

Luigi di Pierro Capponi

Italian Architect sculptor
1445-1515

Son of Pietro (or Gianpietro), originally from Milan, he is a sculptor active in the last decades of the fifteenth century in Rome, where he probably lives in the border area between the Pigna and Colonna districts. With a contract drawn up on 9 July 1485, together with a certain "magister Iacobus Dominici of the Pietra de Carraria marmorarus", he was entrusted with the commission of the "sepulturam marmoream" of Francesco Brusati, archbishop of Nicosia.

The contract, conducted by "Jeronimo de Viateliis de Perusio" in the name of the nephew of F. Brusati, Florio Roverella, provides, within four months of signing and for a total compensation for the two masters of 60 gold ducats of the room, construction and location in S. Clemente of the monument which, in the simple funeral chamber, limited on the sides by two pillars decorated with candelabra and finished at the top by an arch decorated with palmettes, houses, above the base with the epigraph flanked by the coats of arms of the Brusati, the urn decorated with a simple three-festooned garland with the deceased lying down, his hands gathered on his lap. The lunette was to house the images of the Madonna and Child and of the Prelate in prayer (Tosi), now lost.

On March 8, 1496, Capponi stipulates another contract in which he undertakes to create "unam hymaginem Crucifissi et duas alias hymagines, videlicet beate Virginis Marie et aliam sancti Iohannis Evangeliste his usual order".

The marble altarpiece, a "mezo relevo", was commissioned by Michele Bottarone and must be placed in the church of S. Maria della Consolazione, in a place chosen by the client himself, within the month of December of the same year 1496, for a fee of 87 ducats. The work was found, after the discovery of the document concerning it, in the Consolation Hospital and is now located in the sacristy of the church.

These are the only documented information on Capponi, whose name, unknown until the discovery of the two documents cited above, subsequently occupied a prominent place in the treatment of Roman sculpture at the turn of the fifteenth century, acquiring to its credit a series more and more vast of works attributed, if not given for sure; according to the historian's inclination, his art has been exalted or limited to the activity of a modest stonemason. The Milanese origin and some characters of the art of Capponi, above all the ways of the drapery and the taste for realistic details, raised the question whether his artistic education developed in the Amadeo workshop or, in Rome, in the circle of another equally Lombard artist, Andrea Bregno.

First of all, it should be noted in the only two certain works by Capponi that there is no direct and evident dependence on the art of Amadeo and, on the other hand, it should be remembered how all those elements that in the ways of the artist denounce its origin Lombard were already present, and deeply rooted, in Rome for twenty years. The trend

defined as neo-medieval seems to be perfectly anchored to the Roman environment, but which is only the persistence of a tradition beyond the new contributions, and which seems to have in Capponi an indicator in that modulating the folds in their terminations in a traditional stylema Byzantine. The fact that the first commission known to us was entrusted to Capponi.

Between the two documented works of Capponi there is an evident stylistic correspondence: think of the realization of the Moorish head in the Brusati coat of arms, of the short blanket of the funeral bed, which falls in regular folds like the long robes of the Virgin and the Evangelist. With the numerous works attributed to the personality of Capponi is enriched: not so much for reliefs like the one with St. John and Pope Leo in the Lateran baptistery (where above all the figure of the pope seems close to the manner of Capponi), as and above all for works such as the monument of the Bonsi brothers in S. Gregorio al Celio which would reveal him to be the inventor of a successful innovation in the typology of funerary monuments (introduction of portrait busts of the dead), or the frontal with the Stories of s. Gregorio, equally to S. Gregorio al Celio, who demonstrates, in addition to an extreme precision and skill in treating marble, an exceptional sensitivity in the treatment of the nude. But that much more and different from the documented works increases the shadow of arbitrariness in the attributions.

by Giovanna Casadei - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 19 (1976)

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