

The Tradition of Change in Copies of the Santa Casa di Loreto: The Case of San Clemente in Venice

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When the Santa Casa di Loreto, or the Holy House of the Virgin, was reconstructed on the Venetian island of San Clemente **FIGURE 1**, the commissioner effectively translated a sacred architectural interior into the local community. By re-envisioning the holy domicile where the Virgin Mary received the Holy Spirit into her womb, the Venetian patron and artists promoted a local iteration of a sacred relic and pilgrimage destination that, according to the miraculous history of the object, first resided in contested Venetian territories before migrating to its ultimate destination on Italy's eastern coast. Referencing a sacred space elsewhere, the structure at San Clemente behaves as a distinct devotional object, wherein design choices executed across the surfaces of the Holy House express local priorities. That confrontation between aesthetic and symbolic languages of the original and the replica contours many early modern recreations of sacred interiors. Herein I will explore the Venetian replicas of the Santa Casa di Loreto at the local churches of San Clemente and later at San Pantalon, together with printed representations of the devotional structure, that re-envision the Santa Casa di Loreto as a characteristically Venetian devotional object, and call into question the authority of the Loretan original.

The Santa Casa di Loreto **FIGURE 2** is rich for potential replication, given its pre-existing penchant for mobility. As the traditional Church narrative of the Holy House states, the structure lifted off its foundations in Palestine at the close of the thirteenth century at the behest of the Virgin. With the assistance of angels, the structure relocated first to Trsat in modern Croatia — a Dalmatian territory periodically invaded and controlled by Venetian forces — and then to the eastern coast of Italy. After various shifts in location, the structure finally settled on a summit in the Italian region of Le Marche, assuming the name of Loreto.¹ In her miraculous machinations, the Virgin sought for and supposedly found a community worthy of her sacred domicile. The tradition of divine travel in the narrative of the Santa Casa successfully untethers the structure from a single geographic origin — the Holy Land — and opens the building and its cult of Marian devotion to multiple communities simultaneously. That the structure once resided in the environs of Venice makes the edifice all the more relatable to the Laguna Republic. The relic's fickle nature further lends itself to the many later re-creations of the divine edifice constructed across the Serenissima Repubblica and beyond over the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries as the latest relocations of a devotional object in search of worship.

In many ways, the Santa Casa replica on the island of San Clemente faithfully re-creates the original at Loreto. Both structures have an east-west orientation, with the front short façade of the structure facing west into a church interior, and the eastern wall towards the choir or apse. The window through which the Archangel Gabriel supposedly flew to bring the Word of God to the Virgin perforates the western wall in each iteration. Much like the Loretan original, the structural exterior at San Clemente became a site of opulent expression as a reliquary case enveloping the sacred interior.² The richly ornamented surfaces of multicoloured stone and sculptural relief encase a humble structural core **FIGURE 3**. Internally, the religious devotee encounters a simple, barrel-vaulted interior with walls composed of uneven stone and brick overlaid with a patchwork of frescoed plaster, from which fragmented faces gaze solemnly out at the viewer. In the eastern internal wall, a niche



FIGURE 1. Santa Casa replica (exterior: western wall), various stones (Istrian limestone, marble), painted wood, 1644–46 (subsequent additions 1661–1704). Venice, San Clemente



FIGURE 2. Santa Casa di Loreto (exterior: east façade), various stones (marble, porphyry), 1507–79. Loreto, Santa Casa di Loreto.



FIGURE 3. Santa Casa replica (exterior: south wall), various stones (Istrian limestone, marble), painted wood, 1644–46. Venice, San Clemente.

shrine once contained a wooden sculptural replica of the *Virgin and Child of Loreto* at San Clemente, an iconic sculptural type associated with the Santa Casa original and attributed to Saint Luke **FIGURE 4**.³ Before the niche at San Clemente stands an altar dedicated to the Virgin against a latticed partition. Overall, the interior at San Clemente measures approximately 4 × 9.5 m, offering a near commensurate spatial experience to the original at Loreto.⁴

The context for the Holy House commission in Venice emerges from the ravages of the plague. During the 1630 epidemic, one of the more significant outbreaks in the city's history, the local vicar, Monsignor Francesco Lazzaroni of the parish of Sant'Angelo, vowed to pilgrimage to the Santa Casa at Loreto in thanks for the Virgin's divine intervention.⁵ Having subsequently survived the plague and yet to make his pilgrimage journey by the 1640s, Monsignor Lazzaroni offered the construction of a local Holy House in place of his original pledge.⁶ Completed in two years, the dedication of the Holy House in 1646 included a grandiose procession of a *Virgin of Loreto* cult statue commissioned by Lazzaroni. The iconic sculpture travelled to the island from its temporary display at Santa Maria della Carità, accompanied by a boisterous train of *gondole* filled with Venetian nobles, members of religious orders, and singing crowds. Men fired cannon and played music as devotees carried lit torches across the waters.⁷ Instead of going to Loreto personally, Lazzaroni effectively brought the Virgin of Loreto and her Santa Casa to Venice instead.⁸

The choice of San Clemente as a location for the Holy House replica seems threefold. When searching for a site for his devotional construction, the commissioner, Lazzaroni, approached multiple communities within the city, including his own parish of Sant'Angelo in the *sestiere* (neighbourhood) of San Marco. These preliminary requests failed to gain traction, most likely because of the expansive footprint projected for the structure: the small church on San Clemente doubled in size to accommodate the new architectural installation.⁹ Unable to secure adequate space elsewhere, the commissioner settled on the island out in the Laguna, then owned by the Augustinian canons of the church Santa Maria della Carità.¹⁰ Beyond convenience of expansion, San Clemente particularly suited the Holy House by virtue of its long-standing status as an Augustinian-run hospital and quarantine site for incurable disease: the island became a centre for plague victims, and subsequently a mental institution.¹¹ Finally, the site reportedly acted as a resting point for pilgrims on their way south to the original Holy House of the Virgin at Loreto.¹² In this final respect, the San Clemente structure joined various other Holy Houses constructed along pathways leading to the sacred site, as spiritual way stations reminding and reinforcing pilgrimage expectations regarding the devotee's ultimate destination.¹³

The Holy House at San Clemente is a talisman against the plague, an *ex-voto* produced in thanksgiving for delivering the community from harm. As a settlement traditionally founded on the day of the Annunciation, 25 March 421, Venetians gravitated towards the Holy House as a structural embodiment of the Incarnation. Its re-creation in the Laguna at San Clemente reinforced Venice's self-proclaimed status as the chosen city of the Virgin, a fact supported by her initial choice of Dalmatia as the first site of the Holy House's residence.¹⁴ As such, the San Clemente Santa Casa expresses its local orientation through its commission and devotional value, and poignantly

through its construction. A re-evaluation of the structure's decorative program and visual legacy reveals the structure's transformation into an expression of Venetian devotion.

