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From border of the walled city to conventual and hospital citadel Memory and transformation of an urban area, to the north of Naples acropolis (15th–19th)

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From border of the walled city to conventual and hospital citadel

Memory and transformation of an urban area, to the north of Naples acropolis (15th-19th)

Francesca Capano Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II - Dipartimento di Architettura

Abstract

From the fifteenth century the hermits of the Order of Pietro from Pisa settled on the edge of Naples between the acropolis and the northern walls, and contributed to give a religious vocation to this area. In 1519 the Incurabili hospital was also established by Maria Lorenza Longo, from Spain. In this urban area, extending from via Pisanelli (*Decumano Superior*), vico San Gaudioso, via Maria Longo and via Luciano Armanni, there is a concentration of convent and hospital buildings, among which we focus on the convent of Santa Maria Regina Coeli. Here the historical and artistic characteristics of the Renaissance to Late Baroque are very clearly visible.

Da margine urbano *intramoenia* a cittadella conventuale e ospedaliera. Memoria e trasformazione di un isolato a nord dell'acropoli di Napoli (XV-XIX secolo)

A partire dal Cinquecento eremiti dell'ordine di Pietro da Pisa si insediaronono in un'area marginale della città tra l'acropoli e le mura settentrionali, confermando per questa regione la vocazione ad accogliere ordini religiosi. Nel 1519 Maria Lorenza Longo, arrivata dalla Spagna, fondò l'ospedale degli Incurabili. In questo isolato definito da via Pisanelli (*Decumano Superior*), vico San Gaudioso, via Maria Longo e via Luciano Armanni, vi è un concentrato di conventi e edifici ospedalieri, tra questi ci concentreremo sul convento di Santa Maria Regina Coeli. Qui le caratteristiche storico-artistiche tipiche della cultura napoletana tra Rinascimento e Tardo Barocco sono ancora ben visibili.

Keywords: Religious architecture of the 16th century, Incurabili Hospital, Church and Convent of Santa Maria Regina Coeli. Architetture religiosw del XVI secolo, Ospedale degli Incurabili, Chiesa e Convento di Santa Maria Regina Coeli.

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1 | Introduction

In a very restricted area between the Decumano Superior (today a stretch of via Pisanelli), the route of the ancient Neapolitan northern walls (ramps and via Maria Longo), via San Gaudioso and via Luciano Armanni as many as nine churches are documented – among existing and no longer existing buildings –, for many centuries an archconfraternity and the largest hospital in southern Italy. Obviously so many convents and monasteries can be added to this total of churches, that the area is among the most interesting in the *centro antico* (old city centre). This concentration of ecclesiastical buildings qualifies the block already recognized in 1971 as a “insieme conventuale più variamente articolato di tutto il centro antico” (most varied and complex collection of convent buildings of the whole of the Old Town) [Pane-Cinalli-D'Angelo-Di Stefano-Forte-Casiello-Fiengo-Santoro 1971, 60].

The development of this area with a religious vocation began in the 1500s and, today, despite the urban decay, it is still possible to recognize architectural elements that can be traced back to the 1400s. This high area was to be, after the phenomenon of abandonment of the monumental area of temples and theaters, known in antiquity as the *royal marble*, a semi-urban character even if *intra moenia* (inside the wall). Monastic orders settled in this marginal area, often coming from places beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Naples, which significantly qualified this urban region. All religious buildings and the Incurabili Hospital, which are to be found in our study

area, are monuments of great value from the viewpoint of Naples' artistic and cultural history and more; the brief notes, provided below to frame and justify the choice of this area, are taken from known guides from which cannot be ignored, as regards these matters [Catalani 1845; Celano 1856-1860; Galante 1872, Napoli Sacra 1993; Ferraro 2017]. Sometimes, in addition to the guides, other bibliographical references are used, clearly mentioned on a case-by-case basis.

2 | The area between the *Decumano Superior* and the northern walls

In 1412, hermits of the order of Pietro da Pisa from Sperlonga settled in a house near the buildings of San Gaudioso, now non-existent, dating back to the first half of the fourteenth century. In 1447 they acquired various properties including a ruined church opposite San Gaudioso. They probably transformed the pre-existing church and dedicated it to Santa Maria delle Grazie, called *Caponapoli*. The friars gave prominence to the church, building its larger namesake, knocking down the pre-existing church of San Nicolò dei Grassi (1501) and using part of the garden of the convent of San Gaudioso, purchased for this purpose (1521). Other works, which led to the construction of the church we see today and the adjoining convent, date back to the years between 1516 and 1535. Giovan Francesco di Palma was probably the designer – the characteristic design of the portal in double gable 'piperno' is attributed to him (1570) – with Girolamo de Sanctis.

The church keeps the original volume of the nave, it has a single nave with six chapels on each side, transept and apse, but it was greatly altered in the eighteenth century. Domenico Antonio Vaccaro is also documented on the building site in 1724: the busts of stucco saints between the windows are attributed to him. In 1702 the two head chapels on the right side were replaced by a single large chapel, partly reusing the pre-existing marble. In 1811 the left side was also restored look like artistic language of the 17th century [Padiglione 1855; Solimena 1934]. The works at the convent also continued until the end of the 16th century; they were also directed by Giovan Giacomo di Conforto with the collaboration of Cesare Quaranta. In this period the cloister was finished (1611), where the Accademia degli Oziosi took up residence. The cloister is clearly of 16th century style with round arches on pillars and cross vaults. The vaults are frescoed, the pictorial cycle is clearly Mannerist. With the suppression of orders the convent became the property of the nearby hospital. In 1962 restoration was carried out due to copious water infiltration. Today the church is in a poor state of repair.

A little further north, along the same front, the church of San Michele and Omobono was built. The exact date of origin is unknown, but in 1583 it was bought by the *Patronato dell'Arte dei Sartori* (tailors' association). The single main space of the church was aligned to the road; it has no particular elements, restructured several times over the centuries, and today is in disuse and prey to looters. It held a triptych, of great importance, attributed to Francesco Pagano, dated between 1490 and 1492 [Bologna 1977], today at Capodimonte Museum. Also the origin of the Incurabili complex dates back to the mid-sixteenth century. Maria Lorenza Longo and her husband Giovanni arrived in Naples in 1506 from Lerida in Spain. In 1518 Ettore Vernazza also arrived in Naples, in the wake of Ferdinando the Catholic, to found hospitals for 'Incurables'; as a result of the meeting between Maria Lorenza Longo and Vernazza the Neapolitan hospital was born, the largest in the south for many centuries. Longo bought houses and land between 1519 and 1526. In 1519 work began for the construction of the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, owing its name to a congregation of the nobility – the works began the day of the feast of Saints Philip and James, a title that sometimes identified the church – [Rossi 2010].

