



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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COURSE OF ARCHITECTURE CONSTRUCTION AND  
CITY

*Abstract*

**The restoration of the Shipyards of Barcelona (1935-1966)**

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My master degree thesis, followed by the historians of architecture Michela Comba and Carlo Olmo, aimed to the historicization of what led to the restoration of the *Drassanes Reials* of Barcelona held in the 1930s. This urban complex was originally a shipyard of the Crown of Aragon and of the *Ciutat Comtal* (XIII-XVII centuries). Later it was re-functionalized and expanded by the Spanish Army as a place for armament production and troop housing (functions held from the last decades of the seventeenth century to the year 1935) and finally it was restored for thirty years (1936-1966) in order to house the Museu Marítim.

The first part of the thesis dealt with framing the restoration within the political and cultural conjuncture of the Barcelona of the '30s, paying a particular attention to the related urban plans. For the study of the political and economic situation, Catalan nationalism and the new touristic promotion of the city, was fundamental the use of specific sources both bibliographical and documental. The first ones, in particular those by the Barcelonese historian Albert Balcells and those of the British economic historian Joseph Harrison, gave a rich and insightful arrangement of crucial descriptions and interpretations regarding the socio-economic forces active at the time. Regarding documental sources, the analysis of the urban plans designed from the mid-nineteenth century to 1932, located in various archives (Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, ETSAB Graphic Archive, Arxiu del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya and La Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris), allowed me to highlight how the attitude towards the shipyard complex changed over a period of fifty years.

The second part of the thesis focused on the figure of Adolf Florensa i Ferrer. Its figure was studied by investigating the documents kept in his personal archive at the Arxiu del Col·legi d'Arquitectes of Barcelona, the limited existing bibliography produced about him and his own written production. From these sources it was possible to reconstruct, together with his training and his professional and academic career, the architect's contribution to the conservation of the Drassanes, even before he was in charge of their restoration.

The last part of the thesis dealt with the history of the building starting from its foundation (at the end of the 13th century) to the restoration carried out by Florensa from 1936 to 1966. The analysis of the bibliography brought out the year of 1926 as the starting point for the studies about the Drassanes, a *rediscovery* that corresponded in to a change of attitude in urban plans: the one (never approved) made by Giménez, Mújica and Girona (Arxiu Gràfic - ETSAB) of the same year was the first plan in which the Drassanes were no longer represented as a place linked to the Madrid military power - separated from the city by fortifications or demolished - but preserved and renewed through new design interventions. To understand the cause of this sudden interest were consulted local newspapers ("La Vanguardia" and "La Veu de Catalunya") in search for official communiqués from the Army or the Crown. Sources were then found in the documents of the Arxiu Municipal Contemporani, from which it was possible to claim that the sudden interest was a consequence of the first rumours (date back to 1926) of the possible disposal of the Drassanes by the Army, which finally happened in 1935 when the property of the complex was given to the City.

The "rediscovery" of the Drassanes, the historiographical studies of the 1920s and the subsequent restoration were several moments of the same operation. The restoration was, in fact, a vehicle of an important semantic rewriting: from the outpost of the Madrid

government, the Drassanes became a document of the economic and political strength of medieval Catalonia and of its artistic and cultural uniqueness.

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