

# The conservation of monuments and the church of Santa Chiara in Naples

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*Original publication:* Roberto Pane (1948) "Il restauro dei monumenti e la chiesa di s. Chiara in Napoli", in: *Architettura e arti figurative*, Neri Pozza Editore, Venezia, pp. 7-20.<sup>1</sup>

*Translation by Valerie Magar*

Issues relating to the conservation of monuments are not new in Italy. Indeed, one could say that no other country has gathered such a vast complex of experience in this field. However, what has been done is still small compared to what is yet to be done because experts are now facing the most varied and, unfortunately, even the most desperate cases. On the other hand, since it is not possible to restore all the buildings of artistic interest, choices will have to be made, and the criteria will be determined by sifting through numerous contrasts and polemics.<sup>2</sup> In any case, it seems certain that the privileges maintained for the past twenty years by the Roman ruins will have to be greatly reduced for the benefit of the renewed democracy, since that sort of elective affinity that bound the new and ancient Caesars has now had its day.<sup>3</sup>

After all, contrasts and polemics will benefit in this and other matters to reawaken the interest in the common historical and artistic heritage, which is among the first conditions for the revival of our cultural life. We feel induced to rethink the old and new theories of conservation, with a participation that is all the more lively and adherent to the more vast and immediate the task to be accomplished.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Text was originally published with the title *Il restauro dei monumenti* in 1944 in *Arethusa* (I (I): 68-79). It was republished, with a slightly modified version with the title *Il restauro dei monumenti e la chiesa di s. Chiara in Napoli*, in R. Pane, *Architettura e arti figurative*, Neri Pozza Editore, Venezia (1948: 7-20). A third version, slightly modified, was published in *Attualità e dialettica del restauro* (1987: 23-37). The changes have been included as notes in this text, for scholars interested in this philological study, except for the changes in accents in Italian (*più/così/così*) and those in capitals (s. Chiara/S. Chiara). In that 1987 version, two images of Santa Chiara were included, with a short text inserted at the end of the article.

<sup>2</sup> 1987 version: "On the other hand, since it will not be possible to restore all factories of artistic interest, a choice will have to be made, the criteria for which will be determined through the sifting of not a few contrasts and controversies."

<sup>3</sup> In the 1987 version, the first two paragraphs are merged.

<sup>4</sup> 1987 version: "[...] with a participation that is all the more vivid and adherent the more vast and immediate the task to be accomplished will present itself."

Conservation, understood as the preservation and defense of monuments and not merely their practical adaptation to new uses, is an absolutely modern thing whose history dates back to little more than a century. Antiquity ignored the problem of aesthetic conservation; the age of the Renaissance lovingly surveyed the ancient, but rather than preserving it, exploited it on occasion as a quarry for marble and stone; the Baroque age nurtured slightly amused indifference toward the forms of the past and, to its boundless production, it did not hesitate even in the face of the gravest dangers of contamination. One has to reach the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to find true theories of conservation such as those expressed by Quatremère de Quincy and Viollet-le-Duc, the latter as famous as deleterious was his work and influence.<sup>5</sup> For both cases, in which he completed elements or in which he opted for a *ripristino*,<sup>6</sup> Viollet-le-Duc proclaimed the necessity for the conservation architect to embrace as his own the language of the ancient artists, making use for this, not only of the example provided by the particular work that was to be restored, but also of the typical, and therefore generic, forms of the so-called style of architecture; which is not the style of art for the simple fact that this is never generic but always individual.<sup>7</sup> In his *Dictionnaire raisonné* the French theorist wrote, “the best plan is to suppose one’s self in the position of the original architect, and to imagine what he would do if he came back to the world and had the program with which we have to deal laid before him.”<sup>8</sup> This anti-historical assumption appeared so legitimate that it became the foundation of the many restorations that, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, were carried out both in France and other countries of Europe. It is not the case here to show how, even today, such a rationalistic and non-aesthetic mentality is found, in a different guise, in that historiography of architecture that continues to proceed according to patterns and types of evolution. But, to remain on course, I will not mention the French and German works in which the false document is inseparably mixed together with the authentic, by simply reminding us of some of the most famous reconstructions that, based on the same premises, were carried out in Italy. Such are the façades of the Duomo in Florence, that of Santa Croce, the Sforza Castle in Milan, and, more serious still, because of the damage done to a whole vast environment, the restorations carried out by Rubbiani in many large and small buildings in Bologna, beginning with the church of San Francesco on up to the small medieval houses, the porticos, all that spontaneous and admirably balanced production that needed nothing, or only, here and there, some modest consolidation work. Instead it was refurbished and, with the intention of making it more beautiful, reduced to being tedious and conventional. Faced with many of Bologna’s monuments, any sensitive observer cannot help but feel sorry to see that the polychromy of the bricks and stones has been stripped of all primitive liveliness of surface and tone, and that what was immediate and original has become imitation.