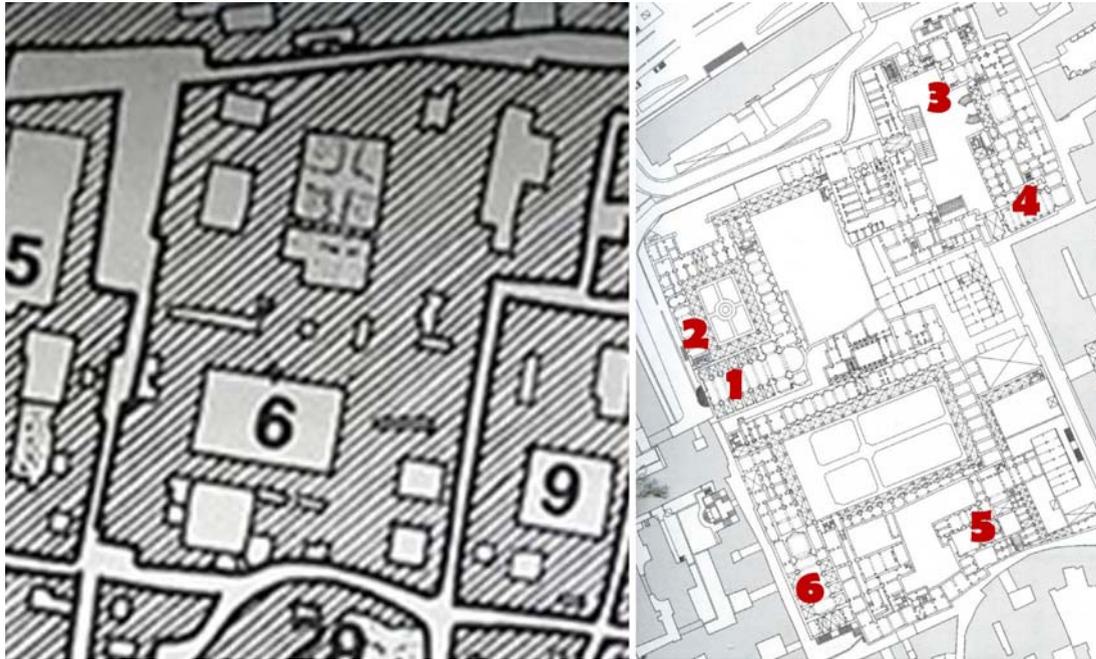


Fig. 1: The block delineated by via Pisanelli, vico San Gaudioso, via Maria Longo and via Luciano Armanni in Pane-Cinalli-D'Angelo-Di Stefano-Forte-Casiello-Fiengo-Santoro (1971). The block in Ferraro (2017), with the key line of the monumental buildings:

1. Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie a Caponapoli,
2. Church of San Michele e Omobono,
3. Courtyard of the Hospital of Incurabili with the confraternity of Bianchi and the Royal Pharmacy,
4. Church of Santa Maria del Popolo,
5. Church of Santa Maria di Gerusalemme,
6. Church of Santa Maria Regina Coeli.

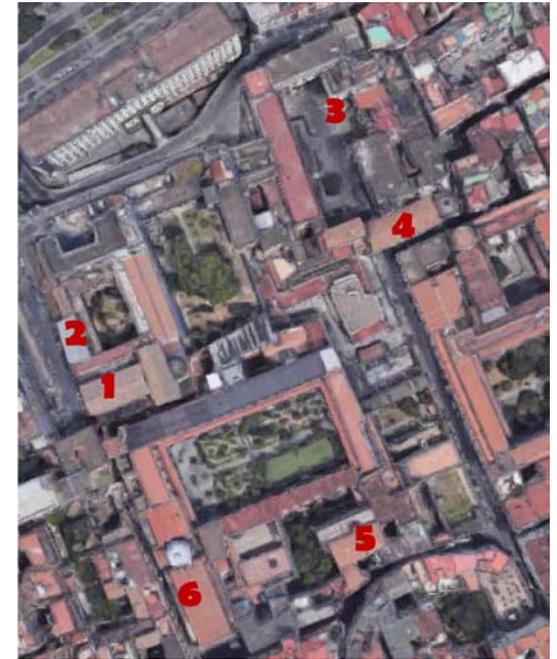


Fig. 2: The Google Earth image of the block with key line of the monumental buildings:

1. Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie a Caponapoli,
2. Church of San Michele e Omobono,
3. Courtyard of the Hospital of Incurabili with the confraternity of Bianchi and the Royal Pharmacy,
4. Church of Santa Maria del Popolo,
5. Church of Santa Maria di Gerusalemme,
6. Church of Santa Maria Regina Coeli.



Fig. 3-4: The cloister of Santa Maria delle Grazie a Caponapoli.

In 1522 the original site of the hospital was inaugurated. In the houses of Longo were Capuchin friars (1529), Franciscan nuns (1530) and Teatins 1533.

To the north east of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie two monasteries were built: one towards the northern walls and the other further south. A church was annexed to each one: that of the *Monaca di Legno* (Nun of Wood) further north and of the Converted further south. For the Monaca di Legno monastery the name derives from the surname of one of the sisters. However, the convent of Santa Maria delle Convertite derives from the reception that was given to women of the world who wanted to change their lives. In 1613 the two convents were annexed to the hospital of the Incurables. The hospital always received large donations, which permitted its growth: as early as the eighteenth century, the complex had almost reached its current size. The church was finished in the middle of the seventeenth century; the high altar was executed by Dionisio Lazzari between 1688 and 1692. The decorative apparatus and the twelve marble altars date back to the first decades of the eighteenth century. In 1730 Alessandro Manni (engineer) was the director of works on a project by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro. The restructuring of the Royal Pharmacy is also attributed to Vaccaro. Between 1747 and 1751 he worked on the entrance, on the double-flight staircase, the pronaos, the atrium, the Great Hall and the *Controspezieria*. Bartolomeo Vecchione, a collaborator of Vaccaro, is also credited. The four hundred and eighty vases for the medical essences were made by the workshop of Donato Massa; the majolica tiled floor was executed by Giuseppe and Gennaro Massa, sons of Donato.

