

A small & forgotten city port, signing a reborn for the city of Palermo.

A virtuous example of urban recovery and social rebirth of a seaside village.

Type of intervention

Restoration Rehabilitation / Renovation

Concerned elements on the intervention project

- 1. Foundations and underground structures
- 2. Vertical structures
- 3. Horizontal structures and vertical connections
- 4. Roof and terraces
- 5. Façade and building envelope
- 6. Finishes and completion elements
- 7. Integrate services
- 8. General strategies for building recovery

Site Messina Marine street, Sant'Erasmus square, Palermo,
Sicily, Italy

Objectives Rehabilitation of the old port of Saint Erasmus

Property Public: Port Authority of Palermo

Designer Provenzano Architetti Associati
Structural design: Eng. Enrico Petralia
Construction Company: Colombrita srl
Director of works: Eng. Enrico Petralia
Work Manager: Eng. Salvatore Acquista

Date 2018-2020



Background to the intervention

Fig.1: General overview of the site. © Provenzano Architects

The project is eminently connoted as a soil project aimed at reactivating dynamics capable of repopulating this important stretch of the urban coast of Palermo with new functions and uses. The *Piano di Sant'Erasmus* (plane of Saint Erasmus), as it is called in the historical topography of the city, has long been a place of identity of primary importance in Palermo, the city of water.

Until before the Second World War that established a turning point in the symbiotic relationships that characterised the city and the sea. The history of the abandonment and subsequent degradation of the small port of *Saint Erasmus* was the same as that of the entire coastal system.

This intervention is part of a broader project of regeneration and redevelopment of the urban port waterfront supported by the Port System Authority of the Sea of Western Sicily.

Description of the intervention

The project is eminently configured as a soil project by reusing the original paving stones and introducing new ones albeit of the same material: *Billiemi* marble, the typical calcareous and compact stone of Palermo. Three buildings were built for cultural and commercial activities, mainly working on public space and greenery.

Saint Erasmus intends to be configured as a city port open to contemporary collective use but aware of the historical memory, the function of small fishermen's port remains unchanged.



