A Lost Confraternity: San Rocco in Modena and its Church

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Summary: This article retraces the history of the Confraternita di San Rocco (Confraternity of St. Roch) in Modena from its foundation in the late fifteenth century to its abolition in the eighteenth century. Thanks to newly examined archival documents, the article details the building and decorative work supported by the confraternity for the construction and decoration of the oratory. The result is a varied picture of the craftsmen responsible for the work, which was carried out by minor, lesser-known artists such as the foremen Paolo Bisogni and Giovanni Battista Biavardi. The confraternity's scarce resources were constantly invested in structural interventions on the walls, which were periodically threatened by water from the underlying canal. Nevertheless, the documents also reveal the members' commitment to decorating the interior. The three altars completed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries involved stuccoists such as Sebastiano Caula and Giovanni Antonio Franchini, as well as artists Marco Antonio Mazzarini, Flaminio Veratti and the more famous Giulio Secchiari and Sigismondo Caula, who created two monumental altarpieces. This article provides some new information about the patrons and their respective chronology.

Very recent contributions have gradually started to shed light on the rich panorama of confraternities in Modena.[1] Nonetheless, the history of the Confraternita di San Rocco (Confraternity of St. Roch) still remains the one outlined in the twentieth century by Gusmano Soli, in his monumental study of churches in Modena.[2] The recovery of the documentation produced and preserved by the confraternity over the three centuries of its existence now makes it possible to bring to light facts and events relating to its oratory, which disappeared after World War II following its conversion into a theatre (figs. 2.1 and 2.2).[3]

[1] See Al Kalak/Lucchi, *Gli statuti delle confraternite modenesi*, 17–25; Al Kalak/Lucchi, *Le regole dello spirito*, 23–26.

[2] Soli, "La chiesa di S. Rocco."

[3] In 1785, the Confraternita di San Rocco was moved by ducal order to the Church of San Bartolomeo. The oratory was ceded to the Opera Pia charity, which, in 1791, allocated it to the Società di Dilettanti Filodrammatici (Amateur Dramatic Society). The building was thus converted into a theatre. In 1831, the Società di Dilettanti ceased to be active and Duke

In the late fifteenth century, the rapid spread of the cult of St. Roch of Montpellier through Europe reached the lands of the Este family at the same time as the great epidemics of plague against which St. Roch was invoked. Initially worshipped alongside other traditional miracle-working saints (including St. Sebastian), St. Roch became the subject of widespread devotion that led to his subsequent canonical recognition and, in the last quarter of the century, to the appearance of his first hagiographies.[4] Thus, the first oratories and places of worship dedicated to St. Roch emerged, often entrusted to lay associations motivated by charitable purposes. In northern Italy, the first Compagnia dei Battuti di San Rocco (Confraternity of the Flagellants of St. Roch) was established in Venice in 1477 and officially recognized three years later in 1480; other were then established in Rome (1499), Piacenza (1524), and Reggio Emilia (around 1530).

The Compagnia di San Rocco (Confraternity of St. Roch) in Modena was reportedly founded in 1480 during the reign of Duke Ercole I d'Este (r. 1471–1505) and Bishop Gian Andrea Boccaccio (r. 1479–94).[5] The *confratelli* received permission to build their church in the village of Albareto, near the castle.[6] This first oratory, referred to as "old" oratory in archival papers, was soon demolished as the city gradually expanded in the first half of the sixteenth century.[7] In the meantime, arrangements were made for the construction of a new church; on the basis of information from Tommasino Lancellotti's chronicle, Gusmano Soli was able to date the start

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Francesco IV d'Asburgo-Este approved the reestablishment of the church as a place of worship. Construction began in 1836 and ended in 1841, when the oratory, entrusted to the Confraternita delle Stimmate (Confraternity of the Stigmata), was officially blessed. Soli, "La chiesa di S. Rocco," 244–245. The building's twentieth-century history, which is not covered in this article, has not yet been fully researched.

[4] On this topic, see Vauchez, "San Rocco" and Maggioni, "La fortuna iconografica." See also Casadoro, *Il cammino devozionale di San Rocco.*

[5] "1480 3 aprile. Andandosi più maggiormente delettando il mal contaggioso per questa Città di Modona rinovando a viventi l'humane miserie, onde conoscendo il nostro Serenissimo Signor Duca Ercole Primo la necessità, che risulta a tutti di placare lo sdegno della Divina Giustizia offesa, e provocata sempre maggiormente dall'enormità de' nostri peccati, risolse in primo luogo il Serenissimo Padrone d'istituire una Compagnia ad onore di San Rocco medemo, e poscia edifficare una Chiesa ne' Borghi della Città, onde con gran prontezza fu eseguito da questo Publico l'ordine avuto dal Serenissimo, e così da lì a poco cessò, con l'aiuto di Dio, il mal contaggioso per intercessione del Santo." BEUMo, *Cronaca di Modena*, MS α.H.10.33, fol. 9^{v}.

