

LES CAHIERS
DE L'ORNEMENT



Res Literaria – République des Savoirs (USR 3608 du CNRS - Collège de France, ENS de la rue d'Ulm)
Centre Jean Pépin (UMR 8230 du CNRS - ENS de la rue d'Ulm)

LES CAHIERS DE L'ORNEMENT

1

sous la direction de

Pierre Caye Francesco Solinas

textes de

TIZIANA ABATE ALEXANDRA BALLETT HÉLÈNE CASANOVA-ROBIN
STÉPHANIE DERWAELE MARZIA FAIETTI CHARLES-DOMINIQUE FUCHS
PIETRO CESARE MARANI JENNIFER MONTAGU
PIERFRANCESCO PALAZZOTTO ENRICO PARLATO EMANUELE PELLEGRINI
GILLES SAURON SARA TAGLIALAGAMBA VALENTINA TORRISI

De Luca Editori d'Arte

Sommaire

- 7 FRANCESCO SOLINAS
Les raisons de l'ornement
- 9 PIERRE CAYE
De l'ornement comme forme symbolique
- 12 HÉLÈNE CASANOVA-ROBIN
Rhétorique et éthique de l'ornement
dans la poésie latine du Quattrocento
- 23 GILLES SAURON
Ornement et politique à Rome,
de la crise de la République à l'avènement
du Principat augustéen
- 38 VALENTINA TORRISI
Les ornements dans l'univers privé de
Livie, femme d'Auguste : de la symphonie
pastorale à l'Âge d'or
- 47 STÉPHANIE DERWAEL
Aux frontières du réel : les *Blattmasken*
dans le système ornemental romain
- 60 CHARLES DOMINIQUE FUCHS
Armement et ornement,
une histoire inextricablement liée
- 74 PIETRO CESARE MARANI
« Admirable... par sa gracieuse simplicité,
par son élégance modeste sans aucune
odieuse surcharge ».
Léonard et la question de l'ornement
- 93 SARA TAGLIALAGAMBA
Machines et ornement chez Léonard
- 106 ENRICO PARLATO
L'archéologie créatrice dans les décors de
Filippino Lippi
- 121 TIZIANA ABATE
L'ornement comme témoignage
de migration artistique : les dessins
d'architecture de l'*Album Rothschild*
du Louvre
- 130 MARZIA FAIETTI
Dettagli non marginali
Gli ornati di Amico Aspertini
- 141 ALEXANDRA BALLETT
Les *ruote pisane*, un dispositif pour
l'ornement à la fin du XV^{ème} siècle
- 148 EMANUELE PELLEGRINI
La notion d'ornement :
documents d'archives et biographies
d'artiste (XVI^{ème} - XVIII^{ème} siècles)
- 162 JENNIFER MONTAGU
Inscription Tablets on Roman Baroque
Memorials
- 175 PIERFRANCESCO PALAZZOTTO
Technique and Inspiration in the work of
Giacomo Serpotta Master of Ornament
- 197 Index des noms

Technique and Inspiration in the work of Giacomo Serpotta

Master of Ornament

PIERFRANCESCO PALAZZOTTO

Museo Diocesano di Palermo - Università degli Studi di Palermo

Giacomo Serpotta was born in Palermo in 1656 and died in the same city in 1732, after working for over 50 years mostly in Palermo and in some other Sicilian towns. Some believe he never left Sicily for his artistic formation¹, but others believe this is impossible, seeing the perfect assimilation of the Roman Baroque by the sculptor². The debate is still open. But what was Palermo like in that period? The city in the seventeenth century was rich, alive and a crossroad of trade, personalities and foreigners. A crucible of cultural intersections of various origins with a population of one hundred thousand inhabitants, making it as big as Rome in the same period. Society was contended between the old feudal aristocracy and the rich and rising commercial middle class, which included vital national communities that had settled within the city walls: Pisans, Neapolitans, Venetians, Lombards and Genoese. The latter were very probably the true holders of economic power in Palermo, the capital of the Spanish Viceroyalty³. In 1622 it was governed by the Viceroy Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy, who died in 1624 in the plague epidemic. His temporary replacement was Cardinal Giovanni Doria, Archbishop of Palermo (1608-1642), who favoured the diffusion of brotherhoods and the erection of big churches of the most important religious orders⁴. The powerful clergy and rich laymen, collectors and attentive art lovers, would have been good clients for artists, often Flemish, who in fact sometimes sojourned in Palermo for long periods, for instance Jan Brueghel the Younger, Matthias Stom⁵ and, above all, Antoon van Dyck⁶. Van Dyck produced in Palermo many paintings⁷ and the last one still preserved is the *Madonna of the Rosary* in the Santissimo Rosario oratory in San Domenico, where Giacomo Serpotta, in the first years of the 18th century, was called not only as a simple stuccoer but as a sculptor and an architect, in other words a master of ornamental sculpture. But let us go back.

Giacomo Serpotta was the son of the marble worker, sculptor and plasterer Gaspare (1634-1670)⁸. His father came from a family that had already affirmed itself in the craft in the preceding century and had shown interesting skills both in marble-work and in sculpture, influenced by the Roman Baroque. If we want to understand his skill as a marble worker, we should see the interior of the chapel for Duke Giovanni Stefano Oneto di Sperlinga in the San Domenico church in Palermo (around 1665), done above all by Gaspare Guercio⁹ (*fig. 1*). As a sculptor he showed his qualities for instance with the marble drape of the statues of the Virgin and of Mary Magdalene, carved in 1667 in the Crucifixion Chapel of Palermo Cathedral. In effect he stayed in Rome between 1665 and 1667, where it is documented that he sculpted a marble head for the Sant'Agnese in Agone church¹⁰. Further, the eclectic artist was also a well known designer of ephemeral apparatuses for feasts, an activity that, as we will see, was to be a central part of his son's culture¹¹. Gaspare, however, could not accompany the technical and cultural development of young Giacomo, because he died prematurely in 1670, at the age of only 36¹². Giacomo thus owed his first steps to his older brother, the stuccoer Giuseppe Serpotta, born three years before him, in 1653, and also very probably to his apprenticeship with his maternal uncles, Gaspare Guercio and Giovanni Travaglia, two of the main later mannerist sculptors in Palermo¹³. The local tradition in sculpture and, above all, in ornamental sculpture in stucco, was deep-rooted and of great importance. It was represented, for example, in the preceding century by Antonio Ferraro who, between 1574 and 1580, did the magnificent stucco retable centring on the representation of the *Tree of Jesse* and placed in the presbytery of the San Domenico church in Castelvetro (Trapani province), on a commission from Don Carlo Aragona, first prince of Castelvetro, and afterwards President of the Kingdom of Sicily, Governor of Milan and Viceroy of Catalonia¹⁴.

Late mannerist taste, evident in those sculptures, was also to remain more or less unchanged in forms in the following generation of artists, also engaged, sometimes, in doing vast stucco apparatuses. Among these we can mention the presbytery of the main church at Ciminna (in Agrigento province) where, between 1621 and 1630, Scipione Li Volsi replicated the big marble retable done by Antonello Gagini and his sons in Palermo



Fig. 1. Gaspare Guercio, Giacomo Serpotta, *Sperlinga Chapel*, c. 1664-1665, Palermo, San Domenico Church.

Cathedral from 1510 to 1574¹⁵. Antonello's Tribune was to be the insuperable model for figurative and ornamental sculpture in Palermo; precisely until the advent of Serpotta who changed the usual patterns. In effect, Giacomo drew inspiration from it for his first works but, as always, after imitating it made it his own and then transfigured it, entirely surpassing it and creating new archetypes for the local sculptors. Hence Serpotta, a simple stuccoer, was the watershed between mannerist and Baroque sculpture and culture in Palermo. If the basis of Giacomo Serpotta's artistic formation is the local tradition, the development of his art was due to the indissoluble relationship that he had with the brotherhoods. They were his main clients and they allowed him that expressive freedom that it would have been difficult to have elsewhere¹⁶. Let us see how.

Brotherhoods in Palermo were often very rich and powerful. The first were founded in the late Middle Ages, but actually there was not only one type of association, simple unions subsequently arose, as well as congregations and, with a superior rank, arch-brotherhoods and companies. In 1999 I tried to bring in some order by precisely identifying the meanings of the different denominations, and to see whether to these there corresponded precise rules, customs and different buildings for meetings¹⁷.



Fig. 2. Vito Sulfarello, *Carminello Oratory*, 1659-1665, Palermo.

Extremely briefly: a central factor is that all of them, except the congregations, were prevalently formed by laymen, not by priests or monks and nuns, and so the members came the authority of the Church but were independent and also reacted to other cultural drives.

In this sphere in Palermo there was a very important peculiarity that, as I will illustrate, decisively influenced Serpotta's choices, and that is to say the difference between brotherhood and company.

