ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY IN ROME

Via delle Terme Deciane n.7

Renovation

Nr 709/2013
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FACTS

Area:  ca. 1000 m²
Cost:  29 MNOK
I hereby congratulate the Norwegian embassy in Rome with their “new” embassy and the project team with a successful project! A special thank you to our Italian architect Claudio Catucci who all through the process has fought to achieve the right quality for the project. Today we can confirm that he succeeded. As head of Department for the Foreign properties in Statsbygg I am extremely proud of the result.

Siri Berg
Head of Department
Statsbygg
Statsbygg assists ministries and other national bodies when they have new or changed requirements for premises. The needs for premises are to be covered in a cost-effective way. In Statsbygg’s activities, the overall interests of the state take precedence over commercial interests. Statsbygg is intended to be an active instrument in implementing political objectives in relation to the environment, architecture, aesthetics, innovative user solutions and health and safety at the workplace, based on the ministries’ priorities.

Consultancy and construction activities
The government’s requirements for premises can be covered by leasing, acquisition or new construction. Statsbygg advises government and official bodies on leasing in the private market, or offers leased premises in Statsbygg’s own properties. In cases where the need for premises requires new construction, Statsbygg advises state lessees when construction is carried out by the private sector or assumes the role of building commissioner for the ministries when the new construction is to be state-owned.

Property management
In all, Statsbygg owns and manages properties totalling 2.7 million square metres at home and abroad. The properties consist of central office buildings, university colleges, special facilities and national properties throughout the country, as well as embassies and residences abroad. Statsbygg’s property management is intended to ensure that our users have functional premises which suit their needs at all times. Statsbygg places emphasis on safeguarding the value of buildings by means of a high level of maintenance. Statsbygg is also concerned with maintaining the cultural distinction and architectural value of historic buildings.

Development projects
Statsbygg plays an active role in coordinating national interests in property development and urban planning. Clarifying government guidelines is intended to pave the way for productive collaboration with local authorities in such cases. The work includes planning for new use of state-owned property that is to be vacated. To achieve environmental policy goals, Statsbygg is extensively involved in research and development. Research and development activities also cover projects intended to improve current standards and regulations in the building, construction and property industry.
The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Rome is very satisfied with the renovation of its chancellery. This has been undertaken in circumstances where many European states, including Norway, have had to reduce their diplomatic presence in Europe for reasons of economy. The decision taken by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Statsbygg to invest in and improve the premises is of great importance not only to Embassy employees but also for bilateral relations. It signals that Italy is important to Norway.

All of the Embassy employees are impressed by the high quality of the renovation work. We take pleasure in inviting clients and guests to view the building, both externally and internally. It is a beautiful high tech-building, redesigned for easy access for all, including the disabled, and for efficient communication and work performance. The increased light from the outside gives energy and positive stimulus to both visitors and staff. The modern and specially commissioned art for the interior of the building from the Norwegian-Italian artist, Aurora Passero, makes a positive contribution.

We would like to express our deep gratitude and sincere thanks to the architect, Mr. Claudio Catucci, to Statsbygg – especially their Project Manager, Merethe Woldseth, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in particular to the Project Director, Øystein Svebo, and to the whole staff of Technorestäuri, the Italian company responsible for carrying out the renovation.

You are heartily welcome!

Bjørn T. Grydeland, Ambassador
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Rome
Remo climbed up Colle Aventino to study the sky and the flights of birds, in order to then decide where the best place would be to found the Eternal City. Colle Aventino housed the exclusive residences of the elite 'Patricians', and various temples of the Gods of Ancient Rome. Here, the Emperors Traiano and Adriano grew up; here, the exclusive Terme Deciane were built; here, during the Middle Ages, the great Churches and Monasteries arose, and today it is the most sought after residential and monumental district in the historic centre of Rome.

The edifice in which the Embassy has its offices is typical of residential Roman architecture from the first decades of the 1900s, a classic Villino Palazzina (too large to be a Villa and too small to be a Palazzo). The architectural and stylistic features of the period imposed the dominance of the image that reminisced, with imitative materials, the classicism of the magnificent regal historic buildings: stone ashlar-work on the ground floor, various styles of windows and visible brickwork on the top floor. Often, the feature of the period was represented by 'constructing and appearing' in an entirety of symmetry and classicism, but devoid of any consideration of the new building techniques which prevailed at this time, and without any attention being paid to the architectural features or exposure to the sun, or even a minimal containment of energy.

Today, the Superintendence of Architectural Heritage of the Vatican City State jealously protects its external image as an architectural testimony of the period.

BACKGROUND

Since 1983, the Norwegian Embassy in Rome has been permanently installed in Via delle Terme Deciane, in the heart of the Colle Aventino, the high place, near the Circo Massimo, in the very historic centre of Rome.
The new project for total upgrading of the complex posed immediate, ambitious challenges and goals:

- Architectural and functional upgrading, creation of spaces for hosting guests, as well as for staff socialisation
- Maximum enhancement of the distinctive features and potentials of pre-existing characteristics
- Modernising and transforming the dynamic of internal spaces and corridors, by means of ‘opening up and transparency’: elimination of dark interior areas through the maximum ‘permeability’ to natural light and the sun’s rays
- Creation of large, elegant and functional areas for hosting guests
- Ergonomic and practical rationalisation of work areas
- Total accessibility and use of the complex in full observance of Universal Design principles
- Protection of staff through amended safety requirements in respect of accidents, vandalism, terrorism, fire, theft and break-ins
- Total observance of the ‘Green Document’ environmental principles, through maximum attention to the amended requirements concerning limiting the quantity and quality of energy use, noise protection, use of non-polluting and easily disposable materials, absolutely not derived from protected sources
- Maximum budget control, quality, as well as the briefest realisation times

The light motif that inspired the architectural project was: ‘Let my home be open to the sun, air, light and free space!’

