

# *From Naples into the World: The Dispersal of Francesco de Mura's Works*

By Loredana Gazzara

The art collection of Pio Monte della Misericordia, an organization founded in 1602, was formed thanks to bequests and donations of paintings and objects (in addition to real estate).<sup>2</sup> Excluded from these bequests and donations were some commissions to the church of Pio Monte della Misericordia,<sup>1</sup> according to the wishes of the Trustees of the organization. Pio Monte della Misericordia was charged with the task of sell-ing this inheritance to convert the assets into funds to advance the institution's charitable goals. Despite numerous dispersals of its art collection, Pio Monte della Misericordia is still today the place where we find the greatest number of large paintings and *bozzetti* by Francesco de Mura, critical for reconstructing the body of his works.

The first monographic study on the collections of Pio Monte della Misericordia – and therefore on the main works of Francesco de Mura – was published in 1970 by Raffaello Causa<sup>3</sup> in anticipation of the opening of its Picture Gallery, which occurred in 1972. Causa's publication still remains the most extensive study done on the art collection at Pio Monte della Misericordia. Causa had already identified the two principal donations to the collection: that of the painter Francesco de Mura in 1782, and that of Maria Sofia Capece Galeota in 1933. A third group was in the bequest of Giuseppe Marciano in 1802. Other provenances that are still unknown to scholars remain to be identified and studied.<sup>4</sup>

## *Public Auctions and Sales: The Dispersal of the Francesco de Mura Collection into the World*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, within a few years after the bequests of De Mura and Marciano, Pio Monte della Misericordia found itself housing at least 292 paintings. Strongly present was the obligation to attend to the will of the donors to sell the "things ... to benefit poor gentlemen and poor ladies."

The Trustees who administrated the inheritance decided to catalogue all the paintings they wanted to sell. In 1838, they called on Aniello D'Aloisio, a painter and professor at the Istituto di Belle Arti, to draw up a list of paintings destined for public sales at auction. The compiler D'Aloisio was quite precise, since he was clever enough to note 257 paintings, with the sequence taking into account the number from the Marciano bequest, and it is reasonable to think that this was the occasion in which there were affixed on the surface of the canvases numbers in red and stamps of sealing-wax that are sometimes still visible today.<sup>5</sup>

Before the auctions took place on February 14, 1845, another inventory consisting of only 164 paintings was drawn up under the signatures of Nicola la Volpe and Camillo Guerra, the last preparatory undertaking before the sales.<sup>6</sup> From March 31 to November 17, 1845, the auction sales were held and completed with the intent of converting the artistic inheritance into cash: 78 paintings were sold, 37 of which were works by De Mura. A placard containing a sales summary was known to Giuseppe Ceci<sup>7</sup> and Raffaello Causa,<sup>8</sup> and I published it for the first time.<sup>9</sup> A reading of the inventories of works that came into Pio Monte della Misericordia is extremely useful in identifying the paintings, especially when it is accompanied by this sales document, which records precisely which paintings were sold.

Attempts can be made to track down the current location of the paintings that were sold by comparing subjects and measurements, but we must give thanks for the numbers placed on the canvases before they were sold. A prime example is the painting *The Assumption of the Virgin*, which is today in the Museo di Capodimonte. It is the same painting listed in the Bardellino-Fischetti inventory of 1783, described as a "*bozzetto* of the Assumption of 4½ by 10 *palmi* painted in the Nunziatella at Pizzofalcone," marked with the number 214 in the Aniello D'Aloisio inventory of 1838. In fact, the painting with the same subject at the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, besides being of the same measurements, shows even today a red-colored number on the surface: 214, to be precise. We also know the reason why the painting is in an Italian state museum: because of the sale made by Pio Monte della Misericordia to the Italian government in 1907.

Between 1906 and 1907, the Gattini Commission singled out 23 De Mura paintings to be acquired for the preparation for the late eighteenth-century halls of the Galleria at the Museo Nazionale of Naples. In a private transaction Pio Monte della Misericordia sold as a block 23 works at the price of only 10,000 *lire* (equivalent to \$34,431 today). The commission that was organizing the installations for the state museum,

which lacked any works by De Mura – a chief representative of eighteenth-century Neapolitan art – intended to fill this void with the acquisitions from Pio Monte della Misericordia. According to Article 4 of the agreement, the works (or part of them) were to be exhibited in a hall with a wall label that indicated their provenance from Pio Monte della Misericordia. As a result of the transaction, the canvases are today separated from the original De Mura nucleus of paintings and are held in different government museums in Naples, Florence, and Bari, as will be specified later.<sup>10</sup>

With this last dispersal, fortunately, we end the history of the sales of the art inheritance of Pio Monte. The organization decided not to sell any more of De Mura's works, respecting the intent of the Law of June 20, 1909, no. 364 of the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction on Antiquity and Fine Arts.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Canvases at Pio Monte and Their Fortunate History of Conservation*

Up to this point, we have recounted the history of the dispersal of a precious inheritance that has spread, by way of sales and public and private acquisitions, throughout Europe and the Americas. On the other hand, we can also render an account of the great conservation effort for all the paintings that were not sold and which remain, even today, on view in the Picture Gallery (*Quadreria*) at Pio Monte della Misericordia.

I am always asked about the reasons for the sudden interruption of sales after the auctions of 1845. The answer probably lies in a reading of the inventory, dated February 11, 1851, of Giuseppe Simonetti, who was charged with preparing a *Report to the Most Excellent Signor Marchese Don Francesco Saverio d'Andrea, Superintendent of Pio Monte della Misericordia*. The report lists 128 paintings and is very valuable because of its many details concerning their location and state of conservation. It concludes with the recommendation that the paintings no longer be sold in order to avoid the danger of underselling them.<sup>12</sup> In fact, after the last – and almost diplomatic and forced – sale of the De Mura paintings in 1907, and the 1914 decision to no longer sell them, the 1920s and 1930s introduce some fundamentals established for an appreciation of this collection. It is in this historical moment that the administrators of Pio Monte della Misericordia came to realize not only the monetary value, but also the cultural value of the collection, as evidenced by some important facts.

In 1925, there occurs a fundamental initiative: for the first time, the collection is recognized by specialists in the field. Gino Chierici chooses to have 79 pieces described and catalogued. Among these are all of the De Mura works in the collection today.<sup>13</sup> It is the first act of recognition by the Italian government on behalf of the Ministry of Instruction, beyond a prior precautionary undertaking by Pio Monte della Misericordia for the conservation of its own works. This, then, was done ahead of its time, fourteen years before the Ministerial Law on Cultural Properties enacted in Italy in 1939.<sup>14</sup>

We now arrive at the years just before World War II. Sergio Ortolani, Director of the Royal Picture Gallery of Naples, writes on March 6, 1936, with reference to “the tasks of reorganization in this Picture Gallery.” He asks the Superintendent of Pio Monte, Placido de Sangro di Fondi, to forgive him for missing an appointment and promises to “bring to a close the work on the critical catalogue and installation of the Picture Gallery of this honorable institution, work that gives me great pleasure.”<sup>15</sup> Probably, the entrance into war, but above all, the obligations of Ortolani, the founder of the first Italian center for restoration, prevented the publication of this critical catalogue.

In 1938, there was an exhibition of Neapolitan painting in Castelnuovo.<sup>16</sup> This first great survey and civic event to promote local art, exhibited in Hall XVII Francesco de Mura's *Portrait of His Wife* [fig. 1]. In the chapel of Santa Barbara, there were other De Mura works: “The Terror,” “St. Benedict Extinguishing the Fire in the Abbey,” “Paradise,” “The Visitation,” “Aurora Awakens Tithonius,” “The Triumph of St. Joseph,” “The Adoration of the Magi,” “St. Benedict Praying at Monte Cassino,” and “St. Benedict and the Miracle of the Wheat.”<sup>17</sup> Inside this thick compilation on Neapolitan art, were eighteen Neapolitan paintings from the collection at Pio Monte, ten by De Mura. It was not by chance that Sergio Ortolani was there among the curators of the show and this was for him the chance to fulfill the promises made to the Trustees of Pio Monte three years earlier.<sup>18</sup>

By this point, the collection had its own features, an official cataloguing, and an installation in the halls curated by Sergio Ortolani. He placed the paintings in the environs of the noble first floor of the palazzo of Pio Monte, and, from the entrance hall onward, in different locations near several administrative offices. These old installations, which even today are partially maintained, can be reconstructed from a detailed list of the

paintings, with their exact locations. The list was drawn up when the paintings had to be transferred during World War II in 1941. To protect the Neapolitan cultural heritage from bombardments, government officials had the responsibility of transferring numerous works of art from the Royal Palace, from the National Museum, and from other Neapolitan churches.<sup>19</sup> Since Pio Monte might have proceeded at a slower pace in its own administrative practices because of the war conditions, the civil commissioner Placido de Sangro di Fondi<sup>20</sup> decided to petition the Royal Superintendent of Galleries and Art in the Campania to try to also transfer outside Naples the collection at Pio Monte, including the paintings by Caravaggio and De Mura.

Spurred on by the last heavy aerial attacks of November 18, 1941, the government was asked to safeguard this cultural heritage, even though it was privately owned. The request arrived in a timely fashion, with the signature of Sergio Ortolani, who was finding it impossible to find funds for the cost of the operation. There was no time for financial negotiations and Pio Monte faced the burdens of the swift transfer and, as a result, on December 4, 1941, the paintings of Caravaggio, Battistello, and another 74 canvases left Pio Monte della Misericordia for the palazzo of the abbey of Mercogiano, near Avellino. All the De Mura paintings were thus safe from aerial bombardments, taking cover from the aerial bombardments.<sup>21</sup>

Remembering these facts permits us to understand the excellent state of conservation of the De Mura collection at Pio Monte. Thanks to the wisdom and timeliness of the administrators at the time, these operations succeeded in saving a great many of the paintings that we admire today. In the post-war years, the archives of Pio Monte record restoration efforts only to those canvases that were not transferred and which were damaged during the aerial bombardments on Naples. The buildings of Pio Monte on Via Tribunali, in fact, suffered bombings and the works that were not transferred to the abbey at Mercogiano were damaged and underwent restorations in the 1950s.

The decade that followed is characterized by great Italian exhibitions sent abroad and by the full cooperation on the part of Pio Monte in loaning out its works, beginning with the participation in the show of eighteenth-century Italian art in Paris in 1960 with the loans of *The Visitation* and *The Scene of Terror*.<sup>22</sup>

With the arrival of the new superintendent, Tommaso Leonetti di Santo Janni, in 1969, there begins an important undertaking by the institution to put the collection on view to the public for the first time. The first task was the publication of the catalogue of the artworks, curated by Raffaello Causa.<sup>23</sup>

The collection of paintings was hung on the walls of the first floor of the seventeenth-century structure in the environs of offices, viewed only by Pio Monte's associates and employees. Already more than half a century had passed since the last paintings were sold and, therefore, there was a need to reorganize and display a heritage that, up to this point, had no other purpose but to adorn the offices. The Superintendent had one precise idea in mind: to put the paintings in order and place them in suitable locations in the halls of the institution so that the collection might become known by exhibiting it to the public. This re-installation of the halls required a considerable transformation and involved a lot of hard work. It was, in fact, necessary to adapt the surroundings to the exhibiting of the paintings by placing the administrative offices in older locations in the building, separating them from areas open to the public. Francesco de Mura's paintings were placed along the Main Hall that led to the General Assembly of the Associates and the Trustees' Meeting Hall (now called the Hall of the Coat of Arms or the Hall of the Old Governing Body). This gave them a privileged placement in the exhibition areas. Since December 1972, after the opening to the public with a solemn celebration, the group of De Mura's works, together with the entire collection at Pio Monte della Misericordia, has been visible to the community and not just to a small privileged circle of associates and art specialists.

But we must also consider another important step forward for these paintings in this setting. In Italy, the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage made a significant decision shortly after a decree was passed on January 25, 1975.<sup>24</sup> It found that the collection at Pio Monte della Misericordia, designated as having "exceptional artistic interest," considered inseparable in the interpretation of Article 5 of Law 1939/1089.<sup>25</sup> From then on, Italian law has defined the nucleus of De Mura's paintings as an inseparable unit.

In 1979, forty-one years after the 1938 exhibition, another show entitled *Civiltà del '700 a Napoli* ("Neapolitan Civilization of the Eighteenth Century") once again drew attention to critical studies of the De Mura paintings, and Pio Monte della Misericordia was requested to lend fifteen paintings. Among these were the *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, *The Glory of the Princes* (in the larger version) [fig. 2], and *St. Francis of Gerolamo* [fig. 3]. It was the first great survey of eighteenth-century Naples, and Francesco de Mura stood out among the artists in this overview of Neapolitan painting, from his numerous pupils and his master Solimena.<sup>26</sup>

Following this, there were many other requests for loans of De Mura's works and they continued to appear in subsequent exhibitions on eighteenth-century Naples.

