Genoa, former church of Saints Gerolamo and Francesco Saverio and former university library: conservation, reuse and enhancement proposals

Received 31 May 2023
Revised 28 July 2023
Accepted 8 September 2023

Stefano Francesco Musso and Giovanna Franco
Architecture and Design Department, University of Genoa, Genoa, Italy

Abstract

Purpose – This article sets out to show how principles and questions about method that underlie a way of interpreting the discipline of conservation and restoration can find results in research and studies, aiming at achieving even conscious reuse process. The occasion is the very recent research performed on the former Church of Saints Gerolamo and Francesco Saverio in Genoa, Italy, the Jesuit church annexed to the 17th-century College of the order. It is a small Baroque jewel in the heart of the ancient city, former University Library and actually abandoned, forgotten for years, inaccessible and awaiting a new use.

Design/methodology/approach – The two-year work carried out on the monumental building was conducted according to a study and research methodology developed and refined over the years within the activities of the School of Specialisation in Architectural Heritage and Landscape of the University of Genoa. It is a multidisciplinary and rigorous approach, which aims to train high-level professionals, up-to-date and aware of the multiple problems that interventions on existing buildings, especially of a monumental nature, involve.

Findings – The biennal study has been carried out within the activities of the Post-Graduate Programme in Architectural Heritage and Landscape of the University of Genoa. The work methodology faces the challenges of the contemporary complexity, raised by the progressive broadening of the concept of cultural "heritage" and by the problems of its conservation, its active safeguard and its reuse: safety in respect of seismic risk, fire and hydro geological instability, universal accessibility – cognitive, physical and alternative – resource efficiency, comfort and savings in energy consumption, sustainability, communication and involvement of local communities and stakeholders.

Originality/value – The goals of the work were the following: understanding of the architectural heritage, through the correlated study of its geometries, elements and construction materials, surfaces, structures, spaces and functions; understanding of the transformations that the building has undergone over time, relating the results of historical reconstructions from indirect sources and those of direct archaeological analysis; assessment of the state of conservation of the building recognising phenomena of deterioration, damage, faults and deficits that affect materials, construction elements, systems and structures; identification of the causes and extent of damage, faults and deficits, assessing the vulnerability and level of exposure of the asset to the aggression of environmental factors and related risks; evaluation of the compatibility between the characteristics of the available spaces, the primary needs of conservation, the instance of regeneration and possible new uses; the definition of criteria and guidelines for establishing the planning of conservation, restoration and redevelopment interventions.

Keywords Conservation, Restoration, Reuse, Sustainability, Social inclusion, Local communities, Laser scanning, Modelling, Digitalization

Paper type Case study

Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development
Emerald Publishing Limited
2044-1266
DOI 10.1108/JCHMSD-05-2023-0069

Premise

It is difficult to determine what Restoration is today and what place it holds amongst the disciplines of architecture and the environment, in the context of education, research and life in our present, in view of the future. We have experienced the progressive transition from a conception of "monuments" as artefacts selected through processes of an "aristocratic" nature, to a more "democratic" vision of them, in the words of Alois Riegl and then of Gustavo Giovannoni (Riegl, 1903; Giovannoni, 1945). The interest then extended from the monuments considered as "homeland glories" (declared intangible but, in fact, extensively redesigned, for various reasons) to works even of "modest size", provided they are rich in testimonial values, to also include the widespread building of historical centres and the sometimes impoverished and fragile construction of rural environments. The "choral" (or systemic, we would say today) values have slowly joined the highly "individual" ones, while History (or rather historiography) was engaged in a parallel work of rereading the many pasts of which those buildings are a surviving tangible and precious trace, being irreproducible and irreplaceable. The contemporary extension of the concept of Heritage has provoked and still causes unprecedented reflections and various technical and design proposals. We have thus progressively arrived at a very broad vision of what is today the "Cultural Heritage" to be protected, safeguarded, conserved, restored and reused. Whole landscapes, built and designed by man over the past ages, are now at the centre of everyone's interest. Not even restoration can ignore this fragile, uncertain but also riskily open nature of the times we live in and those that await us. Restoration, yesterday as today, concerns the traces of a past that is no longer and that will never be again, but that "truly was" (Ricoeur, 2000). On those traces, it claims a sort of primacy and often bears great responsibility towards their destiny and our future and the generations that will follow us. In this perspective, considering what the discipline of Restoration has so far elaborated as the only and essential foundation for the future, through our present, it would mean thinking of the latter as a mere product of the past.

This article sets out to show how principles and questions of method that underlie a way of interpreting the discipline of conservation and restoration can find results in research and studies aimed at real operational repercussions for the whole community, also aiming to fill that "gap" between academia and society that often blames itself on the scientific world. The occasion is the very recent and lengthy work performed on the former Church of Saints Gerolamo and Francesco Saverio in Genoa, Italy, the Jesuit church annexed to the seventeenth-century College of the order, a small Baroque jewel in the heart of the ancient city, surrounded by Palazzi dei Rolli, today museum centres and university buildings, forgotten for years, inaccessible and awaiting a new use, shown in the aerial view as the building set back from street level and accessible by a staircase (Plate 1).

The former church of Saints Gerolamo and Francesco Saverio, annexed to the Jesuit college (currently the seat of the Rectorate of the University of Genoa), was built in the mid-17th century by Francesco Maria Balbi on the ruins of an older church, adjacent to the convent of the hermit nuns of Sant'Agostino. The church, with a single nave and four side chapels (added in successive phases) was frescoed in the chancel by Domenico Piola. With the suppression of the Society of Jesus (1773), all the assets were confiscated and the Republic of Genoa assigned the Palazzo del Collegio and the adjoining Church to the headquarters of the institutes for higher studies and have remained so until today, despite the ups and downs and changes in the uses of some spaces that have led to significant transformations.

It is a hall church with a historic layout, built with vertical load-bearing structures in stone masonry and air-lime mortar, supporting a structural vault in solid bricks; the structure has been multilayered and modified several times and divided into different internal spaces to adapt it to successive and different uses. In the second half of the 19th century, the former church was transformed into a Natural History Museum serving the adjacent University (Alizeri, 1875); it was later used as a Soldier's House during the First World War (Pro Patria,

1915) and, starting from 1934 and until 2014, as the seat of the University Library. Above all, this use has led to profound internal modifications, first of all the division in height of the nave, with the insertion of a reinforced concrete floor (on a Hennebique patent, built by the Porcheddu company of Turin) to create the book deposits below, in metal shelving and the reading room above. The Porcheddu company also created a new roofing system in reinforced concrete equipped with two skylights (with relative cut in the vault) (Figure 1).

In 1966 the building was recognised as being of particular interest, pursuant to Law no. 1089/39 "because it preserves the original seventeenth-century façade and, inside, very valuable frescoes by Domenico Piola in the apse area". The complex is subject to "monumental protection restriction", pursuant to Italian Legislative Decree 42/04. The former church and the University building were also declared "of cultural interest" with a specific Decree of the Regional Secretariat – DSR on 30 June 2015 with the following denomination of the property: "University building complex and historic site of the University Library, formerly the Jesuit College and the Church of Saints Girolamo and Francesco Saverio".

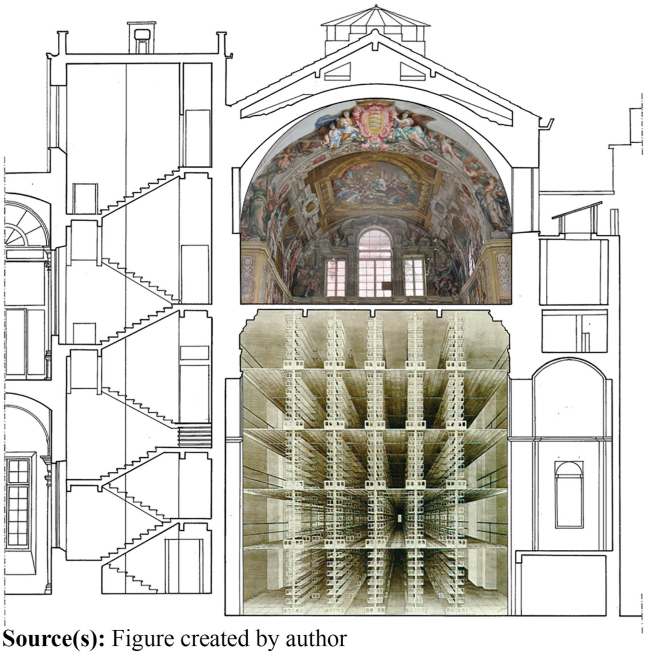
The former church was abandoned for years, unused and under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. Since the end of the last century, a slow transfer of book deposits has begun to the new site of the University Library, the former Columbia hotel in via Balbi 40, also restored for this purpose by the Ministry of Culture. The move of the huge book heritage preserved in it was recently completed and the former church is therefore closed to the public, without use and, obviously, under risks for its very conservation. This hidden architectural and artistic jewel, located in the heart of the city, is therefore completely unknown even to a large part of the citizenry.

