

# Carlo Francesco Lambardi

Italian Architect  
(1545-1620)

Son of Bernardino di Fabiano, a rich haberdasher, he was born in Arezzo, where he was baptized in the parish church on 11 February, 1545. The family belonged to the Aretine aristocracy, and the father is documented among the reformers of the Fraternity of the laity.

From 1583 Lambardi appears to be living in Rome. Starting from that year, the states of the parish of S. Maria in Via recorded him in Piazza S. Silvestro with his wife Laura and a young boy; and in this area Lambardi will continue to live until the end of his days. He was active in the construction sites promoted by Sixtus V, in that five-year period of intense construction activity dominated by D. Fontana.

From September to December 1588 he moved to Mantua, where he had been summoned to replace the prefect of the Ducal factories, the Florentine F. Trabalesi, painter and architect, who died on 21 April of that same year.

On June 17, 1588, Lambardi had been reported to the Mantuan court in a letter sent by Cardinal Scipione Gonzaga; and on 16 September his presence is positively recorded in a letter sent from Mantua to Rome. He was immediately involved in the design of the new Gonzaga mausoleum in the church of S. Francesco and of the tribune with the relic of the Blood of Christ in S. Andrea. The first was strongly desired by Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua from September of the previous year; the second concerned one of the most important churches in the city. However, these encouraging premises were not followed by a rooting in the Gonzaga court. On the contrary, perhaps for health reasons, on 21 Dec. 1588 he obtained permission to return to Rome. From here on 4 Feb. 1589 communicated that he had begun the designs of S. Andrea and who was also preparing to carry out those of the chapel of S. Francesco, projects that were not followed up.

In Rome in 1590 his presence is attested in the site of the Ss. Apostoli directed by D. Fontana, where he estimated the works carried out in the convent. On 1 April 1593, together with Bernardino Valperga, was appointed by Clement VIII as general inspector of public buildings, a position entrusted to Lambardi again in 1606 and which strengthened the bond with the Apostolic Chamber, as well as with the Aldobrandini family, for whom in 1604 and in 1605 he inspected the works carried out by the stonemason Stefano Buzzi (Buzio) both in the Tuscan villa and in the chapel in S. Maria sopra Minerva.

In 1593 Giacomo Della Porta defined Lambardi "mesurator et non architect". Of great importance to understand what his professional profile was is the story relating to the construction of the Iacobilli palace in platea Trinitatis, a building that a few decades later would become the permanent residence of the Spanish ambassadors in Rome. The construction begun in 1592 was completed in 1601: Lambardi was its designer and manager.

Among the first Roman works, the Vitelli al Quirinale vineyard should also be counted: if the intervention in what would become Villa Aldobrandini in 1601 is no longer recognizable.

Later Lambardi continued to work for Vitelli. Between 1592 and 1594 he designed the wooden ceiling of S. Marcello al Corso and followed its installation as shown in the specifications of the contract stipulated on 15 June 1594 with the painter GB Ricci da Novara who was entrusted with the pictorial decoration, contract where Lambardi is qualified as "Monsignore's architect". With its reliefs and figurations of sacred subjects, the coffered of S. Marcello resumed both that of the nave of S. Giovanni in Laterano (about 1562), and that of S. Maria in Aracoeli (1572-86) and was very close to that of S. Eligio dei Ferrari (1604), for which the name of Lambardi has also been advanced.

On 7th February 1594 Lambardi worked on the Quirinal palace. On 16 October of the same year the congregation of the Rivers commissioned him to build a new spillway to replace the old one and put an end to the overflows of Lake Trasimeno, a job in which he demonstrated his entrepreneurial skills. Lambardi was also involved in other engineering works: in 1598 he took care of the bridge over the Tiber at Borghetto, an undertaking begun at the time of Sixtus V, but in which design errors had emerged. To the Cardinal Camerlengo, Pietro Aldobrandini, Lambardi dedicated the Discourse ... on the cause of the flood of Rome... (Published in Rome in 1601), where he proposed five interventions on the course of the river.

The most innovative proposal was to build a dam on the Tiber upstream from Orte; also suggested the opening of a spillway between the Milvio bridge and Castel Sant'Angelo, the use of the latter's ditches as drainage channels in the event of a flood and, in general, the enlargement of the urban stretch of the riverbed.