As with many architectural creations of the early modern period, a certain level of mental reconstruction is necessary to visualize the structure's original design. The façade of the Holy House at San Clemente that we see today does not reflect its original appearance. When the building was first conceived in 1644, a program of colourful, geometric revetment in *rosso di francia*, *verde aostani*, and *breccia medicea* adorned all four sides of the exterior.¹⁵ A single oil painting on panel of unknown subject matter was commissioned of Bartolo Cerù in 1646 for the external front façade of the Holy House.¹⁶ Today, the painting's whereabouts are unknown, and the original geometric marble decoration remains visible only along the lateral sides and in the lingering peripheral revetment framing the east and west walls. From these remaining areas, we can intuit how the stone and panel painting once enlivened the walls of the San Clemente replica. Encompassing these colourful details, a framework of Istrian stone — a pale, mottled grey limestone reminiscent of white marble — encased and presented the structure, articulating the Santa Casa replica within a locally quarried material and regional visual language.

Stone revetment is a characteristic form of Venetian decoration. From the walls of San Marco to the façades of Venetian *palazzi* lining the Grand Canal, stone declares opulence and prosperity, permanence and eternity. Pietro Lombardo's late fifteenth-century external and internal revetment of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, tucked away in the *sestiere* of Cannaregio, celebrates the community's devotion to a miracle-working Marian painting through material means.¹⁷ The jewel-box exterior frames and presents a distinctly Venetian sacred space, with bookended variegated marble revetment framed by Istrian pilasters and cornices. Taking their cue from such local precedent, the designers of the Holy House at San Clemente created a layered framework: first a superstructure of Istrian stone, then register outlines of dark grey marble, with raised colourful revetment at the heart of each wall zone. The layered effect creates a sumptuously textured revetment not unlike the profusion of relief decoration across the Santa Casa original.¹⁸ The Istrian superstructure framing these sumptuous materials stresses the inherently local nature of this sacred house as a reliquary case of regional media transporting, encasing, and presenting the architectural relic to the local community.

The front façade of the sacred house, much more in keeping with the Loretan original today, is the result of a later commission. Over the 1660s, the powerful Morosini family commissioned Juste le Court to execute the tombs of Giorgio and Pietro Morosini flanking the high altar of San Clemente.¹⁹ Seeking visual uniformity between the sacred building and their newly erected monuments, the family likely appealed to renovate the San Clemente Santa Casa itself. This design change coincided with the 1660s general renovation of the devotional structure by the new owners of the island sanctuary, the Camaldolese, who had purchased the church from the Augustinians in the 1640s as the initial Holy House construction was underway.²⁰ In 1661, the Camaldolese monks required the San Clemente Santa Casa to be moved backwards by eight or nine Venetian *piedi* to accommodate a longer nave and accompanying retrochoir.²¹ According to the San Clemente records, a Signor



Giovanni Battista Franceschini was commissioned to execute the new *incrostadura di marmo* of the front façade, with low reliefs in *pietra columbina*, a dove-white stone, on 16 August 1701.²² The family shield immured in the top centre frieze festoon of the new composition most likely represents the Morosini crest and implies their financial support.

With these external alterations, the Morosini transformed the high altar of San Clemente into a family chapel, shading the communal vision of the Holy House with a dynastic veil.²³ Other prominent families of the Venetian Republic paid similar homage to the Santa Casa at San Clemente. Angelo Contarini, for example, bequeathed a silver lamp and funds to maintain a lit flame in perpetuity at the *Capella della Beata Vergine*.²⁴ Contarini and his mother would later be buried within the Holy House itself, having promised

1000 ducats to renovate the new choir constructed behind the devotional building.²⁵ The legacy of illustrious patronage by long-standing Venetian families and community members speaks to the favour accorded to the Loretan Madonna and her perceived capacity to heal and protect the Venetian community. The resulting Morosini façade gestures back to Loreto while re-envisioning the apse of San Clemente as a family chapel of noble proportions.

The close of the seventeenth century brought transformations at San Clemente calling to mind the Loretan marble prototype, but the community still maintained visual elements infused with Venetian taste. These decisions are fairly standard: exteriors of Holy House replicas are often wildly individualized with decorative schemas filtered through regional priorities and materials. What further sets the San Clemente Santa Casa apart from contemporary constructions are the stylistic tensions wrought between the Venetian structure's sacred interior and its authoritative predecessor, and the influence of the version at San Clemente upon subsequent Sante Case.

Given the layered decorative program of the Holy House exterior with its generations of opulent materials, the structural interior of the Santa Casa replica seems all the more jarring. Rows of uneven brick articulate the sacred space, materializing behind crumbling frescoed surfaces. The seemingly haphazard, degraded interior is as consciously articulated as the structure's decorative façade, re-creating the humble materiality of the Santa Casa original. The fine red and white marble floor showcasing a sepulchral plaque decorated with crests of the Morosini and the opus sectile altar before the rear-wall sculpture niche further emphasize the worn state of the interior through stark contrast. In this respect, San Clemente embodies an intentional transformative experience where the viewer passes into a sacred interior wherein materiality renders the humility of the faith. As many other Holy House replicas, the purposefully rough internal walls attest to the relic's age, its legacy of devotion, and the fragility of this lingering contact relic of the Incarnation.²⁶

The San Clemente interior is not characteristically Venetian per se: the unknown fresco artist that executed the patched decorations makes archaizing nods to the fifteenth-century precedent at Loreto, imagery that in turn

FIGURE 4. Santa Casa replica (interior: eastern altar wall), brick, various stones (Istrian limestone, marble), frescoed plaster, painted wood, metal, 1644–46. Venice, San Clemente.

harkens back to earlier figural forms. Even so, the frescoes at San Clemente deviate from the Holy House original.²⁷ The largest discrepancies appear on the western-facing wall, what is the counter-façade of the Holy House.

