

Paolo Benaglia

Italian sculptor
(† 1739)

Very little is the biographical data on Benaglia: he was born in Naples and the first news concerning him are those relating to the commission that he had, in 1728, to prepare the plans for the construction of the Trevi Fountain in Rome: which remain four drawings in the Library of the Institute of Art History of Berlin. The commission, as it is known, was taken from him in 1730, when Clement XII banned a competition for the fountain, won by Nicola Salvi. At the B was however entrusted the execution of the two allegorical figures of the *Fame* that hold, on the summit, the papal coat of arms and which were already on site in 1736, when we proceeded to a first inauguration of the still unfinished fountain.

Meanwhile, Benaglia had executed the relief depicting *S. Andrea Corsini* who multiplies the loaves in the Corsini chapel in S. Giovanni in Laterano (circa 1732), the relief with the *Visitation* on the façade of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini (1734) and then the large statues of *Christ* and of *S. Ambrogio* on the facade of the same Lateran basilica (1736). Shortly afterwards Benaglia was active in Naples, where between 1736 and 1738 he sculpted the *Madonna and Child group and the SS. Domenico and Rosa* in S. Caterina a Formiello and the two allegorical statues on the tympanum of the high altar of S. Maria della Sapienza. In 1739, however, it was again in Rome, still at the service of the Corsini house, carrying out the two *Fame* holding the coat of arms of Clement XII on the facade of the Palazzo della Consulta. It is also attributed the stucco relief depicting the *Baptism of Christ* which is an integral part of the architectural decoration, by F. Raguzzini, of the chapel of the baptismal font of S. Maria sopra Minerva.

In all these works, Benaglia is shown to be a close follower of P. Bracci, however, sometimes taking inspiration, and especially in the statues of S. Giovanni in Laterano, to the wide and pictorial plasticity of a Rusconi: his work is still characterized 'a shrewd manager, capable of some personal compositional invention as in the group of St. Catherine in Formiello in Naples.

From the documents relating to the accomplishment of the plastic decoration of the Trevi Fountain by GB Maini it can be deduced that Benaglia died in Rome in 1739.

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