About fifty years before Rubbiani, Naples too had had its own restorer, Travaglini, well known especially to scholars for his destruction in San Domenico Maggiore of the numerous tomb slabs that covered the church floor and for those vague gilded crosses which, rather than an attempt at restoration, are a peregrine expression of the neo-Gothic fashion that arrived with some delay from England in the capital of the kingdom of the two Sicilies.<sup>9</sup> And still on the

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<sup>5</sup> 1987 version: “[...] from Viollet le Duc, as famous the latter, as vast and often deleterious has been his work and influence.”

<sup>6</sup> *Ripristino*: reconstitution of the original aspect or shape of a monument, through the elimination of added or superposed elements. Note by the translator.

<sup>7</sup> 1987 version: “[...] but also of the typical, and therefore generic, forms of the so-called style of architecture, which is not the style of art for the simple reason that this is never generic but individual.”

<sup>8</sup> Original quotation: “Le mieux est de se mettre à la place de l’architecte primitif et de supposer ce qu’il ferait si, revenant au monde, on lui posait les programmes qui sont posés à nous-mêmes”.

<sup>9</sup> 1987 version, “Two Sicilies.” The following text becomes a new paragraph.

subject of Travaglini, it is worth mentioning another church, severely altered by him: that of San Eligio, the first built in purely Gothic form after the Angevin conquest. In this one the bombs demolished the banal masking of white plaster, exposing some splendid cross vaults of the ancient church. We shall see further on how a restoration problem arises here as well, which, though in a more modest program, closely resembles that which is to be solved for the church of Santa Chiara. More recent defacements, carried out according to the canons of Viollet-le-Duc, that is, still according to the so-called style, are the façade of Naples Cathedral and that of Amalfi Cathedral. But even more numerous would be, in other Italian cities, restorations to be cited as examples not worthy of imitation. And on the other hand, alongside the fancy reconstructions, there has been no shortage of restoration treatments which, although conducted with documents in hand,<sup>10</sup> have achieved expressive results no less ungrateful: thus in Venice the gray and neutral façade of the Fondaco dei Turchi, which does not even preserve the memory of that marvel of color that was the primitive façade.<sup>11</sup>

Fortunately, the errors of the past have benefited the education of modern conservators, and critical and aesthetic culture, in Italy more advanced than elsewhere, has greatly contributed to the formation of a mature awareness of the problems in question. Evidence of such progress is, among other things, that set of norms concerning the criteria to be followed for the protection of monuments, which years ago was formulated through the intervention of the organizations responsible for the protection itself, namely the superintendencies of monuments and excavations. This set constitutes a document of animated interest and, although it has the unfortunate title of *Carta del Restauro*, it will certainly have better luck than many other similar charters, because it appears, on the whole, dictated by a sound and enlightened sense of art and history. In its fundamental imprint, it shows that it is inspired by a conception clearly antithetical to that preached by Viollet-le-Duc. In fact, restoration of *ripristino* based on stylistic similarities is definitely banned there and is only permitted in those cases where it is based on absolutely reliable grounds.<sup>12</sup> Referring to works of ancient times, these norms stipulate that the completion of missing parts is excluded, even in cases where it is possible to infer with certainty their particular elements, and this is because the formal sense of a modern execution could in no case compose a stylistic unity between the ancient and the new.<sup>13</sup> Only anastylosis is permissible, that is, the mechanical reassembly of dismembered parts, such as might be, for example, the scattered drums of a Doric column or the blocks of an isodomic masonry. In the event that it turns out to be necessary, for any kind of restoration, to make new parts, it is suggested that these be limited to the indispensable and, in any case, that they be made, either with different materials from the original ones or with the adoption of envelope surfaces in which the shape of the ancient element is depicted schematically. All this is done the proper intention of distinguishing the old part from the new and that is, as has already been mentioned, in precisely the opposite sense to that practiced by Viollet-le-Duc.

