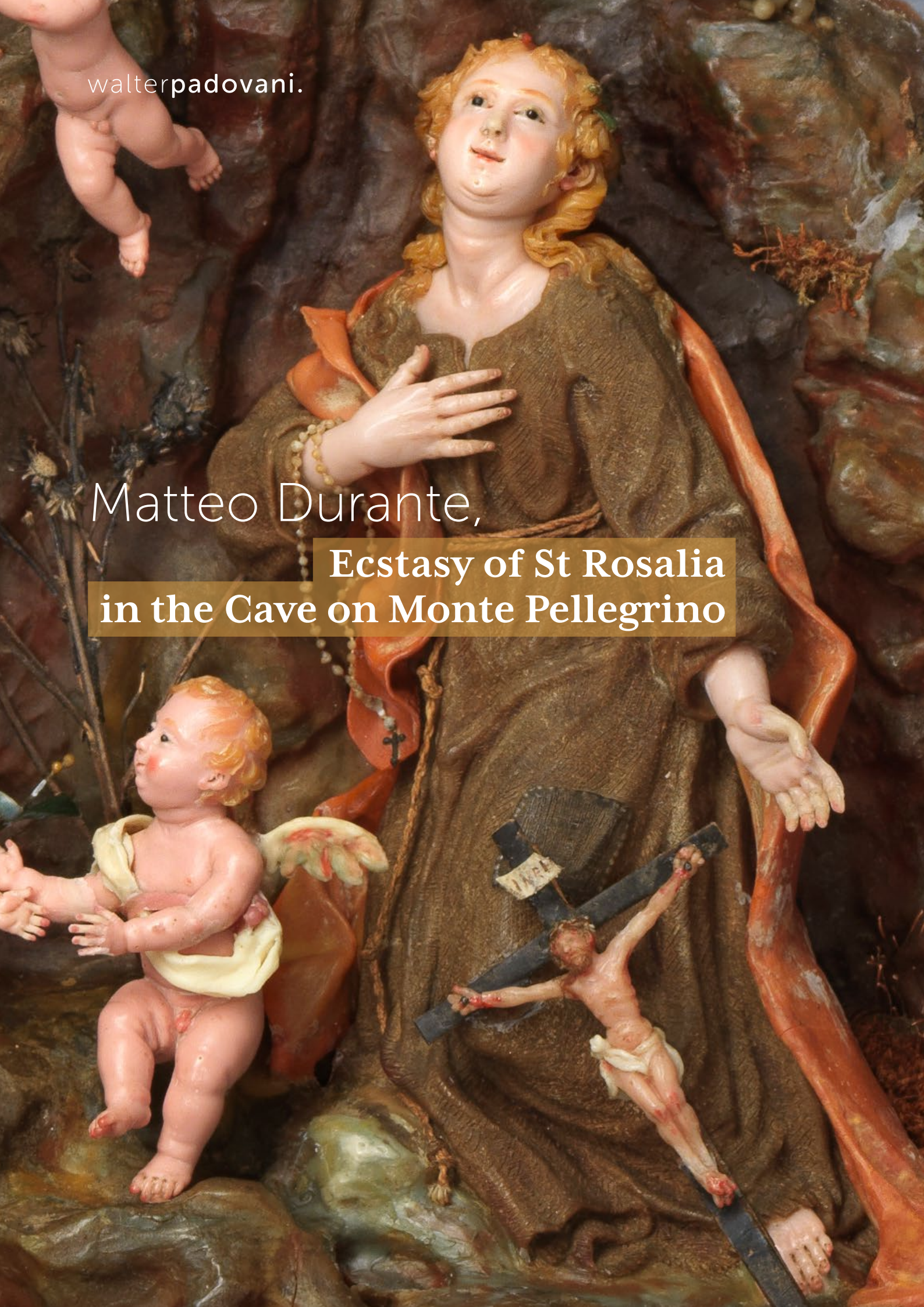


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Matteo Durante,

**Ecstasy of St Rosalia
in the Cave on Monte Pellegrino**











Matteo Durante
(active in Sicily in the 17th century)

*Ecstasy of St Rosalia
in the Cave
on Monte Pellegrino*

Coloured wax on painted wood panel
in a wooden frame veneered
in blonde tortoiseshell with concave
and convex mouldings.

Overall dimensions: 44 x 50 cm;
wax 27.5 x 33 cm

REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY: P. Giansiracusa, ed. by,
Gaetano Giulio Zumbo, catalogue of the exhibition, Milan
1988; S. Grasso, M. C. Gulisano, *Mondi in miniatura: le cere
artistiche nella Sicilia del Settecento*, Palermo 2011;
Un'importante raccolta di opere in cera, Cambi Auction House,
Milan 18 November 2015.

