

The world of conservation

An interview with Eugenio Galdieri

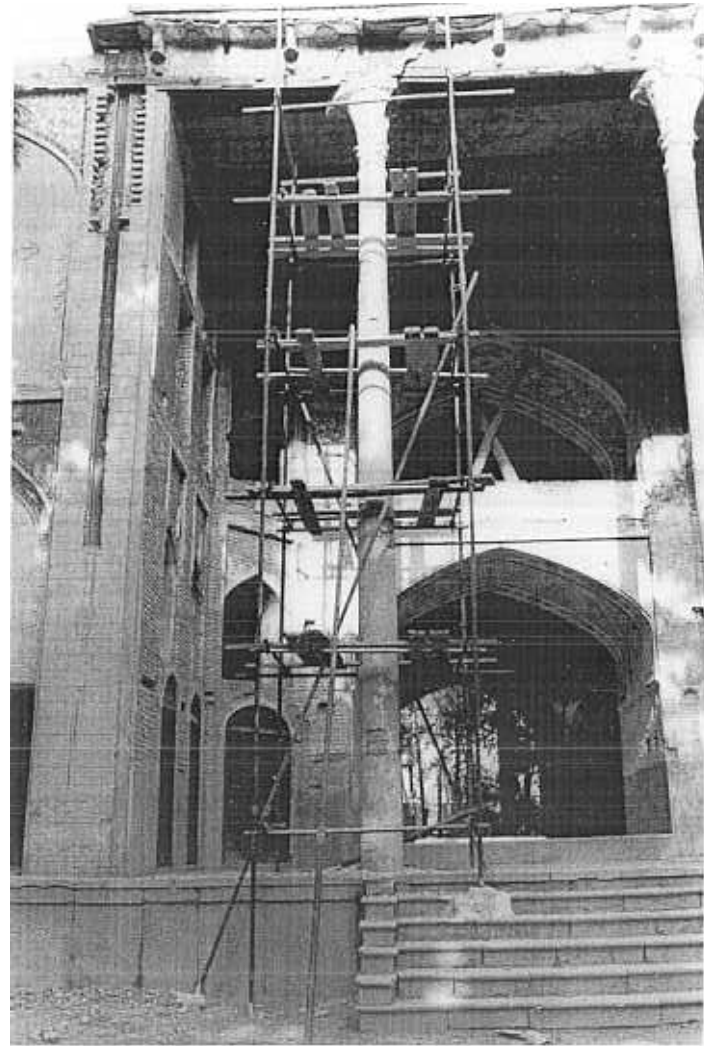


FIG. 1. Isfahan, Iran. The Hasht Bihisht Pavilion during the restoration of a wooden column in the south porch.



FIG. 2. Signor Galdieri in Iran, during a religious ceremony.

From where we were sitting talking in Rome there was a fine panoramic view of the city's long and varied sequence of architectural form and style. It was an ideal background against which to discuss conservation, but as Eugenio Galdieri (*Fig. 2*) was the architect being interviewed the emphasis ought to have been different. Instead of the Roman domes and campaniles there ought to have been elegantly soaring minarets, and the domes should have had a different, more bulbous outline. Instead of the sandy browns, dull creams and dark dusty pinks that traditionally colour the mass of Roman buildings there should have been glittering blue, green and yellow tiles, and mirror-plated columns reflecting the light. Instead of pines and cypresses there should have been the ubiquitous plane trees of Isfahan, the city where Signor Galdieri worked for long periods from 1966 until recent times. But how did he become so closely involved in the conservation of buildings in a country outside his own? And when did he turn to this branch of the architectural profession?

He was born in Naples in 1925, and his family background was predominantly literary. His father and his grandfather were writers, and so far as he knows his only architectural antecedent was his maternal great-great-grandfather. Among this relative's buildings was a summer residence for Elizabeth of Austria at Akillion, but apparently there was little inherited direction towards architecture. Signor Galdieri recalls that as a young man he had first thought of studying medicine; by that time his family had moved to Rome, and it was there that he came under the influence of Vincenzo Fasolo, a family connection, who thought otherwise and encouraged him to enrol as an architectural student in the University of Rome. For the first two years of his studies, he was greatly influenced by Professor Fasolo, whom he remembers with admiration because of the way in which he taught three generations of Italians to develop their critical faculties and to conceive architecture and space in three dimensions.

This preoccupation with the spatial quality of buildings was largely due to Professor Fasolo, and it may be that his influence is also apparent in the work of Paolo Portoghesi who was another of his students at this time in Rome. In discussing Baroque architecture, Professor Portoghesi emphasizes that a key to its understanding is the perception of space

understood as the place of human experience and at the same time as something corporeal and having density, something that can be modelled by acting on its surrounding shell with the flexible instrument of geometry . . . and since the internal space and the external space . . . are both filled with this vitality, their connection by means of facades and openings becomes the crucial nodal point of architecture.¹

This training was so influential that it became the habit of Signor Galdieri (and, he believes, of many of his contemporaries in the Faculty) to think of design, not as plans and elevations, but always in terms of

axonomic entities. Did this training have relevance to his work on historic buildings? Certainly—intuitively he sees a building as a structural unity, and when he is first introduced to one he finds he is reading it in three dimensions, looking through the surface and attempting to identify the components in this way. He believes that it was this experience of being taught to read and interpret buildings in this manner that caused him to be drawn more towards the study of existing structures than in the direction of designing new buildings.

