



BAROQUE

Routes

issue 11 - 2016

FEATURES:

Malta – The Splendour of its Baroque Architecture

International Conference:
The Visual Power of
Military Architecture in
the Baroque Age

Tomaso Maria Napoli:
A Dominican Prior's
Contribution to Military
Architecture in the
Baroque Age

Journal of Baroque
Studies Volume 1 No. 3
2015



newsletter

Contents

- 2 - Contents
- 3 - Foreword
- 4 - International Conference: The Visual Power of Military Architecture in the Baroque Age
- 6 - Malta – The Splendour of its Baroque Architecture by Denis de Lucca
- 16 - *Tomaso Maria Napoli: A Dominican Prior's Contribution to Military Architecture in the Baroque Age*
- 18 - Review of *Journal of Baroque Studies*, Volume 1 No. 3 2015
- 20 - Programme of outreach lectures 2015-16
- 23 - IIBS MA Graduates 2015
- 24 - *Lines of Defence - Fortification Drawings of the Baroque Age at the National Library of Malta*



The website of the International Institute for Baroque Studies can be accessed at www.um.edu.mt/iibs. It contains information about the Institute's aims and objectives, its members of staff, as well as an overview of its past and on-going projects, programmes and courses. The website also contains information on the seminars, study tours, research and consultancies undertaken by the Institute as well as information on the publications, dissertations, and long essays produced by the students who attended IIBS courses. Visitors to the website can now also download issues of the Baroque Routes Newsletter in PDF format directly from the site. The new website also offers detailed information on the various postgraduate and undergraduate courses offered by the Institute and provides facilities for online applications.

www.um.edu.mt/iibs.

International Institute for Baroque Studies

Since its foundation in 1996, the International Institute for Baroque Studies has been involved in a range of activities that support its mission to disseminate multidisciplinary knowledge about the Baroque heritage of mankind, and to promote its appreciation and conservation for posterity. This objective has been taken forward through teaching activities at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as through extensive research work which has formed the basis of various publications and theses. The Institute has also performed consultancy services concerned with aspects of the Baroque heritage of the Maltese Islands which is linked to the Hospitaller Knights of the Order of St John the Baptist in the 17th and 18th centuries.

On an international level, the Institute has enhanced its teaching activities by actively participating in academic conferences at universities overseas, and has also taken the initiative to organise international seminars in Malta. The Institute assumed a pioneering role in the foundation of the Baroque Route Network of the Council of Europe, on behalf of which the Institute still regularly publishes a newsletter. The Institute's publications as well as its courses offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, reflect the interests of the academic staff members in the political, military, religious, social, philosophical, scientific, literary, artistic and conservation aspects of the Baroque age. The Baroque world is approached as a holistic cultural entity which embodies the two contradictions of the age: the abstract mathematical and methodical aspect on the one hand, and the rebellious, emotional and exuberant aspect on the other, which are both manifest in the architecture and art forms of the great Baroque capital cities of Europe. The enduring residues of this eminently European cultural expression bears witness to an age of learning, discovery, brilliance and splendour which continues to attract the attention of many scholars and poses a formidable challenge for them to provide answers to a host of yet unanswered questions, and to use archival research to identify and disseminate new knowledge about the Baroque achievement.

Contact Address

International Institute for Baroque Studies
 University of Malta
 Msida MSD 2080
Tel / Fax: 00356 - 21333919/21316619
E-mail: andre.debattista@um.edu.mt
Director: Prof. Denis De Lucca
Administration: Andre P. DeBattista
Newsletter: Dr. Petra Caruana Dingli and Dr. Stephen C. Spiteri

Foreword

The activities of the International Institute for Baroque Studies – teaching, research and publications – continued energetically over the last year. The Institute also organised an international seminar, and another series of public lectures at different venues outside campus, as part of its outreach programme.

One of the main recent events of the Institute was the launch in May 2016 of the new publication *Lines of Defence: Fortification Drawings of the Baroque Age* at the National Library of Malta, in collaboration with Malta Libraries. This large-scale volume will surely serve as an invaluable resource of information on military architecture for scholars and other readers. It contains the eighteenth-century plans and elevations of the fortifications built and projected by the Hospitaller Knights of St John in the Maltese Islands held by the National Library, together with explanatory commentaries. The authors of the work are Denis De Lucca, Stephen C. Spiteri and Hermann Bonnici.

Another highlight was the international symposium 'The Visual Power of Military Architecture in the Baroque Age', organised by the Institute in October 2015. Talks were delivered by scholars from various European universities and cultural institutions, exploring the manner in which architects, designers and military planners introduced elements of aesthetic appeal into their works of military architecture.

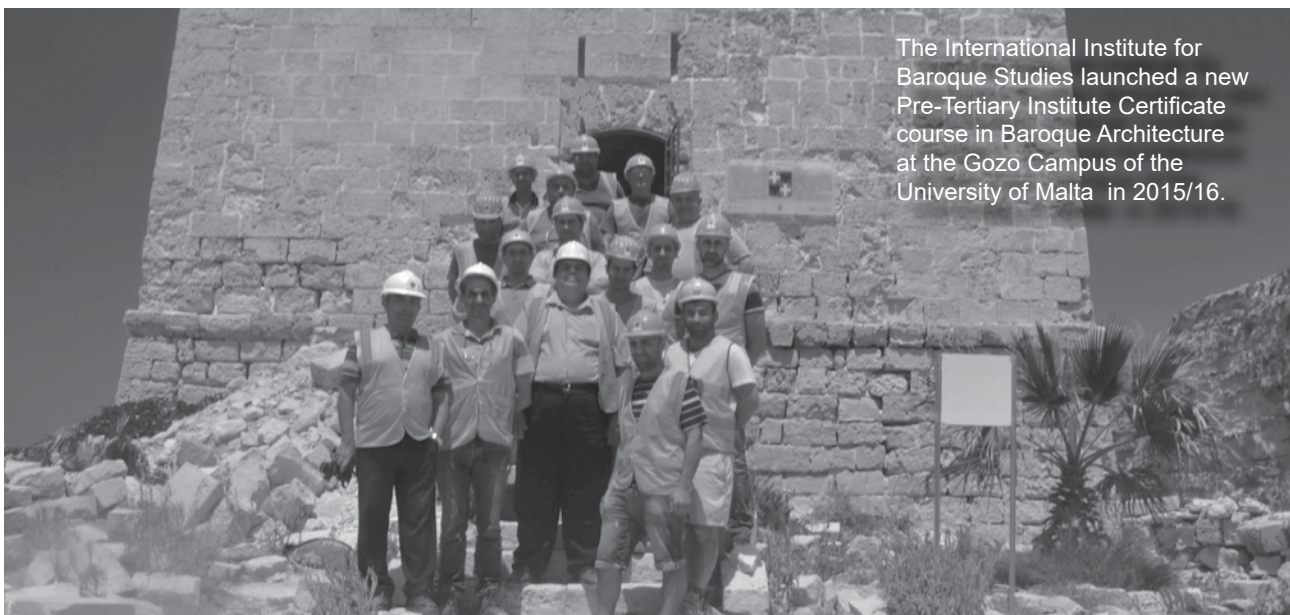
The third issue of the Institute's Journal of Baroque Studies was published, ably edited by Frans Ciappara. This contains eight articles on a variety of topics including St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta, the architect-engineer in 18th-century Malta, and the poetic travelogue of the German nobleman Ludwig von Anhalt-Kothen, as well as studies on Baroque painting and music.

A recent publication by Denis De Lucca focuses on the work of the Dominican prior Tomaso Maria Napoli and his contribution to military architecture in the seventeenth century. This study reveals how, besides the Jesuits, the Dominican Order was also deeply involved in the study and teaching of the art of military architecture.

Visiting lecturers to the Institute over the last year included Marcello Fagiolo from the *Accademia dei Lincei* in Rome, Michele Virol, and Maria Giuffre. The public lectures of the Institute were organised in collaboration with various other cultural entities, including the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura*, Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum, and the *Alliance Française Malte Méditerranée*.

This issue of the Baroque Routes newsletter also features the text of a lecture on Malta's Baroque architecture delivered by Denis De Lucca at the European Cultural Days 2015 programme organised by the European Central Bank in collaboration with the Central Bank of Malta, held in the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt, Germany.

Petra Caruana Dingli
International Institute for Baroque Studies

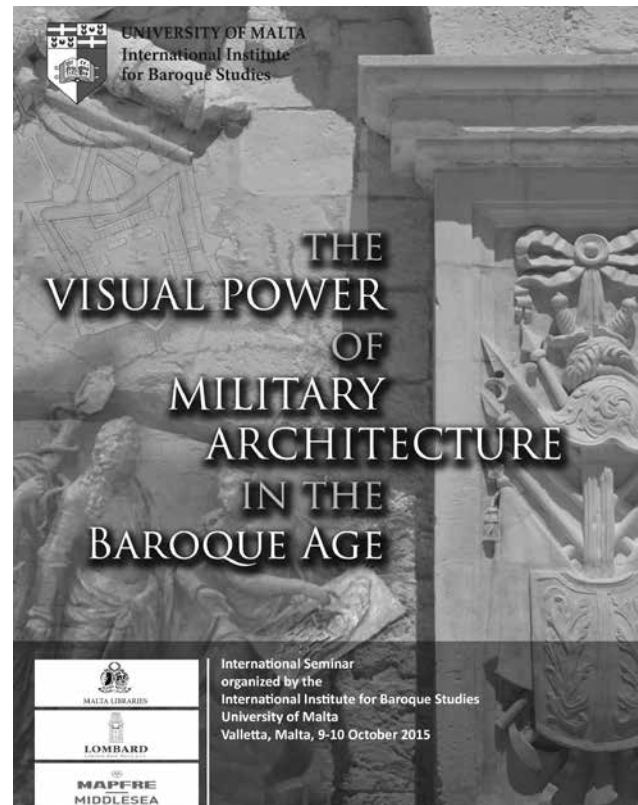


The International Institute for Baroque Studies launched a new Pre-Tertiary Institute Certificate course in Baroque Architecture at the Gozo Campus of the University of Malta in 2015/16.

