

PALAZZO ARDINGHELLI IS REBORN: THE RESTORATION AND MAXXI L'AQUILA

**SATURDAY 5 AND SUNDAY 6 SEPTEMBER:
PRESENTATION OF THE RESTORATION AND GUIDED TOURS OF THE PALACE**

**FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER:
INAUGURATION OF MAXXI L'AQUILA**

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L'Aquila, 5 September 2020. An extraordinary palace returned to the community. A piece of the city's history that comes back to life to interact with the territory. A jewel of L'Aquila's Baroque period that is reborn after careful restoration and becomes a hub of contemporary creativity, a laboratory of the future. An admirable example of international and interinstitutional collaboration. A contribution to the reconstruction of the city after the 2009 earthquake, in the name of culture.

This is **MAXXI L'AQUILA**, a project that has seen MiBACT and Fondazione MAXXI – together with the Municipality of L'Aquila, the Abruzzo Region and local institutions including the University, the Gran Sasso Science Institute, the Academy of Fine Arts, the Abruzzo Symphonic Institution, Teatro Stabile and many others – work together with a great goal in mind: to contribute to the revival of the area damaged by the earthquake through culture, skilfully restoring the magnificent 18th-century building devastated by the earthquake, recreating the evocative Baroque beauty of its luminous, multiform and enveloping spaces, and offering it to the community as a new collective place, a platform of open, shared cultural creativity at the service of the rebirth of the city.

The **restoration of Palazzo Ardinghelli** – carried out thanks to the generous contribution of the Russian Federation and resulting from eight years of painstaking work by the local cultural heritage experts and technicians – was presented in L'Aquila today, **Saturday 5 September 2020**, at an open-air event in front of the Palace, in Piazza Santa Maria Paganica, recently equipped with a new lighting system that makes its beauty shine even at night, a further contribution by the Municipality to urban regeneration.

After being introduced by **Margherita Guccione**, Director General for Contemporary Creativity at MiBACT, and **Pietro Barrera**, Secretary General of Fondazione MAXXI, the following speakers took the floor: **Anna Laura Orrico**, Undersecretary of the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, and the Counselors of the Russian Federation to Italy **Alexey Fadeev** and **Konstantin Belyavev**; **Stefano D'Amico**, MiBACT Regional Secretary for Abruzzo; **Alessandra Vittorini**, Superintendent for Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the City of L'Aquila and the Crater Municipalities; **Pierluigi Biondi**, Mayor of L'Aquila; **Marco Marsilio**, President of the Abruzzo Region; **Giovanna Melandri**, President of Fondazione MAXXI.

Hou Hanru, Artistic Director of MAXXI **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, Director of MAXXI Arte, who will curate the inaugural exhibition, were also present.

Also on **Saturday 5 September** (from 3 pm to 7 pm) and **Sunday 6 September** (from 11 am to 1:30 pm and from 2:30 pm to 7 pm) **guided tours of the Palace** organised by the **students of the Academy of Fine Arts of L'Aquila** took place in compliance with safety regulations (for the last remaining spots, reservation required on www.maxxilaquila.art).

In the words of **Giovanna Melandri**, President of Fondazione MAXXI: "The reopening of Palazzo Ardinghelli excites me and makes me proud: it is the symbol of a double rebirth, from the scars of the earthquake and the suspended time of the coronavirus emergency. It is also the demonstration that **together** we can make it! I would like to thank the Russian Federation, MiBACT, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, Enel (our historical partner, which supports us in all important initiatives) and all those who, by working with skill, generosity and passion, have restored the palace to its beauty. Now it is up to us to revive it and, together with the administrations, scientific and cultural institutions, study and research centres and associations in the area, we will strive to ensure that MAXXI L'Aquila's exhibitions, initiatives and activities make a contribution to the long-awaited civil and social regeneration of this city and its cultural liveliness"

Palazzo Ardinghelli: history

The Palace, which was the historical residence of the homonymous family of Tuscan origin, is considered as one of the greatest examples of L'Aquila's Baroque period and is the only one in the region that has a façade with balconies at different heights. It is located in the old town centre, in Piazza Santa Maria Paganica, and was built between 1732 and 1743, after the great earthquake that destroyed the city in 1703.

It was designed by Roman architect Francesco Fontana, son of the more famous Carlo, and is characterised by a porticoed courtyard from which the monumental staircase of Borromini inspiration originates, surmounted by paintings by Venetian artist Vincenzo Damini, representing the Four Continents and the Sunrise, dating back to 1744.

The inner courtyard that crosses the building, connecting Piazza Santa Maria Paganica and Via Garibaldi, will render the Museum a public urban space open to the city, thereby creating an ideal line with the MAXXI Square in Rome designed by Zaha Hadid.

In the first two rooms of the noble floor, there are two monumental fireplaces. On the opposite side, instead, after the main hall, now Sala della Voliera, and a series of rooms nestled one inside the other, the loop of an ideal path ends with the family chapel, where the work conceived specifically by master Ettore Spalletti will be displayed.

