

Turin – A Treasure Trove of Chandeliers

The Palazzos Reale di Torino (Royal Palace of Turin) in the city centre and the Palazzina di Caccia Stupinigi 10 km. to the south, were once seat to the powerful Dukes of Savoy and are both in possession of great riches in their collections of chandeliers and other historical lighting pieces. We visited these palaces during the summer and were so impressed with the collections that we wanted to share a little information about them with our members. Turin is indeed a city worth visiting when one appreciates historical lighting.

In both Palazzos, the lighting stems from two quite distinct eras – the early 18th C. rock crystal chandeliers and the later 19th C. chandeliers with Bohemian crystal trimmings, both being impressive in their own right.

The Palazzo Reale has a long history, the first building having been constructed in the 16th C. with modernizations being made in the 17th C. from the Baroque architect Filippo Juvarra. Unfortunately, not much is known to date regarding the Rock Crystal chandeliers, other than that today they are not all hung in the original rooms. More research is required to uncover the history of these pieces. As Vittorio Amedeo II was crowned king in 1713, a number of additions were made to the palace, perhaps they were a part of this ‘upgrading’?

Most of the chandeliers with Bohemian Crystal trimmings were commissioned by King Charles Albert (1831-1849) with bronze decorations produced in Turin by the bronze foundry “Colla and Odetti” (owners of a manufacture in Turin that was inspired by French models). These 19th century chandeliers were planned by the Court architect Pelagio Palagi from Bologna as part of the renovations undertaken between 1835-1842. The wall lamps or appliqués of the Grand Hall of the Swiss Guards (first floor) can also be traced back to the commissions made by Charles Albert to Palagio and Colla.ⁱ



Figure 1 Wall Sconces in Swiss Guards Hall



Figure 2 Wall Sconce showing coat of arms



Figure 3: 18th C. Rock Crystal



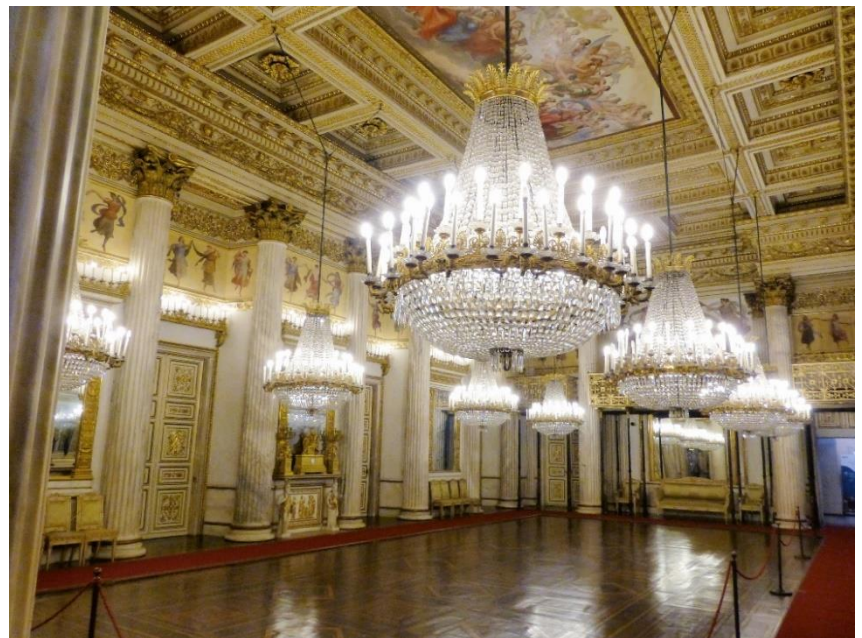
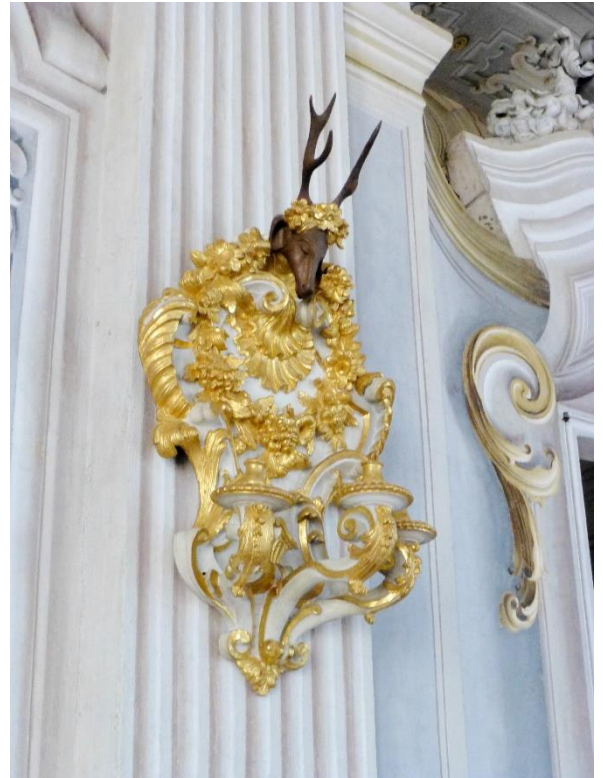


Figure 4: Ballroom Chandeliers designed by Pelagio Pelagi

The Palazzina di Caccia Stupinigi was built as a hunting lodge in the early 18th C. and became the preferred residence of Victor Amadeus III after marrying Maria Antonietta of Spain in 1750. It was also the preferred building to be used for celebrations and dynastic weddings by members of the House of Savoy. Here, in 1773, Maria Teresa, Princess of Savoy, married Charles Philippe, Count of Artois, brother of Louis XVI and the future Charles X of France. The grand chandelier in the central Salon of the Stupinigi is said to have been commissioned to commemorate the occasion of this wedding. Again, the rock crystal chandeliers date from the early 18th C. and the grand chandeliers with Bohemian crystal trimmings date from the mid-19th C.



Figure 5: Grand Salon





A few examples of the many chandeliers in the palace.

ⁱ Lorenza Santa, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Musei Reali Torino