



POLITECNICO
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Honors thesis

SPECIALISTIC DEGREE COURSE of
«Design of gardens, parks and landscape»

Abstract

**«The Park of the Castle of Racconigi,
an unique experience of restoring and managing»**

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by

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Since 1980 - year of the acquisition by the State Property Administration - up to 2010, the 180 hectares of the park of the Castle of Racconigi benefited from the restoration involving, an estimate 18 million Euros of investments.

In these thirty years, the works have been supervised by the architect Mirella Macera, a Superintendence of Cultural Heritage official and Director of the Manor since 1994.

She had discovered and deeply understood the spirit of the park in the first place, having being hosted there with her family since 1983. Having lived there and having dealt with it throughout the years, she got to imagine and plan the most appropriate management strategies and to put together an efficient staff to pursue these objectives.

After having opened to the public in 1992, the castle and the park hosted just over 16.000 visitors, while 14 years later, in 2006, the threshold of 200.000 visits was reached, getting more than 12 times the initial visitors. Therefore, Racconigi for that year was the third most visited museum in Piedmont. It was acknowledged as a UNESCO Heritage Site and registered in the European network «Natura 2000» as Site of Community Importance. In 2010 it also received the award as «Italy's Most Beautiful Park».



Racconigi: the town, the castle and the park. Aerial photo, 2003.

Unfortunately, due to Architect Macera's demise in March 2010, the prevailing crisis, the lack of funds and the many changes in the institutional and political developments led to a drastic worsening.

Visitors halved, reaching 85.000 in 2015, according to the records. Cultural activities were halted, and, likewise, educational services, research, construction sites, restoration and maintenance.

«For the eternity of its stone and the transience of its blossoms - for how relative it may be - the time for the garden requires ambition, modesty, patience and passion».¹

These words by Monique Mosser well show and summarize the essence of the garden, a fragile and precarious Cultural Asset in its nature, as recognized and defined by the Florence Charter.

The aim of the thesis is to give a comprehensive overview of the *modus operandi* in Racconigi carried out in thirty years, putting together a large amount of information and experience, hoping that this architectural knowledge can be a first step for its future reconstruction.

Unfortunately, the condition of the blossoms is far worse, as its transience led to an accelerated degenerative process, which in just three years led the park to a loss of values, merits and care which had been painstakingly achieved.



Racconigi, the Royal Greenhouses (Pelagio Palagi, Carlo Sada, Ernest Melano, 1844-1848). Photo by the author, November 2009.

The thesis, therefore, starts from of a survey, concerning the theories and techniques of restoration of the gardens, focusing on the emblematic experience of Racconigi, by taking into account the diverse academic views. The current case must, in fact, be read as a

¹ Monique MOSSER, *All'impossibile ricerca del tempo perduto: considerazioni sul restauro del giardino*, in Monique MOSSER, Georges TEYSSOT, *L'architettura dei giardini d'Occidente*, Electa, Milano, 1990, p. 525.

cross study, a mosaic of experiences and approaches to set an overall view, so the development of a maintenance plan may ensure ongoing management.

Since only a deep knowledge of each phase of the history of this place, every artifact, every plant allows for the programming of interventions in a broad perspective, the second part of the thesis makes an analysis of the historical and cultural context in which the park was born and evolved, addressing, in particular, the key moments that led to the current composition.

The third part takes care of the restoration carried out between 1980 and 2013 and of the management issues, with a final reflection on the achieved results, accordingly with the use and disclosure of the Cultural Asset.

Finally, the fourth part is a series of unfinished projects, in order to return all relevant information to complete a comprehensive update of the restoration master plan, so to ensure continuity of management if and when the opportunity turned up, once the time is ripe.



Real Corpo di Stato Maggiore Generale, *Piano geometrico del Parco Reale di Racconigi*, 1839. Printed design with watercolor on paper, cm 63,5x91,5 - scale 1:2.500 – north on the left. Collocation: Biblioteca Reale di Torino, M-XXIII, n.3.

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