

THE PAMPHILI CHAPEL IN SANT'AGOSTINO\*

The history of the Pamphili Chapel in S. Agostino in Rome, like that of most Pamphili commissions, can be reconstructed on the basis of an unusually large number of documents.<sup>1</sup> The documents make it possible not only to relate the chronology of the decoration of the chapel but also to outline the system of patronage under which it was created, that is the collaboration between patron, architect, and sculptors, which followed a pattern that is typical of Roman baroque commissions. Normally an architect made his design in consultation with his patron and then was authorized to hire craftsmen and artists to execute it. No change in the design was permissible without the consent of the patron. In the case of the Pamphili Chapel, the system operated in a particularly inflexible manner because the patron, prince Camillo Pamphili took an active interest in the design of the chapel. Once he had approved the design, neither the architect, Giovanni Maria

Baratta, nor the sculptor commissioned to carve the main marble group, Melchiorre Caffà, were free to do their jobs as they wished.

The Pamphili Chapel as designed and constructed from 1660–69 is best illustrated by an engraving published by Domenico De Rossi in 1721 (fig. 1)<sup>2</sup> because the appearance of the chapel has been changed by later additions and restorations (fig. 2). In the eighteenth century Andrea Bergondi modeled the two stucco reliefs placed in the panels flanking the central niche of the altar. Each relief represents a miracle worked by St. Tomaso da Villanova (fig. 3). The semidome above the altar and the pediment of the altar were changed slightly when the church was restored in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The altar of the Pamphili Chapel is located in the center of the apse of the left transept of S. Agostino. The frontispiece of the altar is composed of two pair of columns of the composite order carrying an architrave and a broken triangular pe-

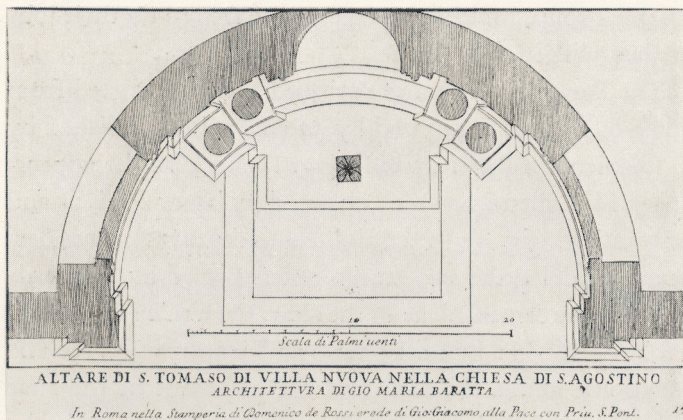
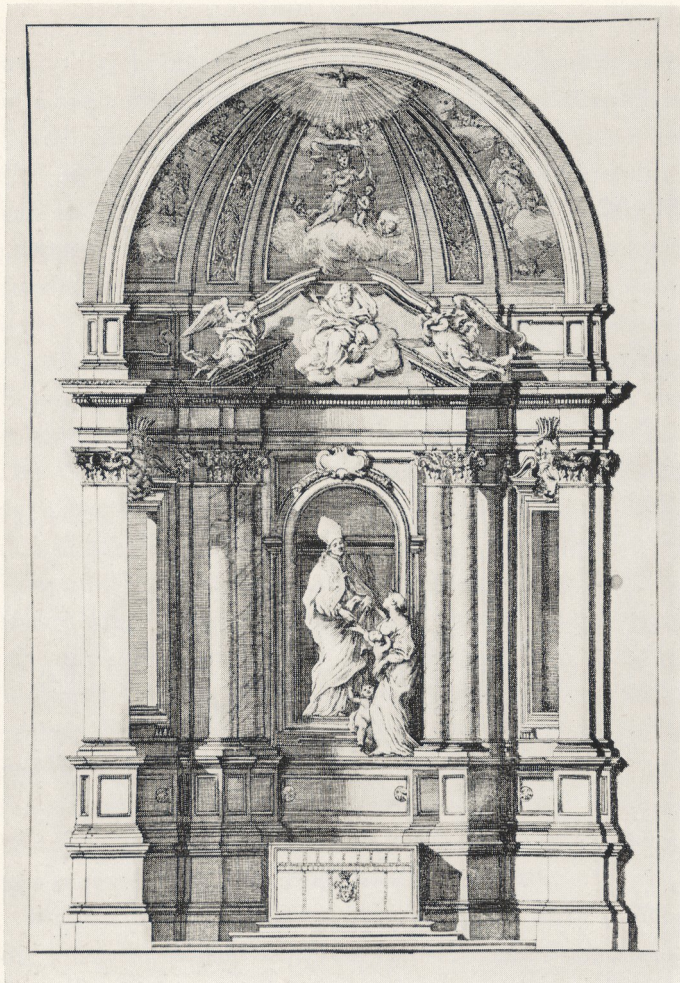
\* The authors would like to thank Principessa Donna Orietta Doria-Pamphili for allowing us to use her family archive and the archivist, Dott. Renato Vignorelli-Rubrichi for his help.

1 The confusing mass of documents associated with Pamphili patronage is reflected in Gerhard Eimer, *La Fabbrica di S. Agnese in Navona...*, 2 vols., Stockholm 1970–71.

2 *Studio d'architettura civile ... II*, Rome 1721, pl. XV.

3 F. Titi, *Descrizione delle pitture, sculture ed architetture esposte al pubblico in Roma*, Rome 1763, 402 attributes the reliefs to Bergondi. Restorations of the church are discussed by A.C. de Romanis, *La Chiesa di S. Agostino in Roma*, Rome 1921, 32ff.





1. Rome, S. Agostino, Pamphili Chapel. Engraving by Domenico de' Rossi

replaced at an unknown date with the present glory in the form of the sun. The semidome was decorated with stucco reliefs of angels and putti, which were replaced by the existing frescos of the same subject in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The main decoration of the altar, the marble group of The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova (fig. 4) occupies the center of the frontispiece above the altar table. St. Tomaso da Villanova, placed in a niche, turns slightly to his left to give alms to a statue of Charity, which stands on a ledge outside of and presses her knees against the bottom of the niche. Charity is accompanied by two babies, one suckling her left breast and the other seated at her feet. She turns toward the saint and hence is seen in slightly less than profile. De Rossi's engraving of the chapel (fig. 1) shows that on either side of the central niche there were framed windows, flanked on one side by the columns of the frontispiece and on the other by the pilasters marking the entrance to the chapel. The window on the right must have been blank, however, because this side of the left transept of S. Agostino is and was imbedded in the monastery.<sup>5</sup> The window on the left opened onto the street and was used to illuminate the chapel. Assuming that De Rossi's rendering of the effect of the lighting is correct, the light entered the chapel from slightly behind the saint and shone on the figure of Charity as a divine light supporting the holiness of the saint.

The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova is symbolic of the life and acts of the saint, who was born in a small town near Villanova, Spain, in 1486. He was ordained a priest of the Augustinian Order in 1518 and was Archbishop of Valencia from 1544 until his death on 8 September 1555. As priest and bishop he modeled himself on the concept of the Good Shepherd, a pastor who looked after the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of his flock. As Archbishop of Valencia, the saint became famous for using his own money for the care of the poor, orphaned, and abandoned people of that city. He was compared to St. Charles Borromeo, whom he resembled both in his devotion to the people of his diocese and his efforts to reform the administration of his diocese. Hence, St. Tomaso became a symbol not only of the Good Shepherd, but also of the

diment. Two marble angels rest on the sides of the pediment adoring a relief of God the Father accompanied by a putto carrying an orb, both floating on clouds. A second broken pediment, somewhat segmental in shape, framed the group of God the Father and putto that rises out of the triangular pediment. The second pediment no longer exists but was

4 Francesco Rossi was paid for the stucco reliefs in October 1662 (ADP, Scaff. 94, no. 12). Eimer II, 532, n. 50 incorrectly states that the document refers to models of the God the Father and Angels that decorate the frontispiece of the altar.

5 Francesco Borromini's drawing of the ground plan of S. Agostino (Vienna, Albertina no. 86) illustrates the form of the left transept before the building of the Pamphili Chapel. See G. Urban, *Die Kirchenbaukunst des Quattrocento in Rom*, in: *RömJbKg* 9/10 (1961-62), fig. 244.





2. Rome, S. Agostino, Pamphili Chapel



role of Good Works in the salvation of souls, a concept denied by Protestants. St. Tomaso da Villanova was beatified by Paul V on 15 September 1618 and canonized by Alexander VII on 1 November 1658.<sup>6</sup>

The first altar dedicated to St. Tomaso da Villanova in S. Agostino probably was consecrated at the time of the saint's beatification. According to the acts of an Apostolic Visit to S. Agostino in 1626, the altar dedicated to Tomaso da Villanova was placed against the dome pier to the left of the high altar chapel. The altar was composed of a table and a simple frontispiece, e.g., columns carrying some sort of pediment, which was made of colored marbles. The altarpiece, a painting by Tomaso Salini, followed the iconography established by Paul V who ordered that the Blessed Tomaso be represented as a bishop holding a purse and giving alms to several poor persons.<sup>7</sup> Another altar of the same type was placed against the dome pier to the right of the high altar chapel. The latter was dedicated to SS. Trifone, Respicio, and Ninfa, the saints for whom the first church on the site of S. Agostino had been named. The left transept of the church contained an altar dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul.<sup>8</sup>

A new altar dedicated to the Blessed Tomaso was consecrated in the left transept of the church shortly before his canonization. The change in location probably was made at the request of the pope as a preparation for the celebration that accompanied the canonization.<sup>9</sup> On the day of the celebration, 1 November (the Feast of All Saints) 1658, the new altar was decorated with Giovanni Francesco Romanelli's painting of The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova (fig. 5),<sup>10</sup> which now hangs in the sacristy of the

church. The painting summarized the theme of the decoration of the church, which for that occasion was given the title, *Novum Sanctorum Pantheon*. The adornment of the church taught that the life and miracles of the saint were examples of the importance of Charity and Good Works for the salvation of the soul. The saint's acts were depicted in fourteen large octagonal paintings, ten hanging in the arches on either side of the nave, one hanging in the entrance to the right transept, one hanging to the left of the entrance of the church, and two hanging in the arches of the chapels flanking the high altar chapel. The paintings compared the charitable acts of St. Tomaso with those of a heavenly hierarchy beginning with God and including all classes of saints. The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova also was emphasized in other images of the saint made at the time of his canonization. For example, an engraving commemorating the new saint (fig. 6) is composed of a large image of the charity scene surrounded by roundels illustrating his miracles. Similarly, an image of The Charity of St. Tomaso is found on the reverse of a medal struck in his honor by Alexander VII.<sup>11</sup>

The building of the present altar dedicated to St. Tomaso da Villanova resulted from an Apostolic Visit to S. Agostino in January 1660, which is recorded by documents in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano and by the minutes of a meeting of the Augustinian Fathers living at S. Agostino held on 25 January of that year.<sup>12</sup> Pietro da Cortona, acting for the pope, inspected the church and ordered the Augustinian Fathers to destroy the two altars flanking the high altar chapel and to face the pilasters against which they stood with marble. The cost of such an operation was estimated at six hundred scudi. The prior of the monastery, which was four thousand scudi in debt, and had no cash on hand, first thought of asking the pope for financial aid, but rather than seem less than completely obedient to the pope, the prior sought another solution. The solution was found in the person of Camillo Pamphili, who had already

to Romanelli by Martinelli, Roma ornata, 11 and has been discussed by H. Voss, *Die Malerei des Barock in Rom*, Berlin 1924, 269, 549; *Art in Italy 1600–1700*, Exhibition Detroit Art Institute 1966, New York 1966, 52ff.

