

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
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Honors theses

War damages: the Turin case in the projects of restoration and reconstruction

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The dissertation takes into consideration three main periods:

a. the pre-war situation: the drawing and the execution of projects of monuments safeguard against the air-bombings during the war, through the collocation of anti-silver barriers, the moving and sheltering of art works in secret places — as far as possible from the war scenario — and the protection of mosaics and frescoes in situ trough fire- and water-proof materials.



RIMINI, Tempio Malatestiano. Inside anti-bombing works

b. the war, the bombings and the aerial attacks: the descriptions of the bombings and the analysis of the damages suffered by the monuments.

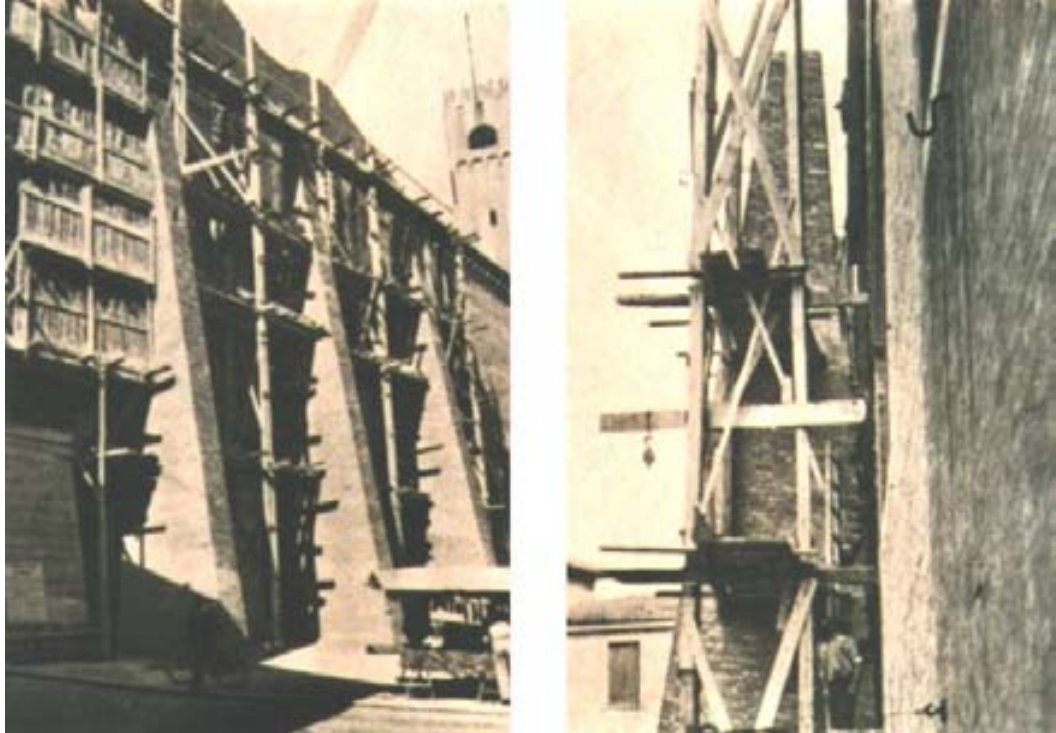
c. the reconstruction after the war: the debate among the restorers who denied the right to a modern intervention on ancient monuments; according to Berenson's theory, in fact, they wanted to rebuild "as it was, where it was". Finally, there were those who wanted to rebuild according to the modern needs and spirit, freely following the tastes and the shapes of contemporary architecture.

There are few doubts that the restorers entrusted of the reconstruction duty were well worth of credit; infringing the "carta del restauro", they took the responsibility to intervene and decide the monuments destiny. As far as the urbanistic intervention are concerned, the bulk buildings and the external facades were respected, even if the internal structures were adequated to the new distributive and hygienic-sanitary needs. In the old-centre districts, which were particularly overcrowded, some buildings were demolished in order to improve both the hygienic conditions, through better exposure to sun and ventilation, and the traffic situation.

As far as the art works are concerned, formal restoration works were made to the frescoes of Mantegna in the Ovetari Chapel in the Eremitani church in Padova and to the monumental cemetery in Pisa, whose fragments of painted plaster, rescued and collected in boxes, were sent to the Central Institute of Restoration in Rome. In order to reassemble the image, these fragments were later put in the right place, on canvas imprinted by photographs.

For the monuments, finally, when the damages were not serious, one can hardly talk about restoration but rather about reutilization of the same material, rebuilding of the missing parts, or reconstruction in a style that, though generating a an imitation, was accepted even by important restorers such as Gustavo Giovannoni. Therefore, the progressive techniques of restoration, the use of reinforced concrete and the huge amount of architectural and photographic surveys justified these choices.

As far as the progressive techniques of restoration are concerned, one can quote the sample of the system used by the supervisor Forlati in order to bring back in vertical position the walls of the palace of Trecento in Treviso and the Eremitani church in Padova.



TREVISO, Palace of Trecento

Prop works of the leant walls). The walls were damaged by the deflagrations and leant; they were then put back in plumb through a sling system made of wood beam linked to the tie beams. For few cases, such as the temple of Augustus in Pola, they used "anastilosi". On the contrary, when only few wall fragments remained, these were left as ruins and the area of the monument itself was converted into lawn, drawing the building plant on the ground or putting a plaque as memorial; such a case is S. Giovanni in Conca in Milan.

The works done in the postwar period were therefore "compulsory restorations", as those caused by exceptional natural events such as floods, landslides and earthquakes, but accompanied by the important campaign of surveys previously done. Moreover, these events were much more widespread than the natural ones and received a character of absolute exceptionality that made some compromises not justifiable under different conditions acceptable.

Finally, after examining the damages caused by the bombings in every attack to Turin, some religious buildings, some roads, some squares and plants have been analysed. For the "Carmine" and "S. Croce" churches, as for "Lascaris" and "Chiabilese" palaces, it was decided to restore them as they were in the pre-war period. When the bombs completely destroyed the buildings, the decision fell on a different choice: the "Madonna di Campagna" and "S. Giovanni Battista" churches were rebuilt with modern distribution and materials while in other cases, as for Turin theatre and "Emanuele" barracks in via Verdi, no intervention at all followed and these spaces in town are still empty.

In the roads and squares characterised by the stiff skyline of the capital, it was indispensable to restore the missing parts not to break the continuity of the homogenous facades.



TORINO, Piazza Palazzo di Città. Air raid on 30 november 1942

Where possible, they tried to adequate the interiors to the needs of major comfort, (for example by giving the same height to all the floors).

This dissertation moreover collects the study of the war damages, from the ministerial decree of the early Thirties to the restorations of the Fifties and examines, along with Turin, the cases of the Italian towns of greatest interest from historical and artistic point of view.