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GUIDE TO THE [DISMANTLED]  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF PAESTUM

*ceci n'est pas  
un musée*





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by carlo alfano

**page 2**  
metopes with dancing girls  
from the sanctuary of hera  
at the mouth of the river sele

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MVSE

Ciel mai jao en musée.

# ceci n'est pas un musée

## the museum beyond its contents

**gabriel zuchtriegel**

director of the archaeological park of paestum

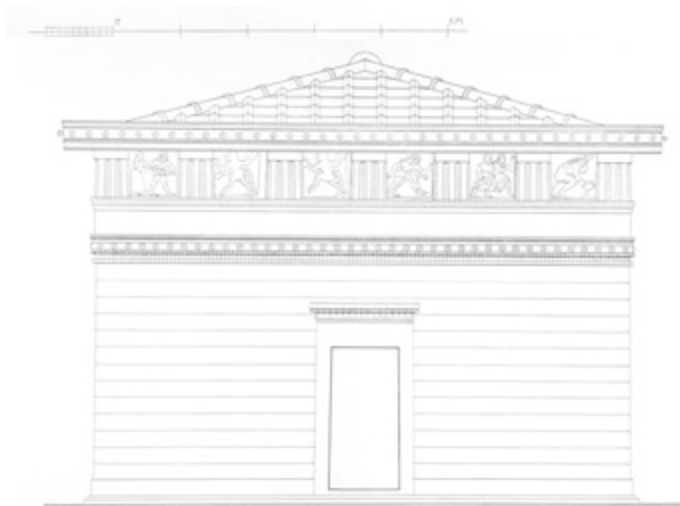
This guide is due to be published at what is arguably the most awkward moment imaginable. In a few years' time, the museum will undergo major refurbishment involving restoration work and a new layout. The collections will be moved and the rooms will be temporarily closed. What is the point of publishing a guide during this phase? Well, we believe that although it may seem inappropriate, the moment is particularly opportune for grasping the sense of the museum of Paestum. It is not a museum, even though the word appears in large bronze letters above the entrance: MVSEO. However, laid bare, stripped of most of its collections in order to carry out the work alluded to above, it reveals its true identity most clearly: that of a temple, a unique work of architecture in which antiquity and contemporaneity merge. The museum of Paestum was designed around the reconstruction (a mistaken one, as is now clear) of the temple of Hera at the mouth of the river Sele. The sandstone metopes (carved panels) that are currently mounted on the walls of the "cella" - the central room of the museum - were attributed to the temple. In reality, however, the temple never existed except in the imagination of archaeologists. New excavations have demonstrated that the building to which the metopes were attributed and whose dimensions are reproduced in full scale in the "cella" of the museum of Paestum actually belong to a much more recent period than that of the metopes. Moreover, rather than being an actual building, it was probably a kind of open enclosure. Meanwhile, the Museum of Paestum, which was opened in 1952, preserves this "petrified" reconstruction. The "cella" with the metopes is sur-



rounded by a “colonnade” of pilasters and a three-stepped podium, just like a temple. Despite being mistaken, the hypothetical reconstruction remains structurally enclosed within the museum itself and, inevitably, continues to proclaim this to the whole world, not with panels or multimedia supports, but with a much more powerful and subversive language: the language of architecture. Redesigning this part of the museum, “correcting” the erroneous reconstruction of the cella (as a few zealots in the archaeological world have suggested), would, in this case, literally mean demolishing the museum as an architectural container and destroying its substance. The same is true for another cornerstone of the museum building, the Mario Napoli Room which houses the Tomb of the Diver. The tomb is situated face-to-face with a contemporary art work entitled *Tempi prospettici* (*Perspective Times*) by Carlo Alfano, made specifically for this place, for this room, for this tomb. It is a dialogue between antiquity and the contemporary world which, at the time of its installation (1972), was visionary. In this case too, there is a mixture of architecture and museology, of structure and installation which cannot be eliminated without eliminating the work of archaeologists, architects, artists and mu-

seologists: more an intellectual work than a material work. For this reason, I am rather perplexed by the proposals to move the Tomb of the Diver to another room or to seal off the courtyard of the “fountain” by Alfano (the artist did not approve of this title) and to add another wing to the existing building. What I find particularly perplexing is the fact that there are architects and archaeologists who have worked seriously on these proposals which, if put into effect, would have led to the destruction of a major piece of contemporary art in the Museum of Paestum. If we reflect on this episode, which was only averted thanks to the long-sightedness of several guardian angels who opposed the madness of the destruction of art in a museum, we can take account of the crucial links between works and architectural spaces. A museum is not just the sum of its contents; it is also the container. This can be appreciated irrespective of “modern” technological layouts and displays. Arguably, it is easier without an unwieldy museum apparatus. If the above considerations are accepted, every museum is also, to a certain extent, the museum of itself. At Paestum it is the “temple” of the metopes and the Room of the Diver that mark the distinction between container and contained; in other places, it is the

## 1. Museum façade

2. Hypothetical reconstruction of the east side of the *thesauros* with the metopes, from Krauss

light, the breadth, the wall decoration, the sequence of rooms that house the collections and that frequently become one with them. This is also true in the case of museum spaces which were not originally designed for the purpose but have taken on this function over time. Besides famous cases such as the Louvre (a former palace of the king of France) or the National Archaeological Museum of Naples (a former army bar-

racks), there are relatively recent examples such as the small Archaeological Museum of Teano in northern Campania, built within a medieval religious complex. In this case too, the architecture, the space and the architectural “fabric” form part of the museum as integral elements of the display, the presentation and the story. This observation leads to another extremely important point. A temple, an installation or a

piece of medieval architecture cannot be perceived along a “museum tour”. Architecture should be experienced in order to be perceived. Indeed, no museum is a museum if this means restricting the experience in space to pursuing a standardised, prescribed museum tour. Each museum, as a work of architecture, somehow avoids just being the pure and totalising display of the contents; each museum also appears as a container. There is nothing wrong with this, it should be added!

Because this is where the multiplicity of a museum’s functions emerges, a key concept in the debate about museology since the 1970s. A museum cannot just be a pre-determined, standardised “museum tour”. If a museum is also an archive that can be consulted by the public, a cultural and social centre, a meeting place - a “cultural machine” as it has been defined by Lanfranco Binni and Giovanni Pinna- then this implies that it has a life that goes beyond the educational-museum story in the strictest sense. Paradoxically, it is the architecture, the most unchangeable element of the museum, that serves as a reminder of this multiplicity of shifting functions since an architectural space, such as a mock “temple” or a “fountain” in a courtyard/garden, is naturally suited to the multifunctional nature of social in-

teractions. These places “are not a museum” in the sense that they represent much more than what is traditionally associated with a museum. Going on a guided tour of a museum undergoing refurbishment may therefore make some sense. What better opportunity exists to discover all the various aspects of a museum that go beyond the display and layout of the collections: first and foremost, a work of architecture, but also the potential for interaction between various groups and individuals. All individuals, in one way or another, are people with special needs who have a different vision of the world. Their vision which, in a museum which “is not a museum”, or rather, is not a museum in the traditional sense - makes an active contribution to the transformation of the displays by exchanging ideas with archaeologists, art historians, museologists and architects. In a certain sense, the Museum of Paestum will remain dismantled even after the work has finished. This is not because there will no display cases or objects, but because we have planned the layout so that it can be constantly updated and continuously changed. In other words, it could be said, slightly altering the sense of Magritte’s quotation, “This is not a museum, but rather *many museums* which its users are able to imagine for the future”.

3. René Magritte, *La trahison des images*  
(*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*), Los Angeles,  
County Museum of Art



*Ceci n'est pas une pipe.*



# the museum of paestum from 1952 to the present

maria antonietta brandoniso

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There is a story of the “container”, as well as the story of the exhibits housed within it, which is often overlooked, even though the space itself is a part of the display.

## Before the Museum

Let's proceed in an orderly fashion. What is the history of this museum? Given the pressing need to protect the finds that were being brought to light from the first systematic excavations conducted in the early twentieth century, between 1925 and 1926, work began on the layout of the *Antiquarium* in the eighteenth-century Palazzo de Maria, adjoining the Early Christian Basilica of the Annunziata. Very soon, however, the small rooms proved to be inadequate for containing so much material. An exceptional discovery was made in 1934 when Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco identified the extra-urban sanctuary dedicated to Hera Argiva (the Heraion) at the mouth of the river Sele and brought to light the oldest cycle of metopes in the western Mediterranean. This provided new impetus for creating a suitable museum: the future museum was designed above all as a Museum of the Heraion.