Brotherhoods were linked very closely to the craft guilds, of which they were often an expression. Thus, for example, the carpenters' guild, founded in 1499, after a short time founded the brotherhood dedicated to St. Joseph¹⁸. This means that the composition of the association was uniform in social and professional origin. By contrast the companies, created in Palermo from 1541, in imitation of the Neapolitan ones and above all the Roman ones, were not necessarily linked to a profession and had a varied composition, often a high-level one; many of the members were educated, collectors and artists like Pietro Novelli, the greatest Sicilian painter of the first half of the seventeenth century, a member of the Rosario company in San Domenico¹⁹. We can also mention the company of Santissimo Crocifisso dei Bianchi, founded by the viceroy Ferdinando Gonzaga and almost exclusively made up of aristocrats²⁰. This would have had consequences on the involvement of artists of fame in their devotional places. Indeed, at least three of the most important seventeenth-century paintings in Palermo were commissioned by companies, not by religious orders or parishes. I refer to the *Nativity* by Caravaggio, painted in the first years of the seventeenth century for the San Francesco company in San Lorenzo, to the *Madonna of the Rosary*, painted by Van Dyck for the Santissimo Rosario company in San Domenico, and to the other *Madonna of the Rosary* by Carlo Maratti, painted for the Santissimo Rosario company in Santa Cita. As we have already seen, companies, formed by laymen, were not linked to the craft guilds, unlike the brotherhoods, and they did not meet in churches, but in oratories. And what were oratories?

An oratory in Palermo was a place formed by a vestibule, called ante-oratory, and by a rectangular room with a presbytery, seats for the brethren along the walls and a bench for the governors under the entrance façade²¹. With my research, I was able to bring to light two principal differences between oratories and churches: 1) the most important wall for the iconography of the decoration was precisely that of the entrance



Fig. 3. Giacomo and Giuseppe Serpotta, *San Mercurio Oratory*, 1678-1682, Palermo.

façade, because during the meetings the brethren looked towards the governors sat there; 2) oratories were exclusive and private places, and only the brethren were allowed in, unless a person had a special invitation. It follows that the images created for those places did not necessarily have to obey to the rules on clarity laid down by the Counter-Reformation, and it would also have been possible to make some formal choices that were not conventional, which was impossible in churches.

Well, Giacomo Serpotta was to renew those places in a revolutionary way and was to create some of his greatest masterpieces in them. Few testimonies remain today of the oldest oratories, but we are sure that stucco always played a prevailing role. In actual fact, since stucco was inexpensive, to confer refinement on the material, very often it was covered with gold foil, as in the apse Agrigento Cathedral, with costs that, according to the documents, were sometimes even superior to those of the whole stucco decoration²².

We can understand how an oratory was decorated before Serpotta by observing the Carminello in Palermo (*fig. 2*), done between 1659 and 1665 by the stuccoer Vito Sulfarello²³, one of the best-known sculptors of that time in the city. But it is a static and traditional decoration, generally of modest quality.

Let us return, instead, to Giacomo. His first noteworthy extant work is precisely in an oratory, the one built for the San Mercurio company, on which he worked between 1678 and 1682 when he was only 22²⁴. It suffices to compare this decoration with that of the Carminello to see clearly how the artist began to renew entirely the preceding schemes, from many points of view: compositional, formal and aesthetic. In the room (*fig. 3*) the walls show a throng of putti climbing around the windows, which surely owes something to Borromini. Everything is cloaked in white, which was to be another distinguishing feature of Serpotta; there is no gilding, the festive putti play, holding up the symbols of the warrior saint, and, above all, interact with one another. The cherubs at the base of the windows begin to converse together, as already seen in the Roman sphere, for example in Sant'Andrea al Quirinale by Antonio Raggi (in about 1662-1665)²⁵, or, after San Mercurio, at Santa Maria in Vallicella (second or fifth span right, respectively by Bernardino Cametti and Michel Maille, around 1698)²⁶. It is here that they begin to be protagonists (*fig. 4*), even becoming impudent in other works; here there is already the heart of Serpotta's poetic, which was to be clear three years later in the San-

tissimo Rosario oratory in Santa Cita. Indeed, although the form of the figures is still not perfect (perhaps also because of the collaboration of Serpotta's brother and other helpers) and the putti do not have that harmony of volumes and proportions that they were to acquire later, here they are chubby, smiling and vital. Serpotta's distinguishing feature starts to be encoded and stucco begins to take on an autonomous role and artistic dignity.

During the work at San Mercurio, a decisive impetus to Serpotta's rise to fame was also given by the commission for the destroyed Carità oratory in San Bartolomeo. The Carità company was the second oldest in Palermo, founded in 1543. Here Giacomo worked between 1679 and 1685, coming into contact with the future Praetor of Palermo, Stefano Reggio prince of Aci, and with the son of the viceroy Francesco Bonavides, prince of Santo Stefano²⁷. In those years of relationship with the Carità company he was given significant commissions, not least of which was the model for the equestrian statue of Charles II of Spain that was fused in bronze for the city of Messina in 1684 and looked to Pietro Tacca's statue of Phillip IV²⁸, finished in 1640 in Madrid. It was perhaps the first equestrian statue done in



Fig. 4. Antonino Pisano and Giuseppe Serpotta, *Putti*, 1678, Palermo, San Mercurio Oratory.

Sicily, unfortunately destroyed. So, Serpotta was beginning even then to have a creative role detached from the traditionally modest profession of the stuccoer, just like, before him, Scipione Li Volsi, the author of Ciminna's tribune and of the bronze statue of Charles V in Palermo (1631)²⁹.

Meanwhile, an important event was the commission received by both brothers in 1684 for the realization of the altars in the transept at the Carmine Maggiore (*fig. 5*), the most important church of the Carmelites in Palermo. On the altars there had to be placed a 15th-century painting on wood of the Virgin and a wooden Crucifix. The scheme is that of the altars surmounted by two couples of staggered twisted columns holding up a lintel on which popes and prophets are set and, at the centre of the Virgin altar, there is the Almighty. The latter is reminiscent of a typical Gaginian model; while the other statues, perhaps done by Giuseppe Serpotta, are not very distant from the late manneristic culture of Ferraro, except for the head of Dionysius I, which reprises the famous *Head of Seneca* by Guido Reni, also known in Palermo through the painter Pietro Novelli³⁰. Hence there are once again signals of references to manuals, together with new orientations going beyond the local panorama. The true novelty is not so much the use of Solomonic columns³¹, evocative of Bernini, but, perhaps, the adoption of twisted columns; certainly innovative was the insertion of stories in the curves of the latter. For the first time in Palermo an artist drew on the repertoire of local Renaissance sculpture, involving high-reliefs with sacred stories, and it is converted onto a Baroque plane, its perspective being deformed according to the ascensional circular movement of the columns. Donald Garstang, the most important scholar on Serpotta, who died in 2007, identified the possible reference model: an engraving on a design by Giuseppe Cesari, taken from a book published in 1586³². What is striking is the idea and the particular position that, in my opinion, reinterprets the system of the classical triumphal column, in which in bas-relief the deeds of the victorious emperor were narrated, as memory and *monumentum*³³. They also became *monumentum* for the story of the redemption and salvation of humanity, achieved through the Advent and the sacrifice of Christ, having as its witness and protagonist the Virgin, the titular saint of the church. But let us return to the altars, which perhaps represent an important stage in the artist's development, also because they

are not only decorative elements, like those which his brother Giuseppe was to do in a similar case at Castelbuono in 1684³⁴ or, for example, the high altar in the St. Cajetan church in Munich, done four years later, in 1688. This too has twin columns, but simply enwrapped in climbing foliage with rejoicing putti. In Palermo putting the Stories of Christ and the Virgin innovates the original Roman model. The Roman promptings that emerge might suggest, even at this stage, a lesson from Roman sculpture, and not only through the use of prints from engravings and drawings, which Serpotta surely made large use of. Therefore he might have made a journey to the papal capital shortly before. In 1911 Corrado Ricci even suggested an apprenticeship by Serpotta with Antonio Raggi, only as a hypothesis³⁵. Today we know that there are four longer periods in which Serpotta does not seem to be documented as working in Palermo, one preceding the work at San Mercurio (1678), and three placed between 1682 and 1684³⁶, just before the altars of the Carmine. But we do not have documentary evidences yet. The fact is, however, that Serpotta immediately afterwards did his first true masterpiece: the oratory of the Santissimo Rosario in Santa Cita, done between 1686 and 1689³⁷ (fig. 6), on which Sir Anthony Blunt wrote that “even the Bavarian virtuosi in stucco never created a work of greater skill or more enchanting fantasy”³⁸. The commission that Carlo Maratti received in 1689³⁹ for the altarpiece with the *Madonna of the Rosary* shows that the company had aimed high and challenged their Rosario cousins in San Domenico, whose main icon had been painted by Van Dyck⁴⁰. Therefore Serpotta, parallel to Maratti, for those brethren must have represented the excellence in stucco art. The Santissimo Rosario company in Santa Cita had probably imposed the presence of an architect to watch over the decoration project, but from the documents nothing has yet emerged and only hypotheses can be made. We know that a drawing by Giacomo Amato exists for the decoration of the external façade⁴¹, while Donald Garstang hypothesized the involvement of Paolo Amato. Both were important architects in Baroque Palermo.

