

# Leonardo Retti

Italian sculptor  
d.1714

The date of birth of this artist, the prominent exponent of a large family of stuccoers from Laino (Como), is unknown. His father, Giambattista, had moved to Parma already in 1633, and the young Leonardo learned the craftsmanships in his shop, alongside his brother Domenico. The Retti were very active in the Emilia city during the regiment of Ranuccio II Farnese (1646-94), and here is the first known intervention attributable to Leonardo's hand in collaboration with Domenico: the plastic decoration of the chapel of Our Lady of Constantinople in Church of S. Vitale, commissioned by Carlo Beccaria, Treasurer of the Duke of Parma and Prior to the Congregation of Suffrage. The imposing ornamentation consists of 18 large statues, including some members of the Beccaria family, 27 figures of putti and 8 bas-reliefs, and was made by the Retti brothers between July 1666 and December 1669 for a compensation of 180 doubles and over 100 ducats. In 1671 the request for payment for stuccos was made in the second chapel to the left of the church of S. Lorenzo in Piacenza; probably already at that date, Leonardo must have completed the decision to move to Rome, perhaps capturing Giovan Battista Gaulli's invitation to visit Parma in 1669, but also taking advantage of the opportunity to enter into a workshop of Ercole Ferrata, a great master of intellect, whose same Retti would actually be "young at home".

In fact, at least from June 1672, Retti was active in the sculptural renovation of the garden of Palazzo Borghese, originally entrusted to the direction of Giovanni Paolo Schor, later replaced by Carlo Rainaldi at the same time restoration of the palace. Borghese Accounts Payments, scanned until March 1673, allow to certify Retti the figures of the central fountain with Diana and the nymphs and the execution of the 29 vases arranged in theory at the top of the wall of the wall (now reduced to 25); the other two fountains with Flora and the Three Graces were realized respectively by Filippo Carcani and Francesco Cavallini, both assisted by Michel Maille. From the documents it can be seen that Laino stuccoer had also performed many other models and figures on Schor's design, then not put into operation or replaced by Rainaldi. In 1672 the modernization site of the church of S. Marta was started at the Collegio romano, on the design of Carlo Fontana. While Giovan Battista Gaulli was called to freshen the vault of the nave with the glory of the Santa titolare, in Retti, assisted by Antonio Roncati, stucco work was entrusted to them. Although the contract was concluded in December 1672, payments were scaled between 1677 and 1678, with the final balance being made only in 1681: the sculptors assigned the Angels on the chapel arches, counter-faced and on the wall of the apse, and the Fama reggicartiglio at the top of the absidal cap, while the angels on the cornice and sides of the window are lost but are witnessed by the engraving by Domenico de 'Rossi. Retti would return to collaborate with Fontana in the church of S. Maria in Transpontina, where the architect had planned and completed the monumental structure at the temple of the main altar in 1674. Here the plasterer modeled a fasting of Angels who supported the " the image of Our Lady of

Transcontinent, while four Carmelite saints, always in stucco, overrun the entrance halls of the choir.

In 1687 the central group was removed and in 1695 the figures of the saints were replaced by the existing ones in marble by Jacopo Antonio Lavaggi, Vincenzo Felici, Alessandro Rondone and Michel Maille. Some critics argue that they would be still to be assigned to Retti the two angels kneeling on the volute of the tympanum, but the hypothesis is ruled out, since they are marble figures.

Also in 1672, August 21, Gaulli signed the contract for the execution of the frescoes in the dome, plumes, vault of the nave and subtleties of the transept of the church of Jesus, also committing to guarantee its decoration and stucco decoration, within the end of 1682. Among the most active sculptors at this site are Antonio Raggi and Leonardo Retti, the first most talented in the works of the nave, the second most present in the presbytery and in the chapel dedicated to St. Ignatius. Retti are the cardinal virtues in stucco of Prudence and Fortress in the dome drum, which couple with Temperance and Justice by Paolo Naldini; the pairs of statues on the sides of the first three windows of the right wall of the aisle (Majesty of France and the Catholic Majesty of Spain, Persian Empire and Jewish People, Egypt and Berbere Populations) and the fourth of the opposite wall (Guaranì and Indios of Potosí) with its bows at the top of the timpani (1679-80); in the presbytery area he made the four statues that flank the windows and the four Angels that support the frame of the Gaulli fresco with the Angelic Concerto of the Underworld (1680-82); the two reliefs (Ignatius releases an indigent at Azpeitia and heals a man from epilepsy on the left, the Holy Spirit burns on the head of Ignatius while celebrating the Mass on the right) and the two lunettes (La Vergine and the Child Purify 'Ignatius' soul on the left; Virgin and Child inspired the writings of Ignatius on the right) of the left chapel of the transept.

