

Santa Rita da Cascia in Campitelli (deconsecrated and reconstructed)



Santa Rita da Cascia in Campitelli is a deconsecrated 20th century church (incorporating 17th century work) situated on the junction between Via Montanara and Via del Teatro Marcellino in the rione Campitelli. It is dedicated to St Rita of Cascia, an Augustinian nun who lived from 1377 until 1447, and should not be confused with the church of Santa Rita da Cascia alle Vergine near the Trevi Fountain which is also dedicated to this saint.

History

The original church was built perhaps in the 11th century on the Piazza Aracoeli, and was called San Biagio in Mercatello (also called Campitello). It was rebuilt by Carlo Fontana, the façade being completed in 1665.

In 1900 St Rita was canonized, and the church was rededicated to her. It became a center of devotion to her in Rome, and was administered by a pious confraternity. This moved to Santa Rita da Cascia alle Vergini in 1904.

In 1928, the original church was demolished as part of Mussolini's remodelling of Rome. The little campanile and an ancient apse fresco survive on site, the latter protected by a small canopy. The rest of the church was reconstructed on its new site beginning in 1937, using original stonework. The war interrupted progress, and the project was only finished in 1940.

During the demolition, two features were allowed to remain as they were attached to the remains of the ancient Roman insula. These are the remnants of a tiny mediaeval campanile, the smallest in the city (the one at San Benedetto a Piscinula is the smallest in use) and an ancient fresco in the former apse.

However, the confraternity at Santa Rita alle Vergini were not interested. Hence the rebuilding proved pointless, and nobody wanted the new church. It was eventually deconsecrated in 1990, and the ownership reverted to the city.

After a thorough restoration in 2000, the building is in good condition and is now used for exhibitions. Paradoxically, this means that access is easier than with many small Roman churches, and is usually without charge.

Exterior

The façade is basically the one designed by Carlo Fontana in 1665. It was meant to be viewed obliquely, from the piazza. There were two storeys. The first had four Corinthian pilasters on high plinths, the pair flanking the main entrance tripletted and the other pair on the outer corners doubletted and wrapped around the corners. In between the pilasters were three large arched recesses, the central one being larger and containing the entrance approached by a flight of steps. The actual entrance was in the back of this recess, the archivolt being molded and supported by a pair of Doric pilasters of an ogee section the capitals of which were continued as string courses on either side. The other two recesses had lunette windows over large vertical panels. Over the entrance was a horizontal elliptical oeil de boeuf window, and over the side recesses was a pair of square ones. The central window was topped by a coat-of-arms in relief, and the pilasters supported an entablature with a projecting cornice.

The second storey had three frontages, the middle on facing straight ahead and the two side ones at an angle and slightly curved. The corners were occupied by pairs of conjoined Corinthian pilasters, and each frontage had a large arched recess matching those below. The central one contained a large window, while the side ones had lunettes. A triangular pediment surmounted the central frontage. Flaming torch finials occupied the outer corners of the first storey, and the four corners of the second one. The tip of the pediment had a cross finial.

Interior

The interior is octagonal in layout, stretched along the major axis and with an apse. The four diagonal walls have pairs of gigantic Corinthian pilasters, and the ceiling vault has a pattern of garlands forming a Maltese cross in cream on grey -quite attractive if restrained.

All paintings and statues have been removed, but the Baroque altar and tabernacle, featuring inlaid coloured marbles, are in situ and can be examined.

Location:

Coord: 41°53'33.4"N 12°28'48.1"E

Address:

8 Via Montanara
00186 Rome

External links

[Roman Churches Wiki](#)

[Italian Wikipedia page](#)

(Also see [San Biagio in Mercatello](#))

["Sovraintendenzaroma" web-page](#)

[Info.roma web-page](#)

[Roman Despatches](#)