

# Vincenzo Felice

Italian sculptor  
1657-1715

Most likely he was born in Rome, by the Roman Andrea and Marta Pagnoncella, in about 1657, as can be read from a document dated 1684 in which it is said of twenty-seven years, " a long time "active with the teacher D. Guidi. This sculptor was linked until his death (1701), supporting him in the execution of various works, not specified by the sources.

Felice married the only daughter (Mary Magdalene) of his master and that "after his death he remained in the study", located behind Via Giulia, towards the river, in place called the Army. In fact, the study and all the other assets of Guidi passed to his daughter, who had appointed Felice his attorney. The two married on September 14th. 1702,. The girl brought in the dowry the use of the study of sculptor, the paintings already owned by the father and other minor assets for an estimated value of 1000 scudi.

In 1702 Felice lent some paintings, probably part of those that were dowries of his wife, to expose them to one of the celebrations celebrated in the church of S. Salvatore in Lauro. Thirteen paintings of the small collection of Guidi were later sold by the sculptor and the money reinvested in places of Monte.

The first known autonomous work of Felice is the statue of *Elisha* on the side of the main altar of the church of S. Maria in Traspontina, executed in 1695 for 165 scudi, together with three others entrusted to GA Lavaggi, M. Maglia, A Swifts. In the document of assignment to the Lavaggi and Felice was asked to make a preliminary model of the work, because obviously these two artists were considered less experienced. Laltare had been designed twenty years earlier by the architect Carlo Fontana, who had foreseen from the beginning the presence, on the dividing wall between the presbyterie and the choir, of statues, first realized in stucco by L. Retti, to which they now replaced these others in marble.

The statue of *S. Filippo* on the facade of the cathedral of Frascati (designed by Girolamo Fontana, nephew of Carlo, and executed between 1696 and 1701) should have been performed by Felice around 1701.

Between 1702 and 1703 he realized the statue of *San. Giovanni martire* placed in the right-hand right arm of the colonnade of San Pietro and almost simultaneously that of *San Francesco* for the facade of San Silvestro in Capite, built on a project by D. De Rossi and completed in 1703. Another statue, representative *San Calepodio*, was sculpted for the facade of Santa Maria in Trastevere between 1701 and 1707, probably around 1702. Still between 1703 and 1708 Felice realized a relief with the *Assumption of Mary* for the church of S. Maria dell'Umiltà built by Carlo Fontana.

Probably between 1706 and 1709 he executed stuccos, now lost, in the church of the Holy Spirit of the Neapolitans in Via Giulia, restored by Carlo Fontana. In the account of the artists to be paid in 1706 his name, in fact, does not figure, while in 1709 he is granted a credit of 60 scudi which will actually be paid only on the first of July 1712: it is paid for the *Angels in act to worship the Cross* (above the high altar) and "for having made several models, so much for the two altars". The bas-reliefs of the chapel of San Francesco di Paola are not mentioned. They

were executed by Felice and G. Napolini, also a pupil of Guidi. Napolini is paid, in the aforementioned accounting books, for a greater amount than Felice, but the nature of its intervention is not specified.

In this first decade of the eighteenth century Felice also carried out restorations to the statue of *Paul IV*, arranged in 1708 in Campidoglio by C. Fontana, and at the base of the Antonina column, flanked by G. Napolini. With the latter sculptor Felice had formed a sort of artistic association and had sublet the study to the Army with a contract stipulated on November 2. 1702. When the friend turned out to be unjust, he took his case and obtained the precautionary confiscation of part of his assets in the study; Napolini concluded the dispute with the guardian of the heir, May 17, 1715, pledging to pay off the debt with small monthly installments.

In 1711 Felice sculpted two *Delfini* for the fountain in the Piazza del Pantheon, alongside the sculptor L. Ottoni. 1 two artists also performed a statue each for the church of S. Maria ad Martyres (the Pantheon), a *Santa Agnese* Felice and a *Santa Anna* Ottoni.

The two models were kept in the gallery of the Vatican Palace on pedestals with the date 1715. A deposit of 17 December 1714 of 100 scudi, for the model and for the statue, is quoted in the inventory of the goods of Felice.

The statue of *Santa Agnese* is perhaps the most elegant surviving work of Felice, of distant algardian reminiscence, mediated through the master Guidi, but softened by obvious eighteenth-century graces.

Felice would have completed the bust of *Cardinal F. Albizzi*, started by Guidi and remained among the sculptor's assets at his death. The work was then included in the funeral monument of the cardinal in Santa Maria in Traspontina, but this reconstruction of the facts seems to contrast with the statement of the Cracas of May 26, 1787, according to which the work was done by a descendant of the cardinal, Monsignor Francesco, using a bust from the cardinal's inheritance (died in 1684); it would therefore be a different work from the one still in the hands of Guidi in 1701.

Felice died in Rome on 9 January. 1715; on that day his testament was opened, deposited from the previous 24 October at the notary L. Caioli.

On that date, already ill, he had ordered that his wife be entitled to the return of the dowry and that he believes that his son Pietro was universal, placed under the tutelage of Pier Vincenzo De Rossi, his brother-in-law. In case of death without his son's heirs, the inheritance would be passed on to his sister Elizabeth, living with her mother. For himself he had the burial in the church of S. Maria del Pianto, being a confrere of the existing Company. The most interesting part of the document consists of a list of works in the studio that the artist has to sell by reinvesting the proceeds in favor of the heir. He personally enumerates twenty-six sculptures, including statues and bas-reliefs, all of them profane and predominantly small in size. These are evidently works carried out without order and destined for the free market that make us understand how our knowledge of his work, based on the only official sacred works, is completely partial: *Flora*, life size; *Venus beats Love with roses*; four great busts of *Stagioni*; four great busts of *Imperatori*; *Andromeda tied to the rock*, of 3 palms; *Cleopatra sitting with the asp*, breast of 3 palms; *Putto sitting that turns off a face*, of 2 palms; *Sleeping winged youngster*, of 3 palms; *Bacchus sitting*, of two and a half palms; *Amorino asleep on the remains of Hercules*, 2 palms; two reliefs with the *Triumph of Venus* and the *Triumph of Galatea*; four reliefs with *Games*

*of putti; two reliefs with the Fucina di Amore and the Fabbrica di dardi; two rounds with heavenly love and earthly love.*

To the list personally drawn up by the sculptor (and signed with the surname "Felice") three other bas-reliefs with *S* are then added. *Francesco and angels, Daphne and Ceres*, as well as forty clay models found in his study on the occasion of the inventory of the goods. Filippo Aldrovandi Marescotti bought from the heirs of Felice the four busts representing the *Seasons*, as well as *Venus that beats Love with roses*.

by Maria Barbara Guerrieri Borsoi - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 46 (1996)

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