



SAVE FLORENCE'S ARTEMIO FRANCHI STADIUM

Brussels, November 23, 2020

For Immediate Release:
**HERITAGE ALERT: Pier Luigi Nervi's *Stadio Artemio Franchi*
Under Threat**

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Florence's *Stadio Artemio Franchi* (originally *Stadio Giovanni Berta*), designed and built by Pier Luigi Nervi and his associates between 1929 and 1932, is an iconic work of twentieth century concrete engineering and sports design. Its boldly cantilevered roof and evocative helical staircases won critical praise and popular attention throughout Italy, Europe, and the world, and called attention to Nervi's talent as an engineer, designer, and constructor. For nearly 90 years, the stadium has been home to Florence's premiere football team, *Fiorentina*, and while it underwent renovations for the 1990 World Cup that concealed much of its impressive structural design, the stadium's historic fabric remains largely intact.

After plans to abandon the *Artemio Franchi* for a new stadium in Florence's suburbs fell through, *Fiorentina* announced, earlier this year, plans to reconstruct a new facility on the site of Nervi's masterpiece. Enabled by legislation passed, hurriedly, in September that exempts stadiums and other sports facilities from Italy's thorough conservation legislation, the team's plans threaten to demolish or irreversibly alter much of the historic



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stadium's structure, potentially leaving only 'souvenirs' like its *Torre Maratona* while replacing much of the original concrete stands. This was confirmed on the 16th of November, when the team wrote to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage asking to evaluate which parts it would be allowed to tear down.

In response, the Pier Luigi Nervi Project Association is mounting a campaign to raise awareness of the stadium's importance and the imminent threat to its integrity, launching a website in Italian and English (<https://www.salviamoilfranchi.org/>) that details the stadium's design and history and that calls on architects, engineers, and historians to contact Andrea Pessina, the Superintendent of Archaeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape for Florence to intervene on behalf of the Nervi stadium. A petition on change.org directed to the Mayor of Florence in support of Nervi's masterpiece has garnered over 2,600 signatures from around the world (<http://chnng.it/ZRccYwNG>), and the PLNP Association is leading a campaign among leading architects and engineers worldwide to bring attention to the demolition threat.

The stadium is "among the most important monuments of Italian architecture due to its unprecedented role as structural architecture," according to Marco Nervi, Chairman of the Pier Luigi Nervi Project Association and Ugo Carughi, President of DOCOMOMO Italia. It "inaugurated a new way of seeing and conceiving forms, and of realizing them through technologies and construction methods that were cutting-edge for their time."

Thomas Leslie, FAIA, a historian of construction and author of *Beauty's Rigor: Patterns of Production in the Work of Pier Luigi Nervi*, calls the *Franchi* an "essential work of 20th century engineering and architecture." "This was the project that first hinted at a great, undiscovered talent working in Italy," he said. "Nervi's stadium set a high standard for sports design and for structural engineering, matching improvements in efficiency with daring structural forms and poetic, evocative architectural elements."



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To prevent the stadium's irremediable destruction the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage has issued an International Heritage Alert. "It is extremely hard to believe what is happening, given the overwhelming and obvious significance of this heritage place," comments Gunny Harboe, FAIA, President of the International Scientific Committee, "Nervi was unquestionably one of the great master architect/engineers of the 20th century, with influence all over the world." The Alert asks that the stadium's imminent demolition plans be halted, that a thorough, neutral investigation of its structural and architectural condition be carried out, and that the historic fabric's preservation be made a priority in the team's future plans.

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