The prolonged lack of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, in the presence of accidental events such as the breaking of the glass of a skylight on the roof and of a number of fixtures in the large former reading room, in some side chancels and in various rooms annexed to the former church, caused the uncontrolled infiltration of rainwater into the interior which was not promptly remedied.

As a result, it is urgent to define a path towards the identification of new possible uses for the building that also support the necessary efforts for its conservation and its restoration

Source(s): Figure created by author

Plate 1.
Aerial view of the former Jesuit College in Balbi street (left) and the former church of Saints Gerolamo and Francesco Saverio, set back from the street, formerly housing the university library (**Source:** Photo University of Genoa, property of the authors)



Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 1.
Cross-section of the former university library and former church. Photo composition with frescos in the apse and with the five levels of metal shelving for the library's book depository (**Source:** elaboration S. Acacia, property of the authors)

due to the very important cycle of seventeenth-century frescoes that it preserves inside and for its own stoic, architectural, urban and social values.

The studies and research conducted by the authors, first with teachers and specialist candidates of the Post-Graduate progamme in Architectural Heritage and Landscape of the University of Genoa in the years 2019–2021 and then in collaboration with the Regional Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture (responsible Manuela Salvitti) and the Superintendence of Fine Arts, Archaeology and Landscape of the metropolitan city of Genoa (responsible Cristina Bartolini and supervisor Carla Arcolao), made it possible to formulate an initial feasibility study for the complete sustainable reuse of the property.

Reasons for the reuse and development of the asset

The architectural complex is located in the heart of via Balbi which connects piazza della Nunziata to piazza Acquaverde in front of the railway station in Piazza Principe. The road was built as part of the ambitious project, completed in 1778 to cross the medieval historic centre of the city, exploiting its upstream offshoots. Via Balbi represents a connection axis between the geographical and functional centre of the city and the immediate west of the city where many public services of various kinds and numerous public transport lines are concentrated, as visible from the aerial photo showing, in red colour, the buildings facing Balbi street (Di Biase, 1993) (Figure 2).

The Jesuit College with the former church is an extraordinary example of an architectural complex where some of the most important artists and architects active in Genoa between the 17th and 18th centuries worked, commissioned by one of the most influential and richest families of the period. Furthermore, the complex constitutes one of the major architectural emergencies of the area, evidence of the urban development of the city outside the medieval

fabric, started during the 17th century by the Balbi family, following the example of the previous Strada Nuova located in via Garibaldi.

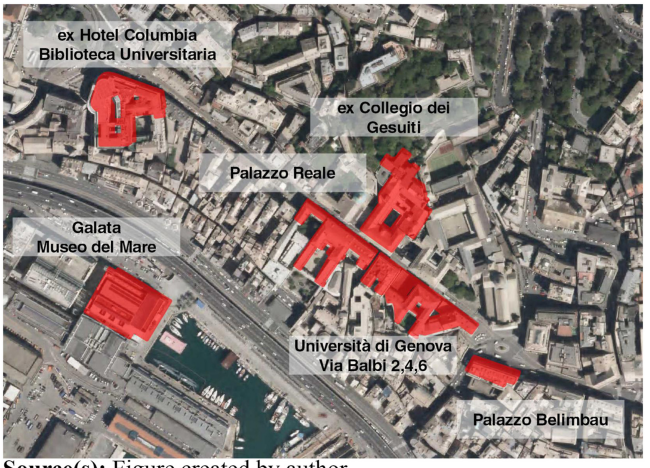
Actually, the complex, consisting of the former College, the neighbouring church of SS Girolamo and Francesco Saverio and the Botanical Garden behind it, represents a symbolic place for the dissemination and preservation of knowledge, the development of the arts and urban history and an important hub for social gathering.

The construction specifications of 1650, drawn up by Francesco Maria Balbi and Francesco Bianco, recognise the former as founder who is granted the right to write his epitaph on the façade and the honour of being buried inside the church. The internal frescoes in the apse area were entrusted to Domenico Piola, with the collaboration of Paolo Brozzi, and were executed between 1666 and 1667.

The fact that Francesco Maria Balbi actually founded the church from scratch is demonstrated by the first plan found in the projects of the adjacent College. It was roughly in the shape of a Greek cross, with five altars and was much smaller than the current one. Francesco Maria Balbi had it extended at the front and enlarged, creating a single nave, with four deep side chapels. The road leading to the Church was also widened, clearing the space between the College and the adjoining building, towards the Annunziata del Vastato. A square was then built and the facade of the church occupied the entire width. The facade, however, was moved with respect to the actual internal axis of the church and was therefore composed in three parts, placing one of the two side doors on the internal axis.

In 1668, the church was consecrated and inaugurated. In July of the same year, work also began on fresco one of the two side chapels, dedicated to San Francesco di Sales. In 1670, the decorative apparatus of the second chapel on the left side, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, was then created, also financed by Francesco Maria Balbi. Finally, in 1687, the second chapel on the right side was painted, dedicated to Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

The decoration, although now interrupted, partly faded or destroyed, still assumes a unitary design, to this day legible. The unity and coherence of the iconographic program and its stylistic elements bear witness to the importance and richness of the painter Domenico Piola's work. The frescoed space of the chancel is framed by a large triumphal arch which divides the apse from the single nave of the church. At the centre of the triumphal arch is the coat of arms of the Balbi family, supported by two allegorical figures: Magnanimity, on the



Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 2.
Urban outline of via Balbi; in red colour the University buildings and the main emergencies around them (Albergo dei Poveri, Galata Museo del mare and Palazzi dei Rolli in via Garibaldi) (**Source:** elaboration S. Acacia, property of the authors)

left, and Piety, on the right. Furthermore, on the sides of the coat of arms are painted two female allegorical figures depicting, on the left side, the True Christian Religion and, on the right side, Goodness. These representations express Francesco Maria Balbi's programmatic intention to celebrate his own virtues as a patron and, at the same time, to exalt the Society of Jesus (Plate 2).

Beyond the triumphal arch, the space of the rectangular apse opens up, completely frescoed both on the side and back walls and on the vault. An important episode in the history of the spread of the Catholic faith is represented in the central "panel" of the vault: the meeting of St. Francis Saverio with the King of Bongo. The ideological message of the company of Jesus is therefore represented in the vault which makes the diffusion of the faith and conversions its main objective and essential purpose.

On the band immediately below the vault, the Doctors of the Church are represented, arranged in the centre of the side walls, and the four allegories of the Catholic Faith, Wisdom, Charity and Good Name, executed in monochrome on the back wall.

Work methodology. The stages of knowledge and interactions with conservation and reuse proposals

The two-year work carried out on the monumental building was conducted according to a study and research methodology developed and refined over the years within the activities of the School of Specialisation in Architectural Heritage and Landscape of the University of Genoa. It is a multidisciplinary and rigorous approach, which aims to train high-level professionals, up-to-date and aware of the multiple problems that interventions on existing buildings, especially of a monumental nature, involve (Franco *et al.*, 2020).