11 F. Bonanni, *Numismata pontificum romanorum II*, Rome 1706, Alexander VII, # XVI, 652ff.; *Acta Sanctorum*, 976.

12 ASV, Misc. Arm. VII, 54, 551ff.; ASR Corp. Relig. S. Agostino 6 (formerly busta 12, fasc., 15), 217. In January 1660 the altar to the left of the high altar chapel in S. Agostino was dedicated to the Blessed Giovanni di S. Faconda (Juan de Sahagun), a fifteenth century Augustinian. The altar was under the patronage of the Principessa Borghese, the daughter-in-law of Olimpia Aldobrandini Pamphili. See H. Hibbard, *The Architecture of the Palazzo Borghese*, Rome 1962, 75.

6 For Tomaso da Villanova see *Acta Sanctorum*, 799–992; and B. Rano in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum XII*, Rome 1969, 591ff. E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux après le concile de Trente*, Paris 1932, 86ff., discusses the use of works of art in support of Good Works.

7 ASV, Misc. Arm. VII, 111 (Apostolic Visit of 10 February 1626), fol. 343v: ... *Proximum huic altari a latere Evangelij adest altare sub invocatione Beati Thomae de Villanova, cuius imago ibi extat pro Icona* ... G. Baglione, *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti*, Rome 1642, 187 attributes the painting to Salini and describes it as *il S. Thomasso da Villanova, che fu elemosina a diversi poveri con molte figure a olio* ... The order of Pope Paul V is cited by (Fr. Sigismondo Tamagnini da Recanati), *Relatione della Canonizzazione di S. Tomaso da Villanova dell'ordine Agostiniano et Archivescovo di Valenza*, Rome 1659, 5ff. and the frontispiece, which might be a copy of Salini's painting. See also F. Martinelli, *Roma ornata dall'architettura*, in: *Roma nel seicento*, ed. C. D'Onofrio, Rome 1969, 11; G. B. Mola, *Breve racconto delle miglior opere d'architettura, scultura et pittura fatte in Roma et alcuni fuor di Roma*, ed. K. Noehles, Berlin 1966, 135.

8 ASV, Misc. Arm. VII, 111, 343v, 345.

9 *Acta Sanctorum*, 945.

10 (Tamagnini da Recanati), *Relatione*, 77ff. discusses the decoration of the church for the canonization. The painting is attributed





3. Pamphili Chapel, detail



4. Melchiorre Caffà and Ercole Ferrata: *The Charity of S. Tomaso de Villanova*

shown himself to be the leading patron of the Augustinian Order in Rome by financing the decoration of the church of S. Nicola da Tolentino, and who now agreed to have the altars destroyed and to reface the surface of the piers in return for the pieces of marble and stone out of which the altars were constructed.<sup>13</sup> On 26 May 1660 the prior and his fellow monks made a second agreement with Camillo Pamphili, who was to build an altar dedicated to

<sup>13</sup> The stones from the destroyed altars were transported from S. Agostino to the *fabbrica* of S. Agnese between 26 January and 7 February 1660 (ADP, Scaff. 94, no. 9). See Eimer II, 531, n. 45.

St. Tomaso da Villanova in proportion to the merit of that saint.<sup>14</sup> The terms of the agreement show that the altar had yet to be designed because they state that it was to be built of marble and decorated with paintings. It is probable, however, that both parties to the pact expected the figural decoration of the altar to illustrate the Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova, the emblem of the lift and miracles of the saint.

<sup>14</sup> Copies of the agreement exist in ADP, Scaff. 88, no. 5, int. 8; ASR, Corp. Relig. S. Agostino 6, 227.



The design of the chapel was complete within a year of the second agreement. On 15 April 1661 Camillo Pamphili made a contract with Giovanni Maria Baratta by which the latter became responsible for the construction and decoration of the chapel, the design of which is described in detail.<sup>15</sup> For example, by the fourth paragraph of the contract Baratta promised to *far fare i bassi rilievi del Padre Eterno et angeli e putti con la statua di San Tomasso et un'altra figura denotante la Carita con due bambini uno in braccio e l'altro piu grandicello per mano che chiede la carita a detto Santo inginocchiati*. . . Other paragraphs mention the specific stones to be used for the different elements of the architecture (paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 9), the cost of the chapel (six thousand scudi) and payments to Baratta (8, 10, 11), and a time limit of two years in which the chapel was to be completed (11, 12). Paragraph seven is the most important from the point of view of the history of patronage because it asserts Camillo Pamphili's control over the project by stipulating that the architecture, sculpture, and decoration of the chapel with colored stones, is to be executed according to the two drawings by Baratta that have been approved by the Principe Pamphili and to a painted wooden model that is to be made by Baratta and that must be approved by the patron before work can begin.<sup>16</sup> Baratta's responsibility to execute the chapel as designed also is reflected by two details of the contract. First, paragraph four stipulates that the sculpture is to be carved by one of the four sculptors (Giuseppe Peroni, Ercole Ferrata, Giovanni Francesco De Rossi, Melchiorre Caffà) who had been hired to carve reliefs for the church of S. Agnese in Piazza Navona. Hence, a sculptor was to be hired to execute marble sculpture according to a design previously approved by the patron. Secondly, paragraph eight states that Baratta may not receive money for any work not mentioned in the contract, which means that the design could not be altered in any significant manner without the approval of the principe.

Camillo Pamphili's control over the sculptural decoration of the chapel was reaffirmed by a contract of 5 May 1661 by which Giovanni Maria Baratta commissioned Giu-

seppe Peroni to carve statues of God the Father and the angels that decorate the frontispiece of the altar. Peroni was to begin carving the marble only after he had made small and large models according to Baratta's design and to the taste and satisfaction of the Principe Pamphili.<sup>17</sup> Peroni promised to finish the work within one year. If he failed to do so, Baratta had the right to ask another sculptor to do the work, at a higher price if necessary. The sculpture was carved by Ercole Ferrata (contract dated 23 August 1662) because Peroni died before he could undertake the commission.<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime, Giovanni Maria Baratta was supervising the construction of the chapel, a task that included the closing of a doorway that had served as a side entrance to the church,<sup>19</sup> the opening of the window on the left side of the chapel, the decoration of the chapel with colored marbles, and the preparation of a full-sized stucco model of The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova, all of which was completed for the dedication of the Chapel in July 1663. The anonymous author of a pamphlet printed in honor of the dedication ceremony<sup>20</sup> praised the indescribable richness of the architecture and then described the model, which included a statue of St. Tomaso giving alms to a poor woman who carried one baby in her arms and was accompanied by another at her feet. Hence, the number and types of figures in the model conformed to the specifications of the contract of 15 April 1661 as well as to the marble group as carved. The dedication marked the official completion of the chapel even though The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova had yet to be carved. On 25 July 1663 the Augustinian Fathers voted to give Camillo Pamphili Romanelli's painting as a token of their appreciation of his generosity. On the same day they decided to give Giovanni Maria Baratta, *soprintendente alla fabrica della Cappella di S. Tomaso*, fifty scudi, *per buona corrispondenza alle di lui fatighe, opera, et industria*.<sup>21</sup>