The most recent restorations in the halls of the Pio Monte della Misericordia palace have allowed, in May of 2003, for the opening of a new configuration that conserves the same expository criteria as in the first opening to the public. This leaves the surroundings, with their canvases and furnishings, unchanged and still used today for the associative life of the organization.

### *The Restorations of the De Mura Paintings*

In recent times, when Pio Monte had the opportunity to restore ninety-nine paintings in the Picture Gallery, of which there were thirty eight De Muras, the history and fortunes of these canvases were told by the works themselves, which have been incredibly well preserved.<sup>29</sup> The group of restorers who examined the paintings in 2004 often noted, with amazement, the *prima tela* ("unlined canvas") conditions of De Mura's works.<sup>30</sup> It is thus verified why the canvases have never been the objects of careless tampering and, as has been seen, after World War II there were interventions only on the canvases that were damaged on site during the bombardments. In fact, the De Mura canvases, before the interventions of 2005-06, were found to be in a reasonable state of conservation. By reviewing the files of the restorers who were called to the institution to report on the state of conservation of the paintings, one is made aware of the peculiarities of the original frames. However, even if these were not as solid as modern frames, since they lacked central crossbars and were much too thin, they were still of a quality to guarantee an acceptable level of tension on the canvases. Such is the case with *The Adoration of the Magi* [fig. 4].<sup>31</sup>

The main degradation was in the homogeneous and flattened tones of the oxidized varnishes. The cleaning of the paintings has eliminated the time-yellowed varnish and has restored their full transparency, allowing us to appreciate the diverse colors used by the painter in his variations on a theme. This is especially true in the preparation of the primer mixed with color pigments, which became – depending on the need – a background, a sky, or a cloud, or, indeed, the setting for De Mura's "*macchie*" ("patches" or "sketches"). This, for example, can be rediscovered in the two versions of *Aurora and Tithonius* [figs. 5 and 6]<sup>32</sup> and in the variations of *The Glory of the Saints*, exhibited in this show in the canvas with a smaller *bozzetto* [fig. 7].<sup>33</sup>

The *bozzetto* with *The Glory of the Princes* [fig. 8], in the smaller version with the pyramid-shaped *tempietto* on view in this exhibition, still has its original frame with a fixed structure that still allows for good functionality. However, the painting soon after was relined (perhaps on the occasion of the 1979 exhibition), but it still has some good pliability. As is the case with many of De Mura's works in this restoration project, the interventions of 2006 concentrated on cleaning up the existing older materials. The entire surface was covered in tissue to allow for the process of enhancing the colors and a reactivation of the glues used in the past was treated under steam, heat, and weights. The intervention is now complete, with the cleaning of the indistinct layers on the pictorial surface, a few instances of plastering, and the reintegration and a subtle layer of protective varnish. During the procedure, the restorer noticed a painted thread consisting of a particularly subtle color occasionally showing up in the background, especially in the bottom left section.<sup>34</sup> Something similar happened with restoration efforts and interventions with *The Adoration of the Magi* and with *The Glory of the Saints* on view in this exhibition.

### *The Virtual Reconstruction of the Painter's Bequest to Pio Monte della Misericordia*

As we started to explain in the preceding paragraphs, the documentary sources conserved at Pio Monte della Misericordia, and especially their comparative studies, allow us to reconstruct the history of the arrival of Francesco de Mura's paintings and of their dispersal from Pio Monte della Misericordia. Leaving aside for a moment stylistic information, we should comment on the Neapolitan *palmi* listed in the inventories (a *palmi* corresponds to 26.5 centimeters or 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches – slightly less than an English "foot") and the current measurements of a painting with the same subject in order to propose an identification of the paintings from Pio Monte della Misericordia that were sold and entered into the world.

Despite the precision of the inventories in the documents from the auction sales, scarcely fifty years after the bequest of De Mura, some of his works were pointed out as belonging to someone else. One, for

instance, is no. 147, sketch by Solimena of the unequivocal subject of *Saint Benedict Returning the Riddle He Had Solved to his Nurse*, cited in the D'Aloisio inventory. As has already been emphasized, therefore, the reading and interpretation of the documents is necessary by reviewing all of the available data in the inventories, together with a stylistic examination of the works themselves.

As mentioned previously, of the 192 works bequeathed by De Mura to Pio Monte, thirty-nine (thirty *bozzetti* and nine paintings) remain there today in the collection. By taking into account an analysis of these, examining the technique and the *modus operandi* of the canvases, gathering together the available documents, and putting some thought into detailed annotations on the inventories vis-à-vis subjects, *palmi*, numbers and sealing-wax stamps on the surfaces, it is possible to track down some fifty paintings of De Mura's bequest that are dispersed to various Italian and foreign museums and collections.

Of the "three *bozzetti* for the small Cupola of the Seat of the Port at San Giuseppe Maggiore, one of  $4\frac{1}{4}$  by  $8\frac{1}{4}$  *palmi*, the other two of about 4 by 7 *palmi*, without frames, which represent the *Transporting of St. Januarius to the Furnace*,"<sup>36</sup> two of them are conserved at Pio Monte<sup>37</sup> [figs. 9 and 10], whereas the principal work with *St. Januarius* was sold to Raffaele Barone in 1849, documented in 1938 in the collection of the princess of Gerace<sup>38</sup> and published in 1948 as being at the collection of the prince of Corigliano.<sup>39</sup> Then the painting took some foreign paths and, after going through a Colnaghi's sale in 1993, it was acquired by the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart<sup>40</sup> [fig. 11]. Correspondingly, the painting described by Bardellino and Fischetti as "of 5 by 7 *palmi* with frame representing *Erminia with the Old Shepherd and his Flock*" can certainly be identified with the canvas originating at Pio Monte, sold to Salvatore Ferdinando Fiore on June 23, 1845, and now in Munich (formerly in the Galerie Carroll).

The twenty-three paintings sold to the Italian government in 1907 are found today among the halls and collections of the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte,<sup>42</sup> the Museo Duca di Martina,<sup>43</sup> and the Museo Provinciale in Bari.<sup>44</sup> Some of these still have the sealing-wax stamps or a number placed on the surface.<sup>45</sup> A *Self-Portrait* of the painter was sold with the block sales of 1907 and was transferred the following year to the Museo Nazionale degli Uffizi in Florence, where it is still located [fig. 12]. This leads us to delve into a deeper discussion of the painter's self-portraits.

