

The Drawings of Architect Giuseppe Denegri (1886-1976): A Study of the Documents in the Denegri Collection, Historical Archives of Finale Ligure

*By Daniela Pittaluga**

The research presented here stems from two PRIN projects, Building Civic Identities and Crafted in Stone/Recorded on Paper. Within the context of this research, the existence of a collection relating to the architect Giuseppe Denegri, held in the Historical Archive of Finale Ligure, came to light. The architect Giuseppe Denegri, Master of Drawing (as he is described in the Museo Torino digital archive), played a leading role in the architectural and urban transformations of much of the western Ligurian Riviera. His professional activity continued almost uninterrupted from the first decade of the twentieth century until the 1970s; his architectural production ranges from Art Nouveau to modern architecture and, later, to contemporary forms. The Denegri Collection contains extensive documentation of this activity. However, the aspect that is of particular interest here is the architect's attention to drawing. Among the thousands of documents preserved in the archive, drawings represent a significant part: in addition to technical drawings, there are many representations of various types, perspectives and axonometric sketches, as well as a large number of freehand drawings. Most of these relate to specific projects, but the collection also includes sketches of architectural elements that do not appear to belong to any completed project. These seem to be ideas or observation drawn from different contexts and carefully preserved in his personal archive. This article therefore aims to investigate the importance of graphic representation for this architect and how this knowledge of details, acquired through drawing, influenced his work. Through the figure of Denegri and his contemporaries with whom he collaborated closely, particularly the architect Antonio Vandone di Cortemilia, the study also seeks to address the question of whether, and in what ways, drawing can evolve from a simple act of representation into a genuine cognitive and speculative practice.

Introduction

The research presented here originated within the framework of two PRIN projects,¹ *Building Civic Identities* and *Carved in Stone/Recorded on Paper: Promoting*

*Associate Professor, University of Genoa, Italy.

1. Both of these studies were carried out between 2022 and 2025: *Building Civic Identities. Towards an Atlas of Communal Palaces in Italian Urban History (12th-20th century)*, PRIN 2022, PI: M. Folin UNIGE, participants: A. Boato, L. Napoleone, D. Pittaluga, and *Crafted in Stone/Recorded on Paper: Promoting the Architectural and Archival Heritage of Small Italian Municipalities (13th-20th Centuries)*. Historical Research and Digital Enhancement, PRIN 2022 PNRR, PI: I. Balestrieri, participants: A. Boato, L. Napoleone, D. Pittaluga. A series of lectures entitled "Civic Liguria: heritage, architecture and municipal archives from the Middle Ages to the present day" was organised by the University of Genoa and the Archival and Bibliographic Superintendency of Liguria, in collaboration with the Italian National Archival Association (ANAI), Liguria regional sectionA

the Architectural and Archival Heritage of Small Italian Municipalities (13th–20th Century)). During the course of the investigation, a significant collection of documents relating to the architect Giuseppe Denegri, preserved in the Historical Archive of Finale Ligure, came to light. The analysis of this archival collection highlighted the relevance of Denegri's professional activity from several perspectives. First, in connection with the aforementioned PRIN projects, since the architect designed and carried out numerous civic buildings for various municipalities along the Ligurian Riviera. Second, the archive proved particularly valuable for research concerning the archaeological study of twentieth-century standing architecture. The availability of the Denegri Collection has provided an opportunity to expand and further develop several lines of research on the archaeological analysis of architecture applied to twentieth- and twenty-first-century buildings, which have been pursued in recent years at the DAD.² Within this field of study, the possibility of accessing archival documentation containing detailed information on the materials employed and the construction techniques adopted, while simultaneously comparing such information with the building as actually constructed, constitutes an interpretative tool of considerable importance. This comparison makes it possible to identify more accurately traces of workmanship visible on material surfaces, construction methods, and, ultimately to reconstruct retrospectively the history of the building process through the analysis of material evidence. Although this methodological approach has been successfully applied since the 1970s to the study of historical architecture, it has thus far been only marginally employed in the study of twentieth-century architecture.³ On this basis, a specific line of research devoted to Giuseppe Denegri

second presentation on Denegri's work took place during the study days on "Post-war reconstructions between continuity and new demands. City buildings of the late 20th century", held in Catania on 5–6 June 2025 at the Museo della Rappresentazione, Villa Zingoli.

2. D. Pittaluga, "The Archaeology of Architecture for the Knowledge and Preservation of the 'Modern,'" *Restauro Archeologico* 30, no. 1 (2022): 378-383; Pittaluga, "Signs of Memory: Le Corbusier's Drawings at Villa E1027," *Athens Journal of Architecture* 10 (2024): 127-152; Pittaluga, "Dalla Carta di Venezia alla conservazione e restauro dell'architettura contemporanea," *Restauro Archeologico* 32, no. 1 (2024): 480-485; Pittaluga, "Tra Architettura Moderna e Contemporanea: uno studio dall'archivio Denegri / Between Modern and Contemporary Architecture: A Study from the Archive Denegri," *Restauro Archeologico* 33, no. 1, Special Issue, vol. I (2025): 164-169; Pittaluga, and L. Nanni, *Dalla calce della Fornace Bianchi ai dipinti di Gino Grimaldi. Conservazione integrata, sostenibile e partecipata a Cogoleto dal 2007 al 2016* (Genova: ECIG, 2016); Pittaluga, and F. Frattini (Eds.), *Conservation et mise en valeur du patrimoine architectural et paysagé des sites côtiers méditerranéens/Conservation and Promotion of Architectural and Landscape Heritage of the Mediterranean Coastal Sites* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2019); Pittaluga, and J. A. Quiros Castillo, "Surface of 20th Century Façade: Reflections on Their Archaeological Awareness," *TEMA Journal* 10, no. 1 (2024): 112-125, 2024; Pittaluga, and J. A. Quiros Castillo, "Timber-Framed Structures and Standardized Elements of the 20th Century in Genova: Archaeological Analysis of Architecture and Written Sources," *TEMA Journal* 11, no. 2 (2025): 19-38.

3. T. Mannoni, "Modi di fare storia con l'archeologia. Variazioni su un tema di Andrea Carandini," *Archeologia Medievale* XX (1993): 561-568; Mannoni, "Lo stato dell'archeologia del costruito in Italia. Prima parte," *Notiziario di Archeologia Medievale* 66 (1995): 25-27; Mannoni, "Lo stato dell'archeologia del costruito in Italia. Seconda parte," *Notiziario di Archeologia Medievale* 67 (1996): 7-11; Mannoni, "Lo stato dell'archeologia del costruito in Italia. Terza parte," *Notiziario di Archeologia Medievale* 68 (1997): 10-11; Pittaluga, "L'analisi archeologica per la conoscenza e la conservazione delle strutture del XX secolo," in ISCUM (ed.), "Tiziano Mannoni. Attualità e sviluppi di metodi e idee" (Ed. All'Insegna del Giglio: Firenze, 2021), 436-443.

was initiated. The opportunity to relate archival sources to the direct analysis of most of the architect's surviving buildings immediately proved to be a particularly promising field of investigation. Indirect sources—such as archival documents, photographs, drawings, articles, and other forms of documentation—provide essential information regarding design motivations, patrons, and the craftsmen involved in the realization of the works, aspects that cannot be inferred solely from the analysis of the buildings themselves. Direct sources, conversely, bear witness to what was actually built: a project preserved in an archive may never have been executed or may have undergone substantial modifications during construction.⁴ The research on Denegri, based on the integration of these two complementary categories of sources, is still ongoing; nevertheless, significant findings have already emerged during this preliminary phase.⁵ In particular, this contribution seeks to explore a specific aspect of the research by examining how Denegri's drawings, representations, and sketches reflect his personal approach to the architectural profession and how, through these, a design approach attentive to materials, craftsmanship, and the environmental context emerges, understood as determining elements in the design process. Underlying this line of research on contemporary architecture is also the awareness that more recent buildings are often among the least known and studied. At the same time, there is an increasingly urgent need to intervene in order to ensure their preservation and transmission to future generations.

Methodology

The research dedicated to Denegri's work was structured into two main phases. The first phase focused on the analysis of the documentation preserved at the Historical Archives of Finale Ligure, within the Denegri Collection; the second phase involved comparing the information derived from the archival sources with the architectural structures that still survive in the area. In the initial stage of the research, the investigation was guided by a series of methodological questions

4. A. Boato, *L'archeologia in architettura. Misurazioni, stratigrafie, datazioni, restauro* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2008); Pittaluga, *Questioni di archeologia dell'architettura e restauro* (Genova: ECIG, 2009).