Another rule worthy of interest is the one that affirms the necessity of preserving all elements of a monument having with a character of art or historical memory "to whatever time they belong to; without the desire for stylistic unity and return to primitive form intervening to include

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<sup>10</sup> 1987 version: "And on the other hand alongside the fictional reconstructions there has been no shortage of restorative ones, which, although conducted with documents in hand [...]."

<sup>11</sup> 1987 version: "so in Venice the gray and neutral façade of the Fondaco dei Turchi, which does not even retain any trace of that variety of plastic episodes that distinguished that marvel of color that was the primitive façade."

<sup>12</sup> 1987 version: "In fact, restorative treatments, based on stylistic similarities, is certainly banned there, and is only permitted in those cases in which it is based on absolutely reliable grounds."

<sup>13</sup> 1987 version: "[...] even in the case that it is possible to infer with certainty the particular elements of these, and this is because the formal taste of a modern execution could in no case come to compose in stylistic unity the old and the new."

some to the detriment of others, and only those such as window masonry or porch interludes which, lacking in importance and significance, represent unnecessary disfigurements may be eliminated.” In principle, this can also be considered as legitimate. However, it seems to me that we cannot absolutely rule out a criterion of choice for the same reason that we cannot historically feel our past giving the whole unfolding of it the same importance. Here the doubt arises that the extreme impartiality, suggested by the above-mentioned norm, generates a certain concern<sup>14</sup> about the future judgment that, as tastes and tendencies change, may be pronounced on our work. A just concern only if limited to inspiring a serious and prudent awareness of the task at hand; otherwise it would risk reducing us to a sterile neutrality no less condemnable than the active artistic ignorance of Viollet-le-Duc.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, while respecting the rule in question, it will be a matter of judging whether or not certain elements have an artistic character, because, if not, it will be entirely legitimate to abolish what masks or even offends images of true beauty and consequently to commit oneself with a choice inspired by a true critical evaluation. Certainly the ugly also belongs to history, but that is not why it should be given the same care for which the beautiful deserves to be the exclusive object.<sup>16</sup> Nor does it seem to me that such an observation should be supported by examples: each reader will have seen monuments in which the contamination brought by a bad reconstruction will have induced him to recall by clear analogy the repainting done by some craftsman on the canvas of a great master, and, strictly speaking, even this repainting, which we on the occasion do not hesitate to erase, has its historical interest. Ultimately, such considerations must lead us<sup>17</sup> to recognize how no fixed rule can be dictated in this field, for it would be equally worthwhile to dictate it to the activity of the critical spirit.

Each monument should, therefore, be seen as a unique case, for such it is as a work of art, and such should also be its conservation.

But is it possible that it is enough for the conservator to have sensitivity and culture as a critic? If we think that even the mere surface of a plaster and the apparent neutrality of a connecting tone can engage creative taste and that the most scrupulous adherence to the best experiences can lead, despite everything, to a negative result, we must conclude that they are not enough. However much one may proceed exclusively on the path traced by the most controlled and secure elements, the time will always come when it will be necessary to build a bridge, to operate a conjunction, and this can be done only through a creative act in which the worker will find no help other than in himself. Nor will he be able, as was once the case, to delude himself that the ghost of the primitive creator stands beside him to guide him.

But a different attitude to the tasks that the present restorer will be called upon to perform is suggested not so much by the complexity of the new problems as by their character of necessity. In other words, a totally new condition will appear to be determined by the fact that, whereas before the restoration, or at any rate, the modification of the appearance of a monument, almost always arose from the more or less justified desire to give back to works of art, which were neither mutilated nor unsafe, the primitive stamp of authenticity and beauty, today it is a matter of saving the remains of precious forms whose abandonment

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<sup>14</sup> 1987 version: “Here the doubt arises that the extreme impartiality, suggested by the above-mentioned rule, creates a certain concern [...].”

<sup>15</sup> 1987 version, “to reduce us to a sterile neutrality no less condemnable than artistic restoration according to Viollet-le-Duc.”