The Visual Power of Military Architecture in the Baroque Age

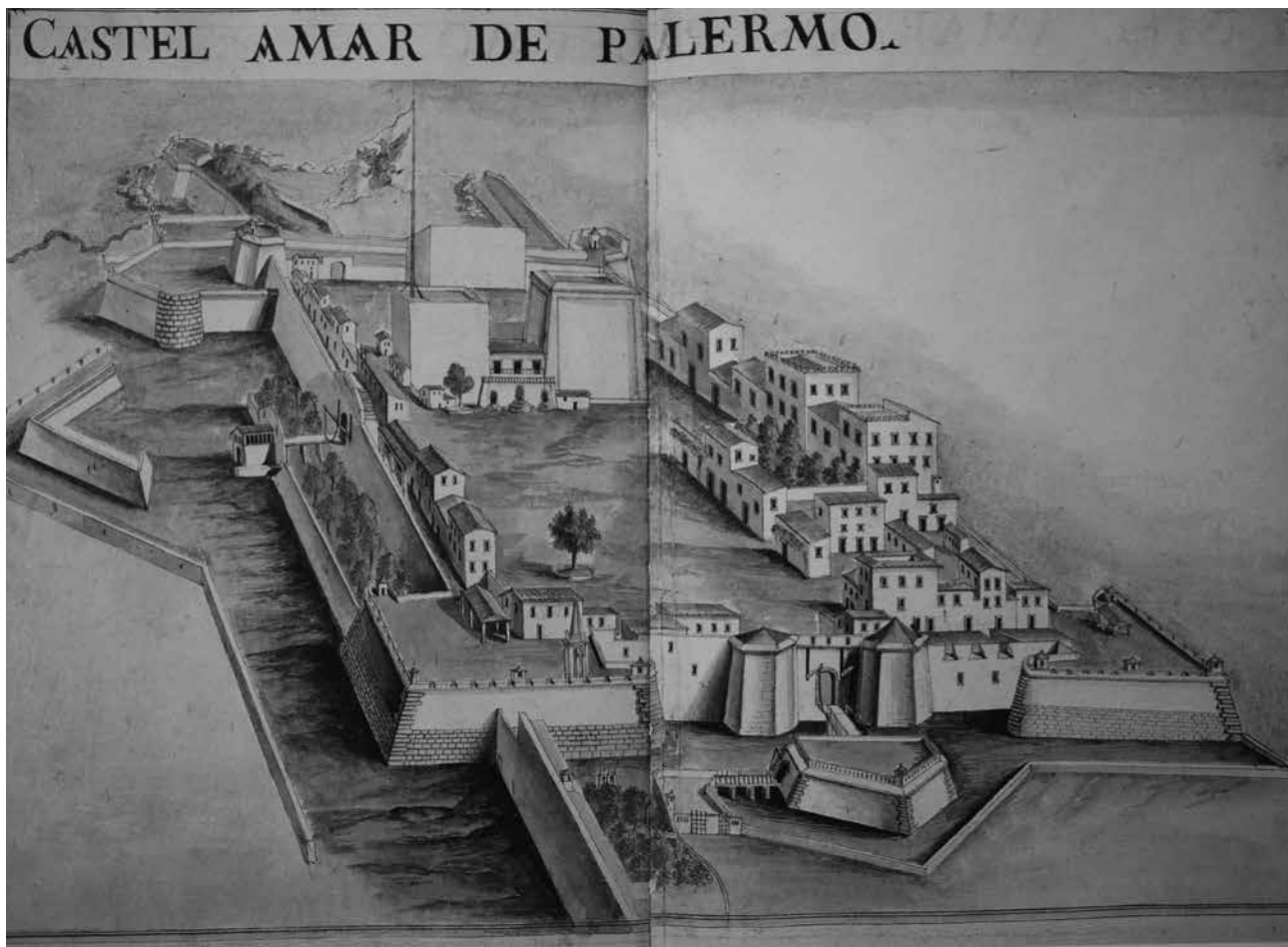
*An International Symposium organised by the International Institute for Baroque Studies, University of Malta
9th October 2015
National Library, Valletta*

This symposium on a relatively unexplored aspect of military architecture was the first of several public activities organized by the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta during the academic year 2015/16. It set out to explore and discuss the manner in which architects, designers, and military planners of works of military architecture during the Baroque age, sought to bring together architecture, engineering, technology, urbanism, and art in their defensive works in an attempt to endow them with aesthetic appeal. The seminar gathered together eminent scholars and



researchers engaged in the study of military architecture and military urbanism, to provide a platform for an exchange of scholarship and research in this fascinating field of study.





The event took place in the prestigious and beautiful hall of the National Library in Valletta, on 9th October 2015 from 9.00 to 5.00 pm. The activities concluded with a preview of a prestigious large-format book entitled *Lines of Defence*, which brings together the collection of some three hundred fortification drawings held at the National Library in Valletta. This book is a collaborative effort between the Institute and the National Library and contains a foreword by the Rector of the University, Professor Juanito Camilleri.

Participants from overseas included Professor Maria Giuffrè (University of Palermo), Professor Fernando Cobos-Guerra (Alfonso X University, Madrid), Professor Michele Virol (University of Rouen), Dr. Emilie d'Orgeix (University of Bordeaux-Montaigne), and Dr. Margherita Taveres (University of Lisbon). Participants from the International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta, included Professor Denis De Lucca, Dr. Stephen C. Spiteri, Architect Hermann Bonnici, Architect Claude Busuttil and art historian Dr. Theresa Vella.

The symposium was supported by Mapfre Middlesea p.l.c., Lombard Bank (Malta) p.l.c., and Malta Libraries.



Malta – The Splendour of its Baroque Architecture

By Denis De Lucca

Lecture given at the Europe Cultural Days 2015 programme organised by the European Central Bank in collaboration with the Central Bank of Malta, held in the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt, Germany, on 7th December 2015.

Architectural history can be one of the most boring or most exciting subjects to talk about. Architects and their buildings have always been inevitably intertwined with ideas about what is beautiful and what is not. Besides, the subject has also been intertwined with unfolding events in the political, religious, intellectual, technological and cultural fields.

A stimulating talk on architectural history, therefore, very much depends on the nature of the visual support that is provided and on the presentation of the subject in its wider context.

It is precisely my intention to do this in this lecture about the splendour of Malta's Baroque architectural heritage. I sincerely hope that my audience will not regret having come to hear what I have to say!

The jewel that best evokes the splendour of the Baroque architectural expression in Malta is, in my opinion, the Conventual Church of the then ruling Hospitaller Knights of St John the Baptist, situated in the heart of Valletta. This city, bordering the Grand Harbour of Malta, was then the seat of this ancient Military Order of the Catholic Church founded by the Blessed Gerard in the Holy Land in the year of Our Lord 1113.

More than evoking Baroque splendour, this magnificent church also evokes the first theme that I would like to address in this talk – the transformation of Valletta from a fortress of bland buildings into a city of Baroque architecture sporting the four main attributes of this international style.

But what were these four attributes?

First. The eagerness of the Baroque mind to explore space, to use axis, curvature, perspective artifices, proportional mechanisms,



Above, View of the high altar of the Conventual Church at Valletta.

and light effects and shadow play, to relate the interior of a church or palace with the exterior and the exterior with the surrounding squares or streets so as to render them holistic, dynamic dramatic and in a state of infinite development.

Second. The concern of the Baroque mind with collective values, with the potential that every new building in Valletta had to better enrich the urban theatre if its façade were to be conceived on the basis of dialogue with adjacent and opposite buildings. And there was a most important reason for this. Many and varied were the festive occasions in a Baroque city. And many and varied were the celebrations of victory, the religious processions, the military parades and the carnivals that added a rich dimension to Valletta. A unified architectural statement was therefore as essential as the scene of a theatrical stage to provide just the right backdrop for such festive spectacles, celebrating the prestige and successes of the so-called Religion of Malta. And such urban festive theatrical moods were not only confined to Malta, as these illustrations of a Baroque Easter in Piazza Navona, Rome, the entrance of the Queen of France in Delft on a state visit and the coronation prelude of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in Pressburg reveal.

Third. The desire of the Baroque mind to achieve a perfect integration, a *gran*



composto as contemporaries of Bernini would have called it, of architecture, painting and sculpture, achieving great beauty. Notice all this happening in the Chapel of the Langue of Italy in the Conventual Church!

Fourth. The issue of communicative force. Meaning the potential of buildings to explain without words the importance of its owner and function within the stratified social fabric of the Baroque age. A corridor in the Grand Master's palace in Valletta illustrates this point!

Seen in this context, the Conventual Church of St John's in Valletta can be defined as a magnificent microcosm of the process of the transformation of Valletta from a bland military city into a splendid Baroque city!

The geometry of its undecorated exterior and the original undecorated composition of its walls, arches and vaults - built shortly after the Ottoman Siege of 1565 - did reflect the military spirit of a city threatened by the Ottomans. They clearly reflected the martial spirit of Francesco Laparelli's fortifications and of all the early palaces and churches of late sixteenth-century Valletta which all sport bland walls and minimalist ornament.

Shall we call this the 'first' Valletta?

It was by no accident that the building of this 'first' Valletta, this new City of God of the

Above, Celebrating victory over the enemies of Christ in Valletta - Grand Master Marc'Antonio Zondadari with the spoils from his naval battles against the Ottomans. Below, Carapecchia. Entrance to Armoury in the Grand Master's Palace, Valletta.





Above, Façade of the Jesuit college and church in Valletta.

Knights “facing Jerusalem”, as Pope Adrian VI Florensz put it, was undertaken just after the Great Siege by Grand Master Jehan de Valéa to create a fortified focal point overlooking the *Grande Porto di Malta*, which contained the precious war galleys and arsenal of the Knights.

According to the astrolabe of a mathematician from Siracusa called Giovanni Antonio Inferrera, the foundation stone of the new city-fortress had been ceremoniously laid by the Grand Master at forty-two minutes to noon on 28 March 1566. An emotionally-charged sermon delivered by the famous orator Padre Spirito Pelo Angusciola, the blessing of the site and the firing of all the artillery during the elevation of the holy host, had concluded the festive occasion.

These proceedings had taken place within sight of a massive Turkish basilisk. This powerful and gigantic weapon had been abandoned by the retreating Ottoman jannissaries and subsequently dragged by the victorious Knights into the main gate area to remain there for a long time afterwards as a powerful trophy of a spectacular victory of the Bible over the Koran.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, most of Valletta had already been built up. It was however not before the fourth decade of the following century that the arrival of Baroque in Valletta coincided with the aspirations of Grand Masters Antoine de Paule and Jean

Paul Lascaris Castellar to introduce the new architectural style that was becoming so fashionable in Europe. Just as had happened in Rome, Baroque architecture was then seen by these Grand Masters as a passionate expression of hope for the future after the bitter experience of an Ottoman siege, of great artistic achievements, of unequalled splendour, of powerful rhetoric and of celestial inspiration ablaze with a blind faith in a triumphant Catholic God.

A significant gesture to announce the new age was the elaborate portal that was added by Buonamici to the façade of the Conventual church and, more than that, the lavish decoration works that were added to all the interior surfaces. Pride of place must here surely go to Caravaggio’s magnificent beheading of John the Baptist, and to Mattia Preti’s painted stone vault.

