Houses and streets, mansions and churches, factories and squares all testify the story of this city. Yet they remain mute until the many stories associated with each place are revealed to us. Stories of yesterday, but also of today, because people who live and visit the city are part of it, with their memories and their knowledge that can be acquired, passed on and handed down.

Turin: the history of a city is a multimedia presentation staged in Palazzo Madama. A story told through visuals, a fascinating and exciting experience that helps us to understand the city and its fundamental stages of development from way before it was founded right up to present days. A journey through time that invites us to see the city through new and different eyes.

Turin: the history of a city is also a permanent exhibition on the website www.museotorino.it, which contains also issue 1 of the museum’s magazine “Rivista museoTorino” dedicated to the contents of the multimedia presentation.

A PORTRAIL IN FIVE PICTURES.
The story begins way back before the city, when the territory where Turin was founded still lay beneath the sea, then moves on to the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary city. Each period is marked by the most significant dates. Changes in terms of shape, structure and dimensions can be observed in maps of the city shown alongside one of Turin as it is today. And revealing changes in appearance, images of places that still today represent and encompass its history.

A SPECTACULAR MULTIVISUAL APPROACH.
The dark room becomes a theatre scene. Twelve “side-scenes” host screens on which images appear telling the story of Turin over time. Photographs in the centre of the room form a dialogue with images shown on the side-screens. On the floor, maps of the city over the centuries are shown in synch with images of the city. Short texts and an engaging soundtrack accompany this visual story. Exploring history has never been so easy... and so fascinating.

A FAITHFUL RECONSTRUCTION.
The selection of the multivisual content is the result of a painstaking task performed by a scientific committee, which identified the 400 places and most significant moments in the city’s history. Then over 20 researchers studied and documented these. This portrayal includes more than 1500 new photos taken by professional photographers, 40 hours of video material shot by specialised teams, and graphics and digital images of 30 maps of the city.

The event takes place in the Corte Medievale at Palazzo Madama in Piazza Castello. It lasts 25 minutes and is repeated a number of times during the day at regular intervals. Times: Tuesday-Saturday 10-18; Sunday 10-20; Monday closed. Free admission.
BEFORE THE CITY

The story begins with an immense leap back in time to a completely different world from today. An account of the geological evolution of the territory in which Turin was founded, of why and how its characteristic features were formed. Features that fostered and conditioned its birth and development. A time-scale marked by four stages. The formation of the continents, the Alps, then the emersion of the hill and the creation of the plain with its rivers, up to the time when the Turinites settled this territory. This helps to explain the fundamental features of the landscape as we see it today. Like the Rivoli-Avigliana morainic amphitheatre created by the expansion of the Susa Valley glacier, the narrow plain trapped between the Alps and the hill and the change in the river Po’s course from south to north of this hill.

THE ANCIENT CITY

Before looking at the birth of Turin, the destruction of Taurasia and settlement of the Turinites who opposed the passing of Hannibal’s troops as they descended from the Alps explains the true reason for founding the city, namely, for its strategic position. Because of this, between 23 and 15 BC, emperor Augustus decided to establish the colony of Augusta Taurinorum to garrison the Alpine passes, but also with a view to expansion towards central-northern Europe. The area it covered can be seen quite clearly thanks to the remains of many sections of the Roman walls. These indicate its shape and size, its streets intersecting at right angle, a layout confirmed and widened later during the baroque period and that still today is a characteristic of the old city centre.

By the end of the 4th century AD a progressive “christianisation” of the city and consolidation of Episcopal power was underway and so the urban area was marked out by the building of new churches and basilicas.

THE MODERN CITY

In 1563 Turin became the capital of the Duchy of Savoy and then in just two centuries it evolved from a small city-fortress into the majestic capital of what was recognised as being one of Europe’s great kingdoms. Here, as time went by, dukes and kings, assisted by military engineers and brilliant architects, designed an ambitious city that aspired to power and brilliance. In 1580, when the church held sway and then the commune of Turin. Points of reference also changed within the urban fabric, as the seat of government moved from the area near Porta Palatina to Porta di Susa. Domination of the Savoy-Acaia family began in 1280 and the city developed around the vital centres of power. Artisan and commercial activities sprang up around the Town Hall. The early years of the 15th century saw the founding of the university, a sure sign of the prestige the city enjoyed. Then in the late 15th century the old cathedral complex was transformed to become the new Renaissance Cathedral. When the old castle at Porta Fimbilla, now Palazzo Madama, was restructured it became the seat of the courts and so acquired increasing importance. In fact it often housed the kings of France, who recognised that Turin was the “Gateway to Italy” through which they passed with their armies.

THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

The final act is marked by far-reaching changes in the city, with the demolition of the walls and consequent expansion that saw the creation of large piazzas, long tree-lined avenues, new quarters. But this was only the start because over the past two centuries Turin was to see a succession of significant changes and transformations. From capital of the Savoy monarchy to moral capital of Italy in its march towards unification. From first capital of a united Italy to the driving force of the nation’s industry. From outstanding example of the industrial towns to a city that is in a very few decades has managed to reinvent its image and take on a new identity. An ability and spirit expressed by the XXth Winter Olympic Games and today seen in celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy.