

# Pietro Camporese, the Younger

Italian architect  
1792-1873

Son of Giulio, he was born in Rome on 22 May 1792. He studied architecture with his father and uncle Giuseppe, but he also attended the Accademia di S. Luca of which he later became a member. He carried out his first activity, together with P. Bosio, as an aid to P. Belli in the first restoration works of the Basilica of St. Paul outside the walls after the fire of 1823. In this period, however, projects were made rather than not real construction works; it is certain that Camporese was no longer present when, in 1833, he was commissioned to rebuild S. Paul's outside the Walls, assisting L. Poletti. In that year, as a member of the Accademia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon, he took part in the opening of the tomb of Raphael and on that occasion he designed a provisional for the artist who was highly praised by F. Gasparoni.

In 1834 Camporese restored the church of the SS. Vito and Modesto. One of his projects for the reconstruction of the Printing House (at the Trevi Fountain) is conserved, which was later designed by Giuseppe Valadier. Around 1837 he transformed the Argentina theater: in the composition of the façade the dependence on models made familiar in Rome by Valadier is evident.

Camporese even managed to overtake the old Valadier for the transformation of the Papal Post Office building (Wedekind building in Piazza Colonna). The simple building was preceded by a new façade and a portico on ancient columns from the Veio excavations: this work is already clearly indicative of the change of generation with respect to Valadier's time; in fact it has a strongly sixteenth-century character, explicitly differentiating itself thus, for the use of robust Renaissance motifs, from the cold classicism of the previous generation. Around 1840 Camporese built the gloomy and severe hospital of the Orfanelli near S. Maria in Aquiro; from 1831 to 1946 the hospital of S. Giacomo degli Incurabili, a vast complex extending from via del Corso to via Ripetta.

In 1843 he completed the two low facades on the Corso, which, together with the baroque façade of the church of S. Giacomo, constitute an important prospect: in harmony with the Baroque forms, he was thus able to create a very suggestive whole from the point of urbanistic view. A project of his own also the Institute of Fine Arts in via Ripetta, consisting of two buildings connected to each other by a small courtyard in the shape of a hemicycle that opens towards the Tiber, near the port of Ripetta, with a colonnaded vestibule. The Ceschi also attributes the facade (1844) of the small church of S. Benedetto in Piscinula to Camporese

His extensive activity during the pontificate of Gregory XVI caused dissatisfaction against him (with accusations of private interests) in the Roman population, tormented by the increase in government expenses and consequent taxes. Traces of it remain in some pasquinate: "... The ones who, by destroying their country, walls that last a month,

peel us with the hand of a cardinal". It must have been the consequence of this hostility and of the accusations that he moved away from any government office in the first period of the pontificate of Pius IX and the decrease in his activity in the following period.

In 1848 Camporese designed, for assignment of the Redemptorists, the chapel of S. Alfonso de 'Liguori in S. Maria in Monterone. A year later he made plans for a hospital at S. Caterina del Funari. He also built some minor civil constructions: a porch in the courtyard behind the choir of S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli, a house for F. Cagiati in Via Frattina, the house of F. Borgognone and a building near S. Chiara.

During the sixth decade Camporese joined the liberal and national opposition party (in 1859 he was one of the major representatives of the Roman National Committee) and in 1861 he took the difficult path of exile.

In the same year he was part, with the Prince of Piombino and V. Tittoni, of a delegation that tried to deliver to Napoleon III (he was never received) an address of the Roman people. His position then remained equidistant between the moderates, who controlled the National Committee, and the Democrats; he was always a proponent of an initiative of strength for the solution of the Roman problem, to be faced also within the city (in 1862, supporting the attempt of Garibaldi, admonished the old friends: "I do not say that you associate, but do not isolate you").

In 1863, Camporese was a member of the jury commission for projects for the facade of the cathedral of Florence. In 1869, having managed to return to Rome in the new conciliatory climate established by Pius IX, he began the construction of the church of St. Thomas of Canterbury in Via Monserrato, which was finished, after his death, by Luigi Poletti and Virgilio Vespignani. Immediately after the liberation of Rome, in 1870, he was elected city councilor, on the designation of the Roman circle of democratic tendencies. By now old and sick, he did not carry out a great activity. His last important assignment was that of president of a commission, appointed by the City Council for the study of a city development plan, the first of the many that later on will vainly try to bring order to its chaotic and disorganized growth.

The commission, formed entirely by Romans, divided by internal disputes, suggested directing the new buildings towards the upper part of Rome (from the Viminal and part of the Esquiline to the Macau, from here to Piazza S. Lorenzo, Porta Maggiore and Piazza S. Giovanni, up to Via Merulana): as far as the development towards the station was concerned, it was the continuation of the projects of Msgr. de Mérode, former minister of Pius IX, owner of most of the land involved. Large arteries and an industrial district in Testaccio were also envisaged.

He died in Rome on February 23rd. 1873.

Camporese belonged to that generation of architects - heirs of the neoclassical maxims, Valadier and Giuseppe Camporese - who gave the Roman architecture a sixteenth-century imprint in the historicist sense. Today he may appear purist and academic; however this turning again to the works of the Renaissance characterized the architectural activity in Rome up to the profound transformations of the modern era.

by Manfred F. Fischer

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