

# Francesco Ferrari

Italian architect  
18th century

We do not know the details of Ferrari, active in Rome as an architect and painter in the first half of the century. XVIII. He participated in the Clementino competition of 1701 with a drawing of a papal palace, obtaining the second prize *ex aequo* with CS Fontana. He became an academic of St. Luke in 1721, was a secretary, then a councilor and in 1750 appointed "estimator of architecture" together with F. Raguzzini.

Architect not particularly original, belongs to the large group of followers of C. Fontana, who tried themselves as he especially in the restoration of the ancient churches of Rome, in line with the main objective of politics, papal construction of the first half of the eighteenth century, after the grandiose seventeenth-century projects.

In 1708 Ferrari had an important part in the work of transformation of the church of Saints John and Paul, wanted by Cardinal F. Paolucci.

The architect A. Canevari, in 1715, had demolished the high altar and the cosmatesque ciborium; Ferrari renewed the apse and placed in the new altar an ancient porphyry urn, where Pope Benedict XIII placed the relics of the martyrs in 1726.

His most extensive and organic work is undoubtedly the restoration of the church of S. Gregorio al Celio (1725-1731). The renovation work was entrusted in 1721 to G. Soratini, a conversant of the Camaldolese monks, who had already enlarged the monastery. In 1725 Ferrari took its place, proposing not only to transform the interior, already basilica with three naves, but to restructure the building, according to a fully eighteenth-century concept.

In the central nave the elegant pillars that support the trabeation on which the vault is set alternate with the existing columns. Ferrari gives particular prominence to the apse, through the fluted columns and the arches that follow each other in depth; the ornamental motifs in stucco, partly rebuilt in the nineteenth century. embellish this rococo interior.

In 1727 there is the decoration of the chapel dedicated to the saints Degna and Merita (second on the right, the MutiBussi chapel) in S. Marcello al Corso, built in 1644 by the Muti family.

The aesthetic effect is given by the variety of marble used: cottanello, alabaster, peach blossom and white and golden stucco. In the vault, within medallions, are the allegorical figures of the *Fortress* and of the *Faith* flanked by angels, the altar is surmounted by cherubim.

In 1729 the Benedictines of Montevergine entrusted him with the execution of the façade of the church of S. Agata dei Goti, "where the qualities of Ferrari, compared to

the smallness of the theme, are best expressed with a faint poetic result" (Portoghesi, 1966).

The architect adopted the unique order of pilasters resting on a high base; these hold the entablature surmounted by a curved and broken pediment including the triangular tympanum. Above the door is placed the plastered medallion with the effigy of the saint. The façade, placed between two wings of the monastery, does not correspond directly to the body of the church, but leads to a space, the survival of an ancient atrium. The slight concavity of the façade recalls late-baroque examples, such as S. Marcello, the Trinity church in via Condotti, La Maddalena, and leads back to the Borrominian tradition.

Between 1 July 1727 and the end of December 1728 it was necessary to carry out the work (see Tancioni, 1989, p.34) for the decoration of the chapel dedicated to S. Francesca Romana in S. Maria Nova, or S. Francesca Romana al Foro . The altar was consecrated in 1729; here Ferrari created a happy contrast between the candor of the sculptural elements and the polychrome of the marbles. The restoration of the church of St. Stanislaus of the Poles, executed between 1729 and 1735, is also attributable to Ferrari

The façade is incorporated into a Baroque palace and presents two orders of pairs of pilasters including the portal and the large window.

He was responsible for the current arrangement of the choir of S. Prassede, commissioned by Cardinal L. Pico della Mirandola in 1730, including the construction of the baldacchino and the stairway, ascending towards the altar and descending towards the crypt.

The baldacchino presents the ancient porphyry columns, from the time of Pope Pasquale I (817-824), and the yellow marble pillars with white capitals; at the corners the four angels bearing various emblems are by Giuseppe Rusconi. The ciborium is covered by a silver dome, a gift from Pope Pasquale.

From 1730 to 1735 Ferrari was the architect of the Carpegna family; in 1733 he undertook renovations in their palace (seat since 1934 of the Accademia di S. Luca), including the ground-floor portico and the façade facing the courtyard. At the end of the fourth decade, Ferrari probably worked on the Del Cinque building project in Montecitorio (Bevilacqua, 1987). In 1741 Ferrari took part in the restoration of the church of Ss. Sergio and Bacco, also known as the Madonna del Pascolo, in the Monti district, dating back to the VIII century. The interior, decorated with a profusion of marble and stucco, remained almost unchanged, while the façade was rebuilt in 1896. The intervention of the church of Ss. Ildefonso and Tommaso di Villanova, founded in 1667, dates from the fifth decade of the eighteenth century.

The façade, restored in 1954, adorned with pilasters with a jutting cornice, is certainly not original, just like the other facades of Ferrari, but has the advantage of simplicity and lightness.

The polychrome and rococo elegance can be found in the *Bussi* monument in S. Maria in Trastevere (first chapel on the right), from 1742.

Cardinal GB Bussi, who died in 1726, is depicted in the bust, executed by GB De Rossi, placed high up in a wavy frame in marble peach blossom and flanked by porphyry floral elements. Below is the sarcophagus in veined red marble; in the work, characterized by a lively taste and by the predominance of the curved lines, Ferrari reveals its qualities as a decorator.

The chapel of S. Francesca Romana in the church of S. Maria Liberatrice, now destroyed, was decorated by Ferrari in 1748.

Very little remains of his pictorial activity: a altarpiece representing *A miracle of St. Vincenzo Ferreri*, performed for the first altar on the right of the church of S. Nicola dei Prefetti, now in the sacristy.

The painting (erroneously attributed to Francesco Ferrari, homonymous painter active in Ferrara, who died in 1708) shows a chromatic and compositional balance; in the center is shown s. Vincenzo who recalls from death to life a woman who rises from the catalytic seat on the left. On the right a gentleman expresses a sense of wonder and fright; at the top is an angel. with heraldic trumpet. The work is a prelude to the neoclassical taste, as can be seen from the somatic features of the characters, from the color spread out neatly on the surface, from the views and the lights.

The altarpiece for the first left altar, representing the *SS*, has been lost. *Anna, Giuseppe and Domenico* in the same church, and the painting with the *Founder of the Order of the Servants of Mary*, executed for the third altar on the right of the church of S. Nicola in Arcione, now destroyed.

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