

THE ARCHIVE SPEAKS VOLUMES

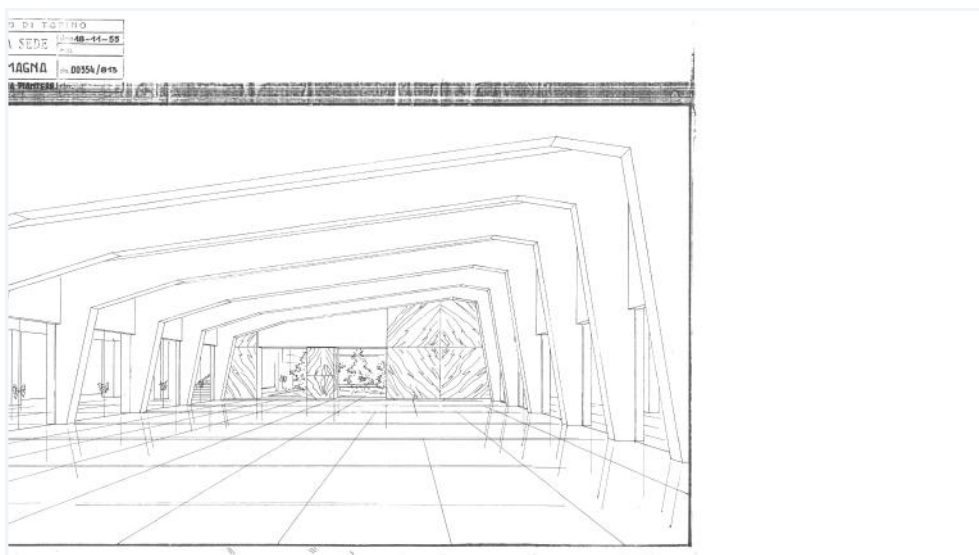
THE POLYTECHNIC OF TURIN

An exciting history of scientific and humanistic knowledge

The gurgling of the river ripples through the valley where the Valentino Castle sleeps, an imposing palace with two towers joined by porticoes and pavilions rising up toward Turin.

Inside, a bearded 32-year-old scans the rooms, the halls, the galleries, the courtyard, and the more he studies them, the more he becomes convinced that that river villa located on the left side of the Po and transformed into a maison de plaisance by Christina of France, is the right venue to house the newly established School of Application for Engineers.

His name is Quintino Sella, a hydraulics engineer, entrepreneur, lecturer and expert in mineralogy, as well as a member of the Superior Council of Public Education and one of the main proponents of the 1859 Casati Law for the reorganization of university studies, which also provides for the establishment of schools for engineers. The legislation names two of them, Turin and Milan: the first is called Regia Scuola di Applicazione, the second Regio Istituto Tecnico Superiore.



It is a revolution of knowledge, which can initiate a new ruling class for the budding growth of a unified Italy.

Quintino writes an initial letter pleading the case for the Valentino which goes unanswered, and when he is appointed deputy in March 1860, he threatens to choose another city that will welcome future engineers.

For a moment there, while waiting for the “right” answer, the city of Turin risked not getting to be the “city of science” and having as their own that engineering art which Aristotle considers a supernatural means granted to Man to overcome natural difficulties and to assert his kingship in the earthly world.

But it's the matter of a second. Sella's requests are granted, and the Turin School of Application for Engineers opens its doors in November 1860 at a temporary location, pending the fine-tuning of the prestigious castle.

