



L'Albergo dei Poveri

Site Report



Co-funded by
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reCITYing Site Report

Albergo dei Poveri
Piazzale Emanuele Brignole, 2, 16136 Genova GE

2024–2028 cofunded by the European Union

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**reactivating unused urban spaces
through architecture and arts**

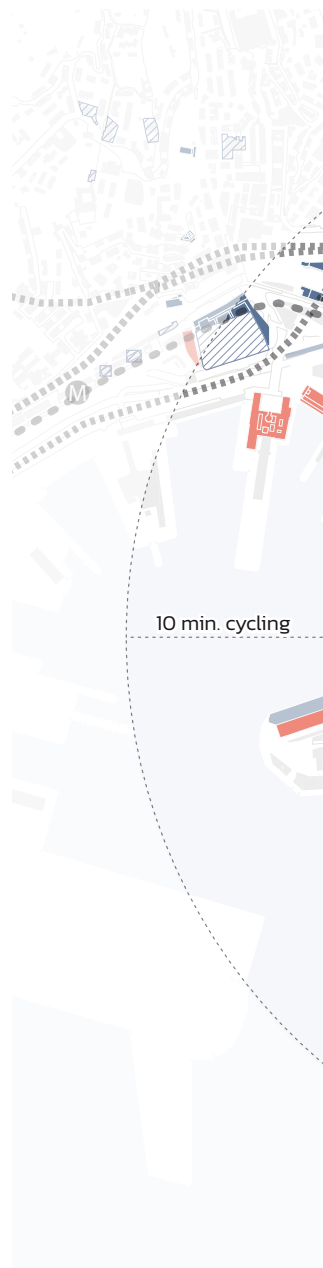
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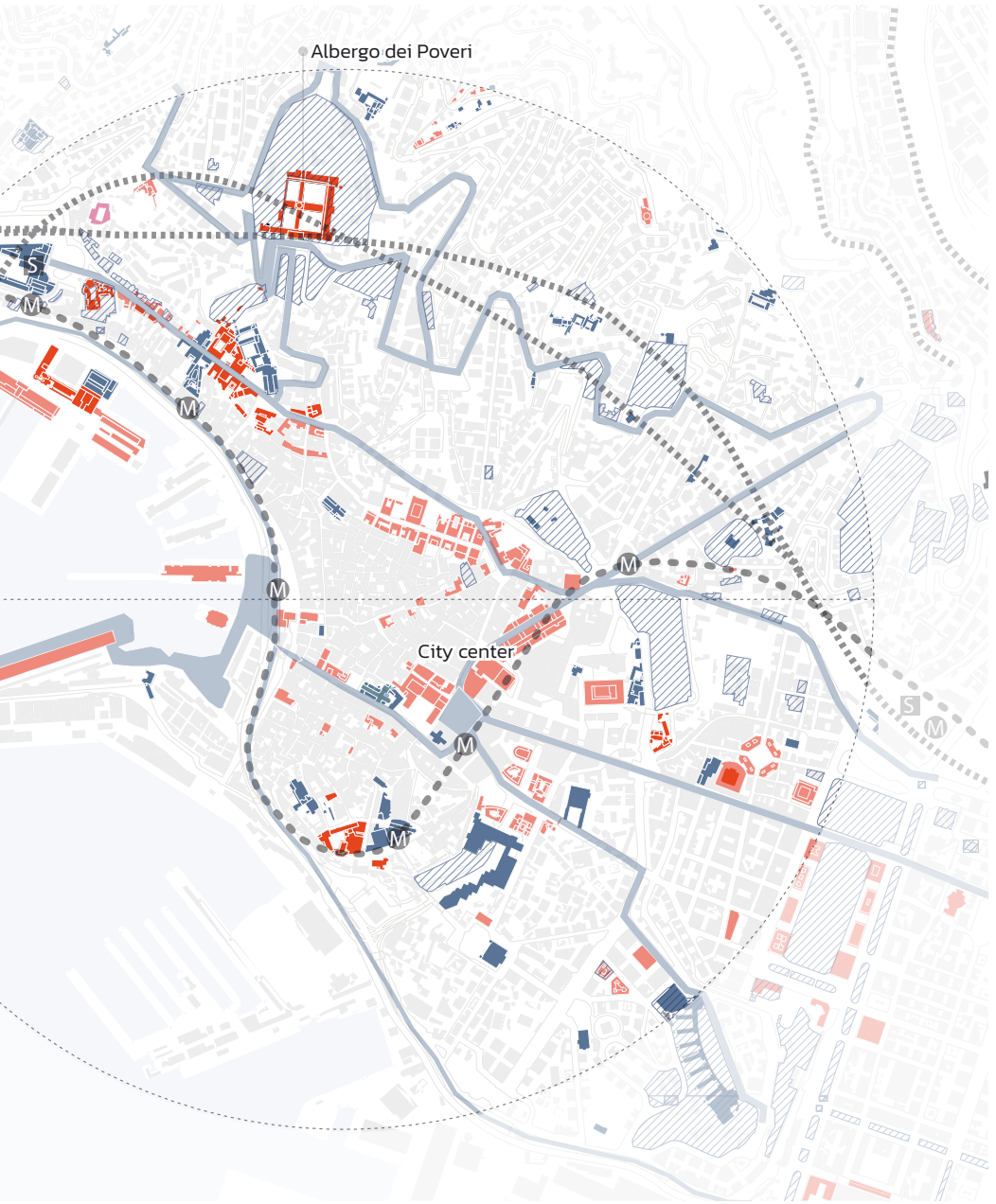
Site characteristics

