

Committenza monastica e strategie iconografiche. Il cantiere di Santa Maria di Donnalbina a Napoli fra XVII e XVIII secolo

Abstract

The discovery of a considerable amount of unpublished documentation and the re-examination of known historiographic sources have allowed the author to meticulously trace the construction of the Neapolitan church of Santa Maria di Donnalbina. The article maps the profile of one of the most important and sophisticated organizations devoted to church decoration in Naples at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, in which painters Francesco Solimena and Nicola Malinconico, among others, were active. Of particular importance is the copious archival evidence relating to the large group of craftsmen (carvers, marble workers, and plasterers). They exerted considerable influence upon the choices made by the Benedictine community, which proved to be particularly alert to the quality of the artifacts and their execution. This evidence has made it possible to reconstruct the authorship of many of the furnishings of the new interior, starting with the high altar, attributed here to Giuseppe Mozzetti. Examination of the documentary sources also allows us to understand the professional strategies and artistic techniques of many of the craftsmen involved, thereby revealing construction practices, the development of models, and collaborations between carvers and architects. Against the backdrop of this impressive modernization campaign, promoted mainly by two abbesses belonging to the most influential sections of the local patriciate, an investigation into heresy unfolded. Its ramifications help explain the iconographic program realized in the interior of the church.