

Lisa Malberg

Ruhr University Bochum

Theatine Churches in Naples and Rome: Sacred space between religious identity and local self-assertion in the age of Counter-Reformation

My doctoral thesis explores the earliest architectural manifestation of the Theatine order in the urban contexts of Naples and Rome, and is dedicated in particular to different aspects of sacred space in the order's building practice. The doctoral project does not claim to analyze the architectural production of this Counter-Reformation order and their typological formation of sacred space in the whole Italian region, but focuses instead on spatial distribution, architectural typology, and liturgical topology in Theatine church architecture in Naples and Rome as well as their use of and alignment with specific social environments and the incorporation of local models and traditions. Furthermore, I am interested in the sociocultural processes and dynamics of the cities as a background for the Theatines' architectural ambitions and visual representation, as well as different liturgical aspects of their building practice.

The first Theatine religious buildings erected in Naples and Rome during the late 16th and early 17th centuries are especially relevant to gain a further understanding of the order's *Anspruchsniveau* or "level of sophistication" (a definition derived from Martin Warnke's 1996 essay "Bau und Gegenbau"), strategies of self-representation within the urban context and the order's role as a specific social actor in Neapolitan society in the Early Modern period. In addition, this line of research aims to achieve a better understanding of Theatine building practice in general. Moreover, it may help ascertain whether a consolidated tradition of building practice or the formation of corporate consciousness in matters of architecture were important factors for the Theatine order.

The city of Naples and its social and cultural environment plays a crucial role in the order's architectural evolution, which is demonstrated by the enormous density of Theatine churches in the city, erected within a period of less than 80 years. This begs the question of why Naples became a focus of interest for the Theatines, and how the order's building activities addressed and incorporated the city's architectural heritage into its own ecclesiastical developments and in turn modified the city's topographical appearance. Intense engagement with Naples' ecclesiastical architecture and its ancient roots by the Theatines and certain members of the order forms another focal point for my analysis of their church buildings in the city. Additionally, I am interested in exploring the dynamics that made the order's encounter with Naples and its urban structure a core element and fundamental experience for Theatine expansion into other European metropolitan cities like Paris, Munich, Prague and Vienna in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Thus, my doctoral research on Theatine architecture is guided by three questions: 1) How did Theatine sacred architecture visualize its own *Anspruchsniveau* in the urban context of Naples? 2) Did the order's architectural approach generate a corporate typological building practice, e.g. did it develop something like architectural "prototypes" or proven spatial solutions? 3. Why did Naples become a sort of "think tank" and an architectural and cultural hub for the Theatine order?