<sup>16</sup> 1987 version: “[...] beauty deserves to be an object.”

<sup>17</sup> 1987 version: “Ultimately such considerations must lead us [...].”

would be unconceivable with the life of a cultured and civilized society. True, there has been no shortage of those to whom such abandonment, or even the total destruction of hard-to-preserve buildings, has seemed the only worthy solution. Let us substitute, it has been said and will be said again, the damaged ancient monuments with new ones, without too much nostalgia for the past; which is as good as saying: let us erase the glories of yesteryear and produce new ones. This might even be worthy of a smile of sympathy, if it were only inspired by a candid and naive fervor, but it produces a vivid sense of alarm if one thinks that, far more likely, it is dictated by a very activist and practical ambition. Moreover, even this attitude has, as it were, its own theoretical presupposition that is worth examining. It consists in believing that the current widespread respect for the works of the past and the care and studies of which they are the object, testify to the scarce artistic capacity of our times, and that such respect would not be felt by us if we were animated by a more animated and fruitful creative impulse. Such a judgment may appear excusable when it is pronounced by artists, but it is not at all excusable when it is pronounced by writers and art critics, as is sometimes the case. In other words, it is meant to imply that since one cannot make art, one is content to write its history and criticism; as if they were not different things but two degrees of the same spiritual activity, one of which is truly essential and sovereign, the other subordinate and unnecessary. Clearly, it is known to all how frequently such an assumption is made by artists; but it is also clear that criticism and history are subordinate to art only in the sense of time, for that same reason: nothing could become history if nothing more happened in this world. Indeed, if we are to wish for the best, this will consist in seeing ourselves enriched by new forms of beauty, rather than perceiving them as coming to destroy what we already have reason to love and thus reason to defend against the ravages of time and other tragic events.

At the beginning of the war a major newspaper published a referendum among Italian architects about the problem of monumental conservation, and among the many proposals that were put forward was the one already mentioned. The great disparity of the judgments expressed on this occasion proved how each one had extended to the most diverse cases of his own judgment or his own particular taste, without thinking too much about the fact that, before putting one's hand to such a vast subject, it was necessary to refer back to general ideas by calling into question the historical and aesthetic foundations of the work to be undertaken.

Given the unpredictable variety of specific cases, it seems clear that there will be a way to carry out all the most diverse experiences, from that of pure static consolidation and the re-composition of scattered fragments up to the completely new work that must replace the destroyed part of a building, creating a happy contrast instead of a false imitation. And here we should note that, while an interior or a façade are expressive by virtue of a fundamental stylistic unity, what we call an environment, namely, what is gathered in the perspective of a square or a street, demands instead variety of forms, because in this case we are not dealing with a single work, even when, in the best examples, the concordant rhythm of different formal tendencies gives the impression of a perfect and ideal fusion; and in such cases no obstacle should be opposed to the manifestation of a new architecture.

At this point, on hearing the enunciation of such an uneven program, if the reader were to ask me who would ever be able to regulate it, I would answer by recalling how one of the authors of the aforementioned referendum proposed the prior abolition of all polemics so that practical work could be done. To this I replied by eulogizing controversy, and I believe that by now, not as a result of my reply, that the author has had ample time to change his opinion; for it will have to be precisely the stimulating participation of the specialists and the educated public that will determine, through free discussions, the favorable atmosphere for the various tasks to be tackled, so as to make possible those solutions which, because they differ, will not be able to conform to a predetermined program.

Some examples of what I have said above can be provided by the complex of works that will have to be carried out in Naples, in the church of Santa Chiara, in that of San Eligio and elsewhere.

The impossibility of recomposing the Baroque interior of Santa Chiara is apparent at first glance. In the present conditions, given the disappearance of the vault and almost all the 18<sup>th</sup>-century decorations, restoration offers only one possibility from the point of view of formal address: that of repeating the 14<sup>th</sup>-century lines while continuing to uncover what the fire has already partially uncovered. However, significant remnants of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century reconstruction may be preserved, such as the sepulchral sculptures in some chapels and the pavement, which, although severely damaged, will not be difficult to recombine, given its predominantly geometric character. It will not be possible to preserve, however, the stucco pilasters and window cornices, because these parts have lacked any organic link of recurrence, following the disappearance of the vaults and pillars between the chapels. Moreover, the preservation of this covering,<sup>18</sup> which constituted the fundamental motive and architectural pretext for the transformation from Gothic to Baroque form, would also not be possible because the parts themselves will be cut off by the restoration of the ancient windows, and this will not fail to return to the full benefit of the internal perspective, because it will contribute more than any other element to restoring the full vertical development to the nave.