We asked to what extent his training had encouraged this preference.

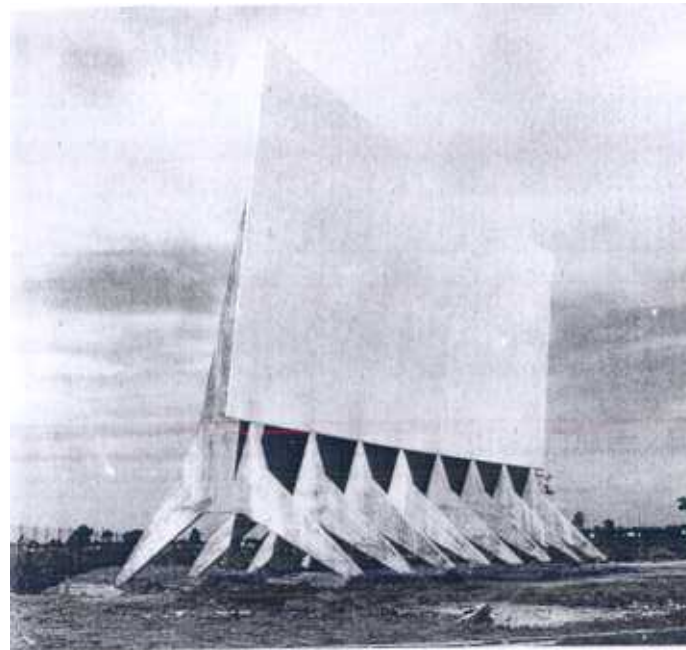


FIG. 3. Castel Fusano, Rome, Italy. The first European reinforced concrete screen for a drive-in cinema (1957).

He thought that whilst conservation was not emphasized explicitly as much as it is today, the majority of the thirty-eight examinations in the Faculty were concerned with understanding and interpreting buildings, and so there was an indirect orientation towards historic buildings as a consequence. Architectural history was studied throughout the course, and he paid tribute to the teaching of Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat as well as that of Vincenzo Fasolo: indeed, looking back now he realizes how much emphasis was placed on history. But he also remembers the great contribution made by Luigi Nervi, modestly repeating with what pride he was paid the compliment of Professor Nervi's indication that he would have been pleased to be the author of one of Signor Galdieri's own designs (*Fig. 3*). These two, history and structures, were the major

¹ Portoghesi, P., *Roma Barocca*, Cambridge, Mass. 1970, 20.

elements of training in the Faculty. Some of his fellow students specialized in one, some in the other; but he likes to think he is able to combine both in his work.

How does he describe himself in professional terms? He thinks of himself as a conservator rather than an architect; but he stressed that to be a conservator of buildings it is necessary first to be an architect, to appreciate and understand the structure and its meaning. He is critical of some methods of teaching architectural history largely in terms of two-dimensional facades, and he thinks there has been a tendency to borrow the terminology, as well as some of the principles, of restorers of art objects. He sees this reflected in the current emphasis on the conservation of facades, and once again he stressed how much he knows he owed to being taught in three-dimensional terms in the Faculty.

Signor Galdieri was awarded his degree in 1950, and subsequently he was enrolled on the *ordine degli architetti*, the register of qualified architects allowed to practise. He has remained independent of any official appointments in Italy, and has not been tempted to change his permanent base from Rome, where he lives and works in the modern EUR, rather than within the historic city. How many assistants does he employ? This varies according to the character of the work in hand: normally he has one or two, and when he was working in Iran he had ten. But ideally he prefers to work alone, thinking this especially important when working on historic buildings. He believes it is difficult to delegate either the collection of information or the assessment of a building's feeling and character. A survey, he said, must incorporate simultaneously an understanding and an interpretation, and so he must be in control at that stage if he has to take decisions later. For that reason, he limits the amount of work he accepts, often having to refuse it despite the sometimes tempting offers. The important thing is to work well, he declared as we watched the light changing on the Roman panorama.

Returning to business, we asked how he had developed his interest in old buildings. As we might have expected, since this is common in the early days of most architects in practice, he began by designing the domestic and commercial buildings that came his way (Fig. 4); and he is grateful that these gave him the practical experience he needed at that time.² He stressed how necessary it is to have experience in order to make balanced judgments in conservation, just as in new commercial developments. Economics are important in conservation; and ideally he thinks an architect should have both old and new buildings in his office because each contributes to the understanding of the other. Usually his own new buildings are associated with historic sites; for example he is now completing an archaeological museum in Ghazni, Afghanistan.

However, the design of new buildings has been a relatively small element in Signor Galdieri's practice, and we talked about the historic buildings and sites on which he has worked. His first experience was in

² He has carried out works in Rome, Ostia, Grottaferrata, Marino, S. Marinella, Naples, Ischia, Sorrento, Piedmont, Sicily, Rieti, Salerno, Cosenza, Aprilia and Gaeta. In 1957 he made a project and directed the construction of the Drive-in of Rome (Casal Palocco); and in 1961 he made an as yet unexecuted design for the Mosque of Rome.