The first year of work focused on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences necessary to perform and check the main and most common non-destructive analysis and diagnosis techniques on the material consistency of the architectures and their behaviour over time. This involved the preparation of morphological analyses (rigorous longimetric, topographical, photogrammetric, laser scanner surveys, geometric controls and topological

Source(s): Figure created by author

Plate 2.
Photoscan survey, view of the apse and frescoes by Domenico Piola (**Source:** elaboration G. Garello, property of the authors)

investigations, treatment and analysis of digital images, computer modelling); documentary and archival investigations; chronological and archaeology analysis of architecture (archival investigations and historical research, dating methods, archaeometry, stratigraphy, excavation techniques); analysis of materials and construction techniques (chemical-physical examinations, mineralogical-petrographic and mechanical characterisation of materials, analysis of the phenomena of alteration and degradation of the material, of the defects and failures of the construction components and of the technological and hygienic-sanitary deficits, as well as the environmental conditions that affect their consistency, stability, functionality and durability); assessment of the spatial and morphological characteristics of the buildings, according to the potential for use and compatible reuse; structural analyses (study of the structural conception and behaviour of traditional and modern masonry building organisms, analysis of structural instability using non-destructive diagnostic techniques and *in situ* tests, consolidation techniques).

The goals of these interventions were the following: understanding of the architectural heritage, through the correlated study of its geometries, elements and construction materials, surfaces, structures, spaces and functions; understanding of the transformations that the building has undergone over time, relating the results of historical reconstructions from indirect sources and those of direct archaeological analysis; assessment of the state of conservation of the building, as a whole and in its individual parts and construction components, recognising phenomena of deterioration, damage, faults and deficits that affect materials, construction elements, systems and structures; identification of the causes and extent of damage, faults and deficits, assessing the vulnerability and level of exposure of the asset to the aggression of environmental factors and related risks; evaluation of the compatibility between the characteristics of the available spaces, the primary needs of conservation, the instance of regeneration and possible new uses; the definition of criteria and guidelines for establishing the planning of conservation, restoration and redevelopment interventions.

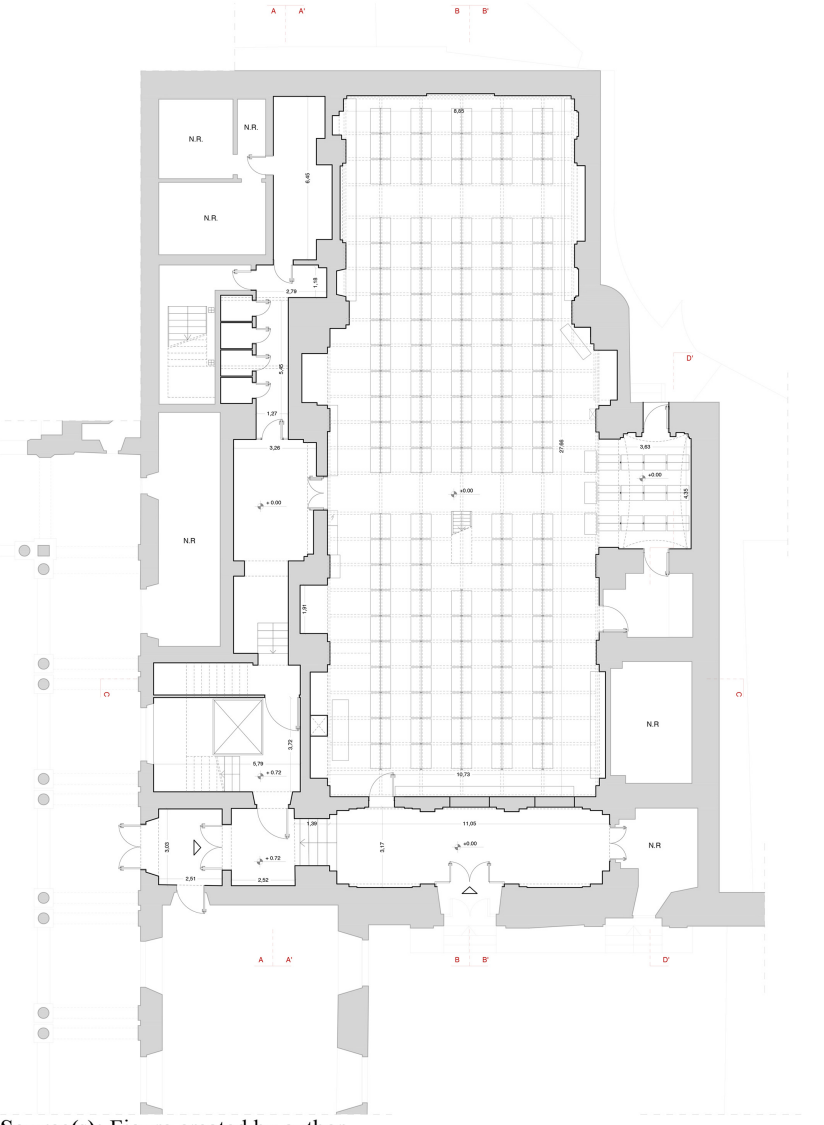
The survey

The complex of the former Jesuit College underwent an overall architectural survey, commissioned by the University of Genoa, in the 1980s (Lamera and Pigafetta, 1987). From recent checks, as part of the studies commissioned to the authors by the local Superintendency, a number of inconsistencies were revealed between the published renderings of that survey and the current state of the places and it was necessary to design a new survey campaign.

The new survey, performed during the teaching activities of the School of Specialisation in Architectural Heritage and Landscape in Genoa, involved both the areas of the former church (the narthex, the nave, the presbytery and the areas of the chapels and the overhanging side chancels) and those adjoining the former religious building, consisting of corridors, stairwell, classrooms, offices, archives and toilets. The methods adopted for performing of the survey varied according to the characteristics of the studied environments: longimetric, topographical, laser scanner, digital photogrammetry.

The longimetric method has made it possible to detect narrow and confined environments, occupied by material of various kinds, where the use of other methods would have been more complex or completely impracticable, less effective and would have required more execution time. The topographic survey operations were performed with the use of a total station. The first phase involved the construction of a topographical network at the level of the reading room, including support points and stations both inside the large room and in the corridors that give access to the side rooms, thus forming a closed polygonal. The reading room was also surveyed with laser scanner instruments. The acquired point cloud was managed with

the ReCap software, to obtain horizontal and vertical projections, then compared with the topographic survey. Rigorous digital photogrammetric surveying was used inside the left side chapel and apse, at the level of the former reading room of the University Library. Through the use of the AgisoftPhotoScan software it was possible to obtain a dense cloud of points and obtain from its elaboration a three-dimensional model of the environment, whose plan representation can be seen in figure (Figure 3).



Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 3.
Floor plan, restitution of the survey (**Source:** elaboration Angela Careddu, Andrea Fenialdi, Cinzia Frongia, Marianna Ghironi, Caterina Lavarello, Luca Marasso, Isabella Passeri, Ambra Pellini, Caterina Politi, Cristiana Tarantino, property of the authors)

The study of archival sources

Any reflection on its future uses, which could also involve significant modifications, cannot however ignore the short but intense history of the transformations undergone by the complex since the mid-nineteenth century which implicitly reveal the cultural attitudes of the actors who conceived and accomplished them.

In fact, in the already explored history of the construction of the Strada Balbi and the Jesuit Collegio (Di Biase, 1993), the roles and weight that the institutional and professional figures who worked on the former church in the 19th and 20th centuries have not been completely surveyed. The aim of the investigation is not only to complete a piece of urban and artistic history located in the wide frame of the city of Genoa, whose buildings have been recognised as world heritage of humanity, but also to correctly address the reuse project with necessary modifications, compatible with the preservation of the tangible and intangible values of the asset.

An in-depth investigation of archival sources has contributed to reconstructing a "micro-history", which lasted just under ten years (from the first project for the transformation of the complex into a university library, in 1926, to its inauguration, in 1935), through the voices, recorded in archival documents, of the main protagonists of the design and construction events in question, partly ignored or "overshadowed" by the "official" historiography published so far and dedicated to the projects for the former library.