Among the paintings that arrived at Pio Monte, there are two versions of the self-portraits with the same measurements. Comparative studies of the inventories furnish us with some details. The first inventory, taken immediately after the death of the painter, was drawn up on August 22, 1782, by Ignazio Spadetta of the Sacred Royal Court, who recorded the contents of the entire house.<sup>46</sup> Here, describing the objects in the *Galleria*, we read: "Portrait of 4 by 5 *palmi* of the deceased Francesco de Mura, with carved gilded frame" (fol. 12r). Further on in the same inventory, we read that in the antechamber of the chapel, there is the: "Portrait of Francesco de Mura of 4 by 5 *palmi* with gilded frame" (fol. 14r).

A following inventory, dated September 9, 1782, was drawn up by Francesco Palumbo, one of De Mura's students.<sup>47</sup> Here, the portrait in the *Galleria* is appraised together with that of his wife: "Portrait of Francesco de Mura, because of the brush strokes, and of being so life-like, including also the portrait of his wife, are valued at 1,000 ducats" (fol. 6r). The other one, cited further on: "Another Portrait of the deceased Signor Francesco of 4 by 5 *palmi*, with frame, being a copy of the original, also painted by him, is valued at 200 ducats" (fol. 13v).

The next year, still acting on behalf of Pio Monte della Misericordia, the notary Michele Valencia, on May 22, 1783, once again made an inventory of all of De Mura's possessions, and here we can read: "A Portrait of 4 by 5 of the deceased Francesco de Mura, with engraved gilded frame" (fol. 19r). On the painting in the chapel: "A portrait of 4 by 5 of the deceased Francesco de Mura, with gilded frame" (fol. 21r).<sup>48</sup>

But the crucial pricing of the paintings was established by Fedele Fischetti and Pietro Bardellino, students of the painter, who undertook a double inventory in which there appear once again the two versions of the self-portraits. In the first inventory, signed "Fedele Fischetti and Pietro Bardellino,"<sup>49</sup> we read: "The portraits of husband and wife of the deceased De Mura valued at 300 ducats (fol. 5r) ... Another portrait of the deceased Francesco de Mura of 4 by 5 *palmi*, with frame of unpainted wood, is valued at 150 ducats" (fol. 10r). An important detail is pointed out here: next to this portrait there is another handwritten note with the word "*Venduto*" ("sold").

Likewise, the other inventory, with the signatures reversed ("Pietro Bardellino and Fedele Fischetti") states: "The portraits of husband and wife of the deceased De Mura valued at 300 ducats" (fol. 3v) and

“Another portrait of the deceased Don Francesco de Mura of 4 by 5 *palmi*, with its frame of unadorned wood is valued at 150 ducats” (fol. 6r).<sup>50</sup> Analogously, along with this last statement there appear in parentheses the words “for Gallotti.”

To summarize, therefore, by highlighting the abundant references, we come to learn that the least valued painting with the smooth gilded frame, which was found in the chapel at De Mura’s house, was sold almost immediately to the lawyer, described by the painter in his will as “my very dear friend.” One can hypothesize that this painting is the same one that Dalbono saw in the house of the painter Carelli and, perhaps, that it was later put on the market and acquired in 1962 by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts<sup>51</sup> [see cat. no. 17]. The painting has the same measurements, with a smooth contemporary frame [fig. 12].

The other self-portrait cited in the *Galleria*, with the carved and gilded frame, can be identified with the one now in the Uffizi Gallery. As previously mentioned, this was sold to the Italian government in 1907.<sup>52</sup>

But there is yet a third version of the *Self-Portrait*<sup>53</sup> [fig. 13], traced through the market to Naples, which here continues to be proposed as another autograph version of the *Self-portrait* in the Uffizi. This contains the image on the background of the painting of Minerva.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the painting does not help us very much with detailed signs that might indicate its provenance. The absence of numbers and sealing-wax stamps on the surface (unless they were eliminated by restoration efforts) makes us believe that this version, of extremely high quality, might be a copy done by the painter and that it was not found in his house studio at the time of his death and, therefore, was not bequeathed to Pio Monte della Misericordia.

Yet another clarification can be made from the attentive reading and cross-checking of the inventories of the art bequest of Francesco de Mura, this time with the *Portrait of the Artist’s Wife*. Still visible in the collection at Pio Monte della Misericordia, the portrait of De Mura’s wife has undergone alternative critical developments [fig. 1]. The first one to discuss the iconography of the painting was Raffaello Causa.<sup>55</sup> The Fischetti-Bardellino inventories singled out only two female portraits: the painter’s wife and Donna Faustina Pignatelli, princess of Columbrano. During the 1979 exhibition, Nicola Spinosa<sup>56</sup> presented the painting as the wife of the artist without, however, ignoring doubts raised by Causa. Later on, in various publications on Neapolitan art, Spinosa confirmed the doubts and called the painting *Portrait of a Lady*.<sup>57</sup> In 1998, the painting was exhibited in the show in Milan entitled *l’Anima e il volto* (“Soul and Expression”), shown again as *Presumed Portrait of the Artist’s Wife*.<sup>58</sup> I also – focusing on a reading of the same sources (the Bardellino-Fischetti inventories) and then with the absence of information on the Columbrano portrait concisely described and influenced by the earlier uncertainties – had concluded that the painting at Pio Monte might be the portrait of the aristocratic Donna Faustina Pignatelli, princess of Columbrano.<sup>59</sup> But with the continued reading of the papers, the answer arrives and the doubts disappear. This came from a widening of the research to other sources, such as the Palumbo inventory, cited above, which unequivocally points out: “Another portrait of the Princess of Columbrano, without frame, of 4 *palmi*, oval shaped, is valued at 30 ducats” (fol. 14). It is clear that the detailed description of the unfinished oval portrait of Faustina Pignatelli does not correspond to the portrait present in Pio Monte’s Picture Gallery, which, apart from all doubt, can now certainly be identified with the wife of the artist.

