Roundtable:

**Piedmontese Baroque Architecture Studies Fifty Years On**

8.30-11.15: Friday, 20 June

*Roundtable Chair: Susan Klaiber, independent scholar, Switzerland*

The current decade marks the fiftieth anniversary of the great flowering of studies on Piedmontese Baroque architecture during the 1960s. Proceeding from pioneering works of the 1950s such as Rudolf Wittkower’s chapter “Architecture in Piedmont” in his *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750* (1958), or Paolo Portoghesi’s series of articles and brief monograph on Guarini (1956), international and local scholars like Henry Millon, Werner Oechslin, Mario Passanti, and Nino Carboneri produced an impressive array of publications on the period. Some of the milestones of this scholarly output include the architecture section of the exhibition *Mostra del Barocco Piemontese* (1963), Andreina Griseri’s *Metamorfosi del Barocco* (1967), and Richard Pommer’s *Eighteenth-Century Architecture in Piedmont* (1967). This scholarship culminated in major international conferences on Guarini (1968) and Vittone (1970), as well as the initiation of the *Corpus Juvarrianum* in 1979.

This roundtable aims to commemorate the golden age of studies on Piedmontese Baroque architecture through a critical assessment of the heritage of the 1960s. Have Griseri’s and Pommer’s “challenging” (Wittkower) concepts proven robust? Does a traditional geographic-stylistic designation remain fruitful for investigating a region whose two major architects built throughout Europe and whose ruling dynasty entered supraregional marriage alliances? Do recent interdisciplinary methodologies – drawing from fields like geography, sociology, or history of science – reframe the roles of agents like civic authorities, construction workers, or military engineers? Has new material evidence altered long-held assumptions?

Discussion positions may directly address historiography or methodology of the 1960s, or present alternative approaches in the form of case studies or new research projects that critically engage with this historic body of scholarship on Piedmontese Baroque architecture, urbanism, and landscape.

At its previous conferences, the EAHN did not highlight the architecture of the host region in dedicated panels. Turin, however, arguably presents an ideal venue for an international roundtable with regional focus: then as now, Piedmont is a major European crossroad for cultural influences from the Italian peninsula, France and Spain, northern Europe, and the former Hapsburg empire. Piedmontese Baroque architecture continues to occupy both local and international scholars, as demonstrated by the recent series of monographic conferences in Turin on architects like Alfieri, Garove, and Juvarra organized by the Bibliotheca Hertziana together with the Venaria Reale consortium. Breaking out of these monographic constraints, this roundtable will provide an opportunity to reflect on where the field has been during the past half century, as well as where it might go in the next fifty years.
Abstracts:

**Architectural Exchanges Between Rome and Turin Before Guarini**

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The architectural advisors of Maria Cristina of Bourbon, Regent of Savoy from 1637 to 1648, were Count Filippo San Martino d’Aglié, appointed “Gran Maestro delle Fabbriche” in 1643, and her former brother in law, Prince Maurizio of Savoy. The two men had been close since their séjour in Rome when Maurizio was still a cardinal and Filippo his gentleman of the chamber; they both had grown up in the cultural and artistic milieu of the city and shared the same interests developed inside the Accademia dei Desiosi. For them it was quite logical to also consider ideas and suggestions of the architects whom they had known during their stay in Rome for the challenging architectural programmes being planned in Turin. In addition, between the death of Carlo di Castellamonte in 1630 and the professional maturation of his son Amedeo, the ducal engineers were attracted by the monumental persuasiveness of the works of their Roman counterparts. This focus on Rome was enhanced by the arrival in Turin of the Theatines and the Minims with their first settlements during the 1620s, and by the promotion of the “dynastic cult” with the resumption of works in the chapel of the Holy Shroud in the 1650s. However, the novelty of the contemporary urban and architectural planning of Turin as a capital city was not ignored by Roman architects as can be seen in some unrealized projects for the renewal of Rome. That Turin could thus command the attention of contemporaries tends to reinforce the theses of Andreina Griseri and of 1960s scholarship on Turin as a model city. The 1640s and 1650s in Turin coincide with a phase of transition and experimentation before the arrival in 1666 of Guarino Guarini, who marked a turning point in Baroque architecture in Piedmont.
Guarino Guarini: the First ‘Baroque’ Architect

