

CHAPTER 13

MIGRANT SAINTS

Art, Religion and Activism in Contemporary Naples

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INTRODUCTION

Wandering through the central Naples neighbourhood of Sanità one hot July afternoon, I came face to face with the image that you see in Figure 13.1.

A young woman looks demurely upwards, away from the viewer's gaze. A golden cloak is wrapped around her shoulders, and she holds a bunch of white lilies in her left hand. A small text at the bottom of the image informs the viewer that this is Santa Patrizia, although almost everybody here in Naples would already have recognized this highly beloved of the city's fifty-one patron saints through the lilies in her hand. What the viewer may well have been unaware of until reading the image's text, however, is that Santa Patrizia, like the model representing her in the image before me, was a migrant to Naples, brought here through calamitous circumstances beyond her control.

I walked deeper into Sanità, meandering through the great street market of Via Vergini and its overflowing stalls staffed by Sri Lankans, Ukrainians, Senegalese and those born to this city. Pausing by the ever-popular Sepe bar, I saw another image of a gold-wrapped saint, this time San Marco the Evangelist. Again, a small text revealed that this saint, too, was a migrant, from present-day Palestine to Egypt, and then eventually, posthumously, to Venice. Emerging from the tight streets into the Piazza della Sanità, I was confronted with the golden glare – amplified by the midday sun – of the



Figure 13.1. *Santa Patrizia* by Santi Migranti (Massimo Pastore).
Photo © Magnus Course.

great Basilica della Sanità, known locally as San Vincenzo (after the Catalan saint, yet another patron saint of the city and of this neighbourhood in particular). The front of the basilica had been covered in the same golden wrapping that had embraced the images of Santa Patrizia and San Marco that I had seen earlier, and now its meaning became belatedly clear: the golden cloak was one of the thermal reflective blankets given to those rescued from the Mediterranean, a striking visual index of what has come to be termed in some quarters 'the migrant crisis'. And inside the basilica, a further image, much like the ones of Santa Patrizia and San Marco, yet this time with the saint looking directly at the viewer, a crook in his hand: San Gaudioso, an early Christian martyr from present-day Tunisia, standing guard over the entrance to the crypt that for centuries held his relics, once again shrouded in gold. Now, finally, these images' identities emerged more clearly; they were not just saints, they were migrant saints.

This chapter constitutes a brief exploration of how contemporary artists in Naples draw upon religious iconography for their art, and in particular, for their art as activism. As I shall describe, they may do so to very different ends and to ask very different kinds of questions, a diversity matched only by the diversity of viewers' responses to their images. My interest is not

so much in the political debates in which these artists seek to engage – the place of migrants in Italian society, the rampant consumerism of the modern age, the continuing struggles for gender equality – but in the fact that they are able to draw on and speak through this widely shared repertoire of religious imagery to make their case. This leads to further, open-ended questions about which I can offer little more than speculations: the nature of the relation between art, politics and religion; the particular role of public art in Neapolitan life; and the question of what, if anything, makes a religious image ‘religious’ in the first place. Public space in Naples is saturated with imagery of one kind or another; imagery frequently reaching towards specific social and political ends (see Guano, this volume; Molnar 2017; Pavoni 2019; Salomone 2018). The large proportion of this public imagery that we might classify as ‘religious’ is again highly varied: from notices of memorial masses, to sculptural features of buildings, to the ex-voto shrines built into the city walls, or to adverts in Sinhala for trips to Lourdes or Medjugorje, the religious, and more specifically, the Catholic, is deeply engrained in Naples’s urban environment (cf. Oliphant 2021). My tactic in the space available is to narrow down the scope of this foray into an investigation of the ways in which artists in Naples have utilized the Catholic iconography of the city’s patron saints to widely different ends. Let me start with a fuller account of the project my encounter with which I described at the beginning of this chapter, and which sparked my interest in art as politics in the Neapolitan context: Massimo Pastore’s Santi Migranti project.