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

After its acquisition by the Government of the Kingdom of Norway in 1982, the structure was initially adapted for use as Embassy offices in 1983, retaining, however, all of the awkwardness of the original residential subdivision: lodgings for the staff, service stairs, internal stairs, ‘official’ stairs and formal halls of presentation. The building became troublesome to use due to changes in the contemporary functional demands of the Embassy.
MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

Through close study of the architectural spaces, materials, technologies and details, the project permitted inside spaces to be created and rendered notable and enjoyable, spaces that communicate among themselves.

This was made possible as a result of the following measures:

• Elimination of the massive load-bearing structures of the edifice and voluminous internal staircases, replacing them with new steel structures, and striving for lightness, efficiency and transparency
• Advantageous use of terrace areas and recovery of the ‘high place’ that can now be reached via a panoramic lift
• Recovery of ‘Remo’s visions of the sky’, aided by the absolute ‘transparency’ of all vertical distribution
• Increasing the natural lighting of the rooms through the introduction of additional windows, replacement of the massive, heavy, internal dividing walls with new, elegant, semi-transparent glass walls

• The general quality of the spaces and materials, as perceived by the user, has been considerably culturally augmented through the meticulous use of simple, classical materials: natural oak floors or white Carrara marble, Venetian stucco or enamel on the walls, rigorous use of timber for internal and external window frames and plastered or wooden ceilings

All of this has been expertly installed according to a masterly combination of formal and functional integration of the spaces with regard to culture and typically Norwegian works of art.

The entire edifice is meticulously equipped with the most accurate thermal-acoustic insulation, with the lowest possible thermal dispersion.
Internal dividing walls, constructed using the most modern sound-absorbent technologies, ensure total privacy of the rooms. The entire complex is equipped with a precise system of active and passive physical protection that also includes the use of safety glass against breakage, accidents and splintering.

As regards technical installations, the building represents a true example of the avant-garde, environment-friendly modern technology and ensures:

- Automatic lighting control of each space, utilising sophisticated, low-consumption LED techniques; a large part of the energy is produced by a system of photovoltaic panels
- Automatic control and regulation of the optimum temperature in each space by means of highly efficient radiant ceilings and primary air renewal
- Temperature production solely by highly efficient heating pumps, which also eliminate every form of combustion and the production of harmful carbon dioxide
- Total automatic control of all installations by means of a sophisticated BMS – Building Management System, which also permits remote and centralised monitoring elsewhere
- Total access control through an automatic electronic detection and memory system
- Control of access points and the outside gardens via video surveillance

In conclusion, this was a precise work of architectural upgrading, in a perfect balance of form, functionality, comfort, style and sophisticated technology and in deep harmony and human and professional empathy with the entire Norwegian-Italian team work.
The refurbished Embassy in Rome has been equipped with art from the former original building in addition to new pieces procured by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo. The primary new contribution, however, has been donated by Public Art Norway (KORO). KORO’s main task is to display fine contemporary art. KORO’s curator, Ida Kierulf, focused on the idea of light as both a physical, conceptual and narrative material. Light has always been important in Italian art and architecture, and in Rome in particular during the Baroque period. Light also constitutes an integral part of Norwegian art, design and architecture, and affects everyday life with its variations from almost total darkness in the winter to the midnight sun in the summer. KORO engaged a young Norwegian-Italian artist, Aurora Passero (b.1984). Passero works with installations in the span between sculpture and painting, where she combines textile techniques like weaving and dying with materials such as nylon and acrylics. Her work in the first floor meeting room and on the staircase has been especially created for the given spaces, taking its starting point in the architecture and natural daylight that infiltrates the building. With titles such as Storm, Mist, Snow and Sun and Alpine Effects the works emphasise the contradictions between the natural and synthetic, monumental and fragile, and respond with the surroundings to create an overall composition and to open up new visual and tactile experiences.

The two other artists, Anne Mette Hol (b.1979) and Eline Mugaas (b.1969), also focus on the span between light and dark, day and night. Hol’s dry pastel drawings entitled The Concept of Light (That will never Exist), precisely reconstruct how the sun illuminates a plastered wall. The four drawings are located outside the large meeting room on the first floor and show the rhythm and intervals of light. The drawn light is both natural and artificial and varies from cold to warm, from blue to yellow. The four pieces are placed in direct dialogue with Passero’s large textile in the adjacent room. The first photograph by Mugaas in the meeting room on the second floor shows the view from a dark room towards the city with all its glittering lights. The second motif is photographed at dusk outside the city centre, where the artificial light from the city gives an impression of a sunrise.

Øystein Svebo and Fredrikke Schrumpf from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo have supplemented the concept from KORO with additional art in the Embassy.

**PROJECT ADMINISTRATION**

**THE ART PROJECT**

- Public Art Norway (KORO)
- Artists
  - Aurora Passero
  - Anne Mette Hol
  - Eline Mugaas
- Art Consultant
  - Ida Kierulf
PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

- **Client**
  Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- **Building commissioner**
  Statsbygg

- **Project management, Statsbygg**
  Merethe K. Woldseth
  Siri Berg

- **Project management, Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
  Øystein Behler Svebo
  Fredrikke Schrumpf

- **User representatives, The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Rome**
  Bjørn T. Grydeland
  Tone Gyberg
  Lisa Hausberg Michelazzi
  Hildegunn Almås

- **Local project management and site supervision**
  Studio Catucci, Rome
  Claudio Catucci
  Chiara Del Gaudio

- **Architect**
  Studio Catucci, Rome

- **Local consultants**
  Studio Catucci, Rome

- **Interior architect**
  ZINC, Oslo

- **General contractor**
  TechnoRestauri, Rome