

Francesco Fabi Altini

Italian sculptor
1830-1906

He was born in Fabriano (province of Ancona) on September 15th. 1830 by Francesco Fabi and Maria Nicolina Altini, shortly after his father's death (26 April). Around 1834, with his mother and his elder brother Giuseppe, he arrived in Rome where, due to the precarious conditions of his family, he entered under the protection of Cardinal Ambrogio Bianchi, who welcomed him to the Roman apostolic hospice of S. Michele a Ripa. By showing the young man a remarkable disposition to art, he was initiated into the study of drawing and figure and, with Adamo Tadolini, of sculpture. At the age of fourteen, he won the admission contest for the nude school of the Accademia di S. Luca, while at the same time attending plastic lessons and completing secondary secondary studies. For having participated in the defense of the Roman Republic in 1848-49, he was expelled from the hospice; later he was readmitted, thanks to the intervention of his brother Giuseppe, a seminarian. He then went on to work in the studio of Pietro Tenerani, his true master, who had him in high regard. Of his fruitful documented artistic production, all of which took place within a style that is still classical yet attentive to the study of truth, it is almost never found existence and collocation.

Almost twenty years old, in 1850, Fabi Altini made a marble group of mythological subjects, *Love and Mercury*, which revealed him as a quality artist, so much so that Empress Elisabeth bought the piece for the imperial palace in Vienna. Another remarkable work of mythological theme and marked by classicism was the *Bacchus*, which was built in 1851. In 1852 is the statue of St. *Romualdo*, the first religious work, preserved in the crypt of the church of Ss. Biagio and Romualdo in Fabriano together with the bust of *Monsignor Agostino Bellenghi*; then followed a *Telemachus*, a life-size gypsum statue in which the young man is depicted in the act of combating the procession by order of Ulysses; the work was commissioned for the Salviati chapel in S. Gregorio al Celio in Rome.

Of 1853 is the statue representing the month of *May*, which, together with other eleven statues of the months, crowns the equestrian monument of Simon Bolivar in Lima, Peru.

In 1856, still in the Salviati chapel in S. Gregorio al Celio, Fabi Altini was commissioned to erect the memorial in memory of Cardinal Ambrogio Bianchi, certainly one of the first major commissions received.

Above an inscription that recalls the virtues of the deceased, a large niche contains the bust-portrait in marble of the cardinal, flanked by two statues depicting the *Pietà* and *Charity*.

In 1861 in Florence, on the occasion of the National Exhibition, the work *Beatrice*, was presented as shown in the description given by Dante in the first song of *Paradise*; Fabi Altini decorated the base with four bas-reliefs illustrating the allegorical journey of the poet. Subsequently, in 1866, by the intervention of Tenerani, Fabi Altini had the commission, from the Counts Giacomo and Giovanni Gulinelli, of a monumental tomb

to honor the memory of their ancestors Giacomo, Giovanni and Luigi, in the Certosa of the Charterhouse of Ferrara, in a context of famous burials. Of 1868 is a plaster statue of natural dimensions, depicting *David* who, after having broken down Goliath, is dressed in pastoral clothes; in 1870 the monument to cardinal Giuseppe Bofondi, placed in the church of S. Maria in Portico (S. Maria in Campitelli), also in Rome.

The *Susanna*, a marble statue of Carrara, executed in 1871 (proposed by the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, on deposit in the Chamber of Deputies), which was a great success with the public, was tasteful at first sight. So much so that several replies were commissioned. Owned by the Galleria Naz. of modern art is also the *Putto playing the lyre*, kept in deposits.

Among the other works carried out by Fabi Altini for the Verano cemetery are: the monument for the Catel, the funeral monument to Cesare Mancini, which depicts a young sleeping naked asleep; executed between 1871 and 1875, it is considered one of its highest quality works. In 1873 Fabi Altini participated in the competition for four colossal statues at the entrance of the Verano cemetery: *Hope, Meditation, Prayer* and *Silence*; presented the four sketches, the jury commissioned the realization of the *Meditation* and *Prayer* (1874-78). The plaster models of the latter are found in S. Maria degli Angeli in Rome.

The monument to the Marchesa Teresa Stampa di Soncino is located under an arch of the quadriportico of the Verano cemetery; it is composed of a base surmounted by a colossal statue of *Charity*.

In 1880 Fabi Altini exhibited in London the *Galatea*, a marble statue depicting the life-size nymph, sitting on a rock, lapped by the sea while removing the veil that covers it; the opera received such success that the author was commissioned a replica for Melbourne in Australia. In 1881 the Fabi Altini made a marble *David* in 1882 participated in the competition for the statues of the apostles in St. Paul Outside the Walls in Rome and was commissioned to realize those of the Apostle *Simon* and *St. Luke*. Among the last works of the Fabi Altini we remember *the Ante peccatum*, a group that depicts Adam and Eve before the original sin, made of marble for the 1900 Paris International Exposition, where, however, it was not exposed.

In 1874 Fabi Altini was elected an academic of St. Luke for sculpture. Between 1884 and 1885 he was elected president of the same Academy, of which he continued to be part until 1903. In 1901 he was named a merit member of the Academy of Virtuosi al Pantheon; he was also president of the Industrial Art Museum. Member of numerous juries, the Fabi Altini was also part of the competition for the Vittoriano in Rome, won by his student Giuseppe Sacconi (the same Fabi Altini performed a relief depicting the *Piceno* for the monument). Paolo Bartolini and Michele Tripisciano also remembered among his pupils. The Fabi Altini lived and worked until the last years in Rome with his wife Carolina Voigt, daughter of the Berliner Carlo and Teresa Fioroni, from whom he had three daughters, Beatrice, Silvia and Augusta prematurely died. In 1903, now sick for some time, he retired to San Mariano di Perugia in the villa Sperling, where he died on February 27th. 1906.

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