

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
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Honors theses

A hypothesis of reuse of the "Manifattura di Moncalieri" as the alternative seat of the Museum of Eastern Art of Turin

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The thesis develops several themes: first of all relations between Japan and the West in art and architecture, and then the reuse of an abandoned industrial building of architectural value (Manifattura di Moncalieri) as the alternative seat of MAO in Turin. Finally is dealt in the theme of popularization and enhancement of cultural heritage through the design of images to be projected on the west front of the Manifattura as a museum.

The thesis is divided in three parts: the first two are devoted to theoretical analysis that have been fundamental to the development of the project, described in the third part. The research path begins from the study of the relationship between Japan and the West in the late nineteenth century artistic renewal.

Through the analysis of the Exoticism and especially of the Japonism I have shown how for many western artists such as the Impressionists, the Japanese art was fundamental to their work. At the end of Japan's isolation from the rest of the world (1853), many artistic objects reached Europe marking the start of to the phenomenon of Japonism that can be defined as the production of artworks inspired to Japanese art.



1856 ca., Utagawa Hiroshige, *In the enclosure of the sanctuary of Tenjin in Kameido* (in GIOIA MORI, *Impressionismo, Van Gogh e il Giappone*, Giunti, Firenze 1999, p. 12) (left) - 1900, Claude Monet, *The water lily pond. Harmony in pink*, Parigi, Musée d'Orsay (in GIOIA MORI, *Impressionismo, Van Gogh e il Giappone*, Giunti, Firenze 1999, p. 12) (right)

In their works the Impressionists resumed subjects, themes, "shots" formats and techniques derived from Japanese prints, as in the case reported here.

About relationship Japan-West, the thesis deals with the influence of Japanese art in Art Nouveau through the analysis of themes, artists and works. This theme has been described using three common characters: the *sinuosity of the line*, the *relationship with the nature*, the *relationship with the feminine figure*. Then I devoted a few pages to Japanese art in Turin during the *First International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art* (1902).

The second part begins with the analysis of the Japanese traditional architecture examined in accordance with the concept of space in Japan and through some characters such as the *Harmony with the surrounding environment*, the *Architecture of transience*, and the *Asymmetry as the exaltation of rationality*. Subsequently I studied the characteristics and changes of traditional habitation in different ages of the history of Japan, and described the space for the tea ceremony.

The thesis continues with the study of the traditional Japanese garden by examining the types of existing gardens.

I also described some examples like the garden of *Ryoanji* (Temple of the Pacific Dragon) or that of the *Katsura Imperial Villa*. Finally, I examined the natural and architectonic elements of the Japanese garden.

The focus has shifted on the Japanese architecture of the second post-war period to understand what characters of the architectonic tradition have reached to our days, in what manner and in what form. The analysis was led through theme critically selected: *Relationship between West and East*, *Use of light and shadow*, *Relationship with the materials*, *Lightness and transparency*, *Relationship with the nature*.

The themes treated in the second part of thesis were also useful as references for the design of the pavilions and gardens to be included in the park around the Manifattura di Moncalieri. The third part begins by examining the project site and the Manifattura di Moncalieri. The building was designed by Mario Passanti and Paolo Perona in the years 1951-52 and is located along corso Moncalieri in Turin.

The idea of proposing an alternative seat of MAO in this building comes from some critical aspects of the current seat (Palazzo Mazzonis) that I have detected, such as the difficulty of finding space for future expansion of the collections.

Other reasons are the redevelopment of a suburban area through the art, and the characteristics of modularity and essentiality of the factory that fit Eastern art and architecture, especially Japanese. The project consists in the recover of the dismantled textile factory and the surrounding park: in the Manifattura are placed the explanatory spaces, the administrative offices, the warehouse of artworks, the reserves, the box-office, the cloak-room, spaces reserved to the staff and the toilets. In the park are provided three pavilions that offer hospitality to the conference hall, the teaching hall, the bar, the bookshop, the toilets and a covered space for meditation. I suggested the use of the villa as a guesthouse for researchers and artists arrived on the city for their activity of research or exposure.

It has been impossible the total graphic reworking of the villa and the arrangement of the interior due to the impossibility of access to the area of Manifattura and the incompleteness of archive drawings. The buildings are connected by a network of paths that is integrated with the existing ones in the park. Here were also designed some gardens inspired to the Japanese tradition and some vegetable species used in the East.



Andrea Beccaris, *Render showing a view from the south-west of the museum complex*

In the picture there are three pavilions, the Manifattura di Moncalieri (left) and in the background the villa, while on the right we see the avenue of plane trees. The layout of the rooms recovers that present of the MAO, also providing for a system for projecting images in the rooms. Great importance has been the theme of environmental sustainability of the project through the choice of natural and recyclable materials, such as sheep's wool, wood fiber and cellulose fiber. The final chapter deals in visual communication of cultural heritage for their enhancement and popularization. The deepening consists in the design of images to project on the west front of the Manifattura di Moncalieri. The objective is the enhancement of the building and the improvement of the inside museum's visibility on the media, with the visitor's consequent increase. A theme of the projections are the artworks of the museum, while the other is the peony's flower: this is a well diffused plant in China, an expensive flower and characterized by many symbolic meanings. In some compositions appear scenes from the Chinese play *The Peony's Pavilion (Mudan Ting)* together with reproductions of prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai that have as their subject the flower, and photographs of the peony.



Andrea Beccaris, *The flower of the peony in Oriental art: woodblock prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai and the Chinese opera "The Peony Pavilion"*

The projection has as its theme the flower of peony and its representation in Chinese and Japanese art. In addition to photograph of the flower are inserted his representations of Japanese artists Hiroshige and Hokusai in some woodcuts. Together there are pictures of the play *The Peony Pavilion (Mudan Ting)*, characterized by precious costumes and a rich scenography in which it appears the image of the flower.

The idea is to imagine a relationship between the real flower and its representation in the play (stage designing and costumes) and prints. Moreover the peony is one of the vegetable species planted in the park around the Manifattura: the idea is to create, through the projections, a link between the real visual experience of the flower in the gardens and the virtual experience of the projections. The thesis allows myself to examine carefully the relationship between Japan and the West in art and architecture. The project develops from the theoretical analysis (study of Japanese architecture and gardens, of the influences between the Japanese and western art) and from visual characters taken from the Japan's art and architecture. The plan suggests an alternative seat of the MAO to answer to possible future needs of space, and at the same time a new use for the Manifattura di Moncalieri, that is abandoned from years. The aim is also to obtain a possible redevelopment of a suburban area through the placing of a museum and the opening to the community of the park that surround the Manifattura. The deepening about the projections on the front gives an answer to visual communication of cultural heritage for their enhancement and popularization (media façade).

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