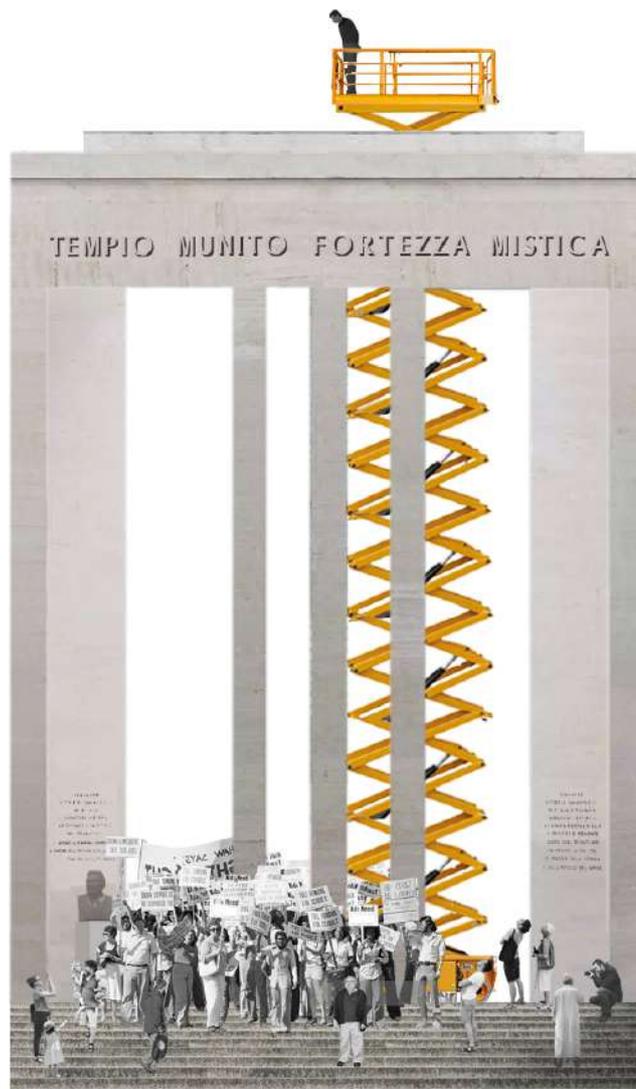


# 01. The Scissor Lift

Bert Stoffels



## Scissor Lift

The scissor lift is an architectural prosthesis for the Casa del Mutilato, a tool to reorient future uses of the building and pragmatically to start a necessary restoration. A prosthesis is required when there is a deficiency in the body. It substitutes an organ with an artificial device. The device will not be able to replace the mutilated part but will nevertheless serve for its function.

This lift operates as a multi-purpose preservation tool within the atrium of the building. Firstly, the lift brings the visitors up to see the oculus from up-close, in order for them to be faced with the now disappeared inscription in the ring.

“È la perenne giovinezza del sacrificio che infiora il camino della vittoria”  
Translated It reads : « It is the eternal youth of sacrifice that embellishes the path to victory.”

Could this be understood as a justification for the sacrifices of the Italians during the war? Why has the inscription been covered up by a new layer of cement in the upper part of the oculus? A possible reconstruction would open up the debate on whether preserving a building necessarily means to restore it to its original state and if the previous modification allows us to rethink the meaning of the inscription.

Secondly, the lift functions as the scenography for the conference. The lift's platform will be the podium for the lecturers in the atrium as a reference to Mussolini confronted with the masses on an iconic balcony, now confronting the building with its mutilated histories. The visitors of the conference will be seated around this stage on the chairs designed for the building. Here, the lift functions as a tool to host conversations and discussions about Fascist heritage and the translation of its ideology into architecture. The conference will happen inside the building, bringing the untold stories of Italian colonization and its heritage into the collective memory. Installing the lift as an expression of an ongoing preservation in the heart of the building aims to solicit a collective reasoning around the future of this contentious heritage. Should this heritage be destroyed, reused, or reoriented? What does this imply for the collective reasoning and preservation criteria connected to this kind of heritage?