It was precisely these Baroque evocations that would have inspired what had then started to happen in Valletta after 1635. For this was the year when the first formidable exponent of Baroque architecture in Valletta, - a member of the famous *Accademia di San Luca* in Rome - arrived in Malta, as a humble assistant - a ‘*pittore del pennello*’ - to the great military engineer Pietro Paolo Floriani who was sent out by the Pope Urban VIII to build the new fortifications outside Valletta. These powerful Floriana outworks beyond the landfront of the fortifications of Valletta, repeatedly perfected in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, still carry Floriani’s name!

But who exactly was this Francesco Buonamici?

Francesco was born in the Medieval Italian city of Lucca in 1596. His parents were Antonio Buonamici and Anna Pistelli.

Having emigrated from Lucca to Rome, the young Buonamici had been involved in the refurbishing works of the church of *S. Croce dei Lucchesi e S. Bonaventura* belonging to the Lucca community in Rome - where he had been commissioned to paint the dramatic titular painting placed behind the main altar of the church. This painting depicted the precious relic called the *Volto Santo di Lucca*. In Rome, too, Francesco Buonamici had been involved in drawing up a project for the façade of the Giustiniani palace. His stay, however, had afterwards been interrupted by a brief visit to Lucca in 1633 when he had prepared designs for the Church of the Suffragio, a monument to

the victims of a terrible plague that had caused havoc in the city in the early 1630's.

Back in Rome after designing the Suffragio church, he had been commissioned by the nephew of the powerful Pope Urban VIII, the Cardinal Francesco Barberini to design some stage sets for the 1634 performance in the Cancelleria Palace of a very special Baroque opera depicting the life of an obscure Eastern saint called Sant' Alessio. The performance was held in front of a packed audience of Roman nobles and church dignitaries to mark the arrival in Rome of the brother of the King of Poland, the Prince Alessandro Vasa. Sant' Alessio had been a huge success.

It therefore comes as no surprise that Buonamici had soon afterwards been honoured by being elected member of the famous Roman art school called the *Accademia di San Luca*, then headed by the great Pietro Berettini da Cortona. It was at this point that the opportunity had presented itself for him to join the entourage of the pope's *Ingegniere Supremo dello Stato Ponteficio*, Pietro Paolo Floriani in his military mission to Malta and to eventually stay on under the protection of the Knights of St. John. For the next 25 years Buonamici served no less than three Grand Masters as the resident architect of the famous 'Religion of Malta.' This was the beginning of the transformation of Valletta into a Baroque city.

It was by no accident that Buonamici's first Baroque interventions in Valletta coincided with the very first Baroque adornment interventions that were, under his supervision, carried out within the Conventual Church of St John.

But more was to come!

It was in the year 1637 that Buonamici was approached by Fr. Tagliava -the rector of the Jesuit college in Valletta - to remodel the interior and design a new façade and dome for the college church which had been originally designed by the Jesuit architects Giuseppe Valeriano and Tommaso Blandino. The church and the nearby college seem to have suffered substantial damages in the 1634 explosion of the *polverista* situated in the same *Strada S. Jacobo*. Buonamici completed the design and started supervising the remodelling operations in the same year. When the job was finished the long façade of the Jesuit college and church, situated behind the Grand Master's palace, introduced a new very Baroque dimension – the first of its kind – in Valletta's townscape. It was the beginning of a replica of the process that

had at the same time started happening in the Via del Corso in Rome!

In 1642 Buonamici was commissioned by Grand Master Jean-Paul Lascaris Castellar to design the layout, the triumphal arch entrance, and the two fountains of a new garden Valletta called *Gnien is-Sultan*, situated in a prominent position overlooking the Grand Harbour, described by Albert Jouvin de Rochefort in 1664 as 'one of the most pleasant gardens in Malta since it contains a large quantity of beautiful lemon trees, orange trees and other fruit trees which are evergreen.'

Other descriptions of this small garden by the Germans Duke Ferdinand Albrecht zu Braunschweig – Lüneburg and Baron Georg Friedrich zu Eulenberg in 1663, mention the fascination of these German aristocrats with the two fountains of this small but charming garden. The larger of these fountains had sculptures of nymphs and satyrs from Classical mythology blowing water from their musical horns while playing around a large statue of Europa. They are here represented at the moment of her being abducted by the lecherous god Zeus, here assuming the semblance of a bull. This was a favourite design theme at the *Accademia di S. Luca* in Rome. Buonamici was in 1652 also commissioned by the Confraternity of the Souls in Purgatory to replace an existing church in Valletta with a new edifice dedicated to S. Nicola, also known as the '*chiesa delle anime*.' The façade and dome of this centrally-planned church together with that of the Jesuit college further up the road marked the beginning of the transformation of Valletta into a Baroque city. It was the year of Our Lord 1658.

It was well known in seventeenth-century Sicily that the Knights of Malta had always left no stone unturned to maintain an excellent rapport with the charming town of Siracusa, which had once welcomed them so warmly prior to their arrival in Malta in 1530.

Keeping this in mind, Giovanni Antonio Capobianco, the Bishop of Siracusa between 22 March 1649 and 19 May 1673, decided in 1650 to further promote these close ties by inviting over Francesco Buonamici, then described as the '*valentissimo ingegnere*' of the Religion of Malta, to assist him in realizing his vision of a new Baroque Siracusa where the labyrinthine itineraries of Medieval Ortygia would be 'modernised' by grand replacement buildings designed in the fashionable Baroque style of architecture and interior décor. The initiative of

Capobianco in this respect paid off handsomely. During his long bishopric he not only succeeded to persuade Buonamici to decorate that model of a *Baroque Bel Composto* which was the *Cappella del SSmo Sacramento* in his cathedral church but also to carry out substantial modernisation works in his medieval palatial residence adjoining the cathedral. Bishop Capobianco also managed to convince Buonamici to design the beautiful church of *S. Maria della Immacolata Concezione*, also known as *S. Maria delle Monache*, in the heart of Ortygia.

And Francesco Buonamici's visits to Sicily were not only confined to the city of Siracusa. There is increasing evidence to suggest that the architect at some point also travelled to at least three other destinations; these being Messina, Palermo and Trapani.

In Messina, he seems to have been responsible for repair works in the old church of *S. Giovanni di Malta*, attached to the Grand Priory of the Knights of Malta – now destroyed. In Palermo, he was involved in building operations concerning the Jesuit *Collegio Massimo Imperiale* in Corso Vittorio Emanuele, now the *Biblioteca Statale*. In Trapani he designed the façade of the Jesuit church in the former *Rua Grande*, now Corso Vittorio Emanuele, recently re-opened to the delight of the citizens of Trapani after long years of disuse and decay.

Demonstrating an overall similarity to his earlier façade of the Jesuit church in Valletta,

Francesco's achievement in Trapani reflected a thorough knowledge of the basic rules governing the building of a Baroque church, where the horizontal is carefully balanced by the vertical, where all bland and solid wall surfaces become refined and sculptural, where all projections and recesses are carefully dimensioned to achieve a superb play of light and shade, greatly embellishing the final product which also reveals his encyclopaedic knowledge of diverse ornamental features rivalling the superb work of the other more famous Francesco in Rome, where the churches of Borromini show similar characteristics in the handling of ornament to maximize shadow play. Considered from this viewpoint, the church of the Society of Jesus in Trapani surely represents the *chef d'oeuvre* of Francesco Buonamici's Sicilian adventure. This splendid church was consecrated in 1705.

It had to be Lascar's successor, the Aragonese Grand Master Martin de Redin, who finally allowed Francesco to return to Lucca in the summer of 1659. He was soon appointed Architect of the Republic of Lucca (1659-1677). In this capacity, he was commissioned to remodel the interior of the medieval Dominican church of San Romano and to design the theatre of San Gerolamo. The illustration shows Juvara's sketch for the interior of this splendid seventeenth-century playhouse.

Before departing from Malta, Buonamici had been asked to design a new façade for the old church of St. Paul in Rabat, also to remodel its

Francesco Buonamici. Facade of the Church of St. Paul at Rabat.



claustrophobic interior space. The foundation stone of Buonamici's new Rabat church had been laid on 1653 and after his departure to take up the post in Lucca, his capable master-masons Lorenzo Gafa and Pawluccio Formosa were in April 1664 commissioned to continue the works on the basis of the original design that had been provided by Buonamici. The design that was good enough to have found its way into the milieu of engravings of the famous Venetian Franciscan friar and cartographer Vincenzo Coronelli. Vincenzo Coronelli was a famous cosmographer who had designed two terrestrial and celestial globes for the great Louis XIV of France.

Buonamici's design of the Parish Church of St Paul in Rabat represented a landmark in Maltese Parish church design. It reflected the new Baroque gusto that he had introduced into Malta as an intended departure from the earlier Latin-cross parish churches that had been designed in the opening decades of the seventeenth century. Designed in a style that had a very Spanish flavour, these parish churches represented an early response of the Bishop of Malta to S. Carlo Borromeo's *Instructiones fabricae et supellectillis ecclesiasticae* formulated at the Council of Trent and published in 1577. Examples of these early parish churches could then be seen at Attard, B'Kara, Mosta, Naxxar and Gharghur.

It is said that while building the Rabat church, Francesco Buonamici came into contact with a very capable Maltese *capomastro* called Lorenzo Gafa, who, learning much about architecture from both Buonamici and his own brother Melchiorre who was then rivaling Bernini in Rome, later on in the century moved on to design or influence the design of the splendid Baroque Cathedral of Mdina, the Church of St Catherine of Zejtun, the Church of St Lawrence in Birgu, the Church of St Helen of B'Kara and so many other Baroque churches, large and small.

Gafa's buildings became models and goads for the dissemination of the characteristics of Baroque architecture to the village settlements outside Valletta after 1660, time-wise coinciding with the geometric splendour of the new fortifications designed by Count Maurizio Valperga and Don Carlos de Grunenberg. These fortifications were perfected in the first half of the eighteenth century by the French military mission of Renat Jacob de Tigne and Charles Francois de Mondion, both associates



of the great Marshal Vauban.

The 1660s were also the time when the great Mattia Preti the painter painted St John's, and Mattia Preti the architect designed Sarria.

The Church of the Immaculate Conception at Sarria was a superb case-study of Mattia Preti's architecture, now clearly attributed to him by virtue of a document dated 27 May 1676 which refers to a decision by the council of the Religion of Malta to approve a wooden model made by Mattia Preti for the new church.

The decision to build this miniature Roman Pantheon on the site of a sixteenth-century chapel that had been constructed on the same site by the Spanish Fra Martino Sarria Navarro, had actually been taken on 11 April of that same year. Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner and his Council, alarmed at the devastation caused by a virulent plague, had resolved to seek the intercession of our Lady and other Saints through a solemn vow of everlasting devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Originally fitted with a lantern rising above its ribbed dome, the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Sarria was a unique project. It revealed the harmonious thinking processes of Preti the architect and Preti the painter, evident in the positioning and composition of all the interior sacred paintings inside the building including that of the Immaculate Conception placed on the main altar. Installed in 1678 by bishop



Mattia Preti. Sarrìa Church, Floriana.