In closing, let me offer this final note and reflective proposal that I will leave open: In the collection that arrived at Pio Monte, there appeared in the Bardellino-Fischetti inventory of 1783 this entry: “A painting representing the Liberal Arts, 6 by 6 *palmi*” (fol. 5v). This very painting was noted as number 140 in the D’Aloisio inventory and was sold during the auctions of 1845 to Filippo Cozzolino. It would be nice to be able to identify this painting with one of his best-known works – a masterpiece exhibited today in the Louvre and which was acquired in the antiques market of 1972.<sup>60</sup> Besides the subject, the *palmi* correspond to the measurements taken with its distinctive frame. Nevertheless, in the first inventories, the painting was described as having no frame. Thus, we have to exclude a correspondence between the painting cited in the inventories and the work in the Louvre, unless the frame was added at a later time. We can, however, certainly affirm that the work at the Louvre might be a second version of the painting cited in the inventory, since it was customary on many occasions for De Mura to make replicas of his own work to present again subjects that were more popular or more often requested.<sup>61</sup>

Lost forever are the decorative cycles for the abbey at Monte Cassino, part of the ceiling frescos for the Royal Palace in Naples, and the great canvases for the church of Santa Chiara in Naples – all reduced to ashes. Finally, we have the occasion for the first exhibition devoted entirely to this painter, an exhibition that brings

together important examples of his prolific output. Francesco de Mura's paintings contain a disconcerting and mysteriously deep quality. Formerly, Francesco de Mura was dealt with by only a few scholars in miscellaneous essays and studies, but now, at last, he is presented to the world in a monographic work.

English translation by Edward Borsoi, Professor Emeritus, Rollins College

### Notes to Loredana Gazzara's essay:

- <sup>1</sup> On the founding of Pio Monte and on the works in its church, I cite, minimally: Raffaello Causa, *Opere d'Arte nel Pio Monte della Misericordia*, Cava dei Tirreni, Naples, 1970; V. Pacelli, *Caravaggio. Le Sette Opere di Misericordia*, Salerno, 1984, 2014; *Il Pio Monte della Misericordia nel Quarto Centenario*, ed. by M. Pisani Massamormile, Naples, 2003.
- <sup>2</sup> On the art collections formed in the last quarter of the century, see: Loredana Gazzara, "Note e documenti inediti per lo studio delle collezioni della Quadreria del Pio Monte della Misericordia (I)," in *Napoli Nobilissima* (V series), vol. IX, May-Aug. 2008, pp. 160-179; L. Gazzara, "Note e documenti inediti per lo studio delle collezioni della Quadreria del Pio Monte della Misericordia (II)," in *Napoli Nobilissima* (V series), vol. IX, Sept.-Dec. 2008, pp. 213-238.
- <sup>3</sup> R. Causa, *op. cit.* The following general works about the collections summarize and continue along the lines marked out by Causa: M. G. Rodinò di Miglione, *Notizie sulla Quadreria del Pio Monte della Misericordia in Napoli*, Naples, 1975; M. G. Leonetti Rodinò, *Il Pio Monte della Misericordia: la storia, la chiesa, la quadreria*, Naples, 1991; F. Capobianco, *Pio Monte della Misericordia: Chiesa e Quadreria*, Sarno, 1997; *Il Pio Monte della Misericordia: Guida rapida*, ed. by L. Gazzara, Naples, 2003, revised 2006, 2012.
- <sup>4</sup> For these, see the already-cited essays by L. Gazzara, in *Note e documenti...op.cit.*, parts I and II.
- <sup>5</sup> On this topic, see L. Gazzara, *Note e documenti...op. cit.*, part II.
- <sup>6</sup> Archivio Storico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples (abbreviated hereafter: ASPMM), B, Patrimonio, Bm, *Titoli di rendita e oggetti d'arte*, II, vol. 2, fasc. 3, folios 24r-29v.
- <sup>7</sup> G. Ceci, "Lo 'Studio' di Francesco de Mura," [extract] in *Rassegna Storica Napoletana*, nos. 2-3, Naples, 1933, pp. 3-23.
- <sup>8</sup> R. Causa, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-117.
- <sup>9</sup> *Distinta delle vendite de Quadri fatte nel locale di detto Monte con pubblico Incanto dal giorno 31 marzo sino al giorno 17 Novembre 1845*, ms. ASPMM, B Patrimonio, Bm *Titoli di Rendita e Oggetti d'Arte*, II, vol. 2, fasc. 2, folio 1r. Transcribed in full in L. Gazzara, *Note e documenti...op.cit.*, II, pp. 230-232.
- <sup>10</sup> ASPMM, *Deliberazioni da luglio a dicembre 1906*, vol. 118, art. 2, p. 1; ASPMM, *Deliberazioni da luglio a dicembre 1907*, vol. 119, art. 31, p. 199. On this dispersal, see also: M. Morelli, "I dipinti di Francesco de Mura acquistati per la Galleria del Museo Nazionale di Napoli," in *Bollettino d'Arte*, 1910, pp. 293-302.
- <sup>11</sup> ASPMM, *Governo del Monte, Registri dell Deliberazioni*, Ha, vol. 134, Oct. 9, 1914, art. 5, p. 200.
- <sup>12</sup> "Avendo finito la mia onorevole commissione, mi fo in dovere presentare all'Eccellenza Sua il totale importo di tutti i quadri che ascende a ducati quattromiladugentotrentatré, che secondo le circostanze che si presentano potrebbe subire aumento o diminuzione, quale diminuzione sarebbe innensa quando si cerca voler vendere, perché in questi casi si capita in mano de rivenditori oggi chiamati antiquari, e questi avezzi a comperare pel decimo del valore non potrebbero convenire ad uno Stabilimento che non venderebbe per bisogno." ("Having finished my honorable commission, I am compelled to present His Excellency the total amount of all the paintings, which adds up to 4,233 ducats, and which, according to the circumstances that arise, could suffer an increase or decrease, which would decrease immensely when one might want to sell, because in these cases, it happens in the hands of today's retailers called 'antique dealers,' and those unaccustomed to buying for a tenth of the value may not agree to an establishment that does not need to sell."): ASPMM, B Patrimonio, Bm *Titoli di Rendita e Oggetti d'Arte*, II, vol. 2, fasc. 3, b, folio 17v. Currently, the document is in process of being transcribed in full.
- <sup>13</sup> Gino Chierici, who would become Superintendent of Fine Arts of the Campania, participated, together with other important people in restoration, at the drawing up of the Athens Paper (1931). On these acts, see: L. Gazzara, "La consapevolezza di un patrimonio d'arte: dalla Pinacoteca alla Quadreria del Pio Monte della Misericordia," in *Raffaello Causa e Tommaso Leonetti: Storia di una amicizia per la cultura a Napoli*, ed. by Stefano Causa, Gianpaolo Leonetti, Fabio Pignatelli della Leonessa, Naples, 2014, pp. 70-101.
- <sup>14</sup> Law of June 1, 1939, no. 1089, on the *Tutela delle cose d'interesse Artistico o Storico* ("Protection for Artistic and Historic Objects of Interest").
- <sup>15</sup> L. Gazzara, *La consapevolezza...op. cit.* p. 74.
- <sup>16</sup> *La Mostra della pittura napoletana dei secoli XVII - XIX*, exhib. cat. in Napoli Castelnuovo, Naples, 1938.
- <sup>17</sup> The titles of the works are reported thus, as cited in the *Piccola guida della Mostra della Pittura Napoletana del '600-'700-'800* [Naples, 1938].
- <sup>18</sup> This also supports the suggestion by Stefano Causa on the competence of the connoisseur of seventeenth-century Neapolitan painting, Sergio Ortolani; see: Stefano Causa, *Caravaggio tra le camicie nere: La pittura napoletana dei tre secoli: Dalla mostra del 1938 alle grandi esposizioni del novecento*, Naples, 2013, pp. 30, 79, 87-92.
- <sup>19</sup> On war events and the heritage of Neapolitan art, see: *Napoli 1943: I Monumenti e la ricostruzione*, ed. by R. Middione and A. Porzio, Naples, 2010.
- <sup>20</sup> Largely in charge of the extraordinary management. In those years, Pio Monte della Misericordia was put under receivership: *cfr.* M. Quarantiello, "I Governatori del Pio Monte della Misericordia," in *Il Pio Monte della Misericordia di Napoli nel Quarto centenario*, ed. by Mario Pisani Massamormile, Naples, 2003, p. 411.

