



**Career development plan**  
**– 1<sup>st</sup> year – XXXVII Cycle (A.Y. 2021-2022)**

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**Type of fellow:**

Standard PhD Fellow

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**Start Date: 1.11.2021**

**End Date: 31.10.2024**

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** Giuseppe Poggi European architect.

Historical-critical survey and analysis of the designer's work within the national and international context, with particular attention to residential architecture.

*Introduction and state of the art*

The architectural currents of the first half of the 20th century, such as Futurism or Rationalism, strongly criticized earlier architecture.<sup>1</sup> Although the devaluation of 19th century architecture, and in particular of eclectic production, has long failed to do justice to the complexity of the economic, technological and social transformations that characterised this century, a wide number of historical studies<sup>2</sup> has now provided a more articulate picture of the architecture of the period.

Throughout the 19th century, Europe undergoes a number of major transformations: from a political point of view, national unifications, but also the birth and dissolution of empires, led to a new administrative order; from a technical point of view, the second industrial revolution creates both economic advances and social disparities; finally, from a social point of view, the rise of the bourgeois class leads to the ever-increasing construction of private residences for the middle class, but also public utility buildings intended to house their new activities. The house, according to Camillo Boito, is a symbol of individualistic 19th century society,<sup>3</sup> but it is particularly the private villa in its typological evolution that reflects the rise of the bourgeois class. During the course of the century, the noble class invests its economic resources in the transformation and construction of villas under the banner of the revival of historical styles nostalgically directed towards the past. The new wealthy class then appropriates the villa typology with even greater opulence, attempting to establish a strong and renewed link with the past.

In the course of the 19th century, Italy doesn't detain anymore its role as an artistic point of reference on the European scene, which distinguished the nation in previous centuries; the main centres of European architecture are France, England and Germany.<sup>4</sup> In spite of this, Italian architecture of this period achieved a quality worthy of the highest international standards.<sup>5</sup> In Italy, the architectural debate aims, in accordance with the European climate, but even more so following the unification of

<sup>1</sup> «Dopo il 700 non è esistita più nessuna architettura.» Sant'Elia 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Hitchcock 1971; Voss 1971; Pevsner 1979; De Fusco 1980; Middleton-Watkin 2001; Restucci 2005; Ciranna-Doti-Neri 2011.

<sup>3</sup>Boito 1880, pp. VIII-IX.

<sup>4</sup> Hitchcock 1971. p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Hitchcock 1971. p. 53.



the country, at the search for a national style.<sup>6</sup> The renewed European historical-critical interest in the Renaissance from the period of the Restoration finds ample space in Italy in the second half of the century. The Neo-Renaissance style, due to its high symbolic value and great versatility, becomes the style that marks Italian cities more than any other in the 19th century.<sup>7</sup>

Already during the Lorraine Regency, in Florence Giuseppe Poggi (1811-1901) makes extensive use of the neo-Renaissance style "freed from the Tuscan tradition and open to the Venetian and Roman influences".<sup>8</sup> The architect, renowned for the works of adaptation of Florence to be capital of Italy, is by the mid-19th century an architect in great demand by both the nobility and the upper middle class, for whom he transforms and builds villas and palaces. While Poggi's urban planning has been extensively studied,<sup>9</sup> studies on his private works are fragmentary: sometimes a single building is investigated in a monographic way,<sup>10</sup> sometimes it is studied in broader publications that address the typology of the villa.<sup>11</sup> The collection of projects compiled by Poggi himself is also extremely valuable, containing both short commentary texts and graphic works.

Poggi is usually studied as a local architect but was probably in contact with the large community of foreigner architects and artists that lived or travelled in Florence. Poggi himself visited London and Paris,<sup>12</sup> and was a member of the *Royal Institute of British Architects*.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Research objectives*

- 1) To study the architectural and urban-planning projects of Giuseppe Poggi in an international context: both European and North American.
- 2) To enrich the knowledge of Giuseppe Poggi's activity as a designer of villas and to draw up a list of his residential architectures, updated and as complete as possible.
- 3) To investigate the adherence of relevant elements of his architecture to the classical and renaissance models proposed by the academy, through the comparison, also graphic, between architectural surveys carried out *ad hoc* on the case study, the analysis of the project drawings and the possible reference models.

#### *Methodology*

The research method is an integrated one: historiographic investigation, typological comparison, architectural survey and graphic investigation.

The research is based on the critical index contained in *Disegni di Fabbriche* by Giuseppe Poggi,<sup>14</sup> but proposes to integrate the list of works on the basis of further bibliographic and archival research, primarily at the Historical Archives of the City of Florence.

Poggi's international relations will be studied both thanks to the available literature but also consulting the international sources or archives that might result of interest for this research like the archives of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

The study will include an analysis of the corpus of drawings by Poggi, conserved at the University of Florence, which possesses drawings of buildings for private individuals. This investigation will be accompanied by a campaign of architectural survey carried out *ad hoc*, in order analyse the reference models of his architectures through dedicated graphic comparisons.

#### *Expected results*

Highlighting the fascination of the historical context, the importance of the architect's work and the originality of the typology investigated, the study proposes a framework in the national and

<sup>6</sup> Neri 1997; Scalvini 2000; Mangone 2015, p. 274.

<sup>7</sup> Neri 1997, p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> Trotta 1994, p. 10

<sup>9</sup> Borsi 1970; Tiberi 2014; Maccabruni-Marchi 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Aubert-Borsi 1983; Trotta 1990, Trotta 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Zangheri 1988, Gobbi Sica 1998, Trotta 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Poggi 1886, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> RIBA 1880, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Poggi 1886.



international debate on the architecture of the historical period, the typology of the villa and the relationships with clients.

The graphic analysis aims at a deep understanding of the architect's work, with the purpose of shedding new light on the relationships between the neo-Renaissance style, the Renaissance models and academic teaching. Outside the academic sphere, the study could lead to an impact on the territory, also in terms of tourism, at the same time increasing knowledge and widespread awareness of the value of the designer's works, also within the heterogeneous group of owners of the buildings studied, made up of both public institutions and private citizens.

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