## The creation of the Museum of Paestum

The first part of the museum, clearly reflecting the influence of rationalist architecture, was designed in 1938 by Marcello De Vita, an architect of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Fine Arts. It consisted of a lower gallery arranged around a central body (the so-called “cella”) designed to display the metopes (carved panels

that ran along the frieze) discovered at the mouth of the river Sele. In terms of the plan and dimensions hypothesised at the time, it was supposed to reproduce the temple to which the metopes had been attributed. From the privileged position of the upper gallery, it would have been possible to admire the entire sculptural cycle.

The museum, which was funded by the Italian Ministry of Public Works and built by the Public Works Office of Salerno, was opened on 27 November 1952; to celebrate the opening, the ribbon was cut by Mrs Segni, the wife of the then Minister of Education.

In the first layout, the lower gallery was devoted to the extra-urban sanctuary of Hera Argiva while the central body (fig. 2) and the upper gallery contained displays related to the evidence for the city of Poisedonia.

However, the archaeological discoveries increased to such an extent that the Superintendent Sestieri made a request, in a letter sent on 29 January 1957 to the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Southern Italy Development Fund) for funding to enlarge the museum. The architect Renato Chiurazzi, an official of the Superintendency of Naples, had already been commissioned by the Directorate General for Antiquities and Fine Arts to undertake the work.

### **The Chiurazzi design and the museum layout by De Felice**

The work, which began in 1959 and was financed by the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, underwent several stops and starts until the end of 1961. Several new parts were added to the 'old museum': a floor with workshops and storerooms, a small office building and a new part that consisted of a first room and a complex of three more rooms arranged around a courtyard. From 1960 Renato Chiurazzi was joined in the direction of the work by the architect Ezio Bruno De Felice, who was in charge of the museum layout and was subsequently appointed sole director of the works in 1962. Although numerous design proposals devised by De Felice never came to fruition, his work, also related to the arrangement of workshops and storerooms, achieved significant results, especially in the first room of the new building, known as the Metope Room (fig. 1). In 1964, De Felice designed the support beams for this room in order to display the other metopes discovered in the extra-urban sanctuary of Hera Argiva: one beam was suspended from the ground while the other was anchored to the ground by a single pier. The arrangement of the metopes in an elevated position drew on the display design adopted by De Vita for the first museum building. However, in this case, the support was

**1. Metope Room, Archive of the Fondazione De Felice, no. 4929**

**2. Interior of the central building (the “cella”), Historical archive of Ernesto Apicella**



stripped down to focus on the exhibits. The roof of this room was also designed by the architect De Felice using a system of metallic trusses on which a skylight of sheets of plexiglass and a lower curtain of square perspex sheets were placed. For the remaining complex of rooms, De Felice planned a layout that highlighted the Lucanian slabs which had never been displayed before.

**De Franciscis' museum intervention**

Following the discovery of the Tomb of the Diver in 1968, the architect Giovanni De Franciscis was commissioned to design a new museum layout which once again incorporated the complex of three rooms arranged around a courtyard and which constituted the third and largest section of the museum, devoted to the religious life of the ancient



city and ancient painting. The first room was devoted to urban sanctuaries (fig. 3) while the second room was set aside, as is the case still today, to house the Tomb of the Diver. In this case, De Franciscis made several alterations, such as closing off one means of access to the courtyard and creating an antechamber to the third room in which the Lucanian slabs were displayed.

To give greater emphasis to the sensational discovery of the Tomb of the Diver, Mario Napoli commissioned a work made between 1970 and 1972 by the Neapolitan artist Carlo Alfano in the open space in front of the second room. The aim was to create an installation that symbolically re-established a connection with the famous scene of the dive portrayed on the covering slab of the tomb. The result was the art work *Tempi prospettici (Perspective Times)*: a marble pool containing flowing water. Inside the pool is a slab with a black and white optical mosaic on which, just covered by water, five cylindrical selectors of varying heights were arranged: two made of steel and three of plexiglass filled with glycerine. A sixth cylinder, made of steel, was positioned “off-screen” together with a drum of an ancient column, like a metaphor for the viewer. The work, which recalls the creations of Carlo Scarpa, a Venetian architect so fascinated by

the transparency of water that he included it in all his architectural designs, achieves a striking effect due to the continuous play of reflections.

The third room resembled an art gallery where the slabs were arranged according to the various typologies of tombs: chamber tombs, tombs with flat roofs or tombs with pitched roofs.

### **The museum today**

From the 1990s onwards, the display was reinvigorated by the opening of the Roman section in 1999 and the prehistoric section in 2007.

The story of the museum of Paestum has now arrived at a crossroads and the layout will undergo a further change in the near future. The so-called cella, a room which has had various functions during the history of the various layouts of the museum, is now used for temporary exhibitions and conferences. Unlike the previous interventions, the refurbishment will, for the first time, involve the whole museum; it is hoped that a homogeneous and coherent museum layout will be created. In view of the work that will be carried out in 2019, and following the dismantling of the exhibition “L'immagine invisibile. La tomba del Tuffatore” (The Invisible Image. The Tomb of the Diver) in the eastern wing of the museum, a new section has been prepared that explores

**3. Sanctuary Room, Archive  
of the Fondazione De Felice, no. 9442**  
Back of the photo: “De Franciscis  
layout, new wing of the Museum”



the history of the Greek city told through its necropolises. The tour includes the display of the oldest grave goods from the tombs which reflect the arrival of the Achaean colonists and the relationship with the local inhabitants. There is also space for the grave goods from small necropolises such as the “Ponte di Ferro” necropolis which tell intriguing stories of ‘less important’ people. Following the restoration of Carlo Alfano’s Fountain

and the Mario Napoli Room, undertaken in 2016 with the support of the Palmieri family, and the recent restoration of the internal garden sponsored by the Associazione Amici di Paestum, the Park will continue its activities designed to enhance the site, also involving its architectural heritage, with two important projects: a project to refurbish the museum layout and another project to restore the former Cirio factory.



# the virtual museum of the mouth of the river sele

bianca ferrara

university of naples federico II

The Virtual Museum (Museo Narrante) opened in a farmhouse along a small country road almost twenty years ago in October 2001. It still keeps all the secrets of having safeguarded and preserved the extraordinary metopes and the first artefacts found by Paola Zancani and Umberto Zanotti Bianco. It is a unique exhibition space, without original exhibits but with exciting and gripping stories, films, video and audio installations, real and virtual 3D reconstructions.

It was not easy to tell the story of the most important sanctuary of ancient Paestum, set in a fascinating, enchanted place, frozen in time but largely unknown to the general public. The only surviving architectural structures consist of foundations, mainly covered by grass, and are difficult to understand for visitors in search of the sacred area.

It was therefore necessary to find another way of enticing and involving visitors and finally making them aware of the incredible story of the discovery of the sanctuary, its excavations (still underway), and the extent to which it has proved possible to reconstruct the lives of the Greeks who lived in this area.

The creation of this museum has been a difficult challenge and only thanks to the huge efforts of a team of archaeologists, geologists, architects, engineers and computer scientists working side by side has it proved possible to overcome the “intellectualist” isolation that often typifies archaeology.

The project has been underpinned by enthusiasm and the sharing of ideas which have made it possible to create a structure that will intrigue and fascinate visitors.

**1. The world of Hera**

(Greco, Ferrara 2002, entry no. 27, fig. 164)

**2. 3D view of the Sanctuary of Hera  
at the mouth of the river Sele**

(Greco, Ferrara 2002, entry no. 15, fig. 84)



They will be encouraged to reach a site that lies about 8 km from Paestum in order to immerse themselves in the stories, videos and sounds that enliven the Virtual Museum.

However, can a story which is mainly narrated be revealed solely with written word? Without sounds, images and reconstructions, it is hard to recreate the magic, but at least it is possible to arouse the curiosity of readers and convince them to go and visit the museum. During the creation of the museum, archaeologists experienced the emotion of working in a film studio, finally using a simpler and

more direct language, and architects had to learn about stratigraphy, immerse themselves in the excavation, and to feel it strangely as their own in order to communicate this using new words and images.

