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Armand Vokshi

Polytechnic University of Tirana, armandvokshi@gmail.com

Florian Nepravishta

Polytechnic University of Tirana, f_nepravishta@yahoo.com

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Fausto Di Florestano - The Genesis Of New Architectural Forms In Albania

Armand Vokshi , Florian Nepravishta
Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Politecnico University ,
Albania
armandvokshi@gmail.com, f_nepravishta@yahoo.com

Abstract. This research on the Florestano Di Faustos architecture seek to highlight the evident facts which are fairly present in the context of Albanian cities, but little-known in the academic and professional field . Di Fausto, the Italian architect who worked on the second regulatory plan of Tirana, designed personally also the new core of the Albanian capital, Skanderbeg Square altogether with the ensemble of ministries and the administrative buildings. The materials found in various archives in Italy and Albania reflects clearly the high capacity of architect's creativity, who worked at the same time for the construction of the city where Mussolini was born, Predapio, in Rhodes, Greece and in Tirana. Working in different contexts, with his architecture, to fulfill the complex requirements that come from these countries, every time he strove to make architecture which will be plugged with "the legend, myth and history of the location, leaving a space into free interpretation of tradition in a new vision of the most modern architecture". This paper will present the typical and original elements elaborated by Di Fausto in Albania, with a deep respect of existing city. Important parts of Di Faustos' ideas are showing for the first time.

Keywords: Florestano Di Fausto, italian architect, italian architecture in Albania, Skanderbeg Square, Royal Palace

1 Introduction

In 1927-28 for the proposals made to the new plan, King Zog asked to the Italian government the intervention of another Italian architect who will contribute to the Regulatory Plan of Tirana, especially in the architectural part of the governmental objects with significant impact. This time Mussolini proposed Florestano Di Faustos, another architect from Rome very appreciated by him, especially for the work done in Predapio, hometown of Duce.



Fig. 1. Florestano Di Fausto (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)

2 Format Guidelines

Di Fausto was born in Rocca Canterano (Rome) on 16 July 1890 to Demetrio and Bernardina Picconi. His education was completed entirely in Rome where he studied architecture at the Academy of Arts and then in 1922 he graduated in Civil Engineering.

Di Fausto [1], with his interventions in the Italian North African colonies, is considered also today as one of the main architects of "Overseas Architecture" for that period. Thanks to a considerable preparation, Di Fausto [2], [3], [4] is an almost overwhelming pattern of a professional architect who was able to master and use regardless of geographic context,



Fig. 2. Predapio Center designed by Di Fausto, Italy



Fig. 3. The building designed by Di Fausto in the center of Predapio, Italy (A.Vokshi)

all styles, from "moresk" to "Venetian Gothic", the "Renaissance" to "Novecento", following up and rationalistic architectural language to another "modern style". Out of prejudice to the formal results achieved what is important to say, is a special report analyzing the view that this category of architects manages to transform the architecture in relation with the place where will be built and with the function that will perform.



Fig. 4. Royal villas in Durres, 1928 (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)

After his arrival in Albania, Di Fausto took an important task from King Zog, to design the ensemble of ministries and administrative and cultural buildings in Skanderbeg Square. In addition, King Zog did requests the design of the Royal Palace in Durres (1928-1930), originally designed by Brazini, re-proposed and built by the Albanian architect Christos Sotiris, design and construction of the Royal Villa in Shiroke [5], the

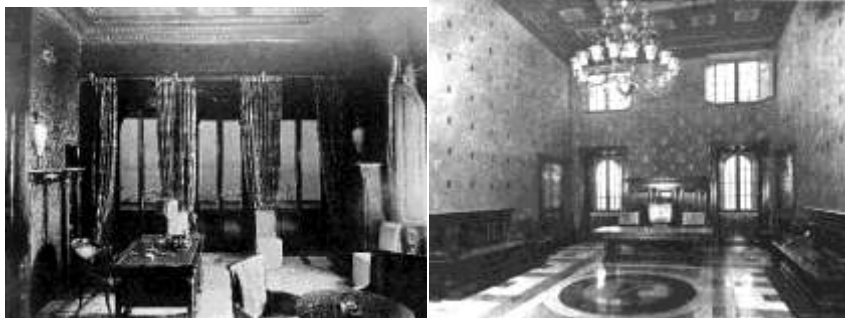


Fig. 5. Interior of the royal villa in Durres, 1928 (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)

Fig. 6. The hall of the royal villa in Durres, 1928 (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)



Fig. 7. Skanderbeg square, the second variant designed by Di Fausto, 1928 (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto) building of the Italian Industrial School in Shkodra and in 1935 to designed the Royal Palace in Tirana. [6]

Naturally, the most important part of his work was the government buildings in Tirana. On 20 January 1929, the king made the decision to trust Di Fausto the project for these important public buildings. By replacing Brazini, Di Fausto worked alongside with the Austrian architect Koler and Albanian engineer will deal with the design of the main square and the boulevard in some parts of it.



