

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

Giovanni Valle: altars designer and wood sculptor

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This thesis deal with Giovanni Valle, engraver, designer of altars who worked in Piedmont between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the next. The marble altars are especially examined not only with an historical point of view but also with the observation and the recognition of colored marbles. Through the literature search has emerged a complex personality with multiple skills, and on which lacked essential information such as, for exemple, where he came from and the period he worked and lived.

The archival research has enabled me to come to the knowledge of essential information to define his figure and his work: Giovanni Valle, an artist originally from Piedmont, sculptor and wood carver, altars designer, an expert in decorative stones, mainly active in the artistic production in the religious sphere.

Valle's versatility makes this work has as a cognitive contribution not only in architecture but also in the wooden sculpture and ornamentation, but not intending to be exhaustive, but opening our eyes to new research.

In addition, the thesis also arises as a contribution to the knowledge of the methodology used for the study of marble altars: an interdisciplinary cognitive approach in which the historical document and the marble document contribute to the understanding of the altars. The stone material that in itself has value document is an essential element in understanding, for example, the originality of the work and recognize the parts that have undergone subsequent modifications.

The sequence of the chapters follows the natural evolution of his professional development: after the explanation of the methodology which I used for study the marble altars, follows an indication of the historical and cultural context in which Valle lived, necessary to understand his own works; then the presentation of his person (origins and family) through unpublished documents (such as will), the wooden works made by him (fig. 1) , and the marble altars to the realization of which he took part as a draftsman and an expert in marble (fig. 2), and finally designs he made for altars projects.



Fig. 1, Giovanni Valle, Pulpit in the church of the Visitation, Turin, 1688-89, photo by Davide Strangio, December 2013



Fig. 2, Giovanni Valle, major altar in the church of San Filippo Neri in Chieri, 1702-1708, photo by Monica Strangio, December 2010

The study has led me to attribute to Valle the altar of the Congregation of the Hundred Brothers which is currently visible in the church of Sant'Andrea in Savigliano (fig. 3), and an altar design which is preserved at the National Library of Turin.



Fig. 3, Giovanni Valle, altar of the Congregation of the Hundred Brothers, 1699-1701, photo by Monica Strangio, June 2012

In addition, the thesis has highlighted and distinct from the figure of John the work of the engraver Pietro Giuseppe Valle, son of Giovanni, as stated in the will, who worked at the court of Savoy in the first half of the eighteenth century. Then from the point of view of materials, an unexpected aspect of the research was to use by John Valley, in the altars he made in the ambit of Cuneo, a black marble which came from Piedmont currently unknown: Black marble by Vernante. Information as it opens a new research in the ambit of blacks marble of the Piedmont.

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