Between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries Ignazio Di Nardo was responsible for the work on the complex; he took care both of the aspects related to the rents of the whole property and the continuous adjustments such as the construction of the houses at Largo delle Pigne (today Piazza Cavour). Di Nardo's restoration work began in 1792. Severely damaged by the allied bombing, both the hospital and the church were restored with a massive and invasive use of reinforced concrete. The church cover was replaced. Immediately after the war, the connection with Piazza Cavour – Maria Longo stairways or ramps – and the large school building, designed by Camillo Guerra, although it initially was designed as a hospital pavilion (1950-1945). This whole side lost its character of a limitation of the city walls that had distinguished it for centuries. The pharmacy, both the rooms and the furnishings, was restored in 1974. Since 1982 the hospital has become the property of the Municipality of Naples and from 1983 the bell tower and the building below were restored.

In 1524 the oratory of Santa Maria Succurre Miseris or the Bianchi, which dated back to 1473, was transferred from San Pietro ad Aram. To accommodate the oratory two rooms and the vegetable garden were transformed. Worthy of note is the small atrium organized in a bay adjacent to the northern entrance of the hospital, which houses a small but interesting curved double staircase. The simple rectangular hall with a barrel vault ceiling is entirely frescoed. The decorations are owed to Dionisio Lazzari (1672). In the same years the fresco of the vault was entrusted to Giovan Battista Bernaschi.

La Longo gave hospitality to Gaetano Thiene, his confessor, between 1533 and 1534 in some rooms close to the *Decumano Superior*, to which the church of Santa Maria della Stalletta was annexed. This was the original nucleus of the complex of Santa Maria di Gerusalemme, also known as delle Trentatré; after 1539, when the Theatines obtained the convent of San Paolo Maggiore, and it was precisely to this house Maria Lorenza Longo that retired until her death. The construction of the cloister, to the east of the original church, dates back to 1585. In the seventeenth century the original church was demolished and today's hall was rebuilt, oriented

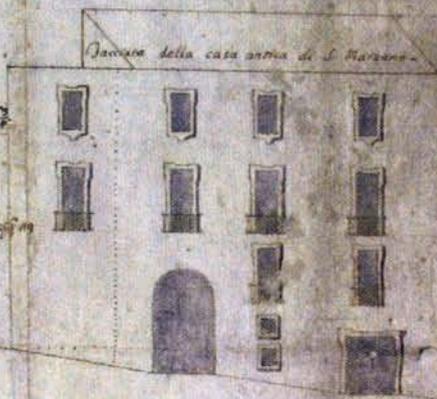
Plano e prospetto delle nuove abitazioni che sono pronunciate fare la *Reg. Sovrana* dello *Real. d. Casa dell'Incomibile* nel giardino di *S. S. Maria* e proprio nel fianco della strada che cala nella *Ripa di S. Antonio*

Plano del piano terreno

- A. Sono esse o dove fare la calce nella scuderia.
- B. Sono al numero di dieci nel fronte della strada.
- C. Sono gradini scendibili, che sono la comunicazione dalli piani superiori.
- D. Sono porticati con gradini, che ingressano nell'appartamento.



Prospetto della casa nuova di S. Maria



Scala di cui seguono le misure



Fig. 5: (previous page) Ignazio di Nardo, Project of houses on the back side of the Incurabili hospital, end of the 18th [Ferraro 2017].

Fig. 6: The huge school building of Camillo Guerra under construction, photo of the 50s.

east-west and without direct access to the road, in compliance with the strictest rules of seclusion. A steep staircase leads to an internal cloister that gives onto the church and the cloistered rooms. The simple rectangular hall, despite its limited decorations, is of great interest, both for the stuccos and the majolica floor, both attributable to the eighteenth century, and for the wooden altar. The cloister and the garden were partly destroyed due to the construction of the Anti-tubercular Dispensary (1918), now in disuse.

Augustinian nuns, who lived in a house in vico Carboni, bought palazzo Montalto on the decumano in 1561, transforming it into their monastery and suppressing the pre-existing chapel of San Valentino. The history of the church of Santa Maria Regina Coeli and of the monastery thus begins and assumes great significance, since it is the only religious complex that still maintains its original functions. It can be traced thanks to two manuscripts: the *l'istoria dell'origine e fondazione del Real Monisterio di Regina Coeli* by Giovanni Barisciano, written in 1794¹ [de' Rossi, Sartorius 1991], and *Platea di Regina Coeli*, edited by the lawyer Vincenzo Coccola, with additions by Barisciano² [de' Rossi, Sartorius 1991]. In addition to these there are a large number of documents kept in the Archivio di Stato di Napoli (State Archives of Naples), the *Monasteri Soppressi* (Monasteries Suppressed), and the Archivio Storico del Banco di Napoli (Historical Archives of the Banco di Napoli) [Santucci, 1993; Spinelli 2005]. The complex, restored several times during the last century, is of great beauty and refinement; today the condition of the complex is, fortunately, excellent. It is an exemplary case study for reconstruction, for the type of church and convent, for the artists who worked there. It is a paradigm of convent life from the sixteenth century to today, especially when compared to the religious buildings, which we have referred to, and is the reason why Regina Coeli has become a case study of great interest.

3 | The church and monastery of Santa Maria di Regina Coeli

The origin of the Lateran Canonichesse dates back to 1518, but until 1562 they first lived in Santa Maria a Piazza and then in vico Carboni. In 1561 they bought the property of Antonio d'Aragona Duca di Montalto (Mont'Alto), opposite the convent of San Gaudioso. It consisted of two houses, one small and one large, and a garden, and stretched to the property of the Pisan fathers of Santa Maria delle Grazie. From the act, drawn up by the notary Aniello Ferretta, it is known that 800 ducats were paid. After some work was carried out the nuns moved to the new complex on March 15, 1562, but both the works and the acquisitions of neighboring properties continued until the mid-nineteenth century.

