

Minimum Documentation Fiche

01. Picture of building



Depicted item: Cathedral of Taranto
source: Torricella (2004)
date: 1970

1. Identity of building

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1.1 current name of building | Gran Madre di Dio, Cathedral of Taranto |
| 1.2 variant or former name | "Palazzo di Penta", "Rex", "Bastimento" (Ship) |
| 1.3 number & name of street | Viale Magna Grecia (7, via Blandamura) |
| 1.4 town | Taranto |
| 1.5 province/state | Taranto/Puglia |
| 1.6 zip code | 74121 |
| 1.7 country | Italy |
| 1.8 national grid reference | 40°25'05 N 17°14'27 E |
| 1.9 classification/typology | Religious buildings, commemorating monuments |
| 1.10 protection status & date | None |

2 History of building

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 2.1 original brief/purpose | Religious buildings, commemorating monuments |
| 2.2 dates: commission/completion | 1964/1970 |

| | |
|--|--|
| 2.3 architectural and other designers | Gio Ponti |
| 2.4 others associated with building | Gaetano Angilella (Structures) |
| 2.5 significant alterations with dates | 2005 |
| 2.6 current use | Religious buildings, commemorating monuments |
| 2.7 current condition | Medium |

3. Description

3.1 General description

Industrial development and the consequent urbanization of the city of Taranto have shifted the center of the social and religious life of the city, distancing the faithful from the centrality of the historic cathedral, San Cataldo. The idea and the construction of a new co-cathedral became the symbol of the revival of the city and the church.

The designer identified to carry out this task is Gio Ponti, architect already committed in the construction of some churches and interested to the relationship between religiosity and the project since the Thirties.

The Great Mother of God in Taranto is the outcome of a long process of simplification and abstraction of forms pursued up to turn into levity immaterial the concreteness of matter built.

3.2 Construction

The initial project shows a compact building from the diamond plant, background of an ideal axis between the old town and the new, which is progressively reduced to a single nave with a rectangular plan, on which stands an aerial "sail" perforated.

High up to 53 meters, the cathedral is consisting of two reinforced concrete walls one meter away from each other, the "front" is crossed from air and light thanks to twin openings by the geometric shapes, between which prevails the diamond shape. The sail is, therefore, a sign easily recognized by the faithful and emerges from the nave as a retablo populated by figures of angels and remembers the visionary project for the Cathedral of Los Angeles. The cathedral had to have a close connection with the maritime traditions of the Ionic capital. In fact, what immediately strikes the observer is the symbolic "sail" that is reflected in the three pools located in the square opposite, representing the sea. The sail replaces the traditional dome and is constituted by a double perforated wall behind which there's only the vacuum.

Even within the church there are seafaring reminders, as the two columns at the sides of the presbytery that sustain symbolic anchors. Behind the small windows of the upper part of the back wall you hide the pipe organ. The main altar is built in stone and the door facing the faithful is in iron painted green. Similarly, even the carpet is green and the choice of this color is dictated by the desire to evoke the seabed.

Behind the altar there are paintings by the same architect, while at the left of the entrance there's a chapel dedicated to the fallen of the Navy.

A careful study of light was made by Gio Ponti so that the interiors were illuminated by a light joyful.

3.3 Context

The area on which stands the majestic work of Ponti is located at the eastern edge of the urban area. Located at the crossroads between viale Magna Grecia and the beginning of Via Dante, the façade is the monumental backdrop of Via Dante, one of the straights that lead to the heart of the historic city, establishing a bilateral relationship between the historic and the new cathedral.

4. Evaluation

4.1 Technical

The work is a synthesis of the architectural rationality and is distinguished by the skilful use of concrete, through which it was possible to create a monumental work that stands out for its grandeur and elegance.

4.2 Social

High value.

4.3 Cultural & aesthetic

The new Cathedral of Taranto was to be the center of an architectural path started during the first centuries of Christianity, and culminating in the new church and “home” to the faithful and God. Ponti builds and materializes a religious thought that concentrates all in a “sail”, or a rhythmic sequence of windows open on the sky. The “sail”, wrote Luigi Moretti, is the church.

4.4 Historical

The '900 is the century in which born artistic and cultural movements that break with tradition. Gio Ponti is careful and curious about everything that is new but does not participate to any of the avantgardes. His work is a journey into the ideas that form the basis of new trends, but free from the rules of the movements. Ponti finds a new architectural language starting from the elements of the classical tradition and interpreting them in a modern way.

4.5 General assessment

The work represents the synthesis of the architectural language of Gio Ponti, which is expressed through the pursuit of lightness and transparency.