SANTI MIGRANTI

I say ‘Massimo Pastore’s project’, but it takes quite a bit of digging to find out who is actually behind these life-sized images of saints that appeared all over Naples, then across small towns in Campania, then in other Italian cities including Rome and Verona, and eventually as far away as the European Parliament in Brussels. None of the images are signed, yet on closer inspection the words ‘Santi Migranti’ appear in the bottom right corner of each image. The S of ‘Santi’ is in such a pale blue that if you look too quickly, it almost reads as ‘anti migranti’. And this, as Massimo explained to me in his Via Foria studio in Naples last year, is precisely the point: to transform something negative into something positive. The negative refers not only to the notoriously anti-migrant stance of the then Minister for the Interior, Matteo Salvini, but also to what Massimo describes as the Italian people’s ‘wobble in their own humanity’ (*a traballare nella propria umanità*) in response to this mainstreamed discourse of anti-migrant sentiment (Cole 1997; Tuckett 2018; Grotti and Brightman 2021). The project was born out of a trip

made by Massimo to Lampedusa in 2015, a trip inspired out of interest in the ‘welcome centres’ for migrants recently recovered from the Mediterranean. Yet he soon realized that these centres were anything but ‘welcoming’ (cf. Quagliariello 2021). Confronted by the sheer scale and depth of human suffering, Massimo initiated the first phase of what was to become the Santi Migranti project, #QuiRiposa. #QuiRiposa consisted of epigraphs of drowned migrants copied from the cemetery in Lampedusa, converted into the familiar death notices that cover the walls of many southern Italian towns and cities, which Massimo then pasted throughout the streets of both Lampedusa and, upon his return, Naples. The idea was to create a kind of equivalent to the Stolperstein ‘stumbling stones’ conceived by the German artist Gunter Demnig as a way of memorializing the Holocaust at the individual level, and thus exercising a shift in both scale and location: from statistics to individuals, from far away to one’s own doorstep.

A poignant example of the #QuiRiposa project is the death notice for Ester Ada, an 18-year-old Nigerian woman who was found dead in 2009 on a boat rescued from the Mediterranean, a boat that was subsequently unable to dock in Lampedusa until four days after its initial rescue due to a diplomatic spat between Italy and Tunisia. Massimo explained to me how he was struck by the parallels between the sad fate of Ester Ada and the story of Santa Patrizia, as mentioned above, one of Naples’s most beloved patron saints. Santa Patrizia was a young woman who, like Ester Ada, was forced to flee from her homeland in present-day Turkey, ended up being shipwrecked in the Mediterranean sea at the entrance to Naples and died shortly afterwards. Massimo started researching the life stories of patron saints, not just of Naples, but throughout Italy, and he soon realized that nearly all of them were migrants whose stories very much reflected the tragedies of contemporary migrants. As he explained: ‘As I began developing this project, I was struck to see how the stories of these men and women – now elevated to places of honour and as objects of praise on altars – are so similar to the stories of those men and women now found dead on boats in the middle of the sea.’ And thus the #QuiRiposa project gave birth to the Santi Migranti project proper.

The Santi Migranti project consists of life-sized images of Catholic saints, each identifiable both by the symbolism of their classic iconography and by a short hagiographic text at the bottom of each image. The images are nearly always displayed in public places, usually pasted up on the street in the early hours of the morning, and with an intended correspondence between the place and the saint, so the latter’s image will usually be displayed in a place of which they are patron. What ties all of these images together, beyond the small Santi Migranti logo, is the golden cloak, an emblem both of holiness and, of course, of survival and rescue from the sea.¹ In most cases, the

models are themselves migrants, and in many cases, migrants from the same place that the saint for whom they are modelling originated. So, for example, my friend Omar, a Palestinian man who runs a Middle Eastern restaurant in the Centro Storico of Naples, modelled for San Pietro, himself a Palestinian. The correspondence is not always exact – a Ukrainian migrant modelled the Swedish Santa Brigida, for example – but the idea is simply to draw attention not only to shared histories of migration, but to shared political contexts of intolerance and oppression, and our obligation to resist them.

The Santi Migranti project has also sought to be highly responsive to current happenings in Italy. For example, when the Brescia striker Mario Balotelli was subject to racist abuse in a match against Verona, Massimo headed straight up to Verona the following week to plaster an image of San Zeno, the patron saint of Verona, around the city to remind the Veronese that their beloved patron was himself a Black African.

And when the parish priest of Sora, a small town in Lazio just across the border from Campania, started emitting increasingly racist, anti-migrant statements, Massimo appeared with an image of the town's (migrant) patron saint, Santa Restituta, and plastered it across the street from the parish office. And closer to home, the far-right organization CasaPound (see Cammelli, this volume) woke up to find the front wall of the building housing its Neapolitan headquarters decorated with a life-sized image of the African San Calogero, modelled by the Senegalese-Neapolitan activist Pierre.