- <sup>21</sup> ASPMM, *Corrispondenza*, Fa/2 fasc. 4. For the transcription of the letter with the inventory, see: L. Gazzara, *La consapevolezza...op.cit.* pp. 75-77.
- <sup>22</sup> *La peinture italienne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, exhib. cat., Paris, Musée du Petit Palais, 1960-1961, Paris, 1960.
- <sup>23</sup> The author of the book wrote to the Banco di Napoli, requesting a supportive contribution to the printing of the volume: “*Illustrate Presidente, l'amico Leonetti mi parla di una iniziativa relativa al catalogo delle collezioni d'arte conservate nel Pio Monte della Misericordia. Credo che sia mio dovere spendere una parola a favore di un tale progetto la collezione è molto importante ed è una delle rarissime che si sia conservata fino ad oggi con pochi impoverimenti. Da Caravaggio a Giordano, da Preti e Santafede, in questa raccolta sono rappresentati molti dei più illustri maestri del grande barocco napoletano, insieme ad una serie straordinaria – la più completa esistente – di opere del pittore Francesco De Mura, che volle lasciare in eredità al Pio Monte tutti i suoi 'fondi di studio.'* Veramente, un volume che raccolga insieme, adeguatamente commentate, le più belle opere di proprietà del Pio Monte rappresenterebbe un omaggio a Napoli ed alla sua grande tradizione di cultura d'arte. Voglia gradire i miei più vivi ossequi.” (“Distinguished President, my friend Leonetti tells me of an initiative about a catalogue of the art collection in Pio Monte della Misericordia. I believe it is my duty to say a word in favor of such a project. The collection is very important and is one of the very few to have survived to date with little impoverishment. From Caravaggio to Giordano, from Preti to Santafede, in this collection are represented many of the most illustrious masters of the great Neapolitan Baroque, along with *an extraordinary series – the most complete in existence – of the works of the painter Francesco de Mura, who wished to bequeath to Pio Monte all his 'studio property (artworks).'* Truly, a volume that gathers together, properly annotated, the most beautiful works owned by Pio Monte would be a tribute to Naples and its great tradition of artistic culture. Please accept my warmest compliments.”) Letter of Dec. 6, 1969, sent to Stanislao Fusco, president of the Banco di Napoli, who financed the printing of the volume. (Boldface added by the author.)
- <sup>24</sup> With the Legal Decree no. 657 of Dec. 14, 1974, the Moro Government sanctioned the birth of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage.
- <sup>25</sup> For more details, see: L. Gazzara, *La consapevolezza...op.cit.* pp. 98-99.
- <sup>26</sup> *Civiltà del '700 a Napoli 1734-1799*, exhib. cat., Naples, Dec. 1979–Oct. 1980, Naples, 1979, pp.192-205.
- <sup>27</sup> *Settecento Napoletano: Sulle Ali dell'aquila imperiale, 1707–1734*, curated by Nicola Spinosa and W. Prohaska, Naples and Vienna, 1994, pp. 162-169; *Luigi Vanvitelli e la sua cerchia*, cur. by C. de Seta, Naples, 2000, pp. 201-205.
- <sup>28</sup> The arrangement of the paintings was based on some photographs of 1972 and on other contemporary documents, attempting especially not to distort the essence of the well-established image of the Picture Gallery as a “house museum”: L. Giusti and T. Russo, “Introduzione” in *Il Pio Monte della Misericordia: Guida Rapida op.cit.*, p. 6. In fact, the Picture Gallery still today has “white walls” (“*dalle bianche mura*”), as it had in 1838: cfr. ASPMM, Governo del Monte, *Registri delle Deliberazioni*, Ha, Jan. 8, 1838, folio 151v.
- <sup>29</sup> Pio Monte della Misericordia in 2003 was the winner of a publicly announced competition by ACRI (Associazione per le Casse di Risparmio Italiane), participating with a project called “Via Duomo Cultural District” that included support for the restoration of 99 canvases. The larger version of the “Glory of the Princes” was excluded from the restoration project; however, it was restored on the occasion of the above-named show in 1979.
- <sup>30</sup> I refer again to the entry cards kept in the office of the Picture Gallery and the Archive of Pio Monte della Misericordia, drawn up by Bruno Arciprete, Laura Cibrario, and Fabiola Jatta; Klanis di Gabriella Russo, Umberto Piezzo, and Bruno Tatafiore compiled them in 2003 for the project of restoring the above-cited work.
- <sup>31</sup> Laura Cibrario, Fabiola Jatta, Sabina Marchi, *Introduzione alle Schede-preventivo di restauro*, Nov. 12, 2003.
- <sup>32</sup> Cfr. B.Tatafiore, *Relazione di restauro*, July 2006, Archivio Pio Monte della Misericordia.
- <sup>33</sup> Cfr. B. Tatafiore, *Relazione di restauro*, May 2005, Archivio Pio Monte della Misericordia.
- <sup>34</sup> U. Piezzo, *Relazione di restauro*, May 2006, Archivio Pio Monte della Misericordia.
- <sup>35</sup> On the painter’s donation and the entry documents, see Maria Grazia Leonetti’s essay in the printed Francesco de Mura catalogue.
- <sup>36</sup> Cited in the Bardellino-Fischetti inventory of 1783; see L. Gazzara, *Note e documenti...op.cit.*, vol. I, p. 175.
- <sup>37</sup> “The Scenes of Terror” in cat. entry nos. 126 and 127.
- <sup>38</sup> R. Causa, *Opere...op.cit.*, p. 116.
- <sup>39</sup> G. Lorenzetti, *La pittura italiana del Settecento*, Novara, 1948, p. 00, plate 1. The painting was published for the first time, with the attribution to Solimena. Later, F. Bologna, *Francesco Solimena*, Naples, p. 296, in the absence of documents, attributed it to the hand of De Mura.
- <sup>40</sup> N. Spinosa, “Francesco de Mura al Pio Monte della Misericordia,” in *Il Pio Monte della Misericordia nel Quarto... op.cit.*, p. 209.
- <sup>41</sup> Published, minus the provenance noted here, by N. Spinosa, *Pittura napoletana del Settecento...op.cit.*, p. 167.
- <sup>42</sup> Exhibited: “St. Benedict Welcomes Totila” (Q218); “St. Benedict Receives Sts. Maurius and Placidus” (Q214); “Vision of St. Benedict” (Q222). In museum storage: “Assumption of the Virgin” (Q241); “Death of St. Joseph” (Q255); and, still marked on the surface with number 122 from the Aloisio inventory, “Hymen Removes the Veil from Modesty” (Q462).
- <sup>43</sup> Exhibited: The eight “Monochrome Angels” (Q843, Q215, Q217, Q516, Q517, Q515/844, Q519/843, Q218/518/IC 22879); “Allegory of Strength” (Q849); “Allegory of Abundance” (Q236); “Allegory of Gentleness” (Q237); and “Allegory of Charity” (Q235). In storage: “The Virgin Appears to St. Luigi Gonzaga” (QA231); “Madonna of the Rosario with St. Domenic” (Q240); and “Rest on the Flight into Egypt” (Q458).
- <sup>44</sup> “The Visitation” (Q 454), Pinacoteca Bari; since 1993, no. 7, transferred from the Museo di Capodimonte and sent to Bari in 1967. At the same Pinacoteca (Picture Gallery) is also “St. Vincent de Paoli in Glory” and the “Annunciation.” Both come from the collection of Pio Monte della Misericordia, sold in a moment still to be identified. Cfr. C. Gelao, in *La Pinacoteca Provinciale di Bari: Opere dall'XI al XVIII secolo*, ed. by C. Gelao, Rome, 1998, pp. 180-181, L. Rocco, in *La Pinacoteca...op.cit.*, 1998, pp. 176-178.
- <sup>45</sup> *Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte: Dipinti del XVIII secolo: la scuola napoletana: Le collezioni borboniche e postunitarie*, ed. by N. Spinosa, Naples, 2010, pp. 52-63.
- <sup>46</sup> ASPMM, *Patrimonio, Eredità - Bb, LXII*, vol. 114, fasc. 2, [book jacket], *Nota delli Beni Mobili: Sistenti nella casa Di Don Francesco di Mura per conto nostro del S.R.C. Ignazio Spadetta*, folios 1r-18r.
- <sup>47</sup> ASPMM, *Patrimonio, Eredità - Bb, LXII*, vol. 114, fasc. 21, folios 1r-37r.



