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Abstract

**The enterprise of Musso and Clemente and the society
Porcheddu. Building sites in Turin (1900-1933)**

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«A new building material came to light in recent years, [...]. And it is reinforced concrete. [...] The extraordinary qualities of resistance of the new material and its adaptability to the decorative painting and plastics can really stir up a special address architecture» (ENRICO THOVEZ, *Belgian Architecture at the Turin*, in «The Modern Decorative Arts», I, n . 7 July 1902 , pp . 195-200).

Turin between the last part of the eight hundred and early twentieth century presents a complex cultural ambient due to the amplitude of stylistic references for both the introduction of new materials in architecture, including the reinforced concrete. In recent years is the theme of the relationship between architecture and decoration, ornament and structure that it emerges as dominant. The spread of the new material illuminates the debate on concrete and style. The general topics to which historians refer are manifold: the building of a unified style of the city as significant urban fact; the stylistic and typological character in building construction; the developments in technology and the application of innovative materials for the building and the decorative choices inherent. The theorists of the time seem to all agree: the architectural beauty depends on the combination and fusion of the problem constructive and the decorative.

Framed the theoretical problem we tried to investigate this moment of architecture in Turin studying archival documents of two companies active in the debate: the decorative undertaking of Musso and Clemente and the construction company Porcheddu.

The archive Musso Clemente, preserved at the DIST - Interuniversity Department of Science, Planning and Land use policies - located at the Castello del Valentino, collects documents testifying to the professional activity of a decoration firm opened in Turin for almost a century (1886- 1974).

The archive of «Company G.A. Porcheddu» stored at DISEG - Department of Structural Engineering, Geotechnical Engineering and Building - in the headquarters of the Politecnico of Torino, collects the documentary material of the Porcheddu company (1895-1933) that deals with concrete buildings according to Hennebique's patent.

From the intersection of archival documents have emerged three leading figures of the architectural culture of Turin: the architect Carlo Ceppi (1829-1921), one of the greatest exponents of the academic eclecticism, the engineer Pietro Fenoglio (1865-1927), considered the greatest interpreter of Art Nouveau, the architect Giovanni Chevalley (1868-1964), a pupil of Ceppi. He is still tied to the academic eclecticism and, therefore, he is considered by critics the symbol of tradition in opposition to the avant-garde architecture.

The three designers have taken advantage of the collaboration of the two companies and the construction sites where the companies are working together are all located in the central city of Turin. Specifically have been studied five yards: Palazzo Priotti (1900-1911) in Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, designed by Carlo Ceppi; Ristorante del Parco del Valentino (1906-1908), il Grande Albergo Giovanni Rey (1908-1910) Via Santa Teresa, Palazzo delle Assicurazioni Generali Venezia (1909-1911) in Piazza Solferino, all projects by Pietro Fenoglio; Palazzo della Cassa di Risparmio di Torino (1929-1933) in Via XX Settembre, disigned by Giovanni Chevalley.

The concrete structure has only a supporting function , this is camouflaged and hidden by decorations of late eclectic taste. In the period studied in fact, it is still only the ornament that characterizes the architecture. This up to the Thirties of the twentieth century when it will impose for all architects comparisons with rationalism.