The itinerary starts with a beautiful photo of the river Sele; the long canvas that greets visitors underlines the importance of the river in the choice of the foundation of the Sanctuary of Hera. It marked the boundary between two different territories: on the one side, the territory of the Etruscans of Pontecagnano and, on the other, the territory of the Greeks of Poseidonia.



In the first room devoted to the territory, a large panel depicting the Mediterranean describes Greek colonisation as the movement of peoples who, travelling in their ships, transported not only goods but also different ideas and cultures. Emphasis is given to the cult of the goddess Hera, both from the mythical perspective, with the legend of the arrival of the Argonauts led by Jason, and from the historical perspective, with the arrival of the inhabitants of Sybaris in the plain of Paestum during the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The relationship between the sanctuary of Hera and the city of Paestum is also

emphasised. Information is provided about the results of scientific research (geological surveys, sedimentological, microfaunal and palynological analyses) which has led to the reconstruction of the surrounding watery environment and the vegetation that alternated between tall trees such as elm, poplar and willow and low-growing marshland vegetation.

At the centre of the room, the first video tells the exciting story of the discovery. It recounts the fascinating undertaking of Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Paola Zancani who, based on the Greek historian Strabo's de-

scription, ventured into the marshes of the river Sele in the early 1930s to make one of the most sensational discoveries of the period. The video was made using numerous archive documents, photos, notes, sketches, plans, reports, letters, lists of expenses and private donations to fund the excavations and also documents the various problems encountered by the two archaeologists, especially the hostility of the Fascist regime.

Immediately afterwards there is a small dark room where a screen is positioned on the floor on which a reconstruction of the various phases of the excavation is projected. Visitors feel as though they are on the edge of an archaeological excavation during the discovery of one of the most beautiful and important metopes to have been unearthed: the metope portraying the suicide of Ajax.

There is a juxtaposition of older and more recent excavations, including the excavation of the so-called square building in 1958 and the discovery of a drainage channel during the 1990s beneath the foundations of the so-called *thesauros*, previously considered to have been Archaic. The excavation of the channel brought to light material of Hellenistic date, thus completely altering the interpretation and chronol-

ogy of the structure. The story is told through the notebooks of Umberto Zanotti Bianco during the 1930s excavation while a young archaeologist illustrates new excavation methodologies and the continued enthusiasm for research in recent years.

Through a narrow corridor, visitors enter the world of Hera (fig. 1), her cult and the ceremonies held in her honour. The goddess is represented in a circular fashion with her numerous attributes: initially she is a girl/virgin, then she becomes the bride of Zeus and lastly a widow when, out of jealousy, she leaves, hides and becomes a virgin once again, after bathing in the waters of the sacred river, symbolising the continuity of life and its cyclical nature. Screen-printed images on large white canvases depict a procession of girls carrying gifts for the goddess with a reconstruction of the various cult sites, the first altar of ashes, and votive deposits, such as the *bothros* (sacrificial pit) where sacred objects were preserved.

The following room is devoted to the history of the sanctuary from the 6th century BC to the 5th century AD. Thanks to a virtual model with 3D reconstructions (fig. 2), visitors can see transformations of the landscape, the forms of population of the area and the

**3. Metope Room**  
(Greco, Ferrara 2002, entry no. 5, fig. 36)





architectural structure of the sanctuary over the centuries, viewed from different perspectives (from the river, the sea, the city or from the countryside). A virtual voyage through time is thus created which enables the various phases of the sanctuary to be reconstructed.

However, the most exciting story concerning the discovery of the metopes (fig. 3), is projected in the dark of the next large room in what used to be the old farmhouse stables. It seeks to shed light on the mystery surrounding the metopes, presenting the various hypotheses about their original position and arrangement. The characters portrayed in the metopes – the mythical heroes – are brought back to life, revealing the story of their own myth at first hand and with the help of atmospheric lighting: Heracles describes his labours through the words of Hesiod, Sophocles or Apollodorus; Achilles, Hecuba and Ajax present their stories through the passages of Homer's *Illiad* or the choruses of Aeschylus, Jason and Ulysses talk of their feats through the verses of the *Odyssey* or the passages from the *Argonautica*; simultaneously, all the other ancient depictions of the myths are projected continuously on a screen.

But the magic does not stop here! Going up the staircase of one of the

two silos, surrounded by hundreds of reproductions of Hera and the women who bring offerings to the goddess, visitors step back in time and are immersed in the sound of the ancient Greek litany that recites the women's invocations to the goddess. Visitors arrive in the room devoted to the square building, but not before passing a small belvedere from which they can admire the remains of the sanctuary of Hera Argiva and glimpse the river Sele in the distance. The building was used for girls' initiation ceremonies and contains reconstructions of the four looms used for weaving the peplos for the goddess, the large main entrance and everyday objects, cooking vessels, small vases for perfumes, a coral branch, earrings, vases used for religious ceremonies and astragals (knucklebones) used for dice games.

The tour ends by going down through the second silo, devoted to the transformation of the cult in the Roman period and the spread of Christianity. The account becomes more complex and, for the first time, an alternative interpretation to the hypothesis of religious continuity between paganism and Christianity is presented. Visitors are accompanied through the main phases of the spread of Christianity at Paestum, from its first appearance, documented

in around 374 AD, to the transformation of the city into a bishopric in 431 AD until the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD when Christianity became the official religion.

Voice-overs and illustrative panels, with the addition of multimedia, tell the story of the stages in the creation of a Christian iconography. The account follows the writings of the Church Fathers which state that Christians, unlike Pagans, should not have simulacra to worship because their God is invisible and therefore cannot be represented. The account continues through the silos, showing how the image of Mary was constructed on the basis of stereotyped representations of the great goddesses of antiquity, highlighting the clear discontinuity between Hera, wife and sister of Zeus and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Lastly, a video illustrates how the idea of the continuity of cult practice between Our Lady with the Pomegranate at Capaccio and the Hera of the river Sele was created, following the various stages of gradual building work which, over time, transformed a chapel dedicated to the Holy Mother of God into a sanctuary of Our Lady with the Pomegranate.

Among the ritual ceremonies held in honour of Our Lady with the Pomegranate on 15 August, the day of the

Assumption of the Virgin/Mother of God, there is a procession of the faithful who carry a special votive gift, a wooden structure with 100 candles (hence the name *centa*) adorned with ribbons and flowers, to the sanctuary on the mountain above Capaccio.

They can be round, square, ring-shaped, in the form of a sanctuary, a lily or a ship, like the ones offered during the twentieth century to Our Lady with the Pomegranate. The *cente* in the form of a boat have led to the suggestion of an ancient link with the ritual, known from ancient sources, of the transport by boat of a wooden simulacrum of Hera, with her close relationship to the sea and her status as the goddess who protects navigation and safe landings. Another relationship of continuity with the ancient world has thus been created, although there is no evidence either in the material or literary evidence; it is probably a learned construction produced later on to emphasise continuity with a glorious past.



# the excavations at the mouth of the river sele: in search of the greeks during the twenty-year period of romanisation

daniele rossetti

archaeological park of paestum

The rivers in ancient Italy divided territories and marked boundaries but they were also important routes for connecting different peoples, for encouraging trade between them and, as a consequence, cultural contamination. This is the case of the river Sele which dominates the plain of Paestum and contributes to its fertility and rich soils. It separates the Greeks from the “mixed” community of Etruscans and local populations, linking the sea to the mountains (fig. 1). The sanctuaries situated outside the large settlements (extra-urban sanctuaries) marked the limits of the territory controlled by the city, and protected them with their sacredness; they often became wealthy mainly because of their location in key points along trading routes. This was the case for the sanctuary situated at the mouth of the river Sele, one of the most important of the areas occupied by the Greeks in Italy, marked by imposing buildings but, above all, by the exceptional nature of its decoration, in particular the sculptural cycles that were concentrated in the spaces of the metopes. It is almost a unique example in archaic Italy, which resembles the sanctuary at Selinunte, in Sicily, also located outside the city, on the boundary between Greek-controlled and Punic-controlled areas. According to many scholars, the presence of such complex sculptural cycles in these places may not be a coincidence: the populations that the Greeks considered “barbarian” lived only a few hundred metres away, distinct in terms of different customs, languages and beliefs, and observed them. The aim may have been to impress the “barbarians” through the Greeks’ capacity to create such extraordinary and diverse artistic works. Indeed, the stories narrated in the reliefs are dominated by the figure of Heracles, the civilising hero