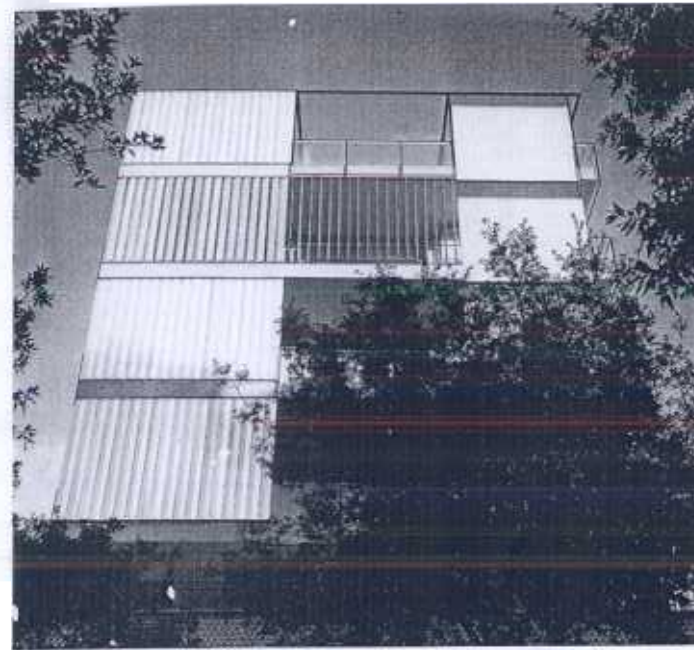


FIG. 4. Rome, Italy. A commercial building planned in 1958.

Libya, where he was associated with an archaeologist who was restoring the Roman theatre at Sabratha, an impressive structure with a double-storeyed *frons scaenae*. His task was to record the archaeologist's findings and help in formulating decisions about the reconstruction while he was working there.³

Then, in 1966, he was asked unexpectedly by Professor De Angelis if he would like to go to Iran to solve a small restoration problem; there was a need, he was told, for advice based on practical experience in construction and a respect for old buildings. The building in question was the Palace of Ali Qapu (Sublime Porte) which occupies the central position in the long west side of the Maidan, the vast open space in Isfahan (Figs 5 and 6). Erected in 1610, this building was the centre of government in the Safavid regime, and it incorporates a great covered balcony commanding a view of the ceremonial Square and the other major monuments (the Bazaar to the north, the Shaikh Lutfullah Mosque to the east, and the Masjid-i-Shah Mosque to the south). The tower forming a part of the palace is 33 metres high and 18 metres wide, and in 1964 it was found to be heavily damaged in all its parts. There was a conspicuous crack along the facades facing north and south, and other disturbing cracks were found on the forebuilding. Proposals were made to set up metal tie-beams anchoring the latter to the main block, and

³ Raven, S., *Rome in Africa*, London 1969, 85. 'This theatre has been restored by the Italians to something approaching its original splendour'.

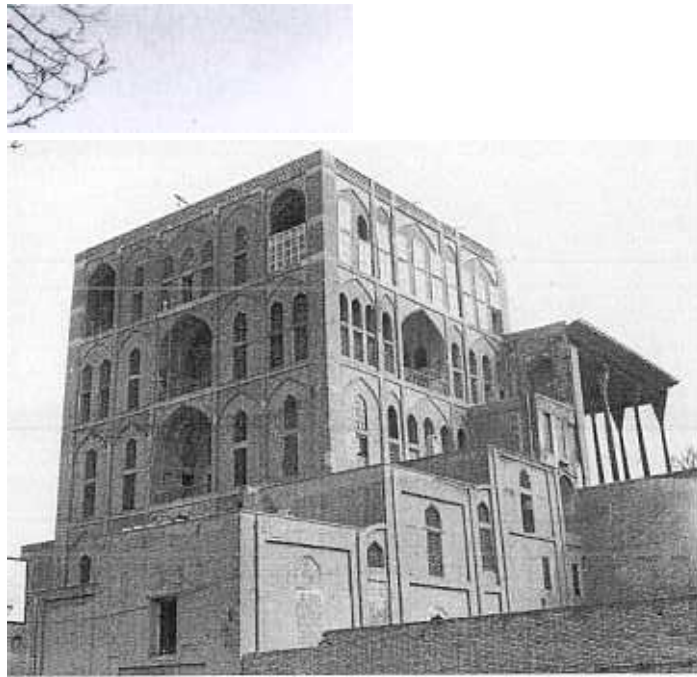


FIG. 5. Isfahan, Iran. The Palace-Atrium of Ali Qapu in the 1960s, before restoration.

another recommendation was to insert reinforced concrete rings at seven levels in the tower; but there were technical problems on which Signor Galdieri was invited to advise.

After examination of the structure, his advice was to stop work, as he realized there was no understanding of how the structure had been designed to work. As he said, 'they had only made beautiful drawings of the facades'.

The structural design was different from those to which he was accustomed in Italy, but a detailed inspection revealed that the building consisted of a large number of 'ministructures', each an independent element capable of a degree of flexibility. It is an admirably sophisticated form of construction in which even the hollow piers are flexible, and this is the reason why the building has resisted several earthquakes which would have destroyed a more rigid structure. A recent earthquake had fractured some elements, causing the upper part of the tower to settle along the arches (Fig. 7). The supposition had been that this damage had been caused by settlement in the foundations, and the recommendation to insert ring beams had been made as a consequence of this misconception. It was, commented Signor Galdieri, a text-book example of a misinterpretation of a structure which could not have taken the remedy proposed.

