

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
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Master of Science in Architecture (Rehabilitation and Revaluation)
Honors theses

Leo von Klenze (1784-1864) and the German Classicism

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In a Germanic area still consisting of politically divided States, the Classicism takes place later than elsewhere in Europe, that is during the Restoration, resulting linked to the Romanticism and to a historical, political and cultural context of important events and changes that contribute to the growth in the German people of the consciousness of belonging to a unique nation. The search of the national identity is connected, in the field of architecture, to the search of a national style culminating in a dispute about choosing Doric or Gothic as the most representative style for the new instances, characterized by the cultural influences of great personalities such as Fichte, Schlegel, Hittorff and, in particular, Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Leo von Klenze, the two main representatives of German Classicism, who respectively work for the royal families of Prussia and Bavaria. Klenze, in time, remains faithful to his own convictions that the best model for the German national style is the ancient Greek architecture, instead of the Romantic Gothic style. For life he collaborates with Ludwig of Bavaria who since the time of the Napoleonic occupation of Berlin means to help Germans to be aware of their moral strength and of their belonging to a unique great nation and, for this purpose, commissions from Klenze monumental works like the Walhalla, the maximum symbol of the German Classicism, the Befreiungshalle, the Ruhmeshalle and the Propylaion, besides important museums as the Glyptothek or the Pinacothek to popularize education and culture, and many architectural works in Munich of Bavaria. In fact he means to celebrate the power and the glory of the royal Bavarian family and also to transform the city in a modern capital on the same level as the European ones. Walhalla and Glyptothek, in particular, in this graduation thesis are subject of a more in-depth study about the plan and the construction, also as regards to the point of view of the culture of the time.

To analyze urban and architectural works (not in Munich only, as the Ermitage in St. Petersburg) but also to understand the relationships with the royal family and the great figures of the time as Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Martin von Wagner, Peter Cornelius and so on, I consulted and translated the most important Klenze's writings and manuscripts, as the *Memorabilien* I-VII, which in seven books represent a retrospective view of the relationship with King Ludwig I of Bavaria, a customer hard to please who energetically intervenes on plannings, the *Tagebuch*, relating to the course of events omitted in the *Memorabilien* between 1825 and 1833, the *Erwiederungen* I-III and part of the correspondence with Schinkel and other important figures of his time, examining more than 4000 pages of writings. Klenze's texts are an important source of information, besides about the analysis of his career and achievements, about the reconstruction of his formative period too. The analysis of his travels, in particular, allows us to explain the stylistic choices characterizing his works: Klenze, in fact, especially for the celebratory monuments, uses forms and rules of ancient Greek architecture that he identifies with the ideal of freedom, truth, humanity, but with the absolute rejection of a banal imitation. A chapter devoted to criticism, at last, sums up the estimate of Klenze's achievements from his time to nowadays. The draft of this graduation thesis was also possible thanks to my journeys to Munich of Bavaria, during which I could collect material unavailable in Italy and personally take the most of the photos that accompany my thesis.

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