Molina, this painting represented a remarkable combination of both Marian and plague iconography, eminently suitable for a sacred building in the Catholic world of the Baroque.

There is a reference that during the construction of the church of Sarrìa, Mattia Preti struck a friendship with the resident military engineer of the Knights, Mederico Blondel des Croisettes who had replaced Buonamici after his departure. Mederico Blondel was the brother of the famous Francois Blondel who was the founder of the *Academie d'Architecture* and the designer of a fascinating course on architecture in Paris.

Did Preti, in the absence of any other foreign architect of repute, occasionally act as an architectural advisor assisting Blondel in his Valletta office, particularly during the principate of his Calabrian compatriot, Grand Master Gregorio Carafa?

And would this imply that Preti would have sometimes been involved in designing fortifications, as well as a number of churches and palatial buildings in Valletta?

Seen in this perspective, it becomes understandable why the magnificent façade of the Auberge de Provence and the splendid interior of the Church of St Francis - both happening at this time in the main thoroughfare of Valletta – as well as other buildings such as Blondel's Church of St Mary of Jesus, that would have appeared in Valletta at the time, would have echoed the contemporary transformations that were also then happening in and on the sides of the wide nave of the Conventual Church, now magnificently enriched with Mattia Preti's painted vault. This splendid work, described by the French traveller to Malta Albert Jouvin de Rochefort in 1664 as representing the apotheosis of the 'Religion of Malta', was indeed a landmark in the transformation of the sacred interior of this church into a sumptuous Baroque edifice.

So that it would seem that by 1670, walking down the nave of the Conventual Church and looking towards the aisle chapels and superb funerary monuments on either side and walking down the parallel *Strada San Giorgio* and



Façade of the Auberge de Provence, Valletta.

looking towards the palatial enclosure planes on either side, one would have enjoyed identical exciting experiences.

For when looking around in these two beautiful 'streets', one interior and one exterior, one sacred and one profane, one could not fail to admire all that was splendid in the new architecture and works of art of the Baroque.

And would this not have led a Baroque persona, as Jouvin comments, to think that he or she would have been in some sort of gallery full of beautiful paintings that collectively would have led any visitor to Valletta in the Baroque age to form a marvellous opinion of the city and its buildings?

Was this not indeed a fitting celebration of the emerging splendour of Baroque Valletta?

A splendour that soon reached its apogee in the eighteenth century!

Two key players entered the scene at the dawn of the eighteenth century. Romano Carapeccchia, an architect trained by Carlo Fontana, arrived from Rome in 1707. And Charles Francois de Mondion, a military engineer trained by Vauban, arrived from Paris in 1715. Both reached the zenith of their very considerable achievement in Malta when Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, a Prince of Portugal, was elected Grand Master on 19 June 1722.

The considerable output of the Italian architect Romano Carapeccchia after 1707 posed a fresh approach to elaborating the emerging splendour of Baroque Valletta.

Born in 1666 to poor parents – Giovanni Antonio Carapeccchia and Francesca Roveti - residing in the S. Eustachio parish of the spiritual capital of Catholic Europe, Romano was a self-made man.

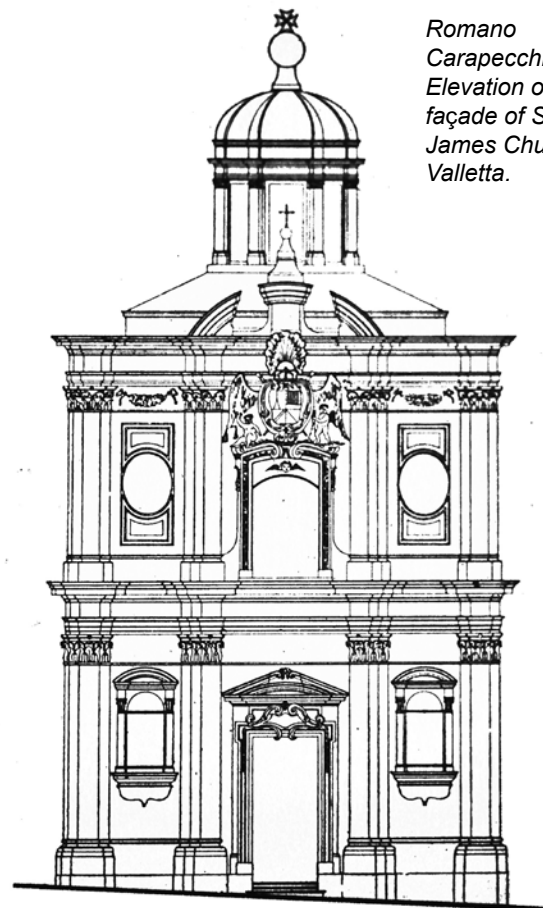
Having received his architectural education in the studio of the influential Carlo Fontana, he soon started practising his profession in Rome where he is credited with the design of the church and nearby hospital of S. Giovanni Calabita, the Palazzino Vaini and the Tordinona and other palace theatres.

In a Rome dominated by the presence of Queen Christina of Sweden and her friend Ebba Sparre, Romano also recorded the highlights of his education experience at the *Accademia di San Luca* in a unique document entitled *Compendio architettonico inventato da Romano Carapeccchia* and drew up several projects for large urban schemes and fountains, shown in these images.

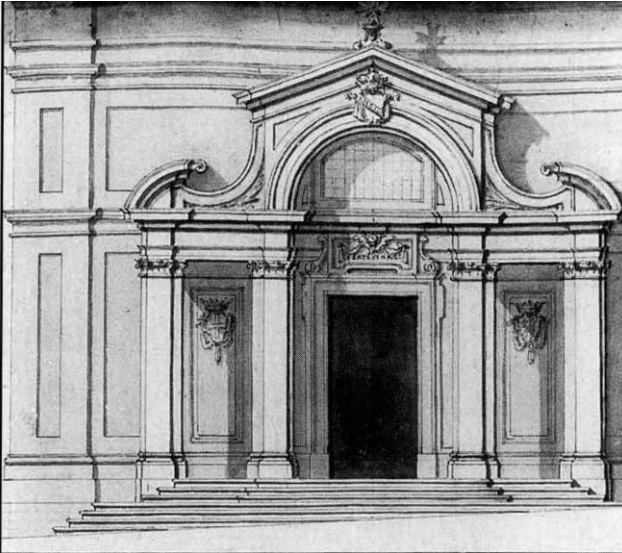
Disappointed with the limited opportunities available in Rome at the turn of the century, Romano Carapeccchia was persuaded to leave the city in 1707 to eventually settle in Valletta during the principate of Grand Master Ramon Perellos Y Rocafull. Within the context of an island fortress situated on what was still considered to be the very edge of European Catholicism, the newly arrived architect soon managed, as a result of Pope Clement XI Albani's recommendation, to find favour with the Grand Master.

As a result he soon drew up several embellishment projects which all reflected a total commitment to his profession to an extent that rarely has the spirit of the Baroque been more powerfully and splendidly evoked in Valletta than it is in the work of this distinguished Roman architect.

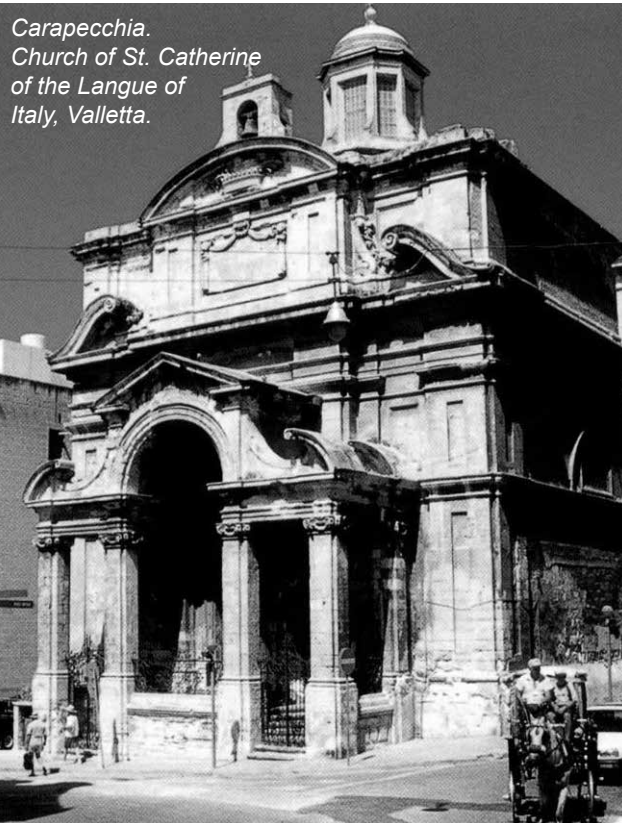
A firm command of a wide architectural vocabulary, an exceedingly pronounced integrative approach, flexibility of thought and a rare control of the design process presupposing the architect's ability to think out every detail on the drawing board, represent the hallmarks of Carapeccchia's sophisticated work. It is obvious that he well understood the four characteristics of the Baroque idiom that I mentioned in the beginning of this talk.



Romano Carapeccchia.
Elevation of
façade of St.
James Church,
Valletta.



Carapecchia.
Church of St. Catherine
of the Langue of
Italy, Valletta.



Which is why all this can be seen in his oval church of St. James, in his church of St. Catherine of the Langue of Italy, in his church and convent of St. Catherine in lower Republic Street in the beautiful Pilar church adjacent to the Auberge d'Aragon and in the church of St. Barbara in Republic Street which seems to have been built posthumously.

But Carapecchia's success in Valletta can be perhaps best measured by his very detailed *Disegno della facciata o sia il Prospetto della Chiesa di S. Caterina*, which he prepared in connection with his project for the church of St. Catherine of the Italian langue to which he was proud to belong.

It was the first projecting structure of its kind to be introduced into the urban fabric of Grand Master Valette's city, in blatant contradiction to one of the main town planning regulations that had been drawn up by the *Officium Commissariorum Domorum* of the Knights in the sixteenth century, when such projections had then been considered to be detrimental to the rapid movements of troops and artillery in times of war.

It was indeed a sign of the changed times when the embellishment requirements of Venus now superseded the military requirements of Mars, that had dominated the 'first' Valletta. For the talented Carapecchia - who according to Lione Pascoli, '*disegnava a maraviglia*' - was now allowed to introduce from the heart of Rome all those architectural elements of mature sophistication and studied finesse that went a long way to transform the military city of the Knights into a fine Baroque city.