5. The following conferences have been held: "Finale: historical architecture and the municipal archives. Giuseppe Denegri. Projects, ideas and realisations in the Finale area", held in Finale Ligure, Palazzo Ricci on 10 May 2025, speaker: D. Pittaluga. A second presentation on Denegri's work took place during the study days on "Post-war reconstructions between continuity and new demands. City buildings of the late 20th century", held in Catania on 5–6 June 2025 at the Museo della Rappresentazione, Villa Zingoli Tetto. In that context, the paper presented by D. Pittaluga was "Giuseppe Denegri: between lost civic identity and the construction of new spaces. Post-war interventions in the municipality of Finale Ligure". The following papers were presented by D. Pittaluga: "L'architettura di Denegri: "un patrimonio grigio" e progetti di cura" in conference "PATRIMONI GRIGI Riflessioni ed esperienze per le architetture, i paesaggi e i tessuti urbani ai margini della tutela", Milano 9, 10 e 11 luglio 2025 organised by the Polytechnic University of Milan and "Il Fondo Denegri nell'Archivio storico di Finale Ligure: una possibilità di ricerca, di conoscenza e di conservazione per l'architettura del Novecento" in International Conference RIPAM 11, organised by University of Palermo and Archivio di Stato di Palermo.

aimed at defining the role of drawing within the architect's production. Rather than concentrating on the systematic analysis of a single project through all the available graphic materials — an approach that is nonetheless considered highly valuable and potentially worthy of further research — a transversal perspective was adopted, with the aim of examining different projects and the representational methods employed by Denegri. Given the breadth and heterogeneity of the documentation preserved in the collection, relating to different stages of the architect's professional life — from his academic training to the final years of his career — particular attention was devoted to the evolution of drawing as a tool for conception, representation, and communication, both during his formative years and throughout his professional practice. The investigation therefore developed around several key research questions:

1. to determine whether the practice of freehand drawing was present throughout Denegri's entire career or limited to specific periods;
2. to understand under which circumstances the architect adopted pictorial forms of representation and when, instead, he preferred predominantly technical drawings;
3. to analyse whether the use of less technical and more figurative representational methods extended across the various fields of his professional activity — from nautical design to residential architecture and urban planning — or was confined to specific sectors;
4. to assess whether the representational approaches adopted varied according to the type of commission, whether public or private.

The archival research was conducted through the systematic examination of the materials contained both in the drawers and in the folders of the Denegri Collection. For each identifiable drawing, whenever possible, the period of production, the technique employed, and the intended purpose were identified. The principal formal and material characteristics of the documents were also recorded, together with any interpretative issues resulting from missing information, erasures, deterioration, or discoloration. The first phase of the research, concerning the archival documentation, has been completed, whereas the systematic comparison with the surviving buildings is still ongoing. The two restoration cases discussed below, the Church of Nostra Signora di Loreto at Perti, the Mausoleum of General Caviglia and Villa Noberasco (project/realisation of new building) therefore represent preliminary results rather than a comprehensive assessment of Denegri's practice.

Results

The archival research conducted at the Finale Ligure Archives focused on the examination of the documents contained in the Denegri Collection. This essay, in particular, presents the results of the analysis of the drawings preserved in the collection, which include technical drawings, construction details, and freehand sketches.

Giuseppe Denegri, Master of Drawing

Giuseppe Denegri is the only Ligurian architect mentioned on the website of the MU Torino Virtual Museum,⁶ in the section on Art Nouveau architects. This is probably due to his close collaboration with a well-known exponent of Piedmontese Art Nouveau, the architect Antonio Vandone di Cortemilia. He is mentioned on the website with this brief description: '*Architect, Master of Drawing, graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna in 1909. Born: 24 January 1886, Oneglia. Died: 25 November 1976, Finale Ligure*'. In this context, it is precisely this definition as a Master of Drawing that is of particular interest. On 17 October 1899, Denegri obtained his diploma from the Technical School in Finalmarina and, in 1900, received a training scholarship from the Accademia Albertina in Turin. He trained in the reproduction of bas-reliefs, statues and marble busts during study trips to Venice (1903 and 1905), where he encountered the great architecture of the past. On 19 February 1907, he qualified to teach drawing in technical and normal schools at the Academy of Fine Arts in Genoa. After a period spent in Bologna (1908) and a stay in Rome between March and June 1909, he obtained his licence to teach architectural drawing at the Institute of Fine Arts in Bologna on 30 December 1909.⁷ A few years earlier, in 1905, Denegri had joined the Turin studio of engineer Antonio Vandone di Cortemilia (Terni 1863–Turin 1937), one of the significant interpreters of Piedmontese eclecticism and Art Nouveau. He entered the studio as a draughtsman and later became a co-owner. This experience was particularly important for his graphic formation, as it placed him within a professional environment in which drawing was not simply a means of documenting an architectural project, but an essential instrument for developing, testing and communicating architectural ideas. The importance of this experience is also suggested by the documentation preserved in the Vandone Archive at the Polytechnic University of Turin, which contains numerous original sketches and drawings produced in connection with the studio's projects. Some projects were developed jointly by Vandone and Denegri, and Denegri's involvement can therefore be situated within a professional culture in which the production of drawings played a central role. Although the surviving documentation does not always allow the authorship of individual drawings to be established with certainty, this early experience provides an important link between Denegri's academic training as a draughtsman and the graphic practice documented in his later career. The continuity between these formative experiences and Denegri's subsequent work is particularly evident in the drawings preserved in the Denegri Collection. Many of

6. <https://www.museotorino.it/view/s/d8488afc11a5488fa44dc364d6da3545>. (Accessed 20 October 2025.)

7. L. Alonzo, *I cento del Finale. Biografie di Finalesi* (Finale Ligure, 1996); Alonzo, "Denegri Giuseppe (ad vocem)," in *Dizionario Biografico dei Liguri* (ed.) W. Piastra, vol. V, 442–444. Genova, 1999; L. Alonzo Bixio, "Oggetti scomparsi a Finale Ligure," *Il Quadrifoglio* VII, no. 16 (2017): 45–47; R. Nelva, "L'archivio Vandone di Cortemiglia," *Politecnico di Torino – Facoltà di Ingegneria. Istituto di Architettura Tecnica. Quaderno di Istituto*, no. 5 (Torino, 1981); R. Nelva, and B. Signorelli, "Lo studio Vandone di Cortemilia fra Eclettismo e Art Déco (1890–1929)," *Bollettino SPABA*, nuova serie, anni XXVII–XXVIII–XXIX, 1973–1975, 84–102 (Torino, 1976). Nelva, and B. Signorelli, "L'Archivio Vandone di Cortemilia," *Quaderno dell'Istituto di Architettura Tecnica della Facoltà di Ingegneria del Politecnico di Torino*, no. 5 (1981): 1–37. Torino: Levrotto e Bella.

them retain the characteristics of academic graphic training: attention to ornamental detail, careful rendering of architectural elements, the use of watercolour and charcoal, and a strong interest in the relationship between architecture and its visual context. Drawing thus appears to have accompanied Denegri from his earliest education through his professional activity, gradually shifting from an academic exercise and a means of acquiring visual knowledge into an instrument of architectural conception and communication.⁸ The Denegri Collection therefore preserves material evidence of this continuity, from academic exercises and ornamental studies to professional drawings and watercolors of architectural and environmental context. Denegri's trajectory thus reveals a continuity between his early experience as a draughtsman in Vandone's studio and his subsequent professional practice. For Denegri, drawing was not merely a means of representing architecture, but an instrument through which architecture was observed, interpreted, conceived and transformed

Giuseppe Denegri: An Architect between Art Nouveau and Contemporary Architecture

It has been reported that, at a very young age, Giuseppe Denegri, joined the studio of Antonio Vandone di Cortemilia (or Cortemiglia), where his skills as a draughtsman allowed him to become involved in professional architectural work. A considerable amount of information on this prominent architect, particularly well known for his contribution to Piedmontese Art Nouveau, is preserved in the Vandone Archive.⁹

8. Many of Denegri's and Vandone-Denegri's projects were published in the journal **L'architettura italiana**. In particular, **L'Architettura italiana**, 1905–1929: **Palazzina Maffei** (Maffei's house), vol. I (1905–06), no. 12; Boncardo Baths in Finale Marina, year VI (1910–11); Competition for the headquarters of Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, year VIII (1912–13) no. 3; Zorio's House, Via Vassalli Eandi 22, Year X (1914–15); Villa Maffei in Procaria – Ceres Maffei's House, Year XIII (1918) No. 4; Intervention at the Church of the Annunciation in Turin, year XIV (1919) no. 4; Mogadishu Cathedral, year XXIV (1929) no. 1. For a more complete biography of Giuseppe Denegri, see Alonzo 1996, 55–56; Alonzo 1999, 43–44; G. Murialdo, *Giuseppe Denegri (1886–1976)* (2023), 110–117; and a biography of Denegri, written by Giovanni Murialdo, preserved in manuscript form at the ASF, Giuseppe Denegri collection.

9. The archive contains 307 items, each corresponding to one of Vandone's professional activities or commissions. Most of the files consist of original sketches and graphic drawings on paper and tracing paper, produced at different scales, ranging from general plans, usually at a scale of 1:500, to detailed working drawings at scales ranging from 1:10 to 1:20. The graphic material is accompanied by documents that complement the design activity, including correspondence, bills of quantities and cost estimates, reports, newspaper clippings and, in some cases, photocopies. Some files, however, consist exclusively of graphic material.

