

Prospettive
The cultural heritage of Molise
n.1

The National Museum of Castello Pandone

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The National Museum of Castello Pandone

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Thanks: Lello Golluccio, Nicandro Brusello, Benedetto Zullo, Benedetto Giovanazzi, Giuseppe Di Pilla, Albertina Bagaglia, Associazione nazionale Carabinieri Nucleo Volontariato Servizio Civile Sezione di Venafro (IS)

“Su ai margini della piana, la campagna tende ai monti prossimi con pigra dolcezza di declivi e di prode folte di ulivi dalle chiome interamente verdi, fronzute; le piante numerose in bell'ordine fanno bosco, hanno una cordiale solidarietà di vita”.

Francesco Jovine

“The castle stands among the sloping mountains, and with the olive trees it adorns the landscape of unmatched beauty and it is the perfect fusion of art and nature”.

Brief history of the Castle of Venafro

The castle of Venafro is located on Saint Angelo hill, at the foot of Santa Croce mountain.

Its strategic position allows to dominate and control Venafro and the communication routes between the upper Volturno Valley, Campania, Lazio and Sannio.

Like many castles, it has gone through various eras, therefore its structure is characterized by different growth stages and modifications that correspond to the defensive and residential needs of the various families of feudal lords who inhabited it.

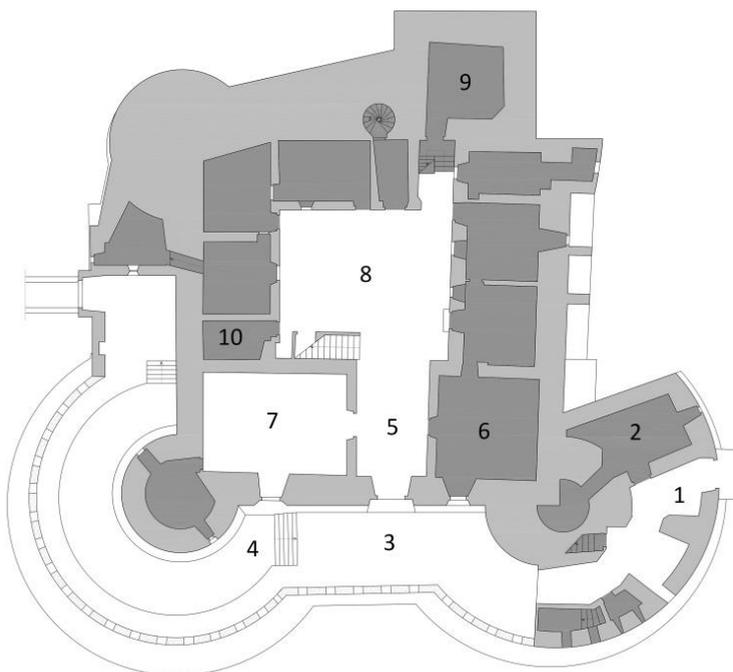


Fig. 1 – Map of the castle.

Historical sources of the Lombard period inform us that in Venafro the castle existed in the middle of the ninth century, conquered and destroyed in 860 by the Arab Emir of Bari Sawdan. Defensive and territorial protection requirements entailed the reconstruction of the structure, which is also mentioned by other sources. These ups and downs of destruction and rebuilding, which some sources mention, concern not only the Longobard era, but also the later Norman and Swabian phases; they can still be read on the walls of the castle and in faint traces identified in some parts of the building from the Angevin-Aragonese period. During the Angevin domination, the city experienced a new period of cultural and building development, also thanks to the establishment of religious orders - especially Franciscan and Augustinian brotherhoods, often commissioners of works of art as well as religious buildings. At this time the Castle was assigned to the royals and had a defensive function aimed at the fiscal control of the territory. The castle, already in the middle of the 9th century, was entrusted by the king to various castellans and was subjected to building renovations that made it more livable. The three cylindrical corner towers with a truncated-conical base, the redondone and the crowning with shaped shelves supporting the patrol walkways are typical elements of the Angevin defensive architecture; later another patrol walkway was attached to the southern side, near the lower atrium. In 1443 Alfonso V of Aragon, who settled on the throne of Naples, assigned the county of Venafro to Francesco Pandone, for his services. During the Aragonese phase some changes were made to the castle:



Fig. 2 – View of the castle.

a wider defense battlement, built on the opposite side of the towers and the curtain interposed on the south-eastern side with a covered walkway; rectangular or crossbow slits were added to the circular slits for firearms. For residential and representative needs, some rooms were widened and ornamental architectural elements were added to enhance the appearance of the building: the construction of the lodge at the entrance of the second floor dates back to the time of Enrico Pandone, on the model of the Sangallo and Bramante architectures; Count Enrico also built the terraced garden and added the significant cycle of frescoes (1521-1527) made up of the portraits of his favorite horses, which makes this place unique.



Fig. 3 - Renaissance loggia. Entrance to the second floor.

With the end of the Aragonese kingdom and the rise of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V of Habsburg, Henry Pandone also became Duke of Bojano (1525), for having contributed to the defeat of the troops of Giacomo Stuart, Duke of Albania and ally of the French who wanted to reconquer the kingdom of Naples. In 1522 Charles V appointed Charles Lannoy viceroy of Naples: he also had the Principality of Sulmona and other manors for having distinguished himself in the battle of Pavia (1525) fighting against the French. The year 1528 was decisive for the end of Enrico Pandone's lordship: accused of treason, captured and taken to Naples, he was executed with other traitors. At his death, his confiscated fiefdoms were acquired by the Colonna family and then by Francesca Mombel, widow of the viceroy Carlo Lannoy.

The Lannoys had the fiefdom of Venafro from 1533 to 1582. To them are attributed the grotesque decorations

on the walls of some noble rooms. From 1582 to 1606 the castle was acquired and managed by the Spinola, a powerful Genovese family of shipowners and bankers of the Spanish monarchy. In the XVII century the castle and fiefdom belonged to the Peretti noble family and then to the Savelli family. In this period a flood filled with mud part of the moat that was around it and some places that remained full until the eighties. In 1698 the castle was sold to the Di Capua family. To Giovanni Di Capua are attributed some restoration works in occasion of his wedding with Vittoria Piccolomini, such as the access bridges. Giovanni Di Capua died on January 5th, 1711. The wedding was never celebrated but traces of it remain on the coat of arms in the party room. To this period can be dated back also the decorative bands in the first rooms of the noble floor. The decorations of the room in the square, the theater and the structure at the entrance with near setting, as well as the residential rooms with a balcony and a terrace on the first floor are of the 18th century too.

In 1744, the castle was sold to the Caracciolo Del Rosso, dukes of Miranda. Then it passed to the Caracciolo Del Leone, princes of Avellino and dukes of Atripalda. From 1810 it was acquired through Marianna Gaetani by the de' Medici princes of Ottaviano and from 1830 it was rented to de Cola, who lived there for a hundred years.

In 1816 the theater was used for a theatricals organized by the soldiers of the National Guard for the poor. From an officer's testimony, we know that at the time a scruffy stage and a room on the main floor were still preserved, they still had a silk background and some tapestries on the walls.



Fig. 4 – Walkway.

In 1922, the Duchess of Bruzzano sold it to Ercole Ferri. Since the 1930s the castle was divided into flats rented to modest families, and during the Second World War it served as a shelter for homeless people. In 1979, it was purchased by the Minister for Cultural Heritage, restored and finally open to the public. Since 2012 it has been home to the National Museum of Molise.

Introduction to the view

Nowadays the castle is configured as a real schedule and its general complexity is an articulated and composite building, in which it is sometimes possible to distinguish single elements or consistent architectural portions attributable to the various historical phases or even to specific building interventions. Despite its historical and residential vicissitudes, there are still visible frescoes, decorative apparatuses and inscriptions testifying the evolution of the taste and need of the numerous feudal lords who inhabited it, but also some aspects of a court.