15 ADP, Scaff. 88, no. 5, int. 8, which also contains notes for the contract in the handwriting of Camillo Pamphili's secretary, Niccolo Angelo Cafferri. The contract has been cited by J. Hess in Giovanni Passeri, *Die Künstlerbiographien*, Leipzig and Vienna 1934, 318, n. 2; A. Nava-Cellini, *Contributi a Melchior Caffà*, in: *Paragone* 7 (1956), 83, 30, n. 14 who quotes part of the document and cites several other documents related to the project; Eimer II, 531.

16 Cafferri's note to paragraph 6 (see note 15) states that the wooden model is to include clay *bozzetti* of the statues of St. Tomaso and Charity and red wax *bozzetti* of the angels.

17 ASR, Not. 6682, 44f., 49.

18 Passeri, *Die Künstlerbiographien*, 318 states that Peroni died in July 1663, which is a mistake for July 1662. The contract between Ferrata and Baratta is in ASR, Not. 6689, 640ff., 663.

19 See note 5.

20 *Breve relatione della festa in S. Agostino di Roma per la dedicatione della nova cappella a S. Tomaso da Villanova eretta dall'Illustrissimo & Eccellentissimo Sig. Principe Don Camillo Pamphilio*, Rome 1663. A copy of the pamphlet and payments for the decoration of the church for the dedication are found in ADP, Scaff. 88, no. 5, int. 8. See p. 194 below.

21 ASR, Corp. Relig. S. Agostino 6, 273. ASR, Not. 6695, 411ff., 445 contains a contract dated 20 August 1663 by which Camillo Pamphili made a major payment to Baratta for his work in S. Nicola da Tolentino and on the Pamphili Chapel.

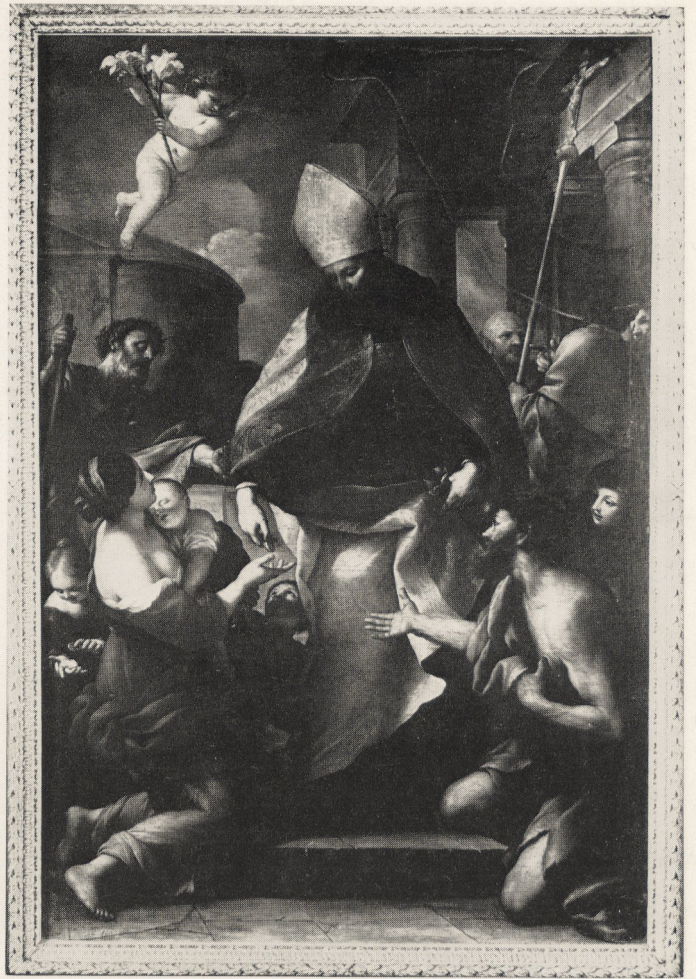


Architecturally the Pamphili Chapel (fig. 2) is little more than an adaptation of the high altar chapel of S. Nicola da Tolentino (fig. 7), which was built at the expense of Camillo Pamphili and under the supervision of Giovanni Maria Baratta beginning in 1651.<sup>22</sup> Both altars are composed of frontispieces carried by pairs of columns flanking a shallow niche that is reserved for sculpture. In both cases the columns carry broken pediments on which rest angels and in which are placed reliefs of God the Father with His right hand on an orb. Furthermore, the tripartite division of the Pamphili Chapel is reminiscent of the altar wall in S. Nicola da Tolentino, which is composed of the altar flanked by framed windows and doorways leading to the monk's choir. The wall is crowned by a lunette that is divided into three sections and decorated in the same manner as the Pamphili Chapel. The connection between the chapels is also supported by a comparison of architectural detail. For example, the cartouche carrying the inscription above the niche of the Pamphili Chapel is similar to the cartouches above the windows on the altar wall of S. Nicola. The Composite capitals of the Pamphili Chapel are different from the Corinthian capitals of the columns in the high altar chapel of S. Nicola but are similar to those crowning the pilasters in the crossing and nave of the church. The similarity of the two chapels in general and of the handling of the windows in particular demonstrate that the more dramatic appearance of the Pamphili Chapel is largely the result of the topography of the left transept of S. Agostino. The windows in the Pamphili Chapel originally must have been included because they repeated the form of the older chapel. On the other hand, the repetition of the motif allowed one window to be opened to the street permitting directed light to be used in support of the iconography of the sculpture, a popular motif in baroque art.