Santi Migranti is, of course, but one of many, many artistic and political responses to the debate about migration in Italian society, and indeed across Europe as a whole. My purpose here is neither to explore the issue of migration, nor directly to understand the motivations for the project itself.² For the artist's intentions alone are clearly but one part of a much broader picture. My interest here is to understand the particular agency of the religious imagery upon which such contemporary activist art can draw as a resource. For my contention is that this relationship is not necessarily as transparent as it might at first seem; the images are neither straightforwardly religious nor unproblematically secular; their very force comes from their ability to merge these categories together (cf. Oliphant 2021). To engage in this exploration, we need to turn away from the artist's intentions and motivations, and towards the way in which the images have been received.

These images, like all images, have afterlives. And their afterlives afford us some clues as to their reception. In some cases they have been immediately torn down, in others covered in racist graffiti, which in turn has been responded to with anti-racist graffiti. Massimo puts up his posters late at night, not only to avoid the physical bustling of passers-by, but primarily to avoid direct confrontation with particularly 'fervent' (*infuocato*) opponents. He then returns the next day to try and gauge people's reactions:



Figure 13.2. *San Zeno* by Santi Migranti (Massimo Pastore). © Massimo Pastore.

It's usually the case that the reactions are very varied: there's indifference, there's those who stop and have read the text at the bottom of the image, because in the place of what is usually a prayer on a saint's prayer card [*santino*], there is written the story of the saint's migration, and people stop and read that and say 'Well, they were

migrants; yes, even they were migrants.' This reaction really struck me, but so, too, did the reaction of scorn. This work clearly touches some aspects of humanity that aren't so pretty, to do with racism, to do with intolerance. So very often the images are ripped down. . . . In many cases, the images become a sort of territory of encounter and conflict, when people have written things against migrants over the image's face, and then somebody else has written something defending migrants, so it becomes a kind of canvas upon which people write their impressions. At first, when I saw that the images had been ripped down with such meanness and stupidity, I felt really bad. I said to myself, 'How is this possible? You're dishonouring the memory of somebody who's done so much for others. How is it possible that you've arrived at such indifference and evil?' But then I realized that in fact this, too, was part of the project, to register the various reactions.

Massimo tells me that nearly all of the images get torn down in the end. Sometimes this is simply part of the ecology of street images: old ones, once faded and weather-damaged, get torn down and new images are pasted in their place. In other instances, as described above, the images are consciously defaced, quite literally in fact, as it is always the saint's face that is the first part of the image to be ripped off or scribbled over. Fragments of the images have remained on Naples's streets for months, and in some cases, years.

ARE THESE 'RELIGIOUS' IMAGES?

The Santi Migranti project has been highly visible, both in the media and in the streets themselves.

It has impact because these images of saints are immediately known, immediately recognized: for some viewers, at least, they index and perhaps even instantiate the holiness of a saint. As Peter Brown's (2014) study on the origin of the cult of saints has shown, proximity to a saint's material presence – either in life through pilgrimage or in death through burial near the saint's tomb – has long been foundational in thinking about Christian materiality more generally. And as Caroline Walker Bynum (2011) has shown, this emphasis on the divine potential within visual materiality came to be further elaborated throughout the Middle Ages into the Renaissance. This complex relationship with materiality and presence continues to characterize Catholic practice today (Mayblin et al. 2017; Orsi 2018). Thus we might surmise that for at least some viewers, each Santi Migranti image of a saint is 'religious' in the sense that its agency emerges as much from the direct connection to the divine as from any intention of the artist. I have witnessed people crossing themselves as they pass by these images, just as they would cross themselves in front of images in a church, or reach out to briefly touch the images with their fingertips before raising those

fingertips to their lips. Yet I think that these images are both more and less than ‘religious’ images; to suggest that their impact comes solely from the piety and devotion of an unproblematically devout and unproblematically Catholic Neapolitan populace would be something of a distortion to say the least. In elaborating this point, let us return briefly to the nature of the religious image.

