

# Michel Maille

French sculptor  
1643-1703

Maille (Maglia), Michel (Michele). - Peter's son was born in Saint-Claude, in the French Upper Jurae, around 1643, as is derived from a report of the congregation of the Academy of St. Luke of Rome of 1 Jan. 1667. It is likely that Saint-Claude Maille had attended the workshops of Denis or Jacques-Antoine Rosset, learning to carve "small figures of ivory". With this technical knowledge, young Maille moved to Rome, presumably around 1666, coming into contact with E. Ferrata and the artists of his circle.

On the occasion of his first public commission, Maille was invited to attend the gigantic operation of the statues for the colonnade of St. Peter. In this season of the shipyard the presence of Ferrata pupils is predominant; with the names of G. Mazzuoli, L. Ottoni and F. Carcani also appears that of Maille, author of two unidentified saints for the north and south curved arms of the colonnade, for which he received the first payments between May and June 1668. The work carried out in St. Peter came to Maille in 1677 commissioning one of the eight Franciscan saints for the crowning of the church of S. Maria dei Miracoli, a yard shortly before under the direction of the architect C. Rainaldi. At the beginning of the seventies of the seventeenth century, Rainaldi led the well-trained Ferrata students in the works of the garden of Palazzo Borghese, following the erection of three monumental travertine and stucco fountains.

The central structure with *Diana and the nymphs* was executed by L. Retti; while F. Carcani and F. Cavallini occupied respectively the right fountain dedicated to Flora and the left one with the Three Graces. From the scans of payments to artists, it is found that both Carcani and Cavallini both collaborated with Maille. His role at this stage was limited to the production of models and putti for which he received a total of 170 scudi.

The union between the architect and those young sculptors was also renewed in the *Monument of Cardinal Carlo Bonelli* in S. Maria sopra Minerva; for this complex funeral machine Maille realized the Marble Allegory of Religion, receiving the balance of 235 scudi on 31 Jan. 1674.

However, the next commission is to mark Maille's final consecration: as soon as he has completed his commitment to the church of Minerva, G.L. Bernini called him by his side to carve the kneeling statue of *Alexander VII* (1675-76), in the monument of Pope Chigi in St. Peter. By the time he was almost eighteen years old, in 1677 Bernini directed the work of the fountain wanted by Dom Luís de Meneses, the third Count of Ericeira, for the garden of his palace of the Annunciada on the hills of Lisbon (now in the Palácio Nacional de Queluz park).

After drawing the drawings to outline the figure of *Neptune* and the four *Tritons*, Bernini left the models and sculptures to be made by Ferrata, who worked at the statue of *Neptune* with the collaboration of Maille as the only assistant.

At the end of the seventies Maille started to participate in some decorative monumental companies focusing on the use of stucco as a material of excellence. In the vault of the church of Jesus, with A. Raggi, L. Retti and G. Rinaldi, was active under the direction of G.B. Gaulli also Maille, author of the sculptures "in the right hand arm": Titi's account, which confirms in an unpublished payment of 100 scudi "for 4 Statues", performed directly by Superintendent Gaulli on 12 December 1679. At the end of 1682 the sculptural modernization work began in the church of Jesus and Maria al Corso entrusted to C. Rainaldi.

All the figures on the left wall are to be assigned to the Maille: The six prophets with putti at the sides of the windows of the upper order, the SS. *Giovacchino and Zaccaria* of the niches under the marcapiano frame and again the *King David* of the counterfacede, whose model in terracotta is preserved at the Palazzo del Venezia Museum.

In the early eighties of the seventeenth century there were other single stucco executions, such as the statue of *S. Filippo Neri* in the oratory of the Filipinos, the two stucco angels on the marquetry cornice of the altar of S. Lazzaro in the church of S. Martina and the Allegory of *Justice* on the tympanum of the main altar in S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini.

In the constant alternation of techniques, Maille did not miss out on marble works as well. Between 1682 and 1684 he worked in the chapel of S. Pietro d'Alcántara in Aracoeli, restructured by G.B. Contini.

