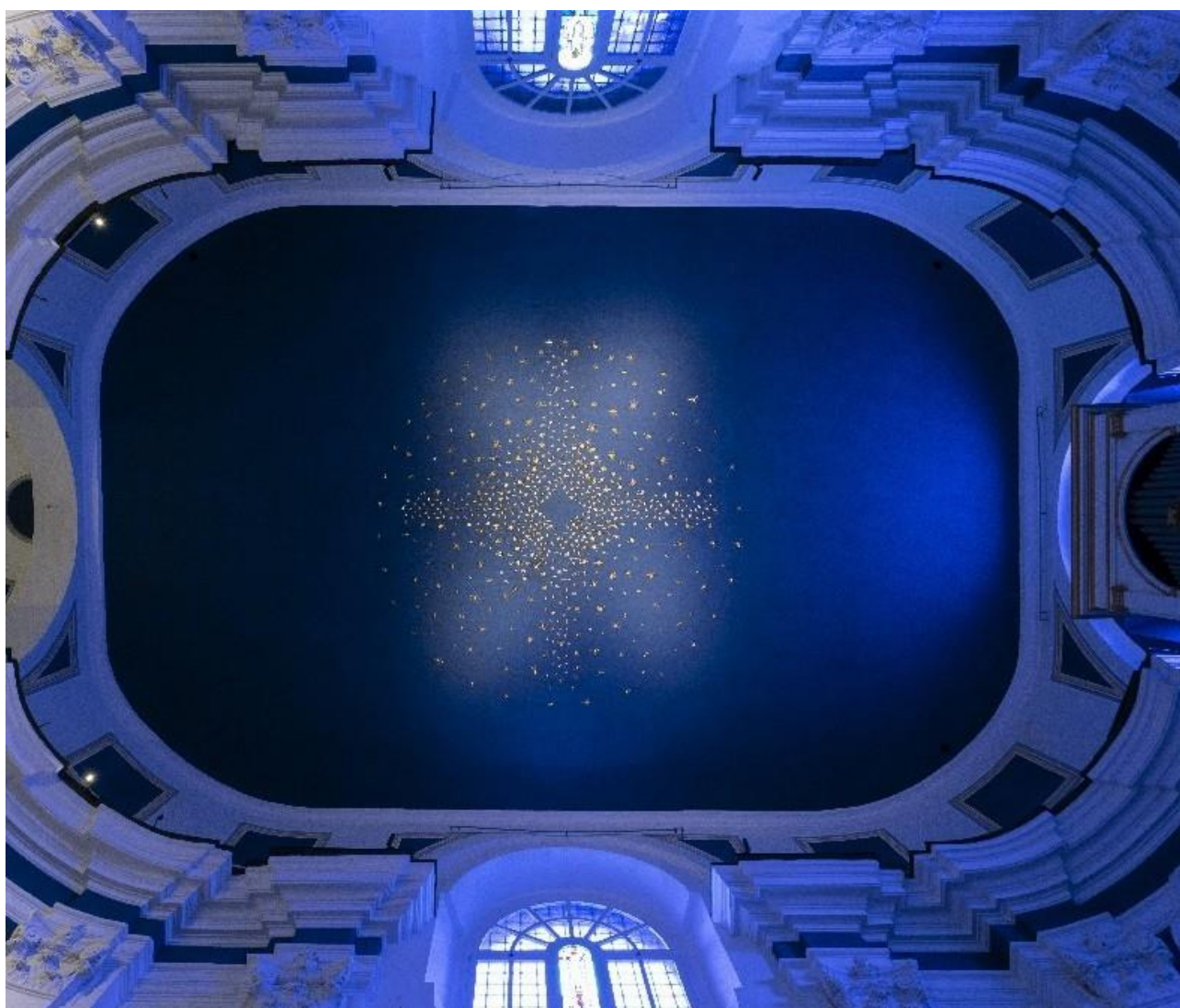


# Santiago Calatrava

## Nella luce di Napoli

**A work of worldwide importance by Santiago Calatrava for the Church of San Gennaro in the Real Bosco of Capodimonte completes his major exhibition “*Santiago Calatrava. Nella luce di Napoli*”**