Albergo dei Poveri Genova, Italia

The construction of the Albergo dei Poveri was promoted by the Genoese patrician Emanuele Brignole, who was tasked by the Health Magistrate with selecting and acquiring a suitable site for a large building intended to house those who were less able to lead a self-sufficient life. Construction began in 1656 in the heart of the Carbonara valley and was long and laborious, lasting almost two hundred years. The delays were due in part to the Great Plague, which claimed around 10,000 lives, whose bodies were buried in the foundation excavations. Additionally, the challenge of building such a large and rigid structure on sloping terrain added to the difficulty. The project envisioned a square structure with a Greek cross-shaped interior intended for worship, creating four independent courtyards. This design followed the established hospital tradition based on the model of the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan developed by Filarete. One of the main challenges was placing this extensive layout in the narrow, steep Carbonara valley. The most significant innovation of this structure was its internal organization, making it the first of its kind in Italy. The Albergo dei Poveri was designed as a work-based hospital, where manual activities were both a form of self-financing and a means of spiritual salvation. Along with prayer, these activities structured the daily lives of the residents, who could not leave the facility except in exceptional cases. By 1694, the Albergo housed up to 2,600 residents. Under Emanuele Brignole's initiative, the Albergo was adorned with valuable artworks, beginning with the statue of the Assumption, commissioned in 1666 from the famous French sculptor Pierre Puget. This heritage was enriched over the centuries through



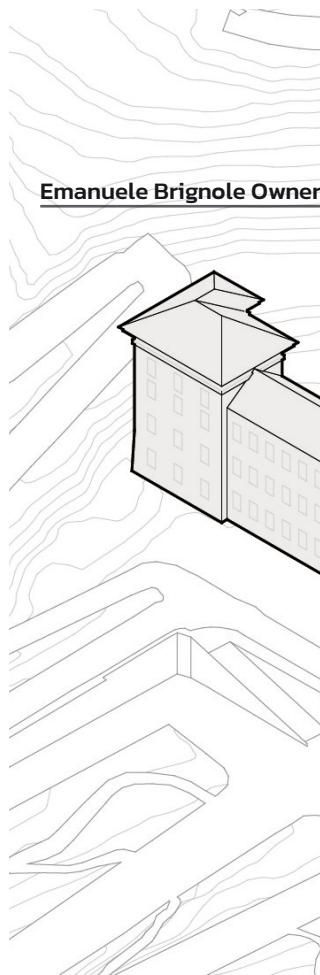
Elaboration from: PUC-Livello pa
Graphics: L. Di Domenico for ReCI



esaggistico puntuale
TYing, 2024

- UniGe facilities and cluster of historical buildings
- Sites of historical interests, Unesco heritage
- Attraction nodes and public services
- Parks and green areas
- Attraction areas and main streets