Many scholars have elaborated how the Reformation marked a distinct shift in the functioning of Christian materiality, one in which Protestantism came to reject and oppose direct access to the divine through sight and touch.³ This devaluation of material mediation eventually came to be one of the hallmarks of ‘modernity’, a modernity freed from the ‘enchantment’ of a tactile and visible divine, and one that in many ways became constitutive of its close bedfellow, the secular (Keane 2007; Weber 1993). To be secular and modern is to keep the material in its appropriate disenchanted place, to recognize all agency as human agency, and thus to see images as simply images (Asad 2003; Taylor 2007).

The relevance of this shift in Christian materiality has been applied to the particular case of images by the art historian Hans Belting (1997). Belting’s highly influential study of the evolution of Christian images suggests that prior to the seismic shifts of the Renaissance and then the Reformation, ‘art’ as we currently imagine it did not exist. Rather, the images indexed not the work of an artist, but the divine presence both represented and embodied in what Belting calls the ‘cult image’. According to Belting, this immanence of divine presence in images was gradually eroded by a growing emphasis on the individual artist as agent, and it is this emphasis that led to the emergence of the ‘art image’ as we currently understand it. There are lots of reasons that we might perhaps hesitate to endorse Belting’s narrative, but it does nevertheless illustrate a particular tension between sources of agency in an image. The art historian James Elkins (2004) has taken this point further in distinguishing the religious from the spiritual in art, suggesting that whereas the spiritual may have a place in contemporary art, the religious (by which he understands the direct presence of the divine) might be understood to disqualify images from counting as art at all. In a sense, then, following Belting and Elkins’s emphasis on the definitive role of the artist’s agency, we might say that ‘religious art’ is an oxymoron. Yet my suspicion is that rather than being resolved chronologically – religious images slowly replaced by artistic ones – this tension between the divine and artistic agency in an image can exist simultaneously; or to use Belting’s terms, the image might be both art image and cult image. So if Massimo Pastore’s *Santi Migranti* project cannot be understood as solely ‘religious’, let us turn now to another project – *Roxy in the Box*’s *Martirni* series – and ask how it might or might not constitute ‘secular’ art.

SANTI MARTIRI

A contrasting use of Catholic iconography can be found in the Martirini series of another Neapolitan artist, Roxy in the Box. Like Massimo, Roxy sees her work as very much belonging to the street and to the Neapolitan people, and not simply for wealthy collectors and galleries. For her, this engagement with the street, this ‘porosity’ between the artist’s studio and the life of the city, is one of the things that differentiates the Neapolitan art scene from art scenes elsewhere in Italy (cf. Benjamin and Lacis 1995). Roxy has drawn upon Catholic iconography at several points in her long artistic trajectory. In 1999 she produced two images of the Madonna, one of the Addolorata (Our Lady of Sorrows) covered in ladybirds, and one of the Immacolata (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception). The second image is a play on the Neapolitan name for this incarnation of Mary – ‘Mmaculat – which is phonetically close to the Italian word ‘maculata’ meaning ‘stained’, a word known but rarely used in Naples, and graphically represented through her virginal purity being covered by purple blotches. Roxy explains that there was no scandal when these images were displayed, because ‘they’re already a part of Neapolitan culture, not just a religious thing’. A more recent series has focused more specifically on Neapolitan saints, in fact on the two most popular of the city’s many



Figure 13.3. *A' Mmaculata* by Roxy in the Box. Print © Roxy in the Box.



Figure 13.4. *San Gennaro* by Roxy in the Box. Print © Roxy in the Box.

patrons – San Gennaro and Santa Patrizia – the first recognizable by his mitre, the second by her lilies.

San Gennaro's mark on the city is everywhere, from the fact that every other man seems to be named after him to the 'Stai Sciolt' T-shirts beloved by the Neapolitan youth.⁴ In this series, both saints are grafted into the

unmistakeable branding of the alcoholic drink, Martini, but with the exchange of an *r* for the *n* giving ‘Martiri’.

Roxy explains to me in her studio that these are not necessarily religious images in any straightforward way, partly due to the particularities of these particular saints. San Gennaro does not belong to the Church. He belongs to the people of Naples, and on his feast days, the Cardinal must ask permission from a deputation representing the people of the city in order to gain access to the vial containing his miraculous blood.