*“A work of global art in which diverse arts (porcelain, weaving, enamelling, painting) converge in an autonomous work that speaks of the past to the present to the future”. (Santiago Calatrava, 2020)*



*La volta della Chiesa di San Gennaro decorata da Santiago Calatrava*

Architect Santiago Calatrava’s decorative scheme for the Church of San Gennaro in the Real Bosco di Capodimonte, built in 1745 by architect and stage designer Ferdinando Sanfelice at the behest of

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Charles of Bourbon, is a tribute to the ‘light of Naples’ and local artisan craftsmanship. A global work of art by a contemporary artist in an 18th-century chapel that completely reinterprets the space, from the stained glass windows to the ceiling decorated with porcelain stars, to the decorated niches and porcelain creations inspired by the Real Bosco of Capodimonte. Calatrava produced exclusive designs for the chapel from new lighting and furnishings, altar cloths made from the precious silks of San Leucio, porcelain vases and candelabra made during workshops with students and master craftsmen of the Istituto ad indirizzo raro Caselli - Real Fabbrica di Capodimonte. In this contemporary reinterpretation of the sacred space, music also contributes to the spirituality with the restoration of the ancient organ and bells, which now return to sound after decades of silence.

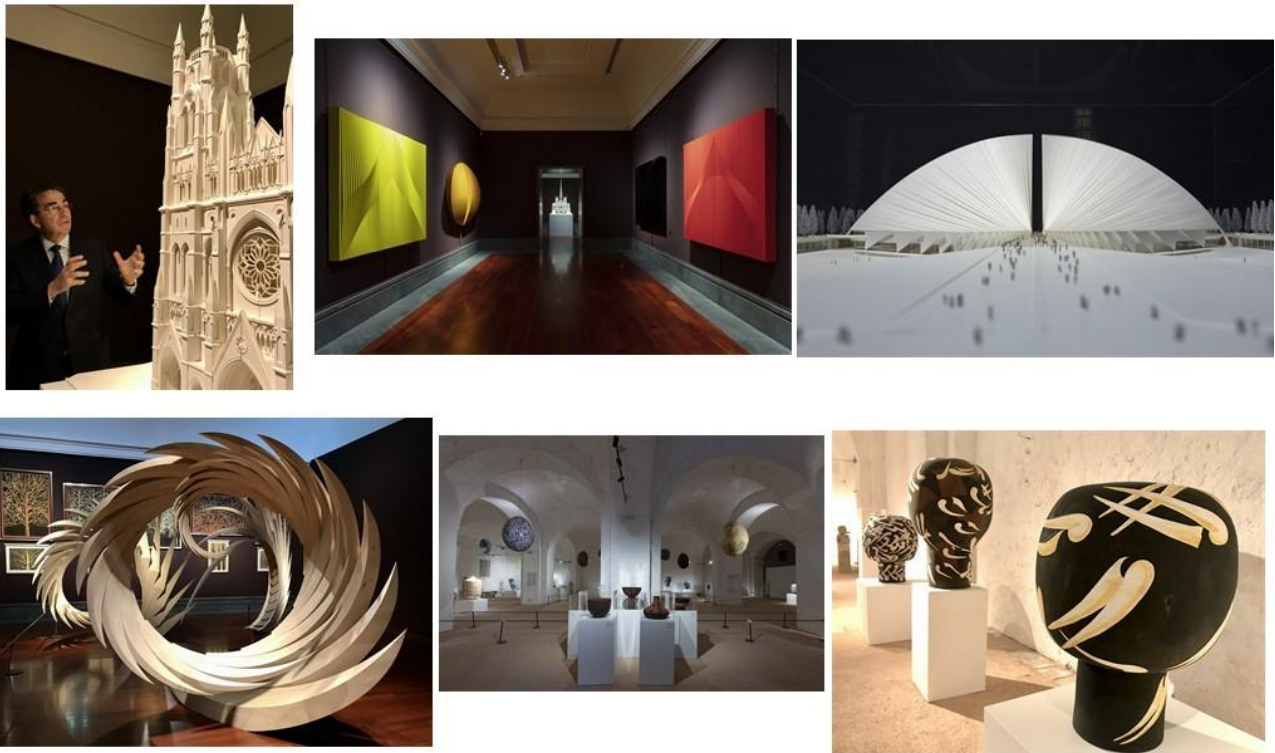


*Chiesa di San Gennaro nel Real Bosco di Capodimonte, veduta interno con altare centrale e due altari laterali*

The intervention completes the major exhibition *Santiago Calatrava. Nella luce di Napoli* (until 22 August 2021), which brought to the Museum and Royal Park of Capodimonte four hundred works - sculptures, drawings, maquettes - by one of the most brilliant creative minds of our time: Calatrava, architect, engineer, painter, sculptor, designer, all-round artist. A restless spirit in constant search of a balance between volume and light, the two essential elements of his concept of architecture. The exhibition at Capodimonte, divided between the second floor of the Museum and the Cellaio building in the Royal Park, already underlines the element of light in its title: *Santiago Calatrava. Nella luce di Napoli*, but also the artist's love for the city, cradle and port of the Mediterranean, crossroads of different cultures and civilizations. An exhibition curated by the Director of the Museum and Royal Park of Capodimonte Sylvain Bellenger and Robertina Calatrava, wife of the artist, and supported by the Campania Region thanks to European funds POC Complementary



Operational Program 2014-2020, organized by Scabec, regional company of cultural heritage, and realized in collaboration with Studio Calatrava and Studio Avino.



