Abstract

Funeral architecture of the Monumental Cemetery of Turin. The Masters from Eclectism to contemporary: history, technologies, conservation techniques

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Turin’s Monumental Cemetery was realized in 1829 to satisfy the growing demand of burials. It was the first cemetery built outside of the city walls, in response at the Saint Claude Edict (1804).

The cemetery was initially called “general” because it was thought as a new unique place designed to receive the bodies of the city’s deceaseds, it’s currently called Monumental, because of the numerous historical and artistical graves that the cemetery hosts.

The main focus of the thesis concerns the architectural, historical and artistic heritage present inside the cemetery, to build a wide and significant valorization project. In particular, a big phase of the research work was dedicated to the analysis of the documentation preserved in private and public archives.

The research activity, together with the field work, allowed to acquire important information about the architects that designed the graves that weren’t available in the city archives and that may be important in view of the valorization operation that the administration is currently promoting.

A hundred and fifty tombs were studied, mainly designed by relevant architects at local and international level. Thirtyfive of these were selected to the following step of a detailed filing, four were chosen for a proposal of maintenance intervention.

The filing details location, building firms, date of construction, designer, sculptor, artisans, archivistic sources, materials and relative application; furthermore it includes a photographic repertory that illustrates the characteristics identified during on-site inspections.

The majority of the graves in the cemetery is made with valuable materials. With the help of eng. Oreste Catella, current owner of the Catella firm that since generations provided marbles for monuments and graves, and realized hundreds of works inside the cemetery, were studied the main materials employed in the monuments, the relative quarries and constructive techniques. On the basis of this information was elaborated a filing of these materials that gathers technological characteristics essential to develop projects of maintenance.

Four graves were further studied: the Zuffi’s, the Morbidelli’s, the Bottoli’s and the Rossi’s graves. For each of these were examined: the project, the state of decay, possible recovery projects, materials and technological solutions.

Following this detailed analysis it was formulated a maintenance proposal concerning the necessary activities to reduce and contrast the decay. The typology of maintenance was chosen considering the complex nature of the architectures that include a wide variety of materials with different techniques.

To build the valorization project were studied the activities of some of the most important cemeteries around Europe, chosen for their importance in being part of the UNESCO Heritage and of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE).

Comparing the ways these cemeteries promote their assets helped the creation of three thematic itineraries around the Monumental Cemetery, dedicated to architecture, architects and constructive materials. This itineraries promote the knowledge of the architectures in the site and valorize the exceptional works of this open air museum.

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Itinerary proposal: “Architects and architectures”. The path concerns some architectures in the cemetery designed by important architects between the 19th and the 20th century.

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Tactile itinerary proposal: “Quarries and materials”. The path describe the main materials employed in the graves, conservation techniques and the story of the quarries where they were taken. The itinerary has an educational purpose and is addressed to students, professionals and blind people.

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