Meanwhile, in 1675 Retti was accepted 'a viva voce' as a confrere in the Virtuous Congregation at the Pantheon, while in 1679 his affiliation was proposed to the Academy of St. Luke, although the actual nomination it was only ratified in 1699. In 1682, Cardinal Paluzzo Altieri entrusted Mattia de Rossi with the plans for the Clement X Sepulcher in St. Peter: the pontifical marble statue was assigned to the old Ercole Ferrata and the allegorical figures of Charity and Clemency went to Lazzaro Morelli and Giuseppe Mazzuoli, respectively. Other elements of minor importance went to Filippo Carcani, author of Putti reggicartiglio, and in Retti, who carved the relief on the sarcophagus depicting the opening of the Holy Door for the Jubilee of 1675.

According to a recent hypothesis based on stylistic comparisons, the sculptor would also have intervened in the decoration of Altieri al Gesù two times, that is, those in the rooms of the Telamons and the Triumph of Aeneas.

The main altar of the church of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini was opened in 1683, on whose tympanist Retti had modeled the allegory of the Fortezza in pendant with Justice by Michel Maille. His modeling skills also attracted the presence of famous architects in the commissioning of important ephemeral apparatus: in 1689 he modeled eight statues (Merit, Charity, Peace, Heroic Virtue, Prudence, Justice, Virtue of Virtue, Fame) for the triumphal arch required by the Farnese in the possession of Alexander VIII by Carlo

Rainaldi, and in 1692 he was accompanied by Carlo Fontana in the execution of figures (*Prudence, Charity, Justice, Peace, Guard, Merit*) for the bow of Innocent XII Possession.

From 1689 the sculptor was engaged by Prince Giovanni Battista Pamphilj for an extensive restoration campaign of the ancient sculptures kept at the Belvedere villa in Frascati; the operations lasted until 1697, without the emergence of some problems related to the economic evaluation of the interventions.

In 1694 Giuseppe Mazzuoli was called to quantify the overall value of the work, but the estimate of 825 scudi he performed did not meet the parties involved, so they turned to two new experts: Francesco Nuvolone for the Prince and Antonio Francesco Fontana for Retti, who evaluated work 400 and 1100 respectively. The gap between the two figures required a fourth expert, identified in the French sculptor Jean Baptiste Théodon, who fixed the amount of 800 scudi, including travel expenses between Rome and Frascati supported by Retti.

Also in 1689 the sculptor had been commissioned to complete the upper part of the relief depicting the martyrdom of S. Emerenziana for the eponymous altar of S. Agnese in Agone, left unfinished by Ercole Ferrata, disappeared in 1686.

Even in this circumstance, some economic problems arise, and on June 18, 1704 a large group of sculptors (Domenico Amici, Michel Maille, Francesco Pincellotti, Bonaventura Zeno) estimated the integration of Rets equal to 300 scudi, confirmed on 26 followed by Bernardino Cametti and Pierre Le Gros. It was above all Maille to judge severely the work of the colleague, defined as "drenched and dry, for having cut too much marble", and to confirm the sum of 300 scudi in a new expertise of December 1705. The dispute ended only in 1709, when Retti renounced the increase in compensation, even proposing to Prince Pamphilj to arrange transport expenses from his study to the church and to excavate the relief, even to see his marble assembled together with the Ferrata in the altar of S. Emerenziana.

In the 1690s Retti was engaged in two occasions for the Cistercian monks of the church of S. Pudenziana. In 1696 the altar was consecrated near the well at which it was built. Prassede and s. Pudenziana poured out the blood of the martyrs: for this place, destroyed in 1803, the Lombard master made the S. Pudenziana statue alongside those of the saints Pius V and Shepherd. Satisfied by this first trial, the Cistercians commissioned Retti also sculptures for the main altar, whose marble structure was made by the stonecutter Luca Bonatti; here Retti always molded the statue of Our Lady, accompanied by the saints Benedict and Bernard and two Angels. For these works, also destroyed in the nineteenth century (only parts of the figure of the Madonna with the Child and an Angel, rebuilt in the deambulatorio behind the altar itself), received a total balance of 340 scudi in May 1701. In 1697 Retti was called to make the stucco model of the group with the Holy Trinity, which was to be truncated on the top of the tympanum of the altar of St. Ignatius in the church of the Jesus of Rome. Once the work was finished, the sculptor hoped for marble translation, invoking the nobility of that material, in opposition to the will of the Jesuits, more likely to use bronze; However, the lack of necessary funds required a break in the project, which was only taken back in 1723 by Bernardino Ludovisi and Lorenzo Ottoni, authors of the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ respectively. Certain documentary evidence also shows that in 1702 Retti

was involved in S. Maria dell'Orto in Trastevere on behalf of the Fruttaroli confraternity, modeling the putti in the vault above the tribune. The same documents make it clear that the two allegorical figures on the triumphal arch were not executed by Retti but by Maille (p. 108).

During the first decade of the eighteenth century Lombard's stucco career suffered a halt, causing problems of economic nature: in 1710 the artist was imprisoned for debts to his hosts, located in the parish of S. Maria in Via, where he had lived at least since 1693 in the company of his nephew Giuseppe.

He died in Rome in the first days of January 1714: his will (January 8, 1714) and above all the inventory of his property (February 9, 1714) find a situation of extreme poverty, and in his study at the time of death only a few fragments of stuccoes, two relief patterns for Clement X's tomb and work tools were found.

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