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## ARTISTIC LAMPS IN IMOLA

In the early decades of the Twentieth Century the old city centre of Imola saw one of the most important transformations in its centuries-old history. Among the various actions taken, outstanding was the reorganization of Piazza Vittorio Emanuele (now Piazza Matteotti), chosen as the site for

an imposing monument to the Fallen of World War I.

The architectural and sculptural work was carried out between spring and December of 1926. Its creators were the well-known Roman architect Giovan Battista Milani and Angelo Zanelli, designer of the frieze of the Vittoriano.



On 13 June 1928, in the presence of King Vittorio Emanuele III and Queen Elena, a vast crowd witnessed the unveiling of the great stone monument, surrounded by four

grandiose cast iron “sentinels”: these were candelabra of exceptional quality specifically intended to illuminate the commemorative sculpture.

Investigations carried out by the Neri Foundation, especially in the Historical Archive of Imola, have shown that this type of candelabrum was not a random choice: the requirements of the city were that items should be “found” that suitably matched the grandeur of the monument and its numerous decorations. An intense exchange of letters therefore began – lasting about a year and confirmed by the numerous letters discovered – between the then Municipal Civil Engineer Dall’Osso and two Italian foundries, the *Pignone* of Florence and the *Compagnia Continentale J. Brunt* of Milan, known beyond the national borders for the excellence of their products.

Both foundries sent documentation to the Technical Office; Brunt sent large-format designs, Pignone sent single pages from their 1913 catalogue. The contacts with the Florentine foundry, in particular, provided an opportunity to acquire several different typologies of lamp posts to be placed elsewhere in the city. The Brunt Company, on the other hand, presented, among other models for Piazza Matteotti, a project for a monumental lamp post that had been “completely revised” and adapted to the characteristics of the location: looking at the original design we are particularly struck by the large Roman girdles placed on the column. In the meantime the Municipality was also directing its attention towards a group of four candelabra in *art nouveau* style in Rome, then

located in Piazza Colonna at the corners of the majestic marble parallelepiped supporting the Aurelian Column. In the meantime the Municipality was also directing its attention towards a group of four candelabra in *art nouveau* style in Rome, then located in Piazza Colonna at the corners of the majestic marble parallelepiped supporting the Aurelian Column.

These items, immortalized in a photo of the period, were already in place in 1893 and were very probably designed, like most of the artistic illumination in the capital at the time, by the young Duilio Cambellotti, a student at the evening course of the Artistic Industrial Museum of Rome.

If we examine the original location of the Roman candelabra it is easy to recognize an attempt to create something similar in Imola: the aim was to illuminate each side of the stone monument with cast iron items identical to those in Rome. This was the decision eventually made by the civil engineer Dall’Osso.

In reality these items, as Brunt rightly pointed out, had features that had little to do with the monument, but their symbolic and political power was very strong; this power was further increased following the discovery of the Roman origin of the foundry which had created the objects: the *Bastianelli-Avanzini*.

## Sequence of restoration project



Initial conditions





Separating the elements and welding



Sandblasting of single elements



Creating models for reproducing missing parts



Restoration of the lyre





Painting the artefacts



The final assembly