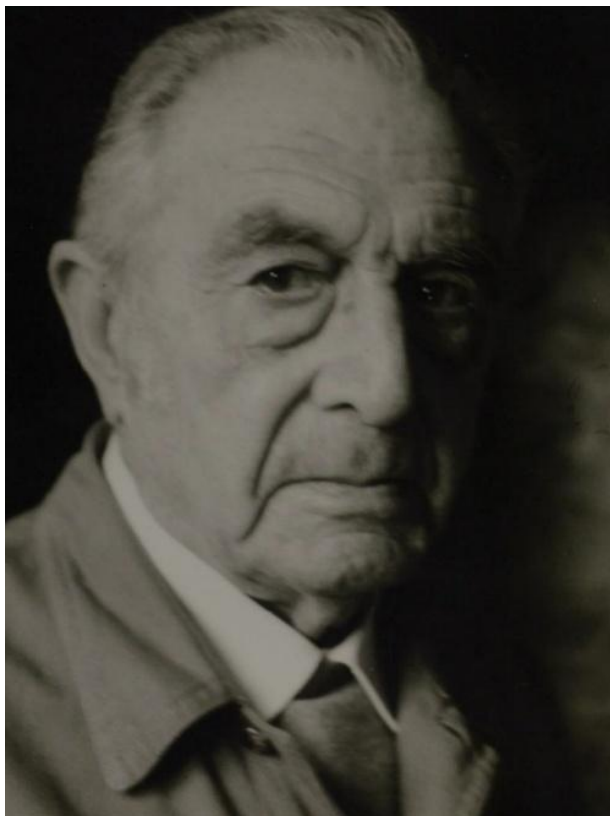


Figure 1. *Giuseppe Denegri (1886-1976)*

Source: Murialdo 2023.

Some projects were carried out in collaboration with architect Giuseppe De Negri (1886–1976) between 1911 and 1921.¹⁰ If we consider that, according to his biographical notes,¹¹ Giuseppe Denegri joined Vandone's studio as stated in his biographical notes, joined Vandone's studio several years before obtaining his qualification as a teacher of architectural drawing in 1909, initially working specifically as a draughtsman, it is possible that he contributed to the drawings of some of Vandone's most significant projects, including the Maffei building and Villa Moretti.

The Denegri Fund in the Historical Archives of Finale Ligure.

Since 22/09/2022, the Historical Archive of Finale Ligure has housed the Denegri Collection. The collection consists of an entire set of drawers intended

10. Among the most significant works in the archive are: Anfossi Hospital Project, Canelli (AT), 1900; Duchessa d'Aosta Asylum, Turin, 1901-2; Maffei Building, Turin, 1904-06; Colongo House, Turin, 1904; Quadri Laboratory House, Turin, 1905; Project for the Renovation of La Morra Castle, 1905/07; Villa Moretti, Tarcento (UD), 1906-07; Zorio House, Turin, 1912; Lombard House, Turin, 1912; Richetti Funerary Aedicule, Turin, 1914; Villa Maffei in Procaria – Ceres (TO), 1914; Villa Gallo, Pollone (BI), 1920; Project for the Matarazzo Asylum, Bruzolo (TO), 1920-21; Project for the new Music High School, Turin, 1924; Bagni Boncardo, Finale Ligure (SV), undated; Salone Odeon (National Gallery), Turin, undated; Villa Mazzotti, Chiari (BS), undated; Villini De Raimondi, Finale Ligure (SV), undated.

11. See Murialdo, *Giuseppe Denegri (1886–1976)*, 2023, op. cit.

mainly for the storage of large drawings and plates, together with a series of folders containing paper documents. These folders are organised and catalogued by geographical area. The Denegri Collection comprises 638 archival items describing material preserved partly in the drawers and partly in the folders. Each file contains a variety of paper and cartographic documents. A review of the catalogue immediately reveals the breadth of Denegri's professional interests. Most of his work concerned the design of residential buildings, ranging from farmhouses to apartment buildings. Numerous villas were also designed, mainly for wealthy families seeking holiday residences on the coast. These projects often included the design of interiors and individual pieces of furniture. The needs of the coastal environment are also reflected in designs for bathing establishments and for a small harbour. The latter was not constructed in the location originally proposed by Denegri, but in a similar setting elsewhere along the western Ligurian coast. The collection also contains several designs for boats, including *gozzi* and sailing boats, as well as sail plans. Particularly significant for the post-war period are commissions for urban plans, schools, hospitals, churches and industrial buildings. The design of cemeteries, mausoleums, individual tombs and monuments is also well represented. The tables below list the folders containing drawings and sketches by architect Giuseppe Denegri. The collection contains different types of drawings, ranging from early works produced during his academic training to drawings associated with his professional activity. The Denegri Collection comprises thousands of documents organised into more than 600 project files and therefore provides a relatively comprehensive overview of the architect's work. Although the possibility that some files may have been lost, either wholly or partially, cannot be excluded, examination of the collection nevertheless provides a sufficiently broad picture of Denegri's professional activity. The accompanying tables present the most significant data concerning the documents preserved in the Denegri Collection. Table 1 lists all documents generically catalogued as "drawings"; Table 2 includes only those classified as sketches and perspective views; and Table 3 groups together drawings executed using different techniques, particularly watercolour, charcoal and pencil. Even from these initial groupings, several observations can be made. In Table 1, for example, of the 36 files catalogued as "drawings" and containing predominantly design material, only eight are explicitly labelled "technical drawings" on the folder and appear to contain exclusively technical documentation. In all the other files, the contents are described using the more generic expression "design for...". These files may contain sketches, graphic works produced using different techniques, calculations and design reports in addition to technical drawings. Table 2, by contrast, lists 35 folders whose contents do not include technical drawings, calculations or reports, but consist exclusively of drawings, sketches and perspective views. This table mainly contains drawings dating from Denegri's Academy years (Figures 2-6), but also includes projects such as the Casanova house, unidentified buildings represented through drawings and sketches, and several sketches of cemetery chapels. Other examples include panoramic views, such as the view of Castelfranco from the promenade; drawings of architectural elements; and views of the façades of the Church of St Giovanni Battista in Finalmarina and the Church of St Maria in Finalpia. Perspective views of funerary chapels are also present,

including the family tomb of Giovanni Maffei. In some cases, the sketches and drawings contained in these folders, catalogued as ‘drawings, sketches, perspectives’, are also associated with technical drawings found in the folders listed in Table 1, although this is not always the case. In some instances, based on the surviving documentation, it appears that only a pictorial representation, sketch or perspective view of the project has survived, with no corresponding technical or working drawings. This can be explained in part by the fact that this section of the archive also contains unrealised design proposals and drawings from Denegri’s academic years. It may also be related to the fact that more technical details, particularly for routine or relatively uncomplicated projects, might have been discussed directly on site. Alternatively, Denegri himself may have gradually selected which documents to retain in his personal archive and which to discard. In some cases, the collection also contains perspective views of coastlines or villages that do not appear to be directly connected with a specific project. These drawings may have been produced simply for the pleasure of depicting landscapes to which the architect paid particular attention, whether in his beloved Liguria or in the inland areas of Piedmont. It is also possible, however, that some of these drawings were associated with Denegri’s post-war activities, when he was involved in urban planning, the design of promenades and public parks. The absence of dates on most of the documents makes it difficult to determine whether these sketches were primarily the expression of the architect’s personal sensibility or whether they were, so to speak, instrumental drawings produced for a specific purpose. Finally, in Table 3, groups together the 30 files containing watercolours, coloured pencil drawings or charcoal sketches. This classification was adopted to highlight the frequency with which Denegri employed different techniques to represent his ideas and designs. Here too, most of the documents relate to Denegri’s projects. However, this section also includes depictions of buildings, architectural details and views that appear to have no direct connection with any of his projects. It is perhaps in the drawings included in Tables 2 and 3 that Denegri’s artistic sensibility and passion for drawing — probably developed during his academic training—are most clearly expressed.

Taken together, these categories indicate that pictorial and freehand drawing was not an exceptional form of representation within Denegri’s archive, but a recurrent component of his professional production.

- 1) Was freehand drawing practised only during certain periods of Denegri’s life, or not? From the material in the archive, it would appear that this passion and skill for freehand drawing cannot be confined to a specific period of Denegri’s life, but that freehand sketches were used consistently throughout, whether during his student years, for pleasure, or as a tool to better illustrate a project. In some cases, the sketch appears to serve as a tool to communicate or develop a project.
- 2) Furthermore, upon consulting the archive material, there seems to be no distinction between types of projects and/or between public and private clients. More technical drawings and pictorial representations are present in both projects for private clients and those for public commissions. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Denegri’s design work ranges from the design of a

piece of interior furniture to development plans for entire neighbourhoods, yet his approach to the project and his method of representing it do not appear to change. Furthermore, although the works from his academic period are predominantly freehand drawings and watercolour and charcoal renderings, the use of these representational methods is retained and is also present in his later projects.