The comparison of the architecture of the Pamphili Chapel to that of the high altar chapel in S. Nicola da Tolentino raises an important question that is not fully answered by documents. Who designed the Pamphili Chapel? Giovanni Maria Baratta, the architect recorded by the documents, was a retainer of the Pamphili Family and as such supervised the *fabriche* of S. Agnese in Piazza Navona, the Villa Pamphili, and S. Nicola da Tolentino.<sup>23</sup> He was

22 Somewhat contradictory versions of the history of S. Nicola da Tolentino have been written by F. Fasolo, La „Fabrica“ della Chiesa di S. Nicola da Tolentino, in: *Fede e Arte* 11 (1963), 66–97; and Eimer II, 519–527.

23 In 1661 Donna Olimpia Aldobrandini Pamphili commissioned Baratta to construct the high altar of the church of S. Nilo in Rossano (ASR, Not. 6680, 472ff., 478). For further information about Baratta, see H. Honour in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* V, Rome 1963, 291ff.; Eimer.



5. Giov. Franc. Romanelli: *The Charity of S. Tomaso de Villanova* (Rome, S. Agostino, Sacresty)

the executor of Camillo Pamphili's architectural projects and as such was entrusted with the plans for the completion of S. Agnese and S. Nicola da Tolentino when his patron died in July 1666.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, he has never been thought of as a major designer. In the case of S. Nicola da Tolentino, Baratta became supervisor of the *fabrica* in 1651 when Camillo Pamphili undertook the expense of decorating the interior and building the façade of the church, which was structurally complete.<sup>25</sup> The interior decoration began with the high altar, the construction of which was supervised by Baratta who worked from draw-

24 Camillo Pamphili's will (ASR, Not. Testamenti 32, 917ff., 948ff.) specifies that S. Agnese be finished according to drawings that he had left with Baratta, that Baratta be paid 6,050 scudi for the completion of S. Nicola da Tolentino, and that Baratta receive a pension of 120 scudi a year for the rest of his life. See Eimer II, 515ff., 527.

25 See note 22.



6. Engraving celebrating the canonization of S. Tomaso de Villanova



ings supplied by Algardi.<sup>26</sup> Algardi designed the sculpture but put little effort into the design of the architecture, a simple adaptation of the high altar of S. Agostino, which must have seemed old-fashioned when it was built in 1626–28. The altar of S. Agostino was a proper model for the altar of S. Nicola da Tolentino, which was built as the noviciate of the Augustinian Order. The rest of the decora-

26 O. Pollak, Alessandro Algardi als Architekt, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur 4 (1910–11), 62–66, 78 quotes a contract by which Baratta agreed to build the altar according to the drawing and model made by Algardi. See also J. Montagu, Alessandro Algardi's Altar of S. Nicola da Tolentino and Some Related Models, in *BurlMag* 112 (1970), 282–291.

tion and the façade of S. Nicola reflect the same old-fashioned attitude, a situation that leads one to doubt that any major architect was employed on the project. A solution to the authorship of the decoration is provided by a statement found in a report on the state of the monastery of S. Nicola da Tolentino in 1700.<sup>27</sup> The author of the report wrote that, *si dice, che il disegno detto (later insert – della volta, cornice e) della facciata nuova sia del medesimo prencipe, intendentissimo d'architettura. L'architetto pero del prencipe, e ch'as-*

27 ASR, Corp. Relig. 277, Stato del Convento in 1700, np, quoted by Eimer II, 520 who also cites (515ff.) documents implying that Camillo maintained tight control over the construction of S. Agnese.



7. Rome, S. Nicola  
da Tolentino...  
High Altar



*sisteva alla direzione della fabrica era il Signore Gio. Maria Baratta.* It seems likely, therefore, that Camillo Pamphili maintained a tight control over the decoration of the entire church, discussing its design with Algardi, Baratta, and any other architect willing to give him advice.

The design of the Pamphili Chapel probably was made in the same manner, that is with drawings and models made by Baratta after discussing the design with Camillo Pamphili. Camillo Pamphili may have discussed the project with Pietro da Cortona as well because Cortona acted as Alexander VII's agent in ordering the destruction of the original altar dedicated to St. Tomaso da Villanova in S. Agostino and may have continued to act as the pope's

agent until the design of the chapel had been completed. Evidence suggests that the marble group representing the Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova was subject to especially rigorous control. Its design required approval not only of the patron but also of the pope, probably because it represented the emblem of a recently canonized saint. A model of the group was sent to the pope in July 1661, two years before the chapel was dedicated.<sup>28</sup>

The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova is not adapted from the sculpture decorating the high altar of S. Nicola

<sup>28</sup> A payment for transporting the model (ADP Scaff. 94, no. 10) is quoted by Eimer II, 531, n. 47.



8. *Alessandro Algardi: The Vision of S. Nicola da Tolentino (Rome, S. Nicola da Tolentino)*



da Tolentino as one might expect but rather from Romanelli's painting (fig. 5), which must have been considered the official iconographic source for the subject. As has been pointed out above, the contract of 15 April 1661 stipulated that the group be composed of a statue of St. Tomaso da Villanova giving alms to a kneeling figure of Charity accompanied by two children, one in her arms and a second

that is too large to be carried. The marble group was planned, therefore, as a reduction of the image of Romanelli's painting, which depicts the saint dressed as a bishop, standing on a step, and surrounded by poor people asking for alms. Two mendicants kneel on the step in the foreground of the painting, a poor man to the saint's left and to his right a woman to whom he gives alms. The woman



carries a baby and is accompanied by an older child. A third child is visible in the background. In the marble group, the woman has been moved from the saint's right to his left in order to take advantage of the light source, and hence is a reversal of the figure in the painting. Because of the scale of the architecture, she does not literally kneel at the saint's feet, but her knees are slightly bent and lean against the frame of the niche. She is seen in profile with her face turned toward the saint as is the poor woman in Romanelli's painting. Similarly, the general pose of the original design for the statue of the saint must have been close to the final statue, which also is adapted from Romanelli's painting. The saint's pose could not simply be reversed from the painting to the statue because he could not be represented giving alms with his left hand. Hence, the final pose of the saint turning his head and shoulders slightly to his left and giving alms with his right hand crossing his body was the simplest solution.

