

## Views &amp; Comments

## The Three “As” of the Naples Metro System

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## 1. Introduction

Metro Line 1 of the Naples underground metro system began from a first draft in 1976, and has been developed through subsequent insights and novel strategies to become the main instrument of urban and social transformation for the city of Naples. The major stations built at the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, including the Viennese railway stations designed by Otto Wagner, express a committed intention to create a form of architecture to enhance the technical undertaking of transport infrastructure. However, unlike these, most of the railway station projects in other cities have been exclusively aimed at enhancing technical and engineering concepts. The infrastructure of such stations is only created to allow accessibility to specific areas, and the station itself is simply a place through which this infrastructure could be accessed. For a long time, and in many cases still today, this lack of quality has turned underground rapid transit stations and railway stations into urban spaces of degradation, even though they are located in central areas of the city: Such spaces cannot provide urban renewal to the city, nor can they be used for city-promoting activities.

MN Metropolitana di Napoli S.p.A. (hereafter referred as MN) is the general contractor of the city of Naples for the design and construction of Metro Line 1. Since 1990, in agreement with the municipal administration, MN has felt the need to provide a more competitive alternative to private transport, including the necessary revitalization of the underground and aboveground spaces, in order to increase public use of the underground rapid transit system and raise public perception of the efficiency and safety of the system.

## 2. Art

The first experience with this revitalization was realized with the construction of the Vanvitelli–Dante subway segment. This undertaking consisted of revitalizing the underground spaces, which are crossed daily by hundreds of thousands of citizens, with contemporary artworks. This experiment, which has progressively seen the involvement of almost 200 artists, was the first of its kind in Italy, and may well be the first in the rest of the world as well.

A huge number of artworks were installed under the name of “public art.” In the words of Professor Achille Bonito Oliva, a

consultant of MN and the curator of this experience, “public art is not simple furnishings or decorations to the architectural envelope; rather, it is a structure that interacts with the existing structure of the architectural shell and randomly draws the happy gaze of the public, who pass through these spaces with attention and sometimes with carelessness.”

Therefore, the revitalized Salvator Rosa Station (Fig. 1), Cilea Station (Fig. 2), Materdei Station (Fig. 3), Museo Station (Fig. 4), and Dante Station (Fig. 5) now represent a sort of “obligatory museum” and have earned the title of “Stations of Art” in the collective imagination.

This initial experiment has already improved the common landscape, if a “landscape” is understood not only as an open space, but also as any closed space, even an underground space, that is enjoyed or participated in by those who cross it at a particular moment.

After commissioning the Stations of Art and realizing the renewal of the downtown stations, it was necessary to manage the huge quantity of archeological findings and relate these to the history of the city of Naples, which encompasses the entire Mediterranean culture from the age of Magna Graecia to the present day.

## 3. Archeology and architecture

By means of stratigraphic excavations, conducted in agreement with the archeological authority, all the historical periods through which Naples has passed, without solution of continuity, have been “rediscovered,” and exceptional descriptions have been written, allowing historians to rewrite important pages in the local urban evolution.

The scientific results of these excavations, which were conducted under the supervision of the Soprintendenza Archeologica, are outside of the scope of this article, and contain so many discoveries that they would require years to be fully described. Notable discoveries include:

- A Roman shrine to the Isolympic Games, found in Piazza Nicola Amore (Fig. 6);
- A port built in the classical age, discovered in Piazza Municipio (Fig. 7); and
- Parts of the Angioino District (XIII century) around Castel Nuovo (Fig. 8).



**Fig. 1.** Salvator Rosa Station. (Photo credit: Luca Pioltelli)



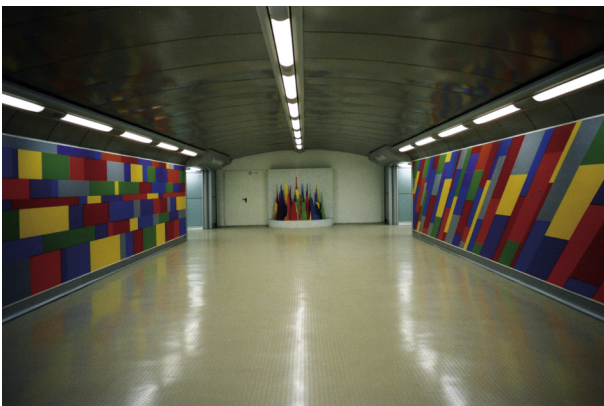
**Fig. 4.** Museo Station displays work by the artist Mimmo Iodice. (Photo credit: Peppe Avallone)



**Fig. 2.** Cilea Station exhibits work by the artist Marisa Albanese. (Photo credit: Peppe Avallone)



**Fig. 5.** Dante Station exhibits work by the artist Joseph Kosuth. (Photo credit: Peppe Avallone)



**Fig. 3.** Materdei Station showcases work by the artist Sol Lewitt. (Photo credit: Peppe Avallone)



**Fig. 6.** Duomo Station exhibits a Roman shrine to the Isolympic Games, a competition that followed the same regulations as the original Olympic Games of Ancient Greece. (Source: Archives of Metropolitana di Napoli S.p.A.)

In light of these discoveries, it was considered to be a primary aim to proceed with the integration, as far as possible, of archaeological findings into the design of the stations. This was done by collaborating with architects with proven international experience, who could bring quality design to the implementation of the infrastructural architecture in combination with archeology and contemporary art, thus giving life to the three “As” of the Naples metro system.

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