

Filippo Gnaccarini

Italian Neo-Classic sculptor
1804-1875

He was born in Rome on May 24, 1804 by Camillo and Geltrude Peruzzi. He attended the Academy of St. Luke, distinguishing himself in the art of sculpture. Fourteen years old, he won a medal for the execution of a *Hadrian's Head* and in the following three years the prizes of the respective academic competitions. In 1822 he succeeded in the Canova contest thanks to the model *Diomede who kidnaps Palladio*, receiving the certificate signed by the master Antonio Canova and, among others, by Francesco Massimiliano Laboureur, Gaspare Landi, Jean-Baptiste Wicar and Berthel Thorvaldsen.

The young sculptor, who definitively entered the circle of Thorvaldsen, confirmed his artistic progress with *Prometheus*.

Unfortunately, we did not receive the Gnaccarini youth works and we do not have any relevant critical evidence. An exception is the declaration by the Marquis Amico Ricci from Macerata who, in an academic speech of 1838 addressed to his friend Count Leonardo Trissino, in enumerating the sculpture works ready to leave the Roman workshops, recalled also the models, including *Prometheus*, in clay, in colossal forms: "It is a statue where many difficulties are overcome [...] Expression without mannerism, notom without dryness, right harmony of the parts, these are the praises, which deserves such a work, and that we would see with gladness of heart sculpted by him".

From the Gnaccarini sculpture study - until 1841 to 1855 of the alley of Frezza - the important allegorical statues came out to enrich the neoclassical urban arrangement of Piazza del Popolo due to Giuseppe Valadier.

The works, still *on site*, well express the academic approach and the classical style of the sculptor, oriented particularly towards the formal stylization, and oscillating between the grace and the Canovian inspiration and the rigor of Thorvaldesian derivation.

Around 1827 Gnaccarini signed, for the left pedestal of the exedra towards the Pincio, the classically dressed and dressed statue of the *Primavera*, one of the four *seasons* commissioned by Cardinal Belisario Cristaldi, for the titles of the hemicycles in Piazza del Popolo. At the entrance of the Pincio, under the balustrade of the second embankment and opposite the *Genius of Peace* of Laboureur, is the *Genius of the Arts*, built by Gnaccarini in 1833 which drew "inspiration from the *Apollo of the Belvedere* and from *Perseus Canovian*". Around 1848, for the Pincio walk, Gnaccarini carved the bust of *Torquato Tasso*.

On various occasions, Gnaccarini devoted himself to the composition of funerary monuments faithful to the formal neoclassical forms, destined for Roman churches where they can still be admired. In addition to the *Allegory of Painting* for the funerary memory of Wicar (who died in 1834) in S. Luigi dei Francesi, one remembers in particular the *funerary monument of Count Lorenzo Mencacci*, erected in 1838 by his sons

in memory of his father, mother Serafina and of his brother Vincenzo, located in the chapel of the Norwegians in the church of Ss. Ambrogio and Carlo al Corso.

Inspired by Renaissance architecture, on a base with an epigraph and portraits of the bride and groom in medals, it shows the sober and elegant framework of Corinthian pillars supporting the cornice, among which are the niches with the statues of the *Faith*, of *Charity* and *Hope* ; at the top, a remarkable bas-relief with nine figures in the parade represents the removal of the dead from the family.

At the same time, Gnaccarini performed the *funeral monument of Camillo Massimo and his wife Cristina di Sassonia* (1837-40) near the chapel known as the Crucifix or Choir in the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso, with the statues of kneeling and praying princes from the angels and the figure of the *Redeemer*.

The large statues of *S. Benedetto* and della *Fortezza* are signed and dated 1837 and 1838 for two Roman basilicas: respectively S. Paolo fuori le Mura and S. Giovanni in Laterano.

The first, grave and powerful, stands symmetrically at the *S. Scholastica* of Felice Baini near the altar of the Assumption in the right hand side of the transept; the second, austere and balanced, belongs to the cycle of the *cardinal virtues* for the Torlonia chapel.

In addition to the Roman commissions, it is worth mentioning the bas-relief about 10 m long, with figures of almost natural size, depicting the *Provinces that pay homage to Pope Pio IX, a veteran of Gaeta*, executed in 1850 and walled up on the façade of the delegate palace in Velletri. then the seat of the sub-prefecture and now of the judicial offices; among other works, in the church of S. Maria di Collemaggio in L'Aquila, there is the *sepulchral monument* to the memory of a girl from the Spaventa house, where is her image and that of a *genius who extinguishes the torch of life* (Leosini).

The most important of the ecclesiastical commissions was the papal one of the bronze statue of *St. Peter*.

On July 6, 1870, Pius IX visited the study of Gnaccarini to admire the model he used for the bronze fusion made by the Mazzocchi brothers in the Vatican. The work was intended for the *commemorative monument of the Vatican Ecumenical Council*, ordered by the pope the year before the architect Virginio Vespignani, who was to rise in front of the church of S. Pietro in Montorio al Gianicolo. Vespignani designed a monument of 36 m, which consisted mainly of a base with reliefs (entrusted to the sculptor Pietro Galli) and an ancient African column on which the bronze statue of the blessing apostle commissioned to Gnaccarini was to be erected. Only fifteen years later, on 4 September. 1885 the monument, raised by the will of Leo XIII in the center of the Pigna courtyard in the Vatican, was crowned with the statue of *St. Peter*. It remained there until 1936, when by order of Pius XI the monument, already deprived of the column and dismembered, reduced to only the counterbase and the statue, was transported to the Vatican gardens, at the intersection of the avenue of the Observatory and the ascent of the Mint (Magi). The reliefs, the inscriptions and other decorative parts were arranged in adjacency.

An eminent figure of the Accademia di S. Luca, Gnaccarini was nominated in 1846 as an academic of merit; in 1859, professor of the high school of sculpture; in 1868, an actual

professor in subrogation to the late Adamo Tadolini. From 1839 he also made part of the Congregation of Virtuosi al Pantheon, of which he was regent in the three years 1871-73. Moreover, in 1859 he received the honor of the commendation of St. Stanislaus from the emperor of Russia for the restoration of a *Venus* ; in 1870 he had the commandery of S. Gregorio Magno da Pio IX for his participation in the commission of the Roman Exposition of Catholic art.

Gnaccarini died in Rome on March 16, 1875.

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