Fig.2: Historic photograph of Saint Erasmus. © Private Archive



Fig.3: The small beach before the intervention. © Provenzano Architects



Fig.4: The pier before the intervention. © Provenzano Architects

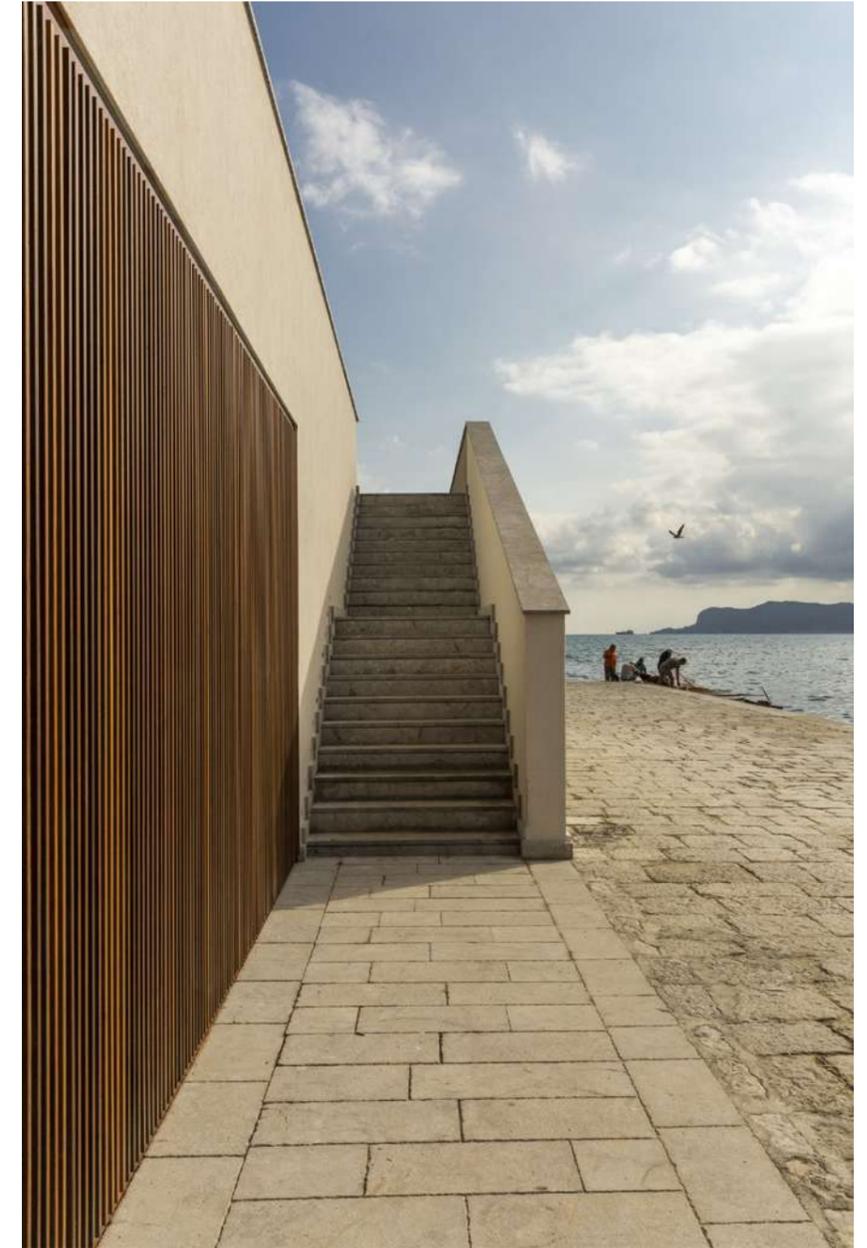




Fig.5-6: The pier after the intervention. © Provenzano Architects



Fig.7-9: The new Club House, details. © Provenzano Architects



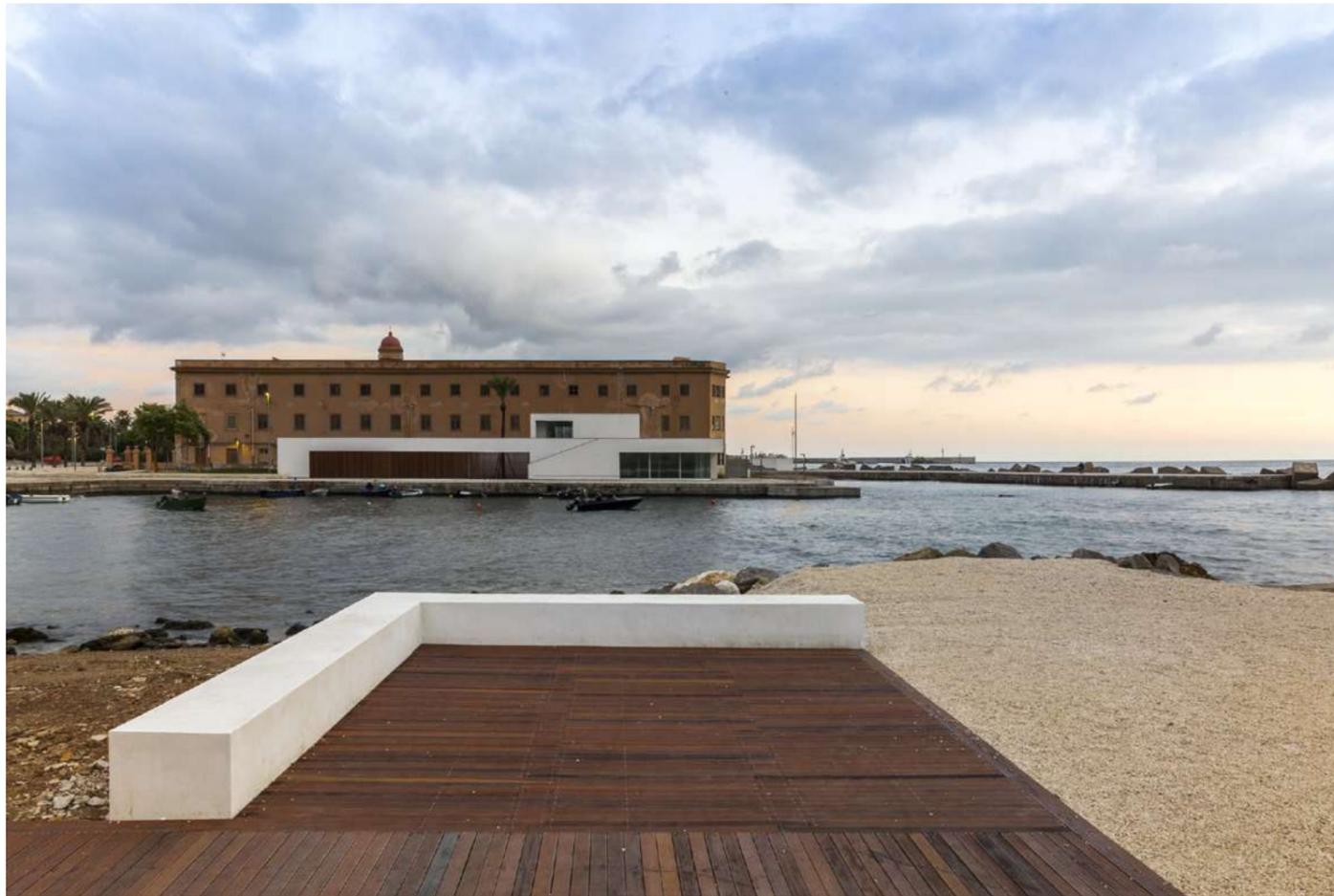


Fig.10-11: The new Club House. © Provenzano Architects

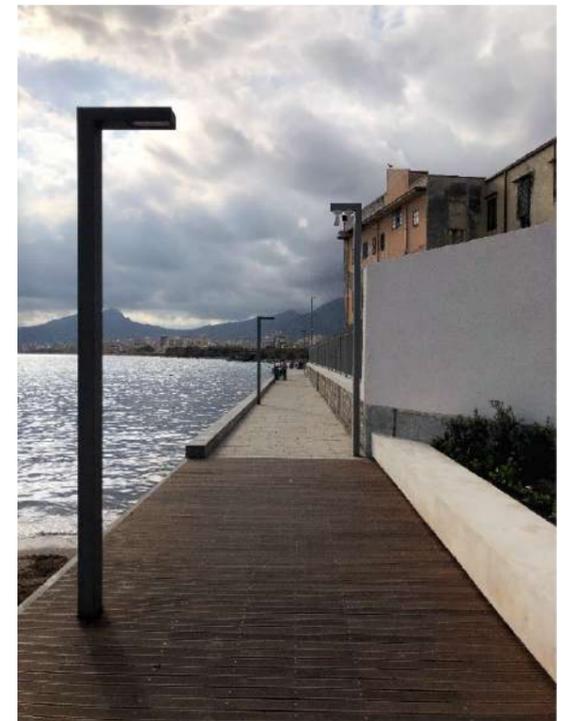