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In her contribution to the conference *Guarino Guarini e l'internazionalità del barocco* of 1968, Silvia Bordini presented a historical overview of the criticism of Guarini, claiming at one point that remarks of eighteenth-century writers "accomunano Guarini nella generale valutazione negative dell'arte barocca". As Bordini rightly claims, this criticism of Guarini was indeed part of a broader trend of censuring the work of architects whom we would now characterize as "baroque". But late-eighteenth-century criticism of Guarini was also unique, and in significant ways not discussed by Bordini. Prominent theorists - Jacques-François Blondel, Francesco Milizia, Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, and others - made clear distinctions between Guarini's failings and those of other architects, and particularly those of Borromini, the architect whom modern scholars most often consider the focus of eighteenth-century criticism. Quatremère de Quincy, in his well-known definition of "baroque" as an architectural term, in fact singled out Guarini alone as "le maître du baroque." My discussion focuses on what made Guarini's architecture unique, and "baroque" in the minds of late-eighteenth-century critics. Such a discussion seeks to revaluate current perceptions of what the term "baroque" meant when it was introduced into architectural criticism and to recognize the criticism of Guarini as a distinctive and crucial part of the formation of these early notions of "baroque" architecture. In so doing, my discussion also calls for a reappraisal of the significance of Piedmontese architecture in the formation of the concept of "baroque" architecture more generally.
In 1968 the conference Guarnio Guarini e l'Internazionalità del Barocco took place in Turin. The conference papers published in 1970 show the various ways in which the presenters had found arguments in the text of Guarini’s treatise Architettura Civile, for instance to draw philosophical and symbolical conclusions from the comparative analysis of his drawings, or to deconstruct Guarini’s supposed knowledge of stereotomy by a close-reading of Trattato IV. The way in which the treatise was applied for the 1968 conference contributions echoes the influence of Sigfried Giedion in the historiography of Guarini. In his search for a theoretical foundation for modern architecture, Giedion pointed at the work by the baroque architects in general and by Guarini in particular. After all, Guarini was the author of an extensive theoretical text on architecture in the baroque period. By doing so, Giedion promoted Guarini as an architect and scientist combined in one person, connecting his artistic genius with his theoretical abilities, and his buildings with his text. It is interesting to evaluate the application of the treatise in the conference contributions of 1968 in order to question the handling of treatises in architectural historiography in general. This paper will present an analysis of the argumentative uses of Architettura Civile in the 1968 conference papers. The hypothesis that forms the basis of the analysis is Manfredo Tafuri’s distinction of the operative architect and the critical architectural historian, an idea expressed in 1968 as well. Is this distinction visible in the argumentative uses of Guarini’s treatise? And in which way has the existence of the treatise influenced Guarini historiography?
The late 1960s saw the publication of Andreina Griseri’s and Richard Pommer’s works on Piedmontese Baroque architecture and of the outcome of a national research project coordinated, since 1962, by Augusto Cavallari Murat, Forma urbana e architettura nella Torino barocca. Dalle premesse classiche alle conclusioni neoclassiche (1968). An engineer who graduated from the Politecnico di Torino, then professor and director of the Istituto di Architettura Tecnica at the same university, Cavallari Murat produced many publications now included among the milestones of architectural history and restoration. Forma urbana chose Turin, in particular the space bounded by the city walls and considered the city’s historic centre, as a case study to introduce and explore an innovative approach to the built environment. The method presented its results in a conjectural philological survey, a tool to provide a unified configuration of the historical urban centre, after it merged into the UNI standard. Cavallari Murat examined the Baroque period (17th – 18th centuries) in depth as it “gets to the roots of the appearance and of the concrete planning more distant in time, all the way to the prior operations of tracing out by Roman colonization […] and to the subsequent uses of theoretical principles and practical operating modes of the city’s architecture”. This paper highlights the methodology of research undertaken by scholars from the Politecnico di Torino in the 1960s, likening it with the scholarly literature produced during the same period on Piedmontese Baroque architecture. The comparison between these contemporaneous studies highlights Cavallari Murat’s position, today perhaps idealistic, regarding the concepts of “historic centre” and “monument.” However, the historical research method applied by Cavallari Murat and his survey technique still crop up as an emblematic reference for “making history” today. Thus, Forma Urbana, almost fifty years after its publication, remains relevant.
A Regional Artistic Identity? Three Exhibitions in Comparison

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The Mostra del Barocco Piemontese organized by Vittorio Viale in 1963 suggested the recognition of a strong architectural identity in the historical experience of Piedmont. The exhibition inspired major initiatives of study that led an international contingent of art and architectural historians to wonder about the personality and work of artists such as Guarino Guarini, Filippo Juvarra and Bernardo Vittone. Subsequent research shifted the interest to urbanism and the history of the city, while the exhibition Diana Trionfatrice. Arte di corte nel Piemonte del Seicento (Turin 1989) recognized the engine of the artistic development in the dialectical relationship centre-periphery between the provincial areas and the capital of Savoy. The exhibition I Trionfi del Barocco. Architettura in Europa 1600-1750 (Stupinigi 1999) aimed at illustrating the development of architectural types in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, and pointed out the innovative role played by Piedmontese architecture in the development of exemplary models. This discussion position critically compares the results obtained by these three exhibitions in outlining some research issues that still need to be addressed.
Wittkower’s ‘Gothic‘ Baroque: Piedmontese buildings as seen around 1960

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At first glance, the 1960s historiography on the history of Piedmontese Baroque architecture appears to be quite disconnected from pre-World War II research on the subject: its factual style of writing, promising impartiality and underpinning objects by the evidence from written sources, marks a clear contrast from pre-war publications which had been inspired by cultural history. My paper considers the approach to Early Modern Piedmontese architecture taken by Rudolf Wittkower in his 1958 book Art and Architecture in Italy 1600 to 1750 and confronts it with Albert Erich Brinckmann’s early twentieth-century research. Crucially, both Wittkower and Brinckmann chose the same selection of architects. Yet their respective approaches reveal two completely different methodological concepts: whereas Brinckmann operates on the basic assumption of the Piedmont as ‘artistic landscape’, Wittkower demonstrates an unbroken continuity between the three architects Guarini, Juvarra, and Vittone. Informed by the architecture of Modernism, Wittkower conceptualises this continuity as ‘skeleton structure’ which, according to him, was ultimately influenced by Gothic architecture. This perspective, transcending as it does place and time, reveals new paradigms of writing architectural history during the 1960s.