Inside the original Santa Casa di Loreto in Le Marche, the counter-façade showcases two scenes of the Madonna and Child enthroned flanking the Gabriel window, each accompanied by a haloed figure, Saint John the Evangelist before the Virgin on the left, and Saint Anthony Abbot before the second Virgin on the right. Directly above Gabriel's window, a wooden crucifixion hangs, referencing the Santa Casa di Loreto's subsequent life as a meeting place for the apostles following the ascension of Christ.²⁸ Inside the San Clemente version, the two scenes of the Madonna and Child enthroned with saints have morphed into four **FIGURE 5**: the upper register pairs two standing Madonnas, Christ-child in arms, beside ambiguous, haloed women on either side of the wall. With few identifying features, the women imply a more feminine orientation to the Holy House than the hieratic representations of John the Evangelist and Saint Anthony Abbot. Likewise, each Madonna would have fostered a visual association with the standing sculpture once presented in the shrine directly opposite.

The two upper scenes of Marian imagery on the counter-façade of the San Clemente replica accompany lower figural groups flanking the Gabriel window. The left lower scene in particular renders an unusual composition: a standing saint and angel, visible only from the bust upwards because of the fragmented plaster, gaze out at the viewer, the latter of which clasps a crossed staff in its hands. Other than the crossed staff, no explicit iconography assists identification of the scene. Frescoed brick lines immediately behind the figures represented provide a subtle *trompe l'oeil* effect that not only heightens one's focus on the exposed brick surrounding, but also insinuates the figures within the chapel interior. Is this the Archangel Gabriel with a heavenly attendant, having just arrived to deliver God's Word? The identity and significance of the figures is obscured by degradation: the abrupt lower edge of the frescoes coincides with the average height of the Holy House visitor, visually recreating the discrete removal of plaster from the walls at the original Santa Casa by zealous early modern devotees.²⁹

Another key difference between the San Clemente fresco cycle and the original version at Loreto appears on the southern internal wall, directly over the second doorway into the central room. What was once the location of Saint Louis riding in victory towards an enthroned Virgin and Child now showcases a painted rendition of the *Virgin of Loreto* sculpture type in her papal crown and white robe. The fresco depicts the now lost sculpture

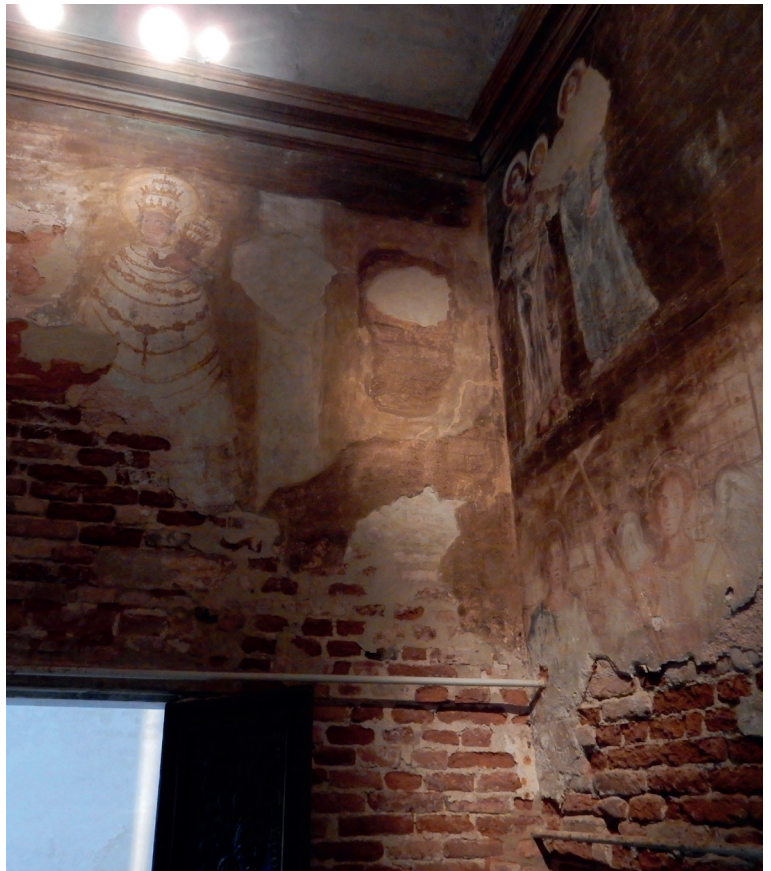


FIGURE 5. *Madonna di Loreto*, Santa Casa replica (interior: western and northern walls), fresco, 1644–46. Venice, San Clemente.



once on display in the altar wall of the Holy House, commissioned by Francesco Lazzaroni and brought to San Clemente in 1646. The decision to omit Saint Louis in favour of the sculpture removes an important detail from this recreation of the Santa Casa di Loreto: the saint's frescoed presence attests to the devotional history of the original structure in Palestine prior to its divine relocation in Santa Casa literature. According to the popular early modern narratives, Saint Louis appended his frescoed visage to the Santa Casa during the thirteenth-century crusades, when the structure still stood at its original location at Nazareth.³⁰

The choice of the *Virgin of Loreto* sculpture as a design detail inside the Santa Casa at San Clemente over the illustrious devotional history of Saint Louis is not so much a commentary against the French monarch-saint as it is a reinforcement of cultural relevance. The sculptural *Madonna di Loreto*, which had processed with great fanfare to the Laguna Holy House in 1646, had acted as a pre-existing emblem of Loretan devotion in Venice inside the church of Santa Maria della Carità in the

years prior to the replica's construction.³¹ The Virgin's miraculous intercession for Venetians in the decades following the 1630s plague marked the votive nature of the San Clemente Santa Casa and therefore superseded the narrative history of Saint Louis. These changes to the Holy House interior will become a standard of Loretan devotion in the Veneto and beyond.

