

Silla Giacomo Longhi

Italian sculptor
(c.1550-1617)

Son of Tommaso, he was born in Viggiù, near Varese, most probably around 1550. The hypothesis that he was born in about 1560 is almost certainly denied, given that in 1567 (when he would have been seven years old) is documented in Bologna, where he participated in the sculptural decorations of the side doors of the cathedral of S. Petronio, and between 1568 and 1572 he was in Nonantola, where he sculpted the eight panels that adorn the four faces of the ark of S. Silvestro in the church of the same name. His home in Viggiù, registered in the *State of Souls* in 1574, is occupied by a certain Orsina Pusterla, a seventy-year-old widow.

From the end of 1572 to 1617, the year of his death, LONGHI was resident in Rome, except around 1581, a period in which he is documented in Naples, in 1587 and 1591, when he stayed in Florence, where he temporarily opened a shop.

In Rome he owned two houses, one in via Frattina, perhaps never inhabited (and often rented), and one with an adjoining shop near S. Biagio dei Catenari (to the Cesarini). The home of LONGHI was the place where the Viggiutesi present in Rome who belonged to the Congregation of the Most Holy Corpus Domini of Viggiù, where he held the office of sub-prior from 1598 to 1601.

In 1578 he became part of the prestigious Accademia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon (together with the countrymen Martino Longhi the Elder and Nicolò Longhi); between 1596 and 1605 he was a member of the university of marble workers; and from 1597 he was officially admitted to the Compagnia dei Ss. Quattro Coronati, in which he was elected mayor in 1598 and chamberlain in 1599.

Surely he was a member of the Accademia di S. Luca from September 1608, the date on which he is taxed the annual fee to be paid for the sculptors operating in the city; but although the documents of the Academy do not mention the Law before 1608, its entry into the Academy is not unlikely already in previous years.

There is no information on his training at home or elsewhere, but it is possible to speculate that upon his arrival in Rome he gravitated around the Lombard architect and sculptor Giacomo Della Porta. In fact, one of his first commitments was the collaboration with Della Porta for the execution of the fountain in Piazza del Pantheon, conceived by Della Porta in 1575. Of the same year is the *Triton* for the fountain in Piazza del Popolo (now in Piazza Nicosia).

Little is known about LONGHI's activity in the eighth and ninth decades of the sixteenth century; it is certain that it had to be part of the conspicuous group of sculptors (including PP Olivieri, F. Vacca, GB Della Porta) at the service of the Sistine enterprises and of whom it is often difficult to discern the hands.

In 1595 he sculpted two *Angels* for the Altemps (today headless and poorly preserved) that support the crest of Clement VIII, placed on the facade of the entrance of their vineyard outside the Porta del Popolo (since 1927 it is the facade of the Treasury building of the Municipality of Rome in the Capitol); for the same family he created the *bust of Marco Sittico Altemps*, placed at the crown of the monumental fireplace in the great hall of the Altemps palace, as well as some "old-fashioned" figures for the ornament of a fountain.

A receipt from LONGHI to the Archconfraternity of convalescents and pilgrims dates back to 1598 for unspecified works carried out in collaboration with the founder Giacomo Lorenziano.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century he received important public assignments: the statue and the relief of *Aaron* and one of the nine *angels* for the altar of the Blessed Sacrament in the transept of S. Giovanni in Laterano (1601); the statue of *Cardinal Michele Bonelli* for the tomb in S. Maria sopra Minerva, designed by Giacomo Della Porta (1604); an *Angel* for the vectors chapel (or of the angels) in the church of the Gesù; the statues of *Clement VIII* and *Paul V* for the Pauline chapel in S. Maria Maggiore (1608-12). For the latter, not particularly appreciated by the pontiff who found them poorly proportioned and not much resembling, an intervention of remaking of the heads entrusted to N. Cordier was foreseen, which however was never completed due to the subsequent death in 1612 of the sculptor (the two heads remained in his shop).

