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CARDINAL OTTOBONI'S LITURGICAL SCENOGRAPHIES AND SETTINGS BETWEEN 1689 AND 1740



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The scope of celebrations, theater and scenography in eighteenth-century Rome is an already widely explored field that has been studied from different points of view, reflecting how complex this artistic, social and political phenomenon is.

Being vice-chancellor of the Church, patron of the French crown, theater aficionado, collector, arcadian shepherd and author, cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740) holds a special role in this wide milieu. Among the artists under his patronage there are Arcangelo Corelli, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, Francesco Trevisani, Simone Felice Delino, Nicola Michetti, Filippo Juvarra and Ludovico Rusconi Sassi.

The studies about the cardinal have been summed up recently during the conference *Alla corte della Cancelleria: Pietro Ottoboni e la politica delle arti nella Roma del Settecento* (Accademia di San Luca, Rome 2020). Biographical and collectorship issues are clear, as well as the vast musical and painting patronage, and there seems to be a growing interest in questions of cultural diplomacy and diffusion of taste. In the architectural field the main contributions are focused on the transformations of the Palazzo della Cancelleria, especially regarding the different theaters and scenographies that were built during the 50 years long residence of the cardinal, with detailed analysis of the production linked to Juvarra's presence at the Ottoboni court (1709-1714).

The same attention has not been reserved to the study of liturgical settings, namely the Forty Hours devotions, a festive occasion promoted by the cardinal over fifty consecutive years as commendatory of the Basilica di San Lorenzo in Damaso by commissioning apparatuses for the same church.

The research starts from this historiographical gap, exploiting the possibility of dealing with such a continuous phenomenon, both for a period and homogeneous in typology, space of application, and client. The aim is to highlight not only the mind behind them, but also their reception from the public, as well as the evolution of the typology and questions of stagecraft and reuse of components in a very specific building site. Spanning over half a century in the roman scene, religious scenographies – just as their profane counterparts – can help to clarify the role of the relationships woven between the cardinal, religious orders and ecclesiastical institutions which, in parallel to cultural diplomacy strategies, have catalyzed the meeting of architects with wealthy international clients.

The analysis, while assuming the point of view of architecture, concerns the event in its entirety both in terms of scale and artistic-cultural expressions. Starting from the marvelous *Machine* as architectural and sculptural elements, the field of investigation is extended not only to the sacred space as a whole, but also to the urban space, represented by courtyard, squares and streets as

stage of processions, and suburban, namely villas and abbeys. Great attention is paid to the collaboration between the arts, and in particular between architecture and music, main passion of the client, and between artists and craftsmen.

The proposed research intends to return an organic reading of the apparatuses commissioned for liturgical occasions by cardinal Pietro Ottoboni from 1689 to 1740, ranging from the formal and liturgical aspects to the technical and professional organization of the settings, with the aim of combining the deep knowledge of the artifacts with the diachronic vision of the cardinal's patronage.

The work is structured in four sections. The first part deals with the framing of the field of study, the current state of the art, and establishes the problems and methodologies of investigation. Given the complexity of the questions and the overlaying of interpretive registers, it was decided not to follow a purely chronological narration but rather to divide the contents in two thematic sections: *Part 2* assumes the point of view of the client in order to outline his politics of the arts, the iconographic choices, and the relationship with arts and artists, while *Part 3* presents the outcomes of the research on the materiality of the apparatuses and their construction, dealing with issues of material culture and stagecraft.

The almost complete conservation of the *Computisteria Ottoboni*, in fact, opens the possibility of investigating the practical aspects linked to the preparation of liturgical occasions sponsored by the vice-chancellor. After a description of the construction and decorative chronology of the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso and of the state of the same in the period under study, *Chapter 6* deals with the times, means and organization of the construction site for the installations for *Quarantore*. In addition to defining the

professional responsibilities and recurring practices on the construction site, the question of the reuse and transformation of scenographic elements is introduced, which concerns both the structural components and the decorative apparatuses, as detailed in *Chapter 7*. At this juncture the research focuses on the role of architecture in service of music, and on the link between the eighteenth-century representative practice of Corellian imprint and the morphology of the space dedicated to music. Finally, the last part of the thesis is dedicated to the apparatuses as to say to all those informations complementary to the research that remain excluded from the discussion due to narrative needs.