Instead, under his supervision, each of the series of 'ministructures' was consolidated so that the building still remained flexible.⁴

In all modesty, Signor Galdieri believes he rediscovered this great invention of the Persian builders ('the solidity and at the same time the elasticity of the structures' is how he described it) which limited defects caused by earthquakes to specific areas of a building. If they had been monolithic, nothing would have survived. His subsequent research proved that even as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries this structural technique had been used, and it only reinforces his belief that before anything is done to a building it must be understood completely. Then, an attempt should be made to remedy the defects by means of traditional materials and methods. If modern techniques are unavoidable, he insists, the inherent elasticity must be retained if the structure was designed to be flexible. This applies equally to Gothic structures: any building of columns and ribs must be allowed to move, but Signor Galdieri pointed out that Gothic ribs are constructed of stone. In Islamic

⁴ Galdieri, E., 'Chronologie et causes des lésions de la structure du Palais de Ali Qapu', *Travaux de restauration de monuments historiques en Iran* (ed. Zander, G.), Rome 1968, 259 ff.; *Isfahan: Ali Qapu, An Architectural Survey*, Rome 1979.



FIG. 6. Signor Galdieri in one of the music rooms under restoration in the Palace of Ali Qapu.

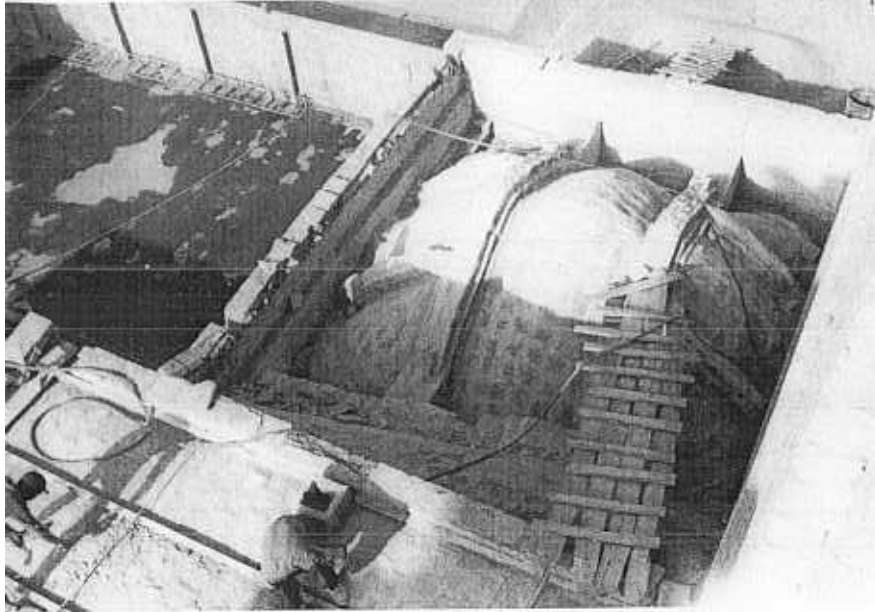


FIG. 7. Isfahan, Iran. The 'exposed' structure of a room in the Palace of Ali Qapu.



FIG. 8. Isfahan, Iran. The sequence of brick vaultings and domes in the Friday Mosque, before restoration.

architecture, as he proved by drawing examples, there is even greater flexibility because the elements themselves, the bricks, are smaller.⁵

This introduction to the conservation of Islamic buildings coincided with his deep-seated interest in structure and those spatial qualities in architecture that are so memorably present in the mosques, bazaars and palaces of Isfahan. Arthur Upham Pope, who revealed so much about Persian architecture to the Western world, wrote of

its paramount virtues: a marked feeling for form and scale; structural inventiveness, especially in vault and dome construction; a genius for decoration with a freedom and success not rivalled in any other architecture.⁶



FIG. 9. Isfahan, Iran. One of the Gothic vaults in the Friday Mosque.

And Signor Galdieri was happy to be able to continue his research by working next on the Masjid-i-Jami (Friday Mosque) in Isfahan, described by Professor Pope as 'one of the greatest buildings in the world' (Fig. 8). As a result of his detailed inspection of the structure, he came to several new conclusions about the building and developed a great personal interest in the history of building technology (Fig. 9).⁷ He directed the restoration work on the Iranian monuments from 1966 to 1968, and in 1970 he was given the superintendence of the whole research and

⁵ See forthcoming Galdieri E., 'Ribbed structures: continuity in Iranian architecture', *Proceedings of Seminar on Structures in Historic Buildings*, ICCROM, Rome 1977.

⁶ Pope, A.U., *Persian Architecture*, London 1969, 114.

⁷ Galdieri, E., *Isfahan, Masjid-i-jam' a-I*, 1, 1972—1, 2, 1973; 'Some aspects of the Ilkhanid presence in the Masjid-i-Jami of Isfahan', *Isfahan (Quaderni del seminario di Iranistica, Uralo-Altaistica e Caucasiologia dell'Università degli Studi di Venezia)*, Venice 1981, 71 ff.; 'A newly discovered wall-painting from the Gav-Chah in the Jami Mosque at Isfahan', *Art and Archaeology Research Papers*, London 1977, 56 ff.