<sup>48</sup> ASPMM, *Patrimonio, Eredità* - Bb, LXII, vol. 114, fasc. 15, folios 1r-37r.

<sup>49</sup> ASPMM, *Patrimonio, Titoli di rendita e oggetti d'arte* - Bm II, vol 2, fasc. 1a, folios 1r-10r., transcribed by Giuseppe Ceci, "Lo 'Studio' di Francesco De Mura," [extract] in *Rassegna Storica Napoletana*," nos. 2-3, Naples, 1933, pp. 3-23.

<sup>50</sup> The document was transcribed by L. Gazzara, *Note e documenti...op.cit.*, vol. I.

<sup>51</sup> The bibliography related to the painting is in: C.T. Dalbono, *Storia della pittura in Napoli*, 1899, p. 24; G. Ceci, *op. cit.*, p. 14; F. Bologna, in *Settecento napoletano*, exhib. cat., Naples, 1962, p. 77; *Census of Pre-nineteenth-century Italian Paintings in North American Public Collections*, ed. by Burton B. Fredericksen and F. Zeri, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, p. 146; N. Spinosa in *The Golden Age of Naples: Art and Civilization Under the Bourbons, 1734-1805*, Detroit-Chicago, 1981, pp. 131-132.

<sup>52</sup> Purchased in 1907 and passed on immediately to the Uffizi the following year: see: C. Gamba, "Nuovi autoritratti agli Uffizi," in *Bollettino d'arte*, vol. II, 1908, pp. 218-221; the painting was published for the first time in *Mostra del ritratto storico napoletano*, curated by Ferdinando Bologna and Gino Doria Napoli, 1954, pp. 38-39.

<sup>53</sup> It is probably the same one identified by Nicola Spinosa in *Pittura napoletana del Settecento dal Barocco al Rococò*, Naples, 1993, p. 345, which published the portrait as on the New York art market (the entry description refers, however, to the "Self-Portrait" in the Uffizi, p. 160); the painting was in the Christie's auction of April 30, 2010, sale 7842, lot 108. I thank the former Superintendent of Pio Monte, Gianpaolo Leonetti, who pointed out to me that the painting, for a long time, was in the gallery of the art dealer Ciro Leone.

<sup>54</sup> The painting has the same measurements as the other two: 50 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 40 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (128 x 102 cm), out of the frame, and 57 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 46 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (146 x 118 cm) with the frame.

<sup>55</sup> R. Causa, *Opere d'arte...op.cit.* pp. 108-109.

<sup>56</sup> N. Spinosa, in *Civiltà...op.cit.*, 1979, p. 192.