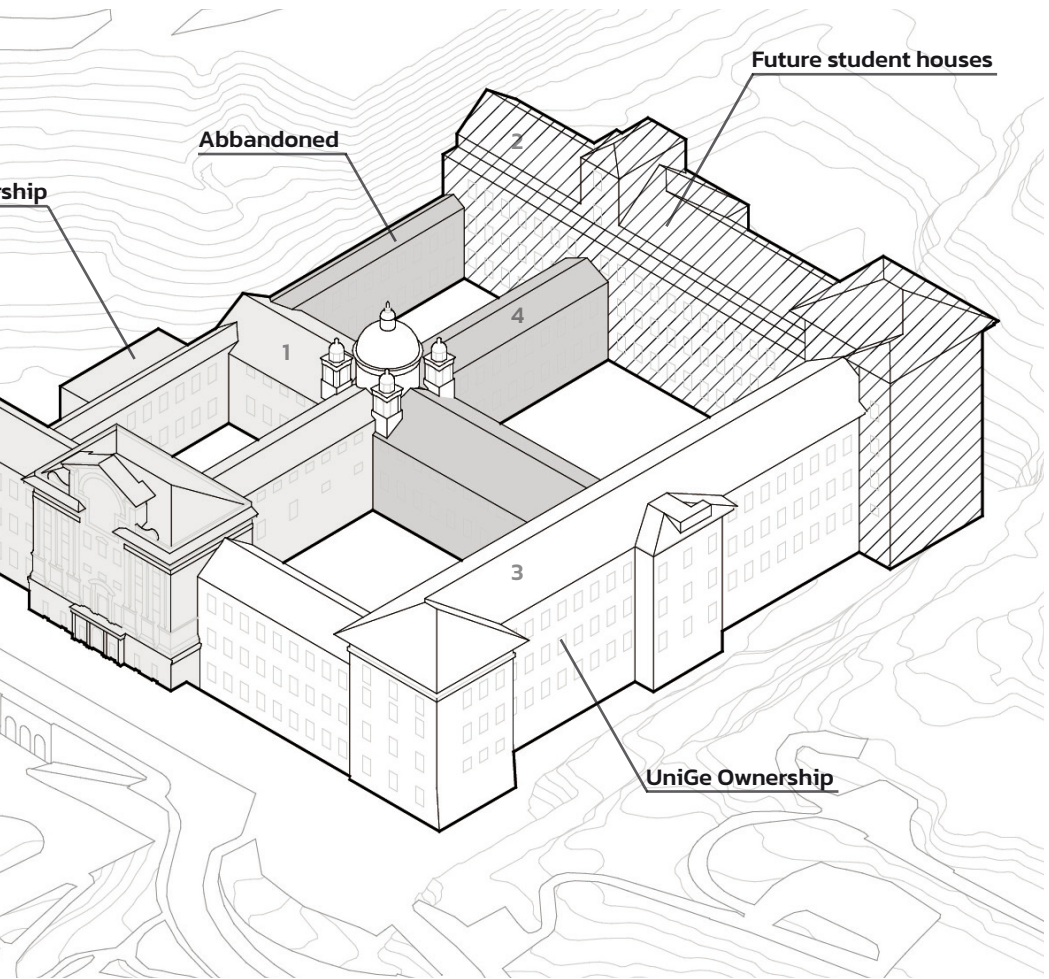
bequests and donations from noble and wealthy families of the city. Following the suppression of religious institutes by the Napoleonic government, assets from these institutes were also added to the Albergo's collection. The architectural structure and use of the Albergo dei Poveri remained largely unchanged until the last century, when it was transformed into a modern hospital. A significant turning point came at the dawn of the third millennium. On November 20, 1991, after fifteen years of negotiations, the Emanuele Brignole Institute formalized a programmatic agreement with the University of Genoa, transferring surface rights to the Albergo dei Poveri real estate complex to the University for 50 years. In the same year, 4,500 students from the Law and Political Science faculties began using the Albergo, with spaces re-adapted for educational use by architect Enrico Bona. Meanwhile, the 490 inpatients started moving to more modern and comfortable residences for the elderly, equipped with private rooms and quality healthcare, located in various neighborhoods across the city.



