

Cosma di Iacopo di Lorenzo

An Italian sculptor, the only son of Jacopo di Lorenzo attested by epigraphic documents. The name, from which the tradition of defining the artistic contribution of Roman marble workers with the adjectives "cosmati", "cosmatesco" and therefore "cosmatesque" art or architecture (Boito 1860), appears for the first time in 1210 in inscription of the portico of the cathedral of Civita Castellana. He must still be a boy because in the aforementioned inscription Iacopo mentions him as "his chaste carissimo" and not as a mature magister: "Magister Iacobus, Civis Romanus, Cum Cosma Filio, His Carissimo, Fecit Ohc Opus, Year Dni, MCCX". It is estimated that he could have from 10 to 15 years when he realized together with his father the decoration of the civic portico which is considered one of the most representative works of cosmatics in general.

He was still very young when, together with his father Iacopo, he collaborated in the construction of the portal of the monastery of San Tommaso in Formis which stands next to the church of Santa Maria in Domnica in Rome: "Magister Iacobus Cum Filio Suo. Cosmato Fecit Ohc Opus ". As you can see, Iacopo writes "fecit" to the singular and not "fecerunt" in the plural, wanting to indicate with this the rank of assistant apprentice of the son Cosma and not of independent magister. Not all the certificates of authorship of Cosma have come to us as epigraphic inscriptions, some of which have been lost and it has remained in some historical documents. But the most important inscriptions of this architect are found in Anagni and in Subiaco.

At Anagni, in the Cathedral of Santa Maria, at least three inscriptions are preserved, bearing his name, one of which certifies that he made the Cosmatesque floor of the basilica superior to the time of Bishop Alberto, that is between 1224 and 1227; another (in fact there were two, but one was lost) that attests the displacement of the altar of San Magno in the cathedral crypt of the same name in the year 1231; another inscription, certifies that he performed some unspecified works, this time with his sons Luca and Jacopo II, again in 1231. The fact that this inscription is on a marble step from time immemorial placed on the right side of the altar of San Magno in the aforementioned crypt, has led all scholars to blindly believe that the cosmatesque floor of the crypt had been executed by him in that place in 1231. Recent surveys, however, have highlighted how all this might not correspond to reality if it is considered that the inscription itself does not refer specifically, as in the case of the floor of the upper basilica, to works concerning the floor of the crypt; that the step with the inscription is the only one of the altar itself that is completely different from the others; that the inscription is totally obliterated by wear, which would indicate that once the step was in another position where every day was trampled by a considerable number of people and faithful; historical and stylistic considerations lead one to hypothesize that the step may actually come from the nearby church of San Pietro in Vineis, where it seems certain that a huge Cosmatesque floor was probably built in 1231 by Cosma's workshop. Finally, again with his sons Luca and Iacopo he left a final certificate of paternity in the cloister of the Benedictine monastery of Santa Scolastica in Subiaco, today called "Cosmatesque cloister".

Cosma's style is distinguished from that of his grandfather Lorenzo and his father Iacopo because of being closer to simplified solutions, such as the down-sizing of quincuxes and guilloche. Considering that the two Anagnian floor works show the same characteristics, with the original longitudinal development of long rows of quincuxes tangent to each other in the outer wheels, one

can easily infer that this solution was an important stylistic element in his works that diversified from those paterne in which the quincuxes are in most cases knotted together like guilloche and not juxtaposed, as well as being significantly larger in size. If Iacopo preferred a moderate but important use of ancient yellow, Cosma aimed above all at the use of green porphyry in his quincuxes (as in the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome and Civita Castellana in the transept and in the presbytery although both were reconstructed). Cosma disappears from the scene after the last inscription of Subiaco, then at least from 1250 (if you want to round up), the year from which the cosmatesque art in general starts towards a general and unstoppable decline.

Reference :

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cosma-di-iacopo-di-lorenzo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cosma-di-iacopo-di-lorenzo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

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