Galleries of the exhibition “Santiago Calatrava. Nella luce di Napoli” at the Museum and in the Cellaio

The installation emphasizes the subtitle of the exhibition “*nella luce di Napoli*” or “*in the light of Naples*”. Light, both natural and artificial, plays a key role in the installation by defining spaces and volumes. But the *luce di Napoli* for Calatrava also radiates from traditional crafts, true artistic skills which are unique to Campania. “*The light of Naples is combined in a modern installation within an eighteenth-century environment,*” says **Calatrava**. “*Contemporary vocabulary is incorporated in an historical context that enhances its meaning. The walls and ceiling are painted an intense ultramarine blue to highlight the structural and ornamental elements of the chapel and give it a greater sense of depth. The installation allows for the creation of a global concept in which different arts (porcelain, weaving, enameling, painting) converge into a self-contained work that speaks from the past to the present to the future.*”

### The philosophy of Calatrava’s intervention: a new spirituality of Nature.

Architecture is by its very nature an all-encompassing work of art since it involves a great number of expressions and means to create or to modify spaces using volume, color, material, and light. These inspire the overall decorative scheme of the chapel, in which the markedly humanist imprint of the architect Calatrava emerges. It is characteristic of his works to combine in concept and practice, the applied arts, sculpture, painting, drawing, engineering, architecture, and light. In his creations, global art approaches the Renaissance concept of the work of art as an expression of man’s harmonious relationship with the world. All of Calatrava’s architecture breathes this spiritual and philosophical vision. In the church of San Gennaro in the Real Bosco of Capodimonte, Calatrava has embraced the entirety of the space and transformed it visually, chromatically, and



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spiritually, while paying homage to the artisanal tradition of Campania including porcelain from the Manifattura di Capodimonte, silks from San Leucio, and stained glass from Vietri sul Mare. The homage also extends to the Royal Park of Capodimonte, the most important historical garden in Naples and one of the largest in Italy, and is inspired by the iconography of the church (stars, doves, bushes, branches and leaves of trees) which take on an even stronger ethical meaning after the Covid-19 pandemic. The result is an all-encompassing work of art that interprets a relationship with Nature in a spiritual way.