SANTA CHIARA, NAPLES. Interior of the church before 1943. Image: G Dell'Aja, *Il restauro della Basilica di Santa Chiara in Napoli, Napoli, 1980*.

In honor of truth and not in order to find at all costs, in the midst of so much ruin, a reason for consolation, it must be acknowledged that, even in the vastness and boldness of the decorative program, the Neapolitan 18<sup>th</sup> century had not reached in Santa Chiara one of its happiest expressions. The frescoes, the gilding, the vaulting, which in its severely depressed intrados could not mask the structural fiction, and above all the stark contrast between all this and the formal taste of the Angevin monuments dominant in the background, gave the visitor

<sup>18</sup> 1987 version: "Of the rest, the preservation of this coating, [...]."

a sense of perplexity and dissatisfaction that was only overcome when the eye, renouncing the overall view, went on to consider the works of art and the documents of history that five centuries had accumulated in this grand interior. This does not detract, in any case, from the fact that even Baroque Santa Chiara is worthy of regret and that its memory arouses in us a feeling of nostalgia, not so much because of the lost image as because the memories, in the minds of many of us, associated with the years of our youth and their vague and sweet imaginings. In this sense the antithesis between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century church, so rich and profane, and the austere and bare one that will rise again from the restoration, will signify in symbol the antithesis between the past time and the time ahead.

About the fate of some other specific elements in the church, it should be mentioned that even the high altar, with its sumptuous marble inlays and scrollwork, can be said to be completely lost.

In Neapolitan churches of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the altar habitually appears as the showpiece of virtuosity, and that of Santa Chiara was no exception.<sup>19</sup> It seems to me that this loss deserves less than the others to be deplored, both because of its lack of artistic importance and because, incorporated into the masonry of the Baroque work and thus spared from the fire, there still remains the primitive Gothic altar with its delicate and precious ornamentation<sup>20</sup> and of a grandeur that, while proportionate to the figure of the officiating priest, and in perfect harmony with the Gothic setting, allows the monument of King Robert and the others flanking it to fully dominate. But here the doubt might arise that perhaps it would be better, given their present ruined condition, if those monuments no longer dominated the view of the nave, while, to make the pain more acute, there is memory of the perfect state of preservation in which the sculptures by Bertini, Tino di Camaino and Baboccio had come down to us. And, as if that were not enough, the photographs taken after the fire show parts still preserved that, due to the impossibility of immediate protection and the onset of bad weather, subsequently collapsed. In any case, it seems clear that part of the fragments will be able to be reassembled in situ and that the rest will have to be collected and preserved, together with the surviving parts of other works, in those rooms of the monastery that, conveniently restored, can be used as a museum of the church. Conceived in purely static function, the conservation will have to limit itself to redoing, where necessary, a few load-bearing elements in a synthetic and schematic form, in such a way that it appears recognizable from the rest by its different character, while cooperating in reconstituting an overall vision and helping to protect what remains from later ruin. Now, that this view of the whole can be attained seems very probable; but it will be certain only when, having collected, examined and surveyed the scattered elements, that graphic conservation which must precede the executive work is outlined.<sup>21</sup>

Almost all the major churches in Naples belong to the Angevin age, including that of Donnaregina, which has been the subject of one of the best conservation treatments carried out in Italy in recent decades.<sup>22</sup> With the same taste and respect, although the task is even more arduous, it would be desirable to see Santa Chiara and the church of San Eligio. The

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<sup>19</sup> 1987 version: "In Neapolitan churches of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the altar habitually appears as the centerpiece of virtuosity, and that of St. Clare was no exception."

<sup>20</sup> 1987 version: "[...] still remains the primitive Gothic altar, with delicate and precious ornamentation [...]."

<sup>21</sup> 1987 version: "Now, that this overall vision can be attained seems very probable; but it will prove certain only when, gathered and examined, the scattered limbs are outlined that graphic restoration which must precede the executive work."