[6] Soli, "La chiesa di S. Rocco," 237.

[7] The old oratory was sold to the "Poor of St. Job" in 1536 and was partly demolished in 1544. It was the subject of a heated dispute between the Confraternita di San Rocco, which claimed it as their property, and the *Santa Unione* (Holy Union). The matter was settled only in 1599 with an agreement approved by the Community on 6 November. See: Soli, "La chiesa di S. Rocco," 237–239.

of the work to 1534; by 1536 the work was already completed.[8] The building stood in the ancient district of San Michele, in an area close to the old "de la Coza" mill, which in turn "was near the della Cerca mill" (fig. 2.3).[9] The church was therefore located in the northern area of the city (fig. 2.4). Its entrance was on the road that led to San Domenico, the current Via Belle Arti. It was eventually demolished in the twentieth century.

The lack of records relating to the church's sixteenth-century history is offset by a series of new documents attesting to its gradual acquisition of that land, in parallel with the statutory definition of the confraternity. On 9 November 1513, with a deed drawn up by notary Ottaviano Tedeschi, Virgilio Conventi and Fra Vincenzo Fornari, acting as auditors and lawyers for the confraternity, purchased a "ruined" housing block from Bernardino Confortini located in the village of San Silvestro.[10] This property bordered the San Pietro road, the property of notary Giovanni Nicolò Morani and the Canale del Molino (Mill Canal), "known as Molino dell'Abbà" (fig. 2.5). The Società or Confraternita di San Rocco paid 24 gold ducats for the land "in order to build an oratory to the praise, glory, and honour of Saint Roch" ("causa construendi, et fabricandi, et edificandi unum Oratorium ad Laudem, Gloriam, et Honorem Sancti Rochi").[11] Six months later, on 1 April 1514, Virgilio Conventi, Fra Vincenzo Fornari and three other lay members of the confraternity (Niccolò Marescotti, Pantaleone Fogliani and Petronio Belletti) received a license from Monsignor Tomaso Forni, Episcopal Vicar of Modena, permitting them to found and erect an oratory under the name of St. Roch in the village of Albareto, in the parish of San Giovanni Battista and near the city's moats.[12] The notarial deed, this time drawn up by notary

[8] Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, 4:400: "Sabato a dì 24 ditto [1534]. La compagnia de S.to Rocho a mexi passati ha principiato la fabrica de ditta compagnia in capo de sotto dela contrada de San Michele in Modena." Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese,* 5:159: "Mercordì a dì 16 agosto [1536]. Questo dì de S. Rocho se fa la festa in Modena e quasi per tuto el modeneso per rispetto dele peste che sono state in Modena e per tutta l'Italia, masime del 1505 in qua; la quale festa non se soleva festare solemnemente como se fa, et da uno anno in qua s'è fatto la giesia nova de S. Rocho in capo de la contrada de S. Michelo, in quelli orti dreto la Cerca, e fano la sua grande intrada verso la via che va a S.to Domenico, et ge una compagnia de homeni de Modena, li quali questo dì ge hano fatto belo offitio insiemo con altre compagnie, e fatto dire molte messe votive. Questa compagnia dal 1510 in qua era posta apreso la porta Albareto de fora in suxo la fosa alo incontro del Castello, ma perché de' andare per terra tuti quelli edificii che ge sono, el ge ha parse meglio levarse via abonora come ha fatto, e questo per rispetto dela forteza che se ge fa apresso."

[9] For the two citations, see respectively: Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, 4:65 and 8:99.

[10] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, 9 November 1513. The file contains a copy by archivist Girolamo Averoldi made on 5 November 1742 of the original notarial deed preserved in ASMo, Archivio Notarile, Modena, Memoriali in pergamena, 346, n. 225, fol. 120^{r-v}.

[11] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, 9 November 1513.

[12] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273.

Giacomo Mirandola, also stated that the building, once covered, should be adorned so that priests could celebrate mass every Sunday and on the day of San Roch. It also authorized the confratelli to collect alms, with the possibility of granting forty days of indulgence to all the faithful who donated.

