

## The Colosseum's Makeover is a Go

natasha lardera (August 01, 2014)



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Back in January 2011 newspapers all over Italy and abroad announced a great, and simply unbelievable, piece of news: entrepreneur [Diego Della Valle](#) [2] announced he would fully finance the restoration of Rome's Colosseum.

Built in 72 A.D, [Rome's Colosseum](#) [3], originally named the Flavian Amphitheater, after the [Flavian Dynasty of Emperors](#) [4], has remained the largest amphitheater in the world and is considered to be the capital's most popular tourist attraction. This monument that once hosted gladiatorial fights, naval battles, re-enactments of famous battles and executions was built in only 9 years using over 60,000 Jewish slaves, it has over 80 entrances and can accommodate about 50,000 spectators. Many



natural disasters devastated the structure of the Colosseum, made of concrete and stone, but it was the earthquakes of 847 AD and 1231 AD that caused most of the damage we see today.

Della Valle's restoration plans include the following steps: the restoration of the Northern prospectus (5 million and 165 thousand euros); the restoration of the Southern prospectus (1 million 936 thousand euros); the replacement of the closures of the barrel vaults with gates (1 million 680 thousand euros); the renovation, restoration and consolidation of the ambulacra and the hypogea (11 million 500 thousand euros); installations and illumination (about 900 thousand euros); the construction of a Service center.

"We want to show the world that Italy is a great country and that it works well. We don't want anything back from this. We aren't doing it to gain anything. We must do it and we are proud of it." These were Della Valle's words back in 2011, as he was giving an explanation why he decided to fund the restoration. He stressed that the decision was made "as a sign of respect to our Country, from an Italian company that is working well in a time of crisis and that represents the Made in Italy all through the world." Della Valle even joked that he would not put a giant Tod's shoe on the monument to advertise his company and that the financing was a duty not just a pleasure.

Let's move forward in time, at the end of July 2014, five of the Colosseum's 80 arches have been brought back to their original splendor. The announcement of the completion of the first round of renovations was made by Rome's Superintendent of Archaeological Heritage, Mariarosa Barbera, during a press conference attended by Diego Della Valle as well. "Today marks the first time that, after years and years of words rather than facts," Della Valle said, "we can all see that something has really happened. We can all see that the first part of this dear monument has been brought back to its original beauty."

Indeed the Colosseum is now sporting its original colors: yellow, ocher, honey and ivory. In order to remove the crusts of smog and other debris that have deposited over the years, the restorers used specific methods to avoid damaging the natural stone spraying room temperature water without addition of solvents. Right before the official unveiling, workers had removed the scaffolding to give Romans and tourists alike a stunning view.

"By the end of September we will complete five more arches and unveil them too," Rossella Rea, the Colosseum's director said, "meanwhile we are putting up more scaffolding and we predict that the restoration will be completed by March 2016."

The total cost of the restoration is 25 million euros. Rome's ex mayor, Gianni Alemanno, said, when introducing the project back in 2011 "The first time Della Valle came to see me in Campidoglio he told me he had 5 million to be used for the Colosseum. I told him it was not enough. He left... but he came back three months later... with 25 millions."

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