So we’ve grown up here in Naples with this saint who belongs to us all, who is ours. The treasure of San Gennaro belongs to us, even to those of us who are not religious or drawn to different kinds of spirituality. He belongs even to those who aren’t Catholic. He’s a bit like Maradona; even those people who don’t like football still love Maradona. I care very much for San Gennaro and I believe in him. It’s as if he were a relative, as if he were my grandfather, so I don’t differentiate what is of the Church and what is not of the Church. I’ve used the image of San Gennaro to encourage people to come to my studio, but I’ve not taken advantage of him. Sure, I’ve used him, but with love, in the sense that I very much love San Gennaro. A few years ago, I started a new project, creating a graphic image of San Gennaro. I wanted to see who would buy it: the great collectors of modern art, very rich people, or those people from Quartieri Spagnoli, Sanità, Scampia, who are poor and not involved in the art scene. The project was very successful because my San Gennaro is in the private collections of very rich people, but also in the houses of housewives in Quartieri Spagnoli or Forcella.

For Roxy, then, the images are ‘spiritual’ but not necessarily ‘religious’ in the sense of being encompassed by the institutional power of the Catholic Church. I am not entirely convinced by this distinction given that the Church in Naples has always had a somewhat tenuous hold on religiosity in the city, partly down to the proliferation of powerful religious orders that a millennium of archbishops have failed to control, and partly down to a populace whose religious imagination always seems to exceed the strictures of canon law. But neither are Roxy’s images ‘secular’ in any straightforward way; they could be read simply as secular kitsch, but to do so would be to ignore the fact that they very much depend upon a sense of intimacy, proximity and devotion to the saint portrayed, an affective predisposition with clear roots in a Catholic ontology of the image.

THE UBIQUITY OF CATHOLIC IMAGERY

To place Santi Migranti and Martirni in the broader context of Neapolitan art, I offer up two brief final examples, both by better known artists, but drawing upon the same Catholic iconography. By far the largest image is that produced by the Neapolitan muralist Jorit, an image of San Gennaro that



Figure 13.5. *San Gennaro* by Jorit Agoch. © Jorit Agoch.

occupies the outer wall of an entire apartment building at the entrance to the Forcella quarter.

This is publicly commissioned ‘civil’ art. It is undoubtedly both visually striking and, I think, beautiful, but it perhaps does not share in the street-level immediacy and intimacy of the other works discussed here. In fact, Jorit’s murals have become so widespread in Naples, they are almost like the visual equivalent of McDonalds – wherever we go, we can find one, and it will always be (more or less) the same. And a final work worthy of mention is that of the British street artist Banksy, whose only work in Italy to date can be found in the Centro Storico of Naples. It is a depiction of the Madonna with a pistol over her head.

The fact that a non-Neapolitan artist like Banksy, too, chose to draw upon Catholic iconography shows how deeply intertwined it is with the imagery and indeed the imagination of the city, not just in how it represents itself to itself but how it is represented to others. This use of Catholic iconography in contemporary art clearly has a genealogy that stretches back into the earliest days of Christianity and, some would argue, as far back as pre-Christian ancient Greek thinking about images. Likewise, the role of religious imagery as part of the visual landscape – countless ex-voto shrines built into the city’s walls, churches on every corner – again has a trajectory stretching back centuries.

One feature of these images is that they are immediately recognizable – they constitute terms in a shared frame of visual reference. People might use



Figure 13.6. *Madonna with Pistol* by Banksy. Image © Wikimedia Commons.

them to ‘say’ different things, and they may be ‘read’ in different ways, but their meanings (multiple as they may be) emerge from a shared visual grammar. These elements of Catholic iconography might be said to constitute the visual equivalent of a Wittgensteinian ‘language game’ – all parties have to agree at some level on what they are before they can be brought into disagreement, as ‘there can be no disagreement outside of the game’ (Wittgenstein 2009). And, still following Wittgenstein, we might also see this visual language game constituted by Catholic iconography as occurring within a ‘form of life’, an implicit, even embodied awareness of how the various contexts of meaning within Naples’s narrow streets fit together. Participation in this game does not require any commitment to Catholic belief; it is interesting to note that even those people born and raised beyond the Neapolitan or even Catholic tradition come to recognize and understand the importance of saints, both as indices of religious devotion but also of political potential.⁵ In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to explore how the very ubiquity of Catholic iconography is perhaps what both enables and restricts its political potential.