5. Documentation

5.1 Principal references

MORETTI, Luigi, *Il fastigio della cattedrale*, Domus n. 497, aprile 1971, pp. 11-14, 22-23

PONTI, Gio, *La religione, il sacro*, Domus n. 497, aprile 1971, pp. 15-21 (testi riediti in Gio Ponti. *Venti cristalli di architettura*, a cura di Gloria Arditì e Cesare Serrato, il Cardo, Venezia 1994, pp. 182-189

e in *Espressioni di Gio Ponti*, a cura di Germano Celant, La Triennale, Milano 2011, pp. 74-77)

DE MARCO, Vittorio, *La vela di Gio Ponti*, Scorpione Editrice, Taranto 1989

LICITRA PONTI, Lisa, *Gio Ponti. L'opera*, Leonardo, Milano 1990, pp. 250-253

TORRICELLA, Maria Maddalena, *Gio Ponti 1964-1971. Progetto e costruzione di una cattedrale. La Gran Madre di Dio a Taranto*, presentazione di Giacinto Nudi, Edizioni Pugliesi, Martina Franca 2004

5.2 visual material attached

Fig.01 – Design plan 1971 (Torricella 2004)

Fig.02 – The construction site in 1968 (Torricella 2004)

Fig.03 – General view (Domus 497)

Fig.04 – View of main front

Fig.05 – “Sail”: detail

Fig.06 – “Sail”: detail

Fig.07 – Inner view

Fig.08 – Inner view

Fig. 09 – The baptistery (Domus 497)

5.3 rapporteur/date

Massimiliano Savorra, March 2015

Adriana Marra, March 2015

6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R

name of examining ISC member: date of examination:
approval:
working party/ref. n°: NAI ref. n°:
comments:



Fig.01 – Design plan 1971 (Torricella 2004)

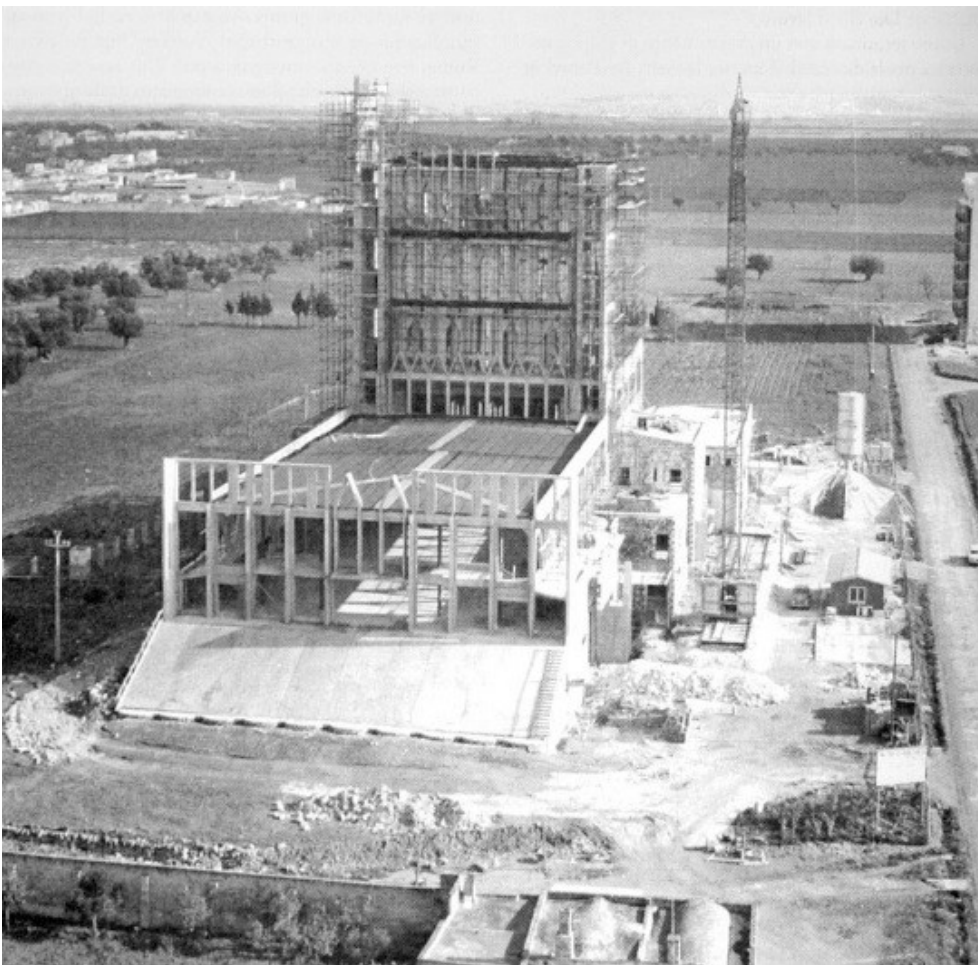


Fig.02 – The construction site in 1968 (Torricella 2004)



Fig.03 –General view (Domus 497)



