

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday 21 June 2022 at 11:00 am – Great Gallery, Reggia di Venaria

Presentation of the recovery and enhancement works of the

Water Theatre of the Fountain of Hercules at the Gardens of Venaria Reale

Today Consulta presented the results of the ambitious restoration project and functional enhancement of the seventeenth-century masterpiece by Amedeo di Castellamonte.

The companies and member bodies of Consulta di Torino were joined by the enthusiasm and support of prestigious partners such as Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, Intesa Sanpaolo, Reale Mutua, Consortium of Savoy Residences, AVTA – Amici Reggia Venaria Reale and Iren, all working together with the aim of increasing and improving the attractiveness of the cultural heritage of the area while respecting the historical memory and legacy that the present has the duty to preserve for generations to come.

This was the missing piece of the vast Venaria Reale recovery project that started in 1998. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the opening of Reggia di Venaria and 25 years since the inscription of the Royal Savoy Residences on the World Heritage List. The recovery of the Water Theatre celebrates these anniversaries.

The Fountain of the Hercules Colossus complex, built between 1669 and 1672, was a place for celebrations: an extraordinary “Baroque scenic machine” resulting from the blend between nature and architecture.

Originally, it consisted of stairways and pavilions, preciously decorated *nymphaea* and caves, water shows and a grandiose decorative system dominated by the Hercules Colossus, which overlooks the scenery from the centre of the large basin.

A symbol of the late Mannerist-style garden, the imposing site was designed by Castellamonte as one of the great wonders of the new royal palace commissioned by Charles Emmanuel II, Duke of Savoy.

Conceived and created for leisure and based on a refined patchwork of allegorical references and mythological allusions, it gave prestige to the Savoy dynasty, of which it embodied the desire to rival the greatest courts of European monarchies.

A change in architectural taste and grim war events led to its dismantling at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The decorative and statuary heritage was then scattered over other royal and noble residences and the site was demolished and buried.

In the early 2000s, important excavation works were carried out as part of the *La Venaria Reale Project*, coordinated by the Superintendency and the Piedmont Region, which unearthed the ruins and brought to light what remained of the ancient splendour.

The Council for the enhancement of the artistic and cultural heritage of Turin accepted the task of restoring what had been one of the most spectacular architectural works of the Savoy hunting lodge, thus completing the restoration project of Reggia di Venaria through the recovery of the last piece left to disrepair.

The result of careful research and investigation, the project designed by architect Gianfranco Gritella has attracted contributions and started collaborations among the main public and private national institutions.

"The restoration – explains the designer and construction manager – embraced the principle of 'conservation planning' intended as a guarantee of respect for the characteristics of the surviving architecture. Starting from the study of the artefacts, we aimed to mend the relationship between the restored items and their original state. The entire project hinges upon the concept of 'light intervention' which supports the idea of sustainable restoration through the use of two ancient materials – wood and iron – both used with assembly systems that allow for complete reversibility."

A valuable narrative has been recreated in the splendid gardens of the Reggia. Following the leitmotiv of collective memory, a myth was recalled – the Wonder – to offer a new exciting reason to visit Venaria and, for those who already know it, a great reason to come back.

Michele Briamonte, the President of the Consortium of Royal Savoy Residences, said: *"The impressive restoration and enhancement project of the monumental complex of the Fountain of Hercules in the Gardens of the Reggia represents the closing act of the general recovery project of Venaria Reale begun in 2007, known as the largest construction site in Europe for a cultural asset. It is an important milestone that marks the revival of the Reggia – right on the 15th anniversary of its inauguration – which can now boast yet another extraordinary attraction. I can only be proud of the result obtained and I rejoice on behalf of the entire Board of Directors and General Manager Guido Curto. I want to extend my thanks to the numerous institutions, patrons and, especially, Consulta di Torino – together with the Consortium – for making this incredible achievement possible with exceptional generosity, perseverance and remarkable efforts"*

"Completing the grandiose redevelopment of the Water Theatre of the Fountain of Hercules is a source of pride and satisfaction for the companies and member bodies of Consulta. The decision to carry out this project was underpinned, as every decision of the association, by its look to the future. The result – achieved under the 'Art Bonus' tax incentive – stands as a proof of the entrepreneurial network's ability to invest and collaborate with institutions for the protection and development of the historical and artistic heritage" concludes the President of Consulta Giorgio Marsiaj

Photos and press kit: www.lavenaria.it / section Press office / 2022 press kits and photos

Consulta di Torino Communication and Press Office: Maria Cristina Lisbona, mc.lisbona@consultaditorino.it
Ph. +39 346-219-6279 www.consultaditorino.it

Consortium of the Royal Savoy Residences Communication and Press Office: Andrea Scaringella, andrea.scaringella@lavenariareale.it Ph. +39 011-499-2300 www.lavenaria.it