

# Agostino Corsini

Italian sculptor  
(1688-1772)

He was born in Bologna in 1688 and he studied painting with Giovanni Maria or Domenico Viani, then went on to "practice the best sculptors of his time", starting to sculpt in marble and wood and modeling in clay.

He was already working at the age of 17, and was considered an "excellent sculptor". But of his initial ways it is not possible to say, because the *Pietà*, performed precisely for Monte, has been lost. His first work remained, in addition to the medal with the *Charity*, made for the Monte di Pietà in 1723, is the polychrome statue of the *Conception*, executed in 1734 for the Palmieri chapel in S. Francesco, and today in S. Petronio: "work of good craftsmanship and customary iconography".

All Bolognese works are presumably from this period, including the *Pietà* in terracotta, still visible on the portal of the Monte di Pietà palace; two statues, still existing, and a bas-relief in the hall and in the staircase of Palazzo Bovio. Also it is known that Corsini had executed twelve stucco statues, representing the twelve *Apostles*, for the cathedral of Ravenna, the first stone of which was placed in 1734. These works were removed in 1774 when the cathedral was totally remodeled based on a project by Cosimo Morelli.

In 1735 he was already in Rome, where he was occupied by two important companies: he executed an *S. Girolamo* for the façade and some gilded bas-reliefs in the plumes of Corsini chapel for S. Giovanni in Laterano; in 1735 he sculpted, for the front of the Trevi Fountain, the statue of the *Abundance of the fruits* which, together with the other three (by Pincellotti, by Ludovisi, by Queirolo), "the effects of the rains and the fecundity of the earth caused by the 'watering the waters', and which was placed *on the spot* the following year.

The custom with the most famous artists of the moment such as the Maini, the Bracci, the Della Valle, confirms Corsini in its tendency, perhaps already breathed in Bologna between algardian echoes, towards a moderate classicism, well assimilated to great scenographies, in which closely connected architectural idea and plastic decoration.

With the election to the papal throne of Prospero Lambertini (Benedict XIV), Corsini had the opportunity to sculpt a statue of the Pope (1741 or 1742) for the facade of S. Maria Maggiore. In these years he was busy in various jobs: in 1740 he received with G. Lironi payments for the execution of the *Putti* that adorn the side walls of the Cavallerini chapel in S. Carlo ai Catinari; and in 1741, in collaboration with the Fuga, commissioned by Cardinal Acquaviva, he sculpted the *Putti reggitemma* to adorn the solemn entrance, designed by the architect, for S. Cecilia. Opera, this, happy for the asymmetric arrangement and the movement of the putti and for the perfect insertion of the ornamental element in the architecture, a problem that Corsini could not always solve happily.

Still in collaboration with the Fugue, who had designed the funeral monument, he executed the poorly featured bust of Cardinal S. A. Tanara now dead for twenty years, in S. Maria della Vittoria, and in 1744 the bust of Cardinal Lazzaro Pallavicino for the funeral monument in S. Francesco da Paola.

These are the most fruitful years for Corsini; in 1745 his masterpiece is dated, the bust of *F. Pannolini*, today in the municipal art collections of Bologna, signed, probably executed in Rome by commission of the pope. "The work is rightly placed in the most elected Roman plastic tradition, as it had been developing around the Rusconi... continued and revised in the Neo-Algardian sense". Also for his city, two years later, he executed the colossal statue of *S. Peter*, for the facade of the metropolitan church, in parallel with that of *S. Paul*, performed by Verschaffelt, with whom he had already found contact in the works for S. Maria Maggiore, and, in 1747, in those for a chapel made by John V of Portugal, to be sent to the church of S. Rocco in Lisbon.

In this enterprise the Bolognese found himself inserted in the team that worked on the ornamental parts of a Vanvitelli architecture, with which he will be in contact several times during the Neapolitan period.

Vanvitelli had no great esteem for the work of Corsini, if he called it (on November 8, 1753) a "Bolognese sculptoraccio". Corsini had been commissioned to perform two marble figures of *Fame*, which support the royal coat of arms, for the portal of the chapel of Portici, also severely judged by Vanvitelli.

The two large marble figures, finished in 1756, were not paid for that in 1758, after many complaints about the figure requested by Corsini and the expertise of sculptors and architects, while the execution of two cherubs for the sacristy doors was also suspended. whose stucco models had already been approved in 1753 by the king.

At the same time the execution of two angels for the high altar was suspended, conceivably the work of Corsini.

Praise to the work of Corsini instead can be read in a report by the architect Antonio Canevari on May 20, 1758: "the finish of the door of the Royal chapel is a worthy and very worthy work... and deserves every respect to free the poor sculptor with unfair persecutions".

In 1763, however, the Vanvitelli approved the sketches of the two statues of *Previdenza* and *Giustizia*, to be placed in the staircase of the palace of Portici.

His judgment on the present and past work of Corsini this time is laudatory, although he recommends harmonizing the proportion of the figures to the niches that must accommodate them: "The said Corsini sculptor given having praiseworthy essay in the statues of the Royal Chapel of this Real Site and in the Fame that support the real enterprise on the door of the same, I do not 'other to add that approval about this subject".

The statues were finished in 1768 and are the last documented works of the sculptor, who died in Naples in March 1772.

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