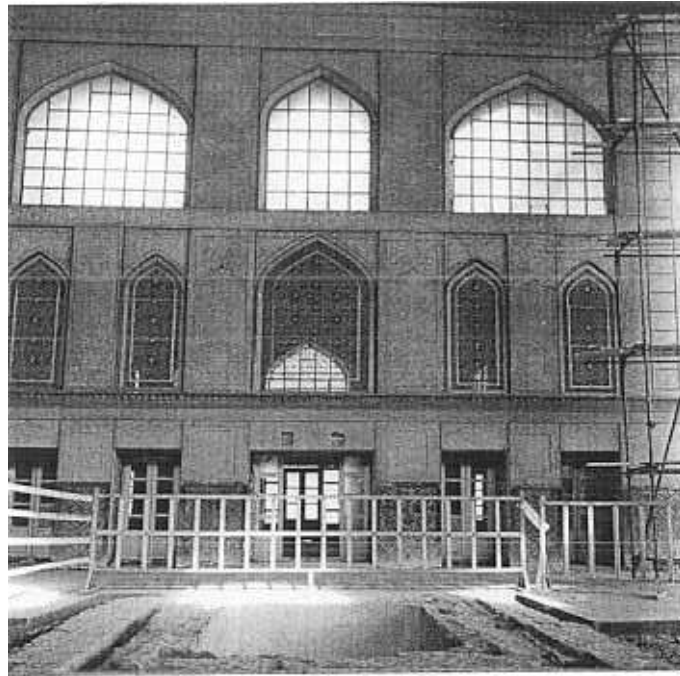


FIG. 10. Isfahan, Iran. The Hall of the Chihil Sutun Royal Pavilion with its re-opened windows, during the restoration works. On the floor, the remains of an old basin.

restoration controlled by IsMEO in Iran, Afghanistan and Oman, with an office in Isfahan. In the local team there were two architects, four technicians and two painting restorers who supervised six Iranians trained in Italy as well as training twenty young Iranians themselves.

All this was due to IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente), and the conservation work was financed partly by the Italian government (which has a budget for cooperation with Third World countries), and partly by the Iranian government.⁸ Following the work on Ali Qapu and Masjid-i-Jami, Signor Galdieri then began on the Palace of Chihil Sutun (Forty Columns) (Fig. 10) with its tall columnar porch, mirror-plated stalactites and polychrome mosaic ceilings, and the smaller Hasht Bihisht (Eight Paradises) (Fig. 1), an exquisite pleasure pavilion set in the Bagh-i-Bulbul (Garden of the Nightingale).⁹ We recalled visiting these two buildings in 1977 when work was actively proceeding, and admiring the high quality of the craftsmanship. Signor Galdieri confirmed this, while recalling how he had had to convince the Iranian government that conservation specialization was necessary at all levels, including that of craftsmen. This idea had not existed previously. He had also found some difficulty in reconciling European principles of conservation with the needs of Iranian buildings. Although some

⁸ Galdieri, E., 'Relazione sulle attività dell'IsMEO in Iran: restauri a Persepoli e Isfahan', *Problemi attuali di Scienza e di Cultura*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome 1971, Quaderno N. 160, 389 ff.

⁹ While working in Isfahan he was also actively planning an underground road across the Maidan to replace the present surface road. He proposed rebuilding the sections of uniform facades destroyed when the latter was constructed, and wanted a 30 m protected belt to be declared around the Maidan to prevent the erection of inappropriate new buildings.

fundamental principles are applicable, he is convinced there is a need to take an example from the flexibility of Iranian structures and adapt Western principles to respect other cultures; a dogmatic approach is unrealistic.

Now that Signor Galdieri's work has ceased for the time being in Iran, where is he working? In Afghanistan he has restored two monuments in Ghazni¹⁰ (Fig. 11) and built an archaeological museum designed as modular units based on traditional housing forms and constructed so as to withstand earthquakes (Fig. 12). Is he using traditional constructional methods and materials in these new buildings? No; much as he would like to encourage this he finds that at present there is an objection to it in most Third World countries because of the association of such methods and materials with what is regarded as a past that should be forgotten. In Italy itself he has been studying the little-known Palazzo Farnese at Gradoli, attributed to Antonio da Sangallo,¹¹ he is now directing some works for its partial restoration and has set up a Research Centre in the town (Fig. 13).

He also held a position as Technical Director to two firms of building contractors, and we asked how this system works in Italy. He explained that application is made by a contractor to be included in a list of those competent to undertake conservation work. These are then put into

¹⁰ Galdieri, E., *A Few Conservation Problems Concerning Several Islamic Monuments in Ghazni*, IsMEO, Rome 1978.

¹¹ Galdieri, E., 'Una malnota fabbrica Sangallesca: il Palazzo Farnese di Gradoli', *Bollettino d'Arte*, Rome 1975, N. 3-4, 143 ff.

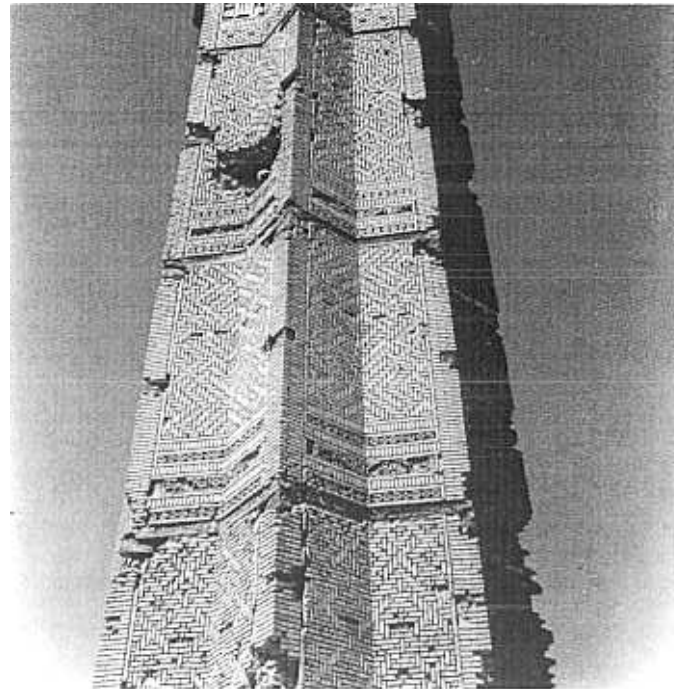


FIG. 11. Ghazni, Afghanistan. The Baram Shah's Minaret during the restoration works (1978).