An important eighteenth-century manuscript on the history of the confraternity recalls that on 27 November 1514, the sixteen members of the confraternity, including Geminiano Cavalarini acting as *ordinario* (president) and Vincenzo Fornari as *sott'ordinario* (vice-president), gathered to draw up the statutes that would regulate it.[13] The confratelli came mostly from the "Compagnia dello Spirito Santo" (Confraternity of the Holy Spirit) and united to form the "Compagnia della Beata Vergine, e San Rocco" (Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin and St. Roch).[14] The chapters, written up by episcopal notary Niccolò Vivi, stated that each member should pay a sum of 10 soldi and 6 denari per month to be used for the care of the sick and needy, and that, in the event of a plague they should collect alms throughout the city to help the sick. A papal bull of 27 June 1530 placed the confraternity under the authority of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, recognized its privileges and indulgences, and gave it the right to appoint one or more suitable chaplains to serve in the church. In return, the company of St. Roch undertook to pay Rome an annual fee of one libra of white wax for the renewal of the bulls, to welcome pastoral visits, and for the right to display the insignia of the Lateran church.[15]

The acquisition of land to build on continued in 1528, when the confraternity bought a second "housing block used as a vegetable garden" from Battista and Antonio Selvatici at a price of 200 lire. The plot was located near the Della Cerca canal, adjacent to a public road and the properties of Franco Maria Carandini and Massimo di Campogalliano.[16] Another purchase took place in 1532: on 7 May, Girolamo Vicenzi sold an "empty housing block, used as a vegetable garden," to the confraternity of St. Roch; it bordered their other properties near the Della Cerca canal.[17]

In 1534, Duke Ercole II d'Este (r. 1534–1559), ordered the extension of the city walls, which led to the demolition of the village where the old oratory of St. Roch was located. The confratelli quickly arranged for the construction of the new church on "the site that was already purchased."[18]

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[13] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 1^{v}.

[14] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 2^{r}.

[15] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 2^{r}–2^{v}.

[16] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, 24 November 1528, notary Girolamo Lucchini.

[17] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, 7 May 1532, notary Andrea Barozzi. The sale was made with a clause specifying that nothing could be built at the property and that, should something be constructed, it must not "be higher than the sacristy or than the school of the Compagnia di San Pietro Martire." See ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, 7 May 1532.

[18] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 3^{r}.

Following the decision of the chapter held on 2 March 1534, work commenced, supported by donations from the faithful.

This new building, which was completed very quickly, underwent substantial changes at the end of the century. Gusmano Soli recorded only the creation of a wooden coffered ceiling, completed in 1599 by Giovanni Silingardi; however, this was just the final phase in a decade-long campaign of architectural improvements to the oratory.[19] An eighteenth-century transcription of the confraternity's minutes from 1585 records the need to rebuild the complex and the decision that the construction of the Chapel of St. Roch should be provided for.[20] In 1596, the confratelli appealed to benefactors to finance the construction.[21] From a list of the expenses for various types of work, we learn that Andrea Concordia produced masonry works and a perspective wall painting, while Paolo and Francesco Bisogni were paid for generic "work" and for work on the "little chapel," respectively.[22] Lodovico Vedriani praised the members of the Bisogni family, whom he considered excellent plasterers involved in the decoration of the Modenese churches of San Pietro and Sant'Agostino; but Girolamo Tiraboschi points out that surviving evidence suggests that they were simple masons who were not particularly well-versed in their art.[23] The work in the San Rocco complex was not limited to only building work, as we read in some confraternity papers signed by Paolo Bisogni who was responsible for the construction of the new high altar on a design by an unidentified "Mr. Cosimo."[24] The renovated areas included a very large room two new windows, the sacristy, the musicians' rooms, and the oratory, in which the three pre-existing windows were modified and another false perspective window was added. Paolo Bisogni whitewashed the new structure, creating a canal for the drainage of water into the courtyard, and decorated the façade "opposite the high altar" by adjusting the frames and adding two *testine* (heads, tops) following the model of those already completed. The work was interrupted, probably because of lack of funding, and then resumed on 22 April 1599 and completed by the end of the year. The total expenditure slightly exceeded 1600 lire and, thanks to the intervention of Prince Alessandro d'Este (1568–1624), future cardinal and protector of the confraternity, all disputes were resolved with

[19] Soli, "La chiesa di S. Rocco," 237.

[20] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, "Capitoli, e Regole, Fabriche," fol. n.n.: "A dì 27 Ottobre 1585 per rogito del Fratello Girolamo Guaitoli Notaio Mandato in Ippolito Vala, e Paolo Albergati a fabricar la Capella di S. Rocco, e a fare tutti li negozi della Compagnia."

[21] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, "Capitoli, e Regole, Fabriche."