*“In a consecrated environment such as the chapel, these natural elements, inspired by those present in the Real Bosco of Capodimonte, the largest urban park in Italy, are elevated to a sacred level” - Calatrava says - “as is the relationship between man and nature”.*

The entire design for the Church including every single preparatory drawing and artifact used in the project have been donated by Santiago Calatrava to the Museum and Royal Park of Capodimonte and will enrich its collections. Demonstrating his profound knowledge of the territory, Calatrava personally chose the workers, most of whom donated their work, from the Vito Avino engineering firm of Salerno to the Modugno restoration company, to the San Leucio silks of the *cavaliere del lavoro* Annamaria Alois, to the master Perotti of Vietri sul Mare for the stained glass windows and tabernacles, to the master ceramicists of the porcelain factory located right in front of the Church. Moreover, the Modugno company donated the restoration of the ancient organ, soliciting the intervention of the Tamburini company of Crema. The restoration of the two bells was undertaken by Campana Merolla. Now the bells are working again and their chimes mark the opening and closing of the Real Bosco, as well as the hours of the day.



*Chiesa di San Gennaro nel Real Bosco di Capodimonte, veduta interno sull'organo restaurato e sugli altari laterali*

Calatrava's artistic intervention is of significant importance to Italy's historical heritage and adds a great creation to the Capodimonte's heritage, allowing for a deeper relationship between the collections and international contemporary art and architecture. The Direction of the Museum and Real Bosco of Capodimonte and the Ministry of Culture express their utmost gratitude to Calatrava,



who has enhanced Italy's artistic heritage by serving and bringing prestige to the excellence of local artistic craftsmanship.

Elsewhere in the world there are other churches that reflect a contemporary vision: the Chapelle du Rosaire in Vence, France, decorated by Henri Matisse between 1949 and 1951 for the Dominican nuns of the town, or the Rothko Chapel, the famous non-denominational chapel founded by the De Menils, built in the 1960s in Houston, USA to house the famous series of paintings by the American artist Mark Rothko. In Italy, there is no lack of examples of sacred spaces reinterpreted in a contemporary way such as the ethereal work by Ettore Spalletti for the Chapel and the Sala del Commiato designed for the Villa Serena Nursing Home in Città Sant'Angelo in Abruzzo, and "Untitled", a site-specific light installation by Dan Flavin created in 1996 inside the Church of Santa Maria Annunciata in Chiesa Rossa, in Milan.



*Chiesa di San Gennaro nel Real Bosco di Capodimonte, esterno*

## The Works

Calatrava's decorative intervention is conceived to be a "living work" because it uses the excellence of Campania's artisanal production (weaving, porcelain, enameling and painting) and the manual skill of the workers to give a living character to the design. Calatrava employs the language of a new spirituality and a new humanism, capable of transmitting peace and joy, and of placing the human being and his perception of nature at the center of a sacred space.

