

PUBLIC SELECTION BASED ON QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERVIEW FOR THE AWARDING OF NO. 1 GRANT LASTING 12 MONTHS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN ACCORDANCE WITH ART. 22 OF LAW OF 30.12.2010 NO. 240 AT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS, PHILOSOPHY, COMMUNICATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO (ACADEMIC RECRUITMENT FIELD 10/B1 – ART HISTORY - ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE L-ART/03 – HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND L-FIL-LET/11 – CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN LITERATURE AS PART OF THE PLAN FOR EXTRAORDINARY RESEARCH CALLED ITALY® (TALENTED YOUNG ITALIAN ®ESEARCHERS) - YOUTH IN RESEARCH INITIATIVE FOR THE YEAR 2016 – TYPE D – CUP: F12I14000230008

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RESEARCH PROJECT

“Bergamo: walled-up and diffused city”

From the Middle ages and afterwards, in modern times, since Alessandro Manzoni’s times, the walls are the mark both of an inhabited, precisely delimited place and of a boundary beyond which lies the territory of the foreign and of the elsewhere, what the Romans called saltus (in opposition to the domestic spaces and to the public work of the domus and of the campus). If, as the architect Christian Norberg-Schulz has written, “the character and the spatial features of a location are defined by its closing ways”, the walls are clearly linked both to the idea of the identity confirmation and to the exclusion of the other and of the unknown. In the present times, when the paradigms are redefined, the spaces are either re-functionalized or abandoned in favor of new places of meaning and identification, we understand that the walls represent an element through which we can concretely measure the effects of the changes concerning the urban dimension.

The city of Bergamo, whose Venetian walls are a central part of the Venetian defense system which has been nominated on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is an interesting example for a study trying to investigate the dimension of change and, on the other hand, the persistence of ancient balances, based on centuries-old social and relational geometries. Bergamo identity has been built up, during the centuries, precisely on the contrast between the infra-moenia space, the urban core, and the extra-moenia space, the valleys and the countryside. In this relationship, the walls marked the space in which the relations of the heideggerian “living” were built up, the space symbolic definition, in opposition to the outside, where the habits and the traditions changed, and where “the stranger” lived, or came from.

The opening of the wall, in the modern times, requires to review what Jurgen Habermas called the “idea of the city”- made up of habits, traditions and knowledge - and to take note of the new spatial and human geographies, developed around the city. It also requires a comparison with that metropolitan dimension, which the city of Bergamo has always refused. Not only Milan, Lombard and national metropolis, but the same conceptual dimension of the metropolis was set against to the closed and protected space of the province city. On the other hand, the contemporary movement opens the boundaries of what is called by sociologists and urban planners the “diffused city”, a catachresis of the continuous cities by Calvino and a European declination of the US urban sprawls. So, this new dimension also stands for a chance to review the ways of living, to re-discuss the relational and social policies, taking into account the new migration phenomena and the incessant integration needs.

Considering such an urban map, the visual art and the literary representation are key research fields to investigate work places, old and new, because they turn up to be equipped with a probe capable of detecting, and so of testifying, the underlying tensions and the new perception orientations, but also of imagining new ways to understand and to use spaces. So, they can suggest the ways of a new symbolic investment of what it seems territories and places overtaken by time and history. First, Pepi Merisio’s photos can be taken as an example for the city of Bergamo. In particular the photos contained in the monumental Terra di Bergamo (1969), an artistic evidence of a changing world, marked by the anthropological mutation, that in those years has been irreversibly changing the human, natural and even urban landscape. Then, the experiences of site-specific art are also representative, such as those organized around the Contemporary Locus project, conceived, in 2012, by Paola Tognon, to propose attempts of an artistic redevelopment of the abandoned or “ignored” spaces of the Upper Town of Bergamo.