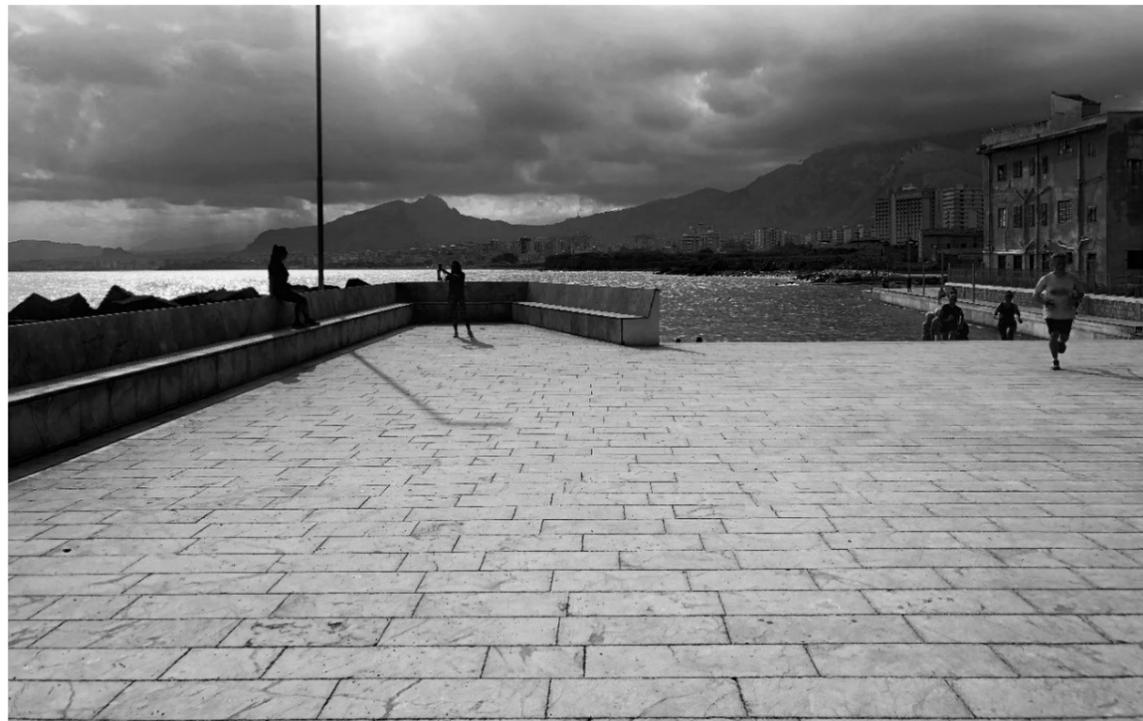


Fig.12-14: The new pedestrian pier. © Provenzano Architects



Rehabilitation works

The work was conceived as a restoration of the public space. The materials have been chosen from the local and Mediterranean tradition. The choice, for example, of introducing a fountain is connected to the Arab tradition typical of the urban culture of Palermo. The buildings are inspired by the search for compatibility with the adjacent convent dated to the XIX century.



