

**Saint Bernard Church in the transformation of Croix-Rousse quarter in Lyon: restoration and refunctionalization hypothesis of a neo-gothic “unachieved”.**

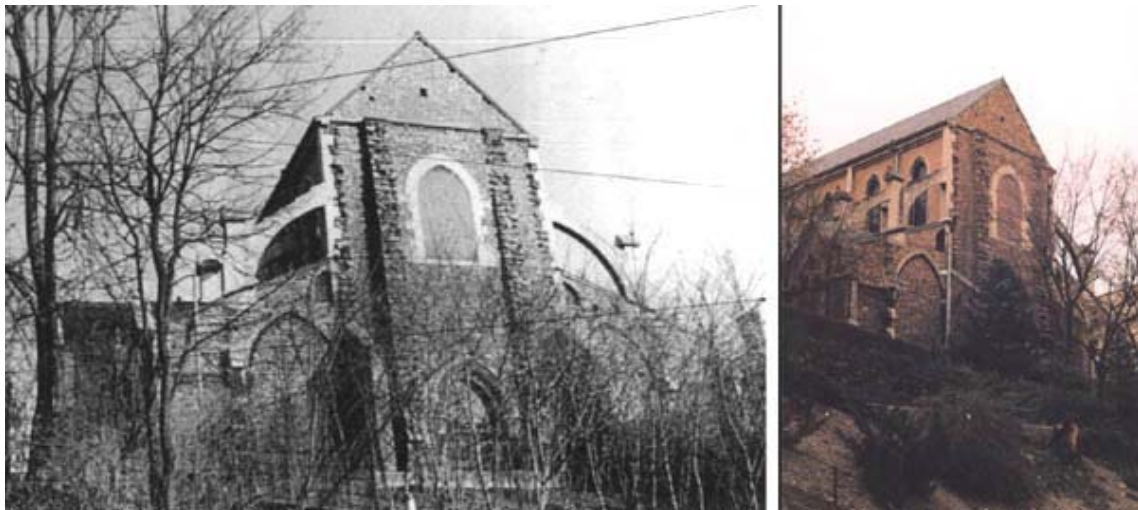
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St Bernard church is a neo-gothic building, built up in 1856 to answer to the religious needs of the many people living there: almost silk production workers, who had their “workshops-homes” there. Owing to economic troubles linked to the decline of the quarter during the XIX century, the church had been unachieved and the present front is an outer wall of stones, regarded as temporary since 1866, when works stopped.



In 1992, when weighty structural disorders appeared, the church was closed to cult and, in the last years, the town council had proposed to pull it down.

Thinking right to conserve it and to suggest its rescue, we had checked if the church could have and which role it should have in the economic and artistic renaissance of Croix-Rousse; this rebirth is supported by the municipality with new strategies in planning.

The historical chapters aim to show the importance of the building, pointing out the value of the architectural typology, the links with local history, considering the church one of architect Tony Desjardins’ masterpieces.

Its designer is in fact a key-figure in cultural panorama of XIX century in Lyon. Studying his operas and neo-gothic style, we prove that St Bernard Church is strictly joined to the historical and artistic context;

Tony Desjardins represents very well the typical architect of that period for his professional training, for his works in eclectic style, for his interests in new fields such as archaeology, museology, restoration, for the design of contemporary structures using modern materials as iron and cast iron. For all these aspects, the provincial architect Desjardins is as important as more famous others of the same period like Viollet le Duc, Duban or Labrouste.

We pointed out the deep link existing between the church and its physical context too: the church has an important role in the identity of the quarter and of the whole city.

The building, conceived following a grandiose design, was born in a very rich period, when silk production employed a lot of craftsmen. But then, at the beginning of XX century, the hill of Croix-Rousse became poorer and poorer owing to the moving of activities on the plain: the church is left unachieved and less and less money are reserved to its maintenance, leading to the present state of disorder.

The second step was the architectural relief and the deeper knowledge of structures and materials.