Here he realized the entire decorative apparatus sculpting *St. Peter in ecstasy* in front of the Cross for the altar and the two Angels supporting the medallions with *S. Ranieri and S. Stefano* respectively for the left and right walls. Of these last compositions remain the preparatory models: the terracotta with *S. Ranieri* was purchased in 1972 on the English antique market and is now in the Museum of the Palace of Venice; while the other is preserved in the Pico Cellini collection, always in Rome. The latter, however, differs from the finished work, in portraying the effigy of a Santa instead of S. Stefano. A strong plasticity distinguishes the beautiful *Angel* (1685-92) of marble kneeling on the left of the altar of the Barsotti Chapel in S. Maria in Campitelli. In this context traditionally attributed to Maille, and *Putti* in the middle of the frame and those of the vault, performed in stucco in collaboration with Cavallini and G. Baratta.

1686 marked the disappearance of Ferrata; Maille had shared the rooms of his home with the master at least for the two-year period 1670-71, but also after his death he is referred to as an inhabitant "in the alley of the Carceri, which was of Mr. Ercole Ferrata". Precisely with Carcani, on July 11, 1686, he took part in the inventory of the hundreds of models present in the Ferretic Atelier, destined to be subdivided between the students and the academies of St. Luke and Ambrosiana. In nearly two decades past Ferrata, Maille had been able to gain ever-increasing recognition that in 1676 he had access to the Virtuous Congregation at the Pantheon, and in 1678 the entry into the ranks of the 'St. Luke's Academy. In addition, good economic stability had made it easy for him to create his family, marrying Cecilia Dorotea Totti: on 12th of September. 1687, the spouses Maille received a subsidy of 25 scudi from the church of S. Maria dell' Anima.

The rise of archive documents is bringing to light the unpublished elements of these delicate years of passage. The work of Maille portraitist is based on two important works: from 1689 it is the bust of Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna in the collegiate of S. Andrea a Paliano, followed shortly by that of Monsignor Francesco Liberati, placed within the exhibition designed by Mattia De Rossi on the stairs of the canonical of S. Maria Maggiore. Of great interest is also the engagement in the field of sculptural marble relief, a type that seemed to be absent from the Maille catalog and which today finds, in relief with the Holy Family above the entrance gate of the Ghisleri College in via Giulia, the only composing of several figures in that material, started in July 1687 and welded for 100 scudi in September 1689. All in all, there is the presence of Maille in S. Antonio dei Portoghesi, where in 1688 he worked in collaboration with Cavallini on behalf of Giacomo Cimini.

For a subsequent reappearance of Maille in a large decorative yard he will have to wait until 1689 when, in the company of C. Rusconi and under the direction of De Rossi, he was called to take part in the works in the church of S. Silvestro in You understand.

The execution of the four *Angels* with the respective *Putti* on the north wing of the transept was assigned to Maille, together with another pair of *Angels* and *Putti* over the arch of the grandstand in a symmetrical position with Rusconi.

In the two-year period 1688-89, the joint intervention of Maille and Ottoni should be traced back to the orchard of the fishermen at the church of S. Angelo in Pescheria. On stylistic bases, assigns to the two artists the entire stucco cycle with the *Evangelists* and *Church Fathers* of the Nave and the relief with *St. Andrew* of the facade.

In the early months of 1692, a public competition was launched for the decoration of the Chapel of the Baptism in the Vatican basilica. The provisors of the factory selected the projects of D. Guidi and architect C. Fontana: from September 1692, the first was committed to performing the group of *Baptism of Christ*; while the latter entrusted the realization of the four *Virtues* he had designed for the same number of sculptors.

Of that group were, apart from G. Lucenti, Ottoni, Maille and his compatriot Jean-Baptiste Théodon. Authors of the figures of *Faith*, *Innocence* and *Religion*, the three artists also modeled the statue of *Purity* left unfinished by Lucenti and dismissed the sculptures - now lost - at the beginning of March 1693. On June 14, Pope Innocent XII, in order to contain the expenses, decided to temporarily block any kind of intervention. Fontana then elaborated new designs using a porphyry tub found in the Vatican caves. Though strongly resized compared to the original project, the sculptural component also covered an important iconographic role in this new phase; and Fontana addressed again to Ottos, to Maille and Théodon, who prepared the *Putti* models in concert; while medallion with the *Trinity* must be attributed to Maille's only intervention.

