

Giovanni Francesco Fiori

Italian architect
(1709-1784)

He was born in Rome on 8 August 1709 by Domenico Antonio and Caterina De Rossi. He was baptized by GF Pellegrini, set designer and "gentleman" of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, who may have influenced his first training in early contact with the construction sites through the paternal workshop of "chiavaro". The beginnings in his career as an architect, carried out mainly in Rome, have been documented since 1739 in the role of "young" of GD Navone and of Francesco Ferruzzi. On May 21, 1743, the latter had him appointed by the Court of the Roads his coadjutor in the post of architect under master with the right of succession, exercised by Fiori the day after his death on 11 December. 1745.

Even his first autonomous assignments took place within the scope of the Ferruzzi patrons, including the ministers of the Infirm of Maddalena, for whom he worked in 1739, and the Congregation of the Wounds of Jesus Christ in St. Philip Neri, from which he obtained the position of architect in 1743. On December 10th 1745 was designated by the Congregation of the Oratory of the Filipinos as successor of Ferruzzi with the coadjutor of the latter's son, Antonio. In the same period he took over from Ferruzzi at the Confraternity of the Trinity of the Pilgrims and at the chapter of S. Maria in Trastevere, here initially only as a substitute for Antonio, official heir of the office. Also the restoration work carried out in 1752 inside the casque of the Marquis Filippo Niccolini in Piazza di Pietra is attributable to the legacy of the Ferruzzi, author of the building.

When, in November 1749, the oratorians already meditated to replace it with L. Vanvitelli, the construction of the monastery of the minifas of S. Francesco di Paola had recently been restarted., his first major work known to date.

The utilitarian character of the workshop, whose original nucleus had already been enlarged by the paolotte in 1744, and the modesty of the funds available - which caused the work to continue until 1760 - prevented Fiori particular stylistic connotations. So that the long façade bent at an obtuse angle according to the road, built according to the building permit of June 26, 1750, is characterized only by the tight rhythm of the windows that accentuates the horizontal articulation of the masonry, in analogy with the nearby convent of the Bambin Gesù of A. Specchi and C. Buratti.

This work is part of a phase of Fiori's career in which the commitment to the Court of Roads was predominant compared to that of the institutions of which he was an architect, between to which the English college is remembered, since 1745, the hospital of S. Maria della Consolazione, since 1754, the church of Ss. Celso and Giuliano, from 1758, the monastery of S. Sabina, in 1760, and the Confraternity of the Sacrament in S. Maria in Trastevere, from about 1763. In this context, however, the intense activity for real estate assets of the Filipinos and of the Confraternita della Trinità dei Pellegrini should be noted.

For the first between 1755 and 1756 he built a house in Via dei Cartari and in August 1759 he gave a technical opinion, together with M. Fontana and C. Murena, on the static conditions and consolidation of the vault of the Oratory of Borromini, followed by a second moment of crisis, arising in "a good correction" deliberated against him in the congregation of September 14 of the same year. For the Confraternity of the Trinity of the Pilgrims, who from 1760 paid him with a fixed annual salary of 12 scudi, between 1759 and 1762 he took care of the construction of a two-storey house with shops on the ground floor and mezzanines above Via delle Zoccolette, today disappeared, rectifying the road front from the corner with via dei Pettinari to the oratory of the confraternity demolished in 1940. This phase also includes the construction of the balustrade of the choir of S. Nicola dei Lorenesi, in 1761.

Completely unrelated to the academic environment, Fiori was, however, an active member of the Congregation of Virtuosi al Pantheon, in which he was unanimously welcomed on November 14th. 1757. The election as regent of this congregation in 1764, the role of architect of the governor for the testing of

the theaters, documented in 1762 and the close ties to the Pannini - and indirectly with F. Fuga - in 1769 by marrying Rosalba, daughter of the famous painter Giovanni Paolo in third marriage, they coincided with the most fruitful period of his career, indicating a good insertion in the Roman artistic environment.

In 1765, in fact, he completed the arrangement of the convent complex annexed to the church of S. Giuseppe alla Lungara, which had begun in 1760 on behalf of the Congregation of Pieri Operai, consisting of the construction of the convent (1760-1765), enlargement and restructuring some contiguous houses (1761-1763) and the restoration of the façade and the counter-façade of the church (1764-1765).

The project of the convent, presented through two drawings to Clement XIII, financier of the workshop, denotes the first complete expression of the architectural language of Fiori above all in the capable interpenetration between functional and formal aspects. The passageways crossing axially the four floors of the building take light outside by large openings of decreasing height connected by floral decorations crowned by an altana. They form a formally autonomous central compartment in the facade divided into five axes, according to a "theatrical" scheme that perhaps reflects youth contacts with the late Baroque trends of the Ottobonian circle, mediated by GD Navone, who seems to have influenced the stylistic evolution of the F much more than the austere secularism of Ferruzzi.

