

## Reviews

Richard Bösel, Antonio Camassa,  
Giovanna Spadafora (a cura di)

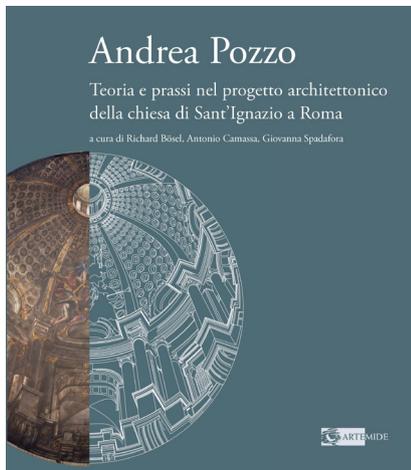
**Andrea Pozzo.**  
***Teoria e prassi nel progetto  
architettonico della chiesa di  
Sant'Ignazio a Roma***

Artemide

Roma 2023

223 pp.

ISBN 978-88-7575-430-3



In *Andrea Pozzo. Teoria e prassi nel progetto architettonico della chiesa di Sant'Ignazio a Roma*, the editors –Richard Bösel, Antonio Camassa, and Giovanna Spadafora– collect sixteen contributions outlining the multifaceted figure of Andrea Pozzo, with particular attention on his work in the church dedicated to Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus. Andrea Pozzo dedicated his working life to painting, art, architecture, scenography, perspective, and the development of a treatise that collects his knowledge of these activities. The activities are all permeated by his deep faith dictated by his clerical status as a Jesuit lay brother.

With respect for Pozzo's multiple qualities, the editors have wisely divided the book into sections that represent his eclectic nature: architecture, art, painted space, drawing, and geometry. The four parts of the book are presented in a continuum that leads the reader to an understanding of Andrea Pozzo, but each part can also be read individually, as an individual investigation on a specific aspect of this artist from Trento.

The section on architecture opens with a contribution by Richard Bösel that covers the design and construction of the Church of Saint Ignatius over 60 years (1626–1686) of troubled vicissitudes, from the initial work by Orazio Grassi up to Andrea Pozzo's assignment with his most famous works: the fresco on the large vault (1688–1694) and the false dome (1680).

Pozzo's architectural qualities are outlined by Maurizio Gargano, who dedicates his text to examining the chapels with altars in the Jesuit church, revealing how the lay brother from Trento, accompanied by Carlo Mauro Bonacina, designed the altars dedicated to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga and Saint Ignatius, the latter of which combines perspective with architecture.

The relationship between the double-height spaces that open in Andrea Pozzo's work is the focus of the contribution by Augusto Roca De Amicis. The architecture historian skilfully traces, using many references, the cultural path that saw the Jesuit artist interact with his contemporaries and their creations, ultimately leaving a definite stylistic mark in the international panorama of the Baroque.

The second part of the book, dedicated to art, opens with a contribution by Andrea Dall'Asta, which focuses on the iconographic structure of the vault of the Church of Saint Ignatius, interpreting the allegory of the Jesuits' missionary work as "*la contemplazione appassionata dell'opera di Dio nella storia*" [the passionate contemplation of the work of God in history].

Finally, Dall'Asta pauses on the unique point of view adopted by Pozzo and compares it to another one-eyed point of view: the telescope invented by Galileo Galilei.

Continuing with the previous contribution, Claudio Strinati examines the

sketches for the vault and dome housed at the National Gallery of Ancient Art at Palazzo Barberini in Rome. The art historian hypothesizes an educational/demonstrative purpose for both, although he does not exclude the value of preliminary studies. As Strinati writes, the two sketches, if “*correttamente interpretati nei loro presupposti estetico-matematici, sono la migliore chiave di accesso alla specificità progettuale del Pozzo e al suo stile incomparabile, specie in rapporto alla coeva esperienza, pur eletta invero, di Fumiani*” [correctly interpreted in their aesthetic/mathematical assumptions, are the best key to access the specifics of Pozzo’s design and his incomparable style, especially compared to the contemporary, albeit superior experience, of Fumiani]. These two contributions, Dall’Asta’s and Strinati’s, are separated by a text by Sara Fuentes Lázaro, who identifies Pozzo’s possible artistic inspiration, finding it in Mattia Carneri, Francesco Maria Richini, and Pellegrino Tebaldi. The author also pauses on the admirable engravings and words in the treatise *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*, in which the Jesuit pays homage to great architects: Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, Palladio, Vincenzo Scamozzi, Sebastiano Serlio, and Vitruvius.

The analysis of the relationship between actual architecture and painting, or better yet, between actual and illusory buildings, is the focus of the third part of the book.

Antonio Camassa investigates the language of the false dome, interpreting it as the coexistence of Andrea Pozzo’s two souls: architect and painter.

