

Ludovico Rusconi Sassi

Italian Architect
(1678-1736)

He was born in Rome on February 28, 1678 to Ludovico Rusconi, a Ticino bricklayer from Stabio living in the parish of S. Maria in Campo Carleo, and to Domitilla, younger sister of the Roman architect Matteo Sassi of Ticino, pupil and collaborator of Carlo Fontana.

The uncle, also very busy in the field of expert witnesses, as his nephew would have been, was able to instruct him in professional practice: a debt that can be deduced from the early addition of the surname to the paternal one and from the long collaboration that lasted until Sassi's death in November 1723, 77 years old. Ludovico, who with his brother Giovanni Battista inherited the goods, succeeded him, among other things, in the roles of architect of the congregation of the Marche nation, of S. Girolamo della Carità and of the pious workers to the Madonna dei Monti.

Having signed an appraisal by Fontana with his uncle in 1711 for a house in the Monti district of the monastery of the oblate in Tor de 'Specchi perhaps presupposes, in addition to a professional relationship, the academic training with the famous teacher. It was in the years of the second Fontanian principality (1694-98) that Rusconi Sassi obtained discrete rankings in the competitions of the Academy of S. Luca: in 1694 with the first prize for the third class of architecture and in 1696 with the second in the second class. In 1702 he shared the first prize for the first class with the Roman Alessandro Rossini, at the time of the first news of services rendered to the most eminent of the academic cardinals of honor present at the award ceremony: Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni.

Between 1702 and 1710 Rusconi Sassi carried out measurements and tares of work accounts at the Palazzo della Cancelleria, the residence of the vice-chancellor Ottoboni, who at the time made use of the creativity of Filippo Juvarra, as for the reconstruction of the palace theater in 1709. When Fontana died in 1714, when Juvarra also left the scene from Rome, Rusconi Sassi was welcomed into the Congregation of Virtuosi at the Pantheon on 24 February, a few days after the death of the Ticino master. In 1712 he had taken care of the decorations of S. Maria Maggiore for the celebration of the canonization of Pius V organized for October 2 by Ottoboni, archpriest of the basilica. Among the initiatives referable to the cardinal, the Marian stucco aedicule in the canton between the streets of Pellegrino and Arco di S.Margherita (1715-16).

Livio Odescalchi died in 1713, his cousin and heir Baldassarre Erba, taking care of the works left undone or unfinished in Rome and in the properties of the prince, preferred to replace his trusted architect, Carlo Buratti, with Rusconi Sassi. The latter, who had already carried out work on Don Livio's yards in Ceri and Palo in 1712, in 1717 worked on the villa formerly belonging to the Peretti family (today Grazioli) in Frascati, while in

Bracciano he took care of substantial works from 1717 to 1725 the ducal "fortress" and other buildings, and from September 1718 completed the aqueduct which had already begun to serve ironworks and factories. In the following decade he built the new church of Palo, and, again on his own projects, in Rome he directed the construction of the chapel of St. Anthony of Padua of the Odescalchi in the basilica of Ss. Apostoli (1719-23), as well as that of the Paolucci in S. Marcello al Corso (1723-24).

Meanwhile, around 1718 he elaborated a project for the church of the Jesuit college of Rimini, but the clients turned to the less expensive one by the Ticino-born Domenico Trifogli, architect of the Cardinal-Bishop Ulisse Gozzadini.

Nicola Michetti, a pupil of Fontana, left for Petersburg in 1718. Rusconi Sassi replaced him in the service of the Rospigliosi (salaried from 1720 to 1724) until his colleague returned in 1723. in 1725, and of the church of S. Pietro in the fief of Zagarolo.

He is credited with the concise idea, of a sensitive urban dialectic, of the concave-convex facade; this one places in the narthex juxtaposed to the oval layout of the classroom inscribed in the low box-like body, from which the imposing oblong lantern emerges: a classroom in whose "vigorous ordinal setting" there are many similarities with other contributions by Rusconi Sassi, theses, such as the same facade, "to the external translation of Borrominian motifs".

Ascended to the bishopric of Sabina in January 1725, Cardinal Ottoboni undertook in the first year of his mandate "the restoration, extension and embellishment of the seminary, the bishop's palace and the cathedrale church", referable to its architect. As bishop of Porto (1734-38) he then had a chapel in the cathedral built for himself by Rusconi Sassi by 1735, a church already enlarged by