Once through the main entrance, you are at the beginning of the walkways and lower atrium, characterized by seats resting on the walls on which drawings, sketches and inscriptions are still visible, the vault is decorated with the Lannoy coat of arms.

Right there is the access door to the fireplace hall, the entrance door to the castle is considered inside the replacement stage. On the left, through a door with a latch on the left, you enter a room with a silo cistern; the silo was used from '200 to '500, when its gradual abandonment and the subsequent underground occurred; from the earthwork various fragments of ceramic tableware have been recovered, evidence of concrete aspects of daily life in the castle. At present it is used only as a conference room or a classroom. The internal courtyard consists of a quadrangular courtyard with access to the rooms on the ground floor, now used as service or storage areas and as a keep, below the staircase leading to the upper atrium. A window is visible to draw water from the cistern. On the walls of the upper atrium traces of the preparatory drawings of two horses forming part of the cycle desired by count Enrico

Pandone are still visible on the sixteenth-century Plaster. These are

the only horses represented at a gallop; on the left wall there is an inscription that says that the bay horse Logo was portrayed in June 1523 and sent to Naples to the Florentine merchant Francesco Pitti. On the left door, there are two coats of arms: the one carved in stone is of the Pandone family, instead the painted coat of arms, which dominates it, is of the Savelli family. On the room that leads to the second floor there is a composite coat of feudal lords of the late XVII-early XVIII century. With the allegorical figures of Justice and Victory. On the right, we find the door from which you can go and visit the main floor.

The lordly plan: the horses of Enrico Pandone

The castle takes its name from the Pandone family, from 1443 feudal lord of the County of Venafro, and in particular from Enrico who, between 1521 and 1527, had the pictorial cycle that still characterizes the manor today. A unique cycle of its kind "which sees the rooms on the main floor transform into a sort of ante litteram photo album, with a parade of images of horses, chosen from among the "favors" (CAPINI, CATALANO, MORRA 1996,)" that the count himself raised in the Venafra town. Enrico spent his youth in Naples in the lively context of the Aragonese court, where he received his cultural training, as well as in the use of weapons and horses. In fact, an equestrian tradition constituted a point of reference for all the European courts. Abandoning the idea of his predecessors to make the castle a bastion fortress, Enrico began a series of works to transform it into a Renaissance residence. This desire stemmed from the

new historical reality of that century, in which the feudal Lordships testified their power through the display of decorative, artistic and cultural forms. The cycle of horses constituted a complex iconographic program in which he entrusted to his horses the representation of his noble and chivalrous rank and of his political and social relations.

Room 1- Preparatory drawings

Over the centuries most of the paintings have undergone heavy monomers. More than twenty images of horses have been identified but only nine of them are preserved almost entirely. The workshop of artists in charge of the work is still anonymous but a Neapolitan origin has been proposed “for the reflections of that mixture of styles – Iberian, Flemish, Roman, Lombard – that characterized the international artistic context of the capital of viceroyalty. One of its components is the ability to illusively accentuate the three-dimensionality of representation. A comparison has been made with the Sale de I Cavalli In palazzo Te in Mantua, frescoed for the Gonzagas by Giulio Romano at about the same period(1526 -1528). The horses are painted life-size with a technique that is almost unique in the history of art: on the preparatory drawing carried out on a first level of plaster, then a second layer of plaster was modeled in bas relief and fresco-painted. In this room, in the atrium of the first floor, in room four and in the living room the reuse of the rooms had caused the loss. Of the reliefs of the horses and the display of the respective preparatory drawings. In the atrium and in the hall are the evident signs of the “striking” of the layer of plaster in relief, as evidence of the intentional elimination of the layer for

the realization of a new decoration. The frieze with plant motifs in the upper part of the walls, also present in the near rooms, is subsequent and presents the coat of arms of the Capua family. Each horse is marked by the fire monogram of Enrico Pandone – A rhombus inscribed in a square and, in its center, the letter H – and surmounted by a cross. Each horse figure is also accompanied by a bite, illusionistically painted hanged on a nail, and with captions that indicate its name, breed, age and sometimes the receiver.