<sup>22</sup> 1987 version: "To the Angevin age belong almost all the major churches in Naples, including that of Donnaregina, which has been the subject of one of the best restorations carried out in Italy in recent decades."



SANTA CHIARA, NAPLES. Wooden ceiling during the reconstruction. *Image: La ricostruzione del patrimonio artistico italiano, Roma, 1950.*



SANTA CHIARA, NAPLES. Interior, after the restoration. *Image: G Dell'Aja, Il restauro della Basilica di Santa Chiara in Napoli, Napoli, 1980.*



latter now shows some new elements of great interest including the beautiful crosses of living stone that flanked the apse and that the neutral and indifferent remodeling by Travaglini, the same man who elsewhere invented Gothic gilding, had masked with emaciated plaster walls. Here, even more than in Santa Chiara, the restorer's task is clearly indicated, both inside and out, by the organic and valuable remains of the Gothic building. The walled windows will thus be reopened to restore light and rhythm to the single nave.

But the greatest difficulty will not consist in the arrangement of the surviving parts of the monuments, to which the numerous means that modern technique places at our disposal will help us, but in the attribution of an aesthetic form to the whole vast ensemble; which, proceeding with the greatest sobriety and caution, will still have to be accomplished. Now it is precisely in this sense that, even following the concept of "bare simplicity and compliance with the constructive scheme" appropriately recommended by the aforementioned norms of conservation, a work will have to be carried out that, in its giving new life to the church, succeeds at once in being both ancient and modern. The constraints of conservation will impose their just and strict limits on taste and fantasy, but it is always and only the latter that will provide a satisfactory solution to the problem. Now, if this is true, what conclusion is legitimate to draw from it? That conservation is itself a work of art. Such a conclusion is already implicit in what has been said earlier, but that it is not at all so in the remembered norms;<sup>23</sup> indeed one would say that in the minds of those who drafted them, there was above all the intention to deny any creative function to the intervention of the conservator, and this out of a plausible fear of the practical consequences that a different attitude might have brought. Evidence of this is, among other things, the passage in which it is said that only "the continuation of existing lines may be admitted in cases where they are geometric expressions devoid of decorative individuality." But there are no such geometric lines in architecture devoid of decorative individuality, because if an individuality is present in the work, it is also so by virtue of those parts which, considered in isolation, may appear as indifferent from the point of view of expression.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the already mentioned arrangement of highlighting with different materials and enveloping lines the new part due to conservation is, albeit unconsciously, an implicit admission of the artistic nature of conservation, whereas the old tendency of imitation leading to the false document denied art insofar as it substituted for it a mimetic virtuosity.<sup>25</sup>

With these considerations, I intended to clarify and, in a certain sense, push to their extreme aesthetic consequences the dictates of the most modern conceptions of conservation.

In addition to the direction to be followed for the internal restoration of Santa Chiara, some considerations about the possibility of a disposition of the environment should be added. As is well known, it is not only the church that suffered serious damage, but almost the entire settlement area surrounding the "sacred citadel" and especially the houses leaning against the friars' convent and those between the bell tower and the entrance to the churchyard. Here the destruction wrought by the bombs offers a possibility that it is to be hoped will not

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<sup>23</sup> 1987 version: "That restoration is itself a sui generis work of art; a conclusion already implicit in what has been said above, but not at all so in the remembered standards; [...]."

<sup>24</sup> 1987 version: "But there are no geometric lines in architecture devoid of decorative individuality, for if an individuality is present in the work, it is also so by virtue of those parts which, considered in isolation, may appear as indifferent from the point of view of expression."

<sup>25</sup> 1987 version: "On the other hand, the aforementioned arrangement of highlighting with different materials and envelope lines the new part, due to restoration is although unconscious, an implicit admission of the artistic nature of restoration, while the old tendency of imitation leading to the false document denied art as it substituted for it a generic virtuosity."

be overlooked: that of the liberation of the monument from the ugliness that has oppressed it for centuries. Even today, a four-story building hides the church's façade from those looking at the Piazza del Gesù and reduces the adjoining cloister of the friars to the miserable appearance of a courtyard. If this building is demolished, and a portico was raised in its place, not only will a splendid result for perspective be obtained, both from the width of the church and from the adjacent square and the cloister of the friars, but also a notable practical result by decongesting traffic in one of the most cramped and busiest parts of the city, because through the portico a pedestrian passage can be created while vehicle transit will continue along Via Trinità Maggiore. Similarly, the bell tower will have to be cleared in the two sides of which, taking away air and light from the environment, the half-destroyed houses are leaning against it, and a low pre-fence wall or gate will be substituted for them, respecting the boundaries of the primitive enclosure and the entrance door with its unique ogival eaves. On the other side of the bell tower the unseemly small houses could be replaced by a small open market, at a convenient distance from the base of the bell tower itself. In this sense the liberating work would be advantageously combined with another of practical utility.