On 19 May 1590 the construction of the "...nuova chiesa col disegno fattone da Gio. Francesco Mormando..." (...new church to the project by Gio. Francesco Mormando...) recounts Barisciano; the architect Giovanni Francesco Di Palma (last quarter of the 15th century – 1572) [Ceci 1900; Ceci 1932; Pane 1975; Donati 1991] was the son-in-law of the first well-known Neapolitan Renaissance architect Giovanni Donadio known as Il Mormanno (or Mormando). The architect, however, had been dead for eighteen years when work on the church began. The documents also mention the name of Antonio Quaranta as head of construction, probably carried out according to the Di Palma project, conceived in the years that followed the transfer of the nuns to the former Montalto houses.

The church was completed on 11 June 1594: it was perfected and blessed with the title of Santa Maria Regina Coeli. The typology is a Latin cross with a wide central nave, five chapels on each side and a dome extradossed on the choir; the plan depicts an elongated rectangle, which is found in the Neapolitan women's convents of the women built during the Counter-Reformation

* The article expands the lectures at the EAUH conference, Rome 2018, and CIRICE, Naples 2018. This research begins with the IDome project of the University of Naples, scientific director prof. Valentina Russo.

¹ Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale, Manoscritti e rari, ms. XV.C.32.

² Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Monasteri Soppressi*, Regina Coeli, vol. 1927. Il documento non è datato ma presumibilmente risale sempre alla fine del XVIII secolo.



Fig. 7-8-9: The small cloister of Santa Maria di Gerusalemme, entrance from via dei Pisanelli and the church gate.



Fig. 10: Via Luciano Armanni on the right the Anti-tubercular Dispensary.



period. The last chapel on the right of the altar was turned into an access to the sacristy. The current configuration³ is the result of the works following the inauguration until the mid-nineteenth century. The staircase and the pronaos date back to 1602. The church and the complex are raised above street level; this is the same level as the crypt-cemetery. From analysis of the Barisciano manuscript it is clear that in 1594 the church was finished look like the volume recognizable today, while the decorative richness of the coverings was clearly obtained, as we shall see, thanks to continuous works. From the same period, there is the fresco of the gallery and the four corners by the Flemish Loysio Crois in Malines, and the mannerist frescoes by Paul Brill (attributed) in the cross of the pronaos entrance.

The context was also modified: the cross, *Capo de Trio*, was transformed into the open yard of church entrance, largo Regina Coeli, by demolishing some buildings. Between 1599-1603 the choir was built above the entrance pronaos, exploiting the different heights between the external bays and the church ceiling. The stuccos and the wooden inlays of the interior decorations and furnishings were finished, by the works directed by Quaranta.

The coffered wooden ceiling, inlaid and gilded, is the work of architect Pietro De Marino (1634-1673), covering the original wooden trusses and surrounding the perimeter walls with the cornice supported by protruding corbels. In 1652 work was done on the main altar with work in inlaid marbles; the wall behind the altar was also inlaid with marble. In 1656 the dome and the

³ See Di Liello article in this issue.

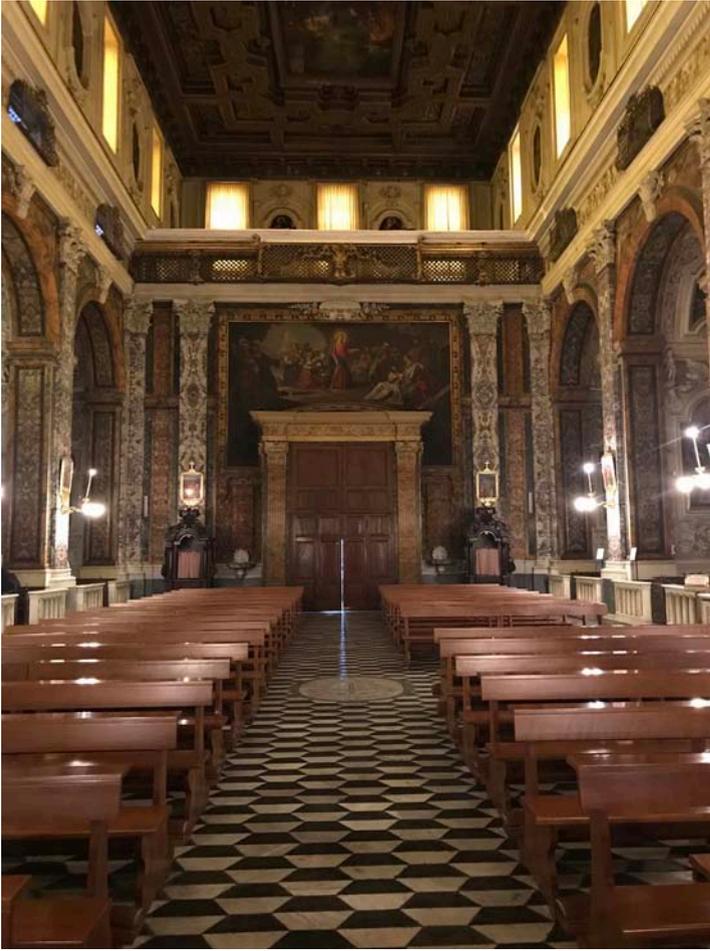


Fig. 11-12-13-14: The church nave of Santa Maria Regina Coeli, the courtyard and the dome.