Fig. 8. Skenderbeg square, last variant designed by Di Fausto, 1936 (Central Technical Archive of Construction, Tirana)

Fig. 9. Tirana plan, 1930 (Central Technical Archive of Construction, Tirana)

Florestano Di Fausto [7] in cooperation with the governor and ambassador Mario Lago since 1923 did built in Rodi and other centers of Greek Dodecanese island a large number of objects for government institutions and after the instructions from King Zog he began with the design and implementation of the ministerial buildings.



Fig. 20. Skenderbeg square, 1936 (Archive of Marubi)



Fig. 31. Skanderbeg square, 1936 (Archive of Marubi)

As evidenced in the legend in one of the papers of the Regulatory Plan, which is available in the central Technical Archives Building in Tirana, where are clearly specified the areas in which worked each of the three projectors. The new Skanderbeg Square together with ministries was entirely conceived by architect Florestano Di Fausto. The Square were re-proposed again, after a host attempts, in an eclipse form, different from the one proposed by Brazini. This time perfectly integrated with the existing nucleus of the Old Bazaar above all in complete sync with the presence of the Ethem Bey Mosque, important religious building in the historical memory of the peoples and certainly with great religious value and of particular oriental architectural although in modest dimensions.



Fig. 42. Tirana Municipality Building, 1928-30 (Archive of Marubi)

At all stages of the project, in terms of Skanderbeg Square, Di Fausto take care to confirm the monumental atmosphere for the public space and the existing context as basic elements for the elaboration of the project. The plan initially proposed center presence of eleven ministerial and municipal facilities, located in complete symmetry on both sides of the square.



Fig. 53. Ministerial building, 1928-30 ((A.Vokshi)

Fig. 64. Ministerial building, 1928-30 (A.Vokshi)



Fig. 75. Skanderbeg square, 1936 (Archive of IGM, Firenze)

With great skill Di Fausto managed to create a strong relationship between the new vision of space and the existing city, above all from Ethem Bey Mosque and the parliament buildings (today Puppet Theatre), defining ministerial complex in terms of volumes. Heights of buildings contained lines that derive from the mosque where the volume view levels can distinguish clear correspondence between layers and the volume between the dome and pull of the upper ministries. Maybe even for economic reasons, the buildings were designed with modest height and thus not bring a sudden change of scale between new and complex fabric of the existing city. This care was well combined with already consolidated image of the mosque, the old bazaar and the City itself, although the eclectic architecture proposed did produced later the new monumental urban characters, quite different from the context of strong Oriental character. [8]



Fig. 86. Skanderbeg square, 1930 (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)



Fig. 97. Ministerial building in Skanderbeg square, 1930 (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)

In this monumental plant were present some citations from the Predapio and Rhodes plan and many points in the same linguistic and architectural in which Di Fausto was working simultaneously. By drawing an urban sign of the eclectic matrix, chasing through centuries in the Italian history of architecture, ranging from Roman architecture, continuing through the Renaissance, in a context of dialogues already seen, the landscape background communicate with the built environment as in Predapio. New expressive Centre of Tirana become the new square surrounded by institutional buildings type, which put on the organization of ministries of infinite boulevard in a refined game of territory control. This organization, which was visual and spatial wanted to make the politico-administrative difference initially from the urban point of view with this new plan.

As another reference, even without renouncing from the local tradition, Di Fausto renominates in his quest of new Albanian capital project very eclectic architectural theme of his architecture in Rodi and North African colonies. Bandages and pilasters, tympanum, architrave bands so often with a plastic drawn out of scale were essential for providing contrast to linear objects.

Just seven of the eleven buildings projected by his were realized, while we can find in archives various projects completed and unrealized. Since the ministry compound was pure symmetry, in reality there are five types of buildings which are reflected in parallel, organized in such a way considering Ethem Bey Mosque as a focal point from which all the system generated.

The intervention of the park between the buildings will then projected by Giulio Bert. This park goes down to a depth of two meters from street level looking to enhance in the eyes of citizens the dimension and monumentality of low ministries buildings surrounding.

A year later, King Zog wanted to be assisted by Di Fausto for the expansion of his Villa, after seeing the sketches for the administrative center of Tirana. On arrival in Albania in mid-August 1928, Di Fausto, was also involved in the project for expansion of the Villa in Durres according to the request of the King Zog.