Room 2 - Hall of walking horses or of the bell

This room was probably a room for personal use, therefore the decoration is entertainment and delight. The theme of the setting is the pleasure of riding and perhaps for this reason, the artist depicted walking horses, that are the best preserved on this floor. The characteristics of the horse can be understood from the type of saddles and bits. The stirrup, for example, has a large plant with full turn-ups, arched at the top, typical of the walking horses as it is suitable for light footwear. Another detail that confirms that the delight is the theme of the room is the original figuration above the door. It seems to be the schematization of a dance or a game, perhaps the game of the bell or the “ualle ciuoppe” (lame rooster), a game widespread until a few decades ago, in the childhood's tradition of Venafro.



Fig. 5 – The horses of Enrico Pandone.

Room 3 – Tower

This is one of the three circular towers built in the 14th century to better defend the castle; there is still a rectangular and a circular slit for firearms. In the tower there are also a latrine with a chair, carved out of a niche on the wall and parts of a previous construction phase.

Room 5 – War horses

It has been speculated that this was Enrico's study, because it was important that any visiting visitor could perceive the power of the owner of the castle. The noble rank of the Pandones and their political and social

relations are described through the portraits of the horses, the receivers who had had them as gifts and the characteristics of the war or carousel specimens. On entering, the visitors find themselves in front of the focal point of the entire cycle: "LO LIARDO SAN GIORGE", given, in 1522, by Enrico Pandone to Emperor Charles V, to thank him for the concession of the county of Boiano.



Fig. 6 – Panoramic photo of the room.

Based off of this fresco is determined the hierarchical arrangement of the other figures. The depiction of this horse was "evocation of the two portraits": that of Enrico Pandone, who raised the magnificent specimen and that of the emperor, who was its receiver. On the other walls there are the horses donated to two exponents of the Neapolitan nobility: "ANIBALLO CARACIOLO" and above all "ANNIBALLO PIGNIATELLO", faithful counselor and man of arms of the emperor. After passing this room, you enter the room that made up the stairwell of the castle; only the architrave of the door with the Pandone coat of arms remains of the Renaissance arrangement.

Room 6- Square tower

The Lombard tower was part of the fortification built by the Lombards at the end of the second half of the 10th century. Modified in the successive historical phases of the castle, today it presents a unique setting with eighteenth-century decorations.

Room 7 – The theater

This room was modified in the eighteenth century to use it as a court theater. A wall was cut to create the proscenium decorated with a stucco curtain and two golden cherubs in the act of supporting part of the curtain. On the other wall the remains of the previous decorative band commissioned by the Lannoys are still visible.

Room 9 - Piper

During the restoration plan, many drawings and inscriptions of a certain mastery emerged, such as depictions of caravels and verses of poems. This room is called the bagpiper for the singular caricatured image of a character with a feathered headdress playing what it looks like a bagpipe.

Room 10 - Celebration room

The hall, at the time of the Pandones, was smaller in size than the current configuration. The cycle of horses had been completely covered by a thick layer of plaster, but

the search for a greater monumental effect than the other rooms is evident. The horses are positioned at a higher height and, on the short sides, there are two horses, on the sides of the coat of arms. The captions of the horses date back to 1527, the last painted figure in the hall, just before the tragic events that brought Enrico to the gallows, in 1528. The decoration of the upper fascia that extends over the four walls is of a later period. At the center of each side of the frieze, there are the noble coats of arms of the Capua and other families. On the wall, towards the valley, there is an eighteenth-century decoration with painted frames, framing tapestries, which have been lost.



Fig. 7 - Coat of arms of the central hall that joins the coat of arms of Capua to that of Piccolomini.

