

Architectural Conservation Studio

Calogero Bellanca



Esperienze di Studio e Restauro in Europa – 1

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Calogero Bellanca

with contributions by

Susana López Verdú and Alejandro Iniesta Muñoz



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In copertina: Piazza del Campidoglio, Roma. Foto di Calogero Bellanca

Dedicated to Giuseppe Zander

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Foreword

This book by Calogero Bellanca, associate professor at Sapienza University of Rome and a scholar of architectural history, design and restoration for nearly 40 years, is the result of his studies on these matters in Italy and various European countries.

The publication provides a precious resource for the younger generations, who often tend to favor digital technology, as it reveals the essence of direct studies on architectural bodies and the analysis of archival and bibliographical sources before restoration work.

The methodology used in preparing this volume reflects the research and didactic activities that Prof. Bellanca carries out at Sapienza University. It expresses cultural identity as a dynamic and critical concept, a process that recreates the heritage of the past in the present and projects it into the future for the new generations to ensure both identity and progress.

Prof. Bellanca's aim coincides with Article 9 of the Italian Constitution: "*The Republic shall promote the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It shall safeguard the natural landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation*". Indeed, his book seems inspired – not only ideally but also operatively – to the words pronounced by Italian President Sergio Mattarella on incentivizing the diffusion of Italian culture as one of the country's excellences.

Thus, I believe that this book by Prof. Bellanca correctly portrays a wide range of singularities and a complex network of cultural and artistic influence, promotes ideas for future research and, above all, is excellent to educate new generations for the progress of this sector.

Eugenio Gaudio

Rector, Sapienza University of Rome

Foreword

This is the first volume of a series of three that Prof. Arch. Calogero Bellanca is preparing as part of the SURE (Sustainable Urban Rehabilitation in Europe) programme adopted by Sapienza University of Rome as part of the 2016-2019 Erasmus Plus research project.

The volume is significant in reflecting the entire academic, didactic and scientific biography of Professor Bellanca, whom I have known and esteemed from his debut, as someone open to Europe and its expressions of art and architecture, especially in Central Europe where he has spent much time ranging from Germany to Austria and Poland, but certainly not only in those countries since, as we'll see later, he embraces also Spain, and Madrid in detail.

The author's historical and critical observations (as in the cases of Zamość, the Polish founding city, and the Sternberg Palace in Vienna), are always based on direct observation, his own careful measured survey drawings, and the study of historical iconography. They then expand to include reflections and proposals on the themes of conservation and architectural restoration – disciplines of primary interest to the author – and comparisons between different approaches to the subject in a European context. Not by chance is the subtitle of his essay on the Viennese palace *A palimpsest for Europe*.

It is also not by chance that the opening contribution of the book is dedicated to drawing, that “graphic representation” that constitutes the solid foundation for the study and restoration of each monument. Here we see it applied, as in other publications, such as the one on the Church of Santa Sabina in Rome, or others on Palazzo Roverella in Ascoli Piceno, on the Wawel complex in Krakow, Poland, and on the Church of Santa Maria la Real of Sasamón in Burgos, Spain.

As a whole, the volume consists of ten substantial essays comprising more than two hundred pages, all written by Professor Bellanca with the exception of two essays entrusted to young Spanish scholars: Susana López Verdú (*Madrid. Alameda del Valle. The church of Santa Marina, Virgen y Mártir*) e Alejandro Iniesta Muñoz (*Madrid, conservation of the historical Metro*).

The essays of Prof. Bellanca summarise and update the bibliographic references for studies that he has carried out in previous years in Italy (Palermo, Sermoneta, Rome) and elsewhere in Europe, drawing upon references and comparisons throughout the continent (from England to Hungary) and systematically expanding, so to speak, from the general to the particular. These range from urban issues, as in the case of the city of Zamość, to the reading of architectural orders and their minute syntax in the case of the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome and the *Stadtresidenz* of Landshut in Germany, the Romanesque and then Cistercian masonry of Santa Maria Assunta in Sermoneta, and the study of construction techniques (such as the ‘*spinapesce*’ adopted by Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane in the vaults of the Bastion of the Colonnella in Rome).

Attention to the analytical aspects is always reflected in a more general historical-territorial framework and, in some cases, in issues of politics, religion, warfare or patronage, always open to comparisons derived from reading architectural languages and exploring in depth the ‘ordinary geometry’ of individual buildings, in plan, elevation and section, such as to reveal previously unrecognized tangents and references. Thus there is stressed once again the fundamental importance of drawing.

In this European *excursus* that moves from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance (the Landshut and 16th-century Roman examples), to the Baroque (architectures of the 17th and 18th centuries in Poland), to modernity (Sternberg Palace, between the 19th and 20th centuries), issues of restoration recur, from the identification of forms of degradation, discussion of previous interventions, on proposals for conservation, on compatible adaptation, so as to ensure the indispensable vitality of the monument over time. Comparisons are made with the help of photos repeated at a distance of time, between the situations *ante* and *post* the most recent restorations. Also discussed are the arguments, applied to both the architecture and the city, and thus to urban themes, the colour treatment of ancient plaster and painted surfaces, and the degree of cleaning of stone surfaces to preserve that ‘patina of time’ masterfully treated by Cesare Brandi and so poetically recalled by Marguerite Yourcenar.

