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Pavaglione is a huge 18th century *quadriporticus*, that is a building featuring a four sided arcade, located in the heart of Lugo (Italy). Historically, its central courtyard housed one of the biggest markets of Northern Italy along the Silk Road, becoming the main condenser of local community life and a commercial and exchange magnet for a much broader region.

By the beginning of the 20th century, when *Pavaglione* gradually lost its function, the courtyard turned into a vast, marginal “backyard” despite its downtown setting and architectural value.

Following the outcomes of a participative process set up by local Municipality, the project aims at redefining the urban role of the courtyard under a contemporary perspective, in order to enhance its extraordinary architectural quality and produce a vibrant public space.

The courtyard is reimagined as a whole system consisting of two functional portions defined by *cardus*, the main axis of the ancient roman settlement which passes through the square:

1. On one side the “enchanted garden” featuring a small grove of *Cercis siliquastrum* trees.

2. On the other, the “mineral plateau”, a free flexible space designed to facilitate a wide range of public events.

The project includes the whole renovation of the existing cobblestones and a new finishing in resin bound limestone aggregates for the central area to replace the asphalt. As in the *graffito* technique, the surface is engraved with signs in corten steel. Some recall the historical pathways without being merely mimetic, and others mark new directions, dynamizing the space and encouraging visitors to walk across or stop by.

A gentle moulding earthwork creates soft seating areas under the trees of the “enchanted grove”, while other squared benches dot the “mineral plateau”. By night, this constellation of elements disappears making room to a dreamlike lighting.

The renewal of the courtyard triggered a process of collective reappropriation and re-discovering of this neglected site even before the conclusion of the construction works. After rehabilitation, the courtyard recovered its role as the main square in Lugo and as a territorial attractor, gathering people looking not only for happenings but also for a comfortable seat, some shadow, a meeting point or a children’s playground.



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Before intervention



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Soft seating areas



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After intervention