Table 1. Documents Contained in the Denegri Collection (ASF) Generically Catalogued as Drawings

Archive Ref.	File	Municipality / Locality	Description: Drawings
A08	2	Finale Ligure, Finalmarina	Richeri Pharmacy, bas-relief design
A09	5; 7	Finale Ligure, Finalmarina	Richeri Pharmacy, façade design in Finale stone; Cemetery, tomb, design for gravestone of Count V. Emanuele Di Raymondi
A21	1	Finale L., Perti	Perti School, drawings and calculations
A23	3	Torino	Corso Rodolfo Montevicchio. Design of the façade of Casa Maffei by A. Vandone
C08	E02; 13.02	Finale Ligure/Calvisio	Drawings: of Villa Buraggi in Calvisio; of Castelfranco. Portraits with faces
C01	C29; C25 B03; B04	-- Finale L., Perti	Various drawings; Technical drawing – tapestry frame Survey for restoration, Chapel of Our Lady of Loreto
C03	B17.03; A04.3; B05.03 B07.01	-- Ceres Procaria Finale L.	Oil label designs Paolo Calvi fu Giovanni; entrance design; <i>Alari's</i> design for the fireplace in Villa Isabella in Procaria; Designs for the Mausoleum of General Cavaglia in Capo S. Donato
C04	B03.01-02-03; A06.01	Buttiglieria d'Asti, graveyard	Technical drawing of windows; fireplace design; technical drawing of funeral chapels; Maffei tomb, technical drawings
C06	A06.08 A01.02 A3.01; A05.06A01.03 A06.04 A06.01 A06.05 A02.01	Finalmarina/graveyard Albenga/Martire della Libertà Avenue; Finalborgo	Design for the inscription on the tombstone of V. Emanuele De Raymondi; Drawings and notes for a book on fishing in Liguria; technical drawings on fishing ; CRISPAOL Fireplace; Portraits by Vittorio De Raymondi / Paintings and drawings; Villa Noberasco in Albenga. Balcony design; Umberto I Barracks. Monument designed for flag bearer Buildings. Drawings of various unidentifiable buildings Designs and sketches of projects. Technical drawing of a cemetery
C06 1949	A05.05	S. Donato	Drawing of the Tower of Capo S. Donato
C07	A01-04; C02; D01	--	Various drawings; technical drawings ; drawings and diagrams
Doc11	5.1	--	Drawings and documents. Notes and technical calculations

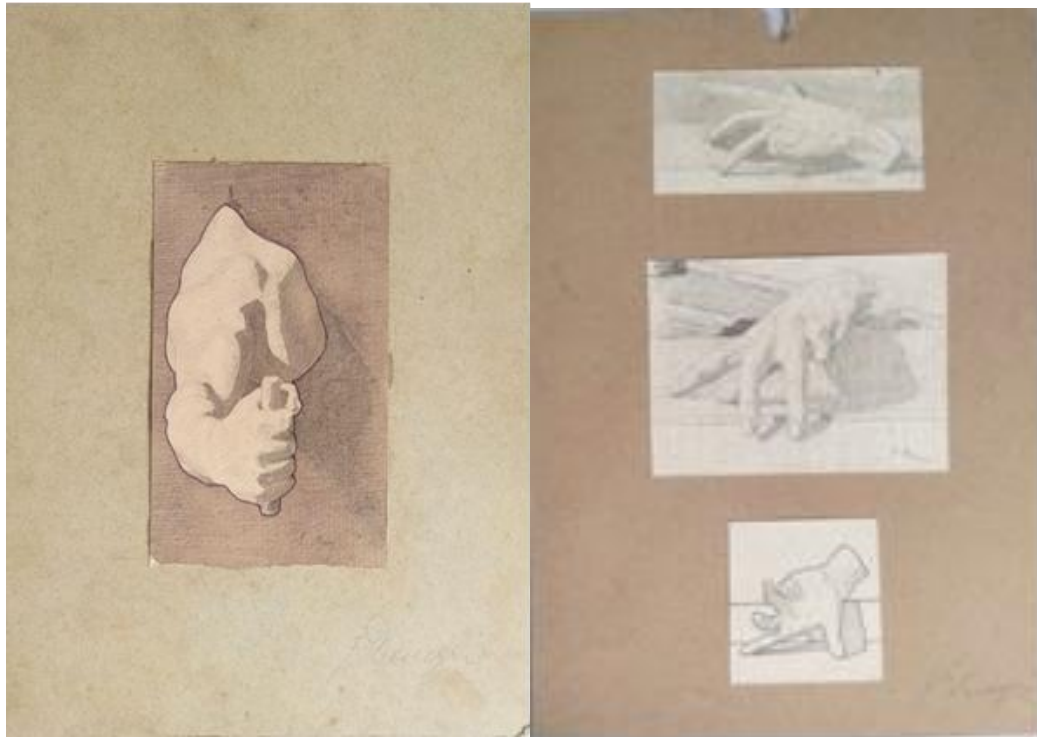


Figure 2. Sketches by Giuseppe Denegri, Probably Dating from his Time at the Academy
Source: ASF, Denegri Collection.

Table 2. Documents Contained in the Denegri Collection (ASF) Catalogued as Sketches and Perspective Views

Archive	File	Description /Sketches// Perspective Views
A23	2	Marina project. Perspective view. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Loc. Castelletto
A 24	14	House design, perspective view. Municipality-locality: Savona
A26	3	Family tomb of Comm. Giovanni Maffei. Perspective view. Municipality-locality: Buttigliera d'Asti, cimitero
A27	7;29;30	Tomb, various cemetery chapels, sketches; Miscellaneous – house, house plan. Miscellaneous and sketches; various notes and sketches
Doc11	3	Collections of drawings, sketches, drafts, notes.
C01	A07	Casanova's house in Brunenghi road, sketches. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Finalmarina
C02	A06.5	Various drawings and sketches.
C03	A04.5 B03.01 B05.01 B07.02 B09.01 B19.01 B03.07	Various drawings and sketches. Miscellaneous – Various drawings and sketches (4); Cemetery project, perspective view of the portico with burial niches and chapels. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Varigotti; Concezione road, Palazzo Buraggi. Project for opening arches on the ground floor. Perspective drawing. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Finalmarina
C04	A01.01 B04.05 B05.01 B06.01 B07.03 B08.02 B09.02	Various drawings and sketches of projects (2); Drawings and sketches of floor plans of unidentified buildings; various drawings and sketches; drawings, sketches, various designs for buildings and furniture. Various drawings; Various drawings and sketches
C05	B07; A03.02	Various drawings and sketches; Perspective. Its derivation from descriptive geometry
C06	A05.04 A05.07 A03-05	View of the façade of the Church of St. Giovanni. Municipality-locality: Finalmarina Various drawings and sketches; View of the Church of St. Mary of Finalpia. Municipality-locality: Finalpia

C07	E03	Boncardo Hotel, perspective view. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Finalpia
C08	A01 B01	Transparency drawings of local monuments and landscapes, objects, rural settings; View of Castelfranco from the promenade. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Finalmarina

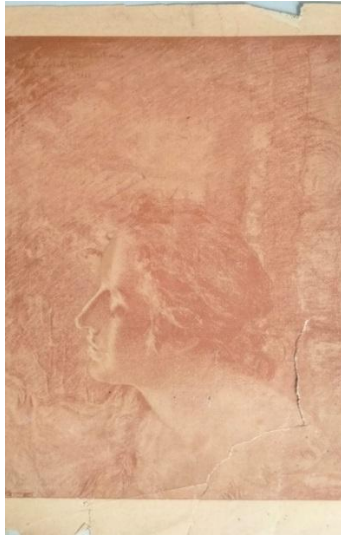


Figure 3. *Sketches by Giuseppe Denegri, Probably Dating from his Time at the Academy*

Source: ASF, Denegri Collection.

Looking at the Denegri collection catalogue, it is immediately clear how much importance was given to drawings in this archive. Approximately one-seventh of the documents preserved in the collection (84 files, to be precise) are catalogued exclusively as “drawings”. This proportion increases further if drawings attached to building permit applications are also included. The archive, however, contains much more than technical drawings. It also preserves sketches, various types of representations and depictions of landscapes. The drawings are sometimes accompanied by notes and, in some cases, by the architect’s signature. Dates are much rarer. For example, among the documents listed in Tables 1, 2 and 3, only one is explicitly dated: document C06 1949 A05.05 S. Donato, drawing of the Tower of Capo S. Donato. The absence of dates is not a peculiarity limited to drawings. It also frequently found in other documents preserved in the Denegri collection, including administrative and urban planning practices and correspondence.¹² The importance that Denegri himself attributed to freehand drawing is particularly striking. His technical and artistic skills are especially evident in the sketches preserved in the collection. The archive also contains drawings produced by Denegri during his youth. In some cases, the catalogue explicitly identifies these drawings as dating from his Academy years. This is the case, for example, with drawing C04 B10.01 -- Various drawings and watercolours from the Academy C06 A01.01 -- Watercolour drawings of fruit and mushrooms - Various watercolours and academic ornamental studies C01 A10 -- Drawings and watercolours from the Academy. C04

12. B. Poggi, *La città di Finalmarina attraverso i verbali del Consiglio e della Giunta Municipale (1861–1926)* (Finale Ligure: Comune di Finale Ligure, 2023).