Graphics: G. Minari Varese for ReC

References

Profilo storico a cura della dott.ssa Annamaria de Marini, autrice del libro "L'Albergo dei Poveri apre le porte all'Università" ed. Giuffrè 2000 (<https://www.albergo-deipoveri.com/la-struttura/>)



ITYing, 2024

Location 44°25'04.8"N 8°55'45.01"E

Opening time

On demand

Owners Emanuele Brignole Institute
Università degli studi di Genova

Visitors/year

 20000

Volume/ uses

- 1 108'338 mc Albergo dei Poveri
- 2 116'188 mc Future student houses
- 3 124'211 mc UniGe
- 4 46'867 mc Not used

Active from/to

1648 – 2003

TIMELINE Urban / Site evolution



REPUBBLICA DI GENOVA
Medieval city, expansion of the XIII-XV century



Strada Nuova 1550-75

1550-1645 Expansion of the city-Strada Nuova, Balbi, G

1500

1550

1600

Albergo dei Poveri

The Albergo dei Poveri was founded in the second half of the seventeenth century as a public assistance institution intended to accommodate various categories of disadvantaged citizens.

it was the Genoese patrician Emanuele Brignole, a life spent with continuous and zealous commitment in the works of mercy, who promoted the construction of the structure, after having received from the Health Magistrate the task of choosing and acquiring a suitable site to place a building of large dimensions, with the aim of hosting in particular those unfortunate people who would have had less possibility of leading a self-sufficient life.





Strada Balbi 1601-18



Strada Giulia 1645



New defensive walls 1626-36.

Giulia



Plague 1656-1657

1656-1676

1677-1740

1664 first guests

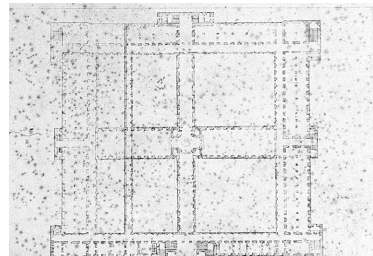
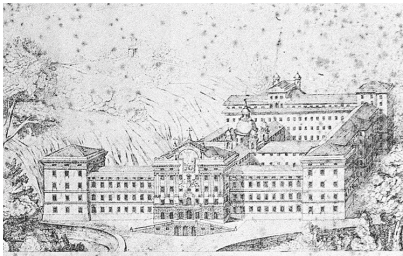
1657 Beginning of the church construction

1656 Beginning of construction

1655 Purchase of the lands in Carbonara

1653 Created a delegation for the "new lazaretto" factory

1740 The west wing and the west façade remained to be completed.



It can therefore be stated that the most important urban planning initiative of the eighteenth century was the "Strada Nuovissima", an almost natural conjunction of the two episodes between the mid-sixteenth century and the mid-seventeenth century: the Strada Nuova and the Strada Balbi. The opening of Strada Nuovissima began in December 1777 and constituted the last urban renewal intervention in the city of the Ancient Regime. Paradoxically, the three "new roads" were traced back to one route, with Strada Nuovissima (1785-90) and Strada Carlo Felice (1832) when the ancient city was reduced to a "historic centre".



Strada Nuovissima 1785-1790



Strada Carlo Felice 1832



Apertura di corso Carbonara e di corso Dogali 1870

1825 Urban Plan of Carlo Barabino

1932 Regio

1800

1850

Unità d'Italia

1900

WW I

1834-1836 costruzione del torrione



1870 L'albergo dei Poveri viene inserito nel tessuto urbano



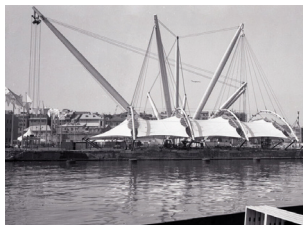
With the opening of Corso Carbonara and Corso Dogali (approximately 1870) the hotel was then inserted into the urban net.

