



for Quarantore prayers", a complex machinery that will be one of the most important points of attraction when these areas will be arranged as museum. Restored area was about 7000 mq whose 400mq where the courtrooms of Corte d'Assise were and 300 mq where the part of school Casanova are now completely consolidated. A large workgroup of Superintendence for historical patrimony of Naples and Province has been engaged to repair this structure. This complex work has been executed also with the help and experience of external consultant. The repairs started in 2000 and the work was divided in two different parts. The first part started in

2000 and it has been completed in 2002 including the project Polis-Musea organized by Superintendence for historical patrimony of Naples with European Community's co-financing by FESR Funds (Financial grants for Historic Centre of Naples); the second part began in May 2006 and it has been completed in July 201 (financed by the law 20.12.2000, n. 400, art. 1 "Restoration on cultural heritage" after the APQ between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Regione Campania). The Convent was reopened to public in May 2012 with the common effort of local and government institutions. [of]



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arte m

**the monastery
of san domenico
maggiore**
a ten centuries
long story



the restoration of the monastery of san domenico maggiore

The monastery of San Domenico Maggiore, together with the church, forms a large structure which is the result of many changes started in 1227 when Pope Gregory IX sent to Naples a small group of Dominicans who settled in the ancient monastery of San Michele Arcangelo in Morfisa, in origin founded by Basilian monks. Between 1272 and 1274 Thomas Aquinas taught philosophy in San Domenico in the *Studium* wanted by Carlo I D'Angiò. In 1289 the monastery was rebuilt extending its dimensions so that it was even compared, in the idea of many visitors of different historical ages, to a city inside a city. It reached its maximum development after the rebuilding in 1669 wanted by Tommaso Ruffo, the grand Prior of Bagnara, who invested large part of his patrimony for that restoration as he wanted to save the hearth of the structure, as the room occupied by Saint Thomas Aquinas, symbol of ancient times. The restorations continued during the Sixteenth century and in this period there were a big factory with three parts: Saint Thomas' dorm, the novitiate and dorm of Masters placed around a free area destined to become a garden. Adjacent to the dormitory of Saint Thomas at

the first floor there were the refectory, the library and the "Sala del Capitolo". The architects who worked at this magnificent structure were: Bonaventura, Presti, Francesco Antonio Picchiatti and Luigi Nauclerio. Now the monastery is divided in different areas: one part is occupied by Dominican monks, another area at the same floor of the cloister is occupied by Virtus Gym; the high school Casanova occupies other three floors and the largest part where until 1990's there were the courtrooms of Corte d'Assise is at present subject to restorations. The recovery of these large areas that contained cells and courtroom with the structures of mezzanines, ceilings, incongruous buildings, was characterized by restoring the original spaced and architectural characteristics and the links between ambient and its features. An important part of the restorations was dedicated to the decorative skin of these rooms with the restoration of ancient frescoes and stuccos of Sixteenth century and of the Saint Thomas' dorm, fully decorated in twenties of Sixteenth century, and of several vestments among which the structure "liturgical machine

the big refectory

The Refectory was built above the former infirmary of the convent during the enlargement and renovation works, undertaken by Tommaso Ruffo of the Dukes of Bagnara, who was the Prior of San Domenico Maggiore from 1668 to 1672. The renovations began in 1669 and lasted until after 1672, enlarging the prior architectural structure in an impressive way. One of the most noticeable of the spaces built during the renovation works is *The Big Refectory*, which has a considerable size; it was intended to accommodate over one hundred monks during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the back wall of the Big Refectory you can see a fresco depicting a perspective scene, painted in 1675 by Arcangelo Guglielmelli (as evidenced by the documents), who is well known as an architect but also as the author of perspective mural paintings for important Neapolitan churches. At the center of the fresco you can see the *Last Supper* scene, painted by Guglielmelli, whereas the background scene that represents the *Cavalry* scene was added at the end of the nineteenth century. Above the entrance of the Refectory you can see the wall painting depicting *St. Thomas Aquinas praying in front of the Crucifix*, painted by the little-known painter Antonio Rossi d'Aversa in 1727.



