

Entrance

Also known as “Bagni di Mario” (Mario’s Baths), the Reservoir was erroneously given this name in the 19th century for its charming appearance which might evoke the interior of Roman *Thermae*.

Indeed, the Valverde Reserve is one of the many efforts to provide the city centre with drinking water, an alternative to the numerous wells where water stagnated, thus favouring the spread of disease.

On 14 March 1563, Pope Pius IV and the deputy delegate Pier Donato Cesi, the Bishop of Narni, ordered two new fountains for the city centre: the elegant *Fontana del Nettuno* (Neptune Fountain) and *Fontana Vecchia* (the Old Fountain).

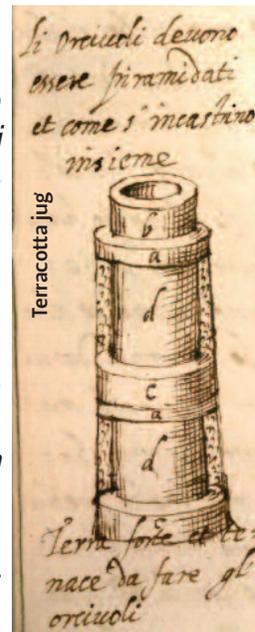
The architect Tommaso Laureti from Palermo was put in charge of finding new sources of water and directing the works. Water was found in the Valverde district with an ingenious system of tunnels and ramifications which passed through the hill. Water was channelled

into the reservoir with four pipelines and then fell into a well, 27 feet deep, which ended in the Church of SS. Annunziata. A conduit made of terracotta jugs brought water under the Neptune Fountain.

Excess water was conveyed inside the Palazzo del Legato to feed the *Fontana dei Cavalleggeri*, which no longer exists; the *Fontana Vecchia* in what is today Via Ugo Bassi; the reservoir in the *Orto dei Semplici* (a botanic garden known as the Garden of the Simple), where today is the *Salaborsa* library.

This supply system remained virtually unchanged for over three centuries.

The reservoir is entirely underground and is built on two levels.



Terracotta jug



Entrance hall

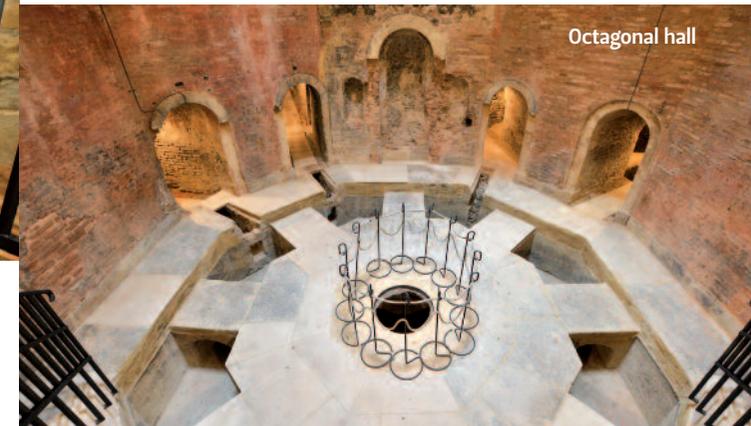
On the top level, a spectacular octagonal chamber measuring over 8 metres in length, reminds us of the Nero’s *Domus Aurea* in Rome. The choice of an octagonal shape was

explained by Laureti with the need to better collect in one place the water coming from the four ducts which, with different lengths, penetrate deep into the hillside. Water was first purified in the small well at the entrance of the duct and then in a crown of tanks on the floor. Light and air entered this large reservoir only through one circular vent at 11 meters of height, on top of the large dome, also octagonal.



Decorative detail

The niche of the Valverde Reserve was inspired by the taste for antiquity, with stucco decorations, earthenware, lava material and elements in turquoise-green terracotta.



Octagonal hall

In the upper part, two rampant lions frame a coat of arms which is now illegible but probably associated with Pope Pius IV or the deputy delegate Cesi who had commissioned the Reserve.

Inside the first duct there is a ventilation chimney with century-old limestone deposits.

A second small octagonal room (known as *Cisternetta* - the small reservoir), with another settling tank, is connected to the main one through a small staircase.



Dome

The lower level received all the rainwater from the upper level. Rainwater was conveyed into a brick duct and arrived near the Church of Santa Maria dell'Annunziata where it merged with the water from the duct of the Remonda Spring from San Michele in Bosco.

When the Roman aqueduct was reactivated, in 1881, the hydraulic systems of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, including the Valverde Reserve, were progressively abandoned to disuse.

