

History Through Images

Clelia Arnaldi di Balme, Enrica Pagella

Prince Eugenio of Savoy-Soissons was an able statesman and man of war, as well as an art connoisseur and well informed collector of books, paintings and works of art for the various Viennese residences. He commissioned the Flemish painter Jan Huchtenburgh to provide the first official documentation of his victorious military exploits: the cycle of the ten *Battles* for the castle of Schlosshof near Vienna, among which the “Battle of Turin” painted in 1712 (today in the Sabauda Gallery in Turin). The painting is the model for many subsequent representations of the siege of Turin, especially within the sphere of graphic production and the military histories of Prince Eugenio published throughout Europe during the eighteenth century. The French artist Ignace Jacques Parrocel painted a “Battle of Turin” in less celebratory terms for the series of the prince’s seven military feats formerly in the Stadtpalais, today in the Winterpalais in Vienna. The liberation of Turin from the French siege became a preferred background for portraits of the two main protagonists, Prince Eugenio and Duke Vittorio Amedeo II, and the subject of many commemorative medals and furnishings, among which inlaid furniture and stucco reliefs.

In thanks to the Virgin for the victorious results of the battle, between 1717 and 1731 Vittorio Amedeo II commissioned Filippo Juvarra to design and build the basilica of Superga, for which Bernardino Cametti sculpted the great marble altarpiece on the high altar in 1729. The City authorities also expressed their thanks: the church of Corpus Domini was provided with a new altarpiece by the Lombard painter Stefano Maria Legnani, called Il Legnanino, today in the church of San Massimo in Turin, while the sculptor Carlo Giuseppe Plura made the processional statue of the Virgin.

Like Prince Eugenio in Vienna, Carlo Emanuele III of Savoy also created an organic framework for the representation of the military glories of the House of Savoy in a dynastic and commemorative key, constructing the Gallery of Battles in Turin’s Palazzo Reale where Huchtenburgh’s paintings, bought from Prince Eugenio’s heir, were hung in 1737. This taste for the dynasty’s great feats led to the series of military exploits commissioned in 1818 by Vittorio Emanuele I from Giuseppe Pietro Bagetti for a new Gallery of Battles in the castle of Moncalieri, a project that was not further developed: a good seven of the thirty scenes painted showed the Battle of Turin and are today in Turin’s Palazzo Reale. The programmes of dynastic celebrations promoted by Carlo Alberto from the 1830s on took up the same protagonists of the 1706 events: Eugenio appears among the reliefs by Giacomo Spalla in the Galleria del Beaumont in Palazzo Reale; among the monochrome frescoes painted by Pietro and Paolo Fea in the great hall of the Senate in Palazzo Madama; in the series ordered from Massimo d’Azeglio in 1837 for the dining hall in Palazzo Reale. A definitive step towards a romantic interpretation was undertaken in 1851 with the battle painted by Francesco Gonin for Ferdinando of Savoy, Duke of Genoa. Here, alongside the commanders, emerge the heroes of the people, first among all Pietro Micca di Andorno, in a decidedly patriotic and Risorgimento key.

Cartographic Representations

Paola Pressenda

The repercussion that the siege had on an international level is testified to also by cartographic representations, where the besieged city was used more or less as a pretext, produced in large numbers such as had never before occurred for Turin. From a cartographic point of view, this enjoyed considerable success that was not limited to the years immediately following the event, but was protracted up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was the opportunity for inserting maps of the city in collections from which the representation of Turin had always been excluded and more in general for a huge production of maps conceived either singly or for insertion into historical works. If war is usually an occasion for the production of manuscript cartographic representations which only occasionally found a printed form, the events of 1706 were, instead, a pretext for increasing the number of printed maps of the city of Turin. A characteristic common to all the produc-