Next to the pragmatic uses of the scissor lift as a preservation tool, the act of going up and looking down through the oculus aims at a symbolic subversion of the building. The lift tries to give a human proportion to the monumental scale of the atrium space. The oculus in the roof, like in the pantheon, could be seen as a divine eye looking down on the humble human. By bringing the visitor up, we offer a divine point of view as a human perspective to subvert the symbolic meaning of the oculus and the monumentality of the atrium. The subversion of the sacral dimension of the space relates to the concept of profanation as coined by Agamben. The domain of the sacred, according to him, has not disappeared with secularization but rather has been reproduced in modern political formations<sup>1</sup> like the Italian fascist ideology. In his book, Agamben points out that “to profane does not simply mean to abolish or cancel separations, but to learn to make new uses of them.”<sup>2</sup> Opening up the atrium with a public conference in an attempt to restore the Casa del Mutilato to a future communal use.

---

<sup>1</sup> DAAR, *Architecture After Revolution*, 2013, Sternberg Press

<sup>2</sup> G. Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007).



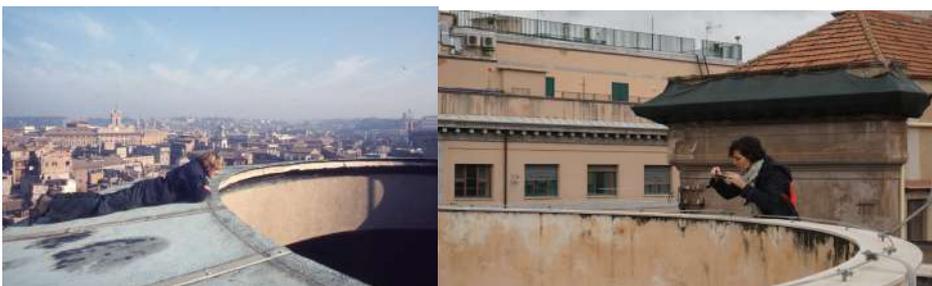
Inscription in the oculus  
Source:Giuseppe Spatrisano Archive at Fondazione per  
l'Arte e la Cultura Lauro Chiazese



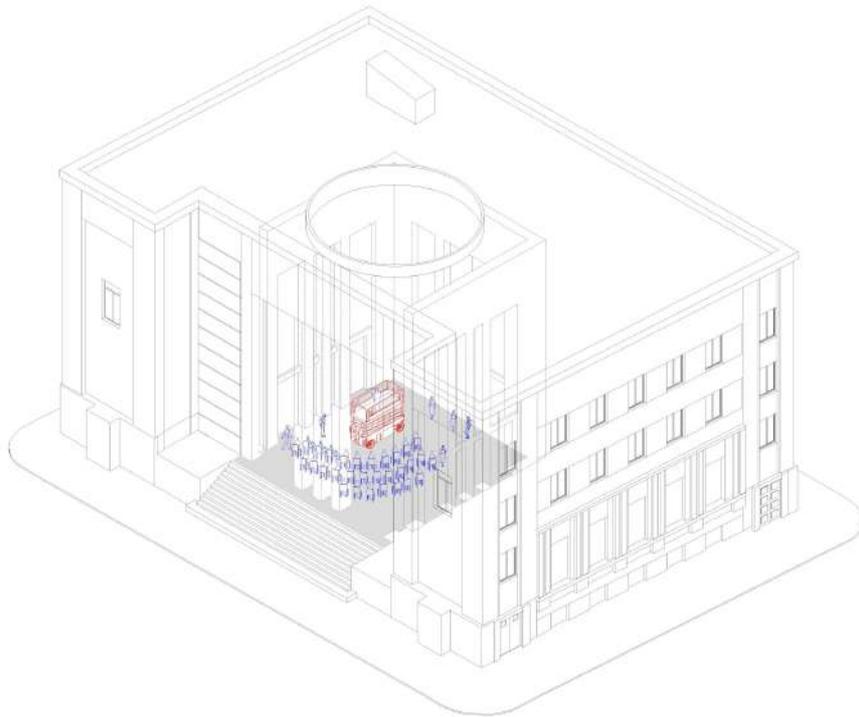
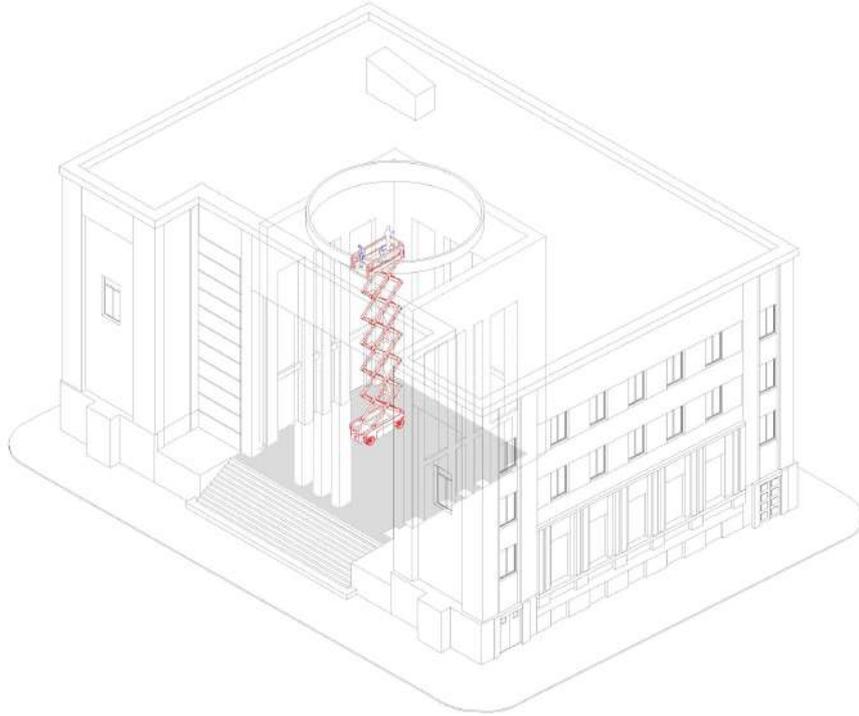


