

Giovanni Battista Contini

Italian architect of the Late Baroque period
(1641-1723)

Son of Francesco and Agata Baronio was born in Rome on May 7, 1642. He had the first training of an architect by his father who "nobility educated him and sent to all the schools to which the nobles were subjected", but he also perfected under Gian Lorenzo Bernini. He was so attached to the great master that he would assist him to death and to have a portrait of him "printed on canvas with black frame". The first important commission of CONTINI to be known seems to be the erection of the catafalco for Alexander VII (1667). arrived through Bernini. In Rome, in addition to carrying out practical duties such as those of measuring and architect of the Apostolic Chamber and Architect of the Virgin Water, in which he succeeded Bernini (1681-1723), he dedicated himself particularly to the erection of family chapels and altars; but his main activity soon moved to different places and often far from Rome, and yet in the papal state.

Three years after the death of Bemini, in 1683, CONTINI became principal of the Accademia di S. Luca, succeeding Luigi Garzi in a prestigious duty function as indicative of the professional stature he had reached at that time.

In the Academy, however, he was disappointed, demonstrating in a way too obvious that his interest focused on practicing the profession. In 1696 he was judged in the banned competition on the occasion of the first centenary of the Academy, but no other activities for this institution were known until 1702, when he worked as an instructor Along with Francesco Fontana, Sebastiano Cipriani, Carlo Buratti and Carlo Francesco Bizzaccheri. From 1702 to 1709 he was also a judge of Clementine contests together with the Fontana and Buratti. The honor of the nomination to "cavaliere" arrived late in 1713, and only in 1719 he was again "principal", that is, thirty-six years after his first election. He then used great power to lead the Academy and "kept strict orders".

One of the first times in which his name appears is in 1662, in connection with the continuation of the construction of the convent of the nuns of S. Maria dei Sette Dolori, conducted by his father. From 1673 to 1675 he built the vault of the apse of S. Maria di Monserrato; on 23 Nov. 1672 was named

Architect of S. Agostino, which he held until his death, and towards 1673 erected the part of the convent of S. Agostino overlooking the Via dei Pianellari and that will be continued by L. Vanvitelli.

While he was Principal of the Academy, he laid out the project for the bell tower of the cathedral of Zaragoza in Portugal. In 1687 he made a plan for the elevation of the Loggia del Paradiso in the abbey of Monte Cassino, which remained unfinished, until about 1694.

In 1689 he went to Macerata where he provided the Filipino fathers with a project for their church and convent, but it was not accepted; but later, new difficulties, in 1705 CONTINI made a new design according to which the existing church was built only in 1732 after his death.

The following year, for the Altieri, he built the "palace of the Badia" in Monterosi, currently in a very ruinous state.

In the interlude between S. Filippo's projects in Macerata, between 1699 and 1703 he built the church of S. Domenico in Ravenna.

In Rome, in the last years of the seventeenth century, CONTINI inserted the columns on the transept of the church of the Trinità dei Pellegrini to reinforce the support of the dome.

In the early eighteenth century he succeeded Crovara as the architect of S. Eustachio, where he constructed, in his project, from 1703 to 1706, the very simple nave with chapels. In this period he also laid the first plan for the church of St. Francesco delle Stimate.

A few years later he worked at the collegiate of S. Maria della Presentazione at Vignanello. It was built for the generosity of Marquis Marescotti, who married the rich Victoria Ruspoli, also taking his last name. Already in 1710 the foundations were excavated "around the old church", and demolished this in 1713, the construction of the new building was completed between 1719 and 1723. In 1725 Benedict XIII went with a great procession to consecrate the new church.

There is also news of his more or less extensive activity for the Propaganda Fide Palace; for St. Paul outside the walls; for SS. Apostoli; for the churches of Cerveteri and Riano (commissioned by Prince Ruspoli); for the cathedral of Albano (for Monsignor d'Aste); for the monasteries of S. Ruffina, Regina

Coeli, SS. Domenico and Sisto in Farfa, to mention only the most important buildings.