The most surprising result of the adaptation of the high altar chapel of S. Nicola da Tolentino and of two figures from Romanelli's painting is that the resulting composition is unique among baroque chapels. Earlier baroque altars can be divided into two categories, those that contain or are the focal points of man-made visions and those that are decorated in the traditional way with altarpieces. Examples of the first type include the altars of the Falconieri Chapel in S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini as designed by Pietro da Cortona in 1634 and as redesigned by Francesco Borromini in about 1657,<sup>29</sup> the Raimondi Chapel in S. Pietro in Montorio, begun about 1640, the Cornaro Chapel in S. Maria della Vittoria (1645–52), the Alaleona Chapel in SS. Domenico e Sisto (1649) and the *Cathedra Petri* in St. Peter's (1657–66), all designed by Bernini. In the first three of these chapels the vision or focal point of the vision consists of a relief or a group of statues contained within a deep niche over the altar and illuminated by light coming from hidden windows or a hidden lantern. The Alaleona Chapel and the *Cathedra Petri* have visible light sources above the sculptural groups. The visions are activated by clouds, angels, and putti that enter along with the light. The authors do not know of any altar of the visionary type that is lit by a source outside of the altar wall and that contains a marble group of two figures, one in and one outside of a central niche.

The second type of altar mentioned above is decorated by an altarpiece that is totally contained within the con-

<sup>29</sup> K. Noehles, *Architekturprojekte Cortonas*, in: *MüJbBK* 20 (1969), 83–86.



9. Melchiorre Caffà: *S. Tomaso da Villanova*

finis of the altar and is illuminated from a source outside the altar wall. Among Roman baroque sculptors, the masters of the second type of altar decoration were Alessandro Algardi and his followers. The most notable examples are: *The Decapitation of St. Paul* in Bologna, S. Paolo (1641 to 1647), *The Meeting of Pope Leo I and Attila* in St. Peter's (1646–53), *The Vision of St. Nicola da Tolentino* in S. Ni-





10. Caffà's design for the Charity of S. Tommaso da Villanova  
(Engraving by Pietro del Po; Paris, Bibl. Nat.)

cola da Tolentino (begun in 1651) and the reliefs in S. Agnese in Piazza Navona (begun in 1660). All of these sculptures illustrate events rather than creating new experiences in the form of visions. On the other hand, Wittkower pointed out that the popularity of sculpture and especially of sculptural reliefs as altar decorations in the seventeenth century was a result of their three-dimensional quality. Unlike painting, sculpture exists within the viewers space and may be used to involve him in the event being illustrated. This is especially true of the Attila relief wherein the figures of Pope Leo and Attila stand out from the background almost in full relief.<sup>30</sup> Algardi's later reliefs and those of his followers are flatter and tend to suppress

the illusionistic. For example, in *The Vision of St. Nicola da Tolentino* (fig. 8) all of the figures are kept within the confines of a narrow niche and are seen as silhouettes against the relatively dark void of the niche. Such reliefs do not involve the viewer in the scenes they illustrate.

The design of *The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova*, on the other hand, consciously took advantage of the power of sculpture to involve the viewer and hence created a group that is neither a vision nor an illustration of an event but a mixed genre that is intended to involve the worshipper, the figures represented in marble, and God in a common religious experience. The meaning of the religious experience is explained in the pamphlet of July 1663, wherein the group is described as follows:

*In vece della Pittura sin hora esposta agl'occhi, & a'bisogni di Roma su questo Altare, vi fu alzata, e sostituita, come per modello, della stessa materia (gilt stucco) la Statua del Santo nel solito atto di compartir la limosina ad una povera Donna, che con un Putto in braccio, & un'altro a'piedi in un tempo stesso mostra la Carità, che dona, e che mendica, e con reciproca corrispondenza la Pietà di chi riceve le gratie, e le comparte; mà non già il titolo di Limosiniere, che rimarrebbe intieramente al suo Pastore, quando il Principe colla sua beneficenza non entrasse a pretendervi la sua parte. Destinata perciò l'una, e l'altra à vivere eternamente in un Marmo (come che sia proprio della Scoltura lo scemarne, e tagliarne per altri) gli siede sotto d'una Colomba questo motto sul capo In foraminibus Petrae fovet viscera Charitatis: convenevole non meno à quella de' Cantici annidata per l'estasi nella Pietra impiagata del Crocifisso, ch'all'altra che scesa prima sul'acque del Giordano, discese poi su i capi Apostolici con piogge di fiamme à dar principio alla Chiesa. E forse sarebbe la più proportionata materia quel Sasso, ma non già senza mani, che siminuzzò tutto un Colosso di tanti metalli ammanassati; ovvero una sola Pietra di Paragone, in cui possino i più fini carati della Carità cimentarsi...*

The inscription, *In foraminibus Petrae fovet viscera Charitatis*, which is contained in the cartouche at the top of the central niche of the altar (fig. 4), has a double meaning. The first meaning, which refers to the sculpture and by extension to St. Tomaso is understood immediately upon reading the inscription which translates into English as: "Carved in stone he gives charity." The second, cryptic meaning is understood only by those who know the biblical sources of the inscription, the meaning of charity as expressed in the pamphlet, and the role played by Camillo Pamphili as donor of the chapel. The inscription comes from two sources. *In foraminibus petrae* is taken from the Song of Songs 2:14, *Columba mea in foraminibus petrae, in caverna maceriae* (O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the steep place). *Viscera charitatis* is derived from a Hebrew version of the more common biblical form *viscera misericordiae*, which appears in several places<sup>31</sup> and always refers to the mercy, e.g., the charity of God. Therefore, the inscription and marble group refer