The differences between the San Clemente Holy House and its prototype at Loreto ripple through Loretan devotion across the Veneto. Subsequent replicas of the Holy House reflect the changes visible at San Clemente rather than the original sacred structure, implying that the iteration at San Clemente grew in status as an authoritative version of the Holy House. The eighteenth-century Holy House replica at San Pantalon, located in the central Venetian *sestiere* of San Polo, is a characteristic example of this phenomenon. Though this later structure exclusively re-creates the interior of the sacred building **FIGURE 6**, the San Pantalon Santa Casa replica envisions the building as a joint devotional space and oratory beside the church apse.³² By the early modern period, San Pantalon was worshiped as a medical saint and another patron of the city, alongside Saint Theodor, Saint Mark and, of course, the Virgin. The medicinal associations between saint and structure maintain and reinforce the healing properties of Holy House devotion, linking the San Pantalon Santa Casa to San Clemente. Much like at San Clemente, the space was constructed in part to house another replica of the *Virgin of Loreto* sculpture, which had been brought to Venice from Loreto in 1658 by the neighbouring Venetian parish of Vinanti.³³ Though instigation of this Holy

FIGURE 6. Pietro Longhi, *Madonna di Loreto with a Saint*, Santa Casa replica (interior: eastern wall), fresco, 1744–45. Venice, San Pantalon.

House chapel initially stalled, actual construction progressed quickly under the guidance of architect Tommaso Scalfarotto, who completed the chapel within ten months in 1744–45.³⁴ As with the version on San Clemente, the San Pantalon Santa Casa enshrined its sculptural *Virgin of Loreto*, and became an epicentre of devotion for the local community.

To complete this new Holy House, the commissioner of the San Pantalon chapel, Monsignor Gregorio Bianchi, called upon Pietro Longhi, a notable Venetian painter and a member of the San Pantalon parish.³⁵ Dated to 1744–45, these rare frescoes by the artist at San Pantalon showcase Longhi's ability to bring his famously delicate touch to a large scale, and crucially re-envision and modernize the heavily degraded fresco cycle at San Clemente.³⁶ The internal short wall beside the entrance of the chapel, which corresponds with the western-facing internal façade of San Clemente, offers the same four groupings of Madonna and Child with saints. Similarly, the San Clemente southern wall decoration of the *Virgin of Loreto* sculpture type also appears opposite the entrance into the San Pantalon chapel. But whereas the San Clemente version prioritizes the conical archaism of the sculptural model, Longhi reinterprets his Loretan Madonna and Child as more realistic forms in space. Their bodies, enveloped by the jewel-encrusted white robe, seem to sway gently towards our right, as the more childlike Christ extends his princely orb out towards the viewer. Just like the frescoes inside San Clemente, the figural forms appear before frescoed brick lines that showcase the crumbling material status of the structure and insinuate the saints, angels, and multiple versions of the Madonna and Child within the chapel interior. Lacking contextual landscape or conventional perspective, the naturalistic figures seem disjointed in that they are not within the confines of a narrative scene, but rather hover before the wall, as if sharing the sacred interior with the viewer. In her rich ornamentation, the swaying Madonna metaphorically symbolizes the revision of the structure itself, a naturalistic woman reframed in opulent attire evocative of the polychromatic surfaces appended to the Holy House at San Clemente.

The decision to create a new Holy House in 1744, a hundred years after the instigation of the first structural replica in Venice, begs questions of precedent and intended meaning. According to the San Clemente in Isola records, the cult of Loreto was reconsecrated on the island on 15 May 1750.³⁷ Though no explicit reference has yet surfaced connecting San Pantalon specifically with San Clemente, the timely creation of the second Santa Casa replica implies commemoration, either on the part of the community or by the patron. Longhi's personalized renditions of the frescoes at San Clemente indicate an indebtedness to precedent even as the artist's airy interpretation infuses the composition with a miraculous, momentary sensation, as if the Holy House has just appeared within the confines of San Pantalon. Longhi's frescoes also came on the heels of another monument to Loretan devotion executed in Venice: Giambattista Tiepolo's now lost ceiling fresco at Santa Maria di Nazareth, painted in 1743–44, once showcased the Holy House of the Virgin in flight over the church nave en route to a new devout destination **FIGURE 7**.³⁸ From Tiepolo to Longhi to the reconsecration at San Clemente, this wave of eighteenth-century public commissions must have reinforced and revitalized the cult for local community members of the laity and clergy alike.³⁹



FIGURE 7. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Translation of the Santa Casa di Loreto*, fresco, 1743–44. Venice, Santa Maria di Nazareth, nave vault (before 1915).

As the Tiepolo fresco implies, Venice played a key role in the spread of Loretan devotion across Europe. Prints detailing the Santa Casa di Loreto, circulating through, if not directly manufactured in, Venice, proliferated throughout seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe.⁴⁰ Intended to accurately convey the sacred structure to a wide audience, and perhaps also acting as foci of devotion unto themselves, these prints claim to detail the internal walls of the Holy House with extreme accuracy, including a structural ground plan, schematic walls with partially disintegrated frescoes and hanging votives, and textual keys to facilitate identification.

