

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2
Degree in Architecture
Honors theses

**From tradition to design. The “Masche” and architecture of the landscape:
street theatre**

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The increase in value and the protection of the local cultural background is one of the prominent targets of each public administration: discovering our past through folk tales allows us to build up the present and the future more consciously.

This assertion sees history and traditions closely connected and capable of producing a cultural substratum to which design is strictly linked. Moreover, the area where the designer/architect often works must be considered as a complex organization.

In the light of the latest developments in the field of territorial policy, it is possible to ascertain a widespread interest in landscape as well as the need to face this theme according to an interdisciplinary approach, which can link different disciplines (town planning, history and so on) and make them interact.

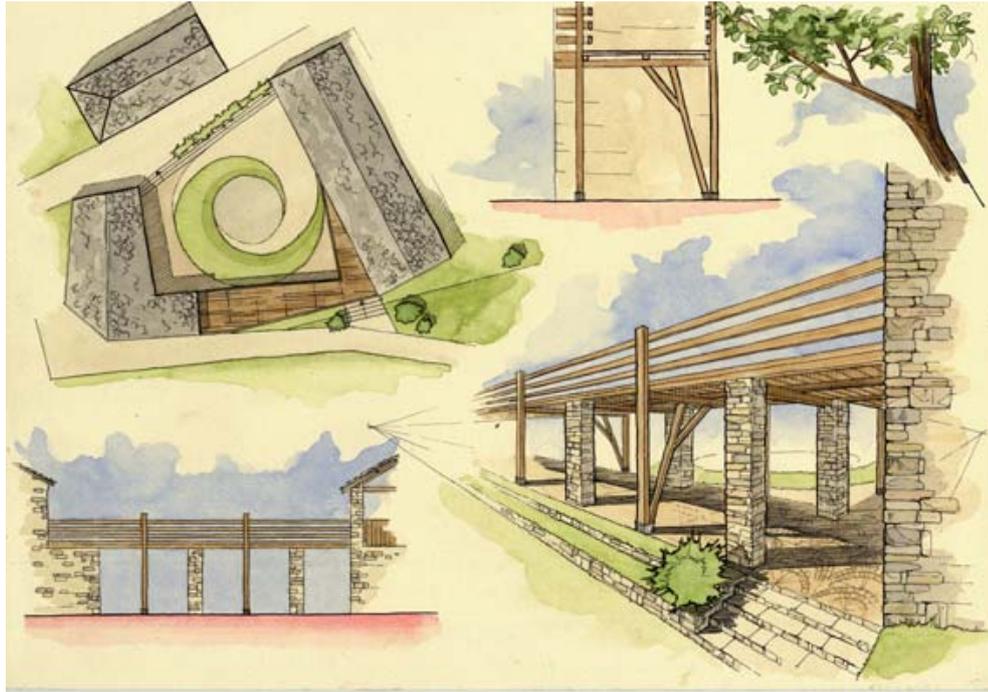
To this purpose the study of folklore has allowed us to grasp the features of landscape in a given area as well as its qualitative aspects, which otherwise might be omitted.

So the collection of tales about the “masche” and fanciful figures represents a clear example of this approach, which can organize a certain area according to a new perspective.

It is difficult to explain the concept of “masca” in few words, as it is abstract and real at the same time. “Masca” is a Piedmontese dialectical term which means witch, spirit, a woman endowed with peculiar faculties. This figure used to strike terror into everyone as she represented the unknown, the difference, and all the negative events of daily life were ascribed to her.

So the case of Paroldo, a small village in the area of Cuneo, suggests us how popular imagination reflects the local history and culture offering several design hints. In this way, our idea is a sort of mediation between the popular tradition and possible architectural styles.

Fears and superstitions are expressed through meaningful symbols such as the circle, fire and the snake, which come true through the organization of outdoor spaces, the creation of routes and the different use of old hoylofts.



The organization of an outdoor space in the historical centre of Paroldo, where the symbols of the circle and of the curve are suggested in the design of the pavement. In fact, we have lots of folk tales where such symbols are considered as negative symbols: sometimes it is just near the curves that witch night meetings take place, characterized by the circularity of the dance

The landscape holds the facilities for tourists, respecting the previous structures, but, at the same time, it is a sort of a live theatre just as the centre of Paroldo, with its views and small corners where time seems to have stopped.

In this way it is clear that our objective in the organization of the town space has been to enhance the local architecture, making it a spectacular outdoor performance, which is already staged every year during the feast of St. Martin, the patron saint of Paroldo.



We aimed at the improvement of rural buildings through the creation of a square, where plays can be staged in the open air, as well as the carrying out of a view footbridge over the same square

What we are proposing are more ideas than designs, which try to evoke suggestive images and emotions. That is why we think that “the design sketch” is an effective way to express the peculiar feelings suggested by the landscape.

The sketch does not indicate a necessity but an opportunity, a starting point from which we can move towards different directions. The sketch is not necessarily a definite object but a set of possible ones, making it a means endowed with an inner force.

A prominent aspect of the sketch is that it may be compared with a fanciful tale as both of them have no beginning or end. So a tale may be enriched by a lot of new details according to the experiences of its narrator as well as endless features may come out from one sketch.

In other words, the sketch will be a “pictured tale” which can be changed and modified by who is looking at it through his\her imagination.



Popular imagination often links lightning and storms with the devil and the “masca”. In this case the symbol is an inspiring shape too: the lightning, like a broken line similar to a blade, may suggest a cantilever roof, a covered passage along a path

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