Still in 1765, taking advantage of his role as architect of the governor, Fiori obtained from F. Capranica the task of the remaking and expansion of the Valle theater, whose "elegant" formal outcome combined with the functionality of the system, in a horseshoe shape., and of the distributive spaces imposed him to the general attention.

In the same years he had the opportunity to compare himself again with the typology of the lease of rent through the building built for the chapter of S. Maria in Trastevere, between 1764 and 1765, at the corner of via della Scrofa (n. -32) and vicolo d'Ascanio (nos. 27-29), without particular stylistic connotations, and the one made for the Filipinos, between 1765 and 1767, in via del Banco di Santo Spirito (nos. 47-49), of far greater architectural impact, costing almost 18,000 scudi.

The casinos of the Filipinos, built according to the license of the thread of 29 October. 1765, spread over five floors with shops on the ground floor and mezzanines above. The sober setting of the prospect derived from the schemes of civil construction, tempered by the aesthetic canons of the client shows an initial acceptance of classicist instances with the adoption of a giant composite order set on three high pilasters that separate the actual façade from the narrow compartment corresponding to the overpass of the pre-existing arch of the Banks.

After the conclusion of this construction site, the activity for the Filipinos was considerably reduced, as shown by an act of 20 August 1768 with which they guaranteed to Fiori an annual remuneration of 16 scudi, related also to the extraordinary tasks. These include the renovation of a house in Piazza delle Cinque Scole, completed between 1768 and 1769 (demolished at the end of the nineteenth century).

In this period, however, the production on behalf of the Congregation of the Wounds of Jesus Christ intensified, since on the occasion of the demolition and reconstruction of the house on the side of the church of S. Filippo Neri in via Giulia towards the New Carceri, between 1767 and December 1768, the old façade of the church was also demolished, which Fiori reconstructed in the current configuration as part of a unitary project of arrangement of the entire complex, completed in 1771 with the renewal of the small oratory of the congregation.

The current facade, in the past dated to 1728 and repeatedly attributed to F. Raguzzini or C. De Dominicis, was built according to the approved project from the Roads Court on Oct. 19th 1767 which provided for an oblique arrangement with respect to the axis of the seventeenth-century church and the inclusion in the elevation of the house. A simple giant composite order divides the façade into three vertical sectors delimited by pilasters and crowned by a triangular tympanum. The central section, with a slight prominence that extends up to invade the tympanum, houses a large oval bas-relief in stucco and the papal coat of arms.

With this work Fiori manifests a language that is now mature, fruit of an empirical and original form of eclecticism, placing itself at an intermediate level between the marginal position of the still numerous architects linked to the Roman baroque tradition and that of the architects, updated on the new theories coming mainly from abroad, they had now oriented the development of the city's architecture towards classical themes. The opportunity to experiment with the linguistic solutions of S. Filippo Neri on a larger scale was offered by the decision of the paolotte to complete their settlement in the district Monti with the continuation of the right arm of the convent and the construction of a church at the end.

The works, started in 1770 and completed in 1776, was consecrated only in the 1780 under the title of Ss. Gioacchino and Anna.

The building marks a marked approach towards the classicist trend: Fiori re-proposes the layout of the façade of S. Filippo, with the only variant of the curved tympanum inside the main triangular pediment, but in comparison with the larger dimension he sacrifices the happy compositional balance and the attention to detail at the imposing nature of the installation, achieved through the accentuation of the projections of the architectural partitions and the drastic reduction of the decorative apparatus. The reception of classical themes is even more evident in the central plan interior. Even if the adoption of the particular plant with a slanted and elongated Greek cross on the main axis, clearly borrowed from the Church of the Child Jesus, seems to refer to a precise willingness of the client, that in the nearby conventual complex of the oblates evidently had a functional model as well as religious.

Simultaneously with the construction site of the paolotte, Fiori led the restoration of the interior of S. Maria dell'Orazione and Morte, entrusted to him in 1772, after taking on the position of architect of the homonymous Confraternity in which he had already occupied several times the charge. of factories since 1753, the year of his admission. The works were carried out in two phases: the first, relating to the tribune, in July-September 1772 and the second in 1773-1774.

Between 1771 and 1773 on behalf of the English college he built the casamento in via dei Pianellari, which, within the framework of increasingly classicist-oriented compositional schemes, shows a stiffening of the architectural partition and a further drying up of the decorative apparatus. The same attitude is found in his last known work, the disappeared casamento on the corner between Via del Corso and Via degli Otto Cantoni, built in 1777 on behalf of the Confraternity of the Trinity of the Pilgrims, in which, even at a more modest level of quality, his stylistic parable ends by reflecting the general cultural change.

With the conclusion of these commitments Fiori, almost seventy years old but still endowed with prestige, as evidenced by the re-election to regent of the Virtuosi in 1777, he limited his activity by taking care of the public tasks for whose tasks he could more easily delegate the collaborators, first among them the only son, Raffaele. It was the latter who replaced it more frequently starting from 1783, when he was struck by a serious illness, and inherited many tasks.

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