

Virginio Bracci

Italian Architect and Sculptor
(1737-1815)

Son of the sculptor Pietro and Faustina Mancini, he was born in Rome on 16 August. 1737. The interest of scholars for his father has probably led to neglect of adequate research for the purpose of a critical reconstruction of the life and activity of this architect.

Bracci received a good literary and also scientific education, having had the famous Fr. Jacquier; he began his career as a sculptor assisting his father, so much so that he would complete the deposit of *Benedict XIV* in S. Pietro (1763-69), while for architecture he was instructed by L. Vanvitelli and C. Murena. As architect Bracci was protected by Cardinal Fed. Marcello Lante, for whom he made numerous drawings and in particular an ambitious project of a "vast hypogeum ... to make the villa magnificent and delicious ... on the Janiculum" which, however, does not was never performed. He was architect of the Congregation of Good Governance from 1768 until his death; various documents in the State Archives of Rome attest to its numerous appraisals, descriptions and opinions: for the reorganization of the Archive of the Congregation itself in the Vatican palace in 1778; for the territorial layout of the roads in the Papal States, with G. Camporesi, in 1803, 1804-1808; since 1811 his relations have been in collaboration with F. Nicoletti.

Architect of the nuns of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, at the end of 1785 he gave an "opinion" on the transport of a painting with "the invention" of the body of the saint and in 1811 he made a report on the expenses necessary for the maintenance of the church itself.

The list of Bracci's works includes the high altar of the church of S. Pantaleo, as well as generally utilitarian works such as "casamentini" near piazza Farnese or a "casamento" at the Arco de 'Saponari for the Lante, a factory for the new oven in the street of Campo Santo of the Chapter of S Peter, etc. In the State Archives of Rome there are two drawings, dated 1805, of the facade of Palazzetto Sciarra, one of which bears the approval "of this drawing as analogous to the prospect we made for the restoration" signed by Bracci and Andrea Vici. In the same list there are also small churches built on Bracci projects outside Rome: in Castelnuovo di Farfa, in Salisano, in Poggio San Lorenzo Nuovo (Rieti), etc. ; in Iesi he would have built a "large factory of a conservatory and church" in addition to the Honorati palace (now owned by the Municipality); a new door in Valenzano, prisons in Terracina. For Genzano and Frosinone he designed fountains, dealt with plumbing problems, restored and made additions to the parish church of Fiano, etc.

He had already been interested in hydraulics in 1772, with the writing *Hydrostatic reflections over the Rieti bridge* ; to it polemically replied, on the *literary Ephemerides* of the same year, the expert Francesco Maria Gaudio of S. Remo who had objected to the

opinion already previously expressed by Bracci on the damage of the bridge over the Velino.

Member of the Accademia di S. Luca since 1784, in 1796 he was one of the censors and under the principality of Canova (1810) he was appointed professor of architecture with Raff. Stern.

He died on Sept. 12 1815 and his sons Pietro and Paolo made him erect a monument, with portrait of R. Tuccimei, in S. Marco (Forcella). A portrait of him painted by von Maron is in the Accademia di S. Luca.

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