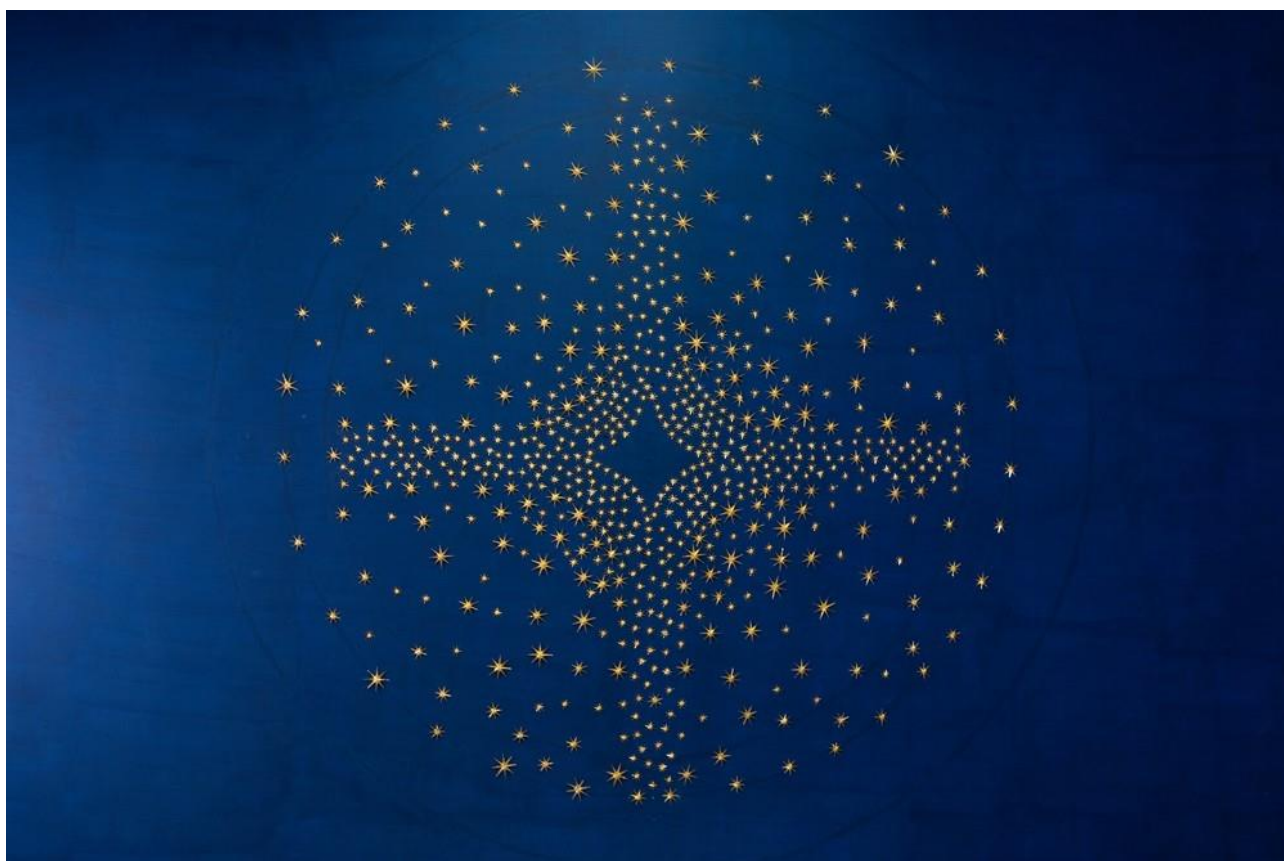
But the artistic intervention is not an end in itself: the church will come back to life as a place of worship and social life as it was in the past. The notes of the ancient organ will resound again as the community of Capodimonte once again hears the hourly tolling of the bell to mark daily life and the opening and closing times of the Bosco.

## Works in Porcelain

Although he has a profound knowledge of the technique of ceramic production as demonstrated by his works exhibited in the Cellaio, Calatrava created porcelain works for the first time and did so in the place where, in 1743, Charles of Bourbon established his Porcelain Manufactory. Calatrava worked with the master ceramicists and students of the "Real Fabbrica di Capodimonte-Istituto Superiore ad Indirizzo Raro Caselli" (Anna Catalano, Borrelli Alessandro, Festinese Anna, Antonietta Fuoco, Gargiulo Angelo, Gatta Morena, Ferdinando Serafino, with the support of the assistant ceramic technicians, Carlo De Giovanni, Salvatore Di Leva) under the direction of Valter Luca de Bartolomeis, headmaster of the Caselli Institute who fully involved the students of the school, as part of the project "Caselli meets the artists: Santiago Calatrava". With them, Calatrava created all the porcelain decorations for the Church of San Gennaro (800 stars for the ceiling, 600 flowers and 600 leaves for the lateral niches, 6 vases and 6 candelabra), which he donated to Capodimonte and which will become part of the museum's collections. The decorations in the Church are in dialogue with those made for the lunettes for the entrance to the school, a building located right in front of the Church. These are also a gift from Calatrava.

