

Oblique Architecture: Comparing Models in Neapolitan Civil Architecture in the Materdei District

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Abstract—*The oblique elements appearing in the Neapolitan civil architecture since the seventeenth century. The decorative system, designed to enhance the skeleton of the architectural members, is configured as a representative pivot in the oblique element, and in many cases, it finds a wider diffusion in the design of the stairs, represented increasingly bold and spectacular, dominating the perspective of the whole building. Starting from the common roots, the essay investigates the influence exerted by Juan Caramuel's famous treatise on oblique architecture in Baroque Naples, reviewing several case studies in which the use of oblique solutions realized between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is perceived considerably.*

The subject of this paper is the analysis of Neapolitan civil architecture dating back to the 18th century located in the area between the Holy Spirit and the Materdei district. The buildings examined are characterized by architectural structures and decorative apparatuses comparable to the principles of the theory of oblique architecture extensively studied by Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz.

In the renewal of 18th-century Neapolitan civil architecture, the decorative system, designed to enhance the skeleton of architectural members, appears as a representative cornerstone in the oblique element, which in most cases must be sought in the meticulous care with which the stairs, ever bolder and more spectacular, so as to be able to dominate the perspective of the entire building. Thus, in the Baroque Naples, forms are experimented and developed that build architectural organisms characterized by innovative space-perceptive relationships.

The area of study is grafted onto the San Liborio plant, which originated from an autonomous training process strictly dependent on different urban pre-existences. The different conformations of the blocks can be ascribed to the transformation of the area following the demolition of the historical walls and the adaptation of the building in ancient times against the defensive wall to the new urban plan.

In the 30s of the 18th century the Palazzo Mastellone alla Carità and the Palazzo Trabucco overlooking Piazza Carità are

the subject of important renovations, making the structures still recognizable today for their architectural quality, so much so that there are no equal in the San Liborio-Pignasecca area.

Palazzo Mastellone alla Carità, originally built in the sixteenth century, was purchased in 1729 by Pietro Paolo Mastellone, who entrusted the renovation work to Nicola Tagliacozzi Canale.

The eighteenth-century transformation of the palace consists of a new articulation of courtyards, staircases and decorative apparatuses; from the entrance vestibule, you enter the square courtyard. The succession of the covered spaces, starting already from the entrance, frames the perfect proportions of the elliptical staircase, whose scenographic effect is determined by a central backdrop and two lateral arches, under which the curved side ramps pass, assuming a balcony-like conformation with single bow lowered in front of three small vaults.

This solution makes the courtyard the extraordinary part of this architecture, which recalls the staircase of Ferdinando Sanfelice to the Virgins, placed however in the corner of the courtyard.

The renovation work carried out by Tommaso Trabucco in 1734, initially entrusted to the direction of the Engineer Michele Porcelli, as reported by M. Rusio from documents dating back to 1736 which testify to his liquidation, then passed to Nicola Tagliacozzi Canale, already engaged in the nearby Palazzo Mastellone. For this palace, the architect plans to replace the existing round portal, with one in piperno decorated with naturalistic motifs and with a fine wooden frame above which introduces a vestibule leading into the courtyard. In this case he elaborates an original compositional program made of cartouches and busts inserted on the window lintels repeated in the inner courtyard, also joining with the open staircase, that already presents a basic layout, for which the contribution of Tagliacozzi Canale is resized and adapted to the existing system.

Leaning against the back of the courtyard, wider and deeper than that of Palazzo Mastellone, the staircase with three rampants and three open arches, separated by two pairs of pillars, looks like a facade from the ground floor to the third floor, reflecting the course of the ramps and is particularized, due to the alternation of the major arches and the two intermediate, visibly very narrow.

Still on the route of the road, overlooking Via Toledo, the San Nicola plant is configured as an area characterized by strong urban elements:

- Via Pignasecca, an ancient road - a market connecting the city center and the hills;
- Via Scura, natural extension of the lower decuman, known as "Spaccanapoli";
- Via Toledo, "new street" par excellence wanted by the viceroy Don Pedro da Toledo and designed with strategic intent.

In this area, of great importance is the Palazzo Maddaloni, of which, the first design works are identified in a large entrance vestibule, already implanted in the sixteenth century.

The palace in the seventeenth century passed to the Flemish merchant Gaspare Roomer, who soon sold it to the Duke Diomede Carafadi Maddaloni; he commissioned the architect Cosimo Fanzago to restructure and embellish it, transforming the sixteenth-century structure according to the baroque style of the time. In Fanzago the project of the portal is attributed, the interventions on the façade, on the staircase, on the porch and on the loggia. Continuing towards the current Piazza Dante and the Carolino forum, we reach the area of the Costigliola, whose historical urban layout undergoes a series of transformations within the blocks during the eighteenth century.