For in Valletta, Romano Carapecchia also designed the Municipal palace, the façade of the Palazzo Spinola, the annexes of the Conventual church, the armoury door of the Magisterial palace, and the Perellos fountain which graces its courtyard. The prolific architect also produced designs for the tombstones of the floor of the Conventual church, for the sacristy furniture of the Church of St Paul and for several other fountains to embellish the city in true baroque style! Fortification gateways were also one of his favourite themes.

But even more important from Grand Master Vilhena's point of view was Carapecchia's involvement in the design of the Manoel Theatre, this inspired by studies that he had made in his earlier *Pratica delle machine de' Teatri* treatise. And the architect's project for the Barriera warehouses was perhaps one of the earliest attempts of the Knights to transform the waterfront of Valletta facing the Grand Harbour into an impressive Baroque scenario which was continued towards the middle of the eighteenth century with the building of the impressive Pinto warehouses. Outside Valletta, in the midst of Malta's beautiful countryside, the restoration of the old citadel of Mdina which had been damaged by the outer ripples of the great Sicilian earthquake of 1693 was a project that would have posed a formidable challenge for the second important personality of eighteenth-century Baroque in Malta, the Frenchman Mondion who was born in Paris and who had studied under the guidance of Vauban.

Charles Francois de Mondion's achievement in Mdina included the updating of the main landfront fortifications with the addition of an impressive array of outworks based on calculations used by Vauban.

It also included the replanning of the main entrance area of the town where the irregular medieval planimetry was now replaced by a straightforward and spacious Baroque design hinged on a splendid gateway building which reflected the best that Vauban had to offer in the France of Louis XIV. Mondion was also here responsible for the design and execution of a magnificent magisterial palace with its adjacent law courts, for a municipal palace, for a small church dedicated to S. Rocco, also for several storage magazines and for a number of smaller buildings including an armoury which was executed posthumously by his *capomastro* Petruzzo Debono.

Concerning Mdina, there is also a strong possibility that Mondion was actively involved in the design and building of the Bishop's Seminary for his fellow national Bishop Alpheran de Bussan. There is also some evidence that the municipal palace project was a collaborative effort involving the architect Pietro Paolo Troisi, who specialised in the creation of magnificent ephemeral artifacts - two triumphal arches and a magnificent altar of repose – for festive occasions, as was common fare in the Baroque world.

Carapecchia himself had designed a magnificent ephemeral *Chapelle Ardente* for the Conventual church in Valletta which had been first used during the death rituals of his master, Grand Master Vilhena in 1733.

The last flowering of Baroque architecture in Valletta happened as a response to the absolutist attitudes to governance that infiltrated Malta in the second half of the eighteenth century.

One now finds Grand Masters Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca, Francisco Ximenes Texada and Emmanuel de Rohan-Polduc forgetting most of their Knightly vows to patronise with great zest a full-blooded mature Baroque architecture that added the final touches to Carapecchia's transformation of Valletta into a Baroque city.

Among the principal large scale buildings that were erected to communicate the unbridled powers and prerogatives of the above-mentioned Grand Masters one can mention the Auberge de Castille, the Castellania, and the palace that presently hosts the National Fine



Grand portal of the Auberge de Castille in Valletta.

Arts Museum.

Stefano Ittar's *Bibliotheca* building, evoking the language of the post-earthquake architecture of nearby Catania, closes the history of the Baroque architectural experience in the Valletta. This magnificent building, with its undertones and overtones of an emerging neo-classicism, was linked to the adjacent palace of the Grand Master which was now fitted with two magnificent portals.

But it was the Auberge de Castille that perhaps represented the ultimate expression of the spatial dominance, the ornamental magnificence and the communicative force of the Baroque age, eloquently evoking Grand Master Pinto's great temporal power and prestige, considerably enhanced after his thoroughly brutal suppression of a Muslim slave uprising.

This palace represented indeed the epitome of Baroque splendour in Malta. When completed it seems to have been acclaimed by many Knights as a superb representative of an architectural form of expression associated with political autocracy and with a pre-Kantian beauty which embraced a now defunct appreciation of fine things.

The Sicilian poet Corrado Rizza once wrote that '*Il Barocco e' un inno all'occhio e alla teoria della visione*' – the Baroque is a hymn to the eye and to the theory of vision.

To my mind, there are no better words to succinctly describe the splendid architecture of Malta in the Baroque age, the subject of this lecture.

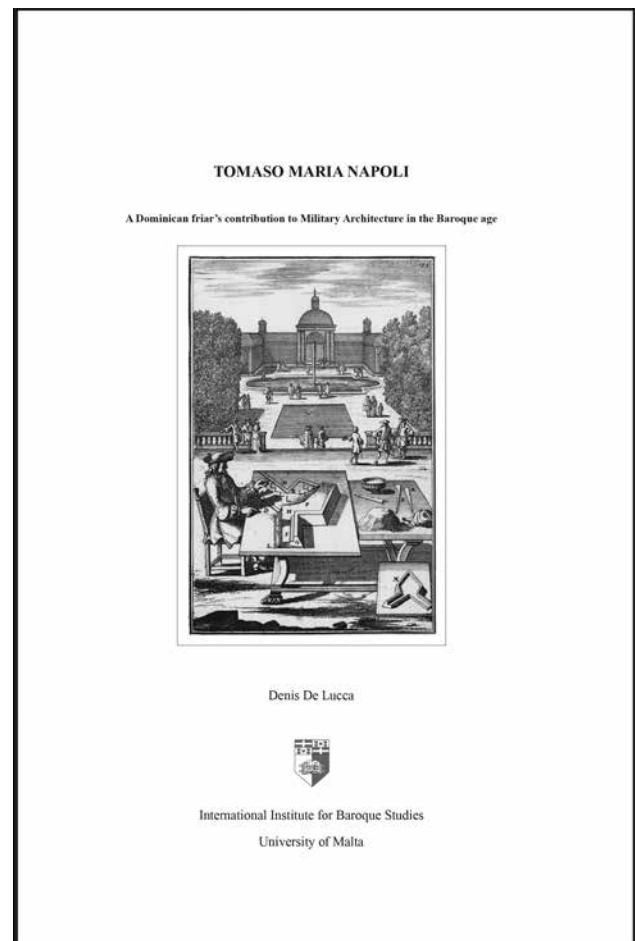
Tomaso Maria Napoli: A Dominican Prior's Contribution to Military Architecture in the Baroque Age. Denis De Lucca, International Institute for Baroque Studies, University of Malta, 2015. 254 pp. ISBN:978-99957-0-837-5

Stephen C. Spiteri

Professor Denis De Lucca's pioneering research work over the past number of years has served to challenge the notion that the design of fortifications, particularly during the age of Baroque, was restricted solely to military circles. His seminal work on the role of the Society of Jesus, otherwise known as the Jesuits, in spreading knowledge about fortifications and military architecture, entitled '*Jesuits and Fortifications: The Contribution of the Jesuits to Military Architecture in the Baroque Age*' and published by Brill in 2012, however, drew attention to the manner in which a very influential religious institution used its educational faculties to teach the subject of fortification to the nobles of Europe while its learned members published treatises on fortification theory and even provided consultancies on the subject to warring princes.

De Lucca's latest study on Tomaso Maria Napoli now shows that the Jesuits were not alone in the pursuit of the study and teaching of military architecture. The Dominican Order of Preachers, founded by the Spanish priest Dominic de Guzman in France in 1216, was another. By the seventeenth century, the Dominican friars excelled at the teaching of mathematics and geometry, the very basis of the art and science of fortification. Some of its members were actively consulted to review and design new works of fortification. Few know, for example, that Vincenzo Maculano da Firenzuola, the architect of the Sta. Margherita enceinte built by the Hospitaller Knights to protect their Grand Harbour in Malta in 1638, was a Dominican friar. Moreover, he was the same Firenzuola – Il Cardinal Maculano – who examined Galileo Galilei during his trial in 1633, the episode dramatically represented in a painting by Cristiano Banti (1824-1904), reproduced in De Lucca's book.

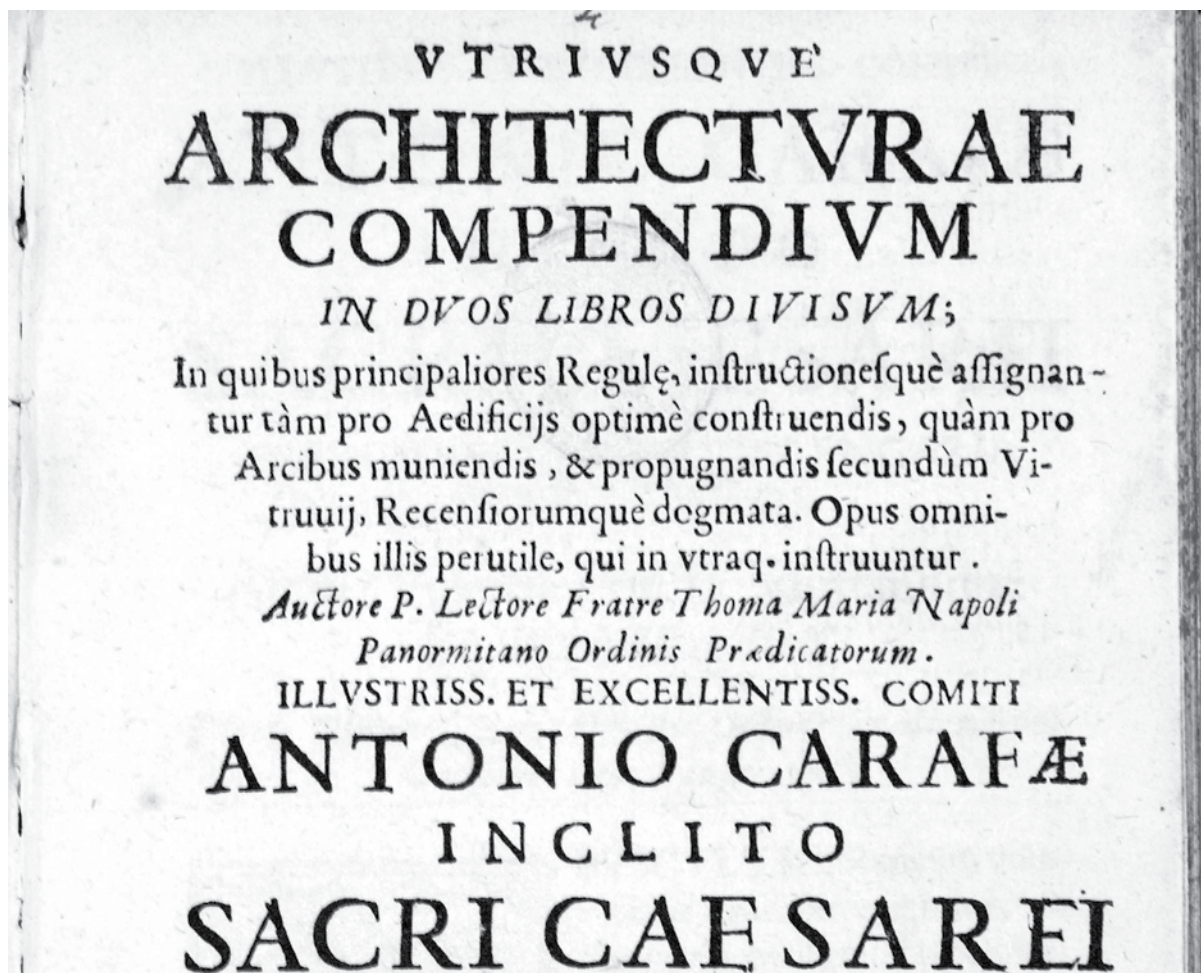
Indeed, the role of the Dominican Order in the teaching and practice of military architecture has remained largely uncharted territory and Denis De Lucca has taken a practically forgotten treatise authored by the Dominican



friar Tomaso Maria Napoli, published in 1722, as his stepping stone into an examination of this subject. Entitled, *Breve Trattato Dell'Architettura Militare Moderna cavato da' piu insigni Autori* and dedicated to Prince Eugenio of Savoy, this little booklet is actually 'a remarkable treatise' distinguished from others by its 'clear, concise and readable qualities' of its texts and diagrams.