On 29 August 1609 the congregation of cardinals deputy to the Strade summoned him together with other technicians - among which we must remember at least G. Fontana, F. Ponzio, G. Rainaldi, G. De Vecchi - to give their advice to make improvements to the sewer system of Rome. On 3 March 1616 he was entrusted with the reconstruction of the bridge over the Liri in Ceprano in collaboration with Rainaldi and De Vecchi.

Lambardi was also in the service of the Giustiniani, before Cardinal Benedetto, owner of the church of S. Marcello al Corso when he worked there for Giulio Vitelli, and, later, of Vincenzo in Bassano di Sutri. For Benedetto, he created the "garden outside the Porta del Popolo" (via Flaminia) and "rebuilt the church of S. Prisca with its facade and altar".

The restoration of the church of S. Prisca was begun after March 1599, when Giustiniani was transferred to the new title of cardinal, and proceeded at a fast pace in view of the jubilee of 1600, for which, as is known, Clement VIII had promoted a vast plan of restoration and embellishment of the Roman churches. The size of the pre-existing building was reduced, the nave, presbytery, confession were restored and the facade was rebuilt. In the latter the brick curtain and the deliberate simplification of the forms with the portal flanked by Ionic columns, which support a simple triangular tympanum, reflect the "oratorian" character which, moreover, is found in the pictorial decoration of the building, entrusted to the Florentine A. Fontebuoni.

In September 1602, after the death of G. Della Porta, Lambardi took over from him together with Ponzio in the direction of the construction site of the Madonna dei Monti and replaced him in the works in the building of Cosimo Giustini (later Piombino) in Piazza Colonna.

The building was substantially complete and the interventions of Lambardi, as evidenced by the modest fees, were limited, also because the works were interrupted abruptly in December 1603 following the assassination of the client.

In September 1603 he obtained from the chamberlain the authorization to build his own house "located on the main road that goes from the Corso street to the Piazza Vecchia di San Silvestro" (demolished in the 19th century).

The desire to reaffirm his aristocratic origins, as well as his economic status appears with great evidence also from the foundation of the noble chapel in the church of S. Maria in Via, of which he obtained the patronage in 1608.

Lambardi maintained economic relations with the servants who officiated the church and, around 1609, the final phase of reconstruction of the sacred building follows. The marble coat of arms of the Lambards appears in the chapel, also repeated in the vault of the chapel, where it is accompanied by the inscription "Carolus Lambardus nobilis Aretinus". The crest is the same that will later be registered in the Golden Book of the Aretine nobility and makes the achieved financial solidity completely explicit, from which it results that Lambardi in the area of the current Piazza S. Silvestro possessed four buildings.

Between 1605 and 1609 he appears to be working in Palazzo Borghese; and since 1606, the relationships with the Conti family are documented, in particular with Cardinal Carlo and with Lotario, Duke of Poli.

In particular, he was involved in the subdivision of the vast plot of the vegetable garden of the Torre de 'Conti, located in the area of the Templum Pacis, a building operation in which the instrument of emphyteusis was once again used: Lambardi, tenant of the Counts, as in the case of the Iacobilli palace, it was compensated with real estate to the Pantani, near the forum of Augustus. On this economic basis, the works took place in Poli, where Lambardi worked from 1614, transforming the ducal palace, the square and the casino.

The architectural work for which he obtained the greatest awards was the restoration of the medieval church of S. Maria Nova al Foro, recently dedicated to s. Francesca Romana, canonized in 1608. The works began in 1612 and ended in 1615. The longitudinal body, originally tripartite, was transformed into a single room with side chapels covered by a wooden ceiling; the medieval facade preceded by the portico was rebuilt from scratch. Inside, the unitary space of the Roman churches of the Counter-Reformation was re-proposed; while the new front of the church imposed itself in the Roman architecture of the early seventeenth century for the classicist accents of the giant order and for the Palladian echo, perhaps already intuited by Milizia and then

highlighted by various scholars, who perceived its importance for the beginnings of the first Baroque architecture in Rome, from S. Bibiana (1624) by GL Bernini to S. Gregorio al Celio (1633) by GB Soria. In this façade, in the development of the project, there is a very strong attention to the recovery, in the forms in keeping with classical syntax, of those medieval elements that were going to be replaced; in the specific case the portico that preceded the facade was incorporated into the new building.

Lambardi died in Rome on June 28, 1619 and was buried in his chapel in S. Maria in Via.

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