

Pietro Pacilli

(1720-1772)

Italian sculptor

He was born in Rome on December 3, 1720, by Carlo and Agnese Gai.

He practiced apprenticeship with his father, carver and sculptor, and at Giovanni Battista Maini, pupil of Camillo Rusconi. In 1738 he won the first prize for the Second Class of Sculpture of the Accademia di S. Luca, presenting *Giuseppe the chastity attempted by the wife of Putifarre* (lost), a work of raw terracotta, for which he loaned as guarantor Maini, because of the Academy's regulation which required the cooking of the works.

Among the first works attributable to Pacilli are the stucco reliefs made between 1740 and 1744 on the walls of the main nave of St. Mark's Basilica in Rome, depicting S. Matteo who resuscitates a child, St. Peter and the fall of Simon Mago and S. Philip baptizing the eunuch.

Between 1746 and 1747 he created a stucco group depicting *an angel who frees a Christian slave and a Muslim* placed on the tympanum of the external portal of the Church of Ss. Trinità degli Spagnoli built at the beginning of the 1740s on a project by Portuguese Emmanuel Rodríguez dos Santos.

The subject, drawn from the vision of St. John of Matha (founder of the Order of the Holy Trinity), follows, with stylistic variants, the autograph drawings by Rodríguez dos Santos, Pacilli is also likely to have collaborated with all of them, but it is also likely that entire decoration, equally in stucco, of the interior of the church (1746-49).

In 1750, with the architect Mauro Fontana, he realized a processional machine for the Arciconfraternity of the SS Crucifix in S. Marcello al Corso, performing in particular the terracotta patterns and the papermaking elements. Between 1750 and 1753, marble, the great statue of S. Camillo de Lellis (central nave, second pillar on the left, lower niche) was dedicated to the series dedicated to the founders of religious Orders, to be placed along the median nave and arms of the transept in the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican.

Probable models for the great marble are two in terracotta depicting the same saint, in the same pose, preserved, respectively, in the National Museum of Venice Palace and in the sacrestia of the church of S. Maria Maddalena. Probably they are also precedent to the real-time stucco statue (lost), which was usually carried out on site to be subjected to the judgment of the commissioners or experts commissioned to make any changes before the final marble translation.

In 1753 he received a payment also for the statue for the same series of Beato Girolamo Emiliani, but Pietro Bracci preferred it and Pacilli seems to have limited the execution of the base in bardiglio marble. In that same year, for the St. Peter's Cathedral in Frascati (altar of the first chapel to the right), he made a stucco relief depicting the vision of St. Isidore in Frascati. In 1756 a payment was made for the marble production of Benedict XIV coat-of-arms (Vatican Museums, above the entrance to the Christian Museum). In 1757, under the stucco decoration of the Maddalena church interior, made according to

the directives of Francesco Nicoletti, he performed a group of Angels placed on the slope of the main altar. Also in 1757 he became part of the Virtuoso Academy at the Pantheon. In 1760 he was appointed Academician of Merit of the Accademia di S. Luca and in 1762 he took over the role of "church administrator" and "paciere". He was also director of the Academy of the Nude in 1761, 1765, 1767, 1769, 1770, 1772. He is also attributed to the high relief marble depicting the deceased for the funeral monument of Cardinal Gianacopo Millo, designed by architect Carlo Marchionni in the early 1760s, in the church of S. Crisogono (on the left of the entrance).

In the 1770's, his work as a restorer, copier and art dealer was important to European customers such as Charles Townley and Gavin Hamilton. Between 1764 and 1765, with Agostino Morelli and others, he was the owner of an excavation company operating at Albano, near the vineyard of Monsignor Sordini's heirs, in order to sell the numerous archaeological finds that were discovered after careful restoration supplementary.

In 1764 he was commissioned to make the model (in plaster) for the statue of *Judith and Holofernes* (conceived in pendant with that of Giuditta commissioned to Jean-André Le Brun) then made in marble for the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin wall at the bottom of the arm right of the transept in the church of Ss. Ambrogio and Carlo al Corso.

In September 1772, shortly before his death, Pacilli donated all the material of his studio (except marbles) to his pupil (shop assistant since 1766) Vincenzo Pacetti. He died in Rome on December 31, 1772.

His wife, Teresa Donati, with whom he married in 1755, after appointing her brother Agostino Pacilli, procurator and estimator of her shop assets, and Tommaso Bandini, curator, various statues at Pacetti, who picked up the shop and handled further sales of the master's belongings in his stead; the widow subsequently sold other works to the Pio-Clementine Museum.

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