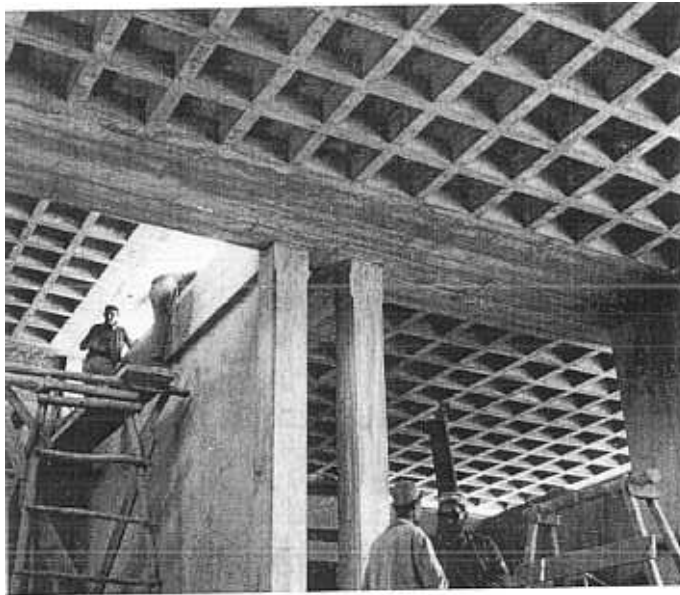


FIG. 12. Ghazni, Afghanistan. Three modular units of the new archaeological museum now under construction.

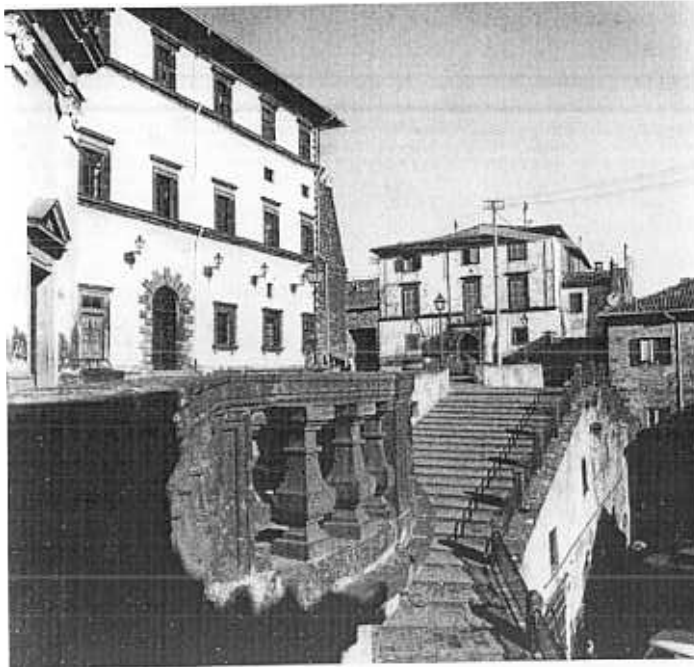


FIG. 13. Gradoli, Italy. The southern facade of Palazzo Farnese, built c. 1520 by Antonio da Sangallo.

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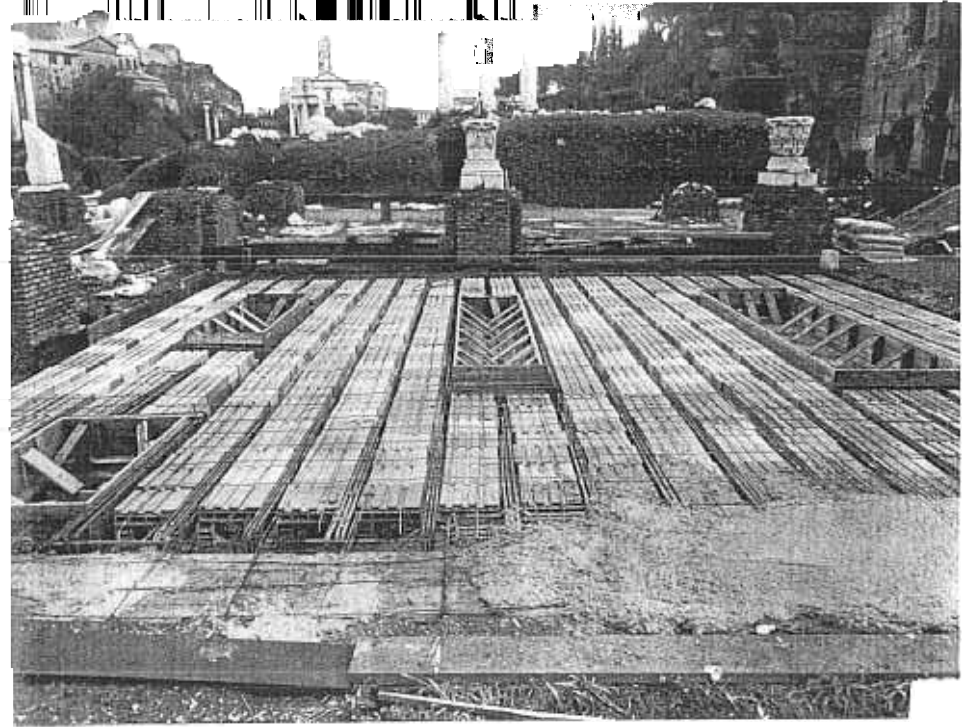