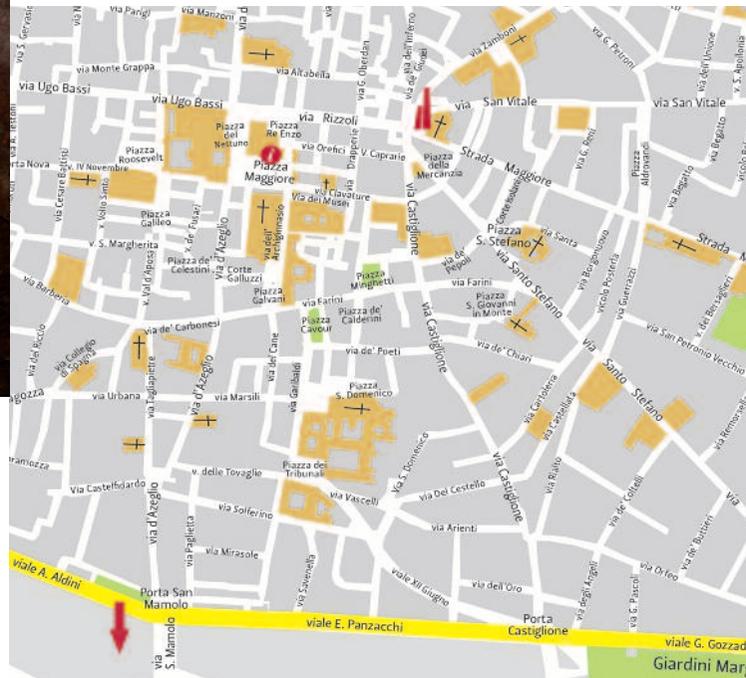
During the Second World War, the reservoir was used as an air-raid shelter.

In 2016, the meticulous restoration sponsored by the Municipality of Bologna brought the Renaissance Reserve back to its original splendour.

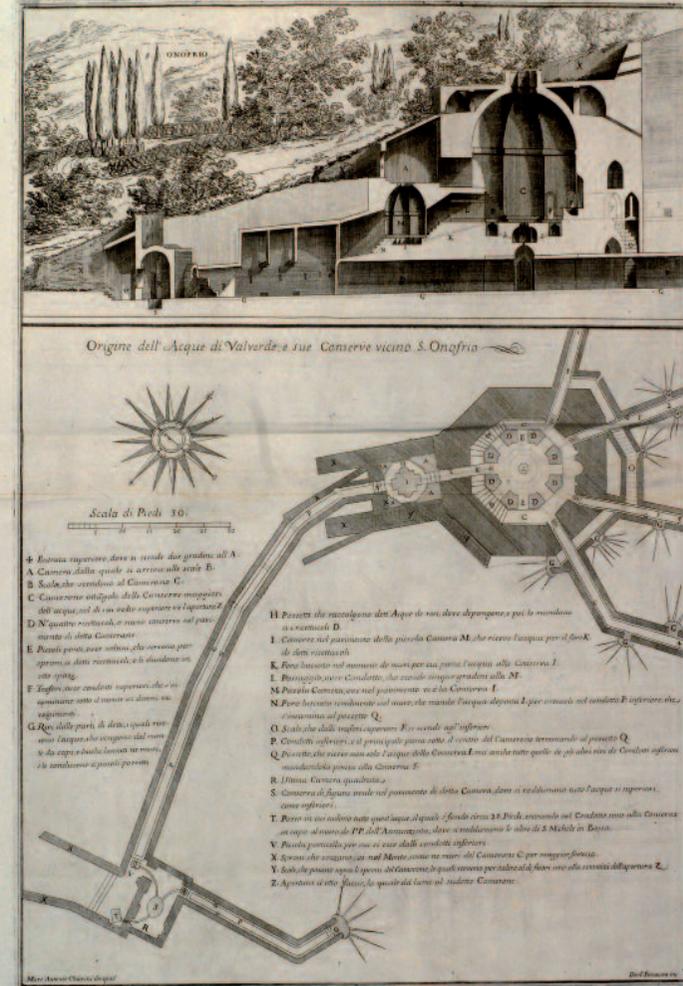
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Tunnel



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Valverde Reservoir

The Renaissance reservoir supplied drinking water to the citizens of Bologna and to the renowned fountains of the city centre. The restoration of this extraordinary work of the Sicilian architect Tommaso Laureti was funded by the Municipality of Bologna.



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