The level of detail and accuracy varies between prints, but one type of Santa Casa engraving is particularly relevant to the replicas at San Clemente and San Pantalon. Housed in the Bertarelli collection in Milan, a print of the Santa Casa diagramming the structural interior reflects design traits more in keeping with the Venetian Holy Houses than the Loretan original **FIGURE 8**. The *Delineatio S. Domus Lauretanae* purportedly details a precise visual recreation of the Loretan original, having been printed in Rome, as it clearly states in the bottom right corner: ‘Romae apud Carolum Losi anno 1773’. The title of the print, *Delineations of the Holy House of Loreto*, and its site of production in Rome accords authoritative accuracy even though the details within the print indicate otherwise: the rear wall of the structural interior, represented in the top right corner of the print, clearly includes the four figural groups encircling the Gabriel window and the *Virgin of Loreto* hovering over the doorway on the wall adjacent.⁴¹ Given the singular traits of the engraving, I theorize that this print by Carlo Losi re-creates a much earlier engraving that stemmed directly from the replica at San Clemente.⁴² With the print’s detailed representation of the surviving frescoes in the Venetian Laguna, Losi likely worked from a source that disseminated the interior details of the Venetian Holy House to other structures in Venice, such as San Pantalon, and beyond.

This same Santa Casa design scheme appears in other communities with long-standing connections to the Venetian Republic, including in Poland and nearby Slovenia. Either members of these external communities travelled directly to Venice to personally experience and document the Venetian Holy House on the assumption of its structural accuracy, or their artisans worked from prints like the *Delineatio S. Domus Lauretanae* to construct subsequent regional Sante Case, the resulting details of which distinguish these replicas from other dominant types.⁴³ The seventeenth-century dates of construction of Polish and Slovenian Sante Case exhibiting details included in the Bertarelli engraving likely indicate that the surviving print is a republication of an earlier engraving or print matrix in circulation in or following the 1640s. The assumption that the Bertarelli print was issued in Rome, the seat of the papacy and administrative hub of Loreto, reinforces the acceptance of subsequent generations of historians and archivists of this idiomatic version, and the lingering assumptions of accuracy and authority appended to the Venetian version.

Changes in representation demonstrate the power of regional authoritative imagery and the malleability of reinterpretation. The assumption of accuracy on the part of local artists is entirely logical, and acceptance of that regional replica as the authoritative *original* by other communities, including by the Roman people — under whose diocese the Santa Casa di Loreto shrine operated — problematizes the singularity of sacred objects and spaces across

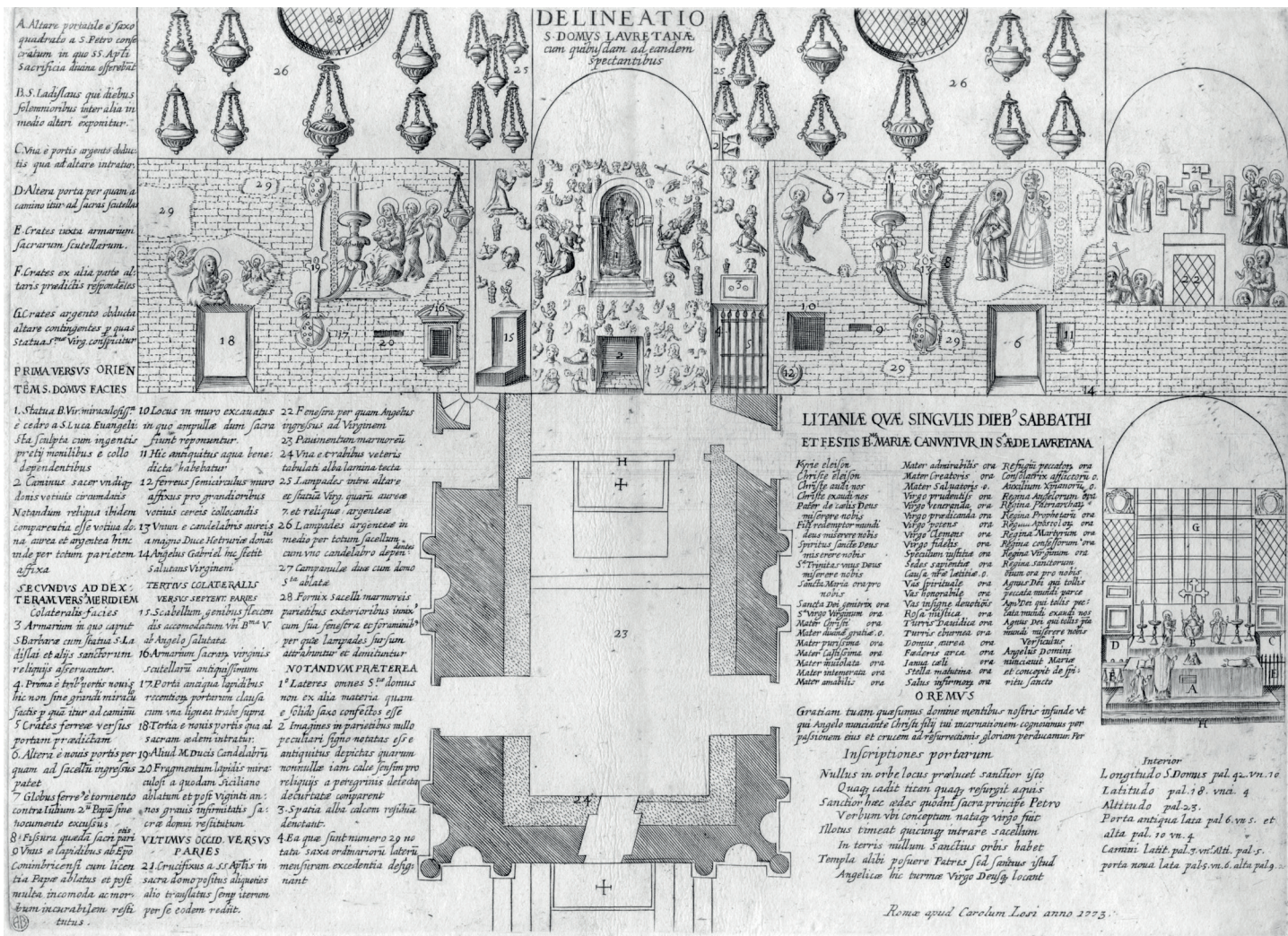


FIGURE 8. Carlo Losi (engraver) *Delineatio S. Domus Lauretanae*, engraving, 1773. Milan, Raccolta delle stampe 'Achille Bertarelli'.

