

Santi Simone e Giuda

(deconsecrated)



The image above shows the exterior of the deconsecrated church of **Santi Simone e Giuda**. From Via dei Coronari in the heart of Rome you find the picturesque cul-de-sac Via di San Simone. The church dedication was to the apostles St Simon the Zealot and St Jude. The church was also known as **Santa Maria in Monticello**, with a reference to a small elevation called Monte Giordano on which it was built. (1) (2)

History

It takes its name from Giordano Orsini, senator of Rome in 1341. The church was allegedly founded by Pope Paschal II (1099-1118), but is mentioned for the first time in 1178 in a papal bull promulgated by Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) under the name of *Santa Maria de Monticellis*. (1) (2)

In the 15th century it became a parish church and had a cemetery attached to it just to the west. Some time after this the church was dedicated to the apostles Saints Simon and Jude. Pope Clement XI (1700-1721) had it heavily restored in 1720, and most of the surviving fabric is of this date. (1) (2)

The church of Santi Simone e Giuda was deconsecrated in the beginning of the 20th century and has since then been used for a number of profane purposes, e.g. as a cinema, as a carpenter's workshop with a small sawmill, as a restaurant and then as a theatre. The premises are now empty.

At the time of the deconsecration of the church the upper part of the façade was demolished. (1)
(2)

Exterior

The theatre's postal address was Via dei Coronari 66, but the old church is actually up a long flight of stairs from the end of the Via di San Simone. This last is a candidate for the shortest street (*Via*) in Rome. The stairs are a reminder that the church is perched on top of a mound. (2)

The edifice is completely surrounded by other buildings, and has no street presence. There used to be another entrance leading into the left hand aisle, accessed via an alleyway and another flight of steps from the Via della Vetrina where it bends. This access seems to have been obliterated by the modern buildings now there. (2)

The church is reached by a flight of twenty-eight steps. The rather narrow entrance is crowned by a curvilinear cornice. At the top of the staircase now, there is nothing to see except a door surmounted by a raised floating elliptical archivolt which is molded and has horizontal projections at its ends. Above this are domestic windows. Apparently, after the deconsecration this section of the façade was remodelled and the Baroque decoration destroyed. However, this was not a case of demolition because this part of the building used to be the priest's house which was built transversely over the first bay of the church in the 18th century restoration. For proof of this, go to the east corner of the entrance of the street where you can just see the old campanile perched on the roof of the priest's house. This has three open arched bell-housings, one above two and with a crumbled triangular pediment on top. (1) (2)

Interior

This was not a very small church, despite appearances. The plan was quadrilateral, almost a rectangle with the far wall longer than the entrance wall and the left hand side wall at a slight angle to the major axis. The layout was basilical, with a nave and side aisles. The edifice was divided into five bays, with an arcade of three pillars on each side; the left hand aisle in the first bay was separated from the rest of that aisle by a blocking wall in order to create a self-contained chapel. The final bay had thick blocking walls creating a main apse, and two side apses at the ends of the aisles. (2)

Although the church is deconsecrated and partly dismantled, the interior still retains two interesting frescoes. The one best preserved is the 15th century *Enthroned Madonna and the Child Jesus with Saints Simon and Jude* (right). It is supposed to have been painted by the school of Antoniazio Romano. The other is a fragment of a 14th century *Crucifixion*. The church is located on *Monte Giordano*, a small, apparently artificial, hill already inhabited in the 12th century. (1)



This is a small portion of Giovanni Battista Nelli's (1701-1756) detailed map of Rome from 1748, which shows the former church of Santi Simone e Giuda (no. 1) and its immediate surroundings. The short Via di San Simone (no. 2) precedes the flight of steps leading up to the entrance of the church. As we can see the church apparently had a second entrance preceded by a flight of steps (no. 3) leading from the present Via della Vetrina. Via dei Coronari (no. 4) is the main street in the region.

Location:

Via di San Simone 145

Coordinates: [41°54'0"N 12°28'9"E](#)

Links:

1. <http://web.comhem.se/%7Eu13117202/sssimgiu.htm>
2. http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Santi_Simone_e_Giuda
3. <http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi108.htm#Giuda>