<sup>57</sup> N. Spinosa, *Pittura napoletana del Settecento dal Barocco al Rococò*, Naples, 1986 (1999), p. 160, fig. 304.

<sup>58</sup> G. Spina in *L'Anima e il Volto: Ritratto e fisiognomica da Leonardo a Bacon*, exhib. cat. by F. Caroli, Milan, 1998, p. 305.

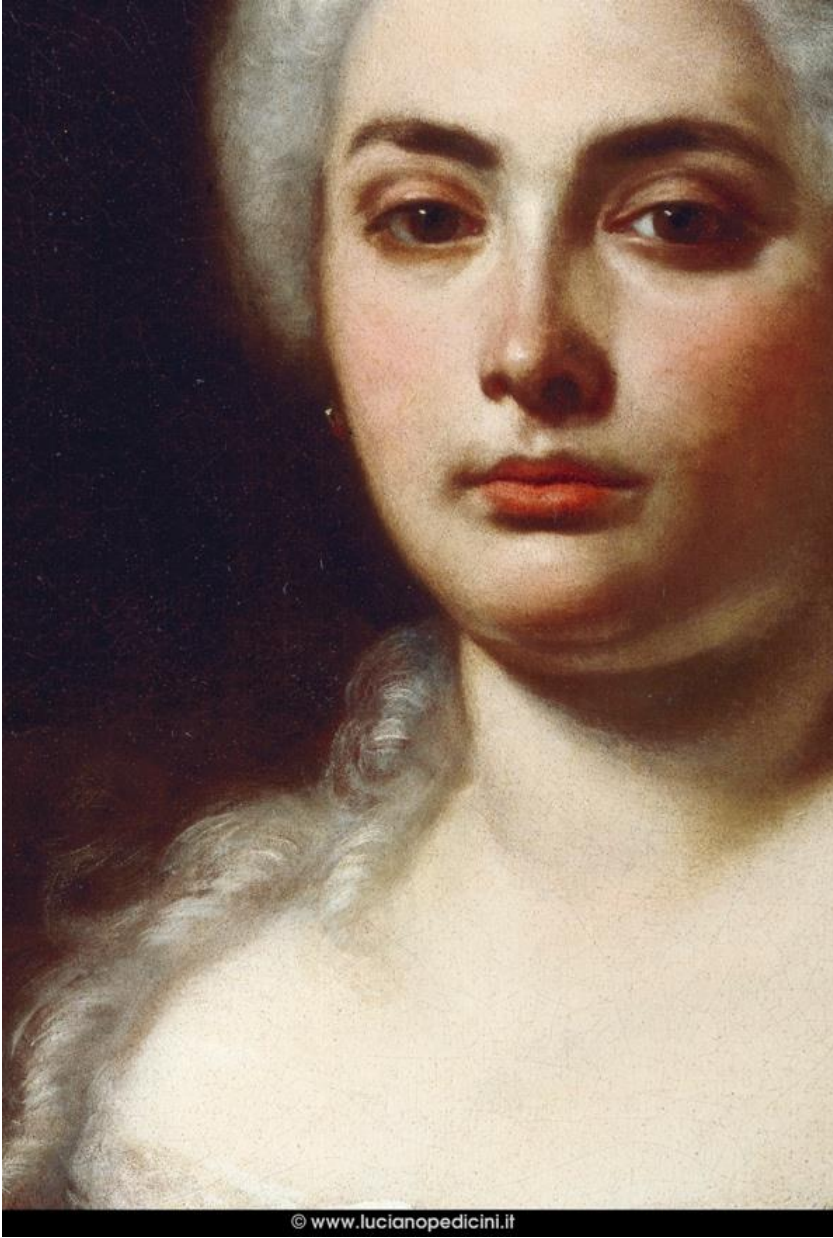
<sup>59</sup> L. Gazzara, *Note e documenti...op.cit.*, vol. I, pp. 174, 179.

<sup>60</sup> N. Spinosa, *Pittura...op.cit.* p. 160, plate 58, with the previous bibliography.

<sup>61</sup> Some figurative inventions were also used for different subjects. See, on this: S. Causa, "Francesco de Mura e il suo doppio," in *Paragone d'Arte*, vol. LXV, third series, no. 116 (773), July 2014, pp. 21-46.



**Fig. 1:** Francesco de Mura, *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 97, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello



**Fig. 1b:** Francesco de Mura, *Portrait of the Artist's Wife* (detail), Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 97, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Luciano Pedicini





**Fig. 2:** Francesco de Mura, *Glory of the Bourbon Princes*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 105  
Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello



**Fig. 3:** Francesco de Mura, *St. Francis of Gerolamo*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 129, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello



**Fig 4:** Francesco de Mura, *The Adoration of the Magi*, Napoli, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 101, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Luca Somma





**Fig. 4b:** Francesco de Mura, *The Adoration of the Magi*, during its cleaning, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 101, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Bruno Tatafiore



**Fig. 5:** Francesco de Mura, *Aurora and Tithonius*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 110, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello





**Fig. 6:** Francesco de Mura, *Aurora and Tithonius*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 118, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello



**Fig. 7:** Francesco de Mura, *Christ, Mary, and Joseph in Glory with Saints*, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 115, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello





**Fig. 7b:** Francesco de Mura, *Christ, Mary, Joseph in Glory with Saints*, during its cleaning, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 115, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Bruno Tatafiore



**Fig. 8:** Francesco de Mura, *Glory of the Bourbon Princes*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 104, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Marco Casciello





**Fig. 8b:** Francesco de Mura, *Glory of the Bourbon Princes*, during its cleaning, Napoli, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 104, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Umberto Piezzo, graphic reworking at STUDIO AF S.r.l. by Massimo Zazza



**Fig. 9:** Francesco de Mura, *Scene of Terror*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 126, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Luca Somma





**Fig. 10:** Francesco de Mura, *Scene of Terror*, Naples, Pio Monte della Misericordia, inv. no. 127, Archivio Fotografico del Pio Monte della Misericordia, photo by Luca Somma



**Fig. 11:** Francesco de Mura, *Scene of Terror with St. Januarius (Gennaro)*, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie





Fig. 12: Francesco de Mura, *Self-Portrait*, Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi





Fig. 13: Francesco de Mura, *Self-Portrait*, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, photo from MIA





Fig. 14: Francesco de Mura, *Self-Portrait*, Naples, Galleria Ciro Leone, photo by Paola Tufo