The historical-critical report attached to the Declaration of cultural interest concerning the former church of the Collegio (drafted in accordance with the Code of Cultural Heritage) traces the planning and construction events of the former University Library and attributes, as other published sources, the project to the engineer Carlo Fuselli (1926, first draft) and its complete realisation to the architects Mario Labò and Giuseppe Crosa di Vergagni, two of the most represented figures of twentieth-century architecture in Genoa, expressions (especially regarding Mario Labò) of a new "rationalist" thought presented with great sensitivity in the historical and landscape context of the city (Labò, 1923). Also in the corresponding documents we find the attribution of the project to the architects Mario Labò and Giuseppe Crosa di Vergagni and, implicitly, a historical-artistic value is also attributed to the metal shelving of the book deposit below the reading room, considered the work of the master. In the documents it is stated that: "The quality of the design meant that the structure was respected over time. The reading room and storeroom are largely original". Furthermore, referring to the "critical success" of the work, the following passage is quoted from the article dedicated to it by the magazine "Casabella-Costruzioni", one of the main publicity vehicles of the time for the new way of thinking about architecture: "Undoubted expertise and controlled taste of Labò, demonstrating to be respectful and jealous custodian of the ancient and frankly modern" (Pica, 1943). In the short text of the sheet, therefore, the authorship of the project for the large reading room and the creation and furnishing of the underlying book depository cannot be distinguished from that of the furnishings of the reading room and the restoration of the façade of the former church, as instead can be inferred from reading of the original text of the cited article. That is, the role of Carlo Fuselli is not clearly identified with that of Mario Labò and Giuseppe Crosa di Vergagni and, as an induced consequence, an almost untouchable historical-artistic value is transferred, albeit in an "informal" way, to the book deposit, almost as an installation to be "frozen" even in the absence of its actual content.

We can and must therefore ask ourselves how much of the current layout of the former church and former library is due to Mario Labò and Giuseppe Crosa di Vergagni and how much to Carlo Fuselli, chief engineer of the University's Technical Office until 1931, the year of his death (Figure 4).

Although it is now clear that Labò's intervention was late and not particularly "incisive" on the general layout of the spaces and structures, the comparative analysis of archive documents already investigated and others completely unpublished (Franco and Musso,

Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 4.
Perspective view of the space in its current arrangement (**Source:** elaboration Andrea Fenialdi, Caterina Lavarello, Luca Marasso, property of the authors)

2022) has allowed us to shed new light on the various actors involved in the transformation of the former church into a library and on their respective roles as well as indirectly testifying to the cultural attitude that underpinned such radical and invasive design choices as to make the seventeenth-century sacred space almost completely unreadable. Carlo Fuselli's first project (1926), very respectful of the architectural decorative apparatus and the spatiality of the former church, it was – under consideration by the Director of the University Library – insufficient to contain the book deposit (Regia Università di Genova, 1926; Nurra, 1932; Celle, 1934). It was therefore necessary to draw up a second project (1928) which provided for the raising of the reinforced concrete floors to build the large reading room at a height incompatible with the decorative apparatus; the large metal shelving inserted in the deposit thus created, of the prefabricated type, was installed well before Mario Labò's entry into the architectural project, who was essentially asked for a contribution for the choice of furnishings; lastly, and perhaps even more interesting, it was the Superintendent himself, arch. Nebbia, that suggested heavily transformative interventions of what remained, surviving, of the seventeenth-century space in the new reading room, such as the "demolition of the pillars and the current cornice along the walls"*(a cornice which, in a handwritten note added to the typewritten copy, is defined as "non-original")*. "These architectural elements are ancient; but detached as they are from the underlying parts, they no longer have any proportional relationship with the residual environment which, stripped of this ornamental excess, will be more harmonious in only the geometric shapes. It should be added that, modelled to be seen from the floor of the church, i.e. from over 15 metres away, these ornaments are of too summary and coarse modelling to be appreciated up close" (Archivio S.A.P.P.). In this regard, Superintendent Nebbia prescribed a "painting of the walls and vault with a clear and calm uniform tone, aimed only at enhancing the dazzling beauty of the frescoes". Other space, in the documents cited, is given to the methods of restoration of the

"admirable frescoes by Piola, which are some of the most remarkable of all Genoese painting", while for the façade of the church, "after general plastering of the architectural and decorative parts of it will be reassembled integrally in the first aspect on the original structure, taking up the mouldings, the projections, the decorations, etc. according to the evident traces and the most reliable graphic memories" (Plate 3).

The new interpretation of the recent history of the former Church, made possible following the finding of new documentation and a cross-reading, has reduced the authorial value of the book deposit, making it possible to agree on a less conservative approach and a greater focus on making the seventeenth-century space legible.

The analysis of the state of conservation and the phenomena of degradation in progress

Due to the prolonged abandonment, the consequent lack of maintenance and of constant cleaning, the building is affected in every part by widespread surface deposits, some solid, some fragmented, with different intensities from area to area, as well as by accumulations of debris and household goods discarded in many environments.

The conditions of abandonment have also negatively affected the system of external fixtures which present localised breakages in the glass, rotting of the wooden parts and oxidation of the metal ones and widespread inefficiencies and malfunctions (blockage of movement and closing/opening elements). As a result, the direct and indirect infiltrations have caused localised phenomena of saline efflorescence, fragmentation and pulverisation of the superficial and deep layers of the internal plasters. On the walls partially or totally decorated with wall paintings, mostly in fresco but with dry applications, this has led to the almost total disappearance of the relevant seventeenth-century decorative elements. The phenomenon is particularly accentuated in the back wall of the apse, in the former reading room, due to the breakage and malfunctioning of the gutters of the University building behind it and at a shaft detached from the neighbouring buildings (Balbi 1) which constitutes a source of anomalous concentration of humidity which, in turn, penetrates and rises in the walls of the former church.

Inefficiency and breakage or lack of fixtures also make it possible for birds to enter and the consequent accumulation of guano or carcasses, compromising the internal hygiene and

Source(s): Figure created by author

Plate 3.
View of the reading room of the university library, with the furniture chosen by Mario Labò, and the frescoed abse at the time of the inauguration (**Source:** Archivio Fotografico del Comune di Genova, Fondo Cresta)

health conditions, especially in the service rooms adjacent to the reading room towards the roof terrace of the underlying chapels, to the east and in the fire escape.

The lack of use also resulted in the abandonment of each system. The lack of air conditioning and ventilation had negative consequences on the internal microclimate of the reading room, with consequent damage to the frescoes in the apse area, both on the former nave, now no longer used as a book deposit but still occupied by the metal shelves that contained it, creating particularly unhealthy and unfavourable conditions for the conservation of the decorative elements still present. Amongst these, first of all, the frescoes on the walls of the apse under the large reinforced concrete floor that divides the church horizontally, not only those in the lateral chancels but also the stuccoes of the top cornice and its painted but faded frieze.

Partial results of direct investigations: risks, vulnerability and fragility, technological, constructive and functional deficits

From the studies carried out, as a first and immediate result, a number of situations of fragility and the correlated risk factors for the future of the former church are revealed, on which to intervene with works of "extreme urgency" which can be summarised as follows:

(1) Inefficiency of rainwater outflow systems from roofs and its disposal (overflow of gutter channels with insufficient section, partial blockages, breakages, etc.), especially in the parts in contact with the adjacent building of the University of Genoa (via Balbi 5), with which there is also a complex situation of spatial and functional "interference" which in turn requires a clear future solution in management terms.

(2) Inefficiency of the fixture system and consequent risk of rainwater penetrating into the building. For example, one of the roof skylights was damaged by the intense meteoric phenomena of last year and caused rainwater to percolate into the former reading room. Fortunately, the problem has now been resolved by the Superintendency with prompt emergency intervention. However, a similar situation could occur again in the future, given the absence of any ordinary maintenance caused by the abandonment of the building.

(3) Total obsolescence of the systems and the need to remove the relative ducts and distribution networks, pending new installations, to be designed in relation to future uses, in compliance with the relevant current legislation.

(4) Inadequacy and non-compliance with the rules of the current system of accessibility and outflow of users in safe conditions, which will need to be radically rethought in relation to the new possible uses.

The surveys, analyses (also in the laboratory) and diagnoses developed by the School of Specialisation have consequently highlighted the need to perform as soon as possible, and potentially in successive phases in relation to the remaining overall design choices on the future use of the building, the interventions summarised below (Figure 5).

Indications for the enhancement, conservation and reuse of the complex

All the interventions envisaged in the future on the former University Library must be aimed at ensuring the rigorous conservation and restoration, where necessary, of its decorative and architectural constructive components as well as the compatible enhancement and full – or as wide as possible – accessibility and enhancement, in compliance with the provisions of the Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code (Italian Legislative Decree 42/2004 and subsequent amendments).

Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 5.
Synoptic table of interventions to be carried out as a matter of urgency to halt the causes of deterioration due to stormwater infiltration (**Source:** elaboration Angela Careddu, Andrea Fenialdi, Cinzia Frongia, property of the authors)

The lengthy research work coordinated by the authors concluded with some design explorations, useful for the Superintendency to entrust a group of external professionals actually in charge of the development of the design. The design explorations concerned the reuse of the spaces, with architectural and functional interventions, including solutions to problems of accessibility and usability, as well as conservation and restoration work on the decorative apparatus, described in detail in the following paragraphs through specific paragraphs.

The choice of a new compatible use

The first objective of the preservation, reuse and valorisation project is to reintegrate the former University Library into the context of Via Balbi, to restore a social and cultural fulcrum within the urban fabric, enhancing the main entrance on the square. This objective is pursued with the choice of a new function of a public nature that allows different possibilities of use.

The former church of Saints Gerolamo and Francesco Saverio is a state property, once granted for use to the University Library of Genoa, then to the Ministry of Culture. The current condition of non-use therefore constitutes an element of dutiful reflection/action by the Ministry through its peripheral bodies. Moreover, the mixture of spaces and functions that the former church has with the neighbouring monumental complex of the former Jesuit college, i.e. with the University of Genoa, is evident. This requires, in perspective, at least the search for possible agreements and synergies for the identification of the most appropriate and compatible future uses with the protection of the characters and values of the entire complex including the church, as well as for the future management of these spaces and facilities.

The strategic proximity between the offices of the two institutions (local offices of the Ministry of Culture and University) therefore leads us to hypothesise a future of the complex hinged on functions that are capable of maximising the values (research, training, protection, conservation and use) that characterise both. This alliance could also be extended to other institutional subjects (Municipality, Region, Palazzo Ducale Foundation) to ensure that, rather than a "black hole", the former Jesuit church becomes a new pole of attraction and revitalisation of the system of via Balbi. A first intention will be to reintegrate the former University Library in the context of the street, to repair a fulcrum of social and cultural reference within the urban fabric, enhancing the main entrance on the square.

In agreement with the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape of the metropolitan city of Genoa and with the Regional Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, the entire building, with the exception of the ground floor, will be used to house the Library of the Superintendency itself and other Institutes of the Ministry of Culture, with all the functions connected to it (warehouses, offices, consultation rooms, services). The ground floor, used as a conference/exhibition hall, will instead also be useable by the external public, on the occasion of events such as conferences, conventions, concerts and exhibitions, to name but a few. The functions therefore open up to a wider and more diversified user base, while ensuring that there is no interference between the different uses and users. In this way, a compatible adaptive reuse of the different phases of the complex is proposed.

The volumes of the new library will be housed in a portion of the existing metal shelving; in fact, it is planned to conserve an "intact" portion of the existing metal shelving (currently occupying the entire church hall under the large attic) as an important testimony of a historical phase of the building.

The size of the shelving to be preserved and reused is finalised according to the needs of the new library repository to be installed (Antonio Morassi Arts Library 450 ml, Armando Dillon Architecture Library 290 ml, – Luigi Bernabò Brea Archaeological Library 370 ml, IISL Library 38 ml) for a total of 1,148 ml.

Maintaining five modules of the existing shelving on each floor and also using the space above the atrium (third floor) and the first side chapel on the right (first and second floors) for book storage would provide 1,398 ml of shelving, which is already surplus to requirements.

Future accessibility

Accessibility represents an ethical and civilisational objective, as well as giving meaning and significance to every intervention on assets and places of cultural interest for the benefit of present and future generations. This objective must and can always be pursued in compliance with the values and characteristics for which the property has been legally declared to be of public interest and, even more so, to guarantee its best enjoyment by the communities to which it belongs.

The demolition or overcoming of the architectural barriers currently present in the architectural complex may be required, in particular the execution of a set of interventions and works which, by their nature, could involve the sacrifice or transformation of some parts attributable to its construction phase or to its subsequent restorations and adjustments that have taken place over time.

The reuse project must in particular seek to:

(1) Minimise the transformations necessary for the installation of the mechanical reascent system.

(2) Limit the points of contact between new structures/elements and existing ones to the bare minimum, if necessary for structural and functional reasons.

(3) Allow a potential reversibility-removability of the new elements inserted in the existing spaces and structures.

(4) Reduce the visual impact of new structures and new elements to preserve the unity of the spaces, their physical consistency, their architectural characteristics and the continuity of internal and external views.

(5) Restore the spatial legibility of the building, its architectural values and its complex historical stratifications which constitute a singular and irreproducible testimonial palimpsest for the history of Genoa.

Consequently, the accessibility system requires:

(1) Installation of an internal ramp in the side rooms to ensure accessibility to all the rooms in the central space of the ground floor hall.

(2) Interventions on the existing external paving to eliminate or mitigate as far as possible the unevenness and discontinuities currently present.

(3) The creation of new accessible toilet facilities on the floors, where permitted by the character of the existing spaces and in compliance with their protected values.

(4) The adaptation of existing stairs with the installation of handrails on both sides, to ensure their usability/safety for a wider range of users.

(5) Adaptation of the use of the doors to ensure their usability/security to a wider range of users.

(6) Overcoming unevenness through the construction of ramps and lifts/passenger lifts.

(7) Installation of tactile/3D model maps for use of the internal spaces and for identification of the historical and artistic elements preserved in the complex.

(8) Creation of internal tactile walking surface indicator paths, to make the building useable also by persons with visual impairments.

(9) Installation of suitable magnetic induction systems, for use of the conference rooms by persons with hearing disabilities.

Indications for architectural and functional design: considerations on lost spatiality

The interventions carried out in the thirties of the twentieth century, to make the former church capable of hosting the University Library of Genoa with its more than 650,000 volumes, inevitably distorted its internal spatiality and obliterated and partially damaged the internal decorative apparatus. The spatial reading of the former Jesuit church is today much compromised: the visitor, entering the building, is unable to perceive and understand the space in which they find themselves. Thus, from the large unitary space of the church, the large reading room above the attic and the "technological machine" of the deposits, in the underlying part, were "derived".

As inevitable consequences of the construction of the new floor, we can summarily highlight that:

(1) The important cycle of frescoes in the apse has since then been irreparably broken into two parts, losing its unity and perceptible meaning;

(2) The frescoes of the vault have since remained visible from unusual proximity only for those persons who frequent the reading room;

(3) The lower walls, which are in turn frescoed, have since then been effectively invisible to most people and, only at times, barely intuitive, because they are hidden amongst the books collected on the shelves, exclusively for those persons assigned to distribute the volumes;

(4) Parts of the large moulded stucco cornice, with dentils, cherubs, decorations with plant shoots and rosettes were destroyed to allow the main beams of the new attic to be housed in the perimeter walls;

(5) The high painted frieze of the cornice, decorated with floral motifs, has been completely whitewashed with "lime milk" (but it survives under this surface layer and its fate will have to be decided);

(6) The need to anchor the large "technological machine" of the shelves of the book deposits has caused further focused damage to the perimeter wall structures of the former church;

(7) The construction, over time, of various systems (air treatment, lighting, fire extinguishing, freight elevators, etc.) has led to widespread tampering with the existing surfaces, including decorated ones, and with the walls themselves (think of one of the side chancels with frescoed vaults knocked down to install the upright columns of the air treatment system).

The attempt to restore, at least in part, an internal visual unity of the spaces will therefore be fundamental in order to allow for a complete and more immediate understanding. At the same time, both the shelving and the reinforced concrete floor, as historical evidence of the various phases of use of the building, constitute a remarkable example of engineering and architecture from the 1930s, which must be preserved, at least in part, as an important testimony of a historical phase of the building. The possibility of creating openings in the reinforced concrete floor will therefore have to be further verified, preserving an adequate portion of the existing floor, following a structural intervention to consolidate the beams affected by partial cutting, which allow on the one hand proposing of the original points of view of the frescoes, from the ground floor, and which, on the other, guarantee better natural lighting towards the lower rooms. In this way it will also be possible to enjoy the vision of the frescoes from a close-up position (as is currently the case), thanks to a walkway along the walls of the apse at the level of the former hall.

