

piero gazzola una strategia per i beni architettonici nel secondo novecento

a cura di

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Raymond Lemaire (1921-1997) meets Piero Gazzola in 1947, as they both attend a conference in the Netherlands¹. At that moment, Lemaire works for the *Office de récupération économique* and is about to start a long career at the University of Louvain (Belgium). The Italian context is not unknown to him: in 1943, at the end of his studies of archaeology, he has the chance to make an internship in Milano with professor Ambrogio Annoni, one of the early masters of Gazzola. During the 1950's, the two men have more than one opportunity to meet each other. Gazzola, 13 years older than Lemaire, is already an important figure of the international scene; Lemaire, for his part, is building a network of relations attending important international events such as reflections towards formulation of The Hague Convention (1954) or the First Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings in Paris (1957). At the same time, he acquires a field experience working on conservation projects, mainly on Belgian churches. Although they don't really collaborate during these first years, Lemaire and Gazzola already become friends. It is only at the beginning of the 1960's that a real collaboration starts: it will last for the next two decades. Lemaire, head of the Service of Historical Monuments of the University of Louvain, starts the project of the revitalization of the Great Beguinage (1962-1973), that will ensure him international recognition. During his visits in Rome, where he teaches at the *Scuola per lo studio dei monumenti*, he meets regularly Carlo Ceschi, Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat and Piero Gazzola, who associates him to the council of direction of the *Istituto italiano dei castelli* (IBI). The very close association of Lemaire to the Italian project of writing a charter at the Venice congress (1964) is the expression of the confidence Gazzola and his colleagues put in his expertise. Starting from the project of Gazzola and Pane, including his own personal notes and the suggestions coming, among others, from Paul Philippot and François Sorlin, he is the one who writes the text presented at the congress and works on the final version in the next weeks. It is also during the discussions of what Lemaire calls "a small group of friends"² that emerges the idea of founding ICOMOS: Lemaire and Gazzola, respectively member and secretary general of the temporary committee constituted in Venice (1964), will be named next year in Krakow, Secretary General and President. During the ten next years, the numerous letters between the two men give evidence of an intense collaboration following the same views, but also of a deep friendship, illustrated by the personal annotations that can be found at the end of every letter. In 1969 already, they both initiate a revision of the Venice charter to adapt it to the question of the ensembles, which is a common concern. In April 1971, they meet in San Ciriaco to prepare a draft proposal of an additional text to the Venice document, to be discussed in June with François Sorlin. Despite many further initiatives, this work won't lead to any result within ICOMOS during the seventies. But Lemaire and Gazzola will have other opportunities to contribute to the conservation doctrine of the ensembles: since 1965, both of them are associated to an international reflection through five experts meetings organized by the Council of Europe on this theme. These will lead to the Conference of Brussels in 1969, and two years later, to the writing of an important synthesis by François Sorlin, assisted by Lemaire and Gazzola, under the title *Rescue operation: the face of Europe*, published in 1973. The main ideas of this report can be found back in the documents that will be adopted for the European year of architectural heritage, in 1975, such as the European charter, the Amsterdam declaration or

the Bruges resolutions. It is also in 1975 that Lemaire replaces Gazzola at the presidency of ICOMOS. This doesn't mean the end of their contacts: until 1979, they will continue to meet each other, exchange views, and share friendly moments. In his speeches and interviews, Lemaire will never hide the deep admiration he felt for Gazzola. But beyond this, it seems that their early meeting played an important role in the course of Lemaire's formation and career: after encouraging, and sometimes initiating, his first important international missions in the beginning of the 1960's, Gazzola always showed a great interest in his projects and reflections, that often rejoin his own work and ideas, which seem to have been, for Lemaire, a major source of inspiration.

Note

¹ D. Lindstrum, *The World of Conservation: an Interview with Raymond Lemaire*, in "Monumentum", XXVI, 2, 1983, p. 90 and R.M. Lemaire, *Report of the President of ICOMOS 1965-1975. A Tribute to Piero Gazzola*, in "Scientific Journal of ICOMOS, 30 years of

ICOMOS", 5, 1995, p. 87. All other information mentioned in this text comes from the personal archive of Raymond Lemaire, kept in the Central Library of the KU Leuven (Belgium).

² R.M. Lemaire, *Report of the President of ICOMOS, Raymond Lemaire 1975-1981*, in "Scientific Journal of ICOMOS" cit., p. 93.



Brussels, First ICOMOS Congress on stone deterioration, IRPA, 1966. On the left, Piero Gazzola and Raymond Lemaire (Collection Marie-Jeanne Geerts).