[22] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1275, 8 July 1596. These expenses totalled around 110 lire. The document also states that a recess for a Madonna was created in the "balcony's parapet."

[23] Vedriani, *Raccolta de' pittori*, 119–120; Tiraboschi, *Notizie de' pittori*, 122–123.

[24] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1275, document without place and date, torn in several parts.

the owners of neighbouring houses regarding the opening of windows to bring light into the new choir.[25]

While the complex underwent significant architectural changes, the interior remained bare, as evidenced by a series of inventories drawn up by the confraternity. In 1598, for example, the church was decorated only with an old broken altarpiece, a little gouache painting of St. Roch, a sculpture of Christ, and two tables for the celebration of mass.[26] Even the sacramental furnishings were rather scarce. In 1602, however, documents mention an oil-painted banner with gold cords lined with turquoise taffeta, and an altarpiece (*ancona*) on each of the two altars then in the oratory (the main altar and a second altar dedicated to the Crucifix).[27] A few years later, in 1624, the second altar featured a sculpture of the *Crucified Christ* that was still in place in the eighteenth century.[28]

Between 1602 and 1624 the church had acquired a large altarpiece by Giulio Secchiari entitled *The Madonna with Child among Saints Geminianus, Sebastian, and Roch, Blessing Plague Victims* (fig. 2.6). Mauro Alessandro Lazarelli attributed the painting to Secchiari, rejecting the notion that it was a work completed by Bernardino Cervi after the dramatic plague of 1630, as some had believed. On the other hand, according to Lodovico Vedriani's account, Secchiari, who died in 1631, completed the *San Rocco Altarpiece* "while he was a young man" and an annotation dates its completion to 1605.[29] On 28 June 1605 the panel was taken from the home of Count Giovanni Battista Laderchi, known as Imola (1538–1618), who was the powerful secretary of state to Duke Cesare d'Este (r. 1597–1628). Then, after being valued at seventy ducats, it was blessed by Gaspare Silingardi, Bishop of Modena, and brought to the oratory of St. Roch to be placed on the high altar.[30] The schematic compositional choices, the artificial spatiality

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[25] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, "Capitoli, e Regole": "A dì 22 Aprile 1599 si cominciò la fabrica della Chiesa di San Rocco, e finì li 21 dicembre di detto anno, e si spese lire 1609. 17.2 a c. 26." ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fols. 6^{v}–7^{r}.

[26] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, Inventory of 15 February 1598: "E più una tavola d'altare negra rota"; "E più uno Cristo grande per l'altare et uno mezano et uno picolo"; "E più uno quadrete a guace con uno San Roco"; "E più una tavola con un S. Roco in sagrestia."

[27] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, "1602. Inventario delli utensilii della Venerabile Confraternita di S. Rocco di Modona."

[28] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1273, "1624. Inventario delli utenisiglii della Venerabile Confraternita di San Rocco della Città di Modona." The inventory also lists some stucco heads representing the Saviour, the Virgin and St. Anne. Mauro Alessandro Lazarelli recalls a relief with a crucified Christ in the right altar; *Pitture delle chiese di Modena,* 46.

[29] Vedriani, *Raccolta de' pittori*, 118.

[30] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1275, 28 June 1605, Modena: "Nota, come dell'anno 1605 il dì 28 Giugno la vegilia di San Pietro si pigliò la Tavola overo Ancona fatta per mano del Magnifico Messer Giulio Sichiari pittore Modonese in casa dell'Illustrissimo Signore Imola secretario

and the devotional rhetoric that inspires them reveal the extent to which the artist was still far-removed from the new naturalistic painting trend. Like other Modenese interpreters of local late Mannerism, Secchiari remains rooted in an expressive vocabulary incapable of grasping the scope of the Carracci's reform, which he embraced only subsequently.[31] Secchiari's stylistic delay seems to reflect, more generally, the alleged delay in the style of the church's decoration, especially compared to the oratory of St Roch in Reggio Emilia where, in addition to *Saint Roch Visiting the Plague Victims* by Camillo Procaccini (date, medium, location), one of the first masterpieces by Annibale Carracci was once located, the *Alms of St. Roch*, which was completed in 1594–95,and is now located in Dresden (oil on canvas, 1594/95, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister).[32] It is also believed that the decorative scheme of the destroyed church of the confraternity of St. Roch in Reggio Emilia was a model for the Modenese confraternity.[33] In Modena, however, the confratelli devoted their scarce resources not so much to the decoration of the building, but rather to essential structural interventions to the walls, whose stability was constantly undermined by the water of the Cerca canal. For example, in 1605 and again in 1618, they appealed to the community for resources to repair the vault and walls of the oratory, which were at risk of collapse, and in 1628 work was carried out on the bell tower.[34]