It is planned to preserve an "intact" portion of the existing metal shelving, as an important testimony of a historical phase of the building. The pre-design choice was oriented towards maintaining a portion leaning against the counter-façade of the former church to restore, as far as possible, the spatiality of the hall towards the apse. In this way, any problems of a static-structural nature can also be resolved more easily, allowing this solution to keep the shelving anchored on three sides to the walls of the former church.

On the side facing the apse, it is proposed to keep a clear and continuous vertical section of the shelving, for all its levels. In this hypothesis, the final design solution, to be defined in terms of detail at the final and executive design level, would make it possible to have a complete view of the entire functioning of the machine at the various levels, to make it useable and viable again as a book deposit or for another compatible use. Furthermore, this solution will make it possible to free up the space in front of the apse and restore visibility to its decorations, from the level of the entrance floor to the former church.

A specific project must be developed for the disassembly of the shelving, which verifies the constructive and structural aspects in detail, in order to guarantee the stability of the parts to be kept, together with their functionality, and the removal of the remaining modules, investigating the possible operational methods, which must take into account the particular

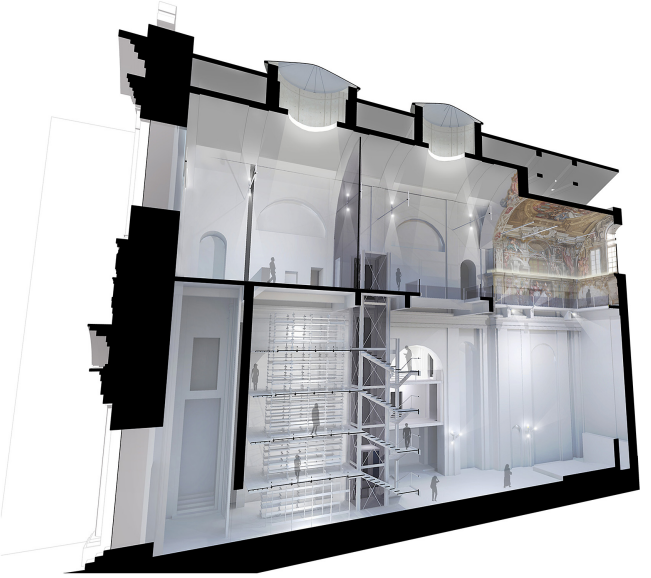
context in which it will operate and must be aimed at maintaining the greatest possible integrity.

In the back wall of the apse, then, there is still the recess that housed the ancient altarpiece and which could house a high-resolution reproduction of it (where still traceable), or even a work of contemporary art, to give new meaning to the entire painted apparatus, with fake Corinthian columns, which framed it. Also to be evaluated is the possibility/opportunity of making further "surgical cuts" in the attic, at the large skylights created over the reading room, with post-war interventions, to allow the descent of natural light also to the lower levels.

Regarding the complex "technological machine" of the deposits, built with the horizontal and vertical reiteration of the basic shelf module created by the Lips-Vago company, the hypothesis of its overall lightning was evaluated, to obtain spaces for the new hypothesised uses and to free up, at least in part, the original space of the church and the original visuals of its decorative elements. This must be associated with the creation of new vertical connection systems (stairs, lifts, freight elevators) between the surviving levels of use amongst the existing ones of the "technological machine" of the former book deposits, or completely new ones, linked to the new conceivable uses of the complex, also necessary for safety and accessibility reasons. Also needed is the design of new building works necessary to reform the existing hygienic and technological services, a review of the escape routes in relation to new uses and the design of new technological systems (heating, air conditioning, air treatment, cooling, vertical ascents, electricity, lighting, etc.) in relation to new uses and in compliance with the pre-eminent conservation/enhancement needs of the asset (Figure 6).

The reuse pre-project envisages a new lift system to serve the preserved portion of shelving, as the now existing vertical connection is missing, located in the centre of the former classroom and unusable in safety conditions, based on the previously described hypotheses.

The design choice of the new "staircase" and its positioning, in investigating the spatial, architectural and technical relationships of the new element with the preserved portion of



Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 6.
Perspective view of the sacred space in the design configuration. The considerable reduction of the book deposit and the lightening of the large reinforced concrete slab make it possible to see the frescoes even on the ground floor (**Source:** elaboration Andrea Fenialdi, Caterina Lavarello, Luca Marasso, property of the authors)

shelving and, therefore, the possibility of its insertion inside or outside of it, will have to find architectural constructive solutions that can solve and combine the functional and safety needs with the formal ones, given the importance that this element will assume in relation to the space in front.

The use of constructive solutions for this new element, of a metallic nature, which can be assembled "dry" and self-supporting, would make it possible to reduce its visual and structural impact, giving transparency and lightness and would make it easily removable if required or in the event of change of use of the artefact. The compositional language must be recognisable and must communicate with the surroundings, continuing, where possible, the alignments and dimensional characteristics.

To obtain greater spatial, functional and perceptive permeability between the large internal volumes of the building, creating as far as possible a new unity or overall coherence and at the same time allowing greater natural lighting to the lower levels of the portion of the "metallic machine" preserved, the possibility of creating two openings inside the reinforced concrete slab that supports the floor of the former reading room of the University Library will be investigated. As already highlighted, in addition to the pre-design studies already elaborated and accounted for in the relative report attached to the Technical Data Sheet, appropriate constructive, technological and structural investigations must be provided to verify the feasibility of such partial demolitions (Figure 7).

Preventive and provisional interventions of utmost urgency

Even before the identification of possible future interventions related to the reuse of the complex, the need arose to identify, quantify and program (by the Superintendency) highly urgent interventions to halt evident phenomena of degradation, thereby hopefully resolving the causes. This is a first and significant result of the analytical and study activities, which anticipates the identification of correct technical proposals and solutions, culturally aware and consistent with the regulations in force on the subject, with the different and often contradictory requirements for protection, conservation, use, environmental sustainability, improvement of energy and seismic behaviour, regeneration and future management of the property. These are summarised in the following points:

(1) Repair of faults in valleys, gutters and downspouts.

(2) Closure of all discontinuities and gaps in the external wall surfaces (also overlooking shafts and internal branches between buildings of the complex and with

Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 7.
Render of the new arrangement of the public space around the apse, after the lightening in the huge concrete slab inserted in the 1930s (**Source:** elaboration Caterina Politi, property of the authors)

neighbouring ones) from which rainwater can penetrate within the walls themselves and into the internal spaces of the former church, as well as the numerous birds that settle above all in the attic spaces and in other gaps causing intolerable hygienic situations with their droppings.

(3) Repair and recovery of the existing external and internal fixtures (with limited replacements, only if unavoidable), including the large skylights on the roof.

(4) Redevelopment of the shafts that flank the former church, ensuring the correct regulation and the effective removal of rainwater, also coming from the rainwater that often stagnates on their bottom.

(5) Removal of outdated, obsolescent, no longer compliant network system elements and linked to ceased and unconfirmable uses (ascending columns and horizontal distribution channels of the treated air, electrical cable networks, fire extinguishing system pipes to sprinklers, with attached anchors, brackets, pins and support elements, etc.).

(6) The removal of incongruous elements potentially capable of triggering further degradation phenomena (nails, cables, pipes, patches of cement mortar incompatible with the masonry supports and neighbouring areas, etc.).

These works will naturally have to be designed and performed in a coordinated manner (also as executive phases) with the conservation/restoration interventions of the superficial decorative apparatuses and with the creation of any new works related to the future uses of the former church and annexed premises.

Conservation and restoration of decorative elements

The restoration of the decorated surfaces of the former Church must be of a conservative nature and must ensure the permanence of the stratigraphic signs and traces that characterise the building in its general configuration, as evidence of its various past uses, first as a "church" and after as a "library".

The operational methodology of the intervention must be based on the principle of conservation, working first of all for the elimination of the causes of deterioration described above, to then identify the intervention techniques applicable to the present deterioration phenomena. The choice of the intervention techniques must envisage the use of materials that are compatible with the existing ones and which can guarantee the "retractability" of the surfaces.