early modern replicas. This revelation does not devalue the many different Holy Houses across the Italian peninsula and beyond, but it rather calls into question the precedent from which each sacred structure arises. The supposedly accurate renditions of the Santa Casa in print and three-dimensional reproduction operate simultaneously as sources of information and objects of devotion, with layers of authority appended to each domicile of the Virgin. Tracing the circulation of Holy House prints and their influence on subsequent edifices demonstrates the spread of Loretan devotion, and, consequently, the replicas born of replicas hint at region-specific devotional priorities: the votive offerings blanketing the altar wall in the Bertarelli print, for example, might reference the prolific devotion at Loreto, but it may also tantalizingly replicate Venetian devotions now imperceptible in the stripped modern interiors of the Holy Houses at San Clemente or San Pantalon, or in even later replicas in Venetian-allied communities.⁴⁴

Re-creations of the Santa Casa di Loreto, executed in multiple media and stemming from various sources of information, have yet to be analysed as interconnected and evolving early modern devotional foci. The case of San Clemente is but one mode of many Loretan representations wherein the

replica assumes authoritative status in the evolution of cult worship. Whether conscious or not, the priority of the San Clemente version dominates the visual language of Loretan devotion in the Veneto, and influences Loretan shrines in the communities of their cultural and political allies. Those infusions of Venetian devotion, through the stone revetment at San Clemente, or the Longhian *leggerezza* of the frescoes at San Pantalon, frame devotion to the sacred structure in a distinctly regional visual language. In many ways, the new sacred edifice at San Clemente highlights the Virgin's discerning favouritism, reinforcing the tradition of change in the community's association with the *Virgin of Loreto*.

Notes

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1 According to Catholic narrative, the Santa Casa di Loreto travelled from Nazareth to Trsat in 1291. The structure subsequently relocated to the eastern coast of Italy in 1294, ultimately selecting the summit of Loreto in 1295; see Girolamo Angelita, *Lauretanae Virginis historia*, Rome, ca 1525–30, f. 25r.

2 Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Santa Casa di Loreto received a rich marble revetment program, instigated by Pope Julius II and Donato Bramante; see Kathleen Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto: Problems in Cinquecento Sculpture", PhD diss., Harvard University, 1965, pp. 6–10; *L'Ornamento marmoreo della Santa Cappella di Loreto*, ed. by Floriano Grimaldi and Katy Sordi, Loreto: Tecnostampa di Loreto, 1999, pp. 25–38. For a concise conversation on the Santa Casa di Loreto and later revetment program as reliquary, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York: Zone Books, 2010, pp. 198–201.

3 A copy of the *Madonna di Loreto* sculpture still receives worship in the Santa Casa at Loreto; see Baptista Mantuanus, *Redemptoris mundi matris lauretanae historia*, Bologna: Bazalero o Caligola Bazalieri, circa 1495, f. 43v; Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus sive de Imaginibus Deiparae per Orbem Christianum Miraculis*, Munich: Typographica Ioannis laecklini, 1657, p. 11.

4 Measurements of San Clemente from Mara Ranucci and Massimo Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa di Loreto in Italia*, Loreto: Congregazione Universale della Santa Casa, 2003, p. 148.

5 More than a local vicar, Francesco Lazzaroni acted as theological canon of the patriarch of Venice and general vicar of the bishopric of Torcello. Following the Holy House construction on San Clemente,

Lazzaroni also supported designs for the high altar of Santa Maria della Salute, another ex-voto plague construction conceived in the 1660s by architect Baldassare Longhena and sculptor Juste le Court (who is also attributed with the Morosini tombs flanking the San Clemente Santa Casa); see *Venezia e la peste: 1348/1797*, ed. by Orazio Pugliese, Venice: Marsilio Editore, 1980, p. 305; Andrew Hopkins, *Santa Maria della Salute: Architecture and Ceremony in Baroque Venice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 81–83.

6 Initial permission to construct the Holy House at San Clemente was ceded to the commissioner, Francesco Lazzaroni, on 11 September 1643; see Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASV), San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta I, f. 1r. In a document dated 24 July 1645, Monsignor Lazzaroni declares, 'la Santa imagine fatta per mio Voto'; ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta V, f. 5r.

7 'Fu accompagnata da Venetia sino alla presente Chiesa con solennità grandissima di Bucintoro imprestato dalla Serenissima Repubblica, Paotte, Gondole in grandissima quantità, Nobiltà Venetiana, Diversi Religiosi, Secolari dell'uno, e l'altro sesso, tutti facendo a gara, et a vicenda chi più poteva onorare la Regina de' Cieli, chi con canti, altri con suoni di diversi stromenti, torcie in gran quantità tutte accese, Trombe, Tamburi, Cannoni, et altre cose con allegrezza universale di tutta la città'; Biblioteca Correr (hereafter BC), *Breve descrizione della Chiesa, che si trova nell'Isola di S. Clemente* MSS, circa 1680, f. 1v. Lina Urban, "Venezia e Loreto: Una 'zanza' annotata da Marin Sanudo, i voti pubblici e una festa sull'acqua", *Arte Documento: Venezia, le Marche e la civiltà adriatica per festeggiare i 90 anni di Pietro Zampetti*, 17/19 (2003), 234–37 (p. 236). See also Giovanna Ceconello et al., *San Clemente: Progetto per un'isola*, Venice: Cluva Libreria Editrice, 1980, p. 29.

8 For more on the context of construction regarding the Santa Casa at San Clemente, see Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, p. 139.

9 *L'Isola di San Clemente a Venezia: Storia, restauro e nuove funzioni*, ed. by Martina Carraro, Venice: CARSA Edizioni, 2003, p. 15.

10 Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, p. 139.