FIG. 14. Rome, Italy. The Basilica Julia, in the middle of the Roman Forum, during the work of replacing the floor, in order to make visible the seven archeological strata down below.

considerable reliance on a contractor's experience and advice. A Technical Director is employed in effect as a consultant and is normally paid a fee, case by case, by the contractor.

This explanation led us to talk about the differences between conservation in practice in Italy and in other countries. Few architects, we were told, are officially authorized to undertake conservation, and these

are usually ones who hold academic appointments. Ten per cent of the conservation contracts will be 'signed' ones made by these recognized authorities according to their own beliefs and philosophies. The other ninety per cent will be the responsibility of the Soprintendenza, according to the law, and it is this category of work which is undertaken by contractors and their Technical Directors. As examples of this type of contract, Signor Galdieri mentioned out of the more than sixty works he has directed, the strengthening of falling structures in the so-called Villa dei Sette Bassi and the covering of the archaeological areas beneath the Basilica Julia (*Fig. 14*) and the church of S. Vito, all in Rome.

But even if there has been an interruption in Signor Galdieri's work in Iran, he is still closely associated with IsMEO. He is now preparing a third report on the Masjid-i-Jami in Isfahan, and he was very gratified to receive the Aga Khan Award in 1980. This is the first time there has been official recognition of the importance of conserving Islamic architecture, and he likes to see it as an augur of a greater regard for the preservation of the buildings to which he has been privileged to devote several years of his professional life.

Résumé

Né à Naples en 1925 au sein d'une famille aux antécédents surtout littéraires, Signor Galdieri avait pensé tout d'abord s'orienter vers la médecine, mais à Rome il a rencontré Vincenzo Fasolo, qui a exercé une grande influence sur lui, et qui l'a encouragé à s'inscrire comme étudiant d'architecture à l'Université de Rome. Pendant les deux premières années le Professeur Fasolo l'a beaucoup influencé, et c'est avec reconnaissance qu'il se rappelle la façon dont il lui a appris à développer ses facultés critiques, et à envisager l'architecture et l'espace en trois dimensions. Il s'est habitué à envisager le dessin, non pas comme des plans et des élévations, mais toujours comme des entités axonométriques, et il estime que cela a beaucoup d'importance pour ses travaux sur les bâtiments historiques. Il perçoit un bâtiment comme une unité structurale, et à sa première rencontre même, il se rend compte qu'il le lit en trois dimensions, en regardant à travers la surface pour en identifier les éléments.

En même temps qu'il rend hommage aux Professeurs Fasolo et De Angelis d'Ossat, qui lui ont enseigné l'histoire de l'architecture, Signor Galdieri se rappelle aussi ce que lui a apporté Luigi Nervi. L'histoire et les structures étaient les sujets majeurs pendant ses années d'étude à Rome et il aime penser qu'il peut les réunir au cours de ses travaux. Il a obtenu sa licence en 1950, et il est toujours resté indépendant de toute nomination officielle en Italie. Il préfère

travailler tout seul, et il pense que c'est particulièrement important lorsqu'on s'occupe de bâtiments historiques, estimant qu'il est difficile de laisser aux autres le soin d'amasser les renseignements ou d'analyser le caractère et l'atmosphère d'un bâtiment. Mais si la nature de l'emploi le nécessite, il a recours à des assistants; pendant des travaux en Iran, par exemple, il en avait une dizaine.

Sa rencontre avec l'architecture de l'Iran a été inattendue; en 1966 le Professeur De Angelis lui a demandé s'il aimerait visiter l'Iran pour résoudre un problème de petite envergure, mais pour lequel il fallait un expert dans la construction avec toutefois un grand respect pour les bâtiments anciens. Il s'agissait du palais d'Ali Qapu, à Isfahan, un bâtiment fort endommagé de toutes parts. On avait proposé l'insertion des tirants ou, alternativement, de sept niveaux de colliers en béton armé, mais après avoir examiné le monument, Signor Galdieri a compris que ces propositions n'avaient pas tenu compte de la façon dont la structure avait été créée pour agir comme toute une série de 'ministructures', chacune étant un élément capable d'un certain degré d'élasticité. Il croit, en toute modestie, que c'est lui le premier à redécouvrir cette grande invention des constructeurs iraniens, destinée à combattre l'effet des séismes et de permettre un niveau maximum d'élasticité.