A03.01 Drawings, watercolours, ornamental studies from the academy (tabs 1-5). C06 A06.11 Charcoal and pencil drawings of faces from the academy. C07 B01 Charcoal portraits from the Accademy (Tables 1-5).

Table 3. Documents Contained in the Denegri Collection (ASF) Catalogued as Drawings Created Using the Watercolour Technique or Made in Charcoal and/or Pencil

Archive	File	Description / Watercolour
C01	A02; B01; B02; C01; C08.02; C27; A10; A08	Ara Pacis watercolour; Watercolours and drawings; Watercolour (3); Various drawings, watercolour; Drawings and watercolours from the Academy; Academy charcoal portraits; Academy charcoal portraits
C02	A11.2	Watercolour painting of St. Mary in Ara Pacis. Municipality-locality: Roma
C03	A01.9; A04.1	Watercolour drawing/painting. Votive shrine on Gorra Olle Road. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure/Gorra; Vittorio Emanuele II square, Monument to Enrico Caviglia. Charcoal drawing with plaque for the general. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure.
C04	A03.01; B10.01; B04.03	Drawings, watercolours, academic ornamentation exercises; Various drawings and watercolours from the Academy; Charcoal and pencil drawings, Gothic church with bell tower on the façade
C05	A03	Watercolour, oratory project. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure/Gorra.
C06	A01.01; A05.08; A06.11	Watercolour drawings of fruit and mushrooms - Various watercolours and academic ornamental studies; Watercolour, cemetery, Noberasco tomb. Municipality-locality: Albenga/S.Fedele; Charcoal and pencil drawings of academic faces
C07	E01; G04; B01	Watercolours and drawings; Watercolours of architecture and geometry; Academy charcoal portraits
A29	1-6	Ink drawing of the mausoleum of Capo S. Donato by E. Caviglia. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure/S, Donato; Church of St. Giovanni Battista, watercolour drawing of the façade. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure/Finalmarina; Vittorio Emanuele II square, monument, watercolour drawing with fountain design around the Margherita arch. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure; Finalpia, Oberdan 1 square, Watercolour drawing of a house in condominium. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Finalpia; Ink drawing of the façade of the church of St. Giovanni Battista. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure, Finalmarina; Condominium - Watercolour drawing with condominium house design. Municipality-locality: Finale Ligure/Finalmarina
Doc11	5.3	Pencil drawing

Drawing Techniques as Tools of Observation and Design

A close examination of the drawings preserved in the Denegri Collection immediately reveals the architect's considerable skill, particularly in his freehand sketches. Of the documents classified as "drawings", at least one quarter are sketches. Some are executed in pencil, occasionally on the reverse side of another drawing, while others are made in ink. Their subjects vary considerably. In some cases, as in

the sketch in Figure 4, they represent details of relief decoration on a ceiling; in others, they depict architectural details, views or landscapes. In the case of sketches depicting decorative details, the surviving documentation does not always make it possible to determine whether these were studies derived from existing examples or preliminary ideas for new designs. Since research on the Denegri archives is still ongoing and will be complemented by further fieldwork, it may be possible to clarify this distinction in the future. In some cases, an initial pencil sketch is followed by a more developed coloured drawing. This sequence suggests that freehand drawing could function as an initial stage in the development of a more fully elaborated representation.

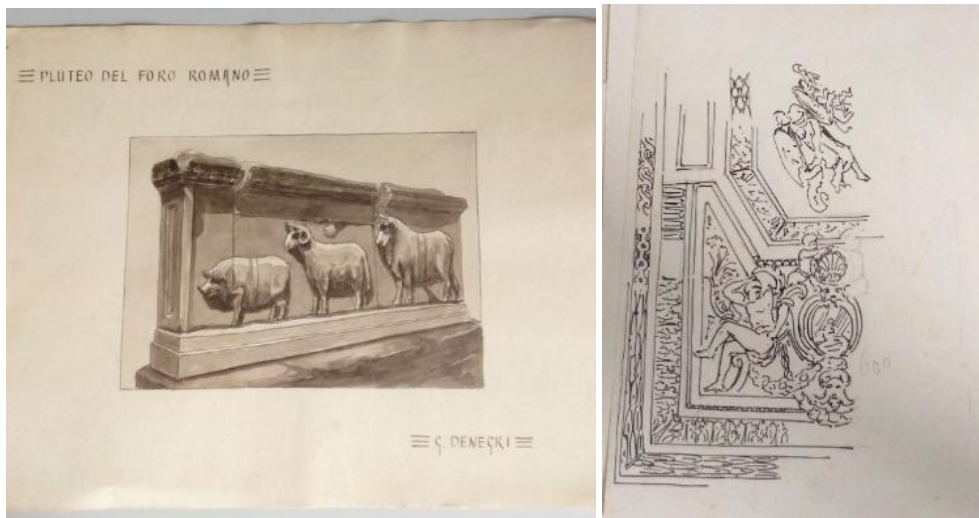


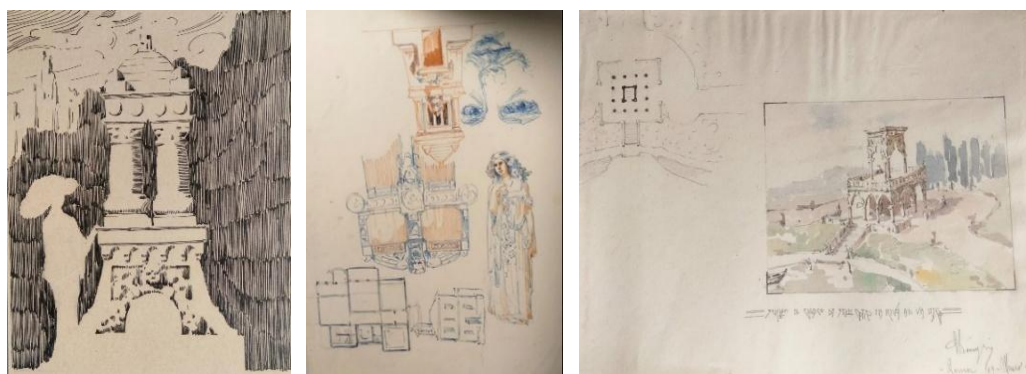
Figure 4. Sketches by Giuseppe Denegri (charcoal sketch, probably executed during his academic training (4a, left); ink drawing for a ceiling decoration, probably related to a project dating from the early part of Denegri's professional career; charcoal sketch, probably executed during his academic training (4b right). In both works, Denegri's versatility in rendering architectural elements, as well as pictorial and sculptural details, is clearly evident. The choice of different drawing techniques may reflect the varying demands of the projects and, perhaps, the different amount of time available for their execution.)

Source: ASF, Denegri Collection.

Some folders contain sketches in which De Negri appear to experiment with different representational techniques. This is the case, for example, with the drawing shown in Figure 5, which depicts an architectural element whose precise function is currently unknown. In this drawing, the background is rendered using thin parallel lines, which serve to emphasise the element represented in the foreground. In addition to line drawings, the Denegri Collection contains numerous charcoal drawings (Figure 4). Denegri frequently employed this technique to emphasise the texture and appearance of masonry/stonework. Stone is a recurrent material in his architecture, particularly in the villas dating from the Liberty period.¹³ Another

13. G. Murialdo, and D. Servente, "La Pietra di Finale tra la fine del XIX e il XX secolo: il grande epilogo di una storia secolare," in G. Murialdo, R. Cabella, R. Arobba (eds.) *La Pietra di*

recurring technique in Denegri's representations is watercolour. Many of these drawings date from his Academy years, but the collection also contains watercolour views associated with his professional commissions, sometimes accompanying the projects themselves. Watercolour was often used to represent a building within its surrounding landscape. This may suggest, once again, that Denegri conceived his architectural projects with particular attention to the context in which they were to be inserted. Different drawing techniques appear to have served different functions within Denegri's architectural practice: pencil sketches were generally used for a rapid exploration of ideas, ink drawings provided greater definition and were often suited to presentation, charcoal was particularly effective in conveying materiality, mass and texture, watercolour allowed him to represent colour, atmosphere and the relationship between architecture and its context, perspective drawings facilitated the spatial anticipation of architectural forms, while technical drawings served primarily to define constructional aspects and communicate the project.



Figures 5, 6. *Sketches by Giuseppe Denegri (probably dating from his time at the Academy; in these sketches, Denegri employs a representational technique based on fine, parallel lines. He frequently uses this method in black-and-white sketches (as, for example, in Figure 5); at other times, he employs fine parallel lines in different colours (Figure 6). The use of different colours is occasionally complemented by areas of colour rendered in watercolour.)*

Source: ASF, Denegri Collection.