199

The 1932 city center master plan concerned the areas of Piazza Dante, Brignole, Piazza della Vittoria, Piazza Rossetti, Corso Italia. While the Detailed Plan of 1953, the area of Piccapietra, Via Madre di Dio, San Vincenzo



Piazza de Ferrari after the WWII bombing



Expo Genova 1992



2004 Genova european capital of culture

Regulation Plan of the city center



1991, after long and thoughtful negotiations conducted between the parties over the course of fifteen years, the Emanuele Brignole Institute formalizes a programmatic agreement with the University of Genoa for the transfer of the surface rights to the latter for 50 years of the Albergo dei Poveri complex.

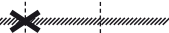
1991 Agreement to move Unige into the complex

1994-1995 Start of the restoration

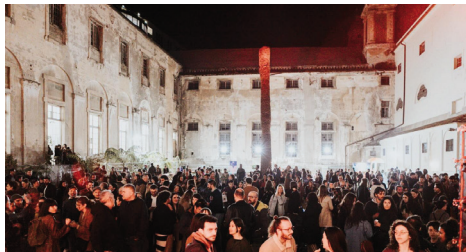
1998-2001 Second restoration

1959 General Regulation Plan approved

2000

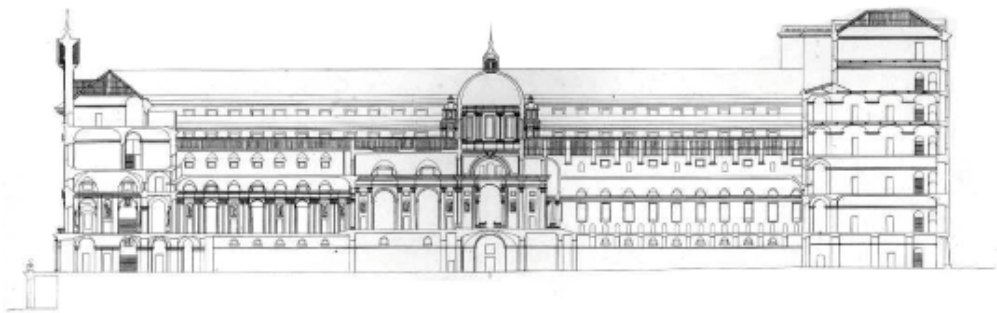


2022-23-24 Cargo Market



2001 Transfer of ownership to the university







Panoramic view of San Nicola valley, A. Sbarbaro, 2007, CC BY-SA 3.0
Elevations of Albergo dei Poveri and aerial view of the complex,
courtesy of ASP E. Brignole - Genova Municipality



Site visit of the main atrium with monumental statues leading to the mans corridors (west wing of the complex)
photo: ASP E. Brignole + E. Sommariva, 2024

Eight stucco statues by Giovanni Battista Barberini (1671–1673) adorn the stairs and upper atrium, commemorating key figures in the institution’s history. Among them, the female allegory of Providence symbolizes divine guidance and the institution’s charitable mission. Notable benefactors like Gerolamo Grimaldi, Ettore Vernazza, and Angelo Gio Spinola, who were crucial to the institution’s foundation in the 15th and 16th centuries, are also depicted. On the upper floor, statues of Emanuele Brignole’s associates—Iacopo Filippo Durazzo, Gio Francesco Granello, Anton Giulio Brignole Sale, and Franco Borsotto—reflect their significant contributions. Durazzo’s strategic counsel and Granello’s financial support were vital during the institution’s formative years.

In 2014, the institution’s sacred vestments were loaned for conservation to the Superintendence for Historical–Artistic Heritage. Restored by Palazzo Reale’s lab, the artifacts, mainly from the 18th century, were preserved through meticulous efforts funded by Lotto, concluding in 2016. From the large entrance hall, through the grand staircases, one could reach the bright upper atrium, which opened onto the church. The focal point of the church was the Puget Immaculate Conception under the immense dome. Along this path, statues of the Benefactors were placed as a memory, model, and encouragement to “do likewise.”





Hall of sacred objects collected in the church and oratory of the Albergo dei Poveri and the collection of paintings in the museum western wing, towards the Mans corridor, AdP Genova. photo: C. Centanaro, 2024
The main navy of AdP church dedicated to Immaculate Conception photo: E. Sommariva, 2024.