Serpotta found himself in front of a big empty box, with three windows per side. This is the skeleton on



Fig. 5. Giuseppe and Giacomo Serpotta, *Church Virgin Chapel*, 1684, Palermo, Church of Carmine Maggiore.

which he acted following the iconographic requests of the brethren and revolutionizing taste in stucco ornamentation. How did Serpotta carry out these instructions? First of all he placed the three different typologies of Mysteries on different walls. At the centre of the façade, below and in line with the crowning of the Virgin, he set the *Battle of Lepanto* in which the fleet of the Holy League was entrusted to the Madonna of the Rosary, which was therefore itself proof of the power and grace granted by the Virgin. In this oratory Serpotta brought to perfection what he had experimented in the Carmine church: the stories are high reliefs in the form of theatres that recover in full the tradition of the sixteenth century tribune by Antonello Gagini, also copying some of its iconography⁴². This is an evident tribute to the Renaissance tradition, which could certainly confer solidity and authoritativeness on the representation and reassure the clients. But Serpotta, having become in this place a sculptor of large and very minute figures, managed the Renaissance perspective and broke its fixity, for a greater dynamic of the small characters inside the Baroque space. Moreover, his gaze was set not only on the Renaissance sculptural tradition, but also on the painterly one, looking, for example, to Vincenzo da Pavia, the Raphaellesque artist



Fig. 6. Giacomo Serpotta, *Santa Cita Oratory*, 1686-1689, Palermo.

of the painting on wood of the *Madonna of the Rosary*, done in 1540 for the nearby San Domenico church, the principal home of the Order of Preachers in Sicily⁴³. Serpotta was to copy its painted mysteries around the icon, but was also to reprise, for example, a *Nativity* done by him, instead, for the Santa Maria degli Angeli church of the Lesser Franciscan Monks before 1556⁴⁴. The authoritative models were his source, which however he adapted as it suited him and according to his iconographic needs. For instance the *Fall of Christ during the Climb to Calvary* is copied from Antonello Gagini's tribune taken from Raphael, and the image is modified by focusing on the Virgin, to whom the oratory is devoted. Let us continue. The remaining ornamentation on the side walls is organized starting from the frames of the big windows, encased by pilasters in sixteenth-century taste on which putti whirl round and on whose tympanums lie angels and more putti, with trappings of foliage, fruit and flowers. A great deal of light penetrates through those windows and settles on the white epidermis of those figures and on the pairs of allegories softly seated on the windowsills, with very different poses from the imposing statues at the Carminello. There is no rigidity. The allegories are taken from various iconological repertoires, including Cesare Ripa, but they are modified, to such an extent that still today there are problems of interpretation. They are connected in iconological terms to the little theatres below, whose meaning they amplify, so that, for instance, above the *Visitation* we find *Hospitality* and *Fertility* (not *Family*), evoking the miraculous pregnancy of both women. Allegories of such beauty and grace, sweetly sitting on windowsills, had never been seen in Palermo. Serpotta, to me, was perhaps influenced by Cardinal Carlo Bonelli's funeral monument in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome, done in around 1674-1686 by Carlo Rainaldi with Cosimo Fancelli and Giovanni Francesco De Rossi⁴⁵. It is possible to see something similar, regarding the face and the pose, comparing some of his allegories *Justice* by Alessandro Algardi posed above the third chapel on the left in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome (1635)⁴⁶ or some virgin saints of Bernini and alumni set on the arches of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome⁴⁷. Certainly it is perfectly aligned in some details with coeval Roman artistic production, as it can be seen, for example, in the chapel of the Ginetti cardinals in Sant'Andrea della Valle, done in about 1684 on a design by Carlo Fontana and with allegories by Alessandro Rondone⁴⁸. The general result at Santa Cita, however, is very different from the Roman taste (*fig. 7*). Indeed, the statues create an uninterrupted flow of sculptural masses,



Fig. 7. Giacomo Serpotta, *Santa Cita Oratory*, 1686-1689, Palermo.



Fig. 8. Giacomo Serpotta, *Entrance façade, Santa Cita Oratory*, 1688, Palermo.

together with other putti still fully active right above the Mysteries. The walls take body and movement with a whirling bundle of decorative elements and figures that are not posing, on which the eye cannot easily dwell. But that is not all. The acme is, and has to be, in the wall inside the façade with Lepanto, which, as we have seen, is the most important wall (fig. 8). The effect is superb, also because all around there is a delirium of whirling putti bearing symbols of the battle, helmets, armours, gloves, swords, all perfectly described in every least detail. But there is not only this. Here Serpotta enacts an extraordinary intuition, with stucco he petrifies and renders durable in time the Baroque tradition of the trappings for civil and religious, festive and funeral ceremonies, which covered churches with drapes and big sheets, often painted with celebratory and commemorative stories⁴⁹. Indeed, he did an extraordinary embossed blanket looking as if the mysteries were painted on it. I have identified an image that can give an idea of the old tradition of Roman and Spanish origins present in Palermo, which to me seems very relevant to this decoration. It is the ornamentation for the principal façade of the Cathedral for the funeral of Phillip IV of Spain done in 1666, but especially for the entrance façade⁵⁰ (fig. 9). The latter is clearly at the basis of Serpotta's idea for Santa Cita. Even the mouldings around the panels, with the presence of winged cherubs above the frames, the shells and the eagle, are evidently the models for that project. So we cannot overlook the architect of that cenotaph, who was Paolo Amato. Hence the hypothesis of Donald Garstang about Paolo Amato's influence comes back again.



Fig. 9. Paolo Amato, *Apparatus for the entrance façade of the Palermo's Cathedral in occasion of the funeral of King Philip IV of Spain*, 1666.

Furthermore, confirming the programme inaugurated at San Mercurio, the putti are the protagonists of the scene. It is their task to lay out the curtain, and they do it playing. In short, they are busy, like the ones designed by Bernini for the floral festoons on the ceiling of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale in Rome, done by Antonio Raggi (1662-1665)⁵¹, or the others present in the cornice of the Cornaro Chapel in Santa Maria della Vittoria (around 1652)⁵². They are no longer simple figurative and inactive tools, serving to hold up iconological symbols and elements, which is what we find in coeval local marble work in high-relief. In the wake of the influence of Bernini and Duquesnoy, who in Rome did the funeral monuments for Adriano Vryburch in 1628-29⁵³ and for Ferdinando van den Eynde in around 1634 at Santa Maria dell'Anima⁵⁴, but certainly also through the influence of the paintings of Van Dyck and Pietro Novelli, the putti are actors in the scene. Because it is indeed a scene (fig. 10). The fact is that everything develops in front of our eyes, nothing is finished and everything is in movement; Bernini's lesson has been perfectly learned and put into practice. An Italian parallel, for instance, could be the work of Abbondio Stazio and Carpofo Antonio Salvatore Mazzetti-Tencalla in the alcove of Palazzo Sagredo (now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York), which, however, came over 30 years later, in 1718⁵⁵. Moreover, at Santa Cita there is much more: the putti above the little theatres with the Mysteries of the Rosary seem to be very aware of their task and, playing, interpret the scenes below. Let us see some of them: *the Annunciation* in which the child plays the role of the Virgin with his arms closed on his breast; *the Visitation*, where another putto hands a veil to a third one, as if they were Mary and Elizabeth, a veil that surely has a symbolic role linked to the divine; the sweet and natural *Nativity* with the sleeping putto, *the Judgment by Pilate* in which a putto is lying on a cushion with curly hair in the classic Roman style; and the dramatic *Fall of Christ during the climb to Calvary* with the



Fig. 10. Giacomo Serpotta, *Entrance façade*, 1688, Palermo, Santa Cita Oratory.

putto that has fallen back, a second one supporting him and a third one crying and drying his face with a veil. Game and theatrical representation are the keys to this decoration, which culminates in the two figures of boys (*fig. 11*) not putti this time, seated under the Battle of Lepanto and to the sides of a panoply, updated with Spanish rifles of the seventeenth century. They have traditionally been interpreted as the victorious Christian with a proud look and the defeated Muslim with his face tilted and sorrowful. Very probably, instead, they are not only simple allusions, but could be the depiction of two young street people, as is deduced from the perfect details of the torn clothes, mindful perhaps of post Caravaggio Genoese paintings present in Palermo, who play interpreting the two characters. In my opinion they put on a naïve theatre evoking the victorious battle against the infidels. In conclusion, the conflict now is over, at least symbolically, as the panoply indicates. True Faith has triumphed, and now it is the time of the rebirth of humanity and the freshness of youth, of an Arcadian *joie de vivre*. It is a world that is renewed, that comes out of darkness and, in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi, rejoices at the magnificent creation. The light expands in the white of the stuccos.

No one in Palermo, till then, had ever achieved such perfection in the sculptural form, such grace and harmony, verisimilitude and naturalness. It was very different from what his brother Giuseppe was doing in Castelbuono at the same time, making stucco appear like mixed marble, as in the past, with a strong presence of gold (1684-87) ⁵⁶. At the Rosario in Santa Cita, instead, the gold foil only remains as a chromatic counterpoint to identify the symbols of the allegories and little else. Giacomo Serpotta's stucco needs no added value; it does not need precious metal to affirm itself as rich decoration. It is such by form and substance.

