

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
SECOND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture (Rehabilitation and Revaluation)
Honors theses

From perspective representation to represented object. The illusory architecture in the Ecce Homo chapel at Sacred Mount of Varallo

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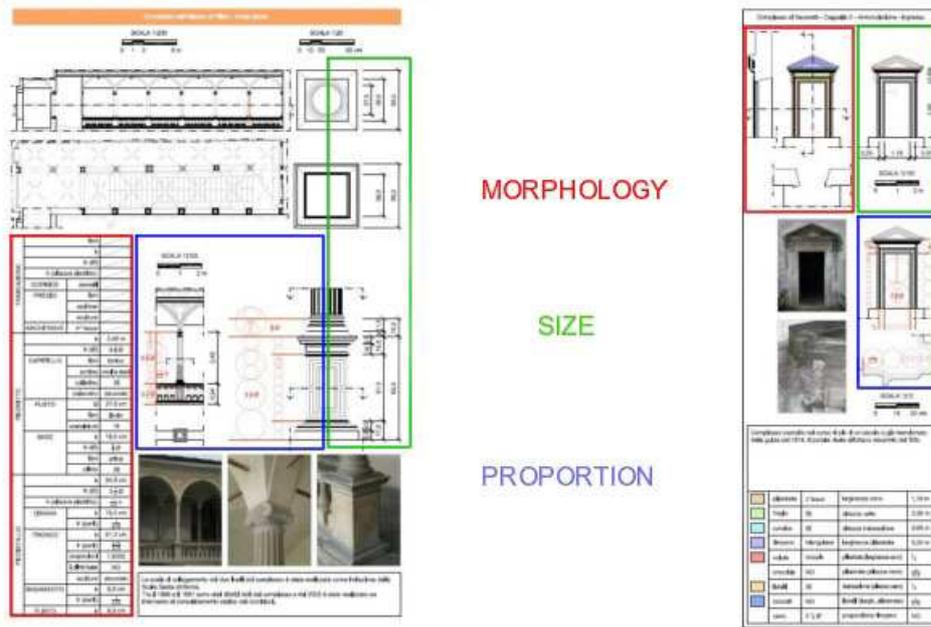
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We present an interdisciplinary analysis of the illusory architecture of prealpin Sacred Mounts chapels. Our goal is the illusory space restitution and the validity inspection of represented architectural parts in order to understand the artistic reasons behind scenery organization.

At first we analyse the chapels fruition which leads to the fusion between image and prototype. These chapels are a complex environment made by frescoes and sculptures. Moreover the observer watches the scenery through a grating which restricts his movements and provides only a few fixed viewer's eye, giving him an excellent illusory sight on the *architectura picta* and *ficta*.

Secondly we turn our attention onto the Varallo Ecce Homo chapel because this is the first example of a new relationship between figures and architectural space and therefore a model for later chapels.

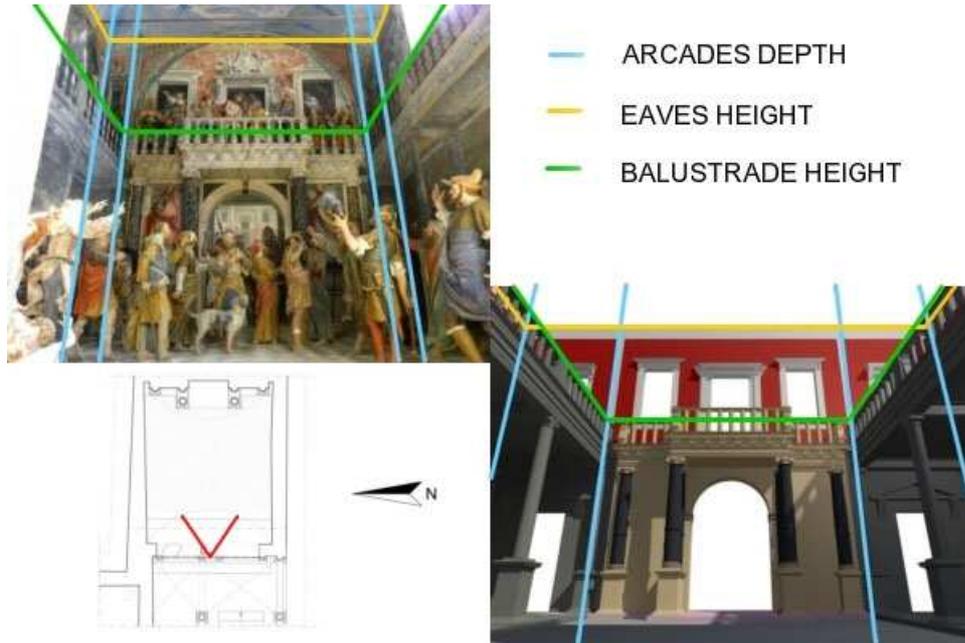
The illusory architecture of the scenery cannot be investigated with the same methodology of the real one, so we use some real-architecture archetypal images to read the illusory one. Consequently we consider both real and illusory architecture of some Varallo chapels and we look for XVI century buildings to explain every single represented architectural part.



Architectural elements in the chapels at Sacred Mount of Varallo: explanatory examples of architectural orders (columns at the Holy Stair) and doors (entrance of the Annunciation chapel)

Then we analyse the Ecce Homo frescos prototype to understand the validity of represented architectural parts. As this chapel is a complex environment, we take some tools related to architectural shape survey from other sciences like drawing or architectural history.

From this analysis it appears that the image is conceived in a rhetoric way. For example in order to put some objects in sight, the apparent depth of other components is altered. Thanks to this rhetorical device, the painter conveys a univocal spatial typology of represented building parts.



The arcades apparent depth influences the reading of the building top storey: on left the real situation painted in the chapel, on right its restitution

However the painter uses the architecture only as a staging environment. In fact we pointed out two areas in the illusory architecture, with independent compositional aspects and different proportions, decorative elements and perspective constructions. In particular the area near the observer is set as a curtain with respect to the other part of the chapel. Moreover these two areas represent simultaneously two chronologically distinct events – the scene of Christ presented to the people and that of Barabba's release.



From the perspective image we show two among the numberless restitutive possibilities about foreparts position and size

This survey shows there are several spatial configuration interpretations of the represented prototype, so a univocal frescos restitution is impossible. Moreover the frescos are conceived to convey a likelihood illusion from the grating fixed viewer's eye.

Consequently the illusory architecture analysis of the Sacred Mount chapel allows the comprehension of the image organization.

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