

COMPLESSO MONUMENTALE DI SAN SEVERO AL PENDINO

1404 Epoca Durazzesca	Giovanni Como was a cloth merchant and owner of a building in the street of S. Giorgio (later S. Severo al Pendino, now named via Duomo) with crossed windows (some of them have survived till today) and its typical dark gray bossage.
1451 Epoca Aragonese	The palace was enlarged and decorated and a typical "Italian garden" with fountains and statues was included. According to tradition, the king of Naples Alfonso "the Magnanimous" bought the building and gave it to his favorite, the beautiful Lucrezia Coppola Di Alagni, who lived there with great pomp for ten years (at least until 1558, when the king died)
1566	The palace became a property for the De'Bottis family and, as can be seen from the famous " <i>Lafrery's view</i> ", housed two courtyards: one of them presumably was porticoed and the other one housed a garden.
1575	Next to the palace was built the church of San Severo al Pendino on the ruins of the ancient S. Maria a Sèlice church, which also hosted a hospital, and which had been rebuilt in 1448 and dedicated to San Severo. With the Counter-Reformation and the renewed power of the Catholic Church, the clerics began to expand their domains in this area and, about 10 years later, they also managed to buy the Palazzo De' Bottis .
1587	Marcello De'Bottis' Palace was sold, for 8,000 ducats, to the preachers of the <i>Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena</i> , dealers of the church of San Severo, along with the adjoining house of the chaplain and cleric, assigned to the custody of the temple.
1599-1620	The church of San Severo al Pendino was rebuilt on a project by the architect <i>Gian Giacomo di Conforto</i> (a Theatine friar) who had to adapt the nearby Palazzo Como De' Bottis as a monastery, preserving the façade and the two courtyards. The rooms of the palace were transformed into cells for the Dominican friars; the large hall was adapted to refectory; the courtyard became the convent cloister.
1617	The funeral monument of Marquis Gian Alfonso Bisvallo , general of the army of Charles V and patron of the church, located in the transept on the right, was made by the sculptor Girolamo D'Auria . Interesting is the bas relief with the general on horseback, at the Battle of Tunis (1535), while fleeing the Turkish enemies. The same author sculpted the marble tondo, carved in bas relief, depicting the "Madonna and Child" on the wall behind the main altar.
1628	In the Baratta view (map from 1670), it's clearly visible the church of San Severo, with its large dome, and the Como Palace with its two courtyards, transformed into a convent. In the second courtyard we see a series of porticos which suggest that it too was porticoed and had a garden in the centre. It is also possible to see the adjacent church of San Giorgio and its bell tower with the original entrance in the front square.
1688	Unfortunately, due to the earthquake of 1688 , the funeral monument of Alfonso Bisvallo collapsed on the ground and then, during the restoration of the '700, its dismembered parts were relocated as we see them today.
1734	Beginning of the Bourbons Kingdom , with <i>King Don Carlo</i> . Finally Naples becomes the capital of the independent Kingdom again. In these years, the interior of the church of San Severo is restored with baroque stucco and chapels decorated with sculpted marble.
1775	In the " Map of the Duke of Noja " the architectural situation of the entire convent complex is clearly legible. The alley behind the apse of the church is open and there is no hut that closes it (as it is today).

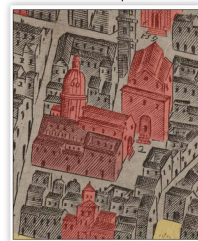
Lafréry's view - 1566



Bas relief - Battle of Tunis (1535)