National Museum of Molise

In 2012 Pandone Castle, with its architectural and decorative urban planning, became also a national museum. The visit continues on the second floor where paintings and sculptures can be seen, in an itinerary that documents their chronology from the Middle Ages to the Baroque and the different cultural trends of Molise artists. Among them there are works coming from the museums of Naples and the National Art Gallery of Rome.

Room 1- Art and artists: churches, abbeys and castles



POLITTICO DELLA PASSIONE

English shop (Nottingham) End of XV century, Alabaster.

Not much is known about this work. It is an English work in alabaster produced in a Nottingham craft workshop. We don't know how it got to Venafro, although it probably

came through Naples given because of the relations between these two places. The certain date isn't known, but the work comes from the church of Annunziata of Venafro and represents one of the rare examples of polyptych of English production in Italy. The polyptych is composed of panels representing the episodes of the passion of Christ. This indicates a great need that revolves around the church of the Annunziata and the important order of the "Flagellanti". The author has emphasized the characters in the scenes: the good ones have the natural bright color of the stone with the gold on the beard and the hair. While the bad ones have dark faces and dark hands. The polyptych was stolen in 1979 and later found, it was then restored in the laboratories of the central institute.

Room 2- The colors of the sacred dale churches of Venafro

Madonna del Carmine tra Santi Angelo da Gerusalemme e Alberto degli Abati Simone Papa (1599-1630)

The Neapolitan author, a pupil of Belisario Corenzio. In his works applies a strong language, full of violent and dramatic colors. The work comes from the church of the Madonna del Carmine of Venafro, dating back to 1612 and has realistic and caravaggesque currents. In the center of the pointing there is the Virgin with the child Jesus. On the sides there are Sant'Angelo and Sant'Alberto, who recall the souls in Purgatory. This work is considered one of the most beautiful of the Venafro's artistic heritage.

Rooms 2-3 - Spiral staircase hall

Wooden sculptures

Paolo Saverino Di Zinno(1718-1781)

Paolo Saverino Di Zinno was born in Campobasso in 1719 from a humble family and at a young age he started devoting himself to art and sculpture. He is known to be the author of the mysteries, shoulder machines that parade on the occasion of Corpus Domini he is also the author of a vast production of wooden sculptures. He carried out most of his apprenticeship in Naples. Subsequently he opened a workshop in Abruzzo and Puglia. The faces of his works appear almost gifts in the eyes of his spectators. Di Zinno is considered one of the best protagonists of the seven hundred baroque art in the south Italy.

Room 4 - “Capricci e varij disegni d’ornamenti” from Oratino

At the end of the 17th century, the dukes Giuseppe and Gennaro Giordano, favored the intellectual artistic activity of the small painters, sculptors. Among these, there were the Brunettis who gave life to a shop. These from a Pugliese style gradually passed to and the seven hundred Neapolitan painting, is Silverio. From this workshop come the graphic works, which have become state property, of painters such as Nicola and Giacomo Giuliani active between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Room 5 - Between the “chiaroscuro” of Caravaggio and the Emilian classicism

San Sebastiano curato da Irene Giuseppe Di Guido (active in Naples in the first half of the XVII century)

The work was attributed by the historians to the “Master of Fontanarosa”, identified in recent times as Giuseppe Di Guido, who comes from the ancient Saint Sebastian’s church in Gildone. His figure appears one of the most original ones in the Neapolitan painting scene of the first half of the 17th century, placing himself between the earlier phase of caravaggism of Battistello Caracciolo, the juvenile phase of Josepe Di Ribera and the debut of Andrea Vaccaro and Massimo Stanzione. Sebastian, after surviving the first martyrdom, is healed by Irene who recollects his body to bury it realized he was still alive. The light, element that symbolizes the grace of faith, lights the Saint who’s looking at the sky, aspiring at imitating Christ. The grace illuminates Irene too who witnessed her faith curing Sebastian.

