

## THE VENARIA REALE COMPLEX

The seventeenth century Venaria Palace is the most imposing building in the complex of buildings and parklands which make up the “Crown of Delights” declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. The Palace, which was designed in 1658 by Amedeo di Castellamonte for Duke Carlo Emanuele II, together with the Gallery of Diana, Lemon-house, and Sant’Uberto galleries and chapel designed by Juvarra (1716-28) make up the “Versailles” of Turin: an outstanding complex which blends in beautifully with the village and surrounding park.

This complex of parklands and buildings, with its numerous annexes (church, stables, park and gardens) is the largest restoration project currently in progress in Europe: it has attracted considerable EU and regional investments in order to be restored for the public, as a tourist attraction of note.

The restoration project. On 11 May 1995, during a conference held at Venaria Reale Castle with representatives from local and national public administrations, dedicated to assessing the potential of the Venaria Reale Complex, the first practical step was taken to planning the work on the Complex, ten years after a previous restoration project had been put forward but never implemented.

The next decisive step was when the European Union approved the feasibility study in 1999 and authorised the call for tenders **to carry out the work involved in the project**, to the value of 61,975,000 Euros, which, coupled with a supplementary sum and added to funding from the Ministry of Culture and other bodies, **brought the total to 196,254,000 Euros.**

The restoration and promotion of the Venaria complex is one of the main strategies set out in the Agreement for the Outline Programme regarding culture in Piedmont drawn up on May 18 2001 by the State and the Piedmont Region.

The work, which has been divided into 9 different projects, includes:

- ❖ The restoration of the Mandria Castle, which will feature a hotel, visitor centre, centre for temporary exhibitions, library, conference hall, areas for seminars, a restaurant and a shopping area in the service courtyard, while the existing Royal apartments will function as a museum. This is a new type of museum in a space of over 4 thousand square metres, which combines spectacular green areas with the latest technologies, landscapes dedicated to exploring man’s relationship with nature.
- ❖ The restoration of the Venaria Reale park, recreating its walkways, viewpoints, wooded areas and meadows, preserving the original layout of the parklands. The park will host recreational activities and shows linked to the history and natural characteristics of the setting: flower shows, games and sports, shows and music, as well as contemporary art exhibitions.
- ❖ The restoration of the Palace, which will feature a tour of the Royal apartments, the basement and the Juvarra-designed Lemon-house and main stables, giving visitors an insight into the way of life of the court which commissioned and used the hunting residence. The area of Venaria Reale with the stables and riding school has been converted into a “Conservation and Restoration Centre”: a university institute of

restoration and a vocational school, linked by the riding school, which will host the workshops.

- ❖ The restoration of Rubbianetta farmhouse, which lies to the west of the Mandria Castle, and was originally used as the Royal stables for breeding horses. This will host an Equestrian Centre, for theoretic and practical educational activities (dedicated to the origins of the horse, the various breeds and their purposes, as well as techniques for rearing, taming and training), and horse shows. There is also to be a lodge which sleeps 30 guests.

The full annual running costs for the Venaria Palace Complex are estimated to be around 15 million Euros, with an estimated 200 members of staff.

Information file prepared by the Piedmont Cultural Observatory.