who founded cities, and who, according to myth, had travelled as far as Italy as a result of his numerous labours. The sanctuary at the mouth of the river Sele was dedicated to a goddess, as was often the case in the archaic world: Hera, the wife of Zeus, one of the most important deities in the Greek pantheon, was worshipped here with her attributes as the protectress of the life cycle, from birth until death. All the quintessential values of the feminine world, such as the fertility not just of humans, but also of fields and animals, crucial for the survival and wealth of the city, were gathered around her. It may be no coincidence that the rediscovery of the sanctuary in the modern era was the work of a woman, moreover during the extremely complex twenty-year period of Fascist rule, just a few years before the outbreak of the Second World War. Aged just over thirty, Paola Zancani Montuoro left in search of the sanctuary in the plain of the river Sele mentioned by ancient historical sources, with the help of her friend Umberto Zanotti Bianco (fig. 2). The story of an archaeological discovery, which was to be one of the most important to be made in southern Italy during the twentieth century, also turns into the account of a challenge, almost a form of silent, unarmed resistance to the Fascist regime. The Fascist authorities, which were draining the marshes in the plain of

Paestum during this period, and were simultaneously excavating the ruins of the city, viewed the work being undertaken at the mouth of the river Sele with suspicion, and only gave permits for excavation as a result of private donations, without any state funding. The two archaeologists were looked upon with disdain, both politically and scientifically. The archaeological research sponsored by the regime during this period was intended to find evidence for the glory of Roman civilisation, in order to elevate it above any other cultural expression of the past, including Greek civilisation, for evident propaganda motives. Zanotti Bianco had been one of the signatories of the anti-Fascist manifesto written by Italian intellectuals, and was forced to abandon all the activities he had previously been engaged in, falling back on archaeological studies, until he was arrested by the authorities a few years later. It is not hard to imagine the impact of the discovery when, shortly after the first excavation campaign in 1934, the finds including the first metopes demonstrated the validity of the two archaeologists' hypotheses (fig. 3). The uniqueness and wealth of the finds forced the regime to highlight the exceptional nature of the discovery. At the time, the archaeological museum was housed in the neighbouring building - the bishoprific - but it had become too small to

**1. The river Sele in the area of the Sanctuary of Hera**

**2. Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco**



display all the material; the heart of the new museum, designed in 1938, therefore became the layout devised especially for the metopes of the Heraion. Its façade reflects the 'monumentalist' architectural language, one of the typical styles of the Fascist period: it was inspired by neoclassicism whose roots lay in classical architecture. Its interior also contains clear references to ancient structures, with an attempt to reconstruct the splendour of a Greek temple. The centre of the museum is occupied by the so-called "cella", considered by the ancients to be the house of the deity. The "cella" dominates the space and the archaic metopes, the inspiration

**3. Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco on the river Sele**



for the whole design, were arranged on its upper part. The area considered in antiquity to be the most sacred, inaccessible place, reserved only for the statue of the deity and priests, has now become the heart of the new archaeological museum for contemporary visitors. The "cella" is the starting point of the tour - echoing with the sounds of music and children's laughter, or the voices of academics during conferences- to explore archaeological research which is in a state of constant flux, continuously enriched by new discoveries and new ideas for projecting into the future a heritage for which everyone should feel responsible and proud.



# the diver in the art work of carlo alfano

raffaele d'andria

restorer architect

**Who are you? And where are you from? – I am the son of Earth and Starry Heaven  
[Gold tablet found in Thessaly]**

Right from the moment of its discovery on 3 June 1968 in the necropolis of Tempa del Prete, situated to the south of Paestum, the Tomb of the Diver has been at the centre of a debate regarding its interpretation which still remains the subject of lively discussion. As part of the exhibition held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its discovery, engaging in a sort of ‘archaeological investigation within archaeology’, Gabriel Zuchtriegel summarised the main cultural positions of this debate underlying the iconographic and philological complexity of the tomb. He also emphasised its historical significance, and eventually focused on its influence in the artistic field. On the same occasion, Maria Emanuela Oddo explored the same stances with regard to bibliographical references, making a distinction between interpretations of the tomb that focus on mystery and those that focus on reductive hedonistic aspects. The latter interpretation was supported in particular by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and Massimo Pallottino, who regarded them as the expression of local art, of “inferior quality”, based on “repertoire figures”. The interpretations of Bandinelli and Pallottino were questioned by Mario Napoli, the discoverer of the tomb, who, in the first publication about the burial, declared the tomb to be a ‘masterpiece of great Greek painting’. According to Oddo, he proposed “viewing the dive as a purificatory action and the banquet as the promise of eternal bliss, linked to the [de-



ceased's] membership of mystery cults, in particular Orphic or Pythagorean cults". To back up this hypothesis, Mario Napoli, who was not just an archaeologist but also knowledgeable about contemporary art, decided to commission a work of art to be made while the display area of the tomb in the new section of the museum was being prepared. Carlo Alfano (1932-1990), a Neapolitan artist of international standing, was commissioned to make the work: he was one of the few people capable of using his "penetrating gaze" – to use a term coined by the art critic Achille Bonito Oliva – in a creative relationship with the tomb. With a background in abstract expressionism and European Art Informel, Alfano experimented with optical and kinetic language during the late 1960s and, during the same period, explored the temporal dimension of representation. It was during this phase, between 1970 and 1972, that the artist created the work that reflected on the Tomb of the Diver, including it in the cycle of works entitled *Tempi prospettici* (*Perspective Times*). The thread running through the cycle is the assessment of the image in the effects of variability in its refractions, exploring the perceptive relationship between space and time: in particular, the effects created by the arrangement of materials with

different densities, accompanied by the same number of refractions of light. The whole work was devised by Alfano to respond to the slightest movements of viewers, calibrated through optical matrices. Obviously, Alfano's work – influenced by the theoretical research of *Gestaltpsychologie* and semiology, as well as by the work of Gerges Vantonongerloo, Alberto Biasi, Getulio Alviani and Bridget Riley – involves solutions with varying degrees of spatiality, marked by the 'threshold value'<sup>2</sup>. Works that can be ascribed to this value include, on the one hand, *Tempi prospettici (delle distanze della rappresentazione)* (*Perspective Times [of the distances of representation]*) presented at the exhibition *Vitalità del negativo nell'Arte Italiana, 1960-1970* (*Vitality of the Negative in Italian Art, 1960-70*) held at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome in 1971; and, on the other, the work related to the Tomb of the Diver. Placed below the exhibition area that houses the work, separated from it by large panes of glass, the work is arranged in a pool full of gently flowing water, with a raised plane within it, made up of an optical mosaic of black and white tesserae (fig. 1). Covered by a few centimetres of water, the plane has five cylinders of varying height installed upon it. Two of the cylinders are made of gleaming steel while three are made

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**1. The work of Carlo Alfano with the Tomb of the Diver in the background**

**2. Detail of the mosaic in the pool  
Archive of the Fondazione De Felice**

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**3. Detail of the pilasters, Archive  
of the Fondazione De Felice**





of plexiglass filled with glycerine; a third steel cylinder is situated close to the pool. The impressive visual effect stems from the interaction of multiple reflections: the reflection of the tomb on the cylinders and on the quivering surface of the water, and the reflections produced on the cylinders by the optical mosaic (fig. 2). The latter is almost an element for measuring the reflections, except for the deformations in the water of the elements surrounding the work, already merged with the colours and mobile forms of the greenery and the sky.

The scene is witnessed by the corroded drum of a column, the third steel cylinder which, by seemingly eavesdropping on what is happening in the pool, not only acts as an atmospheric comment, but introduces the figure of the *other*, the metaphor of the spectator/author, of the portrait/

self-portrait. The artist has entrusted this column drum with the first and last sequence of the perceptive maze, sequences in which the symbolic unity of the tomb is 'broken'; the tomb has now become an element of a wider context, transformed into a part of nature on the 'invisible' return of its own image.

