

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2
Degree in Architecture
Honors theses

The works of S. Zita, in Turin, in the 18th century: the charitable and the architectural role of Abbot Faà di Bruno

by Cecilia Andriolo and Sandro Audagna

Tutor: Piergiorgio Tosoni

The bell tower of Nostra Signora del Suffragio Church in St. Donato Street, in Turin, built in the 18th century, is the highest building in the city, carried out by a religious who introduced original construction and technological technics in the building panorama of that period.

Today, part of these works remain covered by mystery because projects and archives documents cannot be found.

Our research propose to reorganise the story from a historical point of view and from the studies of the author himself.

Studying the eclectic figure of the Faà di Bruno we had the opportunity to enlight the history of one of Turin's main figures of the 18th century: scientist, musician, astromer, benefactor who dedicated great part of his life helping the poor population at the dawn of Borgo S. Donato; also a gifted designer of important architectural works.

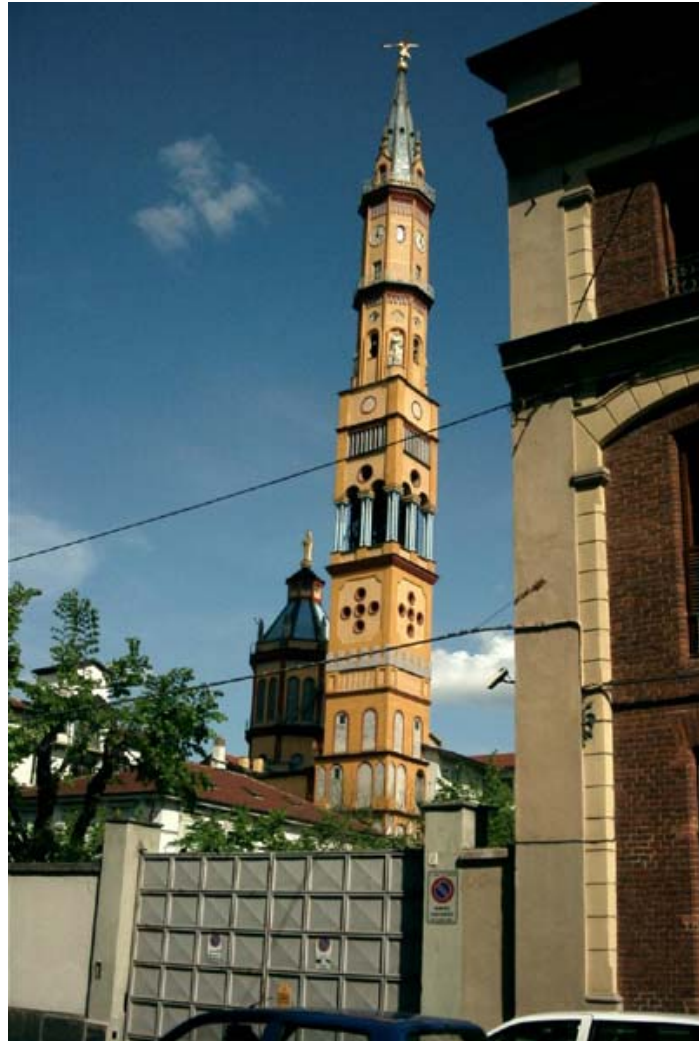


From the second half of the 18th century onwards, the development of Borgo S. Donato had an industrial vocation; troubled with many social problems linked to the immigration from the country. In this reality many Works were realised, mostly in favour of the women's condition.

The welfare Institutes helped the development of the Borgo. Among the many works, today still we find the "Work of S. Zita", founded in 1859 by the Faà di Bruno, to help and instruct the immigrants coming from the country to work in the industry and as house-keepers.

In few years time he could expand his activities building "the city of the women", where the Abbot constructed two magnificent buildings: the Church of Nostra Signora del Suffragio (1866-1876) and the bell tower (1874-1881).





The Faà prepared the project of this sacred building with the help of Arborio Mella, known reformer of the Medieval architectural style, active in the Piedmont territory. The Church, projected in Romanesque style was in reality influenced by the Faà who carried many changes to the point of perverting the original plan.

The breakdown of relationships between Faà di Bruno and Mella lead the Abbot to undertake the construction of the bell tower; this building, 75 meters high and with a square plan of 5 meters wide, cannot be compared to any architectural style and was realised using tradition masonry technics; also introducing metal load-bearings to hold the belfry 35 meters from the ground.

Given the lack of reports which confirm that the project of the bell tower is the work of Mella or of others; given that the only plans found are designed and prepared by the Faà , it follows that the Abbot is the only responsible for the construction. Other proofs which confirm this supposition are the extreme simplicity of the plan itself, and in using material found in the Borgo for the construction: like the cast-iron to hold the belfry instead of the conventional stone column used in the Antonellian style.

Today we can notice a great interest in this piece of work, thanks to the prestigious figure of its author; the building is the highest masonry building in the city; it has also the merit that anticipated the use of a mixed structure: masonry and metallic; until that time it was mainly used for industrial buildings and in civil works.

We cannot forget the unique style of the bell tower, making it independent respect to the predominant 18th century culture.

For further information, e-mail:

Cecilia Andriolo: cecilia216@virgilio.it

Sandro Audagna: saudag@tin.it