The bright interior of the baroque church is dominated by a blue ceiling decorated with more than 800 eight-pointed stars, made of white porcelain then gilded in a third kiln firing. In the two niches on the side altars, the theme of the Passion of Christ is taken up again through the symbol of the cross: in the niche on the right, the crucifix is formed by gold leaves on a background entirely covered by olive branches while, in the niche on the left, a cross composed of red flowers is inserted into a dense network of yellow ochre flowers and branches. For the sculptural elements of the two niches there are about 600 flowers and 600 olive leaves. Moreover, both on the main altar and on the side altars there are single-flame candelabras of different designs: some enamelled in various colors and others decorated with floral elements or olive leaves. Three pairs of large vases in the shape of truncated cones have also been made for the altars; their decoration recalls the olive leaves and flowers. The pair of vases for the high altar depict doves in flight, a recurring element in Calatrava's work that is also found in the decoration of the porcelain egg suspended above the high altar. The niche that holds the baptismal font is decorated with two figures in polished porcelain depicting angels in flight on a blue background.





*Decoration of the vault of the Chapel with more than eight hundred gilded ceramic stars designed by the architect Calatrava and realized by the master ceramicists and students of the Istituto ad indirizzo raro Caselli-Real Fabbrica di Capodimonte, located in the Royal Park of Capodimonte directly opposite the Church of San Gennaro*



*Uovo in porcellana sospeso sull'altare centrale, con decorazioni raffiguranti le colombe disegnate da Calatrava*

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*Lateral niche decorated with porcelain flowers and realized by the Istituto Caselli*

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## Stained glass windows

Master glass maker Antonio Perotti from Vietri sul Mare (Salerno) created stained glass windows for the chapel using the ancient technique of lead sewing, based on original designs of sacred inspiration by Calatrava: *Crucifixion and Deposition* for the entrance, *Resurrection and Ascension* for the two side windows. Each was made using cobalt blue, handmade glass with high chromatic irradiation. For the side doors leading to the sacristy, four stained glass windows were decorated with leaves and berries. Three new doors were also made for the tabernacle depicting a cross with circles. All the stained glass windows were hand painted with five firings in the oven at 630 C°, bound with extruded, extra strength lead, soldered, and finally resined with epoxy to make the windows flexible and resistant. All the windows have a stylized mark with hints of chiaroscuro according to the creative and stylistic needs of the architect Santiago Calatrava.



*Decorated stained glass windows and details*





## Sacred altar cloths in San Leucio silk

*Cavaliere del Lavoro* Annamaria Alois with her textile company of high craftsmanship and artisanal fabrics based in the village of San Leucio (Caserta) since 1885, which has restored ancient hand looms, craft machines and a very rich archive of original designs from the Bourbon period, has made the silk altar cloths for the three altars based on Calatrava's original designs. The altar cloths, decorated with motifs that reflect the decorations of the lateral niches (leaves and roses) in which a golden cross is always stylized, will adorn the side altars, while the altar cloth with doves, a decoration also reproduced on the porcelain vases, will adorn the central altar. Each altar cloth was made without stitching on a loom adapted to the artistic and stylistic requirements of the architect Calatrava in a single piece of fabric more than 4 meters long for the high altar and 3.20 meters long for the minor altars. The method reproduces an old Bourbon loom technique called "*spolinato*". The decoration was made with eight basic colors. The chromatic effects were extended with a range of shades created from the amalgamation of woven threads that reproduce the technique of relief with a three-dimensional effect. Moreover, to let the visitor appreciate the technique, the reverse side of the fabric of each altar cloth has been lined with a veil of organza, cut and sewn by hand, over twenty meters of cloth.