The back wall of the apse is affected by vast losses of painted figurative parts, following falling off of the layers that compose the fresco. The phenomena of degradation still in progress show, in any case, the stratification of the finish necessary for the creation of a frescoed wall.

The design approach to the treatment of the "lacune" will in any case need to preserve the current state, guaranteeing the conservation of all the materials that compose the various layers that emerge to be seen, albeit mitigating their impact on the overall perception of the decorated parts. The parts of a fresco that are not usually visible, for example the preparatory drawing, the engraved paths, the sinopia, etc. are, in fact, important evidence of the techniques and process of creating the fresco itself. With the aim of conserving the image of the work of art and of the preparatory techniques, the intervention will therefore have to guarantee the conservation of the current state.

The presence of frescoes on the walls below the large reinforced concrete attic is concealed by layers of different textures and various covering effects. Along the band that is interposed between the mouldings on the top floor of the shelving, as well as on almost the entire height

of the apse wall, is in fact visible a pale colour which suggests the presence of other decorations. During the detail design phase, the possibility of removing these whitewashes must be investigated and explored on the basis of the results of the diagnostic and fact-finding investigations which will be able to restore their state of conservation and their extension.

Part of the band decorated with floral and plant-based motifs, within the cornice under the large slab of the reading room, characterised by whitewashing, and a good part of the one above, consisting of mouldings and stuccoes in relief, are affected by the widespread presence of continuous stains of blue colour deriving in all probability from leaks of the coolant liquids of the ventilation system currently present but destined to be removed. A more precise identification of the compound must precede the identification of the suitable solvent for removal of the stains.

The entire complex is also occupied by elements that are attributable to the electrical systems and numerous ventilation channels whose positioning has been the cause of many demolitions and vast destructions of portions of masonry, vaults and decorative elements; to date, the systems are oversized and incompatible with the lines of the new project and, consequently, it will be necessary to proceed with their removal and only then act on the surfaces to repair the damage caused by their installation (Plate 4).

Regarding the protruding moulded cornice, with corbels depicting cherubs, alternating with stucco elements with floral decorations: the cornice and numerous decorative elements are currently in an advanced state of deterioration due to the construction of the reinforced concrete slab and the presence of the ducts of the previous ventilation system. In summary, most of the deterioration on the modelled part is due to the conversion project of the former

Source(s): Figure created by author

Plate 4.
View of the huge plant system linked to the university library (**Source:** photo G. Franco, 2019)

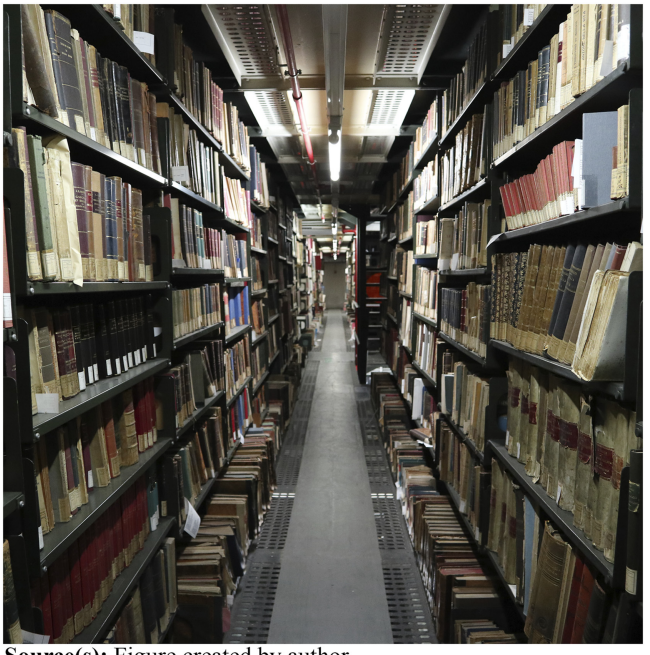
church into a university library which effectively mutilated, in several parts, all of these elements.

The main degradations are however attributable to the presence of saline efflorescence due to the construction of the reinforced concrete slab, which changed the climatic conditions of the architectural complex, the corrosion of the support irons of the stucco, causing them to fall and the insertion of "foreign" bodies" which resulted in cuts and losses of much historical material.

The objectives of the intervention must be aimed mainly at the removal of incongruous and incompatible material, such as the sheet metal ducts and the removal of part of the reinforced concrete slab which will also serve to re-establish correct microclimatic conditions inside the underlying hall of the former church. In any case, the necessary restoration interventions must be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in relation to the type and state of progress of the current deterioration.

In relation to the deficiencies existing in the stucco decoration parts, two different conditions can in any case already be identified: in the first case, there is a loss of original material and the consequent exposure of the secondary iron supports while, in the second case, the stucco element, detached from its support, is still found preserved *in situ*. In the first case it will be necessary to intervene first of all with preliminary operations of cleaning the rods and integration of the missing stucco layer, evaluating to which finishing level to push these additions in figurative terms.

The cuts due to the passage of the ventilation systems should be treated with the integration of the missing part of the masonry, through an operation of simplification of the existing geometric lines, to mend the cut and restore continuity to the decorative apparatus, always ensuring the recognition of the new construction works (Plate 5).



Source(s): Figure created by author

Plate 5.
View of the book depository before the move, 2019 (**Source:** photo G. Franco)

Plant equipment

The building must be equipped with new systems for air treatment (where necessary) and for heating/cooling of the internal environments.

As it is a cultural asset subject to protection pursuant to art. 10 paragraph 1 of Italian Legislative Decree 42/2004, the project to improve the energy performance of the building may derogate from the obligations and specific minimum requirements.

The new plant equipment is necessary, first of all, to ensure the conservation of the decorations and frescoes in the apse, seriously degraded due to the internal microclimatic conditions but also to make the existing spaces actually useable and liveable by the public, in view of their re-functionalisation.

The thermo-hygrometric conditions for the conservation of wall paintings and the thermal comfort of people.

(1) The volumes of the nave are very large but the sedentary activities hypothesised there are concentrated solely on the ground floor. Consequently, the terminals of the cooling/heating and air treatment systems will be concentrated in the lower part of the volume.

(2) All the machines and plant terminals must be equipped with automatic and autonomous regulation and in every room there must be probes to control the thermo-hygrometric and microclimatic conditions.

(3) In any case, the systems must be designed considering the different functions of the complex, so that the spaces can also be used in sectioned ways and at different times.

Machines, distribution networks and terminals must be designed so that they can be inserted within the spaces, respecting the historical-architectural value and the multilayered material consistency of the architectural complex.

These elements must, as much as possible, be hidden from view or integrated into external furnishing elements, in any case avoiding further the destruction and removal of existing architectural, constructive and formal elements.

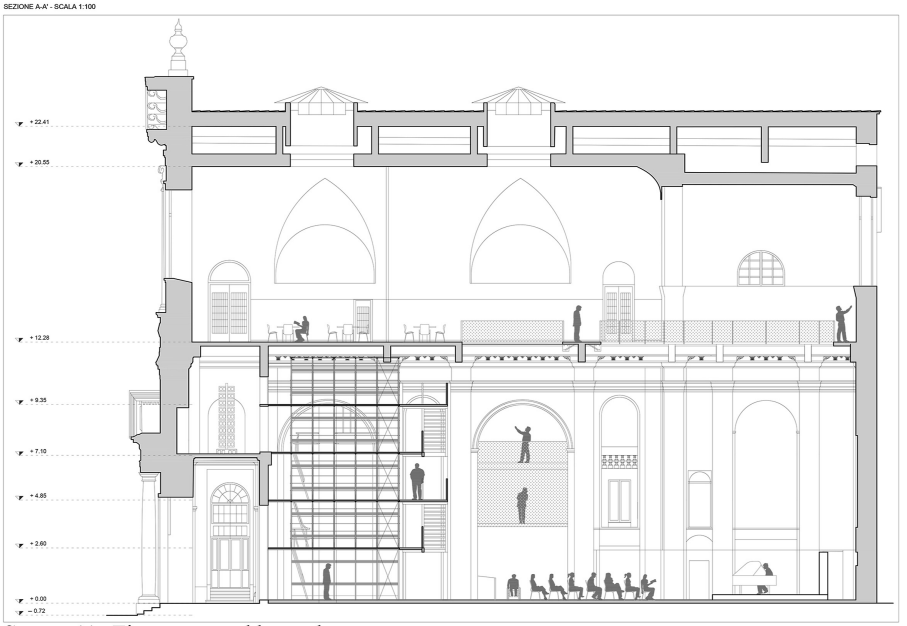
Conclusions and new challenges

The long preparatory work aimed at returning a hidden asset to the community is an opportunity to open the debate on conservation, restoration and the new challenges involved.