Elayne Oliphant’s recent exploration of the ubiquity of Catholic art and architecture in Paris offers an intriguing take on how such Catholic materiality blurs the fissures between the religious and the secular, and through

its constitution as an ‘unmarked’ category becomes a site of both privilege and exclusion (Oliphant 2021; see also Muehlebach 2012). She argues that ‘In contrast to the violence of both invisibility and hypervisibility, Catholicism’s banality allows its symbols to move between the background and the foreground, the overlooked and the monumental (but never the hypervisible or the invisible) in the French public sphere’ (Oliphant 2021: 18). In the Neapolitan case, like that of Paris, there is no doubt that the ubiquity of Catholic materiality may also be understood to constitute a form of ‘banal privilege’. For example, during a day I spent with the *Polizia Mortuaria*, who are responsible for the burial of those who die with neither friends nor family to bury them, an officer insisted to me that the cross placed upon each grave was not religious in any way but simply a secular sign of respect (this despite the fact that most of the people he ended up burying were Muslim migrants). Yet while Oliphant might indeed be correct that this ‘Catholic abundance may continue to buttress racial, religious, and class privilege’ (ibid.: 25), what she fails to leave room for in her analysis are the many ways in which Catholicism can simultaneously resist and undo these forms of privilege. The artists discussed in this chapter are just one example, to which we could add the countless Catholic associations scattered through the city and the rest of Italy, or the deeply radical strains of Catholic social thought present throughout Europe.

I make this point not to ‘defend’ Catholicism, but simply to point out its indeterminacy and heterogeneity (Mayblin et al. 2017). Perhaps this problem stems from the fact that it is never entirely clear in Oliphant’s account what is meant by ‘Catholicism’ – is it located in the institution? In people’s intimate faith and belief? Yet while I am not totally convinced by Oliphant’s take on the ‘banality’ of Catholic materiality, I do appreciate the attempt to offer new insights into the ever-shifting sands of how the secular comes to be constituted. For while none of the artists I have discussed here understand themselves to be producers of ‘religious art’, they each, in their own way, rely heavily on a shared religious grammar with their assumed viewers. In the Neapolitan context, at least, Catholic iconography is not so much a message telling us one thing, but rather a grammar, a generator of meaning, through which it is possible to say quite different, even opposed things towards a highly variegated set of ends.

In this chapter, I hope to have shown how Catholic iconography is a deeply powerful and compelling visual grammar upon which a variety of Neapolitan artists productively draw for different ends. Nevertheless, it is also a profoundly ambiguous and indeed ambivalent resource. ‘Religious’ iconography does not relate to ‘religion’ in as obvious or direct a way as we might expect. The very same image may resonate with a viewer’s deeply held spiritual devotion, with a secular sense of pride in and ownership of a

Neapolitan cultural identity or even with titillation at a conscious devaluation of a religious image to the realm of kitsch pop art. These are not mutually exclusive perspectives. In fact, I suspect that many Neapolitans – both artists and viewers – experience the image in all of these contradictory ways at once. The ontology of the image, as W. J. T. Mitchell (2005) has argued, can never be fully exhausted, constituted as it is by the infinite refractions of both image and viewer, and the relationship between them. So what, then, given this complexity, might we want to say in conclusion about these non-religious religious images? I think, perhaps, nothing more and nothing less than that they are *known*, they are immediately recognizable – San Gennaro’s mitre, Santa Patrizia’s lilies – and they are embedded in a form of life. Thus the key point for me is that while they correspond to terms within a shared grammar of visual reference, they are never wholly predetermined; they may have one foot unmoving, planted firmly with the divine, but another foot with the constant artistic reworking of generations of artists and viewers, each stretching the saint’s stride in new directions.

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NOTES

1. See Ben-Yehoyada (2017) and Chambers (2008) for an exploration of the Mediterranean as a space of constant flux and migration.
2. See Dawes (2020), Lucht (2011) and Tournilhac (2022) for accounts of migration and migrant lives in Naples.
3. Although even Protestantism never entirely escaped the need for mediation as much as it claimed (cf. Engelke 2007)
4. ‘Stai Sciolt’ refers to the exclamation made when San Gennaro’s blood miraculously liquifies on his feast days.
5. Several of the models involved in the project were Muslim, a religion in which saints are not understood to be direct mediators of divine power, but rather exemplars to follow. Yet these models, too, quickly came to understand the nature of saints within the city.

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