Both in Rome and outside, CONTINI, like his age-old Carlo Fontana, became known as the chaplain of the chapels and altars. The first chapel of a certain notoriety he designed is the Marcaccioni chapel in S. Maria del Suffragio, circa 1674, in which the structure above the altar turns towards the spectator convex side almost to give him the image of the Madonna carried by angels. Side panels serve as a background for the busts of the dead.

Most importantly, however, is the Elci Chapel in S. Sabina on the Aventine, dedicated to S. Catherine, whose construction lasted from 1671 to 1688. Designed on a square plan with the cut corners, it stands out not only for the polychrome conceived in bright contrasts, to which the frescoes in the plumes and dome of Giovanni Odazzi are added harmoniously, but above all to the use of light. When it was near to be finished, CONTINI conceived a second masterpiece: the Angelis Chapel in S. Maria in Aracoeli (1682-1684) devoted to S. Pietro d'Alcantara, similar to planimetric plan, and even closer to the chapel Raimondi in S. Pietro in Montorio del Bernini, for the scenic setting of the sculptural decoration above the altar, by Michele Maille. The design of figurative decoration, as a general setting, is easily attributable to CONTINI himself.

Of less importance are the arrangement of the altar in the chapel of S. Rita in S. Agosfino (third on the right), and the opening of a crown above the chapel of S. Monica in the same church, which was then closed by Vanvitelli. He designed for his urn. Rita are mentioned in Inventory of Goods.

The most remarkable commission was to translate into marble (1682) the stucco altar of 1677 of the then venerable Madonna delle Grazie, which was in a passage of the Venetian palace. The altar, with its tabernacle enclosing the effigy of Madonna with Child adored, in the Berninian manner, by two angels kneeling, by Filippo Carcani, was transferred (1911), with its faithfully reconstructed chapel, to the palace of Venice.

Borromini's successor as architect of Sapienza, CONTINI designed the altar of St. Ivo and the unfinished painting of Pietro da Cortona, which culminated in a pavilion's front page.

CONTINI was again preconditioned for the creation of the chapel of the SS. Guinizzone and Gennaro in Montecassino, where he had to adhere to the form of the existing chapels; and not very free was in the case of the chapel of St. John the Baptist in S. Maria in Campitelli (second on the left), arranged for the order of Cardinal Paluzzo degli Albertoni-Altieri, who had chosen her as a burial place. This was the last chapel to which CONTINI was waiting in 1697, with the participation of several sculptors, including Maille.

In the contemporary Capocaccia chapel in S. Maria della Vittoria, CONTINI created a receptacle for the statuary group of Sognodi. The open-minded tabernacle architecture could only be a copy of that of the Chapel of S. Teresa of Bernini facing it.

It seems, however, that CONTINI's activity in the field of funerary monuments of a permanent nature was very limited, and that it disappeared entirely in the monuments in the famous Marcaccioni chapel in S. Maria del Suffragio, and in that for the princess Eleonora Borghese in S. Lucia of the Ginnasi, who, when demolished, was transferred to the SS. Alessio and Bonifazio Church at the Aventino; the monument, by CONTINI's design, was executed by the sculptor Andrea Fucigna.

From 1671 onwards he performed for Cardinal Carlo Barberini changes in the sixteenth century palace belonging to the villa Barberini sul Gianicolo, where he also designed the magnification of the Palma Casino over a slope of the ground. When Carlo Fontana set up the Ludovisi Palace for the new curia of the Curia, it seemed as though for CONTINI the hour for an important task, for the Capranica, who owned land on the opposite side of the square, commissioned him to elaborate a project for a new building. In 1695 he was presented to the presidency of the Court of Roads, but never executed.