Denegri's Works - From Drawing to Building: Three Case Studies

Most of Denegri's professional activity concerned the design of new buildings, at both the architectural and urban scales.¹⁴ The cataloguing of his archive has nevertheless brought to light a small number of restoration projects. The archival material reveals certain differences in the way restoration interventions—such as those concerning the Church of nostra Signora di Loreto, also known as the Church Dei Cinque Campanili, in Perti, and the Mausoleum of General Caviglia—were

Finale. Una risorsa naturale e storica del Ponente ligure (Finale Ligure, 2019), 529-563; G. Murialdo, "Da Antonio Vandone di Cortemiglia a Giuseppe Denegri. Architettura del Novecento a Finalmarina."); Murialdo, *Giuseppe Denegri (1886–1976)*, 2023.

14. Ordine degli Architetti di Savona, "Omaggio All'architetto Giuseppe Denegri - A Finale Ligure Sabato 8 Novembre - Architetti Savona".

represented compared with new construction projects. Nevertheless, a common feature emerges across both categories: Denegri's close attention to the existing context. In both restoration and new-building projects, his drawings demonstrate a careful reading of the site and its architectural, historical, and urban conditions.

Church of Nostra Signora di Loreto or Church Dei Cinque Campanili, at Perti: Drawing as a Means of Comparison with the Existing Building

In the case of the Church Dei Cinque Campanili at Perti, records dating from 1921 onwards document communications with the Superintendency concerning the deteriorating condition of the building, together with a number of initiatives aimed at promoting its restoration.¹⁵ These efforts culminated in February 1939 with the involvement of Giuseppe Denegri. By this time, Denegri had already been regarded for approximately two decades as an “architect of memory” for Finale in connection with the First World War,¹⁶ owing to the numerous commissions he had received for monumental and commemorative works associated with the conflict. It was presumably in recognition of this experience, as well as of his considerable reputation, that he was entrusted with the restoration of the small church. At the time, the intervention was praised both by the Superintendent for Monuments, Raffaello Niccoli, and by the contemporary press. The works included “excavation, removal of the plaster, consolidation of the masonry, and restoration of the ornamental elements in moulded terracotta”,¹⁷ together with new plasterwork and interior finishes, new flooring, and new doors and windows.

15. F. Caffarena, “Sulle ali della fede. I restauri alla chiesa di Nostra Signora di Loreto a Perti in memoria dei caduti dell'aviazione,” in M. Berruti, F. Caffarena, G. Murialdo (eds.) *Enrico Caviglia 1862/1945. Memoria Viaggi Cultura* (Finale Ligure: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2025), 208-221; C. Ceschi, “La cappella di N.S. di Loreto (chiesa dei Cinque Campanili) a Perti (Finale),” *Rivista Ingauna Intemelia* n.s., XXVI (1971): 11-18.

16. Caffarena, “Sulle ali della fede,” 2025, 212.

17. Caffarena, “Sulle ali della fede,” 2025, 213.



Figure 7. *Church NS Signora di Loreto or dei Cinque Campanili a Perti*
Source: ASF, Denegri Collection.

The intervention at the small church of Perti is one of the few restoration projects attributable to Denegri. Within the Denegri archive, only one other project is explicitly identified as a “restoration project”: the Mausoleum of General Caviglia at Capo S. Donato, which will be discussed below.



Figure 8. Church NS Signora di Loreto o dei Cinque Campanili in Perti (After Restoration)

Source: photo by D. Papalini 2010.

This makes the drawings accompanying the Perti project particularly significant. In particular, the drawing depicting the principal façade provides valuable evidence for understanding Denegri's approach to representation and design in the context of restoration. The drawing is rendered in colour using watercolour. Shadows are carefully indicated, presumably to convey a more accurate perception of the different surfaces, distinguishing those in the foreground from elements set further back, such as the drum. The characteristic bichromy of the building—white for the plastered surfaces and red for the exposed brickwork—is faithfully reproduced. There also appears to be a subtle differentiation in the colouring of the brickwork, which may have been intended to distinguish between areas that underwent substantial reconstruction using newly manufactured facing bricks and those in which the historic fabric is largely preserved, with, at most, limited interventions involving the repointing of mortar joints. The latter include, for instance, the masonry sections of the four bell towers flanking the drum. In Denegri's drawing, these areas are represented as plastered surfaces through which a faint reddish hue can nevertheless be discerned. These correspond to the portions in which the historic brickwork predominated and which, in the completed restoration, were ultimately left exposed. In the absence of autograph notes by Denegri, however, the drawing does not allow us to establish with certainty whether the original design actually envisaged plastering almost the entirety of these sections. If so, this might

suggest a particular restoration approach in which the formal unity of the building took precedence over the authenticity of its materials. Alternatively, the apparent plastering may simply have been a graphic convention intended to indicate that these areas did not require the reconstruction of missing sections of brick masonry. A similar process of graphic regularisation can be observed in the bands of exposed brick framing the façade. In the drawing, the brick sections alternating with the white plastered surfaces are consistently represented as four courses high. The actual building, however, is considerably more irregular. This can be observed both in its present condition and in a photograph preserved in the Superintendency's archive, in which the exposed-brick bands alternate between sections of three and seven courses. Another discrepancy concerns the two marble plaques positioned high on the façade and bearing carved coats of arms. Although Denegri accurately records their presence and general form, their position is not represented correctly. Both the building as it survives today and a late nineteenth-century photograph¹⁸ show the plaques set within an entirely brick-built section, immediately below the cornice and separated from it by only a narrow white band corresponding to approximately three courses of brick. In Denegri's drawing, by contrast, they are placed lower down, on the plastered portions of the two corner pilasters of the façade. Further discrepancies can be identified in the representation of the portal and in the uppermost portion of the fifth bell tower. The reasons for these departures from the actual appearance of the building remain unclear. It is difficult to determine whether Denegri deliberately chose not to provide a detailed representation of elements that were intended to be completely replaced, thereby depicting what might be understood as a generic portal and a generic bell-tower structure, or whether these features instead reflect his own design intentions and his conception of the building's final appearance after the restoration. This ambiguity is particularly interesting in the context of Denegri's restoration practice. The drawing appears to occupy an intermediate position between the accurate recording of the existing building and the graphic anticipation of its restored state. While certain material and formal characteristics are carefully documented, others are regularised, simplified, or altered. The drawing should therefore not necessarily be understood as a purely descriptive record of the existing structure. Rather, it may also be read as an interpretative and projective document, in which the act of representation becomes part of the design process itself.¹⁹ The

18. The photograph referred to is the one by Alessandro Beltrame, held in the MUDIF photographic archive and published by Caffarena in his 2025 article.

19. In Denegri's drawing, the portal appears in a slightly beige tone, perhaps intended to simulate the appearance of marble. It consists of marble jambs and a flat architrave, an additional upper framing band, and a marble pediment. In Denegri's representation, the latter appears to be entirely made of marble; in reality, as documented by the photograph by Alessandro Beltrame preserved in the MUDIF Photographic Archive and published by Caffarena (Caffarena, "Sulle ali della fede", 2025, 209), the inner portion of the pediment was instead plastered prior to the restoration. The overall proportions of the portal also appear to differ slightly from those observed in reality. It should nevertheless be borne in mind that, in this case, we are not dealing with an actual architectural survey, but rather with a representation of the building. Any discrepancies in proportion and in the rendering of materials should therefore be assessed in light of the primarily representational nature of Denegri's drawing.

church subsequently required further restoration work in 1964.²⁰ Later assessments Denegri's restoration work on the chapel has therefore been relatively critical. According to Caffarena, however, such assessment may be "...perhaps unduly harsh". There is no doubt, in fact, about the considerable effort Denegri devoted to the restoration. The choice of materials, which in the long term proved not to be entirely compatible with the historic elements, can unfortunately be regarded as one of the errors made by many professionals of the period in their restoration work.²¹

Mausoleum of General Caviglia: Drawing as Design and the Integration of Architecture and Sculpture

Another project associated with the restoration concerns the Mausoleum of General Caviglia.²² In this case, the project involved the restoration and transformation of a historic tower located at Capo San Donato.²³ Denegri's initial proposal, also supported by the technical committee, envisaged a radical redefinition of the entrance to the mausoleum within the tower, replacing the original elevated entrance. Denegri proposed the construction of a large arched pronaos, characterized by the presence of two imposing sculptures in Pietra di Finale depicting medieval warriors. Although never executed, the project clearly evokes a neo-medieval and Romantic aesthetic that was already becoming outdated at the time. It also recalls the allegorical figure of "Glory," created in 1923 by Arturo Martini for the War Memorial in Vado Ligure.²⁴ "As for the interior, it had been decided to place a marble bust of the general, entrusting its execution to Gaetano Cellini, an artist originally from Ravenna but active in Turin, who in 1927 had already created the bronze portrait of Caviglia, part of the monument dedicated to him in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II in Finalmarina, also designed by Denegri".²⁵

20. "The original lime plaster had been poorly covered over on the exterior with sprayed cement plaster; the interior brickwork decorations had been restored without regard for their original features, [and] nothing had been done to restore the original polychrome decoration (Caffarena, "Sulle ali della fede," 2025, 219)."