Pozzo’s illusory dome should not be viewed only as a pure exercise in perspective virtuosity, but rather should be appreciated for the desire to integrate it with the existing building. “*Il finto e il vero*”, Camassa writes, “*si congiungono*

*fino a fondersi in uno spazio e un tempo limitati, provvisori e temporanei*” [Falsity and truth come together until they meld in limited space and time that is provisional and temporary].

The author identifies various stages in Pozzo’s approach to designing these works, tracing them and verifying them in his famous work for the Church of Saint Ignatius. In addition, relying on perspective rendering, Camassa credits the artist from Trento not only with the capacity to design an architectural space, but also to interpret the design history of the place where he must work.

The design and production process for the great barrel vault in the Church of Saint Ignatius, painted by Pozzo between 1688 and 1694, is addressed by Matteo Flavio Mancini. According to the author, there are two aspects that must be considered when interpreting the painting dedicated to the Jesuits’ missionary work around the world: the spirituality of the visual culture of the Society of Jesus and the skillful perspective technique used by the painter.

The contribution contains an ample conceptual discussion of the uniqueness of the two components in the fresco: architecture and the figures moving within it. Through construction of a three-dimensional model, the author has verified both the consistency between the real and virtual space and the logic and correct sizing of the allegorical figures that populate the painting. A study of the illusory perspective that decorates the apse vault is entrusted to Flavia Camagni. Given that Pozzo’s treatise does not include an illustration of the illusory architecture that decorates the noblest part of the church, as is instead provided for the vault and false dome, the author relies on perspective rendering to decipher the perspective, rendering the architecture designed by

Pozzo through the construction of an effective three-dimensional model.

Following an analysis of the engravings in the treatise accompanied by perceptual observations and geometric/perspective reflections, Camagni presents an original reconstruction of the space designed by Pozzo, which, inserted in the model of the church, provides a unitary vision of the actual and illusory architectures.

*Drawing and geometry* is the final part of the book, which examines the fundamental relationship between art and science that pervades all of Andrea Pozzo’s creative activity.

Leonardo Baglioni and Marta Salvatore present a critical reading of some of the most geometrically important passages in *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum*. Thus, moving from the first figures that show the method adopted by Pozzo to construct the perspective, the authors move on to three perspective models presented by Pozzo in his treatise, a mark of his artistic industriousness: liturgical scenography, theatrical scenography, and bottom-up perspective. The authors skillfully guide us through synoptic frameworks and original digital diagrams in reading this apparatus, revealing the geometric and perceptual principles as well as the possible construction techniques.

Closely related to the previous chapter, the contribution by Michela Ceracchi studies the ephemeral devices present in Pozzo’s treatise, which represent a vast range of ideas that the Jesuit artist himself suggests using “*tanto per una fabbrica vera, quanto per una finta*” [as much for actual buildings as for false ones].

In particular, the author pauses on the round building that Pozzo drew in his treatise for the Church of Saint Ignatius next to the Roman College, capably and skillfully reconstructing the ephemeral

device in three dimensions and making interesting geometric/perceptual observations based on it.

The contribution by Giovanna Spadafora focuses on the prominent role of drawing in Andrea Pozzo's work, and particularly on the design process for the false dome. The perspective drawing is elevated to an indisputable tool for constructing the space.

To support this thesis, Spadafora relies on citations present in Pozzo's treatise, as well as his drawings –or those attributed to him– that depict the false domes, analyzing not only the perspective system, but also the architecture presented by Pozzo. She

therefore formulates the research path that the Jesuit would have taken to realize his famous false domes.

The author's work serves as a worthy conclusion to the entire book, since it seems to systematize the preceding contributions, providing an original overall vision of the Jesuit's work in which the dominance of drawing stands out, even with respect to the other arts practiced by Pozzo.

This review could not possibly overlook the important contributions by Vincenzo D'Adamo, Fabrizio Gallo, Luca Pietromarchi, Flaminia Gennari Santori, Elisabetta Pallottino, or Francesca Fatta, or the two focuses by Paola Calicchia and

Dario Aureli with Alessandro Cosma. The first is aimed at the virtual reconstruction of the acoustic environment of the Church of Saint Ignatius with the goal of assessing the difference in acoustics between the false dome and the hypothetical one, while the second is dedicated to the exhibition of two sketches by Pozzo in the Sala della balconata at Palazzo Barberini for the study day intitled "*Congiungere il finto col vero*" *Andrea Pozzo: teoria e prassi nel progetto architettonico della chiesa di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola* held at the church on 3 December 2021.

Marco Fasolo

#### Author

Marco Fasolo, Department of History, Representation and Restoration of Architecture, Sapienza University of Rome, marco.fasolo@uniroma1.it