At the end of the century, he erected the elevation on the wall of the Chigi palace, which disturbs the aesthetic balance so that it can accommodate the library of Cardinal Flavio. the famous "Chigiana", which was brought to it in 1695, and for which she also designed shelves. In 1699 he was entrusted with the elevation of the Sacchetti palace in via Giulia, on the Tevere plateau.

The most important of these occasional commissions were those entrusted to him outside the city, as in Santa Marinella, the expansion of the fortress

and the garden of Cardinal Carlo Barberini (1692), and the construction of a casino in a garden to be connected with the fort by a tree-lined street (1697). Of the many drawings, found in the Vatican Library and published by Fiore (1976), are interesting those who make up the pentagonal penthouse, a free elaboration of what Francesco Contini had built for the garden of the Barberini palace Palestrina, discarded in favor of a somewhat modest project.

In 1723, the year of his death, along with the collegiate of Vignanello he also ended the palace Marescotted, on the same square, for which he created a simple and dignified facade. Part of his business, CONTINI devoted to the world of theater and creating scenarios. During the carnival of 1679, in his home and in the presence of Cristina of Sweden and Benedetto Pamphili, the comic work was recited as Misconceptions in the semblance of which he himself provided the booklet and A. Scarlatti the music.

In 1712 he was appointed to set up the theater of the Archdioca, the protagonist of the initiative by Prince Francesco M. Ruspoli. It was a "very vaguely old" structure, with three orders of chairs, located on the Aventino near S. Sabina, oriented towards the Tiber, and executed according to Paleo of the Knight and Arcade by Girolamo Odam, who designed and published it in the form of engraving. Even for the Ruspoli the recital of the Resurrection speakers (Easter 1708) and St. Francesca Romana, which was held in the noble hall of his palace in Rome.

CONTINI died in Rome on 16 October. 1723 (St. Marcello's parish) and after a "funeral worth great pomp", he was laid in the family tomb in the Chiesa Nuova, where three years later (July 12, 1726) by his wife Francesca Crescenzi died, who he married on 12 September. 1682, in the lateran baptistery. Many of his sons followed him in the profession.

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Translated from:

[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-battista-contini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovan-battista-contini_(Dizionario-Biografico))

Works

Among its many important works, besides various chapels and altars, you can enumerate:

- Restoration and Baroque setting of the [Basilica of San Bernardino](#) in L'Aquila
- [Church of Santa Maria Annunziata delle Turchine](#) in Rome
- Pentagonal Casino of the Garden of the Simple Jetty
- [Vetralla Cathedral](#)
- Chapel of Santa Caterina, Santa Sabina , Mount Aventino (Rome) (1671)
- Restoration of [Sant'Eustachio](#) in Rome, solution of the living part
- Altar, Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza (1684)
- Bell tower of the cathedral of Zaragoza (1683), for which he sent some drawings, perhaps without ever going to Spain, as did Carlo Fontana for other works.
- Project of the church and monastery of San Nicolò Arena in Catania (1687 and 1704)
- Church and Monastery of the Filipinos in Macerata (1689)
- Palazzo Bonaccorsi in Macerata
- Palazzo Altieri in Monterosi
- [Palazzo Marescotti in Vetralla](#)
- Altar of the chapel of Saint Valentino and Ilario in the cathedral of San Lorenzo in Viterbo (1696 - 1724)
- Restoration of S. Domenico in Ravenna (1699 - 1703)
- [St. Augustine's church at Aquila](#) rebuilt on a project by Contini after the earthquake of 1703 and now heavily damaged in the earthquake of 2009. In the same city he cared for the restoration of the [Basilica of San Bernardino](#).
- Urban Renovation in Vignanello for the Ruspoli family. [5] In the small village of Contini, in addition to dealing with other designers of the urban plan, he designed the collegiate church of Santa Maria della Presentazione (1710 - 1723) and Palazzo Marescotti (1723)
- [Church of St Francis of the Stimmate of Rome](#) (1714).

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