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COURSE OF ARCHITECTURE FOR HERITAGE
PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Abstract

**The villas of Salento: languages and techniques
of construction. The case of Villa Hимера.**

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Urban transformations and the residential theme, the oriental architecture and the local practice, the manuals written in Europe and in Lecce: this work faces a series of topics apparently very distant from each other, but close in reality. It exists an element that is able to merge the inspiration typical of distant cultures to the concreteness of ancient traditions, the love for their land and the desire to explore the world: this element is Villa Himeria, a late-nineteenth-century home located in Lecce.

This is the aim of this work: to analyse the architectural declinations produced in this city in the nineteenth century, a period not adequately analysed and eclipsed by the Baroque, a phenomenon more known and appreciated. But most of the interventions that have given Lecce current status and appearance are dated late-nineteenth century: in these years, in fact, the city grew up outside the perimeter of the ancient walls, particularly in its South-Western sector destined for residences for the bourgeois and aristocratic population. In this context are born some of the villas that on the one hand show a break with the historical built - because they open up to national and international experiences promoted by Eclecticism – and on the other hand they still remain strongly linked to tradition.

Among these, Villa Himeria combines typical aspects of Lecce with elements close to the oriental and Moorish culture: the stones like “pietra leccese” and “tufo” are available near the city and for this reason they are widely used in local buildings, but in Villa Himeria they appear in new and unusual forms, close to the Islamic ones and traceable in the architecture of Cordoba, Seville and Granada. Moreover, Apulian artisans and entrepreneurs patent cutting-edge solutions and techniques, which are found in some of the most important monuments of modernity.

In this thesis, all these aspects were analysed individually in order to provide a framework as complete and exhaustive as possible on the main construction and decorative practices found in the villa in Lecce, and then it was made a comparison between that and the object of study, in order to understand how far it differs and how much it adheres to the "rules" of construction.

In this regard, there are two types of conclusions.

The first consideration is a reflection on the way of building. An architecture, for example Villa Himeria, is a mix of references to contemporary scholars, both Italian and European, with the unwritten rules of local constructive tradition, as a testimony to how theory and practice are united by an indissoluble bond.

A second observation is made on a territorial scale, with an eye to the historical and urban events of the nineteenth-century in Lecce: despite the Salento - and the South of Italy in general - is often pointed as a backward area, in contrast to the events of the rest of the peninsula, in the nineteenth century - beyond the problems and deficiencies in terms of infrastructure and socio-economic organizations – Apulian people were aware of the revolutionary impact of the years they were living, and they welcomed these changes without escaping it but at the same time without forgetting their traditions.



Photo 1. Today: Main elevation of Villa Himeria



Render 1. Late nineteenth century: Reconstruction of the main elevation of Villa Himeria

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