Basement ground corridors in the AdP complex in state of abandonment. Consolidation works are undergone in order to give accessibility to norther part of the complex. Photos: ASP E. Brignole + C. Centanaro, 2024



Basement ground floor in the AdP complex in state of abandonment.
Photos: ASP E. Brignole + C. Centanaro, 2024

At the dawn of the third millennium, however, the fate of the Albergo dei Poveri took a turn. The new chapter began to be written at the end of the 1970s when the University of Genoa first expressed its interest in this complex, with the intention of transferring some of its faculties' teaching activities there. This project came to fruition after lengthy negotiations with ASP E. Brignole, the entity owning the Albergo, and the Municipality of Genoa, culminating in a programmatic agreement signed in 1991. The decision to establish a university hub within the AdP, which still housed about 500 elderly or long-term patients, was justified by the recognition that the building was no longer suitable for its original welfare-hospital function. The distribution characteristics, the vast size of common areas (corridors, grand staircases, atriums), and the overall challenging management of the complex made it necessary to identify medium to long-term recovery strategies. These included the use of temporary repurposing (events, associations, art exhibitions, film settings) to ensure a minimum level of activity within the complex. Despite these efforts, the extensive basement spaces of the complex remain in a state of abandonment and are used as dumping grounds for various materials to this day.





Views of the underused south-west courtyard flanking the church main nave.
photo: E. Sommariva, 2024

The AdP complex is inspired by the structures of 15th-16th century welfare architecture with a Greek cross layout, which in turn refers to Filarete's model for the Ospedale Maggiore of Milan (1451). The monastic-hospital architecture has grown to a monumental scale over time, showcasing the glory of God and the power of its patrons. The enduring use of the Greek cross typology as the ideal model for welfare architecture in the 17th century is evidenced by the two plans published by Joseph Furtenbach in 1628 in his "Architectura civilis" as a prototype of the "Italian hospital" and again in 1638 in "Architectura universalis" as a model for a "groses Lazarett," where the layout of quadrangular courtyards had essential distributive and sanitary significance. Today, the state of progressive abandonment of the courtyards is evidenced by the lack of accessibility to much of the northern wing of the complex. ReCITYing thus identifies the southwest courtyard as the privileged site for intervention.



Public / Temporary openings

Event series



Rolly days

The first Rolli Days took place in 2008 to enhance the Palazzi dei Rolli. In 2006, 42 of these buildings were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, they became a truly shared asset, an identity for the Genoese citizens. Past editions: from 2006 to 2024



CFC - Festinar *

"Creative Food Cycles" enhances innovative and creative practices between food, architecture and conviviality in a transnational and European perspective. Past editions: 2020



Cargo Market

Cargo Market is an event that brings together the best artisans, artists, designers, stylists and creatives in historically important and representative locations in Italy. Past editions: 2022 - 2023 - 2024