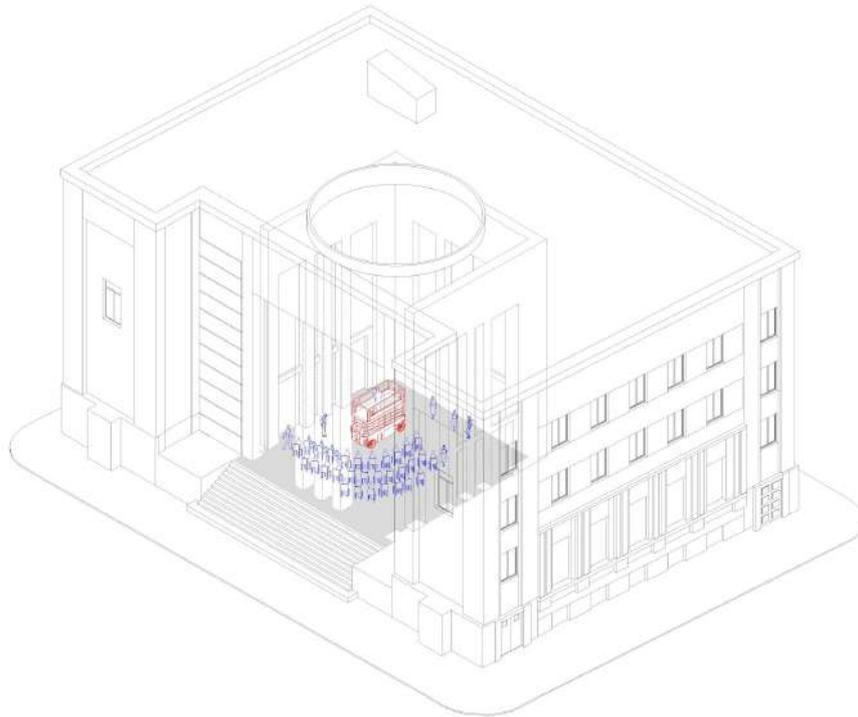
Inscription in the oculus

Source:Giuseppe Spatrisano Archive at Fondazione per l'Arte e la Cultura Lauro Chiazzese

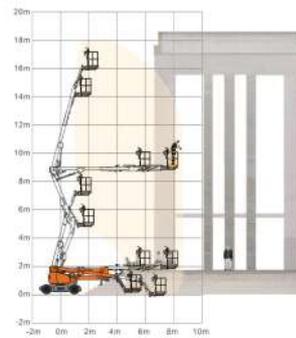


Source: anonymous student of the American Academy in Rome, 1975





Confronting the building with the mutilated histories





**Bibliography**

DAAR, *Architecture After Revolution*, 2013, Sternberg Press

G. Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007)