

Some Reflections on the Preservation and Transmission of Artistic and Architectural Heritage

MARIA ANTONIETTA CRIPPA

The preservation of our artistic and cultural heritage should not be understood in a passive way, as simple protection: to preserve is always to act, and it gives rise to a strategy for intervention that is carried through a communicative process.

In the eighties, Liliana Grassi, whom the present author was a student of, pointed out that restoration had a historical and cognitive as well as preservationist value. The most urgent need is to share and make explicit not only *how* but also *why* and *what* is being preserved. In fact, there is a risk that the culture of restoration will be separated from the construction of a social life that can identify and communicate values essential for the dignity of man, in his person and in his life with others.

In order that the importance of these themes might be grasped, the author compares them with what has happened in the Lombard context to which Cesano Maderno belongs, and examines some very current themes: firstly, the restoration of modern, or twentieth century buildings (the case of the Pirelli building in Milan is exemplary); secondly, the theme of the Po River plain megalopolis, which is composed of many towns that have lost their historical boundaries and need new urban plans, both in terms of individual towns as well as in terms of the general links among them; thirdly, the complex operation of renovation, transformation and 'critical reconstruction' of the city of Berlin started in the 1980s, which gave way to the experience of IBA and inspired a renewed relationship between the past, present and future in the development of the city.

It is hoped that — according to what the English planner Patrick Geddes has said — in the near future work will always be carried out in the sense of a 'continuity of generations'; the inhabited territory will be experienced as a resource and a stimulus for 'collective enthusiasm' that constructs and reconstructs the city, for cooperation between the generations, so that they preserve the profound sense of belonging

to a place, a sense that is linked to the sacredness of individual and community life.

Towards a History of Cesano Maderno: Considerations on a Recently Restored Parchment

ALESSANDRO MOLteni

A recent restoration project — proposed by ISAL and financed by the Municipality of Cesano Maderno — has allowed the material recovery and study of an important late medieval document, for which the author includes an extensive historical-critical introduction with a complete transcription in an appendix.

Consisting of four parchments in scroll format, which is unfortunately damaged in the first part, the document is housed in the Archivio di Stato in Milan (*Archivio diplomatico*, Pergamene). A comparison with earlier and later parchments has made it possible to date it between 1295 and 1331. The act was drawn up by the Milanese monastery of Santa Maria d'Aurona, which invested a certain Filipponus with feudal rights for a year, on his monastic properties in Cesano. In exchange, the monastery was to receive the goods he produced (rye, millet, capons, hens' eggs) as rent.

Santa Maria d'Aurona held the right of *honor et districtus* in Cesano, a prerogative that was clearly cited in the investiture in Filipponus's favor. However, it is impossible to know what the surname and provenance of this personality were. His social extraction was certainly not *rusticus*, considering the public nature of the rights conceded to him and the denomination *dominus* with which he is identified in the document.

The Use of irrigation canals in the Dry Lands of the Po River Plain: The Roggia 'di Desio'

PAOLO CONTE

The *roggia*, or irrigation canal, called 'di Desio' — commissioned by Bernabò and finished in 1383 — wound through the 'pianura padana asciutta', or dry lands to the north of Milan. This

body of water had its source in the area around Cucciago (Como), from whence the *roggia* departed to irrigate the lands around Lentate sul Seveso, Seveso, Cesano Maderno, Desio and Muggiò.

This work of hydraulic engineering was part of a vast plan to modernize the agriculture in the Duchy of Milan. The plan began with the digging of the Naviglio Grande canal in 1176, and was further developed in the course of the centuries that followed. Nevertheless, it involved above all the irrigated lands to the south of Milan, and this may be the reason why the *roggia di Desio* is an episode in the history of agriculture that has not been investigated very much by scholars.

Constructed with public resources, it was managed as private property since its origin, because the lands it crossed, when they did not belong directly to the Visconti, were the property of noble families who were very close to the court. Initially run by the users themselves through consortiums, since the end of the XVIII century — following transfers and pooling — exclusive rights to its management were first held by the Cusani and later by Antona Traversi Tittoni families.

The study of this interesting water infrastructure — which underwent a swift, radical decline after the Second World War — is based not only on bibliographical and cartographical sources, but above all on new archival research. Direct investigation on the land has also documented the present state of the *roggia* as well as the structures that were interspersed along it in order to valorize what still remains.

