

Pietro Galli

Italian sculptor
1804-1877

He was born in Rome on February 14, 1804 by Giovanni and Teresa Del Bufalo. He inherited his passion for sculpture from his father and passed it on to his son Alberto. Registered at the Accademia di S. Luca, he returned honors and prizes in the competitions for the study of the nude and folds. At the beginning of the 1820s, noted by Bertel Thorvaldsen, he began working as a student and then as a collaborator for more than twenty years. Specializing in the execution of bas-reliefs of mythological, allegorical and religious subjects, Galli acquired the undisputed ability of a neoclassical sculptor to imitate the "Nordic Fidia". Not by chance, when in 1838 Thorvaldsen returned to Copenhagen, he entrusted the completion of many works to Galli, assigning him to act as director of the *atelier* in place of P. Tenerani and also leaving the apartment in via Sistina until his return in 1841.

Piazza Barberini's sculpture studio was based on a complex organization, in which the various specialized contributions contributed to the creation of an entrepreneurial type production prepared for possible replicas; an increasingly serial and less expensive production, thanks to the use of gypsum, to facilitate access to a wider and more competitive market. The imprint of Thorvaldsen, always present thanks to the drawn or sketched models, had to constitute a sort of guarantee of author for works almost entirely entrusted to the students.

In the late 1830's, the Thorvaldsenian studio was engaged by the numerous commissions of Alessandro Torlonia for the palazzo in piazza Venezia (demolished at the beginning of the twentieth century) and for the villa in via Nomentana.

Thorvaldsen composed the sketches for the plastic structure of the building and in 1838 Galli translated them into work: bas-reliefs with subjects taken from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, the myths of Diana, of Love and Psyche (some stuccos are preserved in the reconstructed alcove Torlonia at the Museum of Rome); episodes of the *Iliad*; scenes inspired by Greek and Roman history; *Genios* representing arts and crafts (at the Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen, the reliefs casts, mostly lost in auctions, are preserved). The statues of *Jupiter* and *Apollo* which are conserved at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome next to them, as in the original location, are also found at the *Hercules and Lica* by A. Canova and other sculptures of pagan deities performed by various artists. Neoclassical sculptors.

Regarding the villa Torlonia, the stucco frieze, white and gold, of the ballroom is perhaps to be attributed to Galli, who in the Alexander room probably worked on the statuary cycle of *Apollo and the muses* and the marble frieze representing the *Triumph of Alexander the Great in Babylon*, executed between 1835 and 1836 and contemporary to the plaster version of Galli for the Thorvaldsen Museum (here are preserved other works by the sculptor, including marble statues of *Bacchus* and the group of *Pan and Love*). A partial reproduction of the work, conceived by Thorvaldsen for the Quirinale palace in

1808 and repeatedly replicated, was also the subject of one of the four large plates modeled and melted in silver by Galli for Alessandro Torlonia, unfortunately dispersed. In 1843, Galli also participated in the plastic decoration of the theater, modeling the stuccoed rounds depicting *Episodes of the Iliad* that appear on a smaller scale replicas of the reliefs always in stucco made by sculptor a few years before for Palazzo Torlonia.

In 1850 Galli was appointed sculptor of the Reverend Fabbrica di S. Pietro in Vaticano, where his marble statues of *S. Francesca Romana* and *S. Angela Merici* are preserved.

In the same year, Galli performed a work of "purification" in the Vatican, covering those figures who could "do the natural honesty". The statues of *Charity* of the monumental berninian sepulchers of Urban VIII and of Alexander VII were considered worthy of "covering"; the *Genius* of the Canovian sepulcher of Clement XIII; the *Geni* of the cenotaph erected, again by Canova, for the last exponents of the Stuart family; the putti supporting the medallions with the portraits of the popes on the pillars supporting the arches of the chapels wanted by Innocent X.

Moreover, from Pius IX he was entrusted with the task of preserving the ancient sculptures found in Rome and of restoring them to the collections of the Holy See. On papal assignment he restored the stuccos of the lodges of Raphael and, in particular, together with N. Consoni and A. Mantovani, he took care of the decorative installation of the loggia of Pius IX, completed in 1866-67. In the bas-reliefs of religious subjects, Galli showed his special expertise in miniature plastic.

Previously, Galli would have also shaped a large group, representing *Faith, Hope and Charity*, surmounting the temporary triumphal arch on the Quirinale, where Pius IX passed by returning from Gaeta, and the large terracotta bas-relief with figures representing the natural representative *Pius IX grants to the Duke Grazioli the hunting reserve of Castel Porziano*.

Simultaneously with the works in S. Pietro, Galli delivered the bas-relief of the lunette of the chapel of S. Michele Arcangelo in S. Francesco delle Stimmate depicting the *Virgin absorbed in the vision of God with Isaiah, David and angels* and also the bas-relief with the *Deposition* (1850) for the altar of the sacristy of S. Giovanni in Laterano, where, in the Torlonia chapel, also the contemporary reliefs of the pendentives depicting the *Evangelists* and those mounted in the coffered vaults with the *Mysteries of the Rosary* (here had been already the funerary monument of Giovanni Raimondo Torlonia, completed by Galli).

The collaboration between Galli and Thorvaldsen is due to the realization of the statues of *Andrea* and *Giuda Taddeo*, executed in 1842 for the church of Our Lady in Copenhagen. of Galli must also mention some portraits, including the marble bust of *Vittoria Colonna* (Campidoglio, Protomoteca) of 1845.

We also recall the reliefs with the *Proclamation of the dogma* (1857) for the column of the Immaculate Conception in Piazza di Spagna and the one representing the *Ecumenical Council* (1873) for the base of the commemorative column to be raised in front of S. Pietro in Montorio and today preserved in the Vatican gardens; the holy water font

(1860) for the basilica of S. Paolo fuori le Mura (the anecdote circulated in the head of Satan was the portrait of the secretary of state, cardinal Giacomo Antonelli); the reliefs carved for the wooden choir of the canons in the transept of S. Crisogono (1863), mainly the central panel where you can admire the *Virgin that appears to s. Felice di Valois* and the superior one with the *Trinity*.

Galli was an academic of merit and a professor residing in the sculpture class in 1860 and censor for the three years 1869-71 in the Academy of S. Luca; virtuous of merit and regent of the Congregation of Virtuosi al Pantheon; honorary member of the Royal Academy of Milan, of the Academy of Arcades, of the Commission of Sacred Archeology.

Galli died in Rome on May 9, 1877.

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