30 R. Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, 2nd ed. Baltimore 1965, 173-176.

31 Luke 1:28, Phillipians 2:1, Collossians 3:12. Cornelius a Lapide, *Comentaria in omnes D. Pauli Epistolas*, Antwerp 1614, 711f.



not only to the charitable acts of St. Tomaso da Villanova, but also to earthly charity as a reflection of heavenly charity. The description quoted above makes it clear that heavenly charity refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit as evident in the Baptism of Christ and at Pentecost as well as the gift of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ. The marble group of The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova is a translation of the iconography into visual form. Charity not only accepts earthly alms, but also the charity of salvation as represented by the light entering from behind the saint. Since she stands outside of the niche between the viewer and the saint, she also serves as an example to the worshipper, demonstrating the piety of humbly receiving the aid of the Almoner, whether God or saint. Charity is more than the humble receiver of alms, however, for she is represented in the traditional manner, i.e., accompanied by small children to whom she gives aid. The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova teaches that one is to receive the benefits of heaven and earth humbly and to share them with others according to the examples of St. Tomaso da Villanova and Camillo Pamphili, who has shared his wealth and the gift of piety through his donation of the chapel.

In July 1663, it must have seemed likely that The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova would be carved without further delay as it appeared in the full-sized stucco model that decorated the Pamphili Chapel. The composition clearly expressed the desired iconography and had been approved by the living pope, who had presided over the canonization of the saint. Such was not to be the case because Melchiorre Caffà, the sculptor chosen by Camillo Pamphili to carve the group, was dissatisfied with the model. He produced his own design, which survives in an engraving (fig. 10) executed for the sculptor by Pietro del Po and in a *bozzetto* (fig. 11) in the National Museum, Valetta, Malta.<sup>32</sup> The design must have been seriously considered as an alternative to the completed model because the engraving is dedicated to Camillo Pamphili and because a new design is referred to in the contract of 23 October 1663



11. Melchiorre Caffà: *The Charity of S. Tomaso da Villanova*. Bozzetto. Valetta, National Museum

32 A copy of the engraving exists in Paris, Bibl. Nat., Be 8, 3. It is inscribed: *Melchior Caffa Melitensis invenit delineavit dicavit and Pietro del Po excudit*. The dedication reads: *Illustrissimo et excellentissimo Principe D. Camillo Pamphilio Benefactori. In compta bec Thomae effigies si debilis arte est Redditur Auspicij clara Camille tuis. Hanc ut Relligio, et Pietas candoribus aurent, Sic refouet radijs alma Columba suis*. See P. J. Mariette, *Abecedario...*, ed. Ph. de Chennevières and A. de Montaignon, in: *Archives de l'art français* 2 (1851), 242. The authors would like to thank Jennifer Montagu for calling the engraving to our attention and sending us a photograph. The *bozzetto* has been published by Nava-Cellini, *Contributi*, 123f., pl. 12; Wittkower, *Art and Architecture*, 202, pl. 113 (B).

by which Baratta, acting as Camillo Pamphili's agent, commissioned Caffà to carve the group.<sup>33</sup> Caffà promised, *di fare la statua di San Tomaso di Villanova con tutte le figure che rappresentano la Carità, che fa fare l'Eccellentissimo Signor Prencipe Don Camillo Pamphilio per l'altare di detto Santo nella Chiesa di S. Agostino, conforme al modello già fatto, o in altra miglior forma e modo come più piacerà al detto Eccellentissimo Signor Prencipe...*

Caffà's design for the decoration of the altar as represented by the engraving, is a compromise between the Berninesque visions and the Algardesque reliefs. Caffà would have enlivened the altar with a pair of putti flanking the top of the central niche and carrying a banderole containing the inscription discussed above. The putto on the right would

33 ASR, Not. 6696, 777ff.



have handed a stalk of lilies to the saint, emphasizing the interplay between heaven and earth. The sculptor also wished to place three cherubs just to the left of the saint, in the path of the light flowing from the window, making an allusion to the divine nature of that light. Cherubs used along with light to symbolize its heavenly derivation were a basic part of Bernini's illusionistic vocabulary beginning in about 1660. He used large numbers of cherubs to define light entering the lanterns of the dome and high altar chapel in S. Andrea al Quirinale and the lantern of the Fonseca Chapel in S. Lorenzo in Lucina. Bernini used cherubs in the same way in the glory above the *Cathedra Petri*. Caffà would have increased the effectiveness of the symbol by limiting the number of cherubs to three and placing them on one side of the saint in order to give a clear directional value to the divine light. In 1674 Bernini used cherubs in this manner in the Altieri Chapel in S. Francesco a Ripa. Caffà's most basic change was in the pose of Charity, whose body would have been turned toward the worshipper and who would have been accompanied by three rather than two children.

Caffà's solution was ingenious because it modernized the design by adding the illusionistic elements of the putti and cherubs and because it added elements, such as the putto bringing lilies to the saint and the little girl begging for alms, which are taken from Romanelli's painting, and therefore would have made the altar a more complete emblem of the saint's charity. Furthermore, Caffà consciously flattened out the composition and produced a design related to *The Vision of St. Nicola da Tolentino* and the reliefs in S. Agnese in Piazza Navona. As designed by Caffà, *The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova* is composed in two diagonal planes, the first made by the interaction between the saint and Charity; the second, forward plane composed of Charity and the children. Two-dimensional, diagonal compositions combining Berninesque intensity with pictorial reserve are found in the two other major works of Caffà in Rome, the relief of *The Ecstasy of St. Catherine* in S. Caterina a Magnanapoli, usually dated around 1667 (fig. 12) and the relief of *St. Eustace* in the Lions Den in S. Agnese in Piazza Navona, begun in 1660 and completed by Ercole Ferrata after Caffà's death (fig. 13).<sup>34</sup> *St. Catherine* floats on clouds against a ground of colored marble, yet is distinctly part of a relief placed

34 Our analysis of Caffà's style follows that of J. Montagu, *Le Baptême du Christ d'Alessandro Algardi*, *Revue de l'art* 15 (1972), 64–78. Ferrata signed a contract to complete the *St. Eustace* relief on 16 May 1669 (ASR Not. 6728, 359). See Eimer II, 496.

within the confines of the altar. She is represented in a quiet ecstasy, her inner emotion expressed in the Berninesque manner, through the intensity of the surface modeling and the activity of the drapery. *St. Catherine's* intensity is reflected by the other major figure in the composition, the angel in the lower left who helps support the floating cloud. A similar double ecstasy exists in the *St. Eustace* relief, wherein the intensity of the saint is reflected by that of the figure kneeling at the lower left of the composition. The statue of *St. Tomaso da Villanova* (fig. 19), which Caffà had almost completed before his death, has the same quiet intense quality as *St. Catherine* and *St. Eustace*. The inner feeling of the saint is expressed in the handling of his face and the sweep of his drapery. Judging from the *St. Catherine* and the *St. Eustace* reliefs, Caffà would have carved *Charity* in the same spirit.