Cette introduction à la conservation des bâtiments

islamiques s'accordait avec l'intérêt profond qu'il porte aux structures et à ces qualités spatiales de l'architecture qu'il a rencontrées d'abord à Isfahan et plus tard dans d'autres villes de l'Iran. Ses enquêtes sur la structure de la Mosquée du Vendredi, à Isfahan également, l'ont amené à de nouvelles découvertes au sujet de ce bâtiment. Il a dirigé les travaux de restauration sur les monuments iraniens de 1966 à 1968, et en 1970 il a été nommé à la surintendance de tout le programme de recherche et de restauration que dirige l'IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente). Après avoir travaillé au palais d'Ali Qapu et à la Mosquée du Vendredi à Isfahan, il a commencé des travaux aux palais de Chihel Sutun et de Hasht Bihisht. Au cours de ses travaux en Iran il a réussi à convaincre le gouvernement qu'il était nécessaire d'avoir des spécialistes de la conservation à tous les niveaux, y compris celui de l'artisanat, et c'est lui qui a inauguré leur formation. Pour le moment Signor Galdieri ne travaille plus en Iran, mais il restaure des monuments en Afghanistan, travaille comme Directeur Technique de deux compagnies de construction en Italie, et il prépare des études du Palazzo Farnese à Gradoli, palais peu connu mais pour lequel il fait des projets ambitieux. Il entretient toujours des liens étroits avec l'IsMEO, et il a été très flatté de recevoir en 1980 le Prix de l'Aga Khan. C'était en effet la première fois que l'on a reconnu d'une façon officielle l'importance de la conservation de l'architecture islamique, et il estime que cela est de bon augure pour la préservation des bâtiments auxquels il a eu le privilège de se consacrer pendant plusieurs années de sa vie professionnelle.

Resumen

Nacido en Nápoles en 1925, de familia encuadrada básicamente en la tradición literaria, Eugenio Galdieri pensó al principio estudiar medicina, pero en Roma se vio influido por Vincenzo Fasolo, que le animó a matricularse como estudiante de arquitectura en la Universidad de Roma. Durante los dos primeros años estuvo muy influido por el Profesor Fasolo, y recuerda con agradecimiento la manera en que se le enseñó a desarrollar sus facultades críticas y a concebir la arquitectura y el espacio en tres dimensiones. Se acostumbró a considerar el diseño, no como plantas y alzados, sino siempre en términos de entidades axonométricas, lo cual le parece relevante a su trabajo en el campo de los edificios históricos. Intuitivamente ve un edificio como unidad estructural, y en el primer contacto con uno de ellos automáticamente lo interpreta en tres dimensiones, penetrando más allá de la

superficie y tratando de identificar los componentes de esta manera.

Además de rendir homenaje a los Profesores Fasolo y De Angelis d'Ossat por su docencia de historia arquitectónica, Galdieri también recuerda la gran contribución de Luigi Nervi. En su época de estudiante en Roma, la historia y las estructuras eran los elementos principales de la enseñanza, y le agrada pensar que en su trabajo es capaz de combinar ambos aspectos. Recibió la licenciatura en 1950 y se ha mantenido al margen de cargos oficiales en Italia. Prefiere trabajar solo, lo cual le parece especialmente importante en el caso de edificios históricos, ya que cree difícil delegar el conjunto informativo o la evaluación del carácter y manera de ser de un edificio; pero trabaja con asistentes cuando lo requiere el carácter de la obra. En su trabajo en el Irán le ayudaron diez de ellos.

Su introducción a la arquitectura iraní tuvo lugar inesperadamente en 1966, cuando el Profesor De Angelis le preguntó si le gustaría ir al Irán para resolver un pequeño problema de restauración que requería el asesoramiento de alguien con experiencia práctica en la construcción y con respeto hacia los edificios antiguos. El edificio en cuestión era el Palacio de Ali Qapu, en Isfahan, que había sufrido daños de consideración en todas sus partes. Se había hecho la propuesta de insertar vigas metálicas o bien anillos de hormigón armado a siete niveles distintos; pero, después de haber examinado la estructura, Galdieri comprendió que la estructura se había diseñado para que actuase a manera de diversas 'miniestructuras', con cada elemento capaz de cierta flexibilidad. Modestamente, cree que volvió a descubrir este gran invento de los constructores persas, el cual estaba destinado a contrarrestar el efecto de los terremotos y a proporcionar un máximo de elasticidad.

Esta introducción a la conservación de edificios islámicos coincidió con su profundo interés por la estructura y las cualidades espaciales de la arquitectura que descubrió primero en Isfahan y después en otras ciudades. Investigó el diseño estructural de la Mezquita del Viernes, en Isfahan, y llegó a nuevas conclusiones sobre el edificio. Dirigió el trabajo de restauración de los monumentos iraníes desde 1966 hasta 1968, y en 1970 fue encargado de la dirección total de la investigación y restauración controlada por IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente). Después de las obras de Ali Qapu y la Mezquita del Viernes en Isfahan, empezó a trabajar en los Palacios de Chihel Sutun y Hasht Bihisht. Mientras trabajaba en el Irán, convenció al gobierno de que la especialización en materia de conservación era necesaria en todos los niveles, incluso a nivel artesanal, y

empezó la obra de formación profesional. Ahora que su trabajo en el Irán ha cesado por el momento, Galdieri está restaurando monumentos en Afganistán, actuando como Director Técnico en dos empresas italianas de arquitectura, y estudiando el poco conocido Palazzo Farnese en Gradoli, para el que tiene ambiciosos planes. Continúa estrechamente vinculado

a IsMEO y se enorgulleció de recibir el Premio Aga Khan en 1980. Es la primera vez que la importancia de conservar la arquitectura islámica ha sido reconocida oficialmente, lo cual le place considerar como pronóstico de un mayor interés en la conservación de edificios a los cuales ha tenido el privilegio de dedicar varios años de su vida profesional.