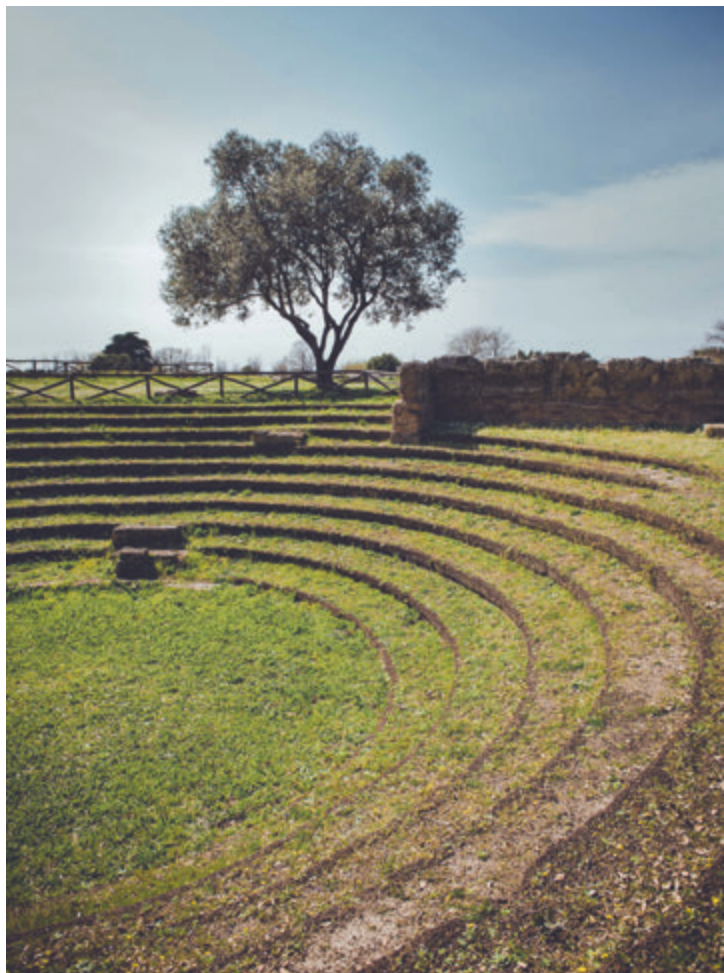
Nevertheless, even though this is the result, it would certainly be partial if it were not completed by a further observation. "By being in a specific point, on the edge of the pool, when the sky is clear and the idea of death is far from the viewer's mind, the viewer can glimpse the figure of the Diver – no longer static but vibrant – in one of the steel tubes"<sup>3</sup>. This is a figure which is freed from its formal relations, whether immediate or remote, suspended only in a game of poetic illusionism.

<sup>1</sup> M.E. Oddo, *La Tomba del Tuffatore. Una bibliografia Ragionata*, in *L'immagine invisibile. La Tomba del Tuffatore nel cinquantesimo dalla scoperta*, exhibition guide (Paestum, Museo Archeologico, 3 June-17 October 2018), G. Zuchtriegel (ed), Naples 2018, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> the concept of the 'threshold', like that of the 'break', stems from the ideas of Michel Foucault, a philosopher of crucial importance for the understanding of the work of Carlo Alfano. In an article published in 2001, written for the exhibition held at Castel dell'Ovo, Vitaliano Corbi argued

that Alfano's work should be defined as 'works of doubt' "which, if he had had to group them all under a single title, then it would have been 'on the threshold', a reference to the 'symbolic line' that divides two spaces that belong to each other yet are separate. The 'threshold' lies between day and night, between wakefulness and sleep; the threshold between life and death is the most important", in *La Repubblica* 7 April 2001.

<sup>3</sup> R. D'Andria, *Il Tuffatore di Carlo Alfano. Restauro di un'opera dei 'Tempi prospettici' a Paestum*, Salerno 1995, p. 40.



# rethinking the museum of paestum: notes on a design for a new display

maria boffa

archaeological park of paestum

The year was 1952 and Antonio Segni, the Italian Minister for Education, cut the ribbon to open the museum of Paestum. The word “MVSEO” written in large lettering clearly identifies the building as a place devoted to culture. Today, after going through the main door, visitors can read, on the front of the “cella” the words written in neon “*Ceci n’est pas un musée* – This is not a museum” (fig. 2). Is this a contradiction? No, we like to think of it as an evolution, a story that has been created over the years and that reflects alterations, changes of mind, changes of direction and openings towards new opportunities. The present is a summary of the narrative in the refurbishment and reorganisation of the display that will take place over the next few years. By adopting the principles of the latest debates about museology, the Museum of Paestum is rethinking itself and its goals are inexorably linked to an architectural design capable of expressing a new identity in the best way possible. From a more strictly material perspective, the work that needs to be carried out can be justified by the serious structural problems of the building and the inadequacy of the museum display and layout. In particular, the series of repeated enlargements of the space and the continuous transformations of the displays have given the Museum of Paestum an uneven and fragmentary character which, like a large patchwork, impairs the use and understanding of the whole complex. The aim is therefore to solve the structural problems and devise a uniform display policy in all the rooms to give the museum the coherence and homogeneity that it currently lacks.

This is what the museum will become. Let's go together through the main entrance and begin the tour of the new museum through the eyes of the people who have devised this display. The idea is to present the history of a city and its territory through the materials found over a hundred years of archaeological exploration in the ancient Greek, Lucanian and Roman settlement of Poseidonia-Paestum. The entire ground floor is devoted to Poseidonia, the Greek *polis* founded by the Achaean of Sybaris in 600 BC and then occupied by the Lucanians from the second half of the 5th century BC. The tour is organised into large thematic sections where the spaces and history of the ancient city come back to life. The first room is devoted to temple architecture and the Doric order, from the origins to its classical canonisation. This section will be displayed around the "cella" in the lower gallery: the spaces will not undergo any change, a decision taken in order to safeguard the oldest part of the museum. In the lower gallery, closely related to the metopes mounted on the upper part of the "cella", there will be a section devoted to ritual practices in the main sanctuaries of the city – the southern and northern sanctuaries – and the surrounding territory –

the sanctuary of Hera at the mouth of the river Sele. The tour continues with the "De Felice Room" (formerly the Metope Room) where the city and the public spaces take centre stage in the display. Pride of place is given to two important monuments unearthed in the archaeological site: the *Heroon*, the tomb of the founding hero accompanied by a rich array of grave goods (bronze and ceramic vases) and the *Ekklesiasterion* (fig. 1).

The *Ekklesiasterion* was the public space of the Greek city used for citizens' assemblies; it is one of the main symbols of political activity and reflects the political changes that took place in Poseidonia during the early Classical period. In this light, there is a reconstruction of the original so that it can once again act as a space that brings people together, a place for the general public, both on an everyday basis and for major events. The following room is devoted to craft products: the artefacts made locally in pottery workshops and mints are on display. The next room focuses on necropolises. By examining the grave goods, the section illustrates funerary ideology: the customs and rituals used at Paestum during the Greek and Lucanian periods. Along the corridor that faces eastwards, with large

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**1.** Detail of the *Ekklesiasterion*  
in the archaeological site

**2.** Tomba della Finanza  
(Tomb rescued by the Guardia  
di Finanza, the Italian financial  
and customs police), detail





windows overlooking the landscape of the plain of the river Sele, there is a display of archaeological material from the hinterland, evidence from the areas surrounding the city of Paestum. This is followed by the “Mario Napoli” Room which contains the slabs from the Tomb of the Diver, one of the main symbols of the museum of Paestum. The room, which has recently been refurbished, will not undergo major changes because, like the “cella”, it is a cornerstone of the museology of Paestum and therefore linked to its original identity. It could not occupy another position: this is also reflected by the presence, in the outdoor area in front of the tomb, of the work of contemporary art by the artist Carlo Alfano, intimately connected to the symbolic significance of the dive into the afterlife. The tour continues with another room and evidence of a new culture: the Lucanians. The “Room of Lucanian paintings” contains a display of the painted slabs and the reconstructions of cist tombs with grave goods, carefully re-assembled to give a clear idea of their original structure and function. The tour continues on the upper floor devoted to the Roman period. The display retraces the classic stratigraphic sequence of archaeological excavation

where the oldest artifacts are found in the lower layers and the more recent ones in the upper layers. The second floor of the museum of Paestum houses the “Roman Room” with the fascinating finds related to the Roman colony of Paestum dating to the period after 273 BC. Following the same logic, the underground room is designed to contain the prehistoric section of the museum: it tells the story of the Gaudio culture and the populations of the territory of Paestum before the arrival of the Greeks.