To this we must add the refinement made by him on the traditional stucco technique, which only in the last few years has been studied with greater attention. Precisely, during the restoration many precious elements came out. Under the plaster a big quantity of autograph drawings was found that have clarified his way of proceeding in the work ⁵⁷. We can distinguish them in this way: 1) sketches, also discovered in other places where he worked; 2) geometric lines drawn on the walls to determine the precise position of the mouldings and the architectural reliefs; 3) drawings of the friezes later done by the workshop and, 4), the hand drawing



Fig. 11. Giacomo Serpotta, *Entrance façade*, 1688, Palermo, Santa Cita Oratory.



Fig. 12. Giacomo Serpotta, *Entrance façade*, 1694, Palermo, Carminello Oratory.



Fig. 13. Giacomo Serpotta, *Chapel of Anime purganti*, 1696, Palermo, Church of Santa Orsola.

of the whole blanket in the entrance façade⁵⁸. Serpotta substantially drew the whole decoration on the walls as if it was a fresco, so as to verify the rendering in the place and to construct the stucco with that modifiable trace.

From Santa Cita on, the commissions from brotherhoods tended to multiply, becoming more and more important for Giacomo's brilliant career. The brotherhoods wanted his innovative language, the new type of decorations in a modern taste and fashionable, of which Giacomo Serpotta was the best representative. Here, not wanting to go on any longer on certain aspects, we will make some jumps in time, dwelling briefly on other masterpieces that mark the evolution of Serpotta's art.

In 1694 Giacomo was called in by the Carminello company⁵⁹ (*fig. 12*), which, like the others, intended to renovate and update the taste of its oratory, now considered obsolete. It shows a clear influence of the Roman taste as expressed on a design by Carlo Fontana and Antonio Raggi for San Marcello al Corso in Rome (1683)⁶⁰ or, for instance, Borromini for the façade of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (by Borromini, Giovanni and Cesare Doni, Francesco Fontana, 1676)⁶¹, and the pose of the allegories is doubtless reminiscent of *Prudence* and *Temperance* in the memorial of Benedetto Gastaldi in Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Rome (from Carlo Fontana, by Antonio Raggi, around 1684)⁶². In effect from here on, there will be a clear reduction of the ornamentation, with progressive simplification that will be more evident in his eighteenth-century decorations. Two years later, in 1696 (*fig. 13*), another company, named after the Prayer of Death, commissioned him to do the two main chapels in its Sant'Orsola church, in Palermo⁶³.

These chapels show once again a clear allusion to Roman culture. The concept comes from the Berninians Throne of St. Peter, miraculously carried by angels and placed at the centre of the Vatican church, or from the innumerable Roman examples of Bernini's art, like Sant'Andrea al Quirinale (by Jean Regnaud, in around 1670)⁶⁴ or Santa Maria del Popolo (right transept by Ercole Ferrata and Arrigo Giardé, 1657-59, left transept by Antonio Raggi and Giovanni Antonio Mari)⁶⁵, to mention only two. In Palermo, the theme is that of souls in Purgatory that are anxious to ascend to heaven and are represented in oil painting. To this Serpotta adds two little theatres, again circular, moulds the compartments for the frescos with two splendid garlands of



Fig. 14. Giacomo Serpotta, *San Lorenzo Oratory*, 1700-1705, Palermo.

flowers, certainly taken from paintings showing Flemish influence⁶⁶ and, above all, creates two skeletons depicted in an almost mocking pose and with truly remarkable attention to physiognomic detail. The presence of skeletons in Baroque works in Palermo is not entirely new, but here the pose, the macabre and grotesque laughter is very different. Moreover, the presence does not only refer to the usual *memento mori* – otherwise the natural reference would have been to one of the many Roman baroque sepulchres. There is instead an allusion, augural and optimistic, to the Universal Judgement, when the souls will get back their bodies and people will be judged once and for all. The reincarnated skeletons thus become fully original, not only in the local panorama but perhaps also in the national one⁶⁷. The restoration work that I dealt with, highlighted other elements for reflection on Giacomo's technique. First of all the armour of the figures was examined⁶⁸. It was done starting from a lime base combined with inert materials like chalk, stones, sand and marble dust, with granulometry becoming finer and finer as we move towards the surface. The overlapped layers are generally 3-4. The armour was made by leftover material of any kind: pieces of wood, fragments of tiles, metal, palm branches (useful for the curved limbs and the wings), which were often coated with fibrous organic material, so as to compensate for the inevitable expansions due to sudden changes in humidity. Ropes were sometimes used as the skeleton of false branches. Moreover, it is certain that some figures were done in the workshop and then taken to the site and anchored. This was seen, for example, for the skeletons in which the joining of the parts can be identified⁶⁹. Probably this was essential for more complex statues and ones richer in details. Finally, about the famous "allustratura" a legend was given by an old tradition in artistic historiography. There was a story about his secret composition that Serpotta applied together with marble dust, on the final surface of his stuccos, because the surfaces are so luminescent as to be similar to marble. Actually the "allustratura" was only a very demanding work technique, suited to compacting the epidermis of the statues to give it greater consistency and resistance to deterioration and dust and to make it reflect light. In fact Serpotta did not apply it everywhere, but selected the parts that he wanted to highlight. He exploited light in his favour with a profound Baroque spirit and, for example, in the floral festoons, he preferred to maintain a rough surface for a vibrant effect. For the "allustratura" he probably used some flax cloths and



Fig. 15. Giacomo Serpotta, *Allegory of Charity*, 1700-1705, Palermo, San Lorenzo Oratory.



Fig. 16. Giacomo Serpotta, *Putti*, 1700-1705, Palermo, San Lorenzo Oratory.

instead modelled the fresh details with spatulas of various sizes, using organic additives like fats and added sugars in the composition of the external layer, which on one side conferred greater smoothness and luminescence on the stucco, and on the other delayed the process of hardening facilitating workmanship⁷⁰.

So we come to 1700 (*fig. 14*). Giacomo was asked by the San Francesco company to renovate the late sixteenth century decoration of the San Lorenzo oratory, beginning from the presbytery, where the famous *Nativity* was painted by Caravaggio perhaps in 1600 and unfortunately stolen in 1969⁷¹. Serpotta, with the architect Giacomo Amato, reprised the scheme of Roman derivation, through the two splendid seraphs at the sides of the painting and a number of allegorical figures.

The oratory as a whole is considered his absolute masterpiece, for the correct proportion between the inventive freshness of the first years and the wise maturity in the executive technique. It is a work dense in images, among which there are the “little theatres”, with episodes from the lives of saints Lawrence and Francis, alongside which allegorical statues are set. We can see the matronly *Hospitality* and the sweet and maternal *Charity* at the sides of the presbytery. This work too, though borrowed from Ripa, is transformed and shows the remarkable technique he has mastered; one should see, for example, the hand sinking into the soft breast. He also adds very original notes like the street putti that desire to be breastfed; they are true and not only symbolic; moreover, the artist springs on us the torn little garment that innocently shows the little bottom (*fig. 15*). Certainly in a church he could not have done it.

Above the windows there are recumbent masculine figures. In my opinion these were inspired by the ceiling of the Gallery of Palazzo Farnese in Rome by Annibale Carracci (1596-1600)⁷² but also by the male figures placed over the windows in the ceiling of the church of Sant’Andrea al Quirinale in Rome (1662-1665) – Antonio Raggi once again⁷³.

The whole decoration is counterpointed by putti that, more than in any other oratory, are unleashed in various activities.



Fig. 17. Giacomo Serpotta, *SS. Rosary in San Domenico Oratory*, second decade of XVIII century, Palermo.

Many are involved in actions and interact with other images. For example they personally discover the stories, opening the curtains as if they were curtains in a theatre. At the moment when they open the curtains they see, together with us, in the same instant, what is unfolding inside the panels and react, with curiosity, leaning out to observe it or are stunned and scandalized by it. The same happens when they see the *Temptation of St. Francis*, when they throw themselves back as St. Francis does in the same instant towards the fire. Precisely *The temptation* was copied from the analogous work by Simon Vouet in the San Lorenzo in Lucina church in Rome⁷⁴. Unfortunately a few decades ago the statuette of temptation, a scandalous dame in décolleté, was stolen. Others participate in the depiction of some allegories, like the three putti that help one another to reach the share-out coins coming from the Bedding. Yet others seem quite indifferent and appear extraneous to evident theological meanings, like for instance the putti blowing soap bubbles, or the one grabbing with impunity, but naïvely, the pubis of the putto above. They are like simple infants (*fig. 16*). It is difficult not to think of an evolution of the ones sculpted in stucco in the Gesù church in Rome by Antonio Raggi and others (1672-1679)⁷⁵.

Actually the whole decoration is played out on marked theatricality in which the frames of the scenes are opened, so that all the figures can participate.

