

# Antoine Deriset

French architect of the Late Baroque period  
(1685-1768)

Son od François, "maitre ouvrier en soye", and Catherine Sibert, was born in Lyon on 18 Nov. 1685. There is nothing we know about his training as an architect although it is certainly not possible that he attended the Lions architects, who were particularly active at the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, a testimony of the time, according to which "the aurait travaillé dans la décoration des opéras in Paris", suggests that he had settled in Paris very soon. It is certain that he followed the courses of the Académie royale d'architecture held by Antoine Desgodets, because in 1720 he achieved the first prize in the competition organized by the Académie. He then obtained a scholarship at the Accademia di Francia in Rome, where he arrived only in 1723, at the age of 38 and where 8 Dec. 1757 married Anna Corona, from whom she had three children.

He was therefore a man of some experience and culture that made his appearance in the Roman milieu, where he could easily be noticed. In 1728 he was admitted to the Academy of St. Luke, obtaining the task of teaching geometry and perspective Deriset was able to meet and advise some young architects who then cared for all respect, such as B. Vittone or G. Quarenghi. Teaching, however, provided him with the opportunity to highlight his theoretic qualities.

It belonged to a generation that had been heavily influenced by the analyzes of François Blondel and his students. Also for Deriset architecture had to correspond to great rational principles. This explains his interest in studying the relationship between musical harmony and architectural proportions, an interest shown by many testimonies of contemporaries, and in particular by B. Galiani in his commentary on The Architecture of M. Vitruvio Pollione and A Comolli. Deriset had even planned a critical edition of the book of French musician René Ouvrard, published in Paris in 1679 under the title Architecture harmonique or the application of the doctrine of the proportions of music in architecture. This interest, precisely because it assumed logical reasoning with obvious links with classical antiquity, well corresponded to the ideas circulating in the Roman intellectuals around 1730.

It is therefore better to understand the non-secondary role of counselor and theorist that Deriset seems to have had in Rome, where he was definitely established after his stay at the Academy of France. This role, moreover, had to occupy most of his time.

Deriset has little realization of its activity. In 1728 he was commissioned to renew the small church of S. Andrea and Claudio (S. Claudio) as Correspondance. A new facade was built so that a beautiful design appeared recently on the Roman art market (1983). Concerning the construction there are three drawings signed by Deriset and kept in the Besançon Municipal Library, accurate and finished works that testify to the architect's final idea.

Even more important is the church of St. Maria's Name near the Trajan's Column, built between 1735 and 1741 on a Deriset project and under his careful and constant

direction. From 1749 to 1764, he directed the resumption of the interior decoration of the church of St. Louis of the French. There are very few tangible testimonies of Deriset's art, but such as to clearly illustrate the principles he wanted to develop: slim play of proportions, search for monumentality, obvious taste for circular plants from which to derive a coherent and organized space.

Both in the few sketches quickly sketched for the Clementine Competition of 1725, both in the adoption of an impressive dome as a cover for the Church of St. Mary's Name, Deriset's concerns seem to always respond to the same research: that of a reasoned Baroque, nourished by the Blondel lessons and the great examples of the Bernini churches or the monumental compositions of Juvarra.

It is necessary to emphasize again that after the beginning of the 16th century. these concerns corresponded to those of many Roman intellectual circles. Circles supported by Carlo Maratta, Camillo Rusconi and Carlo Fontana, who had enjoyed Alessandro Galilei and Nicolò Salvi and who enjoyed the protection of Clement XII Corsini and his grandson, Cardinal Neri Corsini. Nothing extraordinary, therefore, that Deriset was very well introduced in these environments: in 1732, as a judge of the lateran competition, he dared to vigorously support Cardinal Corsini the project of Galilei for the facade of St. John Lateran; in 1738 when he encountered difficulty in accepting from the council the choice of a monumental dome for the church of St. Mary's Name was Cardinal Lodovico Pico, a close associate of Corsini, to support and impose his project.

On the other hand, there were friendly relations between Deriset and some artists of the Corsini circle: the painter N. Ricciolini, the sculptors Giambattista Maini or Filippo Della Valle, whose wedding was in 1733 Deriset witnessed.

The happy insertion of the architect in Rome and the principles he upbeat could only reconcile the favors of most French personalities living in the papal state. Thus, since 1729, Deriset was a member of the Congregation of St. Louis, who had the responsibility of French religious buildings and possessions in the territory of the State of the Church. Shortly thereafter, he obtained the superintendence for all the works of interest to those buildings.

As far as his relations with the French Academy were concerned, they never came to nothing and many French artists worked on the decoration of the buildings built or renovated by Deriset. Deriset should also be regarded as a valuable mentor able to introduce young scholars to the various Roman circles and even to the Florentine ones: in 1746, he led the architect M.-B. Hazon and painter G. Voiriot, who noted the fact in his diary. It seems that Deriset has engaged in such missions until his death, which occurred in Rome on October 6 1768, in a period that was becoming more and more exciting for the evolution of art in Europe

Though, ultimately, he left a few traces, this established French in Rome had a role to play not to underestimate; during the pontificate of Clement XII Corsini was no doubt a personality to be taken into account. This professor of geometry and perspective, nourished by the great examples of French architecture at the end of the seventeenth century and who appreciated the novelties of a Salvi or a Galilean, made his voice heard in the moment that preceded the advent of Piranesi and Winckelmann.

by Denis Laval - Biographical Dictionary of the Italians - Volume 39 (1991)

Translated from:

<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antoine-deriset> (Dizionario-Biografico)