The museum storerooms also deserve special attention: the space designed to house archaeological material not on display has recently been included in the tour so that it is part of the cultural tour available to visitors on a daily basis. It is an innovative decision that makes the Museum of Paestum one of the first Italian museums to provide the public with this opportunity.

In terms of access and use, the new museum display complies with the highest international standards of management, communications, educational and technological innovation which ensure an effective and significant experience as well as one that is enjoyable for the public. The new layout and display have been designed to make the tour safer and

**3. Young visitors observe the Tomb of the Diver**



more accessible for everyone: there are no physical obstacles, such as narrow spaces, or cognitive impediments which could prove confusing for visitors. Considerable attention is devoted to the system of verbal, symbolic, technological and textual communication to make sure the tour provides an effective experience for learning and cultural development.

A key feature of the design of the museum refurbishment regards the theme of accessibility, in accordance with the high level of interest in this topic generally encountered within the Italian museum system, so that it becomes one of the main aspects of the mission of the Archaeological park of Paestum. From this perspective, two different but complementary profiles can be recognised. Firstly, accessibility means breaking down architectural barriers. The aim is to enable people with special needs to enjoy the museum experience in a completely safe and autonomous fashion.

The second aspect concerns accessibility in a cultural sense. The museum thus becomes an inclusive place, open to everyone, which seeks to extend forms of participation and access. Emphasis is placed on encouraging encounters with the “other”: cultural mediation and understanding of the

museum by a heterogeneous public in terms of demographic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

The Archaeological Park of Paestum has promoted a variety of projects on these themes. One outstanding example is the project “Paestum per tutti. Architetture senza barriere” (Paestum for everyone. Architecture without barriers) which literally makes it possible to enter the house of the gods, namely the oldest temple of Poseidonia, the “Basilica” or the “Open Paestum” project aimed at creating a tactile tour for the partially sighted and visually impaired.

The “Dive into the Blue” tour (*Un tuffo nel Blu*) was designed for children and young people with autism spectrum disorders. The museum storerooms have also been made completely accessible to the public as from January of this year. A new social role for museums has recently emerged which seeks to meet increasingly difficult challenges. The contemporary museum is gradually becoming less closely tied to its collections or the building in which it is housed. Rather than just being a container of artefacts, the museum needs to be an institution capable of creating new social meanings.

It is a ‘museum for the public’ with a responsibility to act and bring about

change through the targeted, conscious and personalised use of networks of relationships that already exist or that it intends to construct. In this context, the future role of the Museum of Paestum, following its refurbishment, is to acquire the central role that it ought to play: an active role, an attraction, a participatory and inclusive institution.

It is not a static institution for celebrating archaeological collections. Quite the contrary; it is a place for meetings and constructive discussions of cultural and social significance.



## ...so what exactly is it?

mariajosè luongo

archaeological park of paestum

This is not a museum: it is a theatre! Just as in a theatre, the rooms of a museum have props which are necessary for the layout and the display, in other words the story chosen by the curators to present to the public. There are many artifacts available to us and they can be used to tell multiple stories. They are kept in the 'dressing rooms' of the museum: the storerooms.

Let's focus on an artifact on the 'stage': a red figure krater by the famous vase painter Assteas whose workshop was situated at Paestum. The decoration shows a naked woman with drapery around her hips and a bearded satyr who holds a handful of pellets (fig. 2). This silent encounter has lasted from 370 BC and continues to this day. How did the vase end up in this specific display case? Following the 'journey' of this krater from the excavation to the display case is possible because access to the storerooms at Paestum has been a decisive strategic decision for safeguarding and protecting the artifacts contained within it. The answer lies in the basement, in other words, a 'behind-the-scenes' look at the museum, a place of invisible artifacts and professional expertise. Learning often involves diving deep into a subject: it is no coincidence that Alice has to descend into a tunnel to reach Wonderland. However, the basement of the museum of Paestum is not a claustrophobic place: during the first few decades of this century, a system of trolleys was invented to store and move the stone slabs of the tombs in order to avoid, quite literally, trampling over centuries of history given that the slabs had been laid out haphazardly over the floor (fig. 1).

In the storerooms, the krater rediscovers the whole of its history and thus its identity. It emerges that it was one of the grave goods from tomb no. LXIV, discovered on 22 October 1959 in the necropolis of Laghetto to the north east of the city, dating to 370-360 BC. It was found by Giuseppe Barattucci, an assistant of the then director Pellegrino Sestieri. At this point, visitors can enjoy a unique experience: they can attribute a name to the travertine tomb slab, a name such as that of Barattucci whom they would otherwise never have known. At Paestum, it is possible to consult the excavation diaries, the original notes made by archaeologists to describe the most significant events of the day. The diaries do not just contain measurements, lists of objects or geographical indications. They are full of the emotions of a person who is about to discover something after months of hard work. The diaries convey these emotions and also offer an insight into everyday life. Some diaries contain drawings, calculations of the payment for workmen, notes about cough medicines, or anxieties about new buildings that would culminate in a special law to safeguard the site of Paestum. They reflect the minds of people worrying about distant families, how to make

ends meet, notes to send to the director, errors and hopes. The faded pages, with occasionally wavering handwriting, reveal the man behind the archaeologist's notes. When he discovered tomb LXIV, Giuseppe Barattucci was worried about the exact position of the various grave goods: a jug, two *kylikes*, a *skyphos*, a *patera*, a *lekane*, an *oinochoe*, four small cups, three clay tablets, four clay masks, an iron strigil, fragments of a belt, a spearhead and a round *lekythos*. We are lucky because there are plenty of grave goods. The burials often have no grave goods because tomb-robbers have stolen them and left the heavy travertine walls: this is a terrible blow for scholars because the relationship between the various parts and between these parts and the original context is lost. However, the exceptionally rich burial assemblage poses the question of why a single artifact, and in particular this specific artifact, was chosen for display. What Barattucci saw and what has not survived is the skeleton of the deceased. Until the 1970s, human remains were generally disposed of. Only subsequently was a systematic study of the skeletons at Paestum carried out by the 'invisible figures' who contribute, with their expertise, to the show: the palaeopathologists. Besides

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1. The Museum's storerooms

2. Asteass, red figure calyx-krater,  
from Laghetto, tomb LXIV





the variation in height over the years, the widespread presence of malaria and thalassemia (Mediterranean anemia) also emerged. After unearthing the tomb and the grave goods, the next step is restoration. Restoration is not designed to restore the object to its original condition, but aims to preserve it while respecting historical truth. The travertine slabs are delicately washed with sponges and distilled water, then the stone is reinforced and the colours are restored. One of the oddest objects used by restorers is a mundane toothbrush! At this point tomb LXIV is studied and inventoried. Publication is another extremely important step: without it, it is as though the research had never happened, because it is only at this moment that the information that has been gathered enters the public domain.

Paestum is a nerve centre of research: specialists from Cambridge University are currently analysing the remains of mineralised textiles attached to the plaster of the Tomb of the Women Mourners, displayed in 2017 during the exhibition *Action Painting. Rito & arte nelle tombe di Paestum (Action Painting. Ritual and Art in the tombs of Paestum)*. Many of the things that have been discovered about the stone slabs are due to 'little accidents':

painting running, signs of the ropes used to lower the painted travertine slabs, traces of pottery on damp plaster and bubbles caused by water leaking into the travertine which are still visible. What the slab silently reveals is far in excess of what it shows when it 'speaks': there is a form of serendipity in the field of archaeology which is on a par with the most important medical discoveries (such as Fleming's discovery of penicillin) and geographical discoveries (such as the 'discovery' of America). Moreover, the tomb slabs preserve traces of the ancient paints which elsewhere have been lost. The information gleaned from the tombs also helps to understand the nature of the temples: the temples were also extremely colourful, decorated with red, white and blue, although weathering has removed virtually all traces of them. On this note, it is worth mentioning the anxiety of Mario Napoli, the discoverer of the Tomb of the Diver. He left the slab of the Diver in this storeroom for 23 months in the dark to ensure that the painting gradually became 'accustomed' to a room above ground and to prevent the precious frescoed paints from fading due to the light. However, let's return to tomb LXIV from the Laghetto necropolis. At this