The thinning out<sup>26</sup> operated in the immediate vicinity of the church could be continued through Pallonetto Santa Chiara<sup>27</sup> until it reaches Via Mezzocannone, and even in this next section there would be some partial demolitions to be exploited, completing them. It is clear, however, that given the difficulties to be overcome for the implementation of this larger program, it will perhaps be appropriate to limit the study of the arrangement for now to the area of most immediate interest. On the other hand, it should be remembered that various projects were already drawn up in the past for Santa Chiara and its environs, and if they appeared feasible at one time, all the more so now, since the war has created favorable circumstances for such implementation. In this regard, in a more general way, it should be noted that, if many years will be needed for such vast conservation programs to be carried out, it is necessary that as of now a precise plan of urban arrangements be prepared, especially in the old city, where opportune works of thinning out can be favored by the demolitions produced by the war.

It will be necessary to update the city's master plan considering the new situation: it is desirable that many damaged buildings are no longer be rebuilt, so that their total demolition will return to the benefit of public hygiene, the road system and the better setting of monumental works.<sup>28</sup>

The much-desired thinning out of old Naples can be at least partially achieved if the present circumstances are properly exploited with careful special studies. The *decumani* and *vici* of the ancient Greco-Roman center were lined with houses no more than ten or twelve meters high, while modern Naples has seen the rise, by successive stratifications, of houses sometimes exceeding twenty-four meters on a street section that is still what it was before the birth of Christ. But, I repeat again, for such liberation to be possible, inappropriate reconstructions must be prevented in a timely manner; and this will not be done by implementing vague criteria of choice, but only by following a program that provides for the organic solution of individual cases and the consequent reconstruction of new buildings in those peripheral areas that are already served by wide new roads.

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<sup>26</sup> Roberto Pane uses the term *diradamento* (thinning out), which in agriculture consists in the removal of plants or parts of plants to promote the healthy growth of others. In urbanism, it consists in eliminating buildings considered minor to allow the creation of less dense or empty spaces around monumental buildings. Note by the translator.

<sup>27</sup> 1987 version: "[...] through the Palloneto Santa Chiara [...]."

<sup>28</sup> 1987 version: "It will be necessary to retrace the city's master plan taking into account the new situation: many damaged factories it is desirable that they no longer be rebuilt, so that their total demolition will return to the benefit of public hygiene, the road system and the better setting of works of important interest."

Various monumental arrangements would also prove very useful for the road system and hygiene, and presenting them under the aspect of this dual interest would have the advantage of making their execution more practical. In addition to the already mentioned arrangement of Santa Chiara, it will be necessary to study others, such as that of the church of San Lorenzo, around whose apse some filthy houses are leaning, and to promote the opening of some squares or wide spaces at appropriately chosen points: for example, in front of the beautiful building of the Monte di Pietà.

The destruction of so many works of art makes us feel today how true Leonardo's maxim is, that beautiful things belong to those who love them. This may have seemed a somewhat rhetorical expression until we found to our cost that it was instead a positive and concrete statement of truth.

Conserving and protecting our monuments will have to be one of the peculiar tasks of our future, despite the judgment of so-called practical men who believe that the purpose of human society is already satisfied by the achievement of practical well-being.<sup>29</sup> But to our difficult work of persuasion toward them, logical arguments will benefit far less than those inspired by love for the most precious fruits of our civilization; in the same way that, not logic, but a feeling is what gives impulse to our moral life.

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<sup>29</sup> 1987 version: "Restoring and protecting our monuments will have to be one of the distinctive tasks of our future, despite the judgment of so-called practical men, who believe that the purpose of a human society is already satisfied by the achievement of practical well-being."