

Pietro Paolo Olivieri

Italian sculptor and architect
(1551-1599),

He was born in Rome in 1551 by Antonio, of Roman origin. Certainly, he knows about his training and his activity as a sculptor before 1574; his writing, dedicated to Guglielmo Della Porta, dating back to that year, attests, if not bonds of apprenticeship, at least close contacts with the Lombard master in the Seventies of the sixteenth century. The quality of the text also highlights the refinement of Olivieri's culture.

On March 19, 1574 he became a member of the Congregation of Virtues of the Pantheon and in 1577 he was a member of the Academy of St. Luke. Between the two dates she produced for her prestigious clients her first works known today. In 1574 he made a marble Cleopatra, probably for the Mattei (in the seventeenth century in the collection of Cristina of Sweden, today in Palazzo Corsini).

Since its discovery, the statue has been regarded as an example of high quality of Roman classicism of the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Olivieri demonstrates the refinement of his chisel in the soft treatment of the meat and the details of the chignon, as well as an in-depth knowledge of ancient sculpture; it was also believed that the elongated and sinuous body is the debtor of Florentine models, particularly the works of Baccio Bandinelli. Based on an inventory of 1614, it was thought that the statue was part of the Egyptian theme program of Villa Mattei al Celio.

The ties with the Mattei remained tight during the entire career of the sculptor, who was also architect of the gardens of the villa. It was suggested that before receiving the Cleopatra commission, it was noted as restorer of the antiquities of the family collection. At the same time, a marble of Andromeda, marble of good quality, signed but not dated, and a marble group not traced by Apollo and Marsia.

On June 26, 1576, following a contest, Olivieri was commissioned to execute a statue of Gregory XIII in marble to be sent to the Senatorio Palace, decreed by the City of Rome on February 23. It is interesting to note that Ciriaco and Muzio Mattei were members of the public council in charge of choosing the artist.

The "gigantone", completed in May 1577 and 1876 in S. Maria in Aracoeli, reveals in the pose a careful observation of the Moses of Michelangelo, filtered through the example of Guglielmo Della Gate, whose design for the Tomb of Gregory XIII in St. Peter could serve as a model.

In the summer of 1584 he obtained another capitular commission that sanctioned "the deep alliance between the Roman people and the papacy": Gregorio XI's Funeral Monument S. Maria Nova (S. Francesca Romana), completed before March 1589.

It has been observed that the architecture of the tomb reflects the motives of the Medici of Baccio Bandinelli in S. Maria sopra Minerva, by Adriano VI of Baldassarre Peruzzi and of Duke of Clèves of Egidio of the Riviera and Niccolò Pippi in S. Maria dell'Anima. In the middle of the Olivieri monument, he inserted a great narrative, framed by the statues of Faith and Prudence. If these have always been considered minor works, the relief, as a

representation of a historical episode (Gregory XI's Advent in Rome returning from Avignon in 1377), has instead interested scholars for the vision of medieval Rome. Archaism in the treatment of space, often read as a limit of Olivieri, is considered today as a deliberate effect, marked by Flemish culture, which returns to the relief of St. John the Baptist in the desert.

From September 29, 1587 to 1589, Olivieri received payments from the Chapter for marble ornamentation of the commemorative inscription of Pius V and Marcantonio Colonna in S. Maria in Aracoeli. In the same period he became part of the sculptors' team of Sisto V, proving his growing professional success. He realized in particular St. Anthony of Padua in marble for the Sistine Chapel of S. Maria Maggiore (August 1587 - April 1588), a saint in ecstasy to which Olivieri did not try to give expressiveness or depth. The Madonna with Child of the Crib shows a sweetness well suited to the group of Adoration of Arnolfo di Cambio, which completes it (Treasury Museum of St. Mary Major).

Important is the collaboration between Olivieri and another sculptor interested in antiquarian culture, Flaminio Vacca. The two shared the commission of two angels reggitemma and a relief of the History of Joshua for the Fountain of Moses of Domenico Fontana, installed in July 1588.

Traditionally, as the work of Olivieri, the left angel. The relief is a four-handed work: described as "an imitation of archaeological taste of late Roman", could in fact be conceived through almost experimental stylistic research, that of to appear "a collection of original archaeological finds of different origin", "damaged antiquities".

In September 1588, he was called with Prospero Bresciano to estimate the models of his statues. Peter and s. Paul of the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, works by Leonardo Sormani and Tommaso Della Porta. Later, with Vacca and Sormani, he restored the Dioscuri del Quirinale (1589-90), last work for Sisto V. In 1590 he can trace the signed tombstone of the couple of hospitals from Lyon, not otherwise documented. With Silla Longhi, Ippolito Buzio and again with Cow, he may have worked at the Vittorini Chapel of the Church of Jesus, where he was assigned the first angel on the left.

It was hypothesized that in those years had intervened, as a hydraulic engineer and sculptor, at the Four Fountains yard; here he would re-use Settizonio pieces, delivered to the Mattei in September 1588. Some payments received from the Apostolic Chamber from July 3 to August 14, 1591 might refer to this work. Olivieri (or, alternatively, Silla Longhi) attributed the statues of Arno and Giunone, placed in 1592.

From 1594 to 1595 he was architect of S. Andrea della Valle, appointed by the patron of the yard, Cardinal Alfonso Gesualdo; however, he was, in fact, a superintendent and a "gauzer" and did not intervene in the church project. He then estimated the works of colored marble by Giovanni Battista Della Porta in the Caetani Chapel of S. Pudenziana in 1597. Since 1595 he was an architect of the Caetians and could have replaced Francesco da Volterra, who died in 1594 as an architect of the chapel, and had drawn the altar which contains the marble altarpiece of the Adoration of the Magi, commissioned on April 4, 1596.

Olivieri developed a vast sea and mountain landscape. Without looking for a spatial likeness, he made a picturesque procession down the slope to the first floor, where the main characters were almost entirely carved. The quality of these figures, heavily influenced by classical

models an intervention by Olivieri's best student, Camillo Mariani, who succeeded him after death. The hypothesis is, however, excluded today, since for the period following the disappearance of Olivieri, only payments to a "garzone" of the sculptor Pasquale Pasqualini are known for the polishing of the marble.

In 1598 it was again active for the Mattei, in the family building (now Caetani palace), where he designed the wooden ceiling of the salon. His career ended in the most important Roman yard of the end of the century: the altar of the Sacred Sacrament at St. John in Lateran, wanted by Clement VIII for the jubilee of 1600, of which Olivieri was the architect.

He designed an imposing structure with gilded crown, covered with golden metal and supported by four golden bronze columns from Constantinian Fastigius. On the sides of the altar were placed marble statues of prophets, overlaid by reliefs. From January 25, 1598 Olivieri received payments for the statue of Elijah and for the relief of Elijah and the angel, both finished after his death by Mariani.

He died on 6 July 1599 in Rome, in the parish of S. Stefano del Cacco, and was buried in the church of S. Maria sopra Minerva, near which he lived at least since 1577). His brother, "Knight of the Habit of Christ," wrote an inscription on the tomb.

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