The challenge now seems to have shifted to the conflict between reasons for conservation and the need or aspirations for regeneration. The relationship between the two polarities is always delicate and sometimes very conflicting, so that they do not always find clear and autonomous ideal and operational expressions. The correspondence between the ends and the means used to satisfy their requests is not always as strong and as crystalline as we would like them to be. It can thus be the case that extreme and courageous defences of a conservative nature are implemented with deep gradients of transformation of the existing structure, due to the many interpretations that have been offered of restoration in the course of history, even recent ones. Conversely, an action of an openly transformative nature which not only modifies the existing – as does the consolidation of crumbled plaster, to make it firm and durable again – but which deliberately produces new "forms" (transforming the existing), can sometimes allow or help the maximum conservation of the artefact. It all depends, in both cases, on how much it actually impacts on its body. In fact, restoration, despite its many forms, has always expressed a particular attention, indeed an actual debt, towards the material stratified in the course of past history (of all histories!). Matter is not a fetish in itself, nor does it represent the only value, meaning or interest of the artefact inherited from the past. However, memories, symbolic values, traces of lives, skills or rituals and everything

immaterial that can be linked to it (already known or yet to be discovered), will be able to survive our actions only if they do not change their physical and formal consistency more than is strictly necessary to ensure their stability and durability (Figures 8 and 9).

The fundamental difference, after all, is that between a consideration of the building (or of the heritage as a whole) as the real "raison d'être" of the intervention, the real protagonist of the action of protection/conservation/restoration, on the one hand, and its assumption as a



Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 8. Proposal to reduce the metal shelving that can be used as a book depository so that the ancient sacred space can once again be perceived and enjoyed – longitudinal section (elaboration Andrea Fenialdi, Caterina Lavarello, Luca Marasso, property of the authors)

Source(s): Figure created by author

Figure 9. View of the new configuration of the space, from the apse, once a large part of the metal shelving has been dismantled. The new staircase, necessary to connect the remaining book depository, completes the 'stage machine' (elaboration Andrea Fenialdi, Caterina Lavarello, Luca Marasso, property of the authors)

simple opportunity for self-affirmation, on the other. The perennial conflict between rigour (of research, analysis, diagnosis, on the origins and conditions of the artefact) and creativity (of design solutions), which must always exist, to avoid the traps of a respect translated into comforting reproduction of lost or damaged forms, can perhaps only be overcome by the humility of the intervention. After our passage, as John Ruskin and William Morris denounced, the monument has yet to speak of the worlds of which it is a surviving trace and also of our present, of our will and ability to care for the legacy of the past kept alive in our world, more than of the desires or abilities of individual protagonists (politicians, administrators, planners, builders, etc.).

Perhaps, for this reason, we need to be partly out of step with the times we live in order to be able to perceive the related risks and contradictions, rather than uncritically undergoing the ensuing development. Only in this way will we be able to say that we are truly contemporary and, therefore, capable of contributing to the future. The idea of contemporaneity suggested by Giorgio Agamben can therefore also be valid for our monuments, landscapes and cultural heritage: "Only those who do not let themselves be blinded by the lights of the century can be said to be contemporary and manage to see in them the part of the shadow, their intimate darkness [. . .]. Contemporary is he who receives full face the bundle of darkness that comes from his time" (Agamben, 2008, pp. 14–15). Not being blinded by the lights of the present, such as not to conform to its transient "fashion", being somehow "asynchronous" with respect to what everyone thinks the contemporary world is today, perhaps also allows us to see its limits and not to sacrifice what does not belong to us completely or forever.

References

Agamben, G. (2008), *Che cos'è il contemporaneo?*, Nottetempo, Roma.

Alizeri, F. (1875), *Guida Illustrativa Del Cittadino e Del Forestiero per La Città Di Genova e Sue Adiacenze*, Forni editore, Bologna.

Celle, M. (1934), "La Biblioteca Universitaria e La Sua Nuova Sede", *Genova - Rivista Municipale*, No. 8, pp. 661-668.

Di Biase, C. (1993), *Strada Balbi a Genova: residenza aristocratica e città*, Sagep, Genova.

Franco, G. and Musso, S.F. (2022), "I Santi Girolamo e Francesco Saverio: da ex chiesa dei Gesuiti a Biblioteca della Regia Università di Genova (1926-1935)", in Stagno, L. and Sanguineti, D. (Eds), *Il Tempio delle Arti*, Sagep Editore, Genova.

Franco, G., Musso, S.F. and Napoleone, L. (2020), *The School of Specialisation in Architectural Heritage and Landscape of Genoa. Summary of an Experience*, Genova University Press, Genova.

Giovannoni, G. (1945), *Restauro dei monumenti*, Cremonese, Roma.

Labò, M. (1923), "Il Palazzo dell'Università", *L'Università di Genova*, Genova, pp. 61-82.

Lamera, F. and Pigafetta, G. (1987), (Eds), *Il Palazzo dell'Università di Genova: il Collegio dei Gesuiti nella strada dei Balbi*, Università degli Studi di Genova, Genova.

Nurra, P. (1932), "Accademie e Biblioteche d'Italia - La Nuova Biblioteca Universitaria Di Genova", *Genova-Rivista Municipale*, Genova, pp. 611-612.

Pica, A. (1943), "L'architettura Antica e Noi", *Casabella Costruzioni*, No. 182, p. 26.

Pro Patria (1915), "Casa Del Soldato", *Genova-Rivista Municipale*, pp. 1-42.

Regia Università di Genova (1926), *Nuova Biblioteca Universitaria. Il progetto Moresco – Fuselli – Nurra. Relazione*, S.I.A.G. Stabilimenti Italiani Arti Grafiche, Genova.

Ricoeur, P. (2000), *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Èditions de Seuil, Paris.

Riegl, A. (1903), *Der Moderne Denkmalkultus*, Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung, Wien-Leipzig.

Further reading

Fiorani, D., Kealy, L. and Musso, S.F. (2017), (Eds), *Conservation-Adaptationì. Keeping Alive the Spirit of the Place. Adaptive Reuse of Heritage with Symbolic Value*, EAAE, Hasselt.

Archives

Archivio Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova (A.B.U.G.)
Archivi di Architettura, Biblioteca della Scuola Politecnica, SBA, Fondo Carlo Fuselli
Archivio Fotografico del Comune di Genova
Archivio di Stato del Comune di Genova (A.S.)
Archivio Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio (A.S.A.B.A.P.).
Archivio Storico del Comune di Genova (A.S.C.G.), Fondo Belle Arti.
Archivio Società Porcheddu Ing. G.A., Archivio dei lavori eseguiti, cartella 1927, cartella 1929–30-31, Genova.
Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (A.R.S.I.)

About the authors

Stefano Francesco Musso, architect, PhD and full professor of Restoration, has been Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Genoa and is Director of its School of Specialization for Architectural Heritage and Landscape. He is past President of EAAE-European Association for Architectural Education and coordinator of its Network on Conservation and has been President of SIRA-Italian Society for Architectural Restoration. He has been visiting professor in many foreign universities and thought in training courses for UNESCO (Albania, Israel) and chaired the ICOMOS-European Commission Expert Group "*Cherishing heritage: developing quality principles for interventions on cultural heritage*. He is author of Restoration projects and of 300 scientific publications in Italy and abroad.

Giovanna Franco, architect, PhD and full professor of Technology of Architecture, has been Director of the School of Specialization for Architectural Heritage and Landscape and Head of the Master Degree's Programme in Architecture. Her field of interest is the built heritage, traditional and Modern (20th century architecture), tools and methods for investigation, mainly for the constructive point of view and ways of intervention. She is author of 200 scientific publications in Italy and abroad. Giovanna Franco is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: giovanna.franco@unige.it