On the walls the oldest iconography included small canvases with the lives of the saints and on the wall inside the façade a dramatic *Crucifixion* from the first half of the seventeenth century⁷⁶. Serpotta makes some changes. He replaces the paintings with little theatres in stucco and the *Crucifixion* with the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, but, above all, at the top he adds the *Vision of Christ in glory with the cross*. The artist substantially turns upside-down the life-death connection, that is to say the relationship between the birth of Christ, represented in Caravaggio's canvas, and his cruel death at man's hands, functional to man's salvation, to be seen in the *Crucifixion* is changed. The new concept is linked, instead, to the joy in the conquest of the salvation even after death, which is only a new beginning.

Thus, through relations between the works, the *Nativity* is projected diagonally into the *Glory of Christ*



Fig. 18. Giacomo Serpotta, *Lucifer chained to hell by the angel*, second decade of the 18th century, Palermo, Rosario in San Domenico Oratory.

and the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, deriving from Eustache Le Sueur (Musée de Beaux Arts de Quimper, formerly Saint-Germain-L'Auxerrois church of Paris)⁷⁷, and finds its correct fulfilment on the opposite diagonal in the *Glory of St. Francis*, placed at the top on the triumphal arch in the presbytery. Moreover, the *Glory of Christ* appears like a vision of the saint during his martyrdom. He is portrayed with his arms open as on a cross, while he separates from terrestrial life, and then becomes a prefiguration of his own beatification⁷⁸. Like Bernini, Serpotta goes beyond the models, conferring a new meaning on them. Again Serpotta offers the brethren perfection in form and depth of exemplary theological meanings, very probably helped by a theologian, in a theatrical context which seems to be avowedly affirmed by the presence of two mascarons modelled in the intrados of the presbytery arch and in other parts of the oratory, one sad and the other cheerful: Democritus and Heraclitus or tragedy and comedy⁷⁹. There is an evident cyclicality even in the wooden benches, where the mascarons reappear with the two different expressions, as does the struggle between an eagle and a snake, good and evil. The temporal continuum, the absence of confines, the vision of stories taking place

while we are observing them, rightly led Giulio Carlo Argan to believe that the stories, within the little theatres, expand on the walls and the walls expand in the room as if the whole room was a theatre and we become the characters too⁸⁰.

To better understand the significance of the San Lorenzo oratory in the local sphere, it is enough to compare that monument with the carpenters' oratory decorated by Giacomo's brother, Giuseppe, in 1701⁸¹. The room, with a low barrel vault, is entirely covered by stuccos with putti, festoons, medallions and frames, in which pieces of frescos are inserted, but Giuseppe Serpotta succeeds neither then nor at any other time in repeating the extraordinary skill of his brother, both in the modelling of the single pieces and in the choral Baroque organization of all the elements. It is pure and simple decoration; Giacomo's works are instead a splendid Baroque machine.

This oratory will be visited in 1792 by Léon Dufourny, architect and academic of France, who will remain fascinated, remarking in his diaries, on Serpotta's ability to translate painting into sculpture: "Visité l'oratorio della Compagnia di S. Lorenzo près de l'église de S. Francesco. La décoration de cette chapelle est toute en stucs du célèbre Serpotta et l'un des morceaux qui peuvent donner une meilleure idée de l'étonnante bravura de cet artiste à manier le stuc. En effet les murs sont couverts de figures, de bas reliefs et d'ornemens de toute espèce qui tous et chacun dans leur genre, quoique maniérés, sont traités avec une habileté surprenante et une grâce toute particulière. Les bas reliefs que j'appellerois volontiers des peintures en relief, parce qu'ils sont composés d'une multitude de petites figures isolées et de ronde bosse, plaisent par je ne sais quelle grandeur qui règne dans l'ordonnance, et par le feu et la grâce de l'exécution. Quel dommage qu'un pareil talent n'ait point été nourri par l'aide des grands modèles de l'Antiquité"⁸².

We will end with what Donald Garstang rightly considered Serpotta's mature phase and one of his best known masterpieces: the Rosario oratory in San Domenico done in the second decade of the eighteenth century⁸³ (fig. 17). It can be considered a goal of Serpotta, the most balanced and solemnly controlled work

of his. Undoubtedly the vivacious freshness of the older works is missing, but not the general vision of the whole, that shows the extraordinary elegance reached by the sculptor, the planned semantic depth, the perfect fusion between stucco and the very fine seventeenth-century pictures, already *in loco*. And everything creates the atmosphere of a sacred Baroque representation. The oratory from the early years of the seventeenth century had become the container of canvases commissioned on behalf of illustrious and cultured members of the association (founded in 1568), done by local painters like Novelli, Flemish and Genoese artists. The altarpiece by Van Dyck was devoted to the memory of the scourge of the plague that had struck Palermo in 1624 and had been defeated by the salvific intervention of Santa Rosalia. The Palermo stuccoer therefore had to valorise these images by extolling their beauty and theological meanings. For this purpose, above the paintings he sets episodes of the *Apocalypse* and the *Genesis* that are exceptional high reliefs with unprecedented sculptural impact, linked to the Mysteries of the Rosary of which they are the prefiguration (*fig. 18*). In my opinion the whole layout would seem to recall the nave of San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome (after 1646), and therefore once again Borromini. The scheme of the walls is the same. In San Giovanni is formed by the arches of the nave on



Fig. 19. Giacomo Serpotta, *Allegory of Fortitude*, second decade of the XVIIIth century, Palermo, Rosario in San Domenico Oratory.

which there are the windows, then there are the niches with statues surmounted by reliefs and, even higher, the oval paintings. In Palermo, instead, the wall is marked by arched niches with statues, above which there are windows, alternating with frameworks topped by reliefs and ovals in stucco.

At the formal level, none of Serpotta's assistants or alumni was ever to succeed in doing such technically bold and skilfully composed shaping. It also goes beyond the frames and is not boxed within panels, as at San Giovanni in Laterano, but reaches out of the picture and is part of the whole, as at San Lorenzo. One should see, for instance, the putto that with a torch sets on fire the foot of Lucifer chained to hell by an angel. At the sides of the paintings, instead, there are allegorical statues of Virtue (*fig. 19*), this time placed within niches so as not to disturb the vision of them⁸⁴. Well, the figures linked to the joyous mysteries are partly taken from the classical repertoires, very probably from the collection *Segmenta Nobilium Signorum et Statuarum*, published by François Perrier in 1638⁸⁵; the allegories of the sorrowful mysteries are, instead, incredibly dressed like real dames. Among the Palermitan dames they are the most *à la page*, and indeed they are dressed in vogue according to the current taste of French origin and could today fully be part of a manual of History of Fashion. They show off enviable silhouettes, laces with pretentious accessories, headgears with ostrich feathers and coiffures held in place by diadems and brooches; they also have the attitude of shrewd models. This time they are in poses, fair but imposing, in the wake of the female patron saints portrayed by Anton van Dyck in the altarpiece (particularly *St. Olive*)⁸⁶. As Argan wrote enthusiastically, they are actresses caught as in a snap, or by a decided command of a skilled director leading a show, a real sacred Baroque theatre⁸⁷. All of this convinced Rudolf Wittkower to write that "there is probably no other place in Italy where sculpture came so close to a true rococo spirit"⁸⁸. Furthermore, the artist does not fail to add particular notes, like the little putto dressed as a Dominican monk at the base of Meekness or the putti playing with soap bubbles, as at San Lorenzo. On this occasion too the putti, placed between the Apocalypse and the Mysteries, in their own way interpret the stories below, as in *The Pang*, where, I am convinced that, the putto rends a



Fig. 20. Giacomo Serpotta, *Putti*, second decade of the 18th century, Palermo, Rosario in San Domenico Oratory.

veil showing his face howling with pain, a clear allusion to the suffering of Christ impressed on the Veronica (*fig. 20*).

The sacred Baroque theatre is fully in scene, the room representing the proscenium and the presbytery the stage. Accordingly its curtain is opened by putti, while, above, two seraphs write the poster of the staging, which is the glory of the Virgin of the Rosary, the protagonist in Van Dyck's picture, enwrapped by the incense sprinkled by an angel and in the imagination penetrating into the painting. Well, putti lying at her sides play and sing psalms in her honour and, a magnificent invention, higher up the springer of the little cupola from which the Holy Spirit descends, becomes the stage of the spectators, dames and gentlemen, that is to say ourselves as we observe the show and, at the centre, Serpotta, in my opinion, immortalized together with his son Procopio⁸⁹.