A similar method, expanded to the historical-geographical and religious context and aided by excellent interpretive drawings of historical events, is followed in the contribution of the architect López Verdú on the Church of Santa Marina. Here the contribution of a properly stratigraphic reading is stressed as fundamental for understanding the building in its multiple stages, both constructive and deconstructive.

The contribution of the architect Iniesta Muñoz is different in that it addresses the contemporary theme of the Madrid Metro (1914-1919, in its first configuration), but not different in its basic intention of proceeding as if it were an ancient monument. It reviews the history of the Metro and its four initial railway lines, the resumption of construction in 1944 and the interventions in the following sixties and seventies, up to the work currently in progress (expected to be completed in 2020).

Expansions, afterthoughts and upgrades of the Metro, Iniesta Muñoz notes, have resulted in the almost total loss of the architectural values of the first stations which at the time were studied by quality architects. This is despite the fact that they are subject to ‘restrictions’ as cultural heritage and urban heritage – which suddenly brings us back to contemporary Italian and European events, with the repetition of the centuries-old clash between instances of ‘modernity’ and others of ‘conservation’, as if they were irreconcilable realities and not compatible through the use of an indispensable, measured and sensitive design approach.

In conclusion, this first volume, originating within the Erasmus Plus project, has a dual value both scientific and didactic (conceived by Professor Bellanca for his students of the master’s degree course in Architecture Conservation at Sapienza, but certainly not only for them). In this case it is eminently the history of architecture, yet already with significant attention paid to restoration as still conducted nowadays. In the coming volumes we will give greater attention

to the field of conservation, its theory and practice, thus emphasizing the virtuous circularity of the two disciplines, destined, in restoration, to nourish and complement each other.

Giovanni Carbonara
Emeritus, Sapienza University of Rome

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I express special thanks to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Research Council who have supported me over the years for research in different European countries. My gratitude also goes to the scientific institutions that have been largely involved in this research: specifically, in Poland, the Polytechnic of Warsaw, the Institute of Art History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and restoration directorate at Wawel Castle and the Polytechnic of Krakow; and in Austria, the Technical University of Vienna, the Bundesdenkmalamt and the Max-Planck Institut.

I feel it is my duty to add to my thanks also ICCROM and ICOMOS International.

I also thank the architects Susana Lopez Verdù and Alejandro Iniesta Muñoz for providing two essays, and hope they will continue with further in-depth studies.

I would like to thank Susana Lopez Verdù for the patient and constructive editorial and graphic assistance together with architect Chiara Rullo who competently collaborated on the final drafting in English.

Finally, I express my thanks to the publisher, Sapienza University Press and specifically to Eleonora Carletti and Roberto Di Iulio who with great ability and patience made it possible to print this work.

Calogero Bellanca

Introduction

In recent years in Italy, throughout Europe and in many non-European countries, studies and publications on conservation and restoration have increased but it seems that fewer of the younger generation frequent libraries and archives because they mostly use digital technologies. This assertion is based on several years of observations made during university courses held in Italian and in English, not only at Sapienza but in various other European universities. This situation has also been evident for the last three years within the SURE Erasmus Plus project (Sustainable Urban Rehabilitation Europe). Therefore, aware of the current specious promotion of mobility at any cost, often accomplished in a superficial and banally touristic mode, we want to convey beyond the enthusiasm and passion a proper methodological rigour for the study of our preexistences.

Our aim is to provide students with tools for training in the field of restoration, along with the indispensable bibliographic and graphic aids. Together they constitute a teaching package which can be used and appreciated by other readers who are sensitive towards the restoration of our cultural heritage.

This volume is therefore based on the analysis of activities preliminary to restoration, recognizing the theoretical matrices of reference and the complexity of criteria and techniques for each intervention. It is divided into ten chapters devoted to specific topics.

Some are re-statements based on previous partially published texts which have been revised and updated in the notes and captions. The initial chapter is dedicated to the short guide of graphic representations in which the author's surveys and elaborations are presented.

The second chapter, drawing on previous work and new contributions, exhibits an architectural palimpsest of the central Mediterranean from the Middle Ages through different periods of artistic expressions up to a recent restoration project at the Church of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo. The third chapter is concerned with the Church of Santa Maria Assunta in Sermoneta.

The volume continues with a chapter dedicated to cases from Rome, *The Bastion of the Colonnella, historical and conservation note* (a little-known building by Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane, discovered by the author while preparing for the conference dedicated to Sangallo in 1985); and the façade of the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome, when the author was invited to be part of the international group for its study and restoration during the worksites for the Jubilee in 2000. These chapters are followed by two essays dedicated to the presence and impact in Poland of Italian architectural design from the Renaissance to Baroque. These studies date from the author's study missions in Poland during a period of great political and social turmoil.

The ninth chapter, *Palazzo Sternberg, a palimpsest for Europe*, presents a synthesis about a palace in Vienna, home of the Italian Institute of Culture, where the author had the opportunity to stay at different times. Finally, two young Spanish architects, Susana Lopez Verdù and Alejandro Iniesta Muñoz, present their first studies on, respectively, the Church of Santa Marina Virgen y Martir in Alameda del Valle and the Metro in the city of Madrid.