When the plague arrived, the confraternity distinguished itself for its charitable work, in accordance with the chapters that had regulated its activities since its establishment and, on 1 November 1631, it received a

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supremo di Sua Altezza Serenissima et fu appreciato ducatoni numero settanta a tale stabilimento intervenero il Magnifico Messer Giovanni Antonio Castrini Ordinario di quel tempo, Magnifico Thoma Verri Massaro, Messer Paolo Albergati et messer Giovanni Battista Vezzalici, messer Antonio Bombasi tutti di detta Compagnia e benedetta detta Ancona nel Vescovato per mano dell'Illustrissimo e Reverendissimo Monsignore Gasparo Sellengardi Vescovo di Modona et li istesso giorno fu portatta in San Rocho et posta al suo loco sopra l'altare Maggiore et il tutto per memoria ad honore e laude de Dio e della Gloriosa Vergine Maria e del nostro protetore glorioso Cavaliero San Rocho, et io Nicola Castelvetri notaro et confratello ho fatto qui la presente Memoria." For Laderchi, see Turchi, "Paolo Brusantini."

[31] Guandalini/Martinelli Braglia, "Giulio Secchiari," 144; Benati/Peruzzi, "Pittore molto studioso," 13–33.

[32] Benati, "L'oratorio di san Rocco."

[33] Monducci/Nironi, *Arte e storia*, 89–92.

[34] For the interventions of 1605 and 1618, see Soli, "La chiesa di S. Rocco," 240. The expenses for these years include the payment of 190.11 lire, presumably related to the altarpiece by Giulio Secchiari (ASMo, Soppressioni, 1284, "Libro di Massaria di San Rocho": "A nome di Dio A dì 19 dicembre 1613. Deve dare la confraternita di Santo Rocho Ducatoni trenta sette da lire 5.3 l'uno pagati al signore Antonio Guinni per intero pagamento dell'ancona dell'altare. Pagare lire 190.11"). For work on the bell tower, see ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, 8 June 1628.

silver cross as a token of thanks from the community. To accompany the cross, in 1636 the confraternity commissioned goldsmith Galeazzo Tusari to make two silver candlesticks, which were sold in 1708 to finance yet more building work.[35]

From the mid-seventeenth century, the building required more work, which was funded by bequests, alms, and donations from the confratelli themselves.[36] It was at this time that work was carried out by Modenese foreman Giovanni Battista Biavardi (1598–1662), a former assistant of the famous Gaspare Vigarani and active at the Modenese site of San Carlo.[37] An estimate for the reconstruction of the choir for around 300 lire is attributed to him.[38]

In 1679 some expenses were incurred for the modernization of the altar and crucifix. The documents state that a certain Giacomo Palandri was responsible for the new work on this altar, while Sebastiano Caula, a stuccoist well-known to historians, was paid for having restored the sculpture of the *crucifix*.[39]

In 1682, the church of San Rocco was restored again.[40] This was followed by the restoration of the altar between 1696 and 1697; this was now the main altar and the altar with the crucifix. Several unpublished payment orders mention those responsible and allow us to follow the progress of the work. Between the months of September and October 1696, for example, masons Lodovico Manfredini and Girolamo Maratozzi were paid for stones bought "to make the foundation of the altar of San Rocco."[41] In December, following the completion of the wall structure, the Modenese stuccoist Giovanni Antonio Franchini, who was already involved in the decoration of the Madonna della Ghiara chapel in San Pietro, was paid to make the

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[35] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fols. 5^{v} and 6^{r}.

[36] In 1641, the choir underwent some restoration work; ASMo, Soppressioni, 1275, "A dì 9 Agosto. La Venerabile Confraternita di Santo Rocho della città di Modona deve dare a Giovanni Borelli per altre robe date per la fabricha del Coro fato in Santo Rocho." On 14 January 1650, the brothers also arranged for the backs of the choir to be covered with gold stamped leather made by "Rigo Stoch and Paulo Mensii"; ASMo, Soppressioni, 1275.

[37] See Vandelli, "Le forme del Collegio," 97 and 126–127, note 56.

[38] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, s.l.d..

[39] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, 4 June 1679, "Nota della Spesa fatta da me Gioseppe Chierici Massaro il presento Anno della Confraternita di San Rocco per l'Altare del Santissimo Crocifisso essendo Ordinario il signor Malchior Marescotti." For Sebastiano Caula, who received a salary from Alfonso IV and was employed at the Palazzo Ducale site in Modena, see Cavicchioli, "*L'Aquila e 'l Pardo*," 63.