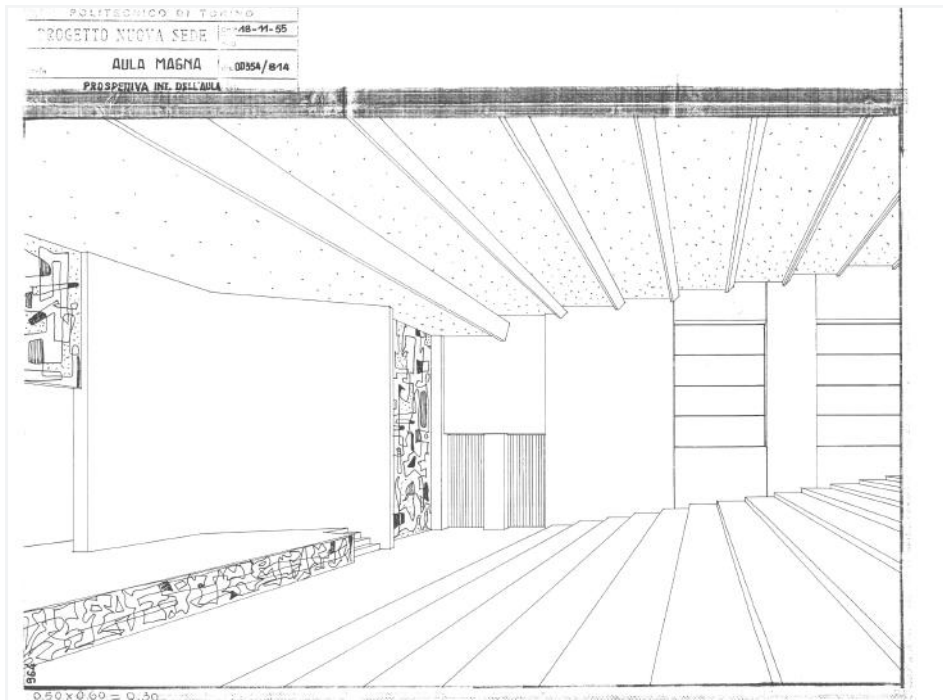
With the sumptuous halls of the Savoy residence to accommodate students and lectures, galleries to house the collections of Turin's technical institute, and the Po Riverbed to conduct hydraulic experiments, the school opens the following year. The university's model is the famous École des Ponts ParisTech, the School of Bridges and Roads in Paris, but enrollment numbers from all over Italy are so high that space at the Valentino is insufficient already from the first months of class.

This is the one time that the brilliant scientist, who was the finance minister of the Kingdom of Italy several times and the author of economic policies that made it possible to achieve the goal of a balanced budget, got the math wrong.

The Regio Politecnico di Torino was founded as an institution in 1906 from the union of the Regia Scuola di Applicazione per gli Ingegneri and the Regio Museo Industriale (established on the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce in 1862), with the purpose of training architects and engineers and



promoting studies suitable for the general industrial and commercial progress of the nation.



As a result, new subject areas are developed such as Electrical Engineering and Construction Science, Aeronautics and new laboratories are established, from chemistry to architecture, which, thanks to distinguished professors and researchers, also teach how to deal with the problems of man and society over time. As Quintino Sella had always hoped. Indeed, when working for the government, he tried to apply the scientific method to public affairs by bringing together scientific and humanistic knowledge, which must work with man in mind in order to improve his quality of life.

The brilliant man of the Risorgimento is unable to see the evolution of what he brought to life. He dies in 1887 at his home in Biella at the age of 56, and the “people”, student engineers and faculty, immediately initiate a fundraiser to have a bronze statue made in his memory, placed in the courtyard of the Castle.

Time runs fast, knowledge, understanding and expectations grow, and therefore it is necessary to create an entirely new university hub. In November 1958, the large complex on Corso Duca degli Abruzzi is inaugurated, later enlarged with the expansion of the Citadella Politecnica, a sprawling campus where classrooms,



laboratories, training facilities, research facilities and services for the city all coexist.

The Valentino Castle, which has undergone subsequent expansion and restoration, is now also home to the School of Architecture and the Department of Land Science, Planning and Policy, the University of Turin and Polytechnic's facility in the cultural areas, which studies land transformation and governance processes from the perspective of sustainability.

Quintino smiles as he enters the Main Lecture Hall of "his Politecnico", holding a mineral in his hand in recognition of the importance of his studies on crystallography. More than 160 years after the inception of all this, the stone seems to point to the path of knowledge, which has no boundaries and no end.

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