



## Venice & War

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Ill. 15. The Partisan woman

### The Monument to the Partisan Woman

When Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978) thought about the location of the Venice Female Partisan Monument he wanted to create a new dock that entered the lagoon in front of the Biennale. He devised a kind of concrete and stone blocks of varying heights that emerged from the water. They function as living elements that are affected by the natural rhythm of the tides and by the changing perception of the spectators who observe them, both from land and from the water. It is a true symbiosis between geometry, construction, and nature.

The sculpture by Augusto Murer (1922-1985) was the result of a competition organized in 1964 by the Venice City Council to replace the piece of the Woman Partisan (work of Leonacillo Leonardi) destroyed by a fascist bomb in 1961. Murer sculpted a bronze statue of a handcuffed woman, with an unhinged face reflecting suffering and fear. The work exemplifies the role of women in the fall of fascism in Italy.

Scarpa's starting point was to avoid placing sculptures in open spaces in Venice because, in his opinion, they were an attack on the formal urban structure. Moreover, since it was a reclining sculpture, visibility was difficult. That is why he placed the sculpture at the water's edge, without a podium, on the boundary between the land and the water in the Fondamenta of the Giardini di Castello.

The Fondamenta are stretches of street that surround canals or rivers in Venice. They are piers with stone steps leading down to the water to facilitate the docking of boats and the loading and unloading of passengers and goods. Thus, the project was configured as a dock of 83 concrete and Istrian stone prisms, with a square section, which are staggered at different levels.



III. 16. Stoneblocks in various heights emerge from the water.

In Scarpa's initial project, the bronze sculpture rested on a copper-clad concrete platform. The work initially floated and varied its position to always remain at water level, and the stepped blocks allowed passersby to approach the sculpture.

However, with its installation in 1968, the monument was altered by closing the space to passers-by for safety reasons, with a bannister and a shrub garden. The sculpture was then fixed to the block and was therefore submerged during high tides. In coincidence with the centenary of Carlo Scarpa's birth in 2009, the Municipality restored it to its former aspect.

Despite its apparent modernity, Scarpa's intervention is rooted in the construction history of Venice. Traditional Venetian



III. 17. The sculpture appear as a symbiosis between geometrical construction and nature

construction was carried out on wooden piles, logs nailed at a height that formed an artificial network like this monument. The geometric system of concrete blocks imitates the fondamenta and the materials (concrete, stone, copper and bronze) generate a patina characteristic of Venice, which arises from the interaction between water, salt, dirt and algae.



*Ill. 18. The harbourfront by Giardini with the Monument to the Partisan Woman in front*

