

Santa Lucia della Tinta



The church of **Santa Lucia della Tinta** (St. Lucy of the Dye) is an originally 13th century, heavily restored former confraternity church in the rione Campo Marzio. It is a small and ancient church, formerly collegiate and parish, set in the country of the Dyers, from which it took its name. It was also called *Saint Lucia delle Quattro Porte* (*quattuor portarum*) or "Four Gates", which is thought to have referred to doorways in an ancient wall defending the riverbank hereabouts. (1) (6)

The church is dedicated to Saint Lucia, Roman martyr of the fourth century, and not to the homonymous and better known Saint Lucia of Syracusan, although both have an altar dedicated to them in the church. (6)

History

The first documentary evidence for the church is an inscription of 1122, found under a staircase on the premises in the 17th century. The church also is mentioned in several papal bulls of the 13th century, during renovations of the complex. (6)

The circumstances of the foundation are unknown, but a good guess is that the church was one of many small parish churches established in the city in the 10th century. This is supported by the later presence of a graveyard next to the church, which was a prerogative of a parish church until the 19th century. The original name was used in papal bulls in 1278 and 1289, granting indulgences to worshippers there. However, an alternative name used was Santa Lucia dei Galletti after a noble family who lived locally and who obviously patronized the church. (1)

From the evidence of the surviving fabric, it seems that the church was rebuilt in this century. It did not have a single priest, but a college of secular prebendaries which later had the name of Santa

Maria Regina Coeli. The establishment of this by a Pope Nicholas is recorded in a long epigraph preserved in the church; it is undated, so it is uncertain whether the third or the fourth of that name is meant. (1)

The name Tinta emerges in the 16th century, when the status of a parish church becomes certain. It literally means "dye", and is thought to have been derived from the locality, which contained dyeworks in the Middle Ages. (1)

The church was taken over in 1580 by the Confraternity of Coachmen (Compagnia dei Cocchieri), which arranged a major restoration. In this period, many of the little parish churches in the mediaeval area of the city were shut down, and given over to other purposes such as being headquarters of guilds or confraternities. (After the 1527 sack of Rome, the population dropped drastically.) The last census revealed that the parish only had 360 persons (including children) in 72 families, which was too small a number to support the institution. (1)

The Confraternity was not in charge for long, because in 1628 Pope Paul V granted the patronage of the church to the Borghese family (which lived locally) who arranged another major restoration. (1) (4)

In 1715, the present façade was added. The architect was **Tommaso Mattei**. The Borghese paid for a new frescoed ceiling in 1781, which was executed by **Taddeo Kuntze**, a Polish painter. In 1826, responsibility for the church was given to the Arcisodalizio della Curia Romana, which was an association of lawyers employed by the Papal government. Its patron was Maria Santissima Salus Infirmorum. (1)

There was a restoration in 1911, when parts of a Cosmatesque floor were uncovered under the present floor level. The Cosmati floor was detached and moved to the front of the main altar. (1) (4) (6)

In 1921 the church was formally put in the care of the Arcisodalizio della Curia Romana, which is a pious sodality for people in the legal profession and an offshoot of the Procuratori mentioned above. The Arcisodalizio remains in charge, and provides the priest. (1)

At the start of the 21st century, the church was attached to a pilgrimage hostel run by the Sorelle Missionaria Fraterna Domus. The exterior has recently been given an overdue re-painting, and in 2014 the ceiling was restored by the Superintendent of Rome because because of serious rain damaged. (1) (5) (6)

Exterior

The building is a long, narrow brick box under a pitched and tiled roof. There is a semi-circular exterior apse. The façade, with a campanile to the left, are architecturally distinct and are added onto the front. (1)

The church is bounded by domestic buildings on both sides, so most of the exterior is invisible. However, it is worthwhile going round to the back in Vicolo del Leonetto to see the 13th century mediaeval apse. It has a little stone arrow-slit of a window, and a decorative cornice with brick dentillations below a row of stone modillions. The really interesting thing about this, is that the interior of the apse is not part of that of the church. Above it is a window, and if you go into the church you will see that this is in the back wall of the tiny sanctuary. (1)