Fig.15: View from the side of the sea. © Provenzano Architects

The Diagnosis of the building (values and state)

The intervention helped to give back a historic part of the Palermo waterfront to the community. Nowadays, the port of *Saint Erasmus* is a place of aggregation and integration between the city centre and its neighbourhoods. The intervention did not cancel the original function of the small fishing port. The reuse of local stone for the flooring ensures a comparison with the history connected to the identity of the place.



Fig.16: St. Erasmo district reborn also with new rehabilitation intervention involving artists and painter: Saint Erasmus painted on a building wall by the artist Igor Scalisi Palminteri. © Manfredi Saeli

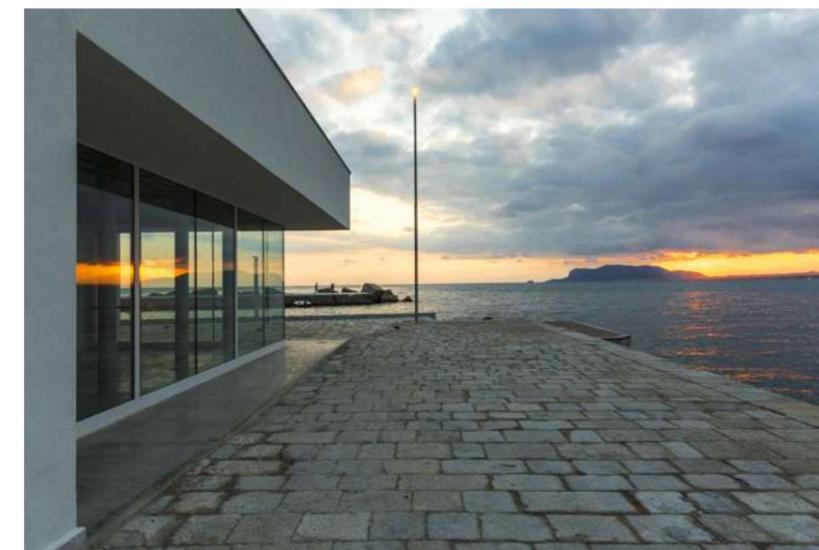


Fig.17-18: View of external area. © Provenzano Architects

Before the intervention, the small port of *Saint Erasmus* was one of the many abandoned coastal places in the city of Palermo. Its historical value had completely vanished, becoming a marginal and infamous, decadent and polluted place.

This intervention is part of a broader project of regeneration and redevelopment of the urban port waterfront promoted by the

Sea Port System Authority of Western Sicily. The project is eminently configured as a soil project by reusing the original paving stones and introducing new ones albeit of the same material (*Billiemi* marble). Three buildings, intended for cultural and commercial activities, working above all on public space and greenery were built. *Saint Erasmus* intends to be configured as a new city port open to contemporary collections. The regeneration intervention has kept the original layout of the historic port unchanged. The original and valuable flooring, where still present, was enhanced and restored. A 1950s building with no historical value was demolished for the construction of a modern clubhouse. The intervention concerned the green, the introduction of street furniture and a new lighting system.

Today Saint Erasmus is one of the most lived-in public spaces of the city. A place of encounter and rediscovery of Palermo's ancient relationship with the sea.

Assessment of the results

The project achieved its goal: since the day of its inauguration, people of Palermo have started to live in this place as if a genetic link had not been cancelled by so many years of neglect and abandonment.

References

We acknowledge the Architect Sebastiano Provenzano and the Port Authority of Palermo for the information and the kind collaboration.

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Fig.19: View of the city from the restored area of *Saint Erasmus* port. © Provenzano Architects



Fig.20: External view of restored external spaces. © Provenzano Architects



Fig.21: Arch. Sebastiano Provenzano shows to the Partners of Smart Rehabilitation 3.0 EU Erasmus+ project the concept and design of rehabilitation intervention, during the Staff Training Course (C6) in September 2021. ©Luisa Lombardo