

Chapter 70

Palatium Vetus in Alessandria: From Tradition to Digital History

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ABSTRACT

The book “Palatium Vetus: The broletto recovered in the heart of Alessandria” is the theoretical, scientific and cognitive achievement of the complex restoration and enhancement, that have returned to the building its role of town prominent features, one of the main focal points of its architectural and urban history. The volume is presented as a result of a large-scale cultural relationship, created and programmed between the ‘Palazzo del governatore’ of Alessandria and the Politecnico di Torino. The use of innovative technologies of representation, aimed to combine – also edited in new forms – the concept of ‘Digital History’, constitute a useful opportunity of welding between the correctness of the contents, the scientific-disciplinary outcome and the divulgative effectiveness. The ‘Virtual Communication’ becomes a media that clarifies the new role of the restored building as cultural center, able to revamp the image of the entire local community.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of Digital History, also called Storytelling¹, quite often it happens to see the birth of many initiatives faced by the ones who do not even know the basics of representation (both for what concerns its traditional aspects, both for the most innovative, digital). Nor things are better in the fundamental field perception and visual communication – strictly bound to the disciplinary field of drawing and representation – and even worst in the field of Visual Culture. In this specific field of study the dialogue between the mentioned specializations is instead to be considered as fundamental (also and especially if there

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is not a harmony of those skills in a single scientific-professional profile). Under these conditions, the results are not always acceptable: they are reduced in performances mainly based on the application of digital programs, or lacking of historical-documentary and communicative aspects, so that the meaning (and the purposes) of the visualization project cannot be grasped. Similarly the sense of virtual product/media could be not clear and complete for the observer who decodes the “story” (visual, but not only) of storytelling. Therefore is fundamental the scientific and technical control of the content and the means of expression, as proposed by *Algirdas Julien Greimas* (Greimas 1983), the *Groupe μ* (Edelin 1992) (University of Liège), the *Nouvelle Rhétorique* school (Perelman 1958) and also *Louis Trolle Hjelmslev* (Hjelmslev 1999). According to these methods, the “content plan”, (with the “level of expression”) should be carefully evaluated: in the new virtual and digital world it will be very useful to start considerations about the possible developments of the relationship between the two new faces of “the signifier” and “the signified”: the language of realistic simulation, or the mimetic, the symbolic/metaphorical, and more.

In the light of these premises the following article refers to a virtuous example of integration between the two levels, in order to achieve a clear aim: the objective of communicating to promote the cultural tourism, but also to properly disseminate the scientific results. The deepening work is the completion of the complex scientific restoration and enhancement of *Palatium Vetus*, in Alessandria² (Figure 1, 2, 3): it develops the visual storytelling through the virtual reconstruction of the *broletto* found in the historical city center, carried out with a multimedia DVD – attached to the book – that offers its communication and promotion.

The conception and the organization of the multimedia work (including the soundtrack) was programmatically designed in an interdisciplinary dimension – involving all professionals, researchers and scholars interested in the different phases of the research – with procedures of investigation and processing (of the large amount of data collected) conducted according to the diversified disciplinary approaches and integrating the results.

Figure 1. Alexandria, Palatium Vetus, main facade on piazza della Libertà
(photo by A. Neri)



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