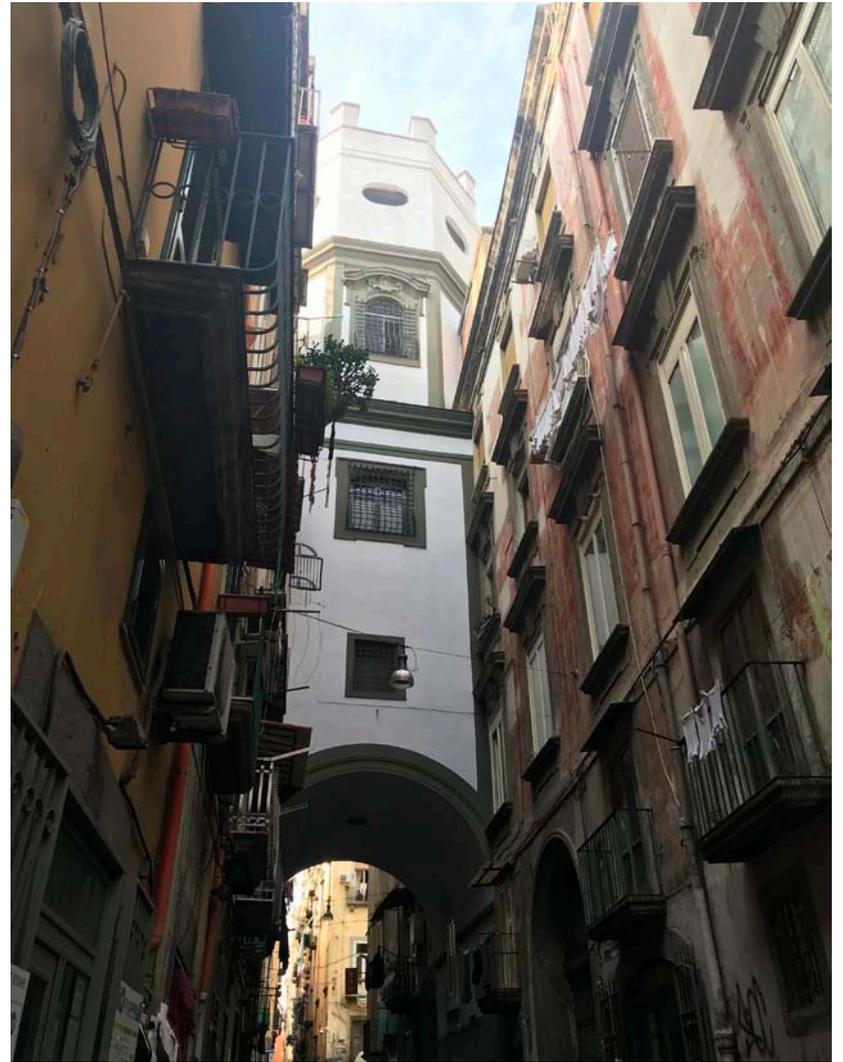
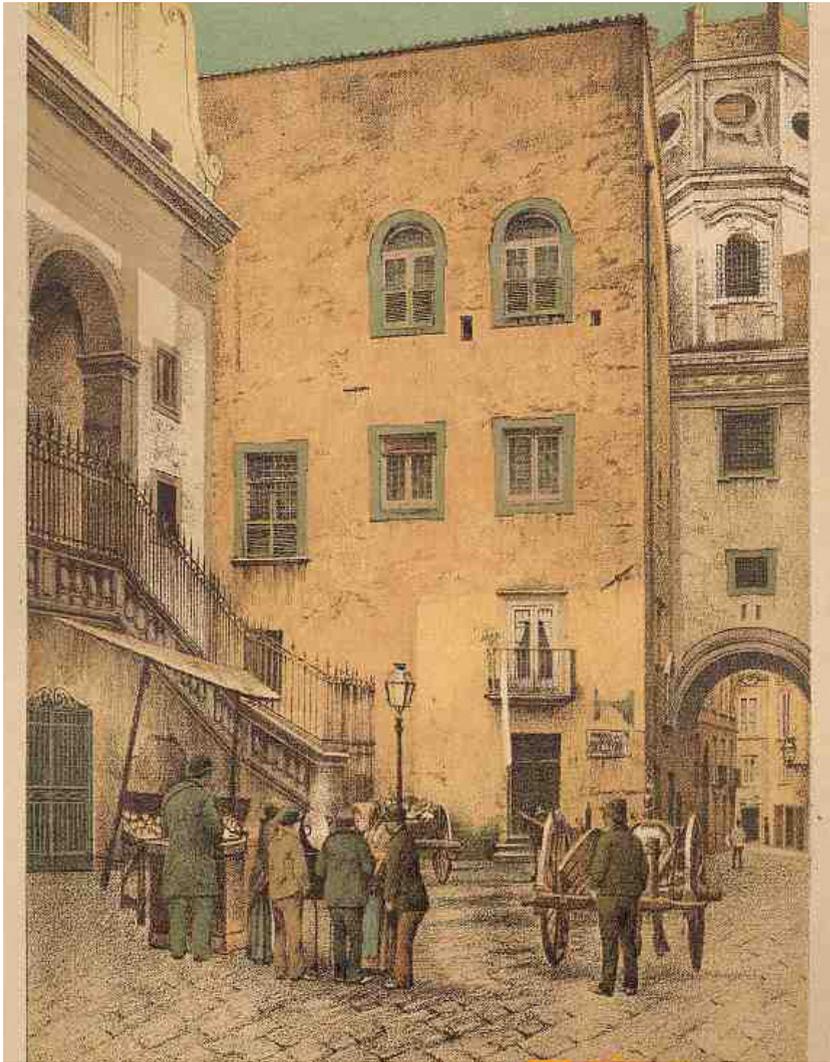


Fig. 15-16: The belfry-belvedere of via Pisanelli in D'Ambra (1998), and today.

