

The reliquaries of Neapolitan silversmiths Capozzi (circa 1830)

“Storage on show”, chapter #1: from the National Museum of Palazzo di Venezia, Rome

**Abbey of Montecassino
December 19, 2015 – February 16, 2016**

The exhibition *The reliquaries of Neapolitan silversmiths Capozzi (circa 1830)* is the first chapter of a more extensive project named *Storage on display*. This project was conceived by Edith Gabrielli, Director of Polo Museale del Lazio, and aims at selecting and returning to public attention works of art that come from the storerooms of Polo Museale del Lazio.

They are therefore displayed in museums and also in other exhibition venues within Lazio.

The project is in line with the assignment that was given to Polo Museale del Lazio in 2015.

Polo Museale del Lazio is part of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and was created in 2015 to direct and improve 43 state-owned sites in Lazio such as museums and archaeological and cultural areas.

Precisely, the project aims at:

- Enhancing and developing cultural places that have been taken away from the general public for a long time, so that they can be enjoyed by the people and used for research purposes.
- Promoting museums, archaeological and cultural sites that don't currently interest citizens and tourists.
- Reinforcing and consolidating the cooperation and the mutual support agreed on by the 43 museums of Polo Museale del Lazio and by those entities which operate in the field of preservation and management of the cultural heritage.

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The exhibition focuses in particular on two objects used as reliquary monstrances and stored in the National Museum of Palazzo di Venezia.

A monstrance is also known as an ostensorium (or an ostensory) and was designed not only to keep the relics of some saints, but also for their public display to the faithful, especially during some special liturgies. The word monstrance comes from the Latin word *monstrare*, while the word *ostensorium* comes from the Latin word *ostendere*. Both terms mean "to show".

The shapes of the reliquaries in question resemble the monstrance intended for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but they lack the sunburst motif that usually decorates the border of the holy relic holder.

Since the eighteenth century, this type of reliquary was enriched considerably with figurative elements such as statuettes of saints, cherubs or angels. They were used, as in this case, to decorate the base or the shaft of the reliquary. The monstrance representing *the Supper at Emmaus* is exemplary of this. It belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century and it is on display at the Museum of the Abbey.

The stamp of the assayer Paul de Blasio, who was the expert appointed to prove the quality of silver artifacts, sets the two reliquaries between 1824 and 1832. Moreover, the hallmark suggests that they were executed at the workshop of the Capozzis, a Neapolitan family which was in the forefront of the silverware and sacred ornaments.

The execution of the reliquaries was attributed to Luigi Capozzi, due to their remarkable quality which is also noticeable on the angels' profiles. In 1838 he also forged St. Vincent Ferrer for the Duomo of Naples which was worth 3,000 ducats at the time. It was also recently exhibited at the Maillol Museum in Paris.

Two years later the people from Itri, a province of Latina, commissioned him to execute the statue of the Madonna della Civita for which they paid a substantial sum of money.

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Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Polo Museale del Lazio

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Exhibition Project

“Storage on show”

Planning and museum studies

Edith Gabrielli

Chapter # 1: From the National Museum of Palazzo di Venezia, Rome

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Sonia Martone

The reliquaries of Neapolitan silversmiths Capozzi (circa 1830)

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Abbey of Montecassino

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