Like other sculptors, LONGHI carried out technical expertise on the work of others, as evidenced by the estimate he signed in 1600 for the Caetani chapel in S. Pudenziana.

The poorly documented sculptural activity of LONGHI in Naples is attributed to the *Tomb of Caterina Orsini* in the church of S. Caterina in Formiello and the *Villani Monument* in the chapel of S. Antonino da Firenze in S. Pietro Martire. The latter refers to around 1602; the date would therefore be in contrast with the presence of LONGHI in the city, hypothesized in the year 1581, except to think of a subsequent sending of the material from Rome. Among the works erroneously assigned to LONGHI are the Roman *S. Brigida* in S. Paolo fuori le Mura, which Baglione attributed to him in the *Lives*, but which he returned to Stefano Maderno in the *Nine churches*, and *S. Gregorio* and *S. Silvia* al Celio, attributed to LONGHI by the Count de Caylus on his journey to Italy in 1714-15, but which is known to be by N. Cordier.

LONGHI added the profession of sculptor to that of restorer of ancient works which, together with that of merchant, seems to have been his most pursued activity, also because, in all probability, more profitable: for the restoration of the *Dioscuri* on the Capitol he perceived 1618, 95 shields.

In 1572 he restored a *Minerva* for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este; in the Florentine period (1587, 1591) he carried out restorations for the Medici family: in particular he intervened on *Hercules and Nessus*, on a *Venus*, on a *Venus with cupid*, on an *Aesculapius*, on a *Paris*, on a *Hercules fighting with a centaur* (some of these works have been lost, others are between the Uffizi Gallery and Palazzo Pitti in Florence); in Rome he restored the *Dioscuri* in Campidoglio (1584-91), some of the statues placed on the Palazzo dei Conservatori (1584, 1586), the Antonina column (between 1588 and 1589), an unspecified head found next to the arch of Constantine; for the Altemps family he restored the *dying Seneca* (between 1599 and 1601: today in the Louvre Museum), the *Athlete at rest*, the *seated*

Hercules (the latter was sold to the Altemps by the same LONGHI). He also intervened on an *Angel* in Castel Sant'Angelo, which could be seen in the *Archangel Michael re-lining the sword* of Raphael from Montelupo (around 1544), overhanging the Adriana mass until 1752.

LONGHI died in Rome in 1617.

In the will drawn up on 30 July 1610, but opened on 6 May 1617, it appears that LONGHI was married to Bianca (the surname is unknown), from whom he had the children Sebastiano, Giacomo and Paolo, and the will of LONGHI to be buried in the church of S. Maria in Aracoeli. He then established that his wife, who remained the usufructuary of the house in via Frattina, go all movable assets except for the irons that belonged to her profession; the second-born son Giacomo, heir of the remaining movable and immovable property, had to pay 15 scudi per year, as long as they were alive, to the priest priests Sebastiano and Paolo: in case Giacomo died, the heir of his assets would become the cousin fleshly Bartolomeo Longhi. LONGHI also advised that an inventory be made of all the objects present in his shop, which could be kept or sold at the heirs' discretion. He established that it was possible to withdraw from all his rental companies and that the money obtained was reinvested in real estate, census and mountains; he assigned the annual income derived to his son Giacomo, according to his needs (his profession is not known, but it is known that in 1600 he was part of the Compagnia dei Ss. Quattro Coronati). Executors Stefano Longhi and his cousin Ippolito Buzzi were appointed as executors.

The inventory of the workshop of LONGHI "placed alli Cesarini" was drawn up by the stonemason Stefano Longhi only on 21 August. 1618. The reasons for this delay are not known, but certainly the small size of the work tools, the works, the casts inventoried in the shop, one of the most active in Rome, suggests that it may have been partially sold or sold previously. There are some marble heads, pieces of legs, arms and heads of horses in plaster, a head of a *Farnese Hercules*, a small headless Hercules, a half figure of Antinous in plaster, the back of Michelangelo's *Prison* (with the specification by Michelangelo's hand).

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