While he was working on Rosario, from 1711 the artist undertook the work for the Sant'Agostino church (*fig. 21*), the most important one of the Augustinian order in Sicily⁹⁰. It was the first time that he had dealt with the whole decoration of a church, originally me-



Fig. 21. Giacomo Serpotta, *Sant'Agostino Church* 1711-1728, Palermo.

dieval, but modified inside at the end of the seventeenth century, after a devastating fire, on a project by Giacomo Amato. This operation was not very distant from what had been done in the nave of the Santa Maria del Popolo church in Rome by Bernini (1655-1661)⁹¹. In a few words: Serpotta starts from the oculus in the façade that is surrounded, as in Santa Cita, with a blanket stretched out by putti and angels, always alluding to an ephemeral decoration for a feast. Continuing from this, above the triumphal arch in the presbytery, he models a tondo with the insignia of the Order. In the nave the artist creates a procession of Augustinian saints and allegories, of splendid noble nuns, placed at the sides of the paintings already present, which are surmounted by stories in stucco connected to them in meaning. These extremely elegant nuns seem line those of Bernini in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, but suddenly standing. The eye races towards the presbytery arch, at whose sides there culminates the triumphant and dynamic representation of *St. Augustine* and, above all, of the *Ecstasy of St. Monica*⁹² (fig. 22). The ecstasy obviously comes from Bernini's masterpiece, but perhaps also from the *Apotheosis of St. Catherine*, done in the Santa Caterina church in Rome by Melchiorre Caffà not later than 1667⁹³. Did Serpotta see the *Ecstasy* in Rome? Or did he once more ingeniously use printed engravings?



Fig. 22. Giacomo Serpotta, *Ecstasy of St. Monica*, 1728, Palermo, Sant'Agostino Church.

For example *Ecstasy* was reproduced on a very small scale by Gian Giacomo De Rossi in the volume *Disegni di vari altari e cappelle nelle chiese di Roma*, published in 1690 and certainly present in Palermo in the library of Giacomo Amato, as well as in that of Paolo Amato, whose copy is still in the Architecture Library of my family and is dated 1692⁹⁴. The characteristic of that print is that the saint is differently oriented in comparison to the original one, and the pose coincides with the pose of St. Monica in Palermo⁹⁵. Hence the debate on his journey to Rome is entirely open⁹⁶, but we agree with Antony Blunt when he writes: "Giacomo's life-size statues of Virtues show such a complete knowledge of Roman Baroque sculpture that, in spite of the lack of written evidence, it seems reasonable to suppose a visit to Rome"⁹⁷.

In 1732 the artist died and after him there would no longer be anyone, in Sicilian sculpture in the modern age, able to constantly reach such artistic peaks⁹⁸, and whose success, as we have seen, is also certainly due to the foresight of the brethren that commissioned many works to him.

Finally, "Serpotta is an artist worthy of all consideration for those who study decoration today"⁹⁹.

- ¹ Siciliano 1912, pp. 23-25 ; Meli 1934, p. 28 ; Argan 1957, p. 29 ; Garstang 2006, pp. 51-52.
- ² Lanza 1859, p. 52 ; Mauceri 1901, p. 82 ; Pitini, 1909, p. 422 ; Ricci 1911 ; Meli 1925, p. 29 ; Blunt 1968, p. 35.
- ³ See Abbate 1999, pp. 39-52.
- ⁴ Travagliato 2006, pp. 357-358.
- ⁵ Zalapì 1999.
- ⁶ Mendola 1999.
- ⁷ See Salomon 2012.
- ⁸ Meli 1934, pp. 104-106 ; Garstang 1990, pp. 50-52.
- ⁹ Piazza 2007, p. 39.
- ¹⁰ Meli 1934, p. 104 ; Garstang 1990, p. 51 ; Piazza 2007, p. 39.
- ¹¹ Garstang 1990, p. 51.
- ¹² Meli 1934, p. 106.
- ¹³ About Guercio and Travaglia see Scavone 1994.
- ¹⁴ See Garstang 1990, pp. 23-26 ; Vesco 2010, pp. 227-228 ; Giardina, Calcara, Napoli 2015.
- ¹⁵ Garstang 1990, pp. 27-29 ; Pettineo, Ragonese 2007. About the Cathedral's Tribune see Krufft 1980, pp. 386-403.
- ¹⁶ Palazzotto 2010.
- ¹⁷ Palazzotto 1999 a.
- ¹⁸ Palazzotto 2001.
- ¹⁹ Palazzotto 2002, p. 19.
- ²⁰ Palazzotto 2013.
- ²¹ Palazzotto 1999 a, pp. 28-42.
- ²² Palazzotto 2004, p. 52.
- ²³ Mendola 2014 b, pp. 73-75.
- ²⁴ Garstang 1988 ; Palazzotto 2004, pp. 116-119 ; Garstang, 2006, pp. 43-48 ; Mendola 2014 a, pp. 28-31.
- ²⁵ Marchionne Gunter 1999, p. 48 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 29.
- ²⁶ Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 342.
- ²⁷ Meli 1934, pp. 235-237 ; Mendola 2012¹, p. 20.
- ²⁸ Meli 1934, pp. 123-130.
- ²⁹ Di Marzo Ferro 1858, p. 477 ; Garstang 2006, pp. 20, 257 note 33.
- ³⁰ Meli 1934, pp. 138-140 ; Garstang 2006, pp. 52, 54-56.
- ³¹ For instance, we can remember the marble altar of the chapel of Duke Giovanni Stefano Oneto of Sperlinga in the San Domenico church in Palermo (around 1665), made by Guercio and his father Gaspare Serpotta, and the stucco altar made in 1672 by Giovan Battista Ferrera in the San Mercurio Oratory with « colonne alla salomona » ; see Mendola 2014 a, p. 24.
- ³² Garstang 2006, pp. 50 ill. 11, 54.
- ³³ Palazzotto 2009, p. 41.
- ³⁴ Magnano di San Lio 1996, pp. 181-182 ; Palazzotto 2004, p. 119.
- ³⁵ Ricci 1911.
- ³⁶ Mendola 2012 a, p. 34. Mauceri thought that Serpotta was in Rome before 1682 ; see Mauceri 1901, p. 82.
- ³⁷ Palazzotto 1999 b ; Mendola 2013.
- ³⁸ Blunt 1968, p. 35.
- ³⁹ Palazzotto 1999 b, pp. 32, 45 note 51.
- ⁴⁰ Blunt 1968, p. 35.
- ⁴¹ Palazzotto 1999 a, pp. 45 fig. 36, 46.
- ⁴² Garstang 1990, pp. 96-97.
- ⁴³ Garstang 1990, p. 97.
- ⁴⁴ Palazzotto 2004, pp. 36, 50.
- ⁴⁵ Palazzotto 2004, p. 53. About the funeral monument see Marchionne Gunter 1996 p. 32 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 275.
- ⁴⁶ The attribution to Algardi is in Marchionne Gunter 2000, p. 40.
- ⁴⁷ Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, pp. 304-305.
- ⁴⁸ Ferrara 1997, pp. 23-24 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 36.
- ⁴⁹ Garstang 1990, p. 76 ; Garstang 2006 p. 58.
- ⁵⁰ Mínguez, González Tornel, Chiva, Rodríguez Moya 2014, pp. 393, 394. About that funeral apparatus see Vacirca 1993, pp. 76-79 ; González Tornel 2014, pp. 215-220.
- ⁵¹ Marchionne Gunter 1999, p. 48 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 30.
- ⁵² Marchionne Gunter 2000, p. 39 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 354.
- ⁵³ Testa 1996, p. 7 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 210.
- ⁵⁴ Testa 1996, p. 10 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 210.
- ⁵⁵ Zanuso 2000, p. 788.
- ⁵⁶ Magnano di San Lio 1996, pp. 225-231.
- ⁵⁷ Palazzotto 2004, pp. 56-57.
- ⁵⁸ Palazzotto 2011, pp. 32-33.
- ⁵⁹ Mendola 2014 b, pp. 78-81.
- ⁶⁰ Aloisi 1995, p. 54 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 199.
- ⁶¹ Lombardi 1999, p. 53 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 65.
- ⁶² Grasso 2014, p. 89. About the memorial see Petrocchi 1995, p. 37 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 294.
- ⁶³ Palazzotto 2011.
- ⁶⁴ Marchionne Gunter 1999, p. 48 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 29.
- ⁶⁵ De' Caterina 1995, pp. 20, 23 ; Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, pp. 308-309.
- ⁶⁶ Palazzotto 2011, p. 34.
- ⁶⁷ Palazzotto 2011, pp. 35-45.
- ⁶⁸ Sebastianelli 2011.
- ⁶⁹ Sebastianelli 2011, p. 53.
- ⁷⁰ Sebastianelli 2011, p. 59.
- ⁷¹ Mendola 2012 b.
- ⁷² Of the same opinion Grasso 2013, p. 53.
- ⁷³ Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 29.
- ⁷⁴ Cosmo 1997, p. 50.
- ⁷⁵ Ferrari, Papaldo 1999, p. 93.
- ⁷⁶ Carandente 1966, p. 52 ; Palazzotto 1999 a, p. 193 note 14. About the previous decoration see also Mendola 2013, pp. 27-28.
- ⁷⁷ Meli 1934, p. 45 ; Carandente 1966, p. 53.
- ⁷⁸ Palazzotto 2004, pp. 192, 194.
- ⁷⁹ Palazzotto 2007, p. 211.
- ⁸⁰ Palazzotto 2013 a, p. 134.
- ⁸¹ Palazzotto 2004, pp. 101-108.
- ⁸² Trad. it. Dufourny 1991 (2th march 1792), pp. 393-394.
- ⁸³ Palazzotto 2002 ; Palazzotto 2004, pp. 242-252.
- ⁸⁴ Carandente 1966, p. 71.
- ⁸⁵ Grasso 2013, p. 48.
- ⁸⁶ Palazzotto 2004, p. 56.
- ⁸⁷ Argan 1957, p. 29.
- ⁸⁸ Wittkower 1972, p. 396.
- ⁸⁹ Palazzotto 2004, pp. 55, 250.
- ⁹⁰ Ministeri 1984.
- ⁹¹ De' Caterina 1995, p. 14.
- ⁹² Garstang 2006, pp. 142-145.
- ⁹³ Carandente 1966, p. 69 ; Cosmo 1997, p. 50.
- ⁹⁴ Palazzotto 2002, p. 70 note 114.
- ⁹⁵ Garstang 2006, p. 147.
- ⁹⁶ Carandente 1966, p. 18.
- ⁹⁷ Blunt 1968, p. 35.
- ⁹⁸ Carandente 1966 pp. 63, 66.
- ⁹⁹ McClellan 1916.