*Altar cloths in San Leucio silk destined for the side altars of the Chapel of San Gennaro*



## Designs for the lateral niches

Santiago Calatrava designed leaves and doves in the niches of the chapel as metaphor of human dexterity that enhances the architecture. His work at Capodimonte becomes a vision of the world that combines respect for the environment and the botanical richness of the historic garden in which exotic plants thrive, with the ancient tradition of the arts that *“in these parts has something platonic, almost as if it were inherent in man”*.



*Lateral niches decorated with doves designed by Calatrava*

## Restoration and retuning of the antique organ “Domenico Petillo”

The restoration and retuning of the organ was entrusted to the Giovanni Tamburini Organ Factory of Crema, who cleaned the organ and the choir loft, disassembled all the phonic material and, in particular, the metal pipes which were dusted, vacuumed and then washed using only demineralized water. The keyboard and the pedal board were restored, as they suffered a strong functional and aesthetical degradation from dirt, rust, oxidation, moths and discoloration. Levers, squares, guide points and attachments to the mechanics have been restored and made to work again. All wooden parts were treated with an anti-woodworm and plastering intervention. The metal parts, which were heavily rusted, were brushed with brass bristle brushes, and then blown and vacuumed repeatedly. The work on the metal pipes was extremely delicate: removal of debris, blowing, washing, reshaping and welding. The hundreds of breaks and gashes were all reassembled and welded, but not a single barrel was replaced.





*Keyboard and register, before and after restoration*



*Inside of the keyboard, before and after restoration*



*Metal pipes, before and after restoration*

## Church bells

On the bell tower of the Church of San Gennaro, inside the belfry, there are two bells with the 'touch sound' system: the first has a diameter of 650 millimetres and weighs about 165 kilos and the second has a diameter of 500 millimetres and weighs about 80 kilos. The Meroll firm removed the rust from the mechanical supports, the blocks and the clappers and, in order to make the 'touch sound' system effective and controllable, has inserted an electropercussion device for each bell, support armatures, an electric panel, and a computer programmer. After the restoration and maintenance work, the bells of the Church of San Gennaro will mark time in the Real Bosco with peals every hour.



### **Historical and artistic notes about the Church of San Gennaro**

Designed by the architect and scenographer Ferdinando Sanfelice, the church was built in 1745 at the behest of Charles of Bourbon, as recorded in the old marble inscription on the facade. The small bell tower has ogival arches that are the result of a subsequent remodeling. The interior has retained its original oval floor plan with rather sober decorations as it was intended as a parish (1776) of the “people of campereccia devoted to mercenary work”, who lived in the Park. Charles of Bourbon was so devoted to San Gennaro that on the occasion of his marriage to Maria Amalia of Saxony on July 3rd 1738, he initiated the Order of San Gennaro to promote chivalry and Christian brotherhood. Above the high altar of the Church hangs an oil painting on canvas representing the patron saint, traditionally attributed to the famous painter Francesco Solimena (1657-1747), master and friend of Sanfelice. Recently it has been assigned to Leonardo Olivieri (1689-1750?), a pupil of the painter. In addition to the large canvas depicting San Gennaro, the church has been adorned since the eighteenth century with four plaster statues dedicated to the patron saints of the ruling family: St. Charles Borromeo and St. Amalia, in niches on either side of the apse dedicated to Charles of Bourbon and Mary Amalia of Saxony and St. Philip and St. Elizabeth in opposite corners of the church, in honor of Philip V King of Spain and Elizabeth Farnese.

### **The chapel: a place of worship for the Capodimonte community until 1970**

A productive social community comprised of the Porcelain factory and other activities developed inside the Royal Estate of Capodimonte which needed a place of worship: the parish of San Gennaro. Religious activity recorded since 1776 by the papers on the exercise of the sacraments and the liturgical-devotional practices continued until 1969-1970 up to the death of the parish priest Domenico La Gamba who was sacristan and custodian of the Church. The Chapel had not only a cultural and liturgical role, but also a social and economic one in the architectural context of the royal site. Subsequently, after the damage sustained in the earthquake of 1980 and the restorations, the Church was mainly used as an exhibition space, and only occasionally for worship.

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