, while in Campo San Felice the one for Ubaldo Belli.

**11. Arsenale**  
**1943-1945**

For centuries a military settlement, the Arsenale with the occupation of Autumn 1943 was transformed into a site at the service of Kriegsmarine. But actually its workers, the "arsenalotti" were amomg the major supporters for the Resistance, supplying arms and explosives and gathering information. Inside the bunker is being built both German air-raid shelters. In the days of liberation, the fleeing Germans tried to set fire to the facilities, but arsenal, fire fighters and partisans were able to save and liberate the Arsenal.

**12. Bunkers in the Laguna**  
**Lido**  
**Autumn 1943**

After the 8 September, the German army start to create a line of extended protection on the upper Adriatic coast, otherwise unguarded. The beaches were fortified with a bunker system with function anti-landing: at the Lido di Venezia is still possible to see many of them.

**13. Scalera film and Cinevillaggio**  
**Giudecca, Calle Convertite**  
**Giardini della Biennale**  
**Autumn 1943 – Winter 1944**

In October 1943, the institutions dealing with films production in Italy were moved from Rome to Venice: there was a need for a new Cinecittà since Rome was under the controll of the Nazi troupes. Therefore were created the Cine-villaggio (being much smaller than Cine-città) between the National pavilions in the Biennale Giardini and the studies of Scalera Film in Giudecca, both used to shoot films. However, directors and actors preferred not to move and not bind to the new regime. Only a few, including Valenti and Ferida, went to Venice for modest film shooting, between traditional stories and low cost production, useful only to prevent Germans took away all the camcorders and the technical equipment.

**14. Santa Lucia train station**  
**Autumn 1943**

The railway is one of the two channels of connection with the land. Immediately after the armistice the railroaders began to sabotage German convoys. They helped also confused soldiers and former prisoners, helping them to flee the city to safer areas. The SS in November 1943 arrested the engineer Bartolomeo Meloni, head of the first National Railways conspiracy organization: he was deported to Dachau, where he died together many other prisoners. Between platforms 7 and 8, a plaque commemorates his sacrifice and other railroaders for their efforts towards the Liberation.

**15. Ca' Michiel delle Colonne**  
**Strada Nuova 4314**  
**1943-45**

Ca' Michiel delle Colonne (later called Ca' Littoria) during the Fascit dictatorship was the headquarters of the National Fascist Party, but in 1943 after September the 8th with the Nazi-Fascist occupation of Venice became a place of torture for Partisans. Among these, Victorinus Boscolo, who was the bomber of Asara. Boscolo during the interrogation jumped from the window in the Grand Canal and he was able to swim across in spite of the handcuffs, reaching a safety place where to recover.

**16. Liceo Convitto Foscarini**  
**Fondamenta Santa Caterina**  
**1939-1945**

Several students were active in the Resistance, some in cities and others in mountain operations. In December 1943, part of the Liceo Convitto Foscarini was used to imprison Jews rounded up in Venice, before deporting them to Fossoli. The other side of the school (in Calle Lunga Santa Caterina 4965) was used as a barracks for the military sailors (10ma Flottiglia Mas).

**17. Fusina ferry bombed**  
**Riva degli Schiavoni**  
**14 August 1944**

One of the few attacks took place in the historic city by three bombers, after hitting at Malamocco a ship of the line Venice-Chioggia (where 24 people died), they headed towards the Bacino di San Marco: between Punta della Dogana and the Island of San Giorgio where was

moored the German hospital ship ‘Freiburg’, that was also the mission target. The allies, after a first attempt to hit by dropping four bombs, began to strafe the ship. But at the same time a ship of the line ‘Fusina Venezia’ – carrying civilians direct to loof for food in the countryside – was passing by: the bursts of guns killed 15 people while 50 were wounded.

**18. Campo del Ghetto Nuovo**  
**Cannaregio, 2892**  
**November 1943 – January 1945**

The arrests and deportations of Venetians Jews took place mainly between the end of November 1943 (in particular, during the raid of the 5th December) and the Summer of 1944, but actually continued until the early months of 1945. 246 Venetian Jews were captured and deported between 1943 and 1944, and only 8 returned. A plaque commemorates their names forever in Campo del Ghetto Nuovo, along with the sculptor Blatas monument dedicated to the Holocaust.

**19. Teatro Goldoni**  
**S. Marco, 4650/ B**  
**12 March 1945**

A group of Partisans occupied the stage of Teatro Goldoni during a performance, they stopped the show and Cesco Chiniello, the leader of the group, gave a short speech to shake the anti-fascist climate of tension and fear generated by the arrests of many of them during the previous months. The public, including military fascists and Nazis, did not have a chance to react and the Partisans could leave safety without getting caught.

**20. The Monument to the Partisan Woman**  
**Riva dei Partigiani**  
**1957-1969**

Just outside the Gardens, emerging from the water at the Riva Partisan, you can see the Monument to Venetian Partisan Woman created by the sculptor Augusto Murer and opened on April the 25th of 1969. In fact, a first similar monument, designed by sculpturer Leoncillo, was located in the Giardini della Biennale on September the 8th of 1957, but it was blown up by neo-fascists on July the 27th of 1961. It took a long time before the new monument was commissioned and placed on the actual spot, just very close to the Biennale entrance.

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| <b>REcall - European Conflict Archaeological Landscape Reappropriation</b>   |   |
| REcall is a research project founded by EC Culture 2007-13 Programme focused on the possible roles Museography can play when dealing with Difficult Heritage such as the ones coming from conflicts and wars. REcall wishes to envision new ways to the handling of Painful Places & Stories going behind any traditional approach: there is the need to shift from the 'simply' commemoration attitude to a more active involvement and participation of people in/with Places & Stories, through design strategies of 'reappropriation' (www.recall-cow.eu). |   |
| The Venice workshop has several goals: launching officially the project, testing its research queries in the context of WWII Venice Heritage and, last but not the least, challenging the 13th Architecture Biennale theme ‘Common Ground’.  |   |