[40] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 6^{r}.

[41] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279.

capitals.[42] In January 1697 an agreement was signed with Marco Antonio Mazzarini for the creation of the relief ornamentation on the altar.[43] This Bolognese carver was also documented in 1697 in the Modenese church of San Pietro where he enlarged the steps of the high altar and created two "torch holders" designed by painter Flaminio Veratti.[44] The latter, a pupil of the more famous Francesco Stringa, had also provided the design for the altar in question, as we learn from his agreement with the confratelli.

After overseeing the umpteenth reconstruction of the choir and the construction of a sacristy that had been lacking in the renovated building, Secchiari's altarpiece was moved from the choir (where presumably it had been located) to the new altar of St Roch.[45] This new arrangement was set up in 1713 when Francesco Maria Bellei, the confraternity's *ordinario*, donated the lost *ancona* made by Sigismondo Caula, which was placed on the high altar.[46] The donation was made on the condition that the altarpiece

[42] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, "A dì 24 dicembre 1696. Signor Girolamo Maratozi si compiacerà pagare al Signor Giovanni Antonio Franchini stucatore per li Capitelli fatti in San Rocco al Altare di detto Santo per sua fattura lire sessanta dico lire 60. E per la calcina Biancha e scaliola per fare il stucho di detto ornamento lire 20 dico lire 20. Sono in tutto lire 80. Angelo Maria Medici scrisi." Giovanni Antonio Franchini later carried out the stucco work in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in 1711; Campori, *Gli artisti italiani*, 214. For his work in San Pietro, see Dugoni, "Vicende storiche e artistiche," 94.

[43] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1279, "A dì 31 Genaro 1697. Fu fatto d'accordo con il Signor Marco Antonio Mazarini, et li Confratelli della Compagnia di San Rocco per far fare un Ornamento intaliato di Bel rilievo dal sopradetto Mazarino e questo per la Tavola grande che si metterà nel Altare nuovo di detta Chiesa, per prezo di lire quattro cento ottanto, e questo promette darlo finito per tutto il mese di Maggio del Presente anno, metendoli del suo Robba e fattura per quento porta detto Ornamento prometendo il sudetto la sua asistenza nel Pore sopra il detto altare detto Ornamento, compito detto Ornamento conforme il Disegno datto da Flaminio Veratti, dico lire 480."

[44] Campori, *Gli artisti italiani*, 310–311.

[45] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 7r: "Dell'Anno 1708 per gli Atti del notaio signor Benedetto Montanari li detti Confratelli intentarono altro giudizio con il fu Signor Sebastiano Gherardi, comprattore della Casa de' suddetti Cottini, e mediante l'autorevole interposizione del Serenissimo Signor Duca Rinaldo Protettore di detta Archiconfraternita, per decreto del Signor Podestà di Modena ottennero un luogo per fare una sagrestia, che mancava a compire la Fabbrica, nuovamente fatta del Coro, e Chiesa suddetta nel Orto di Ragione del detto Signor Gherardi, che è tra la lui Casa, e la Chiesa predetta qual sito misurato dal Perito Demenico Maria Bavuti, consistente in Braccia 11 di Lunghezza, e Braccia 5 ½ di Largehzza, con suoi muri, e nette Braccia 10 di Lunghezza, e Braccia 5 di Larghezza fu valutato lire 150 suo giusto prezzo, e come dalla detta perizia fatta li 27 settembre 1708, e giurata li 5 marzo 1709 per Rogito del Notaio Signor Giovanni San Giovanni. Quali lire 150 assieme con altre lire 50 importare della comun muraglia che si occupò per la construzione d'essa Sagrestia d'altezza Braccia 8 furono pagate dell'Archiconfraternita al detto signor Gherardi, come da ricevuta del Signor Dottore Pietro Ercole Gherardi fatta li 28 settembre 1708."

