

The Temple of the Gran Madre di Dio in Turin: from the project to the building site (1814 -1831)

by Claudia Colacicco

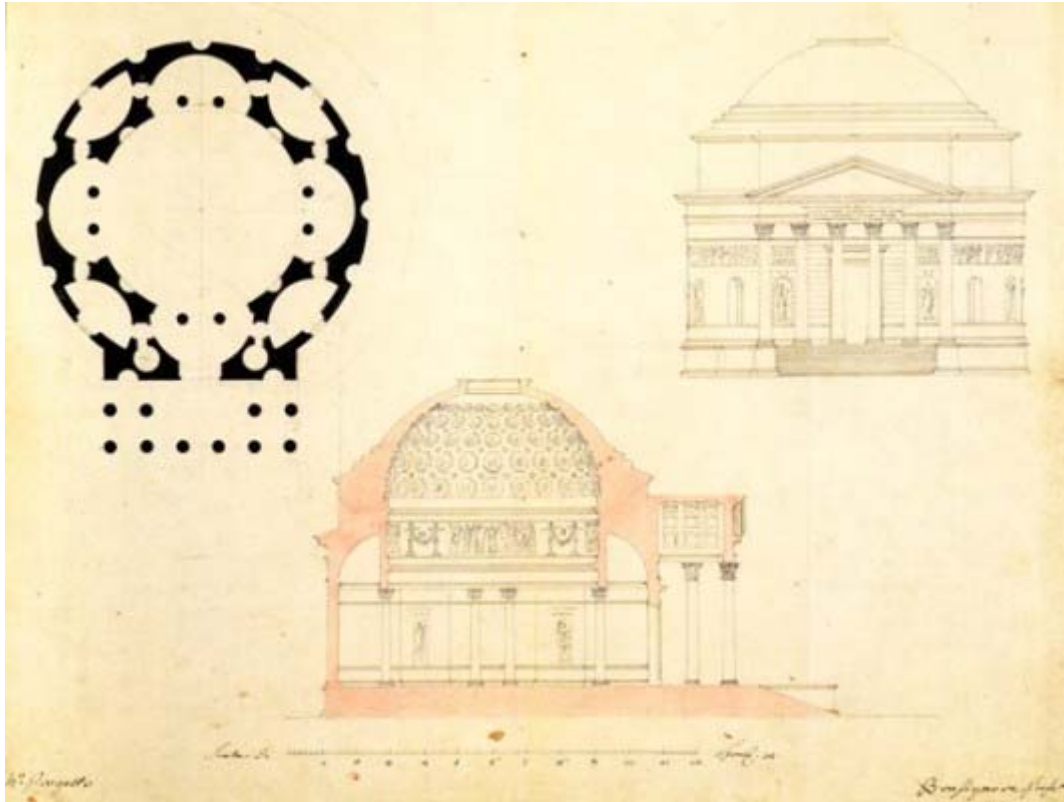
Tutor: Annalisa Dameri



The cupola of the Gran Madre di Dio Church in Turin (Claudia Colacicco)

This thesis is meant to present the records of the various building techniques used by the architect Ferdinando Bonsignore, winner of the competition announced by the City of Turin in 1814. His fourth project was chosen among the seven solutions that he presented with the collaboration of Giuseppe Formento, it was compared with the two projects demoted by the architect Gaetano Lombardi and it was eventually applied by the contractors that got ahead with the project during the development of the building site of the temple dedicated to the Beata Vergine Madre di Dio in the Po district at the beginning of the 19th century.

Being a work commissioned by the City of Turin as gratitude vow "*in the adventurous moment when the Divine Providence made the Capital of these States return for good chance under the paternal rule of the royal Casa Savoia*" the Historical Archive still preserves all the records related to its building process. Aim of this dissertation is thus to use archival sources to illustrate all the existing information regarding the most characterizing element of the temple, i.e. its cupola, which one can clearly make out from Piazza Castello following the nineteenth-century expanding directrix of via Po.