On the side walls of the Refectory there were two long dining tables with piperno seats, decorated with carved wooden backs that covered the walls and at the sides of the entrance there were two large hand basins made by white marble, called "bardiglio", created in 1675 by the marble carver Giovanni Camillo Ragozzino. The dining tables, the seats and the basins have been lost over time, during the years after the abolition of monastic orders in 1865, when the monks were expelled from the convent for twenty years and this room, together with the other ones, was first used as a store and later occupied by the Court of Assizes until 1990s. [im]

the small refectory

Next to the big Refectory, there is the small Refectory that was built during the enlargement works of the convent, started in 1669 by the Prior Tommaso Ruffo. The room was intended to host the sick friars. Today it appears completely bare but at its origin as the big Refectory, there were tables and chairs along the walls with a back decorated with caryatids and corbels. A large painting on the back wall depicting *St. Dominic dining with his friars and being served by angels* completed the decoration, together with ten paintings on the side walls. [im]

the room called

The room called "Sala del Capitolo" is one of the most noticeable spaces built during the enlargement works of the convent, started by the prior Tommaso Ruffo. In this room, the vault and the walls are decorated with stuccos by artists from the baroque master Cosimo Fanzago school, and with paintings of the Sicilian painter Michele Ragolia, who began to fresco the "Capitolo" room in 1677. The decoration of the room was completed by Ragolia in 1678 and includes the *Calvary scene* on the back wall, a series of frescoes depicting scenes of the *Mysteries of the Rosary* and the *Passion of Christ* and ten rounds depicting angels bearing the *Symbols of the Passion of Christ*. The structure seemed to be impaired since 1686 due to the weight of the overlying friars' dormitory. This caused detachments of the stuccos and the collapse of the central parts of the frescoes in the late 19th century, when the frescoes were repainted. A double row of richly carved seats decorated the walls of the room and meant to accommodate the monks in the most important moments of the community life. [im]



the library

The library of San Domenico Maggiore has been considered one of the most important libraries in Naples since the fifteenth century and it has been enriched over time thanks to acquisitions and donations of private individuals and monks of the convent. Housed in a large room at the first floor, next to St. Thomas Aquinas' cell, the library has been enriched at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The enrichment was thanks to the fund of Gioviano Pontano, donated by the daughter of the illustrious humanist. During the second part of the sixteenth century, two illustrious friars, Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella, attended the library of San Domenico Maggiore.

The collection of books, which increased over time, included four of Pontano's own writings, manuscripts of the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey*, the works by Xenophon and Aristotle, Plautus comedies, the *De arte amandi* by Ovid, texts by Cicero, the *Epistles* by Seneca, the *De Trinitate* and the *Homiliae* by St. Augustine. Among the printed works was also the *Metaphysics* by Aristotle. In 1685 the convent council decided to assign the restoration works to the architect Francesco Antonio Picchiatti, placing him in charge of restoring the library "all back to lamia." The impressive structure of the room reflects the main features of the architectural language of Picchiatti, who led restorations until 1694.



the corridor and st. thomas aquinas' cell

The restoration of the main dormitory of the convent was appropriately named "St. Thomas' dormitory" due to the presence of the saint's cell which was completed in 1685. We can date, in the following years, the twenty-five mural paintings depicting the main moments of St. Thomas' life. These were painted along both sides of the corridor and above the entrance of friars' cells. The paintings can be attributed to the late seventeenth century painter, Domenico Viola. After the restoration works, the round paintings that looked "suspended" above the front doors of the cells, were found to be parts of a more complex decoration with cherubs lying on architectural volutes, racemes and scrolls with epigrams reflective of St. Thomas' life. The other elements of the decoration have been recovered, even if partially, in the part of the corridor inhabited nowadays by friars. The most remarkable evidence of the presence of St. Thomas Aquinas in San Domenico Maggiore consists of the cell where he lived between 1272 and 1274. It was at that time that he held the chair in the Theological Study, which was established in the same convent. The small room, which is accessed by a variegated marble portal, sur-



mounted by a bust of the saint built in 1720 by Matteo Bottiglieri, was adapted as a chapel in 1727 by the architect Muzio Nauclerio. Altered by heavy renovation works, the room has been recovered by the current restoration which has allowed the renewal of the original two-color lacquered and gilded wooden ceil-

ings. The famous thirteenth-century panel depicts the *Crucifix* placed on the altar, in front of which St. Thomas, in prayer, had a vision of Christ. [im]