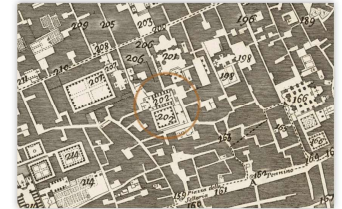


Baratta view - map from 1670



1806	Beginning of the " Bonapartist Decade ". The convent of San Severo al Pendino was also suppressed and the ancient Palazzo Como was used as accommodation for the war widows and also for the <i>Archive of the Reign</i> .
1815	With the return of the Bourbons , a brewery was even installed in the cloister of the convent of San Severo in some rooms on the ground floor and in a almost all the first floor. The consequence was that, in a few years, the entire monastic complex had to suffer serious damage to its structures, including the destruction of the various sculptural decorations and frescoes.
1822	The convent was ceded to the nuns of the nearby Monastero del Divino Amore , but it was so badly damaged that they could not go to live there. The entire complex was completely abandoned and so the plebs who lived nearby took advantage of this to settle there undisturbed.
1826-35	In 1826 , a vault of the refectory suddenly collapsed. So the Dominican friars were recalled and the church of San Severo was reopened after several consolidation and restoration works of the entire convent.
1863	The monastery of San Severo was suppressed again and the monks sent away. The Como Palace was confiscated by the Municipality of Naples . As you can see in the famous painting by <i>Raffaele D'Ambra</i> (1880), another floor had been built above the ledge.
1879-80	During the " Risanamento ", to enlarge Via Duomo and connect it to Corso Umberto , the houses near Palazzo Como and the church of San Severo were demolished. The church itself was severely mutilated: it lost two chapels on each side, the entrance hall and the raised churchyard with two flights of stairs and sculpted balustrades. The nearby church of San Giorgio was also mutilated. The Palazzo Como risked being demolished but the lively protests of a group of intellectuals managed to stop the destroyers! They convinced the Municipality of Naples to move back the facade of the ancient building by about 20 meters. The facades were dismantled stone by stone and rebuilt further back.
1883	Among those intellectuals there was also Gaetano Filangieri Junior , <i>prince of Satriano</i> , who proposed to the Municipality to arrange the internal spaces of what remained of Palazzo Como at its own expense and to place his rich collection of works of art there to create a museum useful to all scholars and citizens.
1940-45	During the Second World War , the entire complex of San Severo al Pendino with its large underground areas was used as an <i>air-raid shelter</i> . Both the church and the Filangieri museum were damaged first by the bombings in 1943 and then by the usual, unknown, looters. After the war, the church was closed and abandoned.
1970-80	In the early 70s the current elementary school was built in the surviving spaces of the old convent. At the end of the 70s , the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Architettonici di Napoli began restoration and consolidation work on the church of San Severo al Pendino, which had been in a state of complete abandonment and decay since the end of the <i>Second World War</i> .
1999	The restoration and consolidation works begun in the 70s were completed and, after 50 years, the former church of San Severo, mutilated and without its decorative furnishings, was reopened to the public. Its architectural space has nevertheless maintained its great charm and enormous evocative power : it is now used as a public exhibition space. Its spaces periodically host exhibitions of artistic and cultural works (paintings, photographs, sculptures, literary texts, etc.), as well as musical, artistic and theatrical performances.

Duke of Noja map - 1750



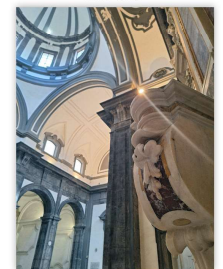
Painting by Raffaele D'Ambra - 1880



Via Duomo Postcard - 1901



Side altar





THE PUTRIDARIUM (Scolatoi)

The *Putridarium*, also commonly known as *colatoio* or *scolatoio*, is generally located in the crypt placed under the floor of the churches.

The dead were placed on these chairs carved in the rock, which had a large central hole and a container below, called *cantero*, intended to collect human fluid during the decomposition process.

Once the process of drying the bodies was finished, the bones were collected, washed and transferred to the final burial of the ossuary. In some cases there were shelves on which the skulls of the deceased were displayed.

In the *Putridarium* the constant change in the external appearance of the corpse was intended to visually symbolize the different stages of painful "purification" that the soul of the dead faced on its way to eternity, supported by the incessant prayers of the brothers or sisters.

During the drying process, the "*schiatto*" was in charge of accelerating decomposition and monitoring the state of the body, using a specific tool.

Linked in some aspects to the ancient belief of the "double death" and the practice of "double burial", in Italy the custom of putridarium spread mainly in the south, where it is also known by the generic term of "mummification chambers" or "seated strainers", and in particular in the area of Naples, with the name of "cantarelle".

IN THE SOUTH...

...the rite of draining was highly appreciated and widespread, even if it remained almost exclusive to nobles and ecclesiastics. Especially in Naples, the drainers have ancient origins that date back to the period between the ninth and eighteenth centuries.

Starting from a law of Roman times, which allowed the burial of the dead exclusively in areas far from the city settlements, the Neapolitans began to dig underground, creating numerous underground catacombs (those of *San Gaudioso* and *San Gennaro* are suggestive). Today many churches, such as that of *San Severo al Pendino* or *Sant'Anna dei Lombardi* in the Crypt of the Abbots, preserve evidence of this.

FINALLY A CURIOSITY - "Puozze sculà"

The memory of the draining, to this day, survives in the Neapolitan expression "*Puozze sculà*", that is, "May you drain". It is an ominous formula with which we condemn a person to undergo the treatment of draining (a fate far worse than death itself!).



The stone seats, dug into the tuff, were used to dry the bodies of the deceased, collecting the products of decomposition in the cantaro placed in the niches dug under each seat