21. R. Scunza, P. Parodi, S. Vassallo, E. Schicchi, D. Pittaluga, S. Fossati, et al., "Il restauro della chiesa di Nostra Signora di Loreto o dei Cinque Campanili a Perti," in G. Biscontin, and G. Driussi (eds.) *Restaurare i restauri. Metodi, Compatibilità, Cantieri. Atti del Convegno di Studi, 24–27 giugno 2008* (Venezia: Arcadia Ricerche, 2008), 951-960.

22. E. Caviglia, *Diario 1925–1945* (Roma, 1952); P. P. Cervone, *Enrico Caviglia, l'anti-Badoglio Enrico Caviglia* (The Anti-Badoglio) (Milano, 1992); G. Colmuto Zanella, "Finale Ligure – Finalpia. Torre di San Donato," in *I castelli della Liguria*, I (ed.) C. Perogalli (Genova, 1972), 343-346; G. Rossini, "Da Cantore a Caviglia. La memoria dei protagonisti della Grande Guerra nei monumenti e nei sacrari," in *Da Baroni a Piacentini: percorsi di approfondimento* (eds.) G. Rossini, and C. Masi (Genova, 2010), 15-37.

23. The initial plan to build a new chapel on Capo San Donato, in accordance with the wishes expressed by Caviglia during his lifetime, had met with opposition from the Superintendency for Monumental Heritage of Liguria (then headed by Carlo Ceschi), which ordered the suspension of all works aimed at demolishing the tower and making significant alterations to the area, entrusting the task of overseeing the restoration of the tower to Prof. Giacomo Raitano. (G. Murialdo and M. Tassinari, "Il Mausoleo di Caviglia a San Donato. Due giganti, enormi, posti a guardia, vegliano sempre," in M. Berruti, F. Caffarena, and G. Murialdo (eds.) *Enrico Caviglia 1862/1945. Memoria Viaggi Cultura* (Finale Ligure: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2025), 227.

24. G. Murialdo and M. Tassinari, "Il Mausoleo di Caviglia a San Donato," 227-228.

25. G. Murialdo and M. Tassinari, "Il Mausoleo di Caviglia a San Donato," 228.

This element highlights the close relationship between the architect Denegri and the sculptors with whom he collaborated. For economic reasons, the project subsequently underwent a series of modifications. The more prestigious stone materials were replaced with grey Malanaggio stone, and it was decided to adopt a bas-relief depicting Scenes from the Life of Saint Donatus, commissioned by the artistic committee from the sculptor Armando Gerbino. In the project for the Caviglia Mausoleum, the drawings are not rendered in color, unlike those contained in the file concerning the restoration of the Church of Nostra Signora dei Cinque Campanili in Perti. This may perhaps be explained by the fact that the tower at Capo San Donato is constructed predominantly from a single building material, namely stone, whereas the façades of the small church at Perti display a combination of white-painted plastered surfaces, exposed brick masonry and decorative elements in marble. The technique employed for the Capo San Donato project is varied: the documentation includes freehand pencil sketches as well as perspective representations executed in ink. No watercolours are present. In the earliest representations, the volume of the tower is rendered in a deliberately essential manner. Here, the tower serves primarily as the backdrop for Denegri's design. The central focus of the entire project is the atrium and, in particular, the representation of what would become the sculptural portal, together with its monumental figures. This element is placed clearly in the foreground and carefully rendered, with considerable attention to detail. Only at a later stage do the technical drawings appear. In the site plan, the tower is positioned within the surrounding context; several reference measurements are indicated, while the promontory is represented together with the irregularities of the terrain and an indication of the surrounding vegetation. Contour lines, however, are not marked. In the elevation drawings, the masonry texture is represented with considerable fidelity through the depiction of individual stone elements, which are shown as roughly dressed and of small to medium size. The level of detail resulting from careful observation of the context—both the natural setting in which the tower is located and the architectural context provided by the surviving structure—appears comparable to that found in the other restoration project, namely the small church at Perti. Here too, however, certain simplifications can be identified. With regard to the tower, for example, its upper edges, which at the time had been preserved as a ruin, are accurately represented. The irregular masonry crest is clearly visible. The sentry box, or rather what remains of it, is instead rendered in a somewhat simplified manner. Based on the documents examined so far, it is still not possible to determine whether the masonry portion of the sentry box was in fact somewhat lower at the time, with small additions being made during the project and its subsequent execution, or whether it already possessed the volume that is currently visible and Denegri simply simplified its form, representing it only schematically. Understanding this detail could help clarify the architect's approach to the issues of restoration. The sentry box appears to be the most recent element of this medieval structure; consequently, its possible simplification in the drawings may have resulted from a deliberate design choice. In the absence of sufficient information, however, this question must, for the time being remain open.²⁶

26. At a later stage of the research, it would be possible to carry out material sampling (of the plaster mortars and the bedding mortars of the sentry box masonry) and, if possible, a

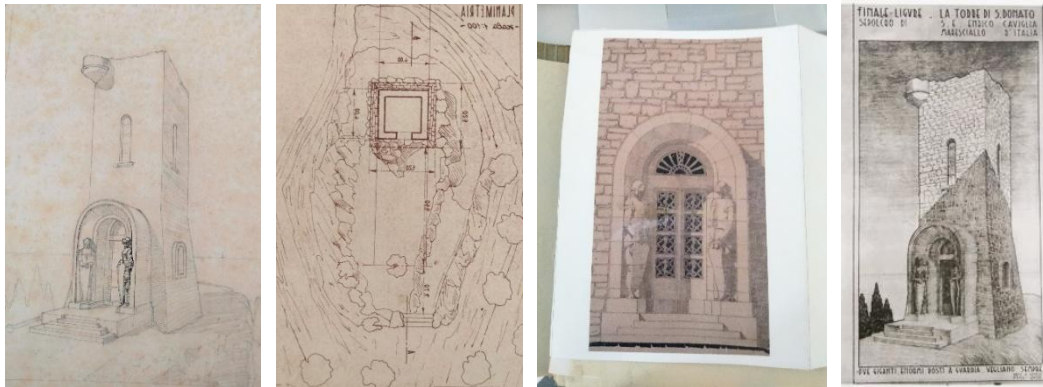


Figure 9. Ink drawing of Giuseppe Denegri, Mausoleo Caviglia
 Source: ASF, Fondo Denegri, A 29.

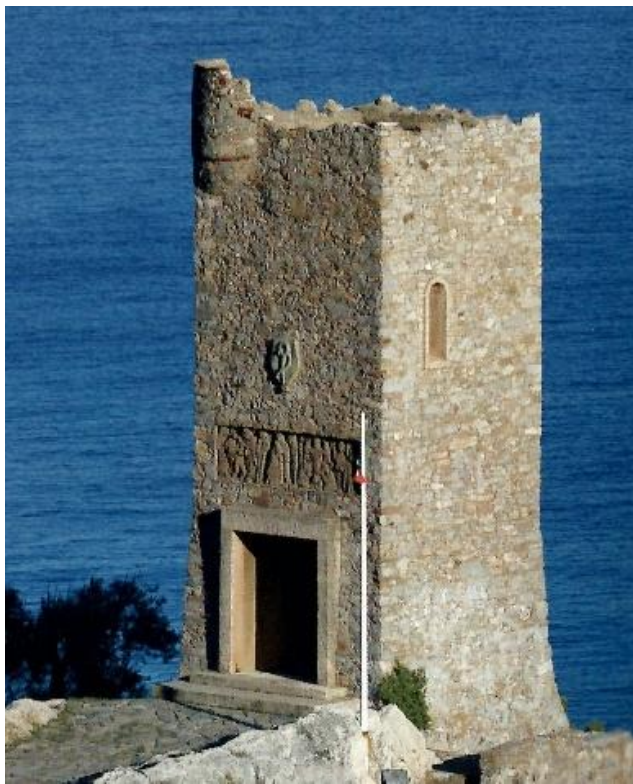


Figure 10. Mausoleo Caviglia Today
 Source: ASF, Fondo Denegri, A 29.

It is possible – and ongoing research is already beginning to suggest this – that Denegri's sensitivity to the visual arts contributed to his ability to secure and successfully execute, commissions in which architecture, painting and sculpture were closely integrated. Examples include, in addition to the Mausoleum of General

mensiochronological analysis of the bricks, in order to determine whether there are any interventions that could date back to Denegri's time. If this were the case, one could then consider the possibility of a reintegration carried out during the construction phase, which is not documented in the project drawings—an occurrence that was by no means uncommon at the time.

Caviglia discussed above, the design of the war memorial in Finalborgo (1920), the plaque for the Monument to Enrico Caviglia in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II in Finalmarina (1927), the artistic conception of the Parco della Rimembranza in Finalpia (1926), the Monument to the Weeping Mother (1921). In the latter case, the sculptural realisation of the sorrowful figure of the victim's mother, almost a Mater Dolorosa, which stands out within the monumental stone complex, was entrusted to the Bergamo artist Edmondo Cattaneo, a former collaborator of the Vandone–Denegri studio.