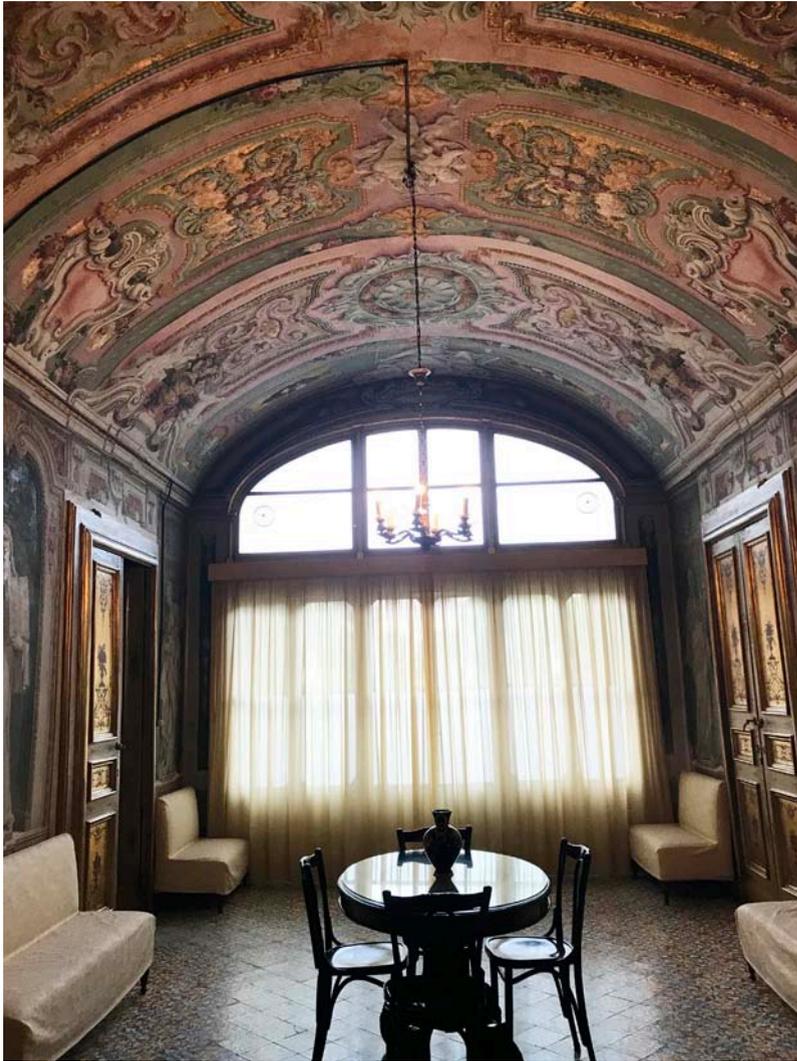
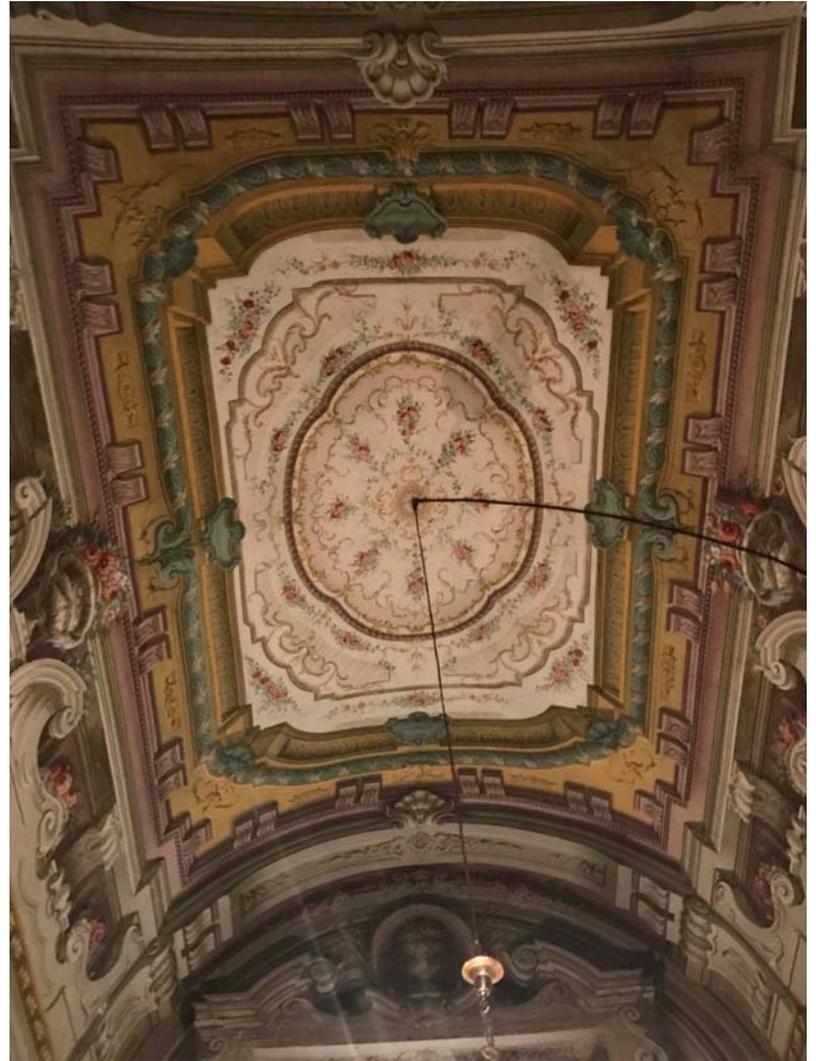


Fig. 17: Frescoes of the porter's lodge and the parlor in Santa Maria Regina Coeli, executed by Domenico Chelli.



large windows were decorated with gilded inlays. The pictorial works of Micco Spadaro and Luca Giordano, covering the arches of the chapels, date back to this stage, which also gave the church the Baroque richness that characterizes it today. At the end of the seventeenth century (from 1682) Francesco Antonio Picchiatti, *Regio Ingegniero et Architetto del Venerabile Monasterio*, was responsible for the construction site: the intrados of the dome and part of the tribune were decorated. The details of the pictorial cycle, the stuccoes, the gilding (Pietro della Rocca, Nicola Sartore) and the materials are described in detail by Dé Rossi and Sartorius.

The artists hired were Nicola Cristiano and Domenico Viola. This renovation in the tribune erased the earlier frescoes of Crois of Malines. This case, too, is emblematic of the baroque arrogance that made the seventeenth-century Neapolitan Style famous throughout the world, but has also erased many testimonies of previous centuries. The floor in black and white marble with dark gray side bands, *pardiglie*, was executed by Pietro Ghetti in 1716. The roof of the church was rebuilt in the 1920s.

The 1732 the earthquake damaged the church which was then consolidated with irons and chains; windows, frescoes and marble cladding were restored. In the documents the name of Antonio Alinei appears as responsible for the restoration of the decorations of the church – Giuseppe Scarola for the stuccos, Filippo D'Amato for the gilding, Arcangelo Trabucco and Carmine Rubino for painting –. In this period Barisciano named Ferdinando Sanfelice as head of renovation of the façade. Recalling that the famous architect was also involved in the nearby convent of San Gaudioso in the same period, there are also no payment documents to date. In 1742, after the post-earthquake consolidation, the fake ceiling of the choir collapsed, which was rebuilt on a wooden armory; this new ceiling was again decorated with Scarola's stuccos.

Another interesting phase was between 1777 and 1803. In 1778 the architect Ignazio Di Nardo started lining this marble church, covering the original pillars in 'piperno', and giving the church that characteristic rich polychrome of inlaid marble. The engineer Antonio Macri directed the marble cladding of the counter-façade (1781). The completion of the marble cladding of the tribune was directed by Nicolò Carletti – the stone-masons and marble workers were D'Adamo and Catalano –. New stuccos were made and some of the side walls of the tribune, which dated back to the end of the seventeenth century, were replaced with works directed by Picchiatti; Domenico Santullo was the stuccos-craftsman. The genuine marble was complemented by marble-like stuccos executed in 1779 – Gaetano Puglia, Gaetano Talento –. Some of these works are indicated in *Notamento, e valutazione de' lavori di Fabbrica, fatti nel Real Monistero di Regina Coeli dal fabbricatore Domenico Santullo* (List and evaluation of the brick works, made in the Real Monastery of Regina Coeli by the contractor Domenico Santullo), 1785, approved by Nicolò Carletti⁴ [Spinelli 2005, 301].

The details of the processes indicated in the archive documents provide valuable information on the lantern and the materials used for the renovation of the dome; this information takes on particular importance today because of the disappearance of this little lantern.

With the suppression of orders, in 1811, the Augustinians ceded the convent and the church to the nuns of the Charity of St. Jeanne Antide Thouret, who occupy it still today; the latter establish an educational institute, today the school is still there. In 1842 restoration was carried out by Gaetano Genovese. The neoclassical choir-stalls on the right side of the nave dates from this phase of work.

The work on the house followed that on the church, which has now been more carefully studied; clearly the names of the same architects and the growth phases of the complex repeat

⁴Napoli Archivio di Stato, *Monasteri Soppressi*, vol. 2035.

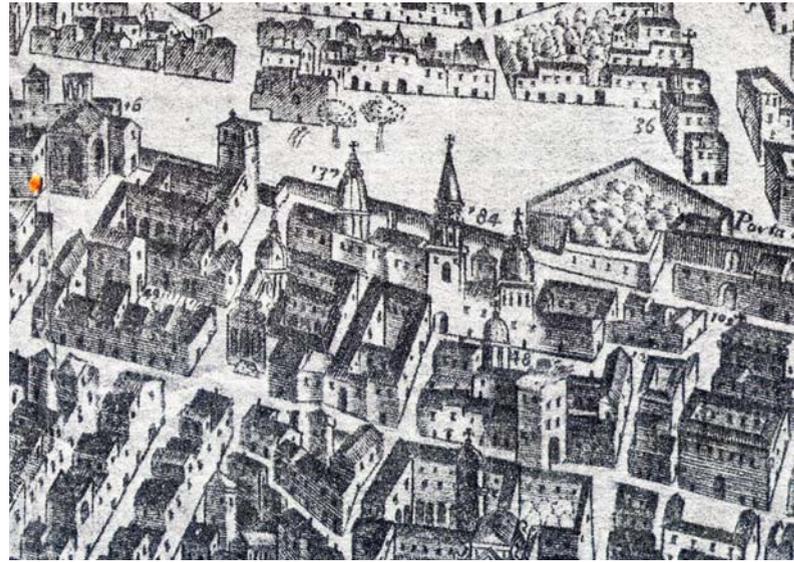
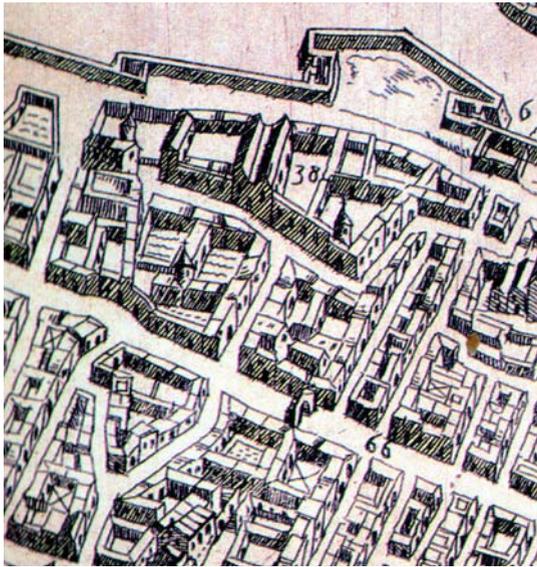


Fig. 18: The block in engravings of Étienne Dupèrac-Antoine Lafrèry (1566) and of Alessandro Baratta (1629).

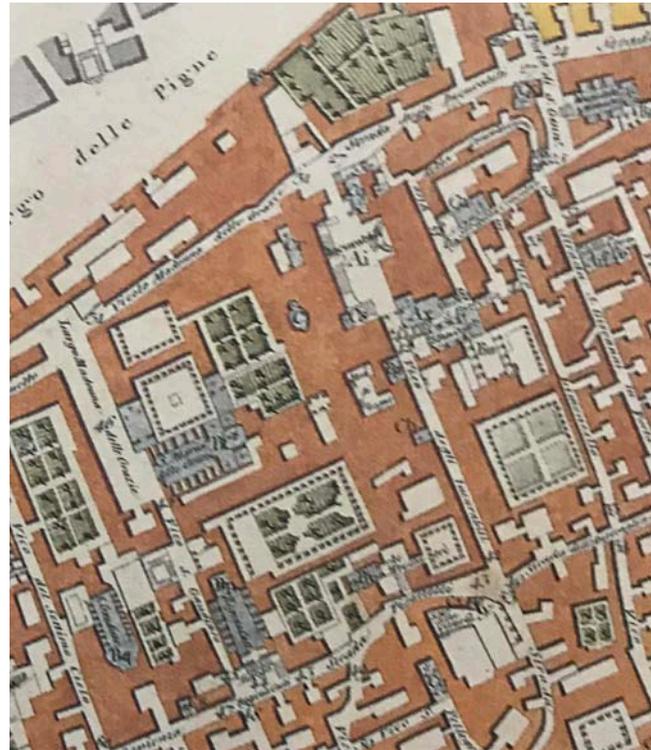


Fig. 19: The block in the plans of Giovanni Carafa, duca di Noja (1750-75) and Luigi Marchese (1804).



Fig. 20: The region of Neapolitan University in Ferdinando Schiavoni plan (1872-1880) and the project for the expansion of the University of Guglielmo Melisurgo and Pier Paolo Quagli (1896) [Amirante 2018].

themselves. The arrangement of the cloister dates back to 1599, completed at the end of the following century. Between 1652 and 1654 the renovation works were carried out, to adapt the monastery to the strict rules of the cloister, set out by Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino. The interior spaces were reorganized so that the confessionals and a chapel were within the cloister. Until 1680 work continued, to consolidate the rear communicat room of the high altar. After 1682, the cloister was completed following the design by Picchiatti. The work was conducted by the master carpenter Ortenzio Pica. Two wings destined for the nuns' cells incorporate the communal kitchen; the characteristic convent type dates back to this phase with large monumental corridors, which lead to the rooms and the cells. Even the doors, carved and framed by 'piperino' panels, are attributed to these works. The palace of Giovan Battista Caracciolo, prince of Marsicovetere, on the southern side of the decumanus, was purchased in 1717. Between 1718 and 1727 the new house was renovated to adapt it to the cloister. The raised viewing point between the two houses and the crenellated octagonal bell tower was also built.

The 1732 earthquake damaged the complex, as mentioned above; consolidations are documented for the dormitory roofs. Sanfelice is also mentioned at this time, in relation to the bell tower, in addition to the façade mentioned above. The continuous works on the complex are always documented by the aforementioned *Notamento ... di Santullo* (1785), approved by Nicolò Carletti. The arrangement of the open spaces of the great court was revisited by Ignazio de Nardo (1785-1808). Always at the end of the eighteenth century the frescoes of the porter's lodge and the parlor date back, executed by Domenico Chelli, scenographer of the San Carlo; even in the economy of this short essay they deserve to be mentioned for their beauty and for their lack of notoriety. These continuous works indebted the nuns who were forced to sell all the other properties (from 1789).

The allied bombing caused extensive damage to the dome. More recent events damaged the whole complex: the Allied bombing caused extensive damage to the dome. Essential, provisional works were already carried out between 1944 and 1946. Presumably the lantern of the dome had collapsed or needed to be demolished as it was irreparably damaged. The coir ceiling, of the nave roof and all the decorations were also damaged.

In the 1960s the state of repair was still low; the earthquake of 1980 greatly aggravated this situation. As part of the immediate consolidation measures to prevent any collapse a containing wall was built in the outside open yard. Five years later the dome, the roof, the nave and the supporting walls of the church were restored. The foundations along the walls of vico San Gaudioso were also reinforced. The works were directed by the Provveditorato alle Opere Pubbliche (Office of Public Works), and entrusted to the Soprintendenza ai Monumenti (Superintendency of Monuments), superintendent Paolo Martuscelli and supervisor Raffaello Causa [Spinelli 2005, 302]. The church was reopened in 1999.

This excursus clarifies the central position of Santa Maria Regina Coeli: artists such as Paul Brill, Micco Spadaro, Luca Giordano, Massimo Stanzione worked here, to name the most famous.

As regards the more strictly architectural aspects reference is made to Di Palma, a leading exponent of Neapolitan Mannerism, Sanfelice is mentioned and other important Neapolitan personalities such as Picchiatti, Di Nardo, Carletti, and so on, are introduced.

Moreover the work of some of these can be found in neighboring convents: this is the case with Di Palma and Sanfelice, to quote the most important. Along with this great quantity of descriptive documentary material are very few iconographies, besides the usual cartography. These are four drawings of the octagonal belfry-belvedere, prepared for a survey, dating from 1862⁵ [Ferraro 2017, 758-785, 762, 763].

4 | Conclusion: the hidden iconography

The city of Naples, thanks to its position, perhaps more than its history, was among the most illustrated and documented cities in Italy, and even in the absence of specific representations of this area, the official cartography confirms what is described above. A typical passage of much of the religious architecture is the transformation of the churches between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the construction of domes to identify the monastery; the canonesses of Regina Coeli conformed to this logic, as we have seen.

The first view that recounts the situation in the mid-sixteenth century is Dupérac-Lafréry of 1566⁶. Our block is not clearly designed as it shows a disorderly form bringing together both the convent of San Gaudioso and that where Santa Maria Regina Coeli stands, probably because of the rise in altitude. To the rear, after vico Corniolo, the buildings of Santa Maria delle Grazie

⁵ Napoli, Archivio di Stato, *Tribunale Civile di Napoli*, Perizie, f. 257/31053.

⁶ Étienne Dupérac (inc.), Antoine Lafréry (ed.), *Quale e di quanta Importanza è Bellezza sia la nobile Cita di Napole in Italia...*, 1566, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv_1b55005165h].

* Contemporary photos are by the author.

and the Incurabili can be recognized. The number 38 refers in legend to the hospital “L’Spedale di S. M.^a d’ Incur.^{ib}”.

The view by Alessandro Baratta, already shows a situation very similar to the current one. The view, in the 1629 edition, presents all the distinguishing features of our monument: the staircase, the pronaos, the north-south direction of the church, the dome with the lantern and behind it the monastery and courtyard. However, even in this case, in the rich legend there is no room for references to Regina Coeli but only to the incurables “184 Lincurabili”.

Sheet number 11 of the map of Giovanni Carafa, duca di Noja (1750-1775) accurately represents the plan of Regina Coeli, identified with numbers 324 and 325, referring respectively to the church and monastery – “Chiesa e Monastero di Dame, detto della Regina coeli dell’ordine lateranense di S. Agostino; fu eretto attorto agl’anni 1561 nel Palazzo del Montalto, indi ampliato nel 1590” (Church and Monastery of Mylady, so-called Regina coeli of the Lateran Order of St. Augustine; it was erected around 1561 in the Montalto Palace, then enlarged in 1590) – and the square – “Piazza che si disse di Trio, in oggi di Regina coeli” (Square called of three streets, today’s Regina coeli) –. The planimetric situation found in the plans of Luigi Marchese (1804 and 1813) and in the updates of the Real Officio Topografico is similar to Carafa’s map.

Table 13 of the Plans of Naples by Federico Schiavoni (1872-1880) documents the saturation of the few green spaces and the completion of the block’s perimeter facade on Via Pisanelli, before the transformation of the area for the inclusion of university clinics. The area definitely changed by the project for the expansion and arrangement of the University of Guglielmo Melisurgo and Pier Paolo Quaglia (1896) [Quaglia, Melisurgo 1897; Pane 1984; Petrella 1990; Amirante 2018, 135].

Regina Coeli, a monument of great historical and artistic value, takes on even greater value for its integrity in relation to the urban scale. The area, in fact, is seriously compromised, abandoned churches, used as storage depots, and in the best cases transformed into schools, universities, classrooms and libraries. In this disorder the Regina Coeli complex maintains a precious, almost unbelievable characteristic, that of the isolation typical of religious houses.

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