Ferdinando Bonsignore, 4th project, s.d., ASCT, Carte Sciolte 1307, p. 50

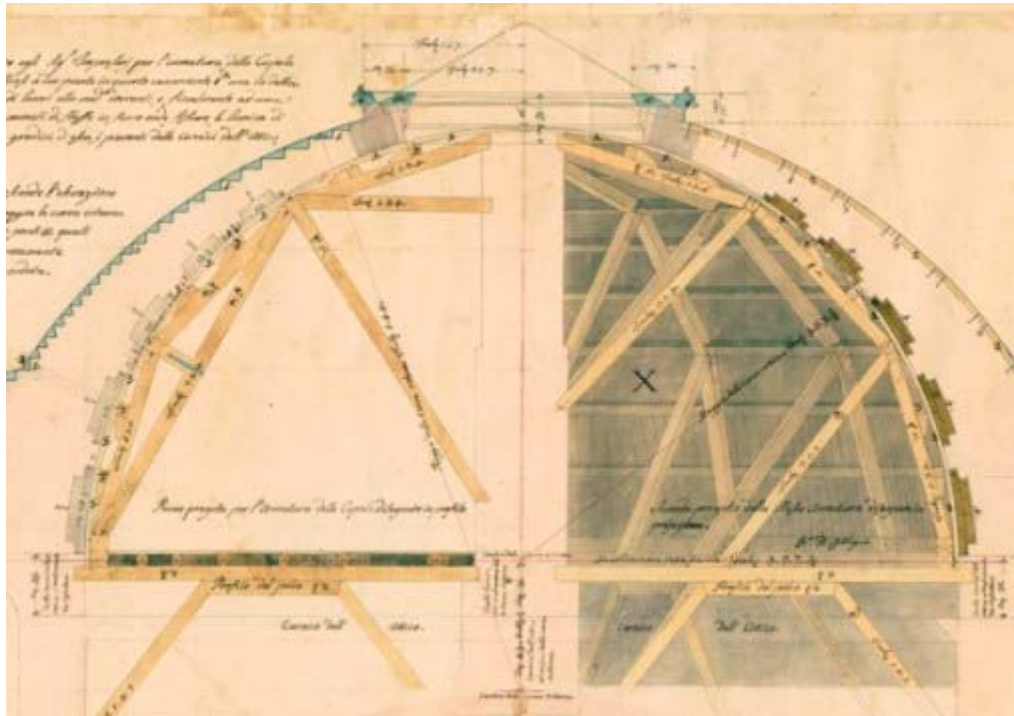
It proves to be impossible to isolate the analysis of the cupola from the rest of the building, hence the study has necessarily to be expanded to the evolution of the building site and to all the building and financial events that succeeded one another in the course of 20 years time – actual term of the site, that are described in the volumes of the accounting departments, of the town records, of the “Collezione X”. The first part of this study is meant to identify the expanding area of Po within the historical period of Restoration at the beginning of the 19th century, after Napoleon’s victory in Marengo and the subsequent decree issued to dismantle the existing fortifications.

Following the events of the district one can notice its gradual change with reference to the whole city: the river, the hills with the Queen’s villa and the building process of the church, from the suburban church dedicated to SS. Marc and Leonard to the completely new sanctuary devoted to the Beata Vergine Madre di Dio e Santi Protettori, on the other side of the napoleonic bridge.

The thesis goes on with the analysis of the several building phases: from the laying of the foundation stone, to the work stoppage of 1818 due to the lack of funds, until 1927, year of the beginning of the excavation to lay the foundations of the building. The work ended on May 20th, 1831 under the rule of the new king Carlo Alberto, who succeeded to Carlo Felice. The unveiling was celebrated in the same day of the anniversary of the King’s return in Turin

The analysis of the architectural elements illustrates the different building techniques with the aid of the architect’s original designs, still saved at the Historical Archive in the “*Tipi e Disegni*”.

The inclusion of the original projects in this work helps to give clearer explanations, as they show the architect's use of colours, contain the measurement annotations and are rich in particulars.



Ferdinando Bonsignore, Designs relating two different project submitted to the contractors for the framework of the cupola, 1829, in *ASCT, Tipi e Disegni*, 10.2.35

The last part of the thesis analyses all the materials used at the building site, that were chosen on the basis of their technical properties. They are described according to their provenance, their characteristics and the supplying methods and technologies used in Piedmont at that time.

The study eventually contains the lists of the materials used for the construction of the inner and outer catwalks and of the machines used by the workers. All these information have been collected during the examination of the contractors' "*Scritture Private*", of the town's simple contracts or of experts' surveys for refunding of expenses and other payments.

For further information, e-mail:
Claudia Colacicco: c.colacicco@libero.it