In this context, of great interest for the architectural elements that make up this civil factory is Palazzo Costantino; bought by Alessandro Costantino in 1683, it presents the entrance at number 25 of via San Giuseppe de Nudi.

The aspect that currently presents the palace is due to the works commissioned by Alessandro Costantino's son in 1739 by Nicola Tagliacozzi Canale, the architect who developed the compositional principles already tested in the Mastelloni and Trabucco palaces, taking up the scale open as a stage backdrop of the narrow courtyard punctuated by a succession of three vaults.

The staircase of the Costantino palace does not present a whole gallery, but a symmetrical prospect of arches that follow ramps and small alternating balconies; the structure is typologically similar to that of Palazzo Trabucco, although in the latter the two arches corresponding to the ramps appear only as slits, while in Palazzo Costantino, rise and fall, stretch like a wave, giving precedence to a horizontal drawing up.

The area that extends between the Materdei square and the parallel Salita San Raffaele, is located between the eighteenth-century plant of Fonseca, the twentieth-century one of Materdei and the complex of Sant'Eramo, and it is precisely in the eighteenth century that it knows the moment more characterizing its formation with the realization of numerous religious and civil architectures including: the Church and the conservatory of San Gennaro dei Cavalcanti's; the Church of the Holy Conception at Materdei and to complete the Piazzetta Materdei, the Palazzo del Forno.

The latter designed by the architect G. B. Nucleiro fits in a lot characterized by limits and irregularities. On the right is bordered by the Morra property has the entire front but takes up little depth due to the presence of a garden up to the Vico along San Raffaele taking more space on the left side.

The entrance and the piperno portal with the balcony above are placed at the limit of visibility on the square, any construction is omitted on the bottom towards the garden, and a courtyard opened towards it, which does not have a homogeneous height; to the right of the courtyard a sort of fake facade is obtained, with small rooms close to the Morra property, while on the left a shallow porch, in continuity with the wide one with three arches on the entrance side, evolves into the loggia staircase, deep and bright that rises on 4 floors including the ground floor.

Finally, another example of oblique architecture is the portion of the Latilla buildings, located at number 31, the property originally purchased by the Marquis Giovanni de Ruggero, and subsequently sold in 1755, to the councilor Ferdinando Latilla includes three buildings respectively located in Via Tarsia at number 23 -27-31. The first building was built around 1722, when in the area "outside the walls" the numerous factories present in modern times did not yet exist. In 1759 F. Latilla commissioned the architect Mario Gioffredo to complete the building at number 31, where the open stairway to the vestibule was built, extended on the left wall of the courtyard, and the façade was built on four floors, in the central areas of which balconies and windows alternated. On the first floor there are the shops and, at the last, only balconies.

The work ends ten years later, in 1765, when the architect, after completing the construction of the second building (at number 27), equips both buildings with two symmetrical portals of the same design. The overall construction ends with the construction of the third building at number 23, at the end of the '700, so that in the Marquis paper of 1804, all three buildings appear.

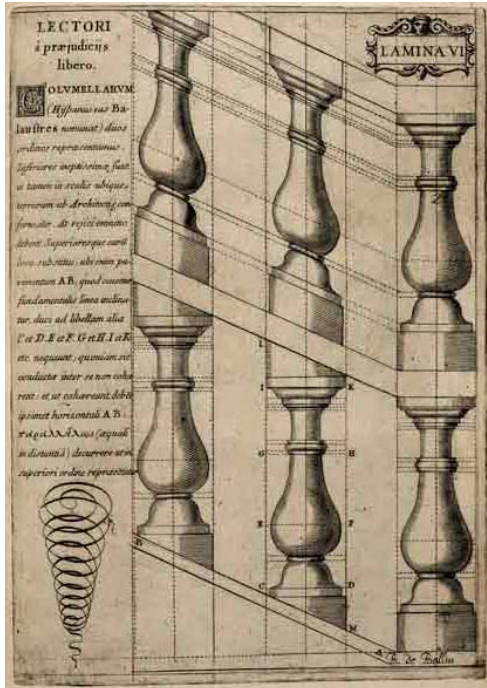


Figure 1: Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz, *Architectura civil recta y obliqua*, Vigevano 1678 lamina VI.



Figure 3: Palazzo Mastellone alla Carità, internal staircase, Naples.



Figure 2: Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz, *Architectura civil recta y obliqua*, Vigevano 1678 lamina XXV.



Figure 4: Palazzo Trabucco, internal staircase, Naples.



Figure 5: Palazzo Maddaloni, internal staircaentrance portal, Naples.



Figure 6: Palazzo Latilla via Tarsia n. 31, internal staircase, Naples.



Figure 6: Palazzo Costantino, internal staircase, Naples.

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