Divided into two *libri* (based on four and eight chapters respectively) Napoli's *Breve Tatto* deals with both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, giving considerable importance to the mastery of the geometrical problems involved in the design of fortifications on plan, the use of a scale, and the compilation of tables and clear diagrams to assist the design of multi-sided regular polygonal forts. His thirteen 'maxims', those rules-of-thumb so beloved by military engineers and practitioners of fortification, laid out in the tradition of Errard¹ and those who followed him in France provide the 'mix', in the words of Janis Langins, of the 'geometrical principles and practical tips that were [then] becoming to be considered the

1 Jean Errard (1600) *La fortification démontrée et réduite en art.*



basis of the science of fortification'.² Napoli's booklet was truly a military engineering pocket hand-book. In this respect, it was a good idea to include a facsimile copy of the *Breve Trattato* in the appendix. As a matter of fact, De Lucca's book is also well illustrated with various images, including portraits of the main characters shaping Napoli's narrative, diagrams and extracts from contemporary treatises and other relevant images that are very useful in setting the scene and capturing the 'spirit of time and place'.

One of the more interesting aspects of the *Breve Trattato*, as De Lucca points out, are the many references to works of the leading military theorists of the Baroque age that pervade its pages, showing that Napoli was not only well versed in the science of fortification but also in its history and in the diversity of the schools of thought and the ongoing contemporary discussions fashioning the quest for the optimal fortress design. From Errard de Bar-le-Duc, through to Caude Milliet, Jose Zaragosa, Matthias Dogen, Blais Francois de Pagan,

Antoine de Ville and down to *il Marescial di Vauban*, Napoli employs each experts' arguments to examine the various problems of fortification facing military engineers in the early eighteenth century, such as the issues influencing lines of defence, bastion design, the advantages of second flanks, the use of terreplein, and the design of traverses and covered ways, to mention but a few.

Napoli's interest, however, extended beyond the world of fortifications. He was in fact, an accomplished architect. De Lucca's book takes a good all round look at Tomaso Maria Napoli's career and achievements and the historical milieu that influenced his formation as both an architect and military engineer. Born in Palermo in 1659, Napoli received his architectural formation under the renowned architect Andrea Cirrincione when a novitiate in the Convent of San Domenico. He then travelled to Naples, Rome, Vienna, and Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik). When in Rome, he penned his first treatise on military and civil architecture entitled *Utriusque architecturae compendium in duos libros divisum* (1699). Napoli visited Vienna on many occasions, and in 1687 even joined the

² J. Langins (2003), *Conserving the Enlightenment*, 59.

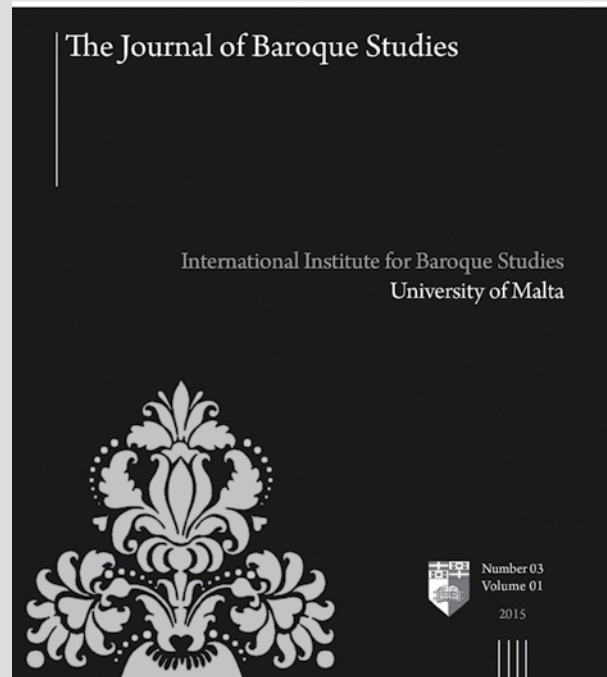
Imperial army as a chaplain and took part in the military campaign in Hungary that led to the Second Battle of Mohacs.

From 1689 to 1700, he was appointed official architect of the Republic of Ragusa and assisted in the reconstruction of that city following the devastating earthquake of 1667, where he contributed significantly to new cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. He returned to Palermo by 1711 and was appointed as military architect and later as *Architetto del Regno e della Real Camera*. His best known works today are two villas in Bagheria, Sicily, together with the façade of the Church of San Domenico in the heart of old Palermo and the *Colonna dell' Immacolata* embellishing *Piazza Imperiale*.

Indeed, Tomaso di Maria, to cite De Lucca, 'emerges from the mist of time as a unique person, demonstrating, beyond a strict adherence to his religious vows, a rare balance of interest in both military architecture – concerned with the honour of several Baroque cities in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries – and civil architecture – concerned with embellishment issues'.

It is interesting to note that Napoli's *Breve Trattato* also wielded a degree of influence over other military theorists. In 1733, a younger colleague friar of Napoli, Benedetto Maria del Castrone, published a treatise entitled *L'Ingegnoso ritorvato di fortificare co in mirabilis attezza ogni sorta di poligono regolare sopra l'idea del Signor di Vauban* which was clearly influenced by Napoli. Less known, and perhaps the subject of further research, is the influence that Napoli's work may have exerted on the military engineers working on the fortifications of the Knights a few miles away farther to the south, on the island of Malta. An annotated copy of his book was, after all, once kept in the *Biblioteca Annunciate Conv. Victoriosae*. Did this ever come to the attention of Charles François de Mondion, for example, then engaged as the Order's resident military engineer?

De Lucca's new book on Tomaso Maria Napoli is a welcome addition to a new type of literature in the study of the history of military architecture that has begun to look beyond the fortress and explore the very formation of the military engineers and architects themselves. Students of the Baroque world and military architecture will benefit greatly from this very readable and well-researched publication.



Journal of Baroque Studies - Vol.1, No.3, 2015

Louis J. Scerri

The third number of *The Journal of Baroque Studies*, the organ of the International Institute of Baroque Studies at the University of Malta, has more than kept the high standards set by its predecessors. The eight selected papers by local and foreign scholars cover various aspects of this period of European culture which, in our case especially, has scored such deep marks on our artistic culture. Of the eight papers, five indeed touch local topics and make of the journal a most valuable contribution to Melitensia. Two papers in particular focus on Malta's Baroque jewel, the magnificent St John's, the glorious feast for the eyes that leaves all visitors stunned by its sheer beauty. Cynthia de Giorgio, the curator of the co-cathedral, writes about the fine set of 29 Perellos' Gobelin tapestries at St John that we can alas today no longer admire in their proper setting in the nave but only in the museum. Some depict scenes from the life of Christ and some triumphal allegorical representations

of the Eucharist, the latter mostly based on cartoons by Peter Paul Rubens and are an important statement of the Church's basic Counter-Reformation principles inspired by the Council of Trent. The tapestries cover an astonishing 700 square metres (it took a skilled weaver a month to produce one square metre!) and are laid out in a sequence to proclaim salvation by means of the Eucharist expressed through the life of Christ. De Giorgio gives an excellent account of how the tapestries were commissioned and how Perellos kept a close interest throughout the three years they were being woven.

Theresa Vella discusses the St Michael altarpiece in the chapel of Provence in St John's. This, the first baroque painting to find its way into the conventual church, is a copy of a famous painting executed on silk by Guido Reni and which is to be found in Rome. For some time attributed to Preti, it would be the only case of the Calabrese master ever painting an exact copy of a famous work. Recent research has also established that it was hung up in the church in 1653, six years before the arrival of Preti on the island.

In 1598-99 Ludwig von Anhalt-Kothen was in Malta as part of his Kavalierstour and kept an interesting journal account. In the 1640s, he started to turn the account into verse in German although death cut his efforts short. In 'Memories in Verse: The Travels of Ludwig von Anhalt-Kothen (1579-1650)'.

Petra Caruana Dingli discusses this baroque fashion which, in this case, might have been motivated to improve and promote vernacular German.

The vast building projects undertaken by the Order of St John necessitated a well-organised system of land acquisition, measuring, preparation, and design. Mevrick Spiteri and Daniel Borg discuss the formation of the architect-engineer, the perito, and the agrimensore and their regulation by the Order of St John in 18th-century Malta. While resident engineers or architects designed the buildings, it was up to the perito and agrimensore to deal with technical aspects, such as surveys, valuations, and the drawing of the measured areas.

In an excellent exhaustive paper Spiteri and Borg focus on the formation of these professions and define their roles making use of archival material, court and administrative records, cartographic sources, and even private

notebooks. After discussing the set-up and educational background of these professions, the authors then turn to particular commissions and highlight their roles, workings, skills, collaborations, and influences. The Order made sure all employees were duly qualified and proficient in skills. There were also specific examinations for one to obtain a licence and to be officially registered. Without a proper school, it seems that most prospective candidates studied mathematics at private schools or the Jesuit college. This is a most interesting contribution which no serious student of the history of Maltese architecture can afford to ignore.

