

**The S. Maria del Carmelo Chapel in the S. Maria del Castello Abbey: problems of preservation**

by Franco Miccoli and Ilaria Ortolani

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**1.** The subject of our thesis is the S. Maria del Carmelo Chapel, which is situated inside the S. Maria del Castello Abbey in the hamlet of Rocca de' Baldi (Cuneo - Italy).

**2.** The main themes of our thesis are:

**Chapter 1:** the insertion of the S. Maria del Castello Abbey in the territorial framework of the hamlet of Rocca de' Baldi.

**Chapter 2:** The Morozzo family and Rocca de' Baldi.

**Chapter 3:** Chronology of the historical facts concerning the building of the abbey.

**Chapter 4:** The Architect Giovenale Boetto: reflections on the Greek-cross plan and a comparison between the main architectures of his and the Abbey of Rocca de' Baldi.

**Chapter 5:** Hypothesis of preservation of the interior stucco decorations and of the exterior 'sgraffito barocco'.

**Chapter 6:** The Vergine del Carmelo Chapel: architectural and decorative emergencies and investigations of the stuccoes. A comparison with the yard of the S. Francesco Saverio Church in Mondovì Piazza by Giovenale Boetto, analogies and correspondences in the choice of the master-stucco decorators from Lugano.

**Conclusions.** As a result of the surveys carried out in order to analyse the architectures and the condition of the chapel, we have come to have a precise knowledge of the present state of the building. Although between the first years of the XIX century and the second half of the XX century the area around the building has partially undergone processes of landslide, the abbey does not present particular structural problems.

As far as the exterior walls of the building are concerned, we observe a state of widespread decay, mainly on the façade that is oriented towards the river Pesio, which causes a high level of humidity.

Since the present situation is particularly interesting and delicate, we do not suggest an intervention of remaking of the façade, but only some small interventions, aimed to restore / repair the microcracks, without varying or reintegrating the decorative apparatus of great value, which is still original.

The exterior walls are enduring strong mildew aggressions, due to the closeness of the river Pesio and the outside plasters, included the superficial ones that are decorated with the 'sgraffiato barocco' technique, show mainly superficial separations, sometimes in depth.

The covering of the roof, made of pantiles and 'lose' (a stone covering), is altogether in good condition, also thanks to a restoration that has taken place around the year 2000.

The over-all state of the interior surfaces of the Chapel is better: the main cause of decay is humidity: the 'cotto' flooring, being directly in contact with the ground, reveals frequent swelling phenomena.

The humidity coming up through the floor causes, on the lower part of the walls, the separation of the plaster.

The parts with stucco decorations, situated to a upper level, reveal a better preservation state.

The only elements of decay that we have noticed are slight superficial separations and a widespread opacification phenomenon of the original colours.

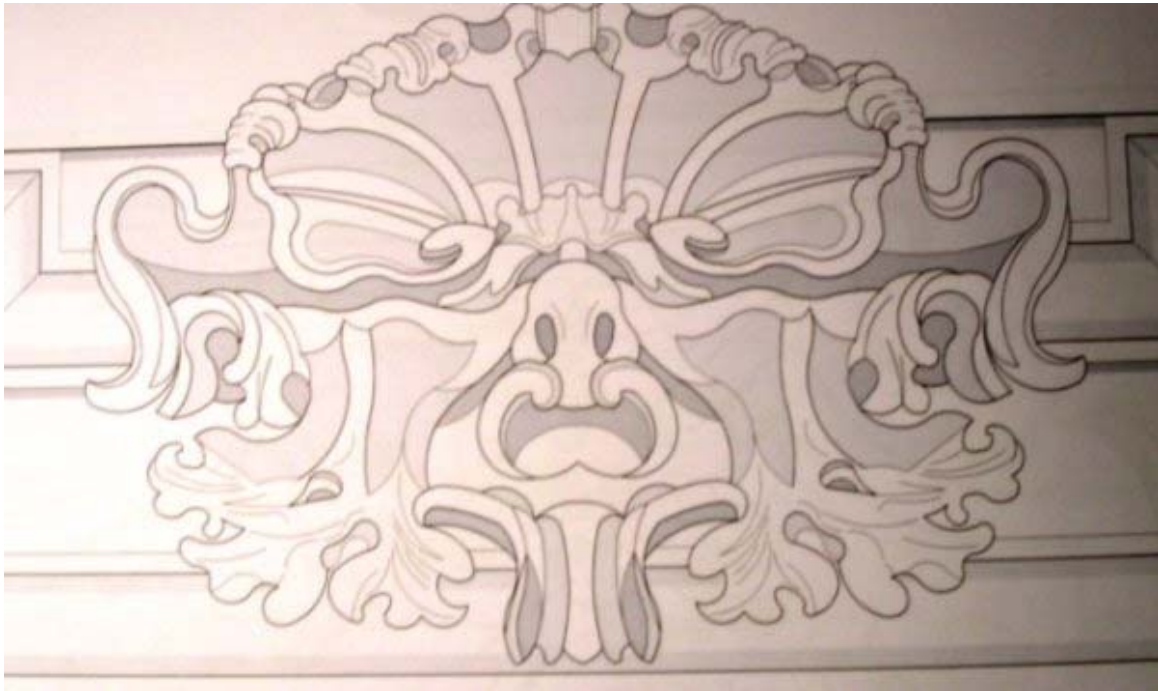
This diagnosis of the state of the Chapel leads us to suggest interventions that will bring the colours to their original brightness, by means of a cleaning process, and, in any case, interventions that will oppose the humidity phenomenon, curbing its causes. All the interventions that we have proposed relate to the concept of restoration considered as a conservative intervention, a concept that is far from any reinstatement velleities.



The S. Maria del Castello Abbey in Rocca de' Baldi



A detail of the stucco capitals



A detail of the stucco anthropomorphous decorations

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