

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
FIRST SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
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Honors theses

From Turin to the Vatican: the career of architect Giuseppe Momo in the presence of Pope Pius XI

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The thesis revolves around the figure of the architect Giuseppe Momo, and more precisely on what he has made to the wishes of the Catholic Church in the first half of the twentieth century.

Without limiting on the fashions of the period, Momo designed with stylistic influences based on the experience of tradition but keeping a keen eye on the styles of the contemporary architectural scene.

This text aims to outline the profile of the architect remained in the shadows of the tradition that the interpretation of the great historians is not considered interesting enough to be deeply studied, despite the many representative buildings that he conceived.

A further hinder the detection of his works is the fact that the writings signed by Momo on the architectural theme are very rare. Never happened that he put his theories or opinions on paper, there are no texts in which he explained his personal architecture's point of view.

For these reasons it became necessary an archival research within the Vatican State, the State Archives of Turin and numerous discussions with representatives of institutes designed by him in search of material and testimonies.

The construction period of the numerous seminars, which occupied the career of Momo nearly a decade, constituted the first phase of the relationship with the Pope, who had the opportunity to test the skills of the architect and evaluate his capability in different contexts and territories.

This vast amount of time, starting with winning the call for bids in Assisi and ends with the seminary of Reggio Calabria, was a sort of "apprenticeship" that eventually allowed Momo to reap the benefits, receiving in 1934 the title of "architect of the Reverend Fabric of St. Peter."

The central part of this historical research revolves around the situation which he faced on the eve of the Lateran Pacts.

Estranged from the national power of the Fascist party and the architecture of the State, Momo found himself designing an entire town in a parallel reality and ideology. With the signing of the Concordat Italy gave the Church the money that was invested in works of renewal the Vatican' surface with new buildings. Momo under the dome designed by Michelangelo built the Governorate, the Annona, 'other stable' service, also lots of buildings necessary for efficient spreading the word of the Holy Father: the Post Office, the Radio station, the telephone system and the railway station. The access' stairs to the Vatican Museums could be define his most famous work, showing obvious anticipation of one of the most important and special architectural work of the twentieth century: the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

To accomplish these immense operation and get the results that established him in the decades the architect of the Pope, Momo relied on people of great fame and skill as the entrepreneur Leone Castelli, Gustavo Giovannoni, Edoardo Rubino, Luca Beltrami and Marcello Piacentini.

Momo collaborated with Piacentini also outside the state border with the reconstruction of Via della Conciliazione.

Momo was not only immersed in the role of architect, but acquitted other major tasks within the state, such the parent of the Joint Commission entrusted with the ratification of the Agreements, in order to clarify technical issues on behalf of Pius XI. With this burden fell to him to worry about the issues that concern the development of the agreements, helping to write the history of the twentieth century.

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