Fig.04 – View of main front

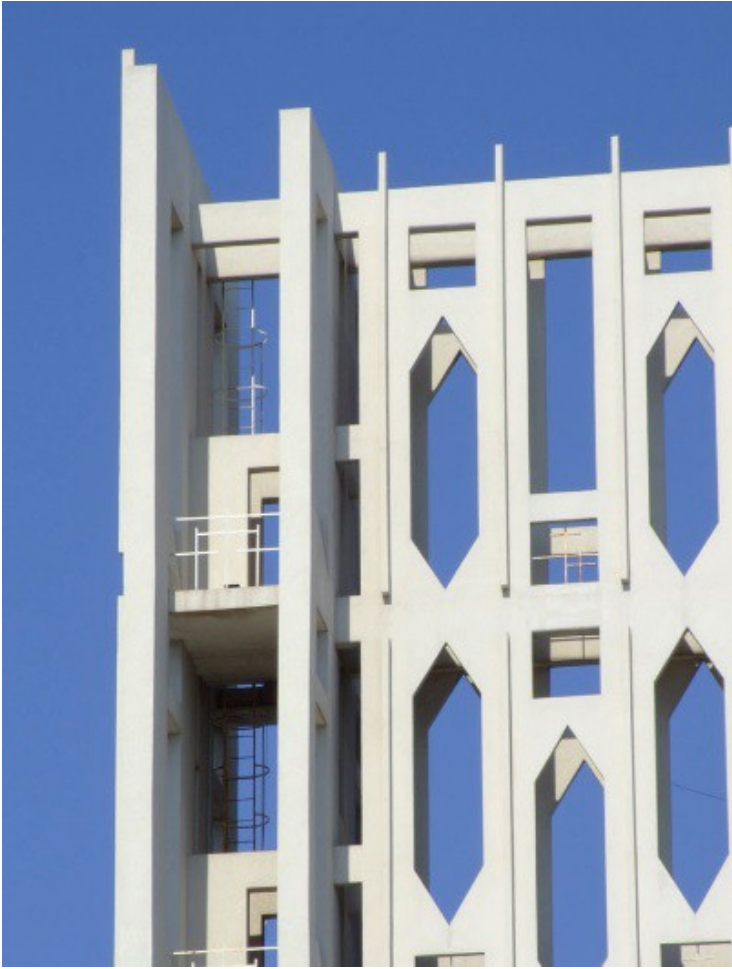


Fig.05 – “Sail”: detail



Fig.06 – “Sail”: detail



Fig.07 – Inner view



Fig.08 – Inner view

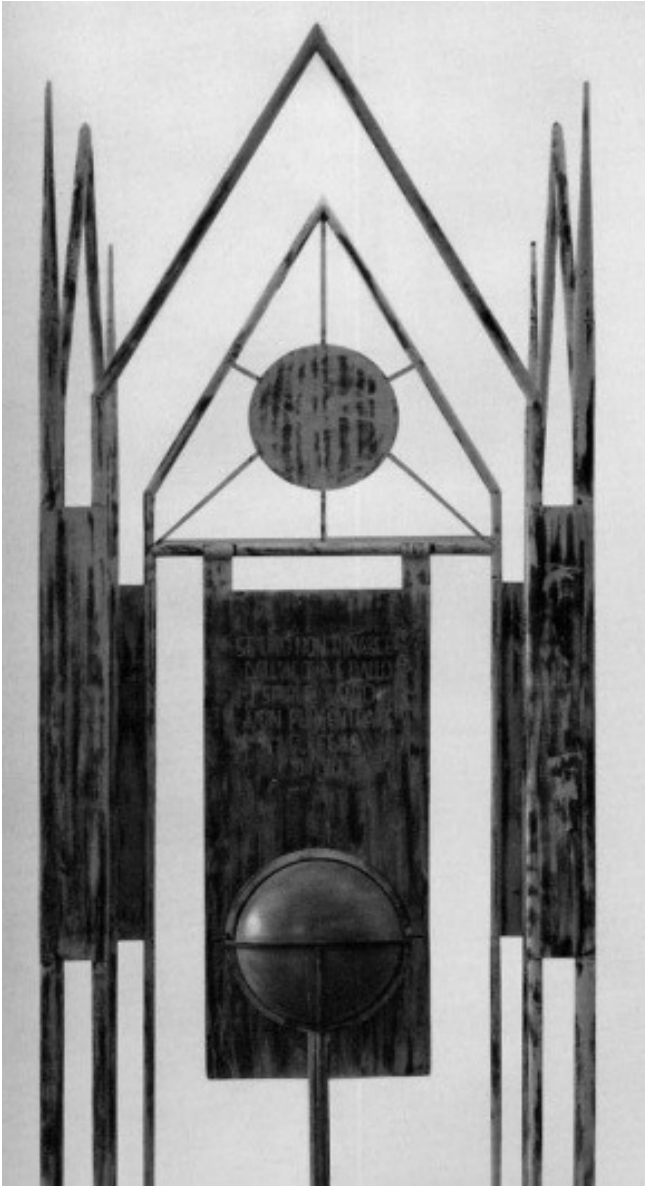


Fig. 09 – The baptistery (Domus 497)