### 3. Behind the scenes at the Donizetti theatre



point in the story, once it was restored, the slabs and the grave goods could follow different and interchangeable trajectories: the could be displayed in the museum, loaned or kept in the storerooms. In 2019, for example, the tomb slabs left Paestum for an exhibition in China while the krater from the grave goods of tomb Laghetto LXIV found its place in the limelight. This takes us back to the initial question: what leads to the decision to choose a specific artifact for display rather than another? How does a museum display take shape? A museum is a cultural device capable of activating specific psychic and emotional processes rather than others for most observers. Making a choice is necessary due to the sheer number of artifacts in a museum, some of which are extremely repetitive, such as the clay statuettes of Hera at Paestum. In the past, display cases tended to be filled with artefacts whereas nowadays the emphasis is on rooms that are not crammed with objects but have more representative elements. Museum communication involves many different cognitive processes such as perception, emotions and motives. Through a series of experiments conducted during the 1990s at Università Roma Tre in Rome, based

on figure-ground and ambiguous images, Gabriella Bartoli, Anna Maria Giannini and Paolo Bonaiuto have demonstrated how, in the context of museum visiting, visitors may be affected by varying degrees of tolerance of homogeneity (order, unity, simplicity) and heterogeneity (disorder, multiplicity, variety), according to specific indicators of perceptual saturation. This is deemed to affect the preferences for contemporary or classical art works by visitors. The interesting finding is that aesthetic experience emerged as the only human experience in which there is simultaneous satisfaction in the viewer's dominant motives. While the satisfaction of a motive may be relevant to the concept of the 'experience of usefulness' and the 'experience of pleasure' (food, clothing, social recognition), only the simultaneous satisfaction of several needs, above a specific threshold of importance, is correlated to aesthetic experience. The sensation experienced is equivalent to the feelings that Manfredi expresses in Dante's *Purgatorio*: "Then, when anything is heard or seen/ which keeps the soul steadily drawn to it, Time passes on and we are unaware" and that Goethe's character Faust also expresses: "Stay a while,

**4. Platform realized for the initiative  
'Paestum for all'**



you are so beautiful!”. Experiencing this type of feeling is a daily challenge in Bauman’s society of liquid modernity, aimed at satisfying ephemeral whims. The rigid, hierarchical, closed and abstract languages of Marshall McLuhan’s *Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* have been joined by increasingly immersive, reticular, fluid and rapid media. This has led to a new epistemology of complexity, the idea of knowledge and being as places of continuous negotiation and mediation, problematic spaces in a state of constant movement. At the Museum of Paestum, the decision was taken to avoid using many interactive supports in the storerooms to preserve the authenticity of the tour. What visitors appreciate is this ‘genuineness’ made up of everyday anecdotes of security staff gathered over time, without the sophistication of augmented reality. On this point, we are not afraid of being ‘out of fashion’. On the contrary, in a period filled with numbers and percentages, quantity at all costs, the Archaeological park of Paestum has decided to adopt a social balance sheet, a document that provides not just information of an economic and financial nature, but also information about the social and environ-

mental impact of the initiatives put into effect. The slogan *Ceci n’est pas un musée* (*This is not a museum*) has been chosen because it is not just a space devoted to the conservation and identity of the past but also a place of possibilities which is in touch with contemporary life and its issues. The project designed to open up the museum storerooms has had many effects on the community: it has enabled the general public to have access to spaces that were previously only accessible to a few scholars and has increased accessibility and socio-cultural inclusion. Ever since he was appointed, Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the director of the Archaeological Park of Paestum, has made museum accessibility a characteristic feature of his work. One of the first projects set up by the Park was entitled ‘Paestum per Tutti’ (Paestum for all) and consists in providing people in wheelchairs with the unique possibility of visiting the interior of a Greek temple thanks to a platform that is both removable and has no negative environmental impact (fig. 4). The storerooms can also be visited by people in wheelchairs. But that is only half the story: tours are currently available in Italian Sign Language (LIS) and braille tablets made using special inks that enable

visitors to perceive frescoes and their state of conservation. Physical barriers are visible and are so evident that it is impossible to ignore them. However, the cognitive, emotional and communicative barriers are subtler and more difficult to overcome. The blue of the water over which the famous Diver of Paestum is eternally suspended is also the symbol of a growing phenomenon: autism. People with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are often considered 'troublesome' visitors because they are difficult to manage. Due to their very nature as places of contamination and experimentation, the storerooms are wonderfully suited to autism-friendly tours, monitored by the Parthenope University of Naples, in order to create a replicable and commonly agreed model. Emotion is therefore not just the aim of aesthetic experience but a form of learning with vast potential. This awareness is making 'Paestum a place for all', a place that is increasingly tailored to everyone. Each individual arrives at a different conclusion after the tour. When they leave the storerooms, coming into contact with daylight, many visitors rub their eyes. It is like Alice reawakening, the return to reality. Who has been dreaming? The storeroom-thea-

tre is not real but it is always credible and this generates a form of disorientation at the end of the tour. But now let's all go back upstairs, definitely with a greater awareness: the show is about to begin!



# the museum, the architecture and the characters

maria boffa, maria antonietta brandoniso

archaeological park of paestum

The planned modernisation and redevelopment of the Museum of Paestum will inevitably bring about structural changes for the rooms: the intervention, which will sometimes be radical and sometimes less drastic, will give the entire museum complex a new appearance. However, the architectural and museographic refurbishment cannot avoid considering what the museum was like in the past, how the spaces were organised, the various displays; above all, it cannot ignore the memory of the characters who put ideas and projects into practice.

We shall begin a brief journey through the rooms of the Museum of Paestum, as it would have appeared from 1952 to the present, and partly before the beginning of the work. A rich selection of photos will provide food for thought about the museum as a ‘container’, not in the negative sense that the term might conjure up, but as a place for bringing together and inspiring dialogue between stories, projects, fashions, concepts and publics. Far too often, the history of the architecture of Paestum has been neglected in favour of the archaeological collections: this interpretation seeks to do justice to this undisputed container of equally important information about the history of Paestum.

## **The first incarnation of the museum**

We have just entered the museum. Look in front of you: two galleries, a lower one (fig. 2) and an upper one (fig. 3) and, in the middle, a structure that replicates the innermost part of a Greek temple (the “cella”). When the Museum of Paestum was



**1. Layout of the Sanctuary Room, Archive of the Fondazione De Felice, n. 9448**



**2. Lower gallery, Historic archive of Ernesto Apicella**

**3. Upper gallery (Sestieri 1955)**



opened in 1952 (fig. 4), it only consisted of these few rooms and nothing else. The creation of a structure suitable for housing the archaeological finds being unearthed in the city and the surrounding area was actively supported by Amedeo Maiuri, the then Superintendent of Campania and Molise. In 1936 he pointed out to the Italian Ministry of National Education the need for a suitable place to house the excavation finds. After getting the approval of the ministry, the superintendent chose the architect Marcello de Vita as the creative mind who could design a museum at

Paestum. The design had already been completed by 1938.

But who was Amedeo Maiuri? Previously a student of the Italian Archaeological School at Athens, he was appointed Superintendent of the Antiquities of Campania and Molise, with its headquarters in Naples, in 1924. He was mainly active at Paestum from 1926 onwards, when he began coordinating the restoration of the three Doric temples and subsequently directed the excavations in the northern sanctuary between 1928 and 1939. It was Amedeo Maiuri who gave his approval to the request for

**4. Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco observe the construction of the Museum of Paestum, 1952**



an excavation permit put forward by Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco on behalf of the Società Magna Grecia to explore the Heraion at the mouth of the river Sele. This research, which began in 1934, represented the real precondition for the creation of the museum.