19° exhibition Movimento Riarteco 2023

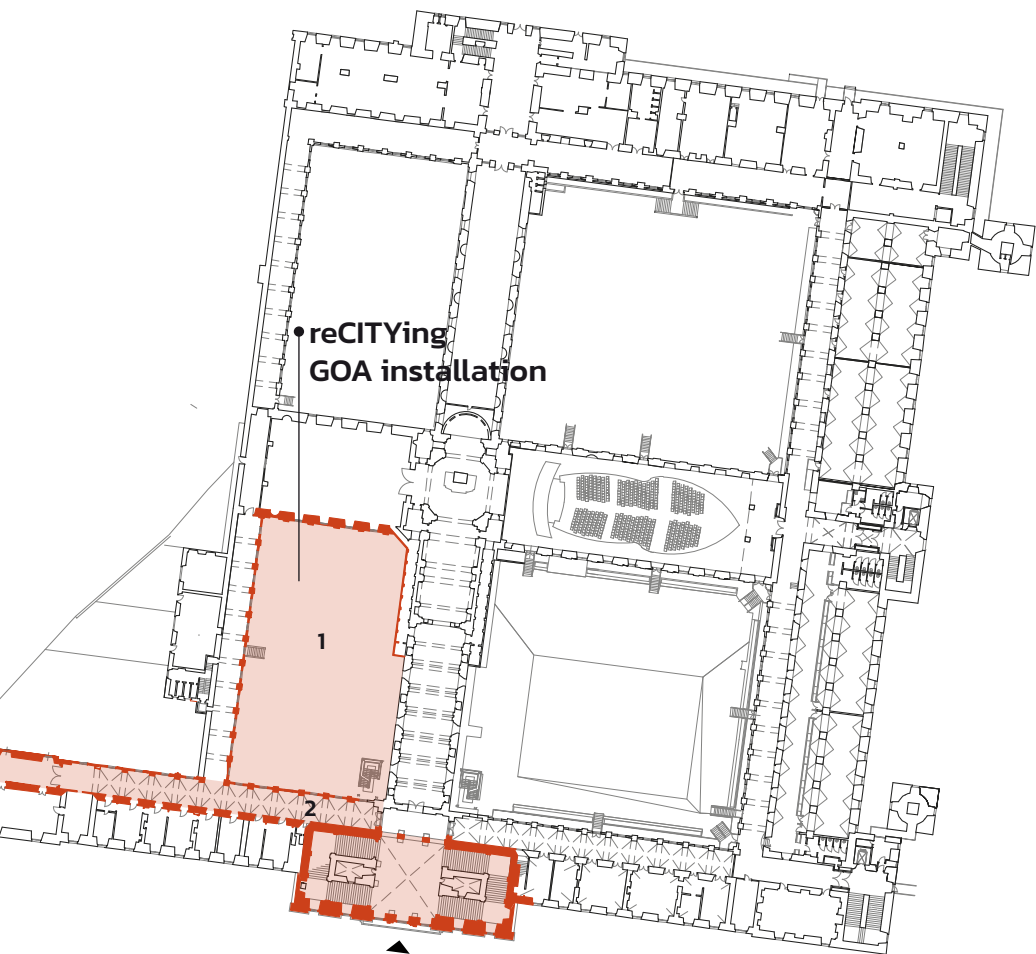
An "exhibition competition" of works of art created with waste and scraps organized for the first time in Florence in 2005. Each edition involves different Municipalities, Provinces and Regions. Past editions: 2023



Set of the film Petra

The Church of the Immaculate Conception inside the Albergo dei Poveri was used as the set for the Italian TV series Petra





ReCITYing installation site

1. Courtyard
 2. Galleria delle Donne
- ▲ Entrance

Creative Food Cycles Experience

Goa CFC–festinar: a virtual banquet
for an innovating research celebration

CFC (Creative Food Cycles) covers different scales and levels of action (and a socio-cultural activism) from production to distribution, from distribution to consumption, from consumption to disposition (and re-production) trying to promote a strategic integration, innovative and fresh at the same time, from the territorial and urban scale to the scale of the creative-social celebrating event or creative-design product, in which the factor “food” as a productive indicator takes on a priority meaning as an inducing agent of new sustainable and innovative processes at the same time.



Interior space: Women's Corridor, a wing of the Albergo still under renovation. ▲



▲ DrinkDress: Enrico Levo, Margherita Massalin, Giacomo Rossi.



▲ Interior space: disused underground kitchens of the Albergo dei Poveri.

Stakeholder map

The stakeholder map visualises the various actors, SMEs and public bodies gravitating around the project to revitalise the targeted space of intervention. The emphasis on their relational impacts, degree of interest and involvement is represented through the positioning on the map according to reference radii (the short radius represents greater proximity, engagement and influence) around the core interest which is the Albergo dei Poveri. In the ring immediately pertaining to the management and strict relation, are positioned the association ASP E. Brignole acting as the owner of the spaces, together with UniGe and Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti. They collaborate synergically in the realisation of the scenography and the theatrical performance envisioned for ReCITYing Genoa event, in order to temporarily reactivate, one of the abandoned inner courtyards of the complex.

Moving forward towards outer rings we can mention, Serre di San Nicola Association, which takes care of the green amenities and terraced areas behind the building and the citizens who live in the neighbouring areas and. Genoa Municipality, represent the main public administration body interested in the revitalisation of the complex, acting as catalysers of supporting local SMEs who may be indirectly involved in the process.

In the outermost ring are positioned all those actors who by interest and affinity can imitate and re-promote the event at other times or in similar locations, also benefiting from European or similar funding. These are local theatres, cultural associations, or associations related to dance, music or film productions.