Fontana again involved the three sculptors in the apostolic hospices of the Poor, for which were commissioned the relief plates depicting the Blessed Christ inspired by the Elegance of the Savior sculpted by Bernini.

Maille obtained three of the five rectangular marble reliefs found in different locations compared to the original placement: the plaque today at the monumental complex of S.

Michele in Ripa it comes from the former convent of the Sisters of St. Croce, the one kept in the National Museum of Castel Sant'Angelo was instead placed in Baldinotti palace in piazza di Pietra, while the sign in a private collection (unknown location) was at the customs of sea to Ripa Grande.

Upon completion of this first assignment, settled on Dec. 8th. 1694, Maille shared with Ottoni the task of realizing also one of the two oval plates to be affixed to the façade of land customs at Piazza di Pietra, now preserved at the Museum of Rome. It must be assumed that Fontana felt Maille's good estimate as he called him on several occasions to attend his yards. The example of the singular figure of S. Alberto, sculpted by the sculptor in 1695 for the S. Maria in Traspontina, or the S. Cornelio travertine statue for the facade of S Maria in Trastevere, designed by Fontana in 1701.

Outside of the rare innocent quarrels, Maille's collaboration with Ottoni and Théodon cemented in numerous other circumstances.

In the chapel of the Mount of Pity Théodon he won the monumental relief over the left side portico with Giuseppe lending the wheat to the Egyptians; while Ottoni and Maille shared the Medallions and the Putti of Stucco designed to adorn the dome. The Emperor has traditionally assigned the relief with Paul III confirming the privileges granted, the two Putti of support, the other four on the shells of the cornice, and also the relief at the center of the dome with the Holy Spirit in glory. Also credited to Maille the relief in the vestibule with the Eternal Father pounding in the sky; but the distinct style diversity compared to other achievements leads to the exclusion of his own paternity of the work. Maille's success is also demonstrated by the result of the competition for the assignment of the statue of St. Ignatius destined to the altar of the church of Jesus. In 1697 there were presented twelve models: Maille took part in the competition, and he won the second position.

Until the last years of his career, Maille privileged the confrontation with the stucco, exalting to the highest degree the qualities also in successive yards such as the chapel of S. Cecilia in S. Carlo to Catinari and the decoration of the nave of A. Maria in Vallicella.

In the first, Maille intervened performing, between 1694 and 1695, the relief with S. Cecilia in the cupola lantern, the Angel with the organ in front of the window, four Angels of the plumes, and still the Portacroce above the altar, modeled in great rush between 1699 and 1700. Smaller size was the intervention in the aisle of Vallicella, where Maille had to work with the Putti, who supported the frames with the paintings of Daniel Seiter in the fifth span, and the Angels in the left transept and those in the right wall of the tribune.

Towards 1700 Maille was also involved in the stucco decoration of the church of S. Maria dell'Orto in Trastevere; however, the documents found do not allow to specify the parts assigned to the sculptor. Moreover, it is almost entirely his hand that the marble bust of Vittoria Parabiacchi Altieri, in the Chapel of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni in S. Maria in Campitelli. Maille worked there since 1699; but in April 1701, perhaps due to a disease, Maille was forced to abandon the work, completed by G.A. Lavaggi.

At the conclusion of his artistic journey, Maille sculpted some travertine figures, such as S. Stefano for the parapet of S. Silvestro in Capite and S. Sebastiano for the colonnade of S. Pietro completed on 2nd ag. 1703. This is the chronological term that attests to the last known activity of Maille; and by the end of 1703 it is time to set the date of his death.

Among the works lost or attributed to Maille are the figure of a Stucco Saint, made in 1674 in pendant with that of Carcani, on the side of the main altar of the church of S. Marcello, and the "many models of Terracotta and Wax Steccata "recalled in the Real Gallery of Tuscany.

Maille's identity was often confused by critics with that of probable brother François, also an active sculptor and engraver in the Roman field at the end of the seventeenth century. Already reported by Bertolotti, it is attested in the works of the organs and cores in S. Maria in Vallicella (1697), as well as numerous interventions in the great yard of the altar of St. Ignatius in the church of Jesus; in 1697 he produced the wooden model of the balustrade and, later, the models for four Putti in support of the candelabra.

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