Bibliographie citée

Abbate 1999

V. Abbate, *La città aperta. Pittura e società a Palermo tra Cinque e Seicento*, in V. Abbate (a cura di), *1570 1670 Porto di mare. Pittori e Pittura a Palermo tra memoria e recupero*, catalogo della mostra (Palermo, S. Giorgio dei Genovesi, 30 maggio - 31 ottobre 1999), Napoli 1999, pp. 11-56.

Aloisi 1995

F. Aloisi, *Santa Marcello*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. 1, n. 2, 1995, pp. 52-63.

Argan 1957

G.C. Argan, *Il teatro plastico di Giacomo Serpotta*, in "Il Veltrio. Rassegna di vita italiana", a. I, n. 7, ottobre 1957, pp. 29-33.

Blunt 1968

A. Blunt, *Sicilian Baroque*, New York 1968.

Carandente 1966

G. Carandente, *Giacomo Serpotta*, Torino 1966.

Cosmo 1997

G. Cosmo, *Giacomo Serpotta, Prassitele e la formazione romana*, in "Commentari d'Arte. Rivista di Critica e Storia dell'Arte", a. II, n. 4, gennaio-aprile 1997, pp. 48-55.

De' Caterina 1995

M.C. De' Caterina, *Santa Maria del Popolo*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. 1, n. 1, 1995, pp. 12-28.

Dufourny 1991

L. Dufourny, *Diario di un giacobino a Palermo 1789-1793*, a cura di G. Bautier Bresc, Palermo 1991.

- Ferrara 1997**
D. Ferrara, *Sant'Andrea della Valle*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. 3, n. 10, 1997, pp. 19-30.
- Ferrari-Papaldo 1999**
O. Ferrari, S. Papaldo, *Le sculture del Seicento a Roma*, Roma 1999.
- Garstang 1988**
D. Garstang, *The oratorio della Madonna della Consolazione e S. Mercurio in Palermo and the early activity of Giacomo Serpotta*, in "The Burlington Magazine", CXXX, giugno 1988, pp. 430-432.
- Garstang 1990**
D. Garstang, *Giacomo Serpotta e gli stuccatori di Palermo*, Palermo 1990.
- Garstang 2006**
D. Garstang, *Giacomo Serpotta e i serpottiani stuccatori a Palermo 1656-1790*, Palermo 2006.
- Giardina-Calcarà-Napoli 2015**
A. Giardina, F.S. Calcarà, V. Napoli, *La Chiesa e il Convento di San Domenico in Castelvetro. Tra committenza dei Tagliavia Aragona e carisma dei Frati Predicatori*, Castelvetro 2015.
- González Tornel 2011**
P. González Tornel, *Grande quien llora e inmortal quien muere. Entre Italia y America: los catafalcos por la muerte de Felipe IV en los dominios de los Habsburgo españoles*, "Semata Ciencias Sociales e Humanidades", 24, 2011, pp. 207-228.
- Grasso 2013**
S. Grasso, *La sintesi delle arti in L'oratorio di San Lorenzo a Palermo*, con testi di S. Grasso, G. Mendola, C. Scordato, V. Viola, Leonforte (Enna) 2013, pp. 37-53.
- Grasso 2014**
S. Grasso, *Giacomo Serpotta al Carminello: la svolta romana*, in *Gli oratori di San Mercurio e del Carminello a Palermo*, con testi di S. Grasso, G. Mendola, C. Scordato, V. Viola, Leonforte (Enna) 2014, pp. 83-91.
- Kruft 1980**
H.W. Kruft, *Antonello Gagini und seine söhne*, München 1980.
- Lanza di Trabia 1859**
S. Lanza di Trabia, *Guida del viaggiatore di Sicilia novellamente compilata*, Palermo 1859.
- Lombardi 1999**
S. Lombardi, *San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (San Carlino)*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. V, n. 16, giugno 1999, pp. 51-57.
- Magnano di San Lio 1996**
E. Magnano di San Lio, *Castelbuono capitale dei Ventimiglia*, Catania 1996.
- Mauceri 1901**
E. Mauceri, *Giacomo Serpotta*, in "L'Arte. Periodico di Storia dell'Arte Medievale e Moderna e d'Arte Decorativa", a. IV, Roma 1901, pp. 77-92; 162-180.
- Marchionne Gunter 1996**
A. Marchionne Gunter, *Santa Maria sopra Minerva*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. 2, n. 8, 1996, pp. 24-39.
- Marchionne Gunter 1999**
A. Marchionne Gunter, *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. V, n. 16, giugno 1999, pp. 43-48.
- Marchionne Gunter 2000**
A. Marchionne Gunter, *Santa Maria della Vittoria*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. VI, n. 17, gennaio 2000, pp. 34-43.
- McClellan 1916**
G.B. McClellan, *Serpotta, an Italian Sculptor of the Baroque Period*, in "American Journal of Archaeology", XX, 1916, p. 78.
- Meli 1925**
F. Meli, *Arte e Artisti di Sicilia*, Palermo 1925.
- Meli 1957**
F. Meli, *Giacomo Serpotta. Volume secondo. La vita e le opere*, Società Siciliana per la Storia Patria, Palermo 1934.
- Mendola 1999**
G. Mendola, *Un approdo sicuro. Nuovi documenti per Van Dyck e Gerardi a Palermo*, in V. Abbate (a cura di), *1570 1670 Porto di mare. Pittori e Pittura a Palermo tra memoria e recupero*, catalogo della mostra (Palermo, S. Giorgio dei Genovesi, 30 maggio - 31 ottobre 1999), Napoli 1999, pp. 88-105.
- Mendola 2012a**
G. Mendola, *Per una biografia di Giacomo Serpotta*, in S. Grasso, G. Mendola, G. Rizzo, C. Scordato e V. Viola, *Giacomo Serpotta un gioco divino*, a cura di R. Sanguedolce e C. Scordato, Caltanissetta Roma 2012.
- Mendola 2012b**
G. Mendola, *Il Caravaggio di Palermo e l'oratorio di San Lorenzo*, Palermo 2012.
- Mendola 2013**
G. Mendola, *L'oratorio della compagnia di San Francesco in San Lorenzo in L'oratorio di San Lorenzo a Palermo*, con testi di S. Grasso, G. Mendola, C. Scordato, V. Viola, Leonforte (Enna) 2013, pp. 25-35.
- Mendola 2014a**
G. Mendola, *L'oratorio della compagnia di Santa Maria della Consolazione, del titolo di Santa Maria del deserto e San Mercurio*, in *Gli oratori di San Mercurio e del Carminello a Palermo*, con testi di S. Grasso, G. Mendola, C. Scordato, V. Viola, Leonforte (Enna) 2014, pp. 23-35.
- Mendola 2014b**
G. Mendola, *L'oratorio della Madonna del Carmine, detto il Carminello*, in *Gli oratori di San Mercurio e del Carminello a Palermo*, con testi di S. Grasso, G. Mendola, C. Scordato, V. Viola, Leonforte (Enna) 2014, pp. 69-81.
- Mínguez-González Tornel-Chiva-Rodríguez Moya 2014**
V. Mínguez, P. González Tornel, J. Chiva, I. Rodríguez Moya, *La fieta barroca. Los Reinos de Nápoles y Sicilia (1535-1713)*, Triunfus barrocos, vol. III, Castelló de la Plana 2014.
- Ministeri 1984**
P. B. Ministeri, *La chiesa e il convento di S. Agostino a Palermo*, presentazione di M.C. Di Natale, Palermo 1984.
- Palazzotto 1999 a**
P. Palazzotto, *Gli oratori di Palermo*, presentazioni di M.C. Di Natale e D. Garstang, Palermo 1999.
- Palazzotto 1999 b**
P. Palazzotto, *L'Oratorio del SS. Rosario in S. Cita. Storia e Arte*, in G. Pecoraro, P. Palazzotto, C. Scordato, *Oratorio del Rosario in S. Cita*, Palermo 1999, pp. 11-46.
- Palazzotto 2001**
P. Palazzotto, *Per uno studio sulla Maestranza dei Falegnami di Palermo*, in *Splendori di Sicilia. Arti decorative in Sicilia dal Rinascimento al Barocco*, catalogo della mostra (Palermo 10 dicembre 2000 - 30 aprile 2001) a cura di M.C. Di Natale, Milano 2001, pp. 678-703.
- Palazzotto 2002**
P. Palazzotto, *I "ricchi arredi" e le preziose dipinture dell'oratorio del Rosario in San Domenico della Compagnia dei Sacchi*, in P. Palazzotto, C. Scordato, *L'Oratorio del Rosario in San Domenico*, Palermo 2002, pp. 9-70.
- Palazzotto 2004**
P. Palazzotto, *Palermo. Guida agli oratori. Confraternite, compagnie e congregazioni dal XVI al XIX secolo*, presentazione di D. Garstang, Palermo 2004.
- Palazzotto 2004**
P. Palazzotto, *Venite adoremus. Natività d'arte nelle chiese di Palermo dal XII al XIX secolo*, catalogo della mostra (Palermo 10 dicembre 2004 - 6 gennaio 2005), Palermo 2004.
- Palazzotto 2007**
P. Palazzotto, *Giacomo Serpotta nella letteratura artistica*, in M.C. Di Natale (a cura di), *Storia, critica e tutela dell'arte nel Novecento. Un'esperienza a confronto con il dibattito nazionale*, atti del convegno internazionale di studi in onore di Maria Accascina (Palermo-Erice, 14-17 giugno 2006), Caltanissetta 2007, pp. 204-218.
- Palazzotto 2009**
P. Palazzotto, *Fonti, modelli e codici compositivi nell'opera di Giacomo Serpotta*, in *Itinerari dei Beni Culturali. Giacomo Serpotta e la sua scuola*, a cura di G. Favara e E. Mauro, Palermo 2009, pp. 39-49.
- Palazzotto 2010**
P. Palazzotto, *Les confréries commanditaires et les stucs de Giacomo Serpotta dans les églises et oratoires de Palerme*, in *Les confréries de Corse. Una société idéale en Méditerranée*, catalogo della mostra (Musée Regional d'Anthropologie, Citadelle de Corte, 11 luglio - 30 dicembre 2010), Albiana e Musée de Corse, Citadelle de Corte 2010, pp. 411-427.
- Palazzotto 2011**
P. Palazzotto, *Giacomo Serpotta e la compagnia dell'orazione della morte in Sant'Orsola*, in Palazzotto, M. Sebastianelli, *Giacomo Serpotta nella chiesa di Sant'Orsola di Palermo. Studi e restauro*, "Museo Diocesano di Palermo. Studi e Restauri", collana diretta da Pierfrancesco Palazzotto, n. 5, Congregazione Sant'Eligio - Museo Diocesano di Palermo, Palermo 2011, pp. 15-47.

