

*Carmelite Altarpieces by Cosimo Fanzago: Spanish patronage and Neapolitan devotion.*

Paola D'Agostino

Cosimo Fanzago was the leading sculptor and architect in seventeenth century Naples. He gave artistic shape and visual emphasis to Neapolitan religious fervour by marking important city sites with his works. Among his most renowned creations are the *guglia* of San Gennaro, the monumental lace-like gate to the dazzling shrine of the San Gennaro Chapel; the triumphant altars for the Jesuit order in churches across the city; as well as the mesmerising and colourful inlaid marble church interior and the sober meditative cloister at the Carthusian monastery of San Martino. Throughout his career Fanzago established a fertile relationship with many of the viceroys who ruled the city and successfully met their artistic requests both in Italy and Spain.

This paper focuses on two Discalced Carmelite altarpieces by Fanzago in Naples. Both works were part of significant projects that the artist developed in his late career and that have often been overlooked, partly because Fanzago's late works have to date received scant scholarly interest, and partly because the original configurations of the altarpieces, celebrated by contemporaries, have been destroyed, or significantly altered over time.

The altarpiece of the Saint Teresa Chapel, in the church of Santa Teresa agli Studi, was the apex of a sophisticated and rich design by the artist, which had an ingenious mechanism that entailed the lowering of the altar painting to reveal a life-size silver statue of Saint Teresa. The analysis of this chapel within the decorative campaign of the church of Santa Teresa agli Studi, as well as the use of reredos by Fanzago in the wider context of seventeenth-century architecture, are meaningful to assess the distinctive character of Neapolitan baroque ensembles.

The close connection of don Gaspar Guzmán, count of Peñaranda de Bracamonte, viceroy in Naples from 1658 to 1664, with the Discalced Carmelites and his role in strengthening this religious order in the Campania region is considered by looking at the project for the church of Santa Teresa a Chiaia, and particularly at the marble statue designed by Fanzago for the high altar. The statues of Saint Teresa carved by the artist himself or fashioned after his designs in different alluring materials, such as silver, bronze and ivory were pivotal to the image campaign launched by the Discalced Carmelites in Naples, and sustained by don Gaspar Guzmán, which led to the declaration of Saint Teresa as *compatrona* of Naples in 1664.

The paper aims to offer a better understanding of Fanzago's late artistic production; to look at the expansion of the Carmelite order as a significant case in point of the strategies employed by religious orders in Baroque Naples; and to raise new questions about the devotional care which patrons, whether clerical or lay, exercised in commissioning new altarpieces in seventeenth-century Naples.