

TORINO

Restoration started on the Shroud altar

Damaged by the 1997 fire - The restoration of the baroque complex of Antonio Bertola, disfigured by the stake, will complete the restoration of the Guarini Chapel

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Bertola altar in the Shroud Chapel (photo Renzo Bussio - La Voce e il Tempo)

In the Shroud Chapel the restoration of the altar disfigured by the stake in 1997 began a few weeks ago. "It is the last piece of the recovery of the Chapel - explains Enrica Pagella, director of the Royal Museums - made possible thanks to almost 650 thousand euros collected by the Mirror of the Times Foundation ».

The altar designed in the 17th century by the architect Antonio Bertola was heavily damaged by the flames. Only the statues of the putti and two angels were saved from destruction, because at the time of the stake they had been transferred to another place. The rest is largely destroyed. The marbles and stones of the base, the wood of the imposing structure have been lost, incinerated or flaked by the infernal temperatures of the fire.

Not everything will be recovered from the restoration: the large summit star, for example, is lost. The embossed and chiseled silver tabernacle will instead return to decorate the altar, together with the pyramid lamps and candlesticks. "In memory of the stake - Pagella announces - we will leave a trace of the wounds inflicted by the flames on a small portion of the altar".

The start of the restoration site coincides with the reopening of the Royal Museums after the days of the Coronavirus. «After three months of stop - continues the director Pagella - we reopened, certainly with special precautions. There is the quota of entrances and we encourage online bookings, we have reduced visiting groups, we have set up 'ring' routes with distant entrances and exits. These are necessary precautions, which do not prevent us from returning to show the riches of the Royal Museums ».

Reopened on June 2, the Royal Museums were closed on March 8. With the large complex of Palazzo Reale and the adjoining galleries, most of the Piedmont museum and exhibition venues have also returned to activity, albeit with wide limitations in the number of accesses.

The Coronavirus emergency slowed down the work of another important construction site in the Palazzo Reale complex: the restoration of the Ducal Garden. «On 23 March the new lighting of the internal facades of the Palace should have ended, instead everything stopped, postponed to the end of June. As soon as we are ready, we will allow evening openings of the gardens, which have benefited from the important contribution of the Compagnia di Sanpaolo. In the autumn we will also close the work on the Giardino di Levante, for which we have contracted the restoration of the central basin ».

Also because of the Coronavirus «a collaboration project between the Royal Museums, Palazzo Carignano and Villa della Regina was skipped for a visit to three locations dedicated to the second centenary of the birth of Vittorio Emanuele II. It was a project we particularly cared about - concludes Pagella - whose logic we continually trust: the Savoy residences allow the unique opportunity of routes that can be used in limited times and spaces, spread over several locations ».