The other paper with a 'Maltese' connection is Angelo Lo Conte's study on the symbolism of blood in two early Italian Baroque masterpieces: Caravaggio's *Beheading* and Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* at Naples' Capodimonte Museum. Lo Conte proposes that both artists used 'blood as a symbolic representation of their own life-stories ... as a vehicle to express intense motions of fear and revenge'. The *Beheading* becomes even more dramatic with Caravaggio, who spent most of his short life running away from his demons, signing his own name from the blood that gushes from the Baptist's neck. Artemisia too had her own troubled life and seems to have used her art to exorcise her rage and anger.

The decapitation of Holofernes is depicted with a brutal reality that is painful and shocking to watch, even more savage than Caravaggio's own earlier treatment of the subject. The other three papers are proof of how the journal is reaching well outside our shores by attracting foreign scholars. Giuseppe Mrozek Eliszczynski from the University of Teramo discusses an episode from Spanish history. The controversial duke of Osuna, viceroy of Sicily (1611-16) and Naples (1616-20), was accused of large-scale corruption and involved Espia Mayor Andres de Velasquez whose brief consisted of coordinating, monitoring the flood of secret information that flowed to Madrid.

Rebecca Hall from the University of Malta writes about the musical prodigy Elizabeth Claude Jacquet de la Guerre (c.1664-1729) who was to become 'model for female composers to emulate'. The chivalric ideal and military ethic during the period of the Sun King is the subject of the contribution in Italian of Francesca Frasca from the Commission *Française d'Histoire Militaire* at the Chateau de Vincennes.

PUBLIC LECTURES OUTREACH PROGRAMME - 2015/16

As part of its outreach programme, the International Institute for Baroque Studies organized a series of public lectures in 2015, each held at a different venue off campus. Dr. Stephen C. Spiteri delivered an illustrated talk on Fort Manoel's designers and Builders - De Tigne', Mondion and Marandon, on 24 March 2015, at the Fortress Builders, Fortifications Interpretation Centre, St. Mark Street, Valletta. The lecture focused on the different roles of various military engineers and architects in the planning and execution of a major work of fortification in Hospitaller Malta during the early eighteenth century. Although it has often been assumed that Fort Manoel was designed by the Order's resident military engineer, Charles François de Mondion, the author's research work has shown that the design process was more nuanced than often generally portrayed, with various other architects contributing to different aspects of this fortification project.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR BAROQUE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Public Lecture

FORT MANOEL'S DESIGNERS
AND BUILDERS: DE TIGNÉ,
MONDION AND MARANDON

by Dr. Stephen C. Spiteri Ph.D.

Venue: Fortifications Interpretation
Centre, St Mark Street, Valletta
Date: Tuesday 24 March
Time: 5.30 pm

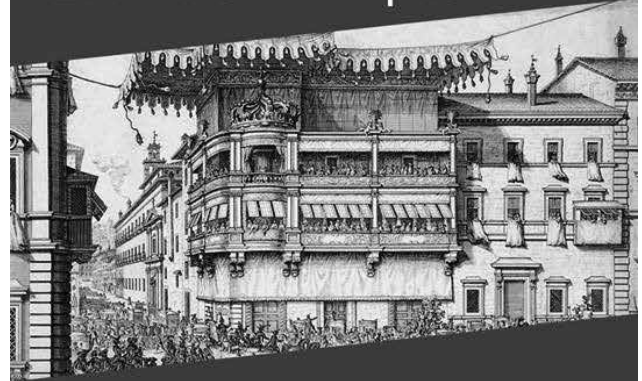
2015

Please note that owing to limited seating capacity,
attendance is by booking only - kindly send e-mail to fi.myl@gov.mt



Visiting Professor Marcello Fagiolo from the *Accademia dei Lincei* in Rome, gave two public lectures in May 2015. The first, entitled '*Il gran teatro del barocco: l'immagine del potere e la festa delle arti*' was held on 11 May 2015 at the 'Le Roi Soleil' lecture room at the International Institute for Baroque Studies, University of Malta. The second lecture, entitled, '*Roma barocca: la festa della Chiesa trionfante da Pietro da Cortona a Bernini e Pozzo*', was delivered on 13 May 2015 at the Italian Cultural Institute, Palace Square, Valletta.

Events on Campus



Il Gran Teatro del Barocco l'Immagine del potere e la Festa delle Arti

Prof. Marcello Fagiolo

Accademia dei Lincei, Rome

Monday, 11 May

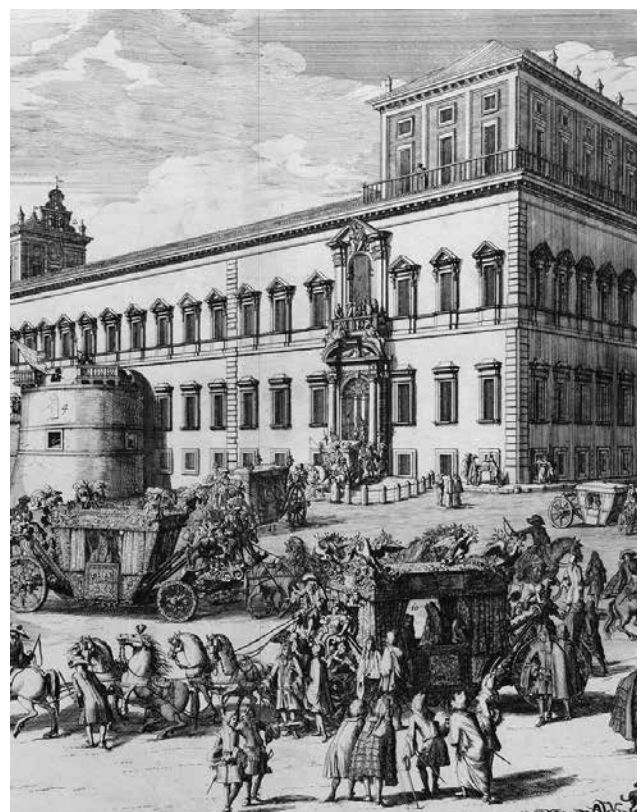
1300-1500hrs


Le Roi Soleil Lecture Room

International Institute for Baroque Studies
Faculty for the Built Environment building



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
International Institute
for Baroque Studies





INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR BAROQUE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Public Lecture

L'ARCHITECTURE
DÉFENSIVE FRANÇAISE
SOUS LOUIS XIV

by Prof Michèle Virol

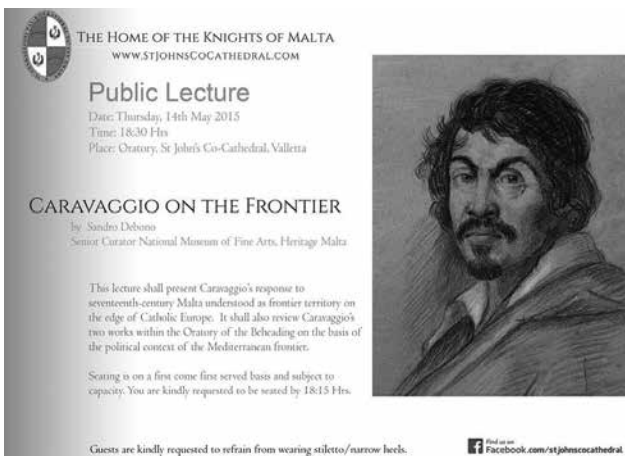
Organized in collaboration with the
Alliance française Malte-Méditerranée
and Fondation de Malte
under the auspices of the
Ambassador of France

Venue: Fortifications Interpretation Centre
St Mark's Str., Valletta
Date: Friday 29 May
Time: 6.30 pm

The lecture will be delivered in French

Visiting Lecturer Prof. Michèle Virol gave a public lecture on 29 May 2015, entitled '*L'Architecture Défensive Française sous Louis XIV*' at the Fortifications Interpretation Centre, St. Mark Street, Valletta.

This lecture was organized jointly with the *Alliance Française Malte Méditerranée*. The lecture focused on Marshal Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban's contribution to French military architecture and fortification in the second half of the eighteenth century.



THE HOME OF THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA
WWW.STJOHNSCOGATHEDRAL.COM

Public Lecture

Date: Thursday, 14th May 2015
Time: 18:30 Hrs
Place: Oratory, St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

CARAVAGGIO ON THE FRONTIER

by Sandro Debono
Senior Curator National Museum of Fine Arts, Heritage Malta

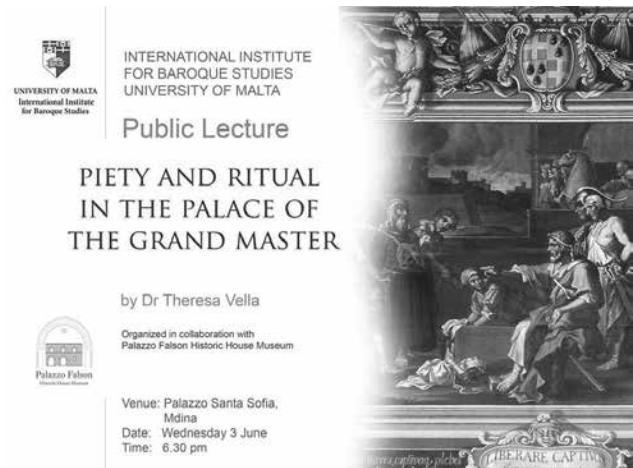
This lecture shall present Caravaggio's response to seventeenth-century Malta understood as frontier territory on the edge of Catholic Europe. It shall also review Caravaggio's two works within the Oratory of the Beheading on the basis of the political context of the Mediterranean frontier.

Seating is on a first come first served basis and subject to capacity. You are kindly requested to be seated by 18:15 Hrs.

Guests are kindly requested to refrain from wearing stiletto/narrow heels.

Facebook.com/stjohnscocathedral

Dr. Sandro Debono delivered a talk entitled '*Caravaggio on the Frontier*' on 14 May 2015 at St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. This lecture presented Caravaggio's response to 17th-century Malta, understood as a frontier territory on the edge of Catholic Europe, and how this may have inspired, influenced or guided a response through his artworks. It also reviewed Caravaggio's *The Beheading of St John* on the basis of the political context of the Mediterranean frontier. The lecture was organised jointly with Heritage Malta.



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR BAROQUE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Public Lecture

PIETY AND RITUAL
IN THE PALACE OF
THE GRAND MASTER

by Dr Theresa Vella

Organized in collaboration with
Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum

Venue: Palazzo Santa Sofia,
Mdina
Date: Wednesday 3 June
Time: 6.30 pm

Dr. Theresa Vella's lecture, entitled '*Hospitaller Piety and Ritual in the Palace of the Grand Master*' was held on 3 June 2015 at the Palazzo Santa Sofia, in Mdina. This lecture was organised in collaboration with Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum. The lecture focused on the manner which the Hospitaller Knights' religious life formed an intrinsic part of the identity of the military and religious noblemen of the Order of St John. The Knights' practice of private religious devotion has received little academic attention. Dr. Theresa Vella presented her study on the private religious devotion of the Knights of St John, through an understanding of Hospitaller values of charity and mercy and through the works of art found in the art collections of Knights of the Order. She demonstrated how the art and architecture of the chapels in the Palace of the Grand Master afford a view of the expression of piety in the private life of the most eminent of Hospitaller Knights, and of public religious rituals expressed within the halls and chambers of the *piano nobile* of the Magistral Palace.





INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR BAROQUE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Public Lecture

Date: Thursday, 18th June 2015
Time: 18:30 Hrs
Place: St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta

THE KNIGHTS AND THEIR SYMBOLS AT ST JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL DURING THE BAROQUE AGE

by Curator Cynthia De Giorgio

The Knights in their enthusiasm to record their devotion left behind a legacy of unique symbolism. Covered with shimmering gold, symbols were carved into the walls, relief in tombstones, captured in paintings and frescoes. The interior of the church became a stunning composition of the Knight's symbolic language during the Baroque age.

With time the ability to interpret these symbols has diminished and today their meaning goes unnoticed.

Symbols as intriguing carriers of unspoken thought and this lecture will discuss the Knight's symbolic legacy, how it developed and the meaning behind the use of these symbols.



THE HOME OF THE KNIGHTS OF MALTA
WWW.STJOHNSCOCATHEDRAL.COM

Find us on Facebook.com/stjohnscocathedral



Cynthia de Giorgio gave a public lecture entitled 'The Knights and their Symbols at St. John's Co-Cathedral during the Baroque Age' on 14 June 2015 at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. This lecture was organised by the International Institute for Baroque Studies in collaboration with the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation. The lecture examined the symbols used by the Knights of St John at St John's Co-Cathedral, in the walls, tombstones, paintings and sculptures which embellish the church. Unfortunately, the ability to interpret this symbolic language has diminished over time and the meanings of these symbols are therefore often not understood or go unnoticed by contemporary viewers. In this lecture Cynthia de Giorgio, who is a Ph.D. candidate at the Baroque Institute, explored the ideology which lies behind this symbolic language, enabling a fuller and deeper understanding of the symbols used at St John's during the Baroque age.



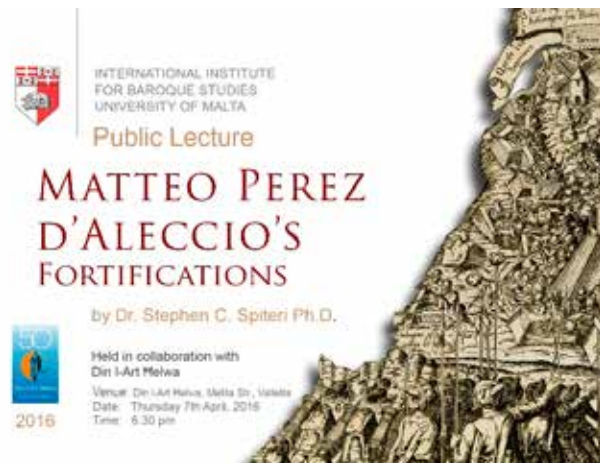
A one-day seminar entitled *Arte Barocca - Tra Fede e Stupore* was held on 28 May 2015, at the Italian Cultural Institute, Palace Square, Valletta.

This seminar focused on the significance and recent restoration of one of the most important artistic achievements of the Baroque age, the Bernini statue of the Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila in the Cornaro Chapel of the Church of Sta. Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

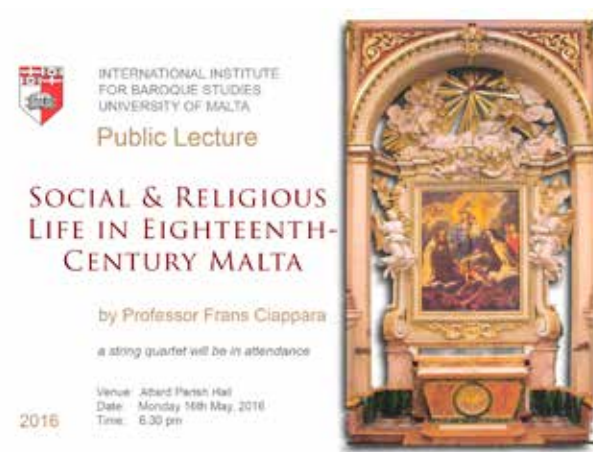
Professor Denis De Lucca introduced the event with an illustrated talk mentioning a hitherto unexplored connection between the building of the church of *Sta. Maria della Vittoria* in Rome, and the Hospitaller Order of Malta.

Other speakers at the seminar included Dr. Theresa Vella, Dott Sante Guido and Dott Giuseppe Mantella, who addressed critical issues about the significance, art appreciation and restoration of the recently restored Cornaro chapel of this church.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini's design of this magnificent chapel, which was commissioned by the Venetian Cornaro family, focuses attention on one of the greatest masterpieces of Baroque art, Bernini's 'Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila'.



Dr. Stephen C Spiteri gave a lecture entitled 'Matteo Perez d'Aleccio's Fortifications' at the Din l-Art Helwa premises at 133 Melita Street, in Valletta on Thursday 7th April 2016 at 6.30 pm. The lecture discussed Matteo Perez d'Aleccio's frescoes and prints which provide us with some of the first representations of the first generation of fortifications erected by the Hospitaller knights of St John in the period leading up to the Ottoman siege of Malta in 1565. Using these images as the basis of our understanding of this little known aspect of the Knights' early defensive works, however, presents students of Hospitaller fortifications with some difficulties. At the essence of the problem lies the question of how much of D'Aleccio's images comprise a faithful representation of the fortified structures and how much was based on his artistic imagination. In other words, how authentic are D'Aleccio's representation of the layout and details of the forts and bastioned enceintes? Were these drawings the product of D'Aleccio's efforts to reproduce things as directly seen, and if so, how much did he really understand what he was seeing and how was this, in turn, informed by his knowledge of the language of military architecture? This talk looked at the techniques (and their limitations) employed by D'Aleccio in his depiction of military architecture in the light of the artistic conventions of fortress drawings employed at the time, and the present knowledge of the state of Hospitaller defences and military architecture in the mid-sixteenth century.



Professor Frans Ciappara gave a talk entitled "Social and Religious Life in Eighteenth-Century Malta" on Monday 16th May 2016 at 6.30pm at the Attard Parish Hall. This talk attempted to recover the 'voice of the voiceless', the people who wrote neither diaries nor letters or family memoirs and left no written records of their thoughts and feelings. Their existence was ignored or taken for granted. It discussed social structure and employment, parish government and the role of the parish priest, solidarity among parishioners, mobility, marriage and the family, religion in the life of the people, and death. A string quartet performed pieces by Handel, Beethoven and Mozart. Members of the string quartet were Stefan Calleja (Violin), Sonia Borg (Violin), Joseph Mallia (Viola) and Desiree Quintano (Cello).

University of Malta Graduation Ceremony - November 2015

Three students graduated M.A. in Baroque Studies:

Christian Mifsud
Dissertation title: *A Historical Interpretation of Religious Architecture in Baroque Valletta*

Alexandra Mifsud Bonnici
Dissertation title: *Women in Eighteenth Century Malta: Legal and Social Aspects*

Josephine Cassar
Dissertation title: *Propaganda by the Lutheran and Catholic Churches: the Use of Music, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture to Draw the Faithful (16th – 18th Century)*

Lines of Defence

The International Institute for Baroque Studies at the University of Malta, in collaboration with Malta Libraries, have published a new, beautifully-produced book containing the eighteenth-century plans and elevations of the fortifications built and projected by the Hospitaller Knights of St. John in the Maltese islands .

Titled *LINES OF DEFENCE - Fortification Drawings of the Baroque Age at the National Library of Malta*, this massive, large-format, full-colour publication brings together in one volume the collection of fortifications drawings of the Knights of the Order of St John housed in the National Library of Malta in Valletta.

Although frequently consulted by scholars and students over the years, these plans have never been brought together in one extensive compendium in the manner that they deserve as a prime source of original information on eighteenth-century Hospitaller military architecture. This book, however, is more than just an album of drawings as each of the featured plans is accompanied by explanatory commentaries that serve to make this publication a useful resource of military-architectural and historical information.

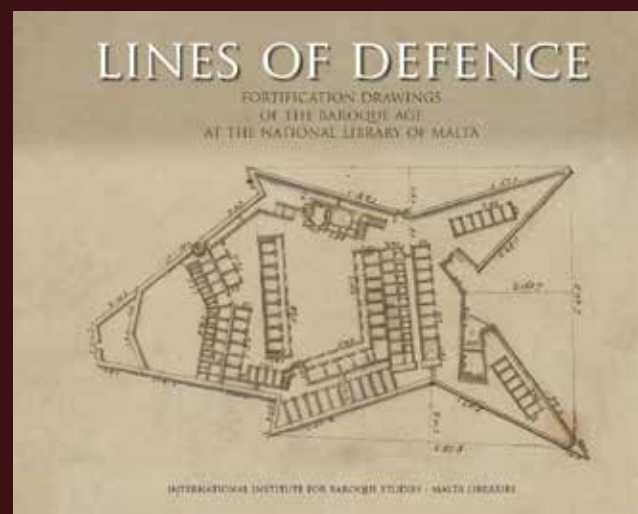
This collection of fortification drawings is the largest and most important collection of architectural plans of Hospitaller fortifications in the Maltese islands to have come down to us from this period of the Island's history. The importance of these plans also emanates from the fact that the fortifications of the Knights of St John in the Maltese Islands are considered as comprising some of the most important exemplars of military architecture built to the conventions of the bastioned trace.

The book's special large-scale format, measuring 49cm wide x 42 cm high, was designed to capture the wealth of graphic information embodied within the many large sheets depicting original plans and designs – architectural details which are invaluable to the students and historians of military architecture and the art and science of fortification. The text of this publication was prepared by Professor Denis De Lucca, the Director of the International Institute for Baroque Institute, Dr. Stephen Spiteri, and architect Hermann Bonnici.

The book has an introduction by Professor Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University, and forewords by Mr. Oliver Mamo and Ms. Maroma Camilleri of Malta Libraries.

The publication of this first edition of *Lines of Defence* is limited to only 200 copies and is directly available from the National Library of Malta. Readers who would like further information about this publication should address their queries to the National Library via e-mail to customercare.nlm@gov.mt.

Book details: ISBN: 978-99957-856-1-1, 398 pages, full colour, 490 x 420 mm, Hardbound in leather, with protective slipcase



facebook 

The International Institute for Baroque Studies is on Facebook. Visit and 'Like' our Facebook Page and keep up to date with all recent and forthcoming events at the Institute.