[46] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 6r. The donation took place on 27 October 1713. S

could no longer be removed from the choir and with the obligation that a mass be celebrated on St. Sylvester's day (31 December). The altarpiece was still in place in the eighteenth century when it was described by Gian Filiberto Pagani as follows: "in the panel in the choir, Modenese painter Sigismondo Caula depicted Saints John the Baptist, Roch and Sylvester, together with the Virgin and her Child in glory."[47] From an iconographic perspective, St. Sylvester's presence is not surprising: his inclusion relates to the internal affairs of the confraternity. In 1583 the church of San Silvestro, which was originally a parish church, became the seat of the Compagnia della Misericordia (Confraternity of Mercy), whose members left the Compagnia di San Rocco in the wake of disagreements.[48] Having survived until the second half of the seventeenth century, the church of San Silvestro was probably destroyed in 1663, when it was bought by the Discalced Carmelites of St. Teresa, who demolished the pre-existing building to complete their convent. In 1661, the confratelli of San Rocco obtained the lower apartment of a building from the abolished confraternity of San Silvestro, as well as 508 Modenese lire and "various tools to keep with an obligation in perpetuity to celebrate the possible number of masses on the morning of St. Sylvester's day in the Church of San Rocco."[49] In 1714, the confratelli decided to allocate part of the 100 scudi left to the confraternity by Giuseppe Chierici to a mass in honour of Francesco Maria Bellei, who had donated the altarpiece, "and in recognition of the *ancona* placed in the choir and this mass in perpetuity."[50]

Sigismondo Caula, a pupil of court painter Jean Boulanger and long active at court, worked for other confraternities in the duchy. In the years preceding 1684, he completed the lost paintings for the choir of the Oratory of San Giovanni della Morte and — even more significantly — created a monumental altarpiece for the chapel in the hospital of San Rocco in Carpi that depicts St. Lazarus giving communion to victims of the plague and St. Roch in glory (fig. 2.7),[51] for which we also have a preparatory sketch.[52]

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[47] Pagani, *Le pitture*, 18. In Giacomo Ceschi's *Memorie* — written a little later —, he recalls St. Catherine as being among the group of saints. ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 6^{v}.

[48] Soli, *La chiesa di San Silvestro,* 295–297.

[49] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fols. 10^{v} and 11^{r}.

[50] ASMo, Soppressioni, 1280, "Partiti 1712–1726," 1 April 1714.

[51] The payment order for the decoration was found in BEUMo, *Autografoteca Campori*, "Caula Sigismondo": "A dì 23 settembre 1684. Io infrascritto confesso haver ricevuto dal Signor Pietro Giovanni Orlandini lire numero 200 dico ducento moneta in Modona, e questi sono a conto della pittura fatta da me nella confraternita di San Giovanni dalla Morte. Io Sigismondo Caula." On the artist, see Lugli, "Erudizione e pittura"; Lugli, "Sigismondo Caula," 135–137; Curti/Righi Guerzoni, "Gentiluom eimi e collezionisti," 283–285; Cavicchioli, "*L'Aquila e 'l Pardo*," 88.9

[52] Garuti, "Chiese di Carpi," 140. Peruzzi, "San Rocco protettore dalla peste."

With the acquisition of Caula's painting, which has since been lost, the church of San Rocco in Modena, which remained unchanged until the move of the confraternity to the church of San Barnaba in 1785,[53] gained the work of one of the leading figures in seventeenth-century Modenese painting, attesting to the Modenese confraternities' decisive role in commissioning the best artistic production of the time.[54]

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CITED WORKS

Abbreviations

ASMo = Archivio di Stato di Modena
BEUMo = Biblioteca Estense Universitaria di Modena
ASCMo = Archivio Storico Comunale di Modena

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Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria (BEUMo)
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Autografoteca Campori, "Caula Sigismondo"

Modena, Archivio di Stato (ASMo)
Archivio Notarile, Modena, Memoriali in pergamena, 346
Soppressioni, 1273.
Soppressioni, 1275.
Soppressioni, 1277, "Fondazione della Compagnia di San Rocco. Memorie antiche, testamenti, fondi, Entrate, ed obblighi rispettivi compilati nell'anno 1785 Dal Confratello Giacomo Ceschi."
Soppressioni, 1279, "Capitoli, e Regole, Fabriche, et altro per Funzioni publiche dell'Archiconfraternita di S. Rocco, Processioni, dove s'intervenne, Mobili."
Soppressioni, 1280.

53 During the eighteenth century, various work on the building was funded; ASMo, *Soppressioni*, 1280, "Partiti 1712–1726," 21 January 1720. The main bell was recast and the cross donated by the community in 1631 was altered; ASMo, Soppressioni, 1277, fol. 7v.

54 Dugoni, "L'altare maggiore."

Soppressioni, 1284. "Libro di Massaria di San Rocho. Mastro della Compagnia di S. Rocho. 1604–1616."

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Fig. 2.1. The demolition of the Church of San Rocco in Cavallerini street (external view), 1951. By permission: Biblioteca civica d'arte Luigi Poletti — Modena (Italy).

Fig. 2.2. The demolition of the Church of San Rocco in Cavallerini street (church interior), 1951. By permission: Biblioteca civica d'arte Luigi Poletti — Modena (Italy).

