

Giacomo Mola

Swiss-Italian architect
1583-1650

He was born in Coldrerio, near Balerna, diocese of Como, around 1576 from Aurelia della Porta and from Giovan Pietro «della Molla», belonging to an ancient family originally from Appiano among whose members had been privileged the profession of «Mastro», ie bricklayer.

The sources are silent on the early years of Mola But it is plausible that he embarked on the path of family specialization, opting, as a consequence, for an early relocation to Rome where, since the last two decades of the sixteenth century, many mills were working in the papal construction sites. In 1591 Mola is registered for the first time in the City, engaged to collect a credit in the name of Uncle Battista, bricklayer and member of the archconfraternity of the Savior responsible for the homonymous Lateran hospital; precisely in that area, the first works of Mola are documented, starting from 1596-97, which, assuming increasingly progressive responsibilities, came to make its first estimate on 15 July 1599 and, in short, to become the "contractor" official "of the work of the confraternity significantly improving its economic position. At the same time, Mola had to conquer a role of trust in the company also through the exercise of roles other than strictly professional, such as the lending of non-indifferent sums of money and, in public deeds, becoming guarantor with his person and own substances in favor of some confreres.

Except for only one documented return to Coldrerio, in 1601 on the occasion of the death of his father and his marriage, on July 12, with M. Daria, Mola had to reside permanently in Rome. In 1606 he became a member of the archconfraternity of the Savior and the continuation of his activity was strictly due to the frequentation and support of the architects who took the direction of the Lateran factory: F. Ponzio from 1593 to 1610, GM Bonazzini from 1610 to 1616, O. Longhi from 1616 to 1618, C. De Politi from 1619 to 1631.

Probably, precisely by virtue of "a professional understanding" matured in the hospital with Pontius, Mola was involved by the latter in other works directed by him: the name of the youngest in fact, the architect appears in documents relating to the church of S. Sebastiano outside the Walls starting from 17 October. 1609 while, until the summer of 1612, coinciding with the replacement of G. Vasanzio a Ponzio at the head of the bourgeois shipyards, Mola received payments attesting the participation of his company, composed from GA Della Bella and D. Curto, for performances at the «vigna» Pinciana.

Starting from 1612 Mola resided in a house entirely owned by him, called «dei Molli», to the Mattei, parish of S. Nicola dei Cesarini, where he would continue to live for the rest of his life in the company of his sons, had both from the first marriage and from the second one, celebrated in 1634 with Maddalena Aldobrandini, and of numerous workers and garrison, and which ended up representing "a point of reference for the

community of the Ticinese workers in Rome". In 1615 Mola, as proof of the new social position acquired, elected the church of S. Maria in Aracoeli as a burial place for himself and his family, making place an early epitaph to his memory, lost.

Between 1618 and 1620, still as a mason, Mola was engaged by the Apostolic Chamber in the restructuring of the properties that the Borghese had acquired from the Altemps, in particular, the villas Taverna and Mondragone in Frascati. Also in this circumstance it is presumable that his participation was prompted by the involvement of Pontius, in the previous decade, in the work of Villa Taverna.

In 1619 Mola carried out a substantial restoration work in the church of S. Maria Imperatrice al Celio, disappeared, damaged by the Sistine works for the opening of the via Lateranense, and for which already in 1606 had to have carried out some preliminary work attested by payments.

The 18th Jan. 1622 was nominated as an "architect of the streets", that is, given the organigram of the ancient street magistracy, responsible for overseeing the interventions of ornate urban buildings and the road functions of the extra-urban territory; probably, he played this role continuously until his death, although the documentation so far investigated can confirm it only for the years 1622-34, 1641-45 and 1647-49.

Between 1622 and 1625 Mola performed the works of the Paluzzi Albertoni chapel in the church of S. Francesco a Ripa, partially remodeled in 1671-72 by Bernini interventions for the construction of the deposit of the blessed Ludovica Albertoni: conditioned by the need to maintain the pre-existing frescoes, Mola opted for a simple quadrangular installation on diagonally set pillars, covered by a dome with a lantern.

From 1629 to 1633 he worked for Cardinal Francesco Barberini on "architecture" in the sacristy and oratory of the church of the Sacred Stimate of St. Francis. It was at the beginning of the 1630s that Mola obtained the first important official recognitions: in July 1631 the appointment as architect of the archconfraternity of the Savior, a position which he held until his death with an initial annual salary of 15 scudi, increased to 36 after 1639. He was probably himself, in 1632, the year of the spread of the suspicion of plague in the city, to become "promoter and instigator" of the apostolic visit conducted in that year in the hospital, in order to verify its state of functionality, by Cardinal Barberini, prefect of the permanent congregation of health instituted by Urban VIII, a visit from which an important series of works could be achieved. From 1634 to 1636, in fact, Mola directed the restructuring of the «old lane» of the Men's Hospital, on Via di S. Giovanni, using the support of drawings by the young C. Rainaldi under the advice of F. Peparelli, an obvious compensation for an insufficient personal experience as a designer architect. Similarly, in the second phase of the works, carried out between 1639 and 1640 with the construction of the "new lane" on the Lateran square, he benefited from the assistance of his brother Giovan Battista and, subsequently, of GA De Rossi, a pupil of Peparelli.

The work of the Lateran hospital had to gain Mola a new prestige on the Roman scene. However, his affiliation to the Academy of St. Luke, reported by the bibliography should not be allowed peacefully due to the laconic nature of the institution's documents in which, up until now, his name: a list of artists and architects, not

necessarily academic, resident in the city in 1635 and the payment of a fee, not better motivated, paid in October 1637 "for the two years 1635-36.

From 1642 to 1649, Mola took on the role of architect of the Confraternity of the Holy Trinity of the Pilgrims: under his direction, minor works were carried out in the church, such as "the removal of some burials or the restoration of brick floors" welded in 1642, both, between 1642 and 1644, the alteration of the sacristy and some interventions in the vault; in those same years Mola equipped the building of the hospital-hospice of pilgrims and convalescents, leaning against the church, of a new and "simply linear" façade and took care of the "maintenance of the real estate properties of the pious place". Probably, still during the pontificate of Urban VIII, Mola was engaged in the restructuring of the hospital of the Mendicants in Ponte Sisto (partially demolished for the construction of the Lungotevere), concerning the layout of the dormitory, the refectory and the stairs, the enlargement of the portico facing that same part of the complex, the layout of the façade already defined by D. Fontana.

In the same years Mola also assumed the role of architect of the fathers ministers of the sick from which he was engaged in the reorganization of the building complex at the church of S. Maria Maddalena: the works he performed are difficult to define due to subsequent restructuring but probably they had to be more significant than they can make to suppose the receipts of the payments collected by him for the church and the convent from 1640 to 1642 and, for the only convent, in 1649.

In 1645 he was involved in the continuation of the works of Palazzo Ginetti in Velletri (demolished in 1961 as a result of the serious damage suffered in the Second World War), already directed by Peparelli, who died in 1641: the role of Mola, who very probably confined himself to to guarantee the implementation of the initial project, perhaps it involved a more extended time span than do not allow the only payments received, recorded on January 4 and September 6, to be understood. 1645.

Mola died in Rome on the 20th January. 1650 (Curcio, 1989, p.38 n.8).

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