Palazzotto 2013a

P. Palazzotto, *Argan e Giacomo Serpotta*, in *Argan e l'insegnamento universitario. Gli anni palermitani 1955-1959*, atti del convegno nazionale di studi (Palermo, Palazzo Chiaromonte-Steri, 28 gennaio 2011), a cura di M.C. Di Natale e M. Guttilla, supplemento al n. 7 di "OADI – Rivista dell'Osservatorio per le Arti Decorative in Italia", Bagheria (Palermo) 2013, pp. 128-136.

Palazzotto 2013b

P. Palazzotto, *La compagnia dei Bianchi e gli oratori come segno e memoria della realtà sociale e culturale della Kalsa*, in *Il quartiere della Kalsa a Palermo. Dalle architetture civili e religiose delle origini alle attuali articolate realtà museali*, atti del ciclo di conferenze e attività di aggiornamento per docenti (Palermo, Galleria Interdisciplinare Regionale di Palazzo Abatellis, gennaio-maggio 2012) a cura di G. Cassata, E. De Castro, M.M. De Luca, Assessorato Regionale dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana, Palermo 2013, pp. 105-117.

Palermo 1858

G. Palermo, *Guida istruttiva per Palermo e i suoi dintorni*, a cura di G. Di Marzo Ferro, Palermo 1858.

Petrocchi 1995

S. Petrocchi, *Santa Maria dei Miracoli*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. 1, n. 1, 1995, pp. 35-37.

Pettineo, Ragonese 2007

A. Pettineo, P. Ragonese, *Dopo i Gagini prima dei Serpotta i Li Volsi*, Tusa, 2007.

Piazza 2007

S. Piazza, *I colori del Barocco. Architettura e decorazione in marmi policromi nella Sicilia del Seicento*, Palermo 2007.

Pitini 1909

V. Pitini, *Note sull'arte di Giacomo Serpotta*, in "Archivio Storico Siciliano", n.s., a. XXXIII, Palermo 1909, pp. 405-424.

Ricci 1911

C. Ricci, *Prefazione*, in R. Lentini (a cura di), *Le sculture e gli stucchi di Giacomo Serpotta*, con testo di E. Basile, Torino 1911.

Salomon 2012

X. Salomon (a cura di), *Van Dyck in Sicily. 1624-1625 paintings and the plague*, catalogo della mostra (London, Dulwich Picture Gallery 15 febbraio - 27 maggio 2012), Milano 2012.

Scavone 1994

V. Scavone, *Guercio Gaspare*, in L. Sarullo, *Dizionario degli Artisti siciliani. Scultura*, vol. III, a cura di B. Patera, Palermo 1994, pp. 162-163.

Scavone 1994

V. Scavone, *Travaglia Giovanni*, in L. Sarullo, *Dizionario degli Ar-*

tisti siciliani. Scultura, vol. III, a cura di B. Patera, Palermo 1994, pp. 328, 330.

Sebastianelli 2011

M. Sebastianelli, *La tecnica di Giacomo Serpotta dal cantiere di restauro*, in Palazzotto, M. Sebastianelli, *Giacomo Serpotta nella chiesa di Sant'Orsola di Palermo. Studi e restauro*, "Museo Diocesano di Palermo. Studi e Restauri", collana diretta da Pierfrancesco Palazzotto, n. 5, Congregazione Sant'Eligio - Museo Diocesano di Palermo, Palermo 2011, pp. 49-77.

Siciliano 1912

G. Siciliano, *Cenni su Giacomo Serpotta scultore palermitano*, Palermo 1912.

Testa 1996

L. Testa, *Santa Maria dell'Anima*, in "Roma Sacra. Guida alle chiese della città eterna", a. 2, n. 8, 1996, pp. 5-11.

Travagliato 2006

G. Travagliato, *voce Doria*, in C. Napoleone (a cura di), *Enciclopedia della Sicilia*, Parma 2006.

Vacirca 1994

M.D. Vacirca, *La morte barocca e l'illusione dell'architettura: cronaca degli apparati funebri del Seicento e del primo Settecento*, in M.C. Ruggieri Tricoli, *Il "funeral teatro". Apparati e mausolei effimeri dal XVII al XX secolo a Palermo*, Palermo 1993 (printed 1994), pp. 63-86.

Vesco 2010

M. Vesco, *Carlo d'Aragona e la politica urbanistica del Senato palermitano: alcuni progetti per il rinnovamento della città*, in Marchese A.G. (a cura di), *Manierismo siciliano. Antonino Ferraro da Giuliana e l'età di Filippo II di Spagna*, atti del convegno di studi (Giuliana, Castello Federiciano, 18-20 ottobre 2009), Palermo 2010, pp. 227-252.

Wittkower 1972

R. Wittkower, *Arte e Architettura in Italia 1600-1750*, Torino 1972.

Zalapì 1999

A. Zalapì, *Il soggiorno siciliano di Matthias Stom tra neostoicismo e "dissenso". Nuove acquisizioni documentarie sull'ambiente artistico straniero a Palermo*, in V. Abbate (a cura di), *1570-670 Porto di mare. Pittori e Pittura a Palermo tra memoria e recupero*, catalogo della mostra (Palermo, S. Giorgio dei Genovesi, 30 maggio - 31 ottobre 1999), Napoli 1999, pp. 147-157.

Zanuso 2000

S. Zanuso, *Abbondio Stazio*, in *La scultura a Venezia da Sansovino a Canova*, a cura di A. Bacchi, Milano 2000, pp. 787-789.

Cura editoriale
Federica Piantoni

Coordinamento tecnico
Mario Ara

© 2016 De Luca Editori d'Arte
Via di Novella, 22 - 00199 Roma
tel. 06 32650712 - fax 06 32650715
e-mail: libreria@delucaeditori.com
ISBN 978-88-6557-272-6

L'editore si dichiara pienamente disponibile a soddisfare eventuali oneri derivanti da diritti di riproduzione per le immagini di cui non sia stato possibile reperire gli aventi diritto. È vietata la riproduzione, con qualsiasi procedimento, della presente opera o parti di essa.

Finito di stampare
nel mese di maggio 2016
Stampato in Italia - Printed in Italy