Façade

The façade was added in 1715, and is incorporated into the larger domestic building which occupies the corner of Via di Monte Brianzo and Via del Cannello. It is painted orange with the architectural details in white. Four thin blind pilasters on two high block plinths support an entablature containing four posts in lieu of pilaster capitals. The inner two of these have tassels. On the frieze of the entablature is a mutilated inscription reading:

Insignis Collegiata S. M. Regina Coeli in

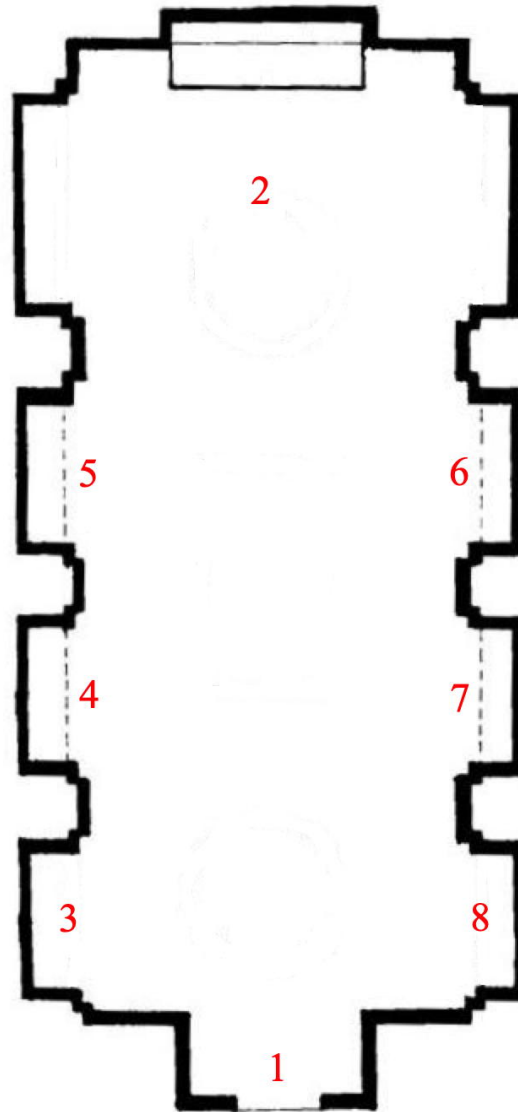
This refers to the college of priests that was in charge until the early 17th century. (1)

Over the inner two pilasters is a little triangular pediment, above which is a horizontal projecting cornice supported on a pair of flanking posts. The single doorway has an unmolded grey marble doorcase with a pair of little curlicues on the sides near the top, and a raised segmental pediment. Above this is a large blank Baroque tablet with the bottom edge curved to match the entablature, in a sunk panel with a stepped edge. The side zones in between the pilasters have a central oval tondo each (the left hand one is a window) bounded by two similarly styled panels above and below. (1)

Campanile

The campanile is attached to the left hand side of the façade, of a very simple design. The street frontage has a doorway and a single window in a wide frame, a thin string course at the level of the pediment cornice and a bellchamber above the façade roofline which has a round-headed soundhole in each face in a recessed panel within a wide frame. There is a pyramidal tiled cap. (1)

Plan



Interior

From the entrance portal [1] to the door of the nave there is a short passageway.