Caffà was never permitted to execute his design in its entirety probably because it would have increased the cost of the decoration of the altar. The contract between Baratta and Caffà stipulated that Caffà could work only on those figures represented in the model, e.g., the saint and the figures denoting *Charity*. The extent to which Caffà's design for the marble group was accepted probably will never be clear. Had the sculptor worked quickly, he might have been able to carve the central figures as they appear in his *bozzetto*. Such a possibility diminished with the death of Camillo Pamphili on 20 July 1666 because his son, Giovanni Battista wished to complete his father's projects as quickly and as inexpensively as possible.<sup>35</sup> At Caffà's death in September 1667, he had almost completed the statue of *St. Tomaso* but had only roughed out the statue of *Charity*, which was completed by Ercole Ferrata by the summer of 1669 when the group was put in place over the altar.<sup>36</sup> The statue of *St. Tomaso* is, as has been demonstrated above, in Caffà's style and hence he must have redesigned the drapery, the facial expression, and to some extent the pose. The final statue of *Charity*, on the other hand, has nothing to do with Caffà's design. Caffà roughed out the figure,

35 ASR, Corp. Relig. 277, Registro de Memorie, 1700, 328 wherein it is noted that Giovanni Battista Pamphili did not complete all of the work planned for S. Nicola da Tolentino. Camillo Pamphili's plans included a piazza in front of the church, two reliefs in the side walls of the high altar chapel, candle sticks and lamps for the high altar and the transept altars, and a chapel dedicated to *St. Tomaso da Villanova* in the right transept. See also Eimer II, 521.

36 ADP, Banc. 86, no. 14, fol. 146, 7 November 1671: *scudi 67 baiocchi 15 a Giovanni Olmo muratore ... per saldo ... di lavori di muri, mettiture, e levature delle statue e bassi rilievi, et altro fatto da lui nella Capella di S. Tomaso da Villanova nella chiesa di S. Agostino dalli 27 marzo 1669 per tutto li 29 luglio prossimo ...*





12. Melchiorre Caffà: *The Ecstasy of St. Catherine*. Rome, S. Caterina a Magnanapoli, high altar



13. Melchiorre Caffà: *St. Eustace in the Lions' Den*. Rome, S. Agnese in Piazza Navona

however, so that he seems to have begun to carve the Charity in her present pose. The idea of Caffà being responsible for such an awkward statue is difficult to accept, and since its pose is close to that of the statue of Charity carved by Ferrata for the Tomb of Clement IX in S. Maria Maggiore, there can be little doubt that the statue of Charity in the Pamphili Chapel is more the work of Ferrata than Caffà. On the other hand, Ferrata would not have made any basic change in Caffà's design for the statue unless he was forced to do so by the patron. Caffà had been his assistant and friend for several years and may have been the chief designer in Ferrata's workshop. Furthermore, Ferrata showed his understanding of Caffà's manner, in completing the St. Eustace relief in the spirit of his assistant's model. It seems likely, therefore that both Caffà and Ferrata were required to conform to the basic composition worked out by Camillo Pamphili and Giovanni Maria Baratta in 1660–61.

Caffà's failure to complete *The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova* is unfortunate because it would have been his masterpiece. On the other hand, documents related to his death and the completion of the statue allow us to reiterate the limitations of the patronage system under which he labored. Sculptors were paid for work completed, not work designed. A document of 8 April 1669 lists the value of the work completed by Caffà on the St. Eustace relief and the group for the Pamphili Chapel.<sup>37</sup> Caffà's heirs were paid two hundred fifty scudi for the relief, that is one hundred fifty scudi for large and small models, eighty scudi for having completed the figure of St. Eustace, and twenty scudi for the *abbozzatura* of other figures. Originally Caffà

37 ASR, Not. 6729, 757. The value of Caffà's work was settled after a long litigation between his heirs and the Pamphili. Documents related to the litigation are found in ADP, Scaff. 90, no. 66; Scaff. 94, no. 4, int. 6.



was to have received one thousand scudi for the relief.<sup>38</sup> Caffà's heirs were paid an additional two hundred fifty scudi for his work on The Charity of St. Tomaso da Villanova, that is fifty scudi for the large and small models and two hundred scudi for carving the statue of St. Tomaso and the *abbozzatura* of Charity. The sculptor originally was

38 ASR, Not. 6679, 446ff. Cited by Eimer II, 496.

to be paid five hundred scudi for the group. Ercole Ferrata received at least one thousand scudi for completing the two commissions.<sup>39</sup>

39 Ferrata later claimed that he was owed 800 scudi for the completion of the St. Eustace relief. See L. Montalto, Ercole Ferrata e le vicende litigiose del bassorilievo di Sant'Emerenziana, in: *Commentari* 8 (1957), 47-68.

#### LIST OF ABBREVIATED LITERATURE

Acta Sanctorum	Acta Sanctorum September V, ed. J.B. Carnandet, Paris 1866	Corp. Relig. Eimer	Corporazioni Religiose, Agostiniani Scalzi Gerhard Eimer, <i>La Fabbrica di S. Agnese in Navona...</i> , 2 vols. Stockholm 1970-71
ADP	Archivio Doria Pamphili		
ASR	Archivio di Stato Roma		
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano	Not.	Notari dell'A.C., H. Simoncellus