Seventeenth Century Musical Collections Dedicated to the Arese

IVAN PELA - DONATELLA BRUNELLI

The authors present a group of interesting seventeenth century musical collections dedicated to members of the Arese family (Bartolomeo III, his wife Lucrezia Omodei and their daughter Giulia; Giulio I and Marco Maria Arese, father and cousin of Bartolomeo respectively; Carlo Giovanni Battista Omodei, Giulia's brother).

The works are the *Canzoni francesi per sonar con ogni sorte di instrumenti* by Francesco Rognoni Taeggio (1608), *Con-*

certi musicali a due, tre e quattro voci by Giovanni Battista Beria and edited by Carlo Federico Rolandi (1650), the *Concerti ecclesiastici a due, tre e quattro voci* by Teodoro Casati (1651), *Mottetti ecclesiastici* by Federico Pedroni (1658) and the *Primo libro de motetti a voce sola* by Carlo Giuseppe Sanromano (1670).

Introduced by pompous but significant celebratory dedications, these works are precious testimonials both to the close connection between the Arese family and musical circles in Milan at the time as well as to the tradition of musical patronage of this noble house.

Two New Entries for the School of Cerano: Ortensio Crespi and Gerolamo Chignoli

SIMONETTA COPPA

The author presents two restored works by the school of Cerano. Both were Arese commissions.

Ortensio Crespi, Cerano's younger brother painted is the author of the *Stigmata of St. Francis* housed in what was once the Arese family chapel in the church of Santo Stefano in Osnago. It is another variant of a composition already known in other versions (Sant'Eustorgio, Milan; Santissima Trinità, Lugano). The prototype, in a private collection in Novara, is signed and dated 1608, and is one of the secure works in Ortensio Crespi's catalogue.

The *Death of the Virgin* by Gerolamo Chignoli is housed in the oratory next to the Palazzo Arese Jacini in Cesano Maderno; the canvas was painted for Benedetto and Giovanni Arese of the branch of the Arese di Seveso family, owners of the adjacent building. The work is signed and dated 1642.

The Borromeo Roggia

SALVATORE COLOMBO -
DANIELE SANTAMBROGIO

The Borromeo *roggia* was a short artificial irrigation canal about fourteen kilometers long, and once crossed the dry countryside of the lower Brianza area near Milan to bring water to the town of Cesano Maderno.

This work of hydraulic engineering was built at the end of the XVII century upon the wishes of Giulia Arese Borromeo, with the twofold intention of increasing the agricultural production of the lands around Cesano and of irrigating the great Italian style garden of the Palazzo Arese Borromeo and activating its fountains and water games. The Borromeo canal was thus an integral part of that imposing Baroque urbanistic system that was, and still is today, the Palazzo Arese Borromeo in Cesano Maderno: the irrigated fields and water mill fed by the *roggia* were the source of further riches for the Borromeo Arese family, who owned an entertainment residence in Cesano that rivaled the splendid residence on Isola Bella.

This study delineates the history of the *roggia* on the basis of numerous archival documents (the report of Engineer Italo Azzimonti of 1914 is fundamental) and reconstructs the course of the canal thanks to historical cartography and field surveys to check on its present condition.

After the Second World War, following the radical socio-economic changes and intense building exploitation in the area, lower Brianza was incorporated into the greater Milanese metropolitan area. Today almost nothing remains of the Borromeo *roggia*: everything has been buried under ce-

ment and asphalt. Only the initial part survives, in the Riserva Naturale Regionale della Fontana del Guercio and some remains that must be protected and restored because of their historical, environmental and scenic value.

A Professional in the Service of the Borromeo: New Information on Ferrante Baselino

SERENA VENTAFRIDDA

Ferrante Baselino is known for editing the descriptive inventory of furniture and paintings in the Palazzo Arese Borromeo in Cesano Maderno in 1762. The author reconstructs his career in the Collegio dei Ragionati in Milan, where he was a leading figure, holding the highest positions between 1746 and 1784. In those same years, five 'ragionieri collegiati' of the Baselino family were also active; thus we can speak of a profession passed on from one family member to another.

Thanks to new documents — from the Palazzo Arese Jacini, now in the Archives of the Library in Cesano Maderno — the professional figure of Ferrante emerges more clearly. He was the general administrator of the Borromeo family in the service of Renato III Borromeo. This important position seems to have been passed on through the family, since in the last quarter of the XVIII century, the Borromeos' administrator was one of Ferrante's brothers, Ildefonso.

Other families were in the Borromeos' service between the XVIII and the XIX century, like the Secco and the Rossi. These figures, who are mainly unknown or considered of secondary importance, were really agents for the Borromeo in the Cesano area, and played an important role in the history of this city.