

The Risiera di San Sabba

The Risiera di San Sabba, a rice mill built starting in 1898, was used after 8 September 1943 by the Nazi occupation force as a prison camp. It was used for the detention, torture and murder of hostages, anti-fascists and partisans, the storage of looted goods, and the sorting of prisoners destined for deportation to the Third Reich, including a large part of the Jews deported from the Adriatic Littoral. The only Lager in Italy with its own crematorium, it was declared a National Monument in 1965, after having been used for a long time as a refugee camp. In 1975, it was renovated to a design by the architect Romano Boico and became the Civic Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba. Today it is one of the most important sites of remembrance in Italy, visited by around 130,000 people a year.

The exhibition

The twenty photographs selected for this exhibition tell the story of the Risiera, traversing its monumental spaces in stark black and white and offering silent and solitary contemplation.

Taken in 2020, they are the work of Marino Ierman, photographer and exhibition designer for the Civic Museums of Trieste. Ierman, born in Trieste in 1957, has been taking photographs for museums, superintendencies and publishing houses since 1979. The study of the use of light for the rendering of materials and forms has led him to work with museum exhibitions. His exhibition projects for museums in Trieste include the Roman and Egyptian sections of the "J.J. Winckelmann" Museum of Antiquity, the "Carlo Schmidl" Theatre Museum and the Museum of Oriental Art. A skilled puppeteer, he was the leader of the historical group "I Piccoli di Podrecca".

The exhibition, curated by Anna Krekic, is promoted by the Municipality of Trieste and realised with the support of the Ministry of Culture. It is being set up for the first time in the Memorial Hall of the Risiera di San Sabba on the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day 2023 and is designed to be lent, with a view to cultural exchange and sustainability. All the images on display belong to the Photo Library of the Civic Museums of History and Art of Trieste, where one of the most extensive photographic heritages of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region is collected, preserved and used.

To remember the victims, to warn the living

The Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste
in Marino Ierman's photographs

Civic Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba
National Monument
Memorial Hall

Trieste
27 January - 4 June 2023

free admission

times
every day
until 31 March: 10 - 17 (last admission 16.30)
from 1 April: 10 - 19 (last admission 18.30)

info
Civic Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba
National Monument
via Giovanni Palatucci 5, Trieste
+ 39 040 826202
risierasansabba@comune.trieste.it
www.risierasansabba.it
www.triestecultura.it

guided visits
serviziodidattico@comune.trieste.it

cover
Marino Ierman, *Risiera di San Sabba: the entrance corridor*, 2020



comune di trieste
assessorato alle politiche
della cultura e del turismo

Supported by



**MINISTERO
DELLA
CULTURA**

ENG

To remember the victims, to warn the living

The Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste
in Marino Ierman's photographs

**Civic Museum
of the Risiera di San Sabba**
National Monument
Memorial Hall

Trieste
27 January - 4 June 2023



Photo captions

The Risiera di San Sabba: monumental entrance.

Standing in front of the gate at Via Palatucci 5, one can immediately perceive the intention of the Monument’s designer, Romano Boico, to arouse the emotional involvement of the visitor through the dry language of architecture.



The entrance corridor.

A corridor of high concrete walls leads to the interior of the monument. The perspective recalls the image of Auschwitz, with the rails leading the eye to the central doorway of the tower.



The garden.

To the right of the entrance, a green area is surrounded by the structures of the Monument. The reinforced concrete perimeter walls and the original bare buildings of the Risiera suggest the bewilderment and anguish of the Lager’s prisoners.



The Death Cell.

Framed here by the entrance door, it is the first cell you meet on entering the Risiera. It was designated for prisoners awaiting execution or sorting.



The Cell hall.

This is the ground floor room of the two-storey building overlooking the central courtyard. The 17 detention cells built by the Nazis in the spring of 1944 are preserved there, almost intact.



The cells.

In the cells – here you can see the detail of the wooden doors – mainly political opponents and members of the Resistance were locked up, for many of whom they were the anteroom of death. Up to six prisoners were crammed into each one (2 x 2 x 1.20 metres).



The inner courtyard.

You can make out part of the concrete perimeter walls and the central building, which bears traces of one of the structures destroyed at the end of April 1945. A plaque in memory of the victims stands in a niche. In front, the steel plate floor evokes the crematorium.



The courtyard with the stele.

The stele (Pietà P.N.30) stands on the site of the chimney blown up by the Nazis on the night of 29-30 April 1945. On the left can be seen part of the steel plate floor and the four-storey building now known as the Hall of Crosses.



The Pietà P.N.30 seen from the passage to the chapel.

Standing 830 centimetres high, it is a site-specific sculpture in Minimalist style, designed by Romano Boico. Consisting of nine steel sections welded in parallel longitudinal axes at staggered heights, it marks the site of the chimney and represents the spiral movement of smoke rising to the sky.



The courtyard seen from the Hall of Crosses.

The courtyard was occupied by two buildings and a 40-metre high chimney. In this area the killings and cremations took place. According to numerous witnesses, the crematorium, built by Erwin Lambert in January 1944, was located at the base of the chimney.



Detail of the tower.

The central building has a higher avant-corps shaped like a tower, containing the stairs to reach the different floors. The ground floor houses the Museum of the Risiera di San Sabba.



Windows.

External detail of the central building. The masonry reduced to a skeleton and the windows transformed into empty orbs allude, in their silence, to the horror of violence.



Detail of the courtyard.

The view is of the entrance corridor (right) and the entrance door to the Museum Hall (left). In the foreground is the wall of the Hall of Crosses.



Museum Hall: cutlery.

The cutlery, glasses and watch were part of the objects looted from the Jews of Trieste during the Nazi occupation. Returned to the Jewish Community of Trieste in 2000, they were partly donated to the Risiera di San Sabba.



Museum Hall: glasses and watch.

The Museum, located on the ground floor of the central building, was completely renovated in 2016. The new layout (architect Corrado Pagliaro, graphic designer Roberto Duse) was awarded an Honourable Mention at the 25th Compasso d’Oro (Golden Compass) in 2018.



The Hall of Crosses.

The large building was divided into four floors, three upper floors and the ground floor. It was the place of detention for many prisoners at the Risiera, most of whom were destined for deportation to other camps. On the ground floor was located the service “command” consisting of Jewish internees.



Hall of Crosses: view towards the cell building.

The walls of the large rooms were once covered with graffiti, which have now disappeared. Evidence of these markings, drawn by prisoners at the Risiera, remains in the diaries of the Trieste scholar and collector Diego de Henriquez. Some graffiti survive in the cells of the adjoining building.



Hall of Crosses: the interweaving of beams and pillars.

The name by which this building is known today derives from the appearance of the wooden pillars and beams that once supported the floors of the three upper floors, which were removed by Boico.



The Memorial Hall seen from the entrance door.

In the hall, originally used as an engine room, there is now the bronze sculptural group The Martyrs by Marcello Mascherini (185 x 80 x 55 cm) and, at the back, a simple altar. Boico called this building the “Chapel”.



Detail of The Martyrs.

The elongated, gaunt figures of the sculpture, designed for a monument at Auschwitz, are reminiscent of the corpses and survivors that the Soviets saw on their arrival at the Lager. The naked bodies modelled by Mascherini, imprisoned in a mesh that pierces them, extend their hands towards the sky and freedom.