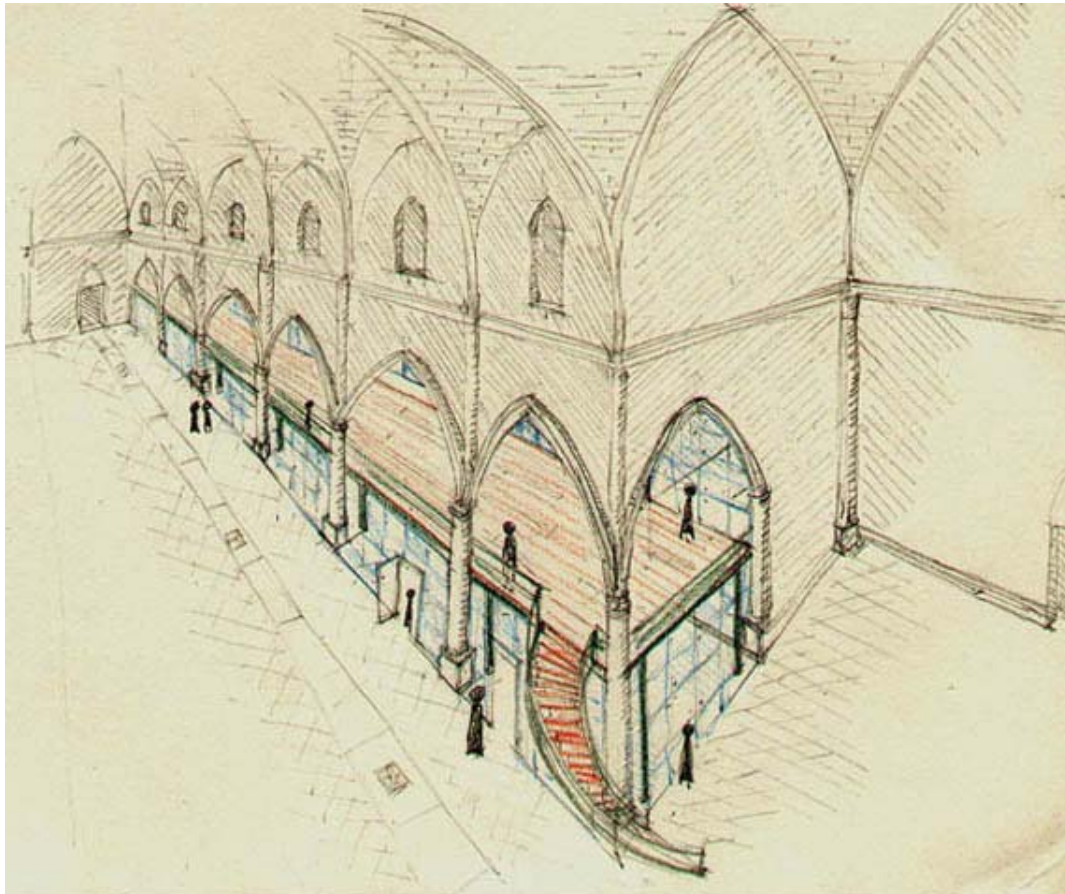
This part aimed to prepare the basis for the relieves of degradations and disorders and for the recognizing of their causes. It made us appreciate the value of construction too, made using at the same time very refined techniques in the details and innovating elements.

The last step dealt with the proposals of intervention from restoring and cleaning to consolidating, to searching for a new function.

Reading the special plan for the protection of Croix-Rousse and coming into contact with the *Mission Pentes de la Croix Rousse*, the public body that looks after local development, we reached data to realize the transformation and the current peculiarities of the quarter.

We suggest to make inside the church a gallery of workshops for craftsmen such as restorators, stylists, designers, jewels-creators, painters, and we propose to join them with a public space reserved to temporary expositions, conferences, concerts. In this way, we have found out a function really related to the present kinds of the quarter; it could make St Bernard a lively and dynamic place where little artisan enterprises, set on the hill, meet people: from here the economical and cultural rebirth of the zone could spread.

The choice wins with the historical memory of the building too. The *passage* is in fact a typical typology of XIX century and then, the ancient artisan *savoir faire* that made great Croix-Rousse should continue to be transmitted inside the church. To set little workshops in there, we have thought to divide the roomy volume: inside the church the design conceives a metal structure that is not in touch with the present walls and piers.



In conclusion, we can affirm that we were able to apply the method learnt to an actual case: in fact the destiny of St Bernard Church is often debated on local newspapers. The elements acknowledged in each section allow us to justify the request of safeguarding the building. These outcomes have been obtained trying to overcome the theoretical approach and coming directly in contact with the background and with public personages involved, such as the *Architecte en Chef des Monuments historiques* and the *Architecte en Chef des Batiments the France*.

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