

Giacomo Monaldi

Italian architect
(1819-1905)

He was born in Rome on February 10, 1819 by Tullio of the Marquises Monaldi and Maria Cassiani (Cassani).

The paternal family numbered numerous writers: his grandfather Francesco Monaldi (Rome 1736-1806), poet and writer, was a member of the Academy of Arcadia; his father Tullio, literate and numismatic, held the role of perpetual conservator of the archive of the Pontifical Roman Academy of Archeology.

It was the father who presented to G. Salvi, professor of theoretical architecture in the academic schools in S. Luca, the young Monaldi, who then continued at the studio of A. Sarti.

The professional activity of Monaldi began in 1844 with an intervention of considerable importance, the restoration of the church of S. Giovanni della Malva in Trastevere. Also called S. Giovanni *in mica aurea*, the church, of medieval construction, was in serious degradation from the times of the Napoleonic occupation. The restoration work was carried out by the will of father L. Togni, prefect general of the ministers of the sick of the Order of St. Camillus de Lellis, to whom the church had been entrusted in 1842, and thanks to the grants of the duchess A. Londei Grazioli and her son Pius, baron of Castel Porziano. According to the practice of the time, the project of Monaldi radically changed the original conformation of the building: the longitudinal system became a Greek cross pattern, surmounted by a hemispherical dome "without a drum and set on three steps perimeter with function containment of thrusts". The entrance is bordered internally by columns on which the choir rests; the façade, delicately marked by the slightly pronounced projections, is tripartite by a giant order of pilasters with composite capitals and closed by a triangular tympanum. Above the entrance portal runs a frame that stops at the pilasters, beyond which there are three bas-relief panels, one for each span, depicting Mary, John the Baptist and John the Evangelist and the symbols of the two saints.

Work began in the spring of 1845 with the laying of the first stone; the church was then completed and inaugurated in 1851. Gasparoni already gave it news in 1846 which, still regarding the young author of the intervention, provided information on a further work by Monaldi in the church of Sts. Vincenzo and Anastasio at the Trevi Fountain, the building of the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, recently completed on behalf of the Marquis E. Di Gregorio. There Monaldi placed a stylobate running along the walls, decorated with squares of scagliola, on which he placed a series of composite pillars surmounted by an entablature that reaches the same height as the axis of the archway; the barrel vault is decorated with stuccos and paintings depicting the theological virtues.

Between 1851 and 1852, in Subiaco in S. Scolastica, Monaldi intervened on the planning system designed by G. Quarenghi in 1769, in turn inserted within the original Gothic structure, designing the apse basin supported by columns and pillars of ionic order, covered with scagliola in imitation of the peach blossom marble: "the new solution of a Palladian ascendant niche was realized, which someone seemed to have come out of the Quarenghi's hand, but which introduced an element of contrasting spatial illusion within it. with the clarity of the Quarenghian architecture".

Again in Rome in 1867, Monaldi wrote an expert report on the conditions of the Florence palace, fully describing the modalities of the recovery intervention, which would also have provided for the demolition of the adjacent small houses on the streets of Pallacorda and Clementino, at the order to use the area more profitably. With the advent of the Italian government, the building underwent a more

articulated series of works of accommodation to become the seat of the Ministry of Grace and Justice and Cults.

Between 1869 and 1871 he took care of the restoration and restoration works of the church of the S. Sudario dei Piemontesi, also closed to worship after the Napoleonic occupation, during which it was used as a stable; the rector G. Croset-Mouchet entrusted the architectural work to Monaldi and to C. Maccari the decorations.

For what concerns still the civil building, the following years saw Monaldi - and with this the great part of the architects operating in that period - grappling with numerous interventions on buildings of the historical city. The changes requested by the client concerned the acquisition of additional volumes through the raising of one or more levels: these operations did not yet entail substantial alterations of the original type, as will happen later thanks to the use of iron structures through which the floor of the floors to obtain a greater number of floors.

These include the superelevation of the building owned by Count A. Alborghetti in the square of Campo de 'Fiori and the Palazzo Vicentini in via Due Macelli (1872); the works of arrangement and superelevation of the Teutonic hospice at S. Maria dell'Anima (1883-84), a casamento of which, moreover, he had been responsible for the construction between 1869 and 1870, and the building in Borgo S. Angelo in the corner with Via Traspontina (1884); the restoration and internal restructuring of the building owned by the pious work of S. Michele arcangelo of the Borgo runners, in via di Ripetta (1897).

In 1872, commissioned to build a building for housing in a lot belonging to the hemicycle of the Diocletian baths, he was invited informally by an official of the Capitoline technical office to draw up a study for the arrangement of the entire area, as "It was the City of Rome's mind that that semicircle was built with a single concept". Learning from the press that the work was instead entrusted to Vespignani, Monaldi sent his project to F. Graspigni, acting as mayor of Rome, recalling the facts. Grispigni returned it to the author, not without having greatly praised the architectural quality of the work, explaining, however, how the building commission had not yet established the precise modalities of the intervention to be implemented.

A handwritten biographical note, written on the occasion of his commemoration at the Academy of St. Luke, of which he was a member since 1851, attributes to Monaldi the restoration and modification interventions in the Cenci palace in S. Eustachio, today Maccarani di Brazzà, the houses of via della Maddalena in the corner with via delle Coppelle, "of pure style", via Tor Millina in corner with via di Parione and corso Umberto, then hotel Campidoglio.

The same source cites another work by Monaldi in Rieti, the restorations of the Palazzo Vicentini: it is a remake of the facade of the Dosi Delfini palace, on Vittorio Emanuele square, the current headquarters of the Varrone foundation and the Vicentini marquises, who they undertook construction in the seventeenth century, incorporating the pre-existing system of the residence of the Montegambaro family. Monaldi redesigned the façade in the neo-renaissance forms dear to him, placing a high base of ashlar surmounted by a band that incorporates the central loggia, supported by two columns (1889).

The most famous work by Monaldi is Palazzo Campanari on Via Nazionale in Rome (1883), about which P. Bonelli, in the pages of *Il Buonarroti*, expressed himself in more than flattering terms, recognizing in him "one of those who try to ward off" from the pure Roman school the infections of modern architecture ».

The language of Monaldi, drawing heavily from the architecture of the sixteenth century, appears most often marked by a great stylistic sobriety. Definitely more daring and overloaded, though in harmony

with the taste of the era, the decorative apparatuses of the interior, which Monaldi used to treat with great attention to the details.

Member of the Tiberian Academy since 1846, he was the author of the preparations for the events held there; in 1868 he figured as an architect vice-director of competitions, among the members of the Congregation of the Virtuosi del Pantheon. The aforementioned biographical note recalls the commitment made by Monaldi in providing assistance to the victims of the cholera epidemic that hit the city of Rome in 1859.

He died in Rome Jan. 9, 1905.

by Raffaella Catini - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 75 (2011)

Translated from:

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giacomo-monaldi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giacomo-monaldi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)