Room 6 - The golden age of Naples

Pan e Siringa Luca Giordano (Naples 1634-1705)

Talented artist from the seventeenth century, Luca Giordano studied in Naples, in the circle of Jusepe de Ribera, from whom he was initially influenced. He was curiously named “Luca fa presto” (“Luca the fast”) because of his fast pace. The various subjects in his works

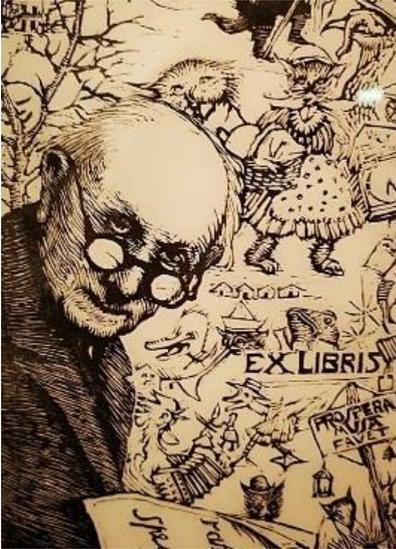
range from the religious theme to the mythological ones. In this work love becomes music. The God Pan, spirit of all the natural creatures and forests, one day he was along the sides of a river when he saw a beautiful nymph Siringa, and he fell in love . But the girl, as soon as she saw the god, believing he was a monster because of his half man and half goat body, ran away to hide through the reeds. Scared and not willing to return Pan's love she requested the help of the Naidi who transformed her into swamp canes. Pan followed her but didn't find her so he took a cane and cut it in little pieces. The God started to blow into it trying to comfort himself with the sweet melody. That instrument was actually Siringa. She was the first Pan flute in history.

Room 7 - Curious eyes on nature and history

Vaso con fiori Gaetano Cusati

Still life is the pictorial representation of inanimated objects, generally flowers, fruits, vegetables, musical instruments etc... The placing of the humble everyday life objects is characterized by remarkable symbolic values other than of natural interests. Gaetano Cusati was a student of Giovanni Battista Ruoppolo, one of the greatest painters of still life in Naples. Later he was influenced by Abraham Brueghel and by his refined decorativism. The artist, despite having already made the transition from naturalism to baroque, in the context of still life painters from which he had drawn his inspiration from and he was sensitive to the formal suggestions of Luca Giordano.

Room 8 - "Romeo Musa" -Between art and literature



Romeo Musa (Calice di Bedonia 1882- Milan 1960)

Romeo Musa, Emilian artist born in 1882, moved to Molise between the 20s and the 30s of the 20th century. Versatile Master of many qualities and passions, he was also a skilled engraver, delicate painter, observant photographer and illustrator. In this room you can admire the fruits of his labor dedicated to the landscape and traditions of the Molise region. The territory represented for Musa not only the background for his characters, instead it is the real main protagonist. Molise's landscape is depicted in its essential and natural elements, defining the authenticity of a land full of agricultural and pastoral traditions that preserves culture and memory of its inhabitants. The inclusion of his orbistic production into the museum was possible thanks to his daughter's, Giovanna Musa, donation.

Room 9 - Robert Capa



**The girl with
suitcase -Diletta
Photography
Robert Capa
(Budapest 1913-
Thai Binh 1954)**

Robert Capa, whose real name was Endre Ernő Friedmann but he changed it due to his clandestinity, was born in Budapest in 1913 and he is one of the most well known war photographers of the early years of the 20th century. His photos have documented 5 world conflicts. His figure is characterized by an adventurous spirit, he was attracted by risk and fatalities. In his pictures he captures the horror of war, man's cruelty and the sufferings of humanity derived from war. "The girl with Suitcase" 1943, captures the innocence of a girl who walks along a mountain path carrying with her all her possessions. In the room a video-installations by Valentina Bonizzi, adds the story of an old woman who remembers the pain and suffering in the years of the conflict, "Diletta". Through her voice, Robert Capa's photos take life. Two very different women but united by the same sad destiny, they become one on the background of the World war.

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