Villa Noberasco: Drawing as an Integrated Design Tool

A close relationship of trust and collaboration often existed between Denegri and the sculptor with whom he worked, at the final realisation of the monuments, including their sculptural elements, frequently confirmed the intentions expressed in the preliminary designs. Similar considerations apply to the pictorial arts and to Denegri's relationships with painters. In many of these works, similarities can be identified with Denegri's sketches from his academic years, particularly in the treatment of architectural details, carefully rendered decorative elements and figurative components. Among his other commissions, in 1927–28 Denegri was also entrusted with the renovation of the pictorial decoration of the council chamber in the town hall on Via Pertica, centred on medallions depicting local historical figures.²⁷ Perhaps, however it is at Villa Noberasco that the relationship between architecture painting and sculpture is most clearly expressed within a single, carefully integrated design. Through drawing, Denegri made visible an architectural reality that did not yet exist, transforming his ideas into images that offered a glimpse of extraordinary spaces and architecture. Through drawing, he made visible an architectural reality that did not yet exist, translating design intentions into a coherent visual representation of spaces, materials and architectural details. His drawings sometimes extend to highly detailed representations of the furnishings and interiors, as in the case of the Noberasco villa in Albenga (SV). For Villa Noberasco (1932–36), Denegri selected high-quality cladding materials and carefully considered the most appropriate materials for the various finishes. For the floors, for example, he selected fir and pine wood, while the tiles were made using ceramics produced by the Ceramica Ligure company. The building was also equipped with some of the most advanced technological solutions available at the time.²⁸

27. M. Berruti, F. Caffarena, and G. Murialdo (Eds.), *Enrico Caviglia 1862/1945. Memoria Viaggi Cultura* (Finale Ligure: Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri, 2025).

28. One example is the electrical system, which was supplied directly by the German firm Siemens, and it was also fitted with roller shutters, which in the 1930s were an absolute novelty in the Ligurian context.



Figure 11. *Villa Noberasco, Model*

Source: photo by Luca Placci 2025.

In Villa Noberasco, the architectural drawings are complemented by details of the interiors, specific indications of the materials used and their workmanship, and precise representations of decorative elements and their relationship with the surrounding context. Drawing, therefore, extends beyond the building envelope and accompanies the definition of interior spaces and their details. This suggests that, for Denegri, design and the drawing associated, was not conceived merely as the volumetric definition of a building, but rather as a coordinated system encompassing architecture, materials, decoration, furnishings, and technology. In Villa Noberasco, a close connection can also be identified with Denegri's early academic training. His studies of ornament, watercolours, attention to the three-dimensionality of sculpted elements and architectural drawings all find correspondences in the architecture, decoration and material treatment of the villa.



Figure 12. *Villa Noberasco, Interior*

Source: photo by Luca Placci 2025.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research presented here has provided a deeper understanding of the work and architectural thinking of Giuseppe Denegri, whose professional activity contributed significantly to the transformation of the western Ligurian Riviera from the early twentieth century through the post-war period. The analysis of the Denegri Collection shows that drawing was a continuous and significant component of his architectural practice, extending from his academic training into his professional activity. The drawings provide insight not only into Denegri's graphic skills, but also into the way he observed and conceived architecture. His sketches, perspectives and watercolours demonstrate a particular sensitivity to architectural detail, materials and the relationship between buildings and their surroundings. In some cases, only a few strokes are sufficient to define an architectural element or identify the essential features of a landscape within which a new building was to be inserted. Drawing therefore appears to have been an active component of the design process rather than simply a means of representing an already conceived architectural idea. The evidence examined also suggests that Denegri's attention to materials and craftsmanship was closely connected to his graphic practice. Materials that had long

characterised the architecture of the Ligurian coast, particularly stone, were carefully observed and subsequently incorporated into his own architectural language. His graphic representations thus appear to have provided a means of translating visual and material knowledge into architectural and technical decisions. The three case studies examined—the Church of Nostra Signora di Loreto at Perti, the Mausoleum of General Caviglia, and Villa Noberasco—illustrate different relationships between drawing and the architectural object.

Case	Condition	Role of drawing
Perti	Existing historic building / restoration	Recording, interpreting and anticipating
Caviglia	Existing historic structure / transformation	Reading the pre-existence and designing a new intervention
Villa Noberasco	New construction	Conceiving, defining and coordinating the building

At Perti, drawing mediates between the observation of an existing historic building and the anticipation of its restoration. In the case of the Caviglia Mausoleum, the existing structure becomes the starting point for a new intervention, and drawing serves to explore and communicate its transformation. Villa Noberasco represents a different condition: through drawings, Denegri conceived and coordinated an architectural reality that did not yet exist, extending his design activity from the building envelope to interiors, furnishings, materials and decorative elements. Taken together, these cases suggest that the role of drawing was not determined by the type of commission but adapted to the specific design problem. In restoration, it addressed the relationship between an existing building and its possible future state; in the transformation of an existing structure, it supported the reinterpretation of the pre-existing architecture; in new construction, it enabled the conception and coordination of an architecture yet to be realised. The continuity lies therefore not in a particular drawing technique, but in the capacity of drawing to support different forms of architectural reasoning. The preliminary findings can be summarised in relation to the research questions that guided the archival investigation. Freehand drawing appears to have been a continuous practice throughout Denegri's career rather than one confined to his academic years. Pictorial forms of representation were used not only for academic exercises or personal studies, but also in professional projects. They occur across different scales and fields of activity, from architectural details and interiors to residential buildings, monuments and urban interventions. No clear distinction between public and private commissions emerges from the material examined. The evidence therefore suggests that freehand and pictorial representation formed an integral part of Denegri's broader architectural practice. The drawings also demonstrate that architectural representation was not necessarily a neutral recording of reality. Particularly in the restoration project at Perti, graphic representation combines observation, selection, interpretation and anticipation. Certain elements of the existing building are recorded with considerable precision, while others are regularised, simplified or altered. This is significant because it shows that the act of drawing could influence how the existing architecture was understood and how its possible transformation was conceived. A similar process can be observed, in different forms,

in the Caviglia Mausoleum and Villa Noberasco, where information was selected and organised according to the specific design problem. This interpretative dimension raises a broader question concerning architectural representation. To draw a building or a landscape is also to decide which elements should be emphasised, retained or subordinated. Representation therefore involves an attribution of value as well as the transmission of information. In this respect, the Denegri Collection offers an opportunity to reflect critically on contemporary forms of architectural representation, including increasingly data-driven and AI-generated forms, by drawing attention to the interpretative choices that remain inherent in the act of representing architecture. Although the research is still ongoing and will be complemented by further fieldwork and archival investigation, the evidence examined so far demonstrates the value of the Denegri Collection as a source for understanding twentieth-century architectural practice. Its drawings extend beyond their value as archival records: they provide evidence of the architect's methods and make it possible to investigate aspects of the design process that are not always accessible through the analysis of buildings alone. This has implications for the conservation and restoration of twentieth-century architecture. A better understanding of Denegri's design intentions, his use of materials and his working methods can contribute to more informed interventions on buildings that are now several decades old, including his surviving works. As these buildings increasingly require maintenance, repair and restoration, archival drawings can provide valuable evidence for interpreting design intentions and developing interventions that are both prudent and respectful of the architectural work of previous generations.²⁹ The study also has implications for contemporary architectural practice. Denegri's work demonstrates the potential of drawing to connect close observation of materials, details, craftsmanship and context with the development of architectural ideas. Examining such practices offers an opportunity to reflect critically on current methods of representation and on the changing relationship between drawing and architectural thought. Despite profound changes in representational technologies, the evidence from the Denegri Collection suggests that drawing retains its value as a means of investigating architectural problems and developing design idea.

29. B. P. Torsello, "La dialettica restauro/progetto," *Ananke*, no. 19 (1997): 29-33; Torsello, *Che cos'è il restauro? Nove studiosi a confronto* (Venezia: Marsiglio, 2006); Torsello, *Figure di pietra* (Venezia: Marsiglio, 2006); S. F. Musso, "L'antico tra archeologia e restauri," in *Archeologie, Studi in onore di Tiziano Mannoni* (eds.) N. Cucuzza, and M. Medri (Bari, Edipuglia: 2006), 489-491; Pittaluga, *Questioni di archeologia dell'architettura e restauro* (Genova: ECIG, 2009); Pittaluga, "Come restaurare anche i beni non tutelati?" in *Proceedings of International Conference Le nuove frontiere del restauro, International Congress "Scienza e Beni Culturali"* (eds.) G. Biscontin, and G. Driussi, Bressanone, 27-30 giugno 2017 (Venezia: Ed. Arcadia Ricerche, 2017), 119-129; Pittaluga, "The Archaeology of Architecture for the Knowledge and Preservation of the 'Modern'," *Restauro Archeologico* 30, no. 1 (2022): 378-383.

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