After the death of Filippo Ardinghelli, centuries of progressive deterioration began for the Palace. At the end of the last century, it first housed the Magistrates' Court Offices, then the Town Hall Registry Office, until it was sold to the State Property Office and, at the end of 2008, entrusted to MiBACT. After a few months, the April 2009 earthquake seriously damaged the building's structure, which was already in a general state of neglect.

The restoration and museum design

In the wake of the 2009 earthquake, it was difficult to even enter the courtyard of Palazzo Ardinghelli. The strong quake on the night of 6 April had caused the walls of the courtyard to collapse, with the consequent partial destruction of the portico as well as various damages to the halls of the upper floor, due to the massive collapse of the roof in various places.

As part of the international solidarity efforts aimed at the city hit by the catastrophic earthquake, the Government **of the Russian Federation** immediately identified two monumental buildings to be restored: the Church of San Gregorio Magno, in the hamlet of San Gregorio and, in the heart of L'Aquila, Palazzo Ardinghelli, to which a generous contribution of 7.2 million Euros was allocated.

MiBACT technicians subjected the Palace to a skilful intervention of conservative restoration, consolidation, seismic improvement and partial reconstruction of the collapsed portions (such as the covering of one of the halls on the noble floor, Sala della Voliera, where the skeleton of the pavilion ceiling destroyed by the earthquake was reconstructed). The works also restored the continuity interrupted even before the earthquake, such as the entrance hall>court>back entrance sequence, recovered in its figurative and architectural values.

This restoration also gave rise to "surprises", with findings that underline the stratification of the building, such as the stones of an ancient portal, or a painting on the ceiling of one of the rooms, probably a bedroom, depicting two cherubs, or the decorations that can be seen on the external walls of the courtyard. This attention to the history of the Palace has included the preservation of the original lustrous plaster of the monumental staircase and the stone of the façade, which features a very rare shade. Witness also the restoration of a portion of the original floor, by which the geometries of the other floors are inspired.

The impressive restoration project was carried out by the Regional Secretariat for Abruzzo (contracting authority) and the Single Superintendence for L'Aquila and the Crater. In recent years, thanks to the close synergistic collaboration between these bodies and Fondazione MAXXI through the setting up of a technical table, constant inspections and meetings, it has been possible to adapt the 18th-century spaces to the new exhibition function dedicated to contemporary art.

Towards MAXXI L'AQUILA

The imposing and refined figure of Palazzo Ardinghelli and its innate spatiality, which creates a natural path through the succession of halls and rooms, led the Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage **Dario Franceschini**, during his visit to L'Aquila in 2014, to envision the building as an excellent exhibition space. That first impression gave rise to the **MAXXI L'AQUILA** project, a space dedicated to contemporary creativity, a laboratory of the future in the midst of the city's history, in one of its most fascinating monuments.

Palazzo Ardinghelli, now masterfully restored, is therefore about to become a living centre of culture not only for the city of L'Aquila, a concrete stage in a process of heritage recovery that revolves around the social, inclusive and identity value of cultural assets, linking them to their vital and daily use, to give meaning and content to the restored places.

Friday 30 October, in the presence of the Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage **Dario Franceschini** and the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Italy **Sergey Razov**, with the participation of **Cassa Depositi e Prestiti**, which supported the construction of the technological equipment for the new museum function of the Palace, MAXXI L'Aquila will be inaugurated.

The exhibition project has been designed to enhance the architecture of the newly restored Palace right from the start, in relation to the commissions specifically produced by five important Italian artists identified by the Ministry in 2015: **Elisabetta Benassi**, **Daniela De Lorenzo**, **Alberto Garutti**, **Nunzio** and the recently deceased master **Ettore Spalletti**, to whom one of the most evocative spaces is dedicated. These works are complemented by a project by **Anastasia Potemkina**, a young Russian artist, produced in collaboration with the V-A-C Foundation in Moscow and realised with the participation of the Academy of Fine Arts of L'Aquila, as a first step to enhance the dialogue between Russian and Italian artists in a historic building restored thanks to a generous donation from the Russian Federation.

Special attention will be paid to photography, starting with the commission entrusted to **Paolo Pellegrin** and **Stefano Cerio**'s works: two stylistically different approaches to witness the rebirth of the city.

This rich itinerary will be complemented and strengthened by a selection of works from **MAXXI's art, architecture and photography collections** chosen for their ability to reflect on the ideal spatial and material spheres that determine the place or are determined by it. The exhibition is therefore an opportunity to explore and experience all the spaces in the Museum, from the courtyard to the main staircase, from the chapel to the series of exhibition rooms that follow one another without interruption, in an itinerary that on the one hand focuses on the extraordinary restoration work carried out to return the building to the city and the public, and on the other accompanies reflections on the combination of light, colour, space and the environment and its perception, on an urban and territorial scale between the visionary and the utopian, through the works of authors such as **Monica Bonvicini**, **Maurizio Cattelan**, **Enzo Cucchi**, **Bruna Esposito**, **Giulio Paolini**, **Piero Manzoni**, **Maurizio Nannucci**, **Liliana Moro**, **Sou Fujimoto**, **Superstudio**, **Giovanni Michelucci**, **Bernard Khoury**, **Yona Friedman** and **Allora & Calzadilla**.

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