Fig. 2.3. *The Della Cerca mill and San Rocco street*, 1608–10, drawing in pen and brown ink on paper. ASCMo, *Acts of General Administration,* 1608–10, b. 38/2 (folder of undated papers). By permission: Archivio Storico del Comune di Modena.

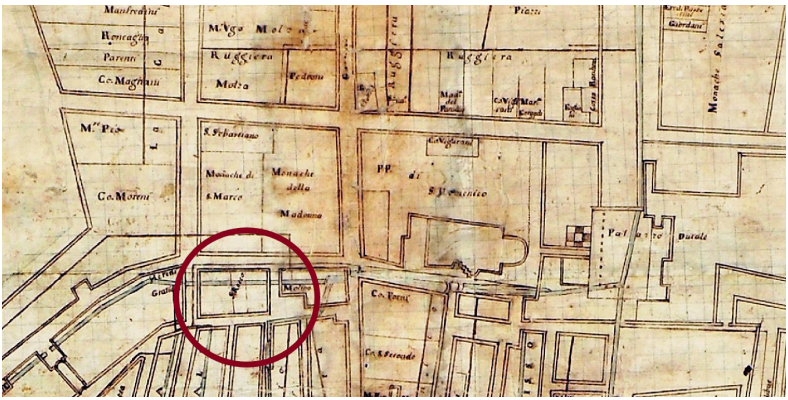

Fig. 2.4. Giovanni Battista Boccabadati, *Pianta della città Modena co' suoi scoli sotteranei, pigliata l'anno MDCLXXXIV*, 1684, drawing in pen and brown ink and blue watercolour on paper. ASCMo, *Cartografia storica*, detail of the block with the Church of San Rocco. By permission: Archivio Storico del Comune di Modena.

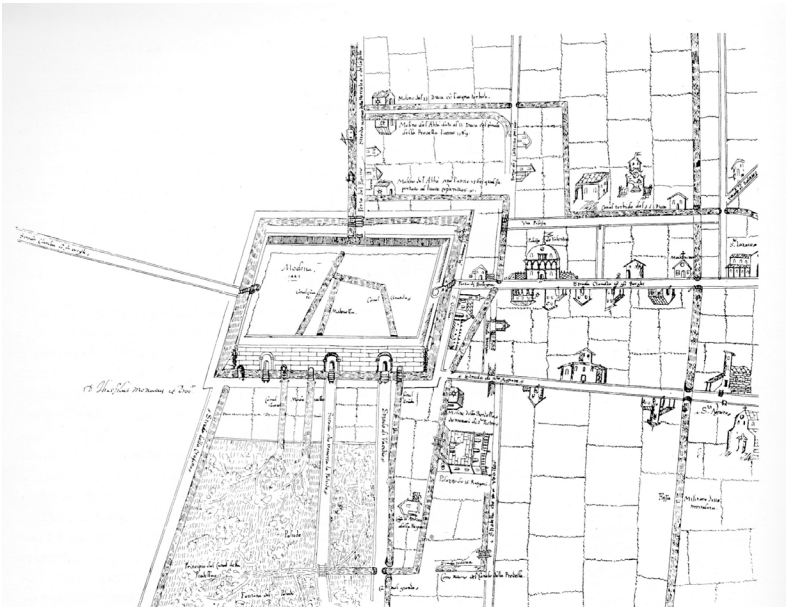

Fig. 2.5. Monaco Teofilo, *Plan of Modena and its Villages*, fifteenth century (from Riccardi, Pietro. "Nota dichiarativa dell'autografia di alcune piante della città di Modena." *Atti e Memorie della R. Accademia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti di Modena*, s. II, sez. Arti, Modena, 10 (1894): 7–8). Photo: public domain. The "Molino del Abbà" appears in the northern part, next to the "Porta del Bacino" (or "di Albareto"); the oratory of the Confraternita di San Rocco stood nearby.

Fig. 2.6. Giulio Secchiari, *The Madonna with Child among Saints Geminianus, Sebastian and Roch, Blessing Plague Victims*, c. 1605, oil on canvas. Galleria Estense, Modena, inv. 559. By permission of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali — Archivio Fotografico delle Gallerie Estensi. Photo: Pugnaghi.

Fig. 2.7. Sigismondo Caula, *St. Lazarus Gives Communion to Victims of the Plague and Roch in glory*, second half of the seventeenth century, oil on canvas. Musei di Palazzo dei Pio, Carpi, inv. A/764. By permission: Musei di Palazzo dei Pio, Carpi.