

POLITECNICO DI TORINO  
SECOND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE  
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*Honors theses*

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**Palazzo Mathis in Bra: hypothesis for restoration and consolidation**

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*“We lived on the upper floor of the house facing town hall, a big building with gentleman’s residences on the main floor and modest housings upstairs, where steps became in rough stone and steeper...”*

This is how Giovanni Arpino’s begins his novel “Gli anni del giudizio”, set in one of the ancient architectural beauties of Bra: Palazzo Mathis, the only building in the town centre that has never been restored nor studied; and it seems like a piece of history is missing to this town.



Here my interest in Palazzo Mathis arose up: from the wish to get this neglected gem rightly known, so that a restoring project could be started to finally complete the enhancement of such a beautiful historical centre.

The first stage of my study consisted in a perceptive analysis of the environment and in a deep historical research. The lack of documentary sources required a main work on the material sources: I examined the present structure in detail and then, comparing it with the historical maps of the town and with the papers founded in the family files, I finally came to a complete interpretation of the several construction steps.

After a geometric survey of the present condition, I transferred on the tables the wall frameworks, the floorings and the ground projection of arching and vaults. A set of photo cards comes with the tables to portray the Palazzo in every smallest detail in order to report the story and the handcraft tradition of each manufacture.



Eventually, I built an analysis scheme to evaluate any kind of deterioration detected and to clarify the nature of the unbalances, trying to define the events that caused them.

**I was induced by the high presence of degradation on the different fronts of the building to adopt a special portrayal procedure that combines a coloured cross-hatching system, which highlights the wider areas of deteriorations (such as weathering, exfoliation, plaster detaching, presence of vegetation, pulverization), with an icons system for punctual degradations** (from *Dalla Costa Mario, Il progetto di restauro per la conservazione del costruito, edit by Celid, Torino 2000*).

As last step, I considered the interventions required to stop, or at least to reduce, the deterioration process, following a conservative stance based on the interventions' reversibility; the results have been reported on the same charts used for the degradation analysis so that a deterioration/intervention cross-reading could be possible.



The unbalances' study focused on the analysis of wooden ceilings on the possible techniques for restoring.

Palazzo Mathis, built in the medieval age, underwent substantial transformations over the centuries until it came, in the seventeenth century, to the present appearance.

Boasso family holds a major role in the palace's history: they accomplished the main extensions and decorated the palace with wall-paintings showing typical subjects of the seventeenth-century Baroque. Unfortunately, the deterioration and the lack of restoration make these paintings hardly enjoyable. Inside the main floor - that has been bound to restrictions by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage because of the wooden ceilings, the paintings and the over-doors in oil painted canvas – the stateroom stands out for its grisaille ornamental bar portraying scenes with the ox, the animal dominating the Boasso crest. The straight-edge ceilings with plastered beam are hand-decorated and stencilled.

The palace belonged over the time to several families: the Mathis family, as last owner, sold it to the municipality in 1982.

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