#### **Metope Room or the De Felice Room**

After the opening of the museum, archaeological discoveries continued apace to the extent that it was deemed necessary to enlarge the display space. You are in the first of the new rooms

**5. First floor designed by the architect Ezio Bruno De Felice**



built for this purpose, beginning in 1959. This room encapsulates the museographic work of a famous Neapolitan architect, Ezio Bruno De Felice (fig. 5), an expert in museum design and architectural restoration. The following are some of his most important designs: the conversion of the Palace of Capodimonte in Naples into National Galleries (INARCH National Prize 1961 for the Conservation and Enhancement of Architectural Heritage), the restoration of the four-sided portico of the Abbey of San Benedetto at Salerno and its conversion into a museum (INARCH Na-

**6. Roof of the Metope Room, Archive of the Fondazione De Felice, no. 4928**



tional Prize 1966 for the Conservation and Enhancement of Architectural Heritage), the restoration and fitting out of the Certosa (Charterhouse) of Padula, the extension of the National Gallery in Palazzo Abatellis at Palermo, the restoration of the Flavian amphitheatre in Pozzuoli, and the restoration of the Auditorium of Victor Hortàin Brussels. De Felice was an architect who had the capacity to capture light, as he has rightly been defined: he designed a skylight roof and a 'velarium' for this room (fig. 6). To support the metopes of the 5th century BC, he chose a pared-down support made up of stainless steel

**7. Layout of the Sanctuary Room, Archive of the Fondazione De Felice, no. 9442**



beams, a linear display solution that did not impede the vision of the finds and, at the same time, communicated harmoniously with ancient artefacts.

### **Sanctuary Room**

The creation of the Sanctuary Room was part of the project to enlarge the museum. Between 1968 and 1970, it underwent an important museographic intervention by the architect Giovanni De Franciscis which can be reconstructed from the photographs kept in the Archive of the Fondazione De Felice. This room marked the beginning of the third section of the museum which, in its

8. Mario Napoli during an inspection at the building site of the Museum of Paestum



turn, was thematically divided between religious life and ancient painting. In this room visitors could admire the votive material together with the architectural elements of the urban sanctuaries of Paestum (fig. 7). Contemporary photographs make it possible to trace the history and evolution of the display solutions that were implemented. It can thus be seen that the clay statue of Zeus enthroned, which is now in a display case, was once displayed without protective devices or barriers, but placed in a pre-eminent position gazing at the landscape of the plain of the river Sele through the large windows of the room

9. Detail of the work *Tempi prospettici* (*Perspective Times*) by Carlo Alfano



(fig. 1). The same can be said for the grave goods of the *heroon* displayed on a platform situated before the entrance to the Mario Napoli Room. The decision may seem unusual and rather reckless in view both of the precious nature of the artefacts and modern museological principles. However, one plausible explanation may lie in the preference for complete unobstructed access for archaeological finds that are of unrivalled importance in Magna Graecia.

### Mario Napoli Room

This room marked the beginning of the section devoted to ancient paint-

**10. Layout of the Room devoted to Lucanian painting, Archive of the Fondazione De Felice, no. 4941**

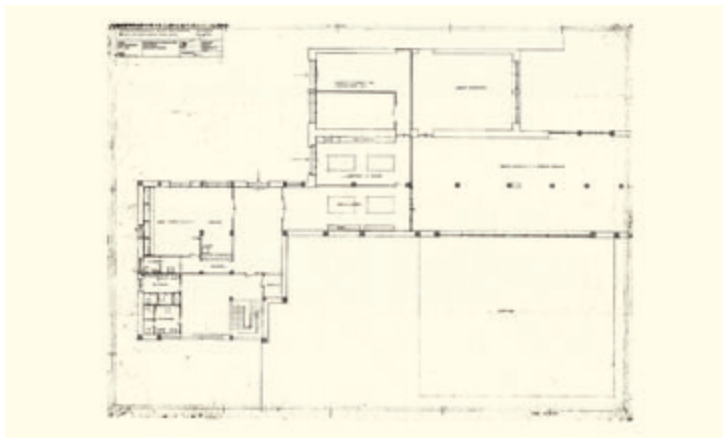
ing. The 'Mario Napoli' Room takes its name from the famous archaeologist who discovered the Tomb of the Diver on 3 June 1968 (fig. 8). The scholar, who at the time was Superintendent of the Provinces of Salerno, Avellino and Benevento, wanted to give the monument an exclusive space, already achieved as part of the museum enlargement project; to mark the occasion, the museum underwent refurbishment according to strict museographic criteria. The architect Giovanni De Franciscis was commissioned to design the museum display. Between 1970 and 1972, in order to highlight the tomb slabs, the Neapolitan artist Carlo Alfano was commissioned to design *Tempi prospettici* (*Perspective Times*), a contemporary work of art that was symbolically linked to the famous scene of the dive depicted on the covering slab of the tomb (fig. 9). The next room, just like a real art gallery, contained a display of the Lucanian tomb slabs (fig. 10), a rich selection of images that illustrates the culture and traditions of an Italic people.



**The storeroom floor**

During the 1960s, the architect De Felice came up with two designs for the storeroom floor (fig. 11): the first concerned the layout of the rooms while the second was related to the redevelopment of other rooms, although unfortunately it was never implemented. In the first design, besides the rooms suitable for the conservation of archaeological material, other rooms were planned such as changing rooms, toilets for employees, a restoration laboratory, carpenter's and smith's workshops. The basement rooms still continue to be used for the same functions for which they

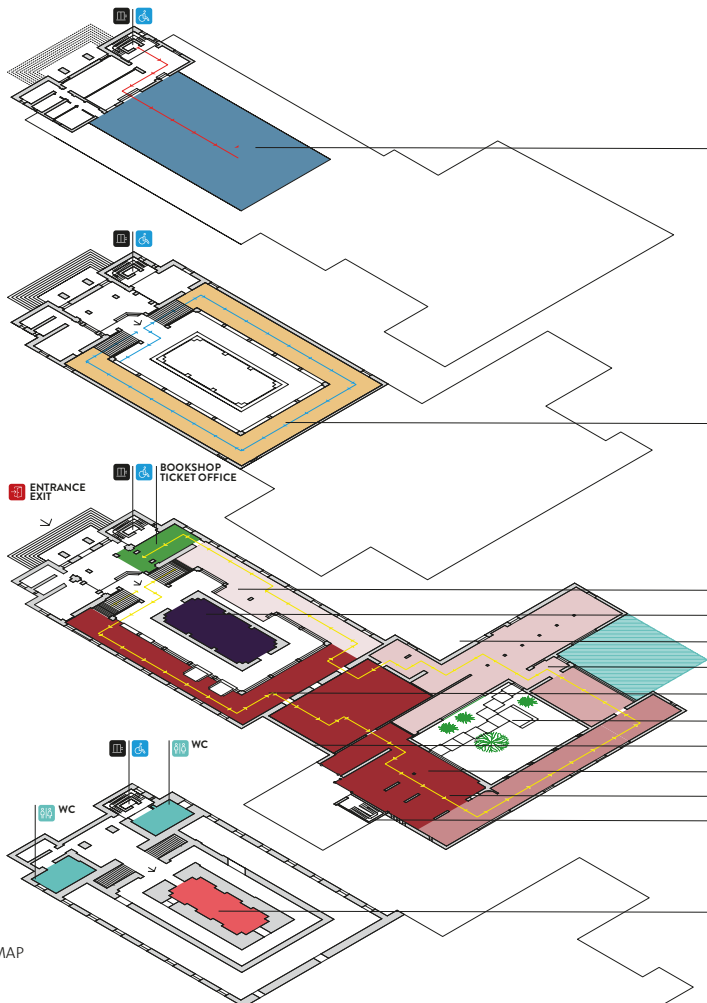
## 11. Plan of the storerooms, Archive of the Fondazione De Felice



were designed by De Felice but, unlike a few years ago, they are now accessible and usable for all visitors. Since 2016, the doors of the storerooms have been open to the public and this has brought the history of the artefacts and the people who have always worked in these rooms to the attention of everyone. A tour entitled “Il Museo dietro le quinte” (a behind-the-scenes look at the museum) opened in late December 2018. It has ensured that tours of the

storerooms have become a regular feature at the museum. The storerooms can be seen as they really are, in their most authentic guise, without any attempt to create a museum display or superstructures of any kind. They express all their potential for those who wish to find out what lies behind a ‘major’ archaeological museum which – it should be emphasised – does not just involve the displays in the rooms, but also includes many different variables.

# map



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**second floor**

roman collection

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**first floor**

prehistoric collection

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**mezzanine floor**

crafts

cella room

painted tombs

work by carlo alfano

the sanctuaries and the city

the tomb of the diver

the sanctuaries and the city

garden of hera

the necropolises

the sanctuaries and the city

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**basement**

educational activity room



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