11 The island of San Clemente was often referred to as the *Lazzaretto vecchio* (the old colony of Lazarus), a reference to leprosy and other mysterious diseases (*L'Isola di San Clemente a Venezia*, pp. 9–13). The island of San Clemente eventually became an insane asylum and hosted many local Venetians and such famous inmates as Ida Dalser, Benito Mussolini's

first wife. For more on the evolution of the island as a hospital and asylum, see Ceconello, *San Clemente*, pp. 39–50.

12 Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, p. 135.

13 The most notable replica on the pilgrimage route to Loreto is the early nineteenth-century version housed in the neighbouring town of Recanati, what was once the seat of the diocese of Loreto, located about thirteen kilometres from the Santa Casa original (Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, pp. 93–114).

14 The Annunciation took special precedent in Venetian iconography. The annunciate Mary and the archangel once flanked the Great Council Hall in the Ducal Palace, which once showcased a frescoed *Coronation of the Virgin* by Paduan artist Guariento; see Patricia Fortini Brown, "The Self-Definition of the Venetian Republic", in *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, ed. by Anthony Molho et al., Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991, 511–48 (p. 518). The close proximity of the Santa Casa's brief residence at Trsat in modern Croatia, less than 240 kilometres from Venice's location around the upper Adriatic basin, promotes an overt association between the devotional structure and the powerful community.

15 Stones discussed in Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, pp. 143–44.

16 Though a large quantity of marble and four columns are listed among the purchases for the Holy House exterior in the San Clemente records between March 1645 and February 1646, no mention of sculptors paid or reliefs commissioned give any hint of the current white marble decorative scheme (ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta V, ff. 6r–8r). Bartolo Cerù was a seventeenth-century Venetian painter, active until his death circa 1660. Cerù was paid 80 scudi for 'la pittura della facciata della s. Casa, tela legname et fattura' on 12 August 1646 (ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta V, f. 7r).

17 Allison Sherman, "'Soli Deo honor et gloria'? 'Cittadino' Lay Procurator Patronage and the Art of Identity Formation in Renaissance Venice", in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and Its Territories, 1450–1750*, ed. by Nebahat Avcioglu and Emma Jones, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013, 15–32; Wolfgang Wolters, "Una bellissima chiesa tornata di marmi, lavorata all'antica", in *Santa Maria dei Miracoli a Venezia: La storia, la fabbrica, i restauri*, ed. by Mario Piana and Wolfgang Wolters, Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2003, 41–50.

18 The grey outlining, in particular, echoes the precedent at Santa Maria dei

Miracoli (Wolters, "Una bellissima chiesa torniata di marmi", pp. 43–46).

19 The Morosini had a pre-existing relationship with the Santa Casa at San Clemente: on 9 July 1647, the newly arrived Camaldolese agreed to receive the body of Thomaso Morosini for burial. According to archival documents, the man had died 'in Armada'. For the honour of burial, the family agreed to construct either a new altar or a chapel dedicated to Saint Thomas. Additionally, Thomaso's brother Bernardo would commission commemorative additions to the San Clemente external façade, discussed later in note 23, below (ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta I, Canto I, f. 4r). In 1688, Francesco Morosini would become doge of Venice, after a long career as a general in the Venetian navy.

20 The Camaldolese purchased San Clemente from the Augustinians at Santa Maria della Carità on 15 January 1645 (Venetian calendar 1644), for 6000 ducats (ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta I, Canto I, f. 2r). In addition to the changes at San Clemente, the Morosini also commissioned the reconstruction of the local church of Sant'Anna di Castello (first stone laid 1634, completed 1659). Dedication to Saint Anne relates to Loretan devotion in that the Santa Casa di Loreto was the home of Saint Anne and Saint Joachim. The nuns of Sant'Anna di Castello received a replica of the *Madonna di Loreto* sculpture in 1646 (BC, San Pantaleone MSS, unpaginated document).

21 The changes at San Clemente reflect a general reorientation of sacred spaces across Venice, from the fifteenth century onward; see Joanne Allen, "Innovation or Afterthought? Dating the San Giobbe Retrochoir", in *Architecture, Art and Identity in Venice and Its Territories*, ed. by Nebahat Avcioglu and Emma Jones, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, pp. 171–84. The backward move of the San Clemente Holy House was decreed 27 June 1662 (ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta I, Canto II, f. 12r). Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, p. 140.

22 'si obliга il Sud[det]o Sig[no]r Gio[vanni] Batt[ista] di fare l'Incrostadura di marmo seguitando l'ordine delle due Parti finite con le due Colonne d'Affricano, eccettuato che nell'Ordine superiore vi dovrà, e vi obliга di poner due Quadri con le figure di Basso rilievo di Pietra Colombina' (ASV, Santa Casa in Isola MSS, Busta 5, Canto II, ff. 23r–23v).

23 The Morosini renovations of San Clemente extended to the church façade. Between 1647 and 1653, Senator Bernardo Morosini appended busts of his brother Thomaso and father, Francesco, flanking the church entrance, together with reliefs of naval battle scenes and a gilded family crest over the central portal

of the church. During the renovation, a fifteenth-century sculpted *Madonna and Child*, reminiscent of the *Madonna di Loreto* type, moved from its original location in the portal tympanum to the attic level of the façade; see Martin Gaier, *Facciate sacre a scopo profano: Venezia e la politica dei monumenti dal quattrocento al settecento*, Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2002, pp. 271–72.

24 ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta I, Canto II, f. 17r.

25 'L'anno 1663: 11 Agosto con atto del Capitolo Conventuale fu concesso à detto N. H. q[uesto] Anzolo Contarini il luogo p[er] la sua sepoltura nella Capella della S[an]ta Casa nel Caminetto p[er] lui solo, et p[er] la sua madre [...] Fu dato sepoltura al Cadavere nel Caminetto' (ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta I, Canto II, f. 17r).

26 Erin Giffin, "Détruire, reconstruire, redéfinir: La fragmentation volontaire de la Santa Casa de Loreto et ses altérations répliquées", *Perspective: Actualité en histoire de l'art*, 2 (2018), 209–17 (p. 209).