The narrow rectangular nave has four shallow niches of each side. The niches nearest the sanctuary are empty except for chairs. The two niches nearest the entrance have votive statues and pictures. The center two on each side have altars. There is a small, shallow sanctuary. Apart from the ceiling frescoes, the artworks in this church are anonymous and of little importance. (1)

Nave

The nave has Corinthian pilasters made to look like red stone in between the side chapel arches, and these support the ceiling cornice via posts (not directly). (1)

The ceiling is flat, wooden and coffered in panels with some acute angles. The three panels in tempera were executed in 1781 by **Taddeo Kuntze** with the assistance of **Pietro Rotati**, who painted the surrounding decorative elements. The central one depicts *The Assumption of Our Lady*, with St Lucy looking on, while the two smaller ones flanking this show putti in heaven (one group is playing with an umbrella). The ceiling was previously frescoed earlier in the century by **Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi**. The ceiling was restored in Decembe 2014. (1) (2) (5)

In the left side of the nave, between the altars is a memorial to Pietro Brenda (1848) with a good double cameo portrait relief. (1)

The long 13th century epigraph announcing the foundation of the college by "Pope Nicholas" is the alcove just to the left of the entrance [3]. On the opposite side is another alcove [8] with votive figures.

Sanctuary

The tiny sanctuary [2] has its walls painted to resemble polychrome marble decoration. The aedicule has two Ionic pilasters in what is meant to be yellow Siena marble support a horizontal entablature with egg-and-dart on its projecting cornice, and above this is a large window containing stained glass with the monogram of the name of Mary. (1)

The altarpiece is a palimpsest. A fresco fragment of the *Madonna and Child*, which looks 15th century, is set in an oil painting featuring two saints, a male cleric and a female martyr. This is in very poor condition, and has been badly restored. Nibby in 1839 wrote that the image was *antichissima, e molto divota*. (1) (a)

A portion of the Cosmatesque floor discovered in 1911 has been re-laid in front of the altar. (1)

Side altars

The side chapels are in the center two shallow arched niches on each side, with the archivolts and wall surfaces in the same fake polychrome marble as the sanctuary. The altarpieces are affixed to the walls without aedicules. (1)

Altar of SS Lucy and Geminianus

The altarpiece of the first chapel [4] on the left is *S. Lucia*, a Roman widow lady, and *S. Geminianus*, who suffered martyrdom together under Dioclesian (note the putti above holding palm branches). This is anonymous of the 17th century, too. (1) (a)

Altar of Our Lady Mater Infirmorum

The second on the left [5] is dedicated to Our Lady Mater Infirmorum, and the 18th century altarpiece shows SS Giles, Yves and Genesius interceding with the Madonna and Child on behalf of the Souls in Purgatory. This work was commissioned by the Arcisodalizio della Curia Romana which was founded in 1723, and which took over this church in 1923. The three unusual saints are the Arcisodalizio's patrons. (1)

Altar of St Lucy

The second on the right [6] is dedicated to S. Lucia of Syracuse, Virgin and Martyr, who also suffered under Dioelesian. The altarpiece is anonymous, 17th century. (1) (a)

Altar of the Crucifixion

The first on the right [7] is dedicated to the Crucifixion. The painted wooden corpus is older than the 20th century cross. (1)

Notes:

Artists and Architects:

Giovanni Francesco [Grimaldi](#) [aka *Il Bolognese*] (1606-1680), Italian architect/painter
Pietro Rotati (18th cent.), Italian painter
Tadeusz [Kuntze](#) [aka *Taddeo Polacco*] (1732-1793), Polish painter
Tommaso [Mattei](#) (1652-1726), Italian architect

Location:

Addr: Via di Monte Brianza 61

Coordinates: [41° 54' 9"N 12° 28' 25.6"E](#)

Info:

Telephone: 0039 06 68802727

Opening times

Every day 04:00pm-06:00pm

Thursday Closed

Saturday Closed

Mass Times:

Tuesday and Friday 06:45pm

Sunday 11:00am

Links and References:

1. [Roman Churches Wike](#)
2. [Info Roma web site](#)
3. [Tourist Information web site](#)
4. [Medioevo.roma.it](#)
5. Art Magazine (no longer available online)
6. [Arcisodalizio della Curia Romana](#)
 - a. Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AND MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842; Pg. V2:275

[De Alvaris gallery on Flickr](#)