The King, once ascended to the throne, ask also to cover the balls decoration of the salon, the decoration of which will be faced by the Italian government entirely as a sign of



Fig. 108. Industrial School, Shkoder (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)



Fig. 119. Industrial School, Shkoder (A.Vokshi)

gratitude. Di Fausto conceived the outside of the villa with a quite different style from the previous architects, transforming the fighter image in an eclecticism simplified and almost devoid of decorations. Construction defects, evidenced by the 1927 earthquake had damaged the central tower, revealed the lack of proper foundations of the building, which stood on a clay soil with high risk of sliding in the sea direction. In fact, the tower changed its appearance on the Di Fausto draft, becoming a central element in almost complete with a three window lintel and a small balcony. The basis part of this, the language of firing openings with round arches as in previous projects. [9]

In fact, the central tower changed the appearance with the Di Fausto project, becoming a central element almost complete with the mullioned architrave and a small balcony. The basement, part of the expansion, regained the openings language with round arches as in previous projects.

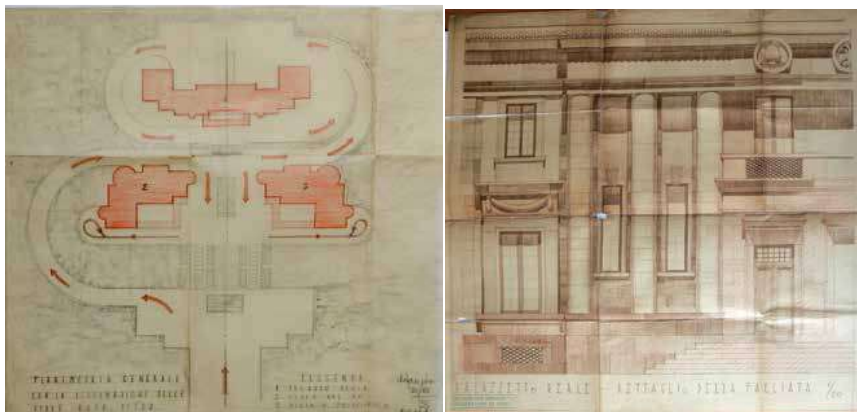


Fig. 20. Royal complex (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)

Fig. 212. Facade of Royal palace (Archiv of Florestano Di Fausto)

The interior part did conserve anyway the French taste as previously and on 23 April 1929 did finished the ceilings of the Villa, where sumptuous decoration with metallic gold will transform the hall very suggestive.

On 21 February 1930 Di Fausto was the victim of a serious accident crash that twelve hour stay in the Tyrrhenian was saved along with the crew of the ship "Città di Tripoli" and rescuers commander with much is he will publish his work which illustrates, published in Geneva in 1932.

Fausto Di died in Rome on January 11, 1965.

3 Conclusions

Florestano Di Fausto was the most important colonial architect to the fascist regime. In his confrontation in different countries that he went to work, showed the constant need of direct connection with the context as in an article which claimed his relationship with "genius loci" he would write: "No stone was set by me without previously filled with the spirit of the country until he become mine". Thinking of the urban and social contrast in Albania at the time he come to realize its architecture and satisfy the complex requirements for the creation of a new urban center the core of a capital. As he declared that as in any project create a relation "to the legend, the myth and the history of the country, connecting in this way the free interpretation of tradition with the new vision of last architecture".

As you can also see his architectural solutions were for the first time in the history of architecture in Albania, the result of an interesting mix of original and traditional local architecture with the modern architecture, but also adding some Italian doses. This led to a higher and real stage of altering architectural language.

Di Fausto was an architect who moved in an area bordered by the remote extremes of eclecticism and the new language of architecture. Although using traditional and eclectic architecture, he mixed them in a sophisticated language of modern architecture, adapted to urban situations.



Fig. 22. Di Fausto buildings in our days. (A.Vokshi)

With the poetic imagination which he form heterogeneous motives, as we saw in the intervention on Skenderbeu Square, where the Oriental, clean and geometric architectural value of Ehem Bey Mosque will articulates in a general framework of values with lyrical and harmonic treatment of eclectic and Renaissance - medieval architecture, brought us a unique cohabitation of Oriental with western values.

The interventions in Tirana makes Di Fausto precedes the rationalism architecture that will later prevailed in Albanian cities, but we can say that fundamentally changes the willingness and the conception of connection so delicate with the typical local territory. Although the style that he used was old, his architecture is fresh and new also today.

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