27 Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, p. 16; Karin Vélez, *The Miraculous Flying House of Loreto: Spreading Catholicism in the Early Modern World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2018, p. 134.

28 According to the Santa Casa di Loreto narrative, the apostles and the Virgin Mary met to hold the first Masses in the Virgin's humble home, equivocally transforming the structure into the first titulus church of the faith dedicated to the Virgin. For an early example of this narrative, see the anonymously written *Translatio Miraculosa ecclesiae B. V. M. de Loreto*, Rome: Bladus Antonius, 1516, f. 80v.

29 Silvio Serragli, *La Santa Casa Abbellita*, Macerata: Paolo Salvioni e Agostino Grisei 1634, p. 60. Explored further in Giffin, "Détruire, reconstruire, redéfinir", p. 213.

30 The frescoed man often assumed to be Saint Louis in seventeenth-century texts is more accurately a representation of Saint George; however, early modern texts describe the figure as Saint Louis in accordance with the larger narrative of the saint's visit to the Santa Casa prior to its relocation from Palestine; see Nereo Alfieri, "Il sacello della Santa Casa: Venerato da sempre", in *Il Santuario di Loreto: Sette secoli di storia arte devozione*, ed. by Floriano Grimaldi, Pizzi: Cinisello Balsamo, 1994, pp. 35–42 (p. 36); Angelita Scaramuccia, *La Santa Casa di Loreto: Rappresentazione sacra*, Rome: P. Corbellotti, 1631, pp. 41–51.

31 Before its relocation to San Clemente, the *Madonna di Loreto* was

honoured as a cult object at Santa Maria della Carità (BC, *Breve descrizione della Chiesa, che si trova nell'Isola di S. Clemente*, MSS, circa 1680, f. 1v).

32 Though the chapel at San Pantalon prioritizes the interior of the Santa Casa, the Gabriel window was subject to external decoration. The window originally opened into the chapel directly before the Holy House replica, wherein the opening of the window was framed by a fifteenth-century polychrome stone altar of the Ognissanti chapel in the pre-existing San Pantalon church (heavily altered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). The current chapel is now called the Cappella del Chiodo (Chapel of the Holy Nail), where a supposed relic of the Crucifixion was relocated in 1836. Today, the relic is enshrined in what was once the open window, obfuscating direct visual access back into the San Pantalon Santa Casa interior and the *Virgin of Loreto* sculpture inside, which once would have been visible from the church nave. For information on the Cappella del Chiodo, see the anonymously written *Breve storica narrazione del Santo Chiodo dei piedi di Gesu Cristo che si venera nella chiesa di S. Pantaleone med. Martire*, Venice: Giuseppe Molinari Tipografia Editrice, 1838, pp. 8–9; Alfonso Bisacco, *La chiesa di S. Pantaleone in Venezia*, Venice: Grafiche Sorteni, 1933, pp. 66–67.

33 Maria da Villa Urbani and Stefania Mason, *Chiesa di San Pantalon: Arte e devozione*, Venice: Tara s.r.l., 1994, p. 45.

34 Francesco Valcanover, "Affreschi sconosciuti di Pietro Longhi", *Paragone*, 7 (1956), 21–26 (p. 22, note 3).

35 Urban, "Venezia e Loreto", p. 236 (note 23).

36 Some debate surrounds the authorship of the frescoes. In the catalogue on Pietro Longhi by Terisio Pignatti, the frescoes fall under the 'artworks attributed' section; see Terisio Pignatti, *Pietro Longhi*, Venice: Alfieri, 1968, p. 138.

37 ASV, San Clemente in Isola MSS, Busta 2, document no. 99.

38 William Barcham, "Giambattista Tiepolo's Ceiling for S. Maria di Nazareth in Venice: Legend, Traditions, and Devotions", *The Art Bulletin*, 61:3 (1979), 43–447. The tradition of architectural re-creations and referents is not new to the Venetian community: the plan of San Marco at the Scuola Grande di San Marco is a notable example. Special thanks to Lorenzo Buonanno for pointing out this referential phenomenon.

39 The 1750 renewal of the cult at San Clemente may also imply a competitive element to the situation: perhaps sensing

a decrease in cultural importance in the aftermath of the changes at Santa Maria di Nazareth and San Pantalon, the Laguna cult centre sought to reinvigorate devotion.

40 Floriano Grimaldi, *Il Libro Lauretano: Secoli XV–XVIII*, Macerata: Diocesi di Macerata Tolentino Recanati Cingoli Treia, 1994, pp. 133–39.

41 Floriano Grimaldi et al., *Il sacello della Santa Casa*, Loreto: Cassa di Risparmio di Loreto, 1991, pp. 132–33.

42 Though the print *Delineatio S. Domus Lauretanae* seems most likely based off the Santa Casa at San Clemente, there remains the possibility that the print is based on a source predating the structure. Since no imagery has surfaced prior to the 1644–46 construction of the Santa Casa at San Clemente, I currently believe the print and any preexisting image or matrix to be documentary results of the replica rather than sources for its design.

43 For example, the Sante Case of Golab, Poland, and in Maribor, Slovenia, both bear the same hallmarks of the San Clemente Santa Casa type, each constructed over the seventeenth century. A replica much closer to home is the eighteenth-century Holy House in Vescovana in the Veneto. For more on Vescovana, see Ranucci and Tenenti, *Sei riproduzioni della Santa Casa*, pp. 205–25. In contrast with the San Clemente Holy House, the Sante Case in Lombardy and the Po Valley reflect different iterations of internal decoration, stemming at least in part from other contemporary prints.

44 Published documentation on the wealth of votive offerings at Loreto beg the question of similar local practice. A pair of epaulettes flanking the Madonna niche at San Pantalon and surviving dedicatory reliefs appended to the San Clemente church façade hint at larger ex-voto traditions now lost. For period accounts of votives at Loreto, see Orazio Torsellini and Bartolomeo Zucchi, *Della historia della Santa Casa di Loreto della Beatissima Vergine Maria*, Venice: Domenico Imberti, 1607, pp. 116, 139.