Enclosed in a precious tortoiseshell frame, this three-dimensional painting depicts *St Rosalia in the Cave on Monte Pellegrino*; her head surrounded by a crown of roses, the Saint is represented in the ecstasy of her passing, with a crucifix resting against her legs. The cave occupies the left side of the scene and opens up at the top to offer a glimpse of the sky, as if to say that the light of the Lord reaches everywhere. The Saint is surrounded by little angels; strewn on the ground are a cup, a vase, a bloodstained cilice and other objects. Also depicted are a bird on a branch, a lizard, snails and various plants. On the right-hand side we see the open landscape with the background of the sky and the sea painted on panel.



1. Matteo Durante, *Penitent St Jerome*, Siracusa, Nava collection

Very little is known about Matteo Durante, but based on a comparison with two of his certain works, both signed and dated, we can attribute the work presented here to the Sicilian wax artist.

The first is a wax depicting the *Penitent St Jerome* signed and dated Mattheo Durante fecit 1663 (fig. 1), belonging to the collection of the aristocratic Nava family of Siracusa. Details such as the crucifix, the skull and the vegetation are almost identical in both small works. The *St Jerome* recalls the painting of the same saint by Caravaggio (fig. 2), formerly in the Giustiniani collection and now in Spain, in the Monastery of Santa Maria in Monserrat (*Mondi in miniatura*, p. 18, Fig. 6). Durante's

2. Caravaggio, *St Jerome*, Monserrat, Museum of the Monastery of Santa Maria



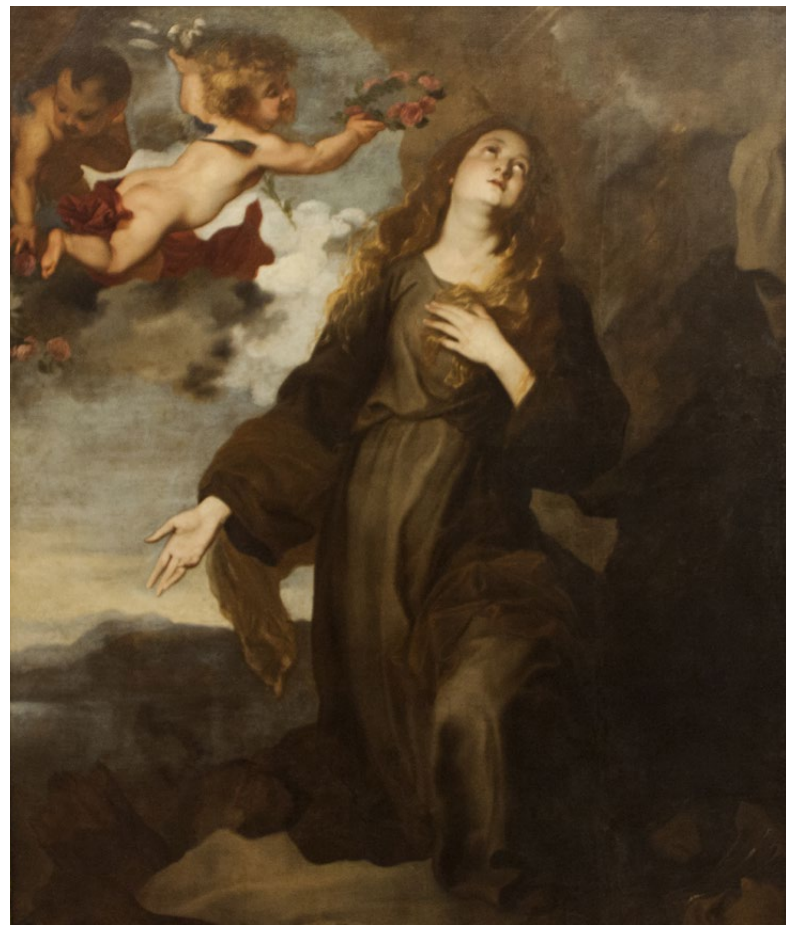




3. Matteo Durante, *Penitent Magdalene*

work seems to be based on a mirror-image engraving of the famous Caravaggio painting, as is true of another wax, also bearing the signature of our artist and the date of execution (1663). The subject of the latter is the *Penitent Magdalene* (fig. 3), clearly modelled on the painting *St Rosalia Crowned by the Angels* (fig. 4) attributed to Antoon van Dyck, now in the Galleria Regionale del Palazzo Abatellis in Palermo, and presumably executed by the Flemish painter while he was in Palermo in the summer of 1624 during a plague (*Un'importante raccolta di opere in cera*, lot I, with an entry by A. González-Palacios).

Whereas for the composition of the Magdalene, the figure is identical to van Dyck's *St Rosalia* and the attributes that identify the Saint change, in our case we are dealing with the same Saint,



4. Antoon van Dyck, *St Rosalia Crowned by the Angels*, Palermo, Palazzo Abatellis

and the wax tableau, albeit with the addition of numerous descriptive details, faithfully copies the painting in the pose of the figure and the garments, in the rocks behind the figure and the sea in the background.

State of conservation: excellent.



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w.p.