

Felice Festa

Italian neo-Classical sculptor
(c.1764-1825)

He was born in 1763 or 1764 in Trinità. His training took place between 1779 and 1786 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Turin, where he followed courses in painting and sculpture, obtaining various awards: in 1779 and in 1783 the 3rd prize for a "clay academy", other prizes in 1784, '85 and '86.

In April 1796 he had received a letter of presentation from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count G. Perret de Hauteville, addressed to the minister plenipotentiary of Sardinia C. Damiano di Priocca; the latter, moreover, undertook to make sure that A. Canova knew and addressed in some way the young artist. From the registration of the marriage of Festa with Candida Boni, occurred on October 16th 1796 in the church of S. Lorenzo in Lucina, it turns out that he lived then in the parish of S. Maria sopra Minerva. Festa arrived in Rome thanks to a retiree for painting; however, he finally chose the path of sculpture. The first sculpture known to us is the Genius with the pour face in the church of San Marco, on the funeral monument of the Countess Gabriella Scaglia di Saluzzo, who died in 1796.

Signed and dated to 1800 is the sorrowful woman slumped on a vase, originally placed in the church of Ss. Nicola and Biagio de 'Cesarini, demolished in 1926, and currently placed in a compartment of access to the sacristy of S. Sudario de' Piemontesi. In the first years of the century XIX Festa worked on works commissioned by FA Hervey bishop of Derry and 4th count of Bristol: the Perseus who frees Andromeda and an Amorino leaning on a trunk, both a little higher than 6 palms; these sculptures remained with the author following the death in 1803 of the client, were exhibited by him in 1804.

In 1806 the sepulchral monuments were completed for Maurizio Giuseppe di Savoia, duke of Monferrato and Placido Benedetto di Savoia count of Moriana, both in Sardinia, the region where the Savoy family had moved after Piedmont, in 1802, had been annexed to the Kingdom of Italy. The first monument, in the cathedral of Alghero, consists of a high pyramid, next to which are the statues - greater than the truth - of the Religion, of a genius and a waxed Ceres, symbol of the fertility of Sardinia, which was particularly successful. In the cathedral of Sassari it is instead the second monument, in which at a funerary urn Festa flanked the statues of a Genius warrior, of Devotion and of Charity.

In 1809 Festa completed the funeral monument of Benedetto Maurizio di Savoia, duke of Chiabrese, already in the Roman church of the Saints Nicola and Biagio de 'Cesarini, but currently at the S. Sudario. In the same year, as part of an exhibition commissioned by the Napoleonic government to the Campidoglio, the sculptor presented a copy of Sardinia as Ceres and a copy of Medusa Rondanini). In 1810, for a similar event, the Warrior Genius of the monument for the Count of Moriana was exposed and a marble bas-relief symbolizing the conjugal Faith. Around 1812 Festa performed for the dining room of the imperial palace - commissioned by Napoleon in the ancient residence

of Monte Cavallo - two bas-reliefs depicting the Wedding of Love and Psyche and Enea that tells Didone about his adventures.

Despite these important commissions, the economic conditions of the sculptor (also burdened by a large family) were certainly not flourishing. In fact, in June 1811 Festa was included among the artists who received a sum of money (200 francs) for the execution of a work of Napoleonic subject; this initiative was taken on the occasion of the birth of Napoleon's son (Arch. Gabrielli; *Giornale del Campidoglio*, 1811). Again in February 1814 the name of Festa was included in a list of needy artists presented to Gioacchino Murat, whose troops had occupied Rome. In that same year the sculptor executed the bust of Pius VII, followed by the busts of Cesare d'Azeglio (Turin, the modern art gallery) and of Maria Clotilde di Borbone, respectively of 1815 and 1816.

After having been elected academic of merit on February 22, 1817, Festa donated a reproduction of Sardinia as Ceres to the Accademia di S. Luca; a further copy of this work, however, appeared in 1822 in the Library of the Royal Palace of Turin. He also realized the busts of Enrico d'Azeglio (1818), and Massimo d'Azeglio (both in Turin, Gall., *Modern art*, 1820) and the bust of Cardinal Morozzo di Novara, whose dating is not known, but certainly completed around 1820. The last work performed by Festa is the funeral monument of King Carlo Emanuele IV of Savoy, located in the church of S. Andrea al Quirinale, a work to which he worked at the time of death. He died in Rome on 4 September 1825.

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