

Matteo Perez d'Aleccio

Pittore Ufficiale del Grande Assedio a Malta

by Lucio Maiorano

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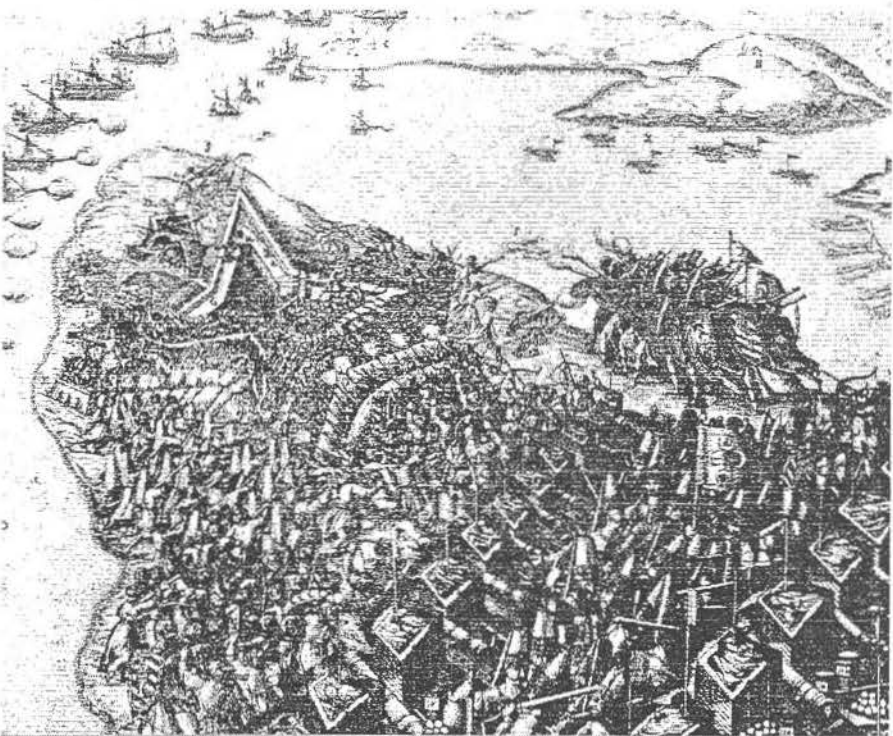
An interesting publication about the 16th-century artist Matteo Perez d'Aleccio focusing on his life history and on his superb frescoes at the Palace in Valletta, has just been published by the commune of Alezio in Italy with the co-operation of the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta.

Authored by Lucio Maiorano, the book contains valuable information about the artist's birth in Alezio in 1547, about his activity in Rome (1566-76) and Malta (1576-81) and, finally, about his demise in far-off Lima in Peru.

Matteo Perez d'Aleccio's finest achievement was undoubtedly the impressive frescoes of the Great Siege in the former Magisterial Palace of the Grand Masters in Valletta, but Grand Master Jean de la Cassiere's reference to Matteo as '*eccellente nella sua professione*' was also proved in other less publicised works produced by the artist during his stay in Malta. Among these one can mention the *Baptism of Christ* and the *Shipwreck of St Paul*, both remarkable for their dramatic composition and the attention to detail that they reflect.

Maiorano's book contains an introduction by the Director of the International Institute for Baroque Studies, Denis De Lucca, according to whom the artist arrived in Malta at a critical time when the Hospitaller Knights of St John the Baptist, having finally found security and a sense of belonging within the strong fortifications of Valletta, could afford to introduce a new Baroque lifestyle by commissioning, among other things, high quality paintings full of memories of their mission to protect Catholic Europe from being overrun by Turkish armies.

Considered from this viewpoint, Perez d'Aleccio's artistic activity in Malta provides us with a unique record of the heroic achievements of the Knights, which are well-explained and beautifully reproduced in the text and various illustrations of this new volume.



Detail of fresco by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio in the Grand Master's Palace, Valletta

M.A. in Baroque Studies

The International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta has finalised preparations for the commencement of a 15-month postgraduate course leading to the award of an M.A. in Baroque Studies. This course, due to begin in October 2000, is presented in a newly-prepared course brochure outlining (a) the aims of the Institute (b) the Institute Programme 2000-2003 (c) the course regulations governing the M.A. in Baroque Studies programme (d) the course syllabus (e) an explanatory essay on European Baroque.

Institute Director Professor Denis De Lucca emphasised the multi-disciplinary nature of the new course syllabus which is to be based on nine study units and a dissertation. The study units consist of

An Introduction to Baroque Europe: Political, Religious, Intellectual and Scientific Scenarios (BST 401);

The Baroque Route 1: Fortification Building, City Planning and Landscape Design (BST 402);

The Baroque Route 2: Architecture (BST 403);

The Baroque Route 3: Sculpture (BST 404);

The Baroque Route 4: Painting (BST 405);

Baroque Theatre and Music (BST 406);

Baroque Literature (BST 407);

The Conservation of the Baroque Heritage 1: Conservation Philosophy (BST 408);

The Conservation of the Baroque Heritage 2: Conservation and Recording Techniques (BST 409).

The Conservation part of the course will be supplemented by a number of practical sessions dealing with the conservation of Baroque architecture in Malta and Sicily, and will include a study tour to the Baroque centres of Catania and Noto in S.E. Sicily.

A number of guest lecturers from Italian universities specialising in Baroque will be invited to participate in the teaching sessions of the M.A. in Baroque Studies course.



Pre-Tertiary Certificate Course in Baroque Architecture

The International Institute for Baroque Studies (IIBS) at the University of Malta, in conjunction with the Works Division, Ministry for the Environment, is organising a one-year part-time Pre-Tertiary Certificate Course in Baroque Architecture starting in October 2001.

The course is intended to provide a broad but thorough grounding of Baroque Architecture by reconciling the theoretical aspects with practical site work, allowing the participants to pursue their own specialisation or field of interest in greater depth through project and hands on experience.

As explained by the Director of the General Works Division, Architect Vince Cassar, the idea behind this course is to create an awareness of our built environment by helping participants to develop the necessary skills to understand Baroque architecture and distinguish between different architectural styles.

Course participants are expected to develop a clear understanding of how Baroque buildings are constructed, and how different materials within a building interact, with the aim of improving their manual skills.

The course is spread over two semesters, with the objective of the first semester being to provide the participants with a complete theoretical background where various historical issues, building construction practices, and structural principles will be discussed.

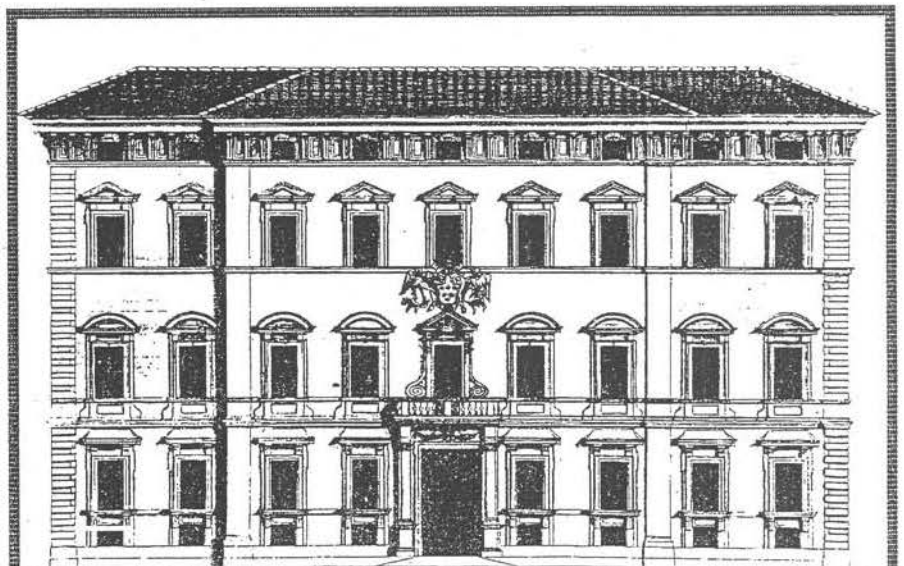
The teaching sessions of the second semester will aim at applying the theoretical aspects discussed during the first semester into practice.

Participants will become aware of the complexity of building structures and their nature as a whole rather than as a collection of individual elements.

The IIBS is taking various initiatives in the field of primary source research and the conservation of the Baroque heritage.

The Pre-Tertiary Certificate Course in Baroque Architecture, which has the approval of the Senate of the University of Malta, will be co-ordinated by Architect Hermann Bonnici, who is also a research assistant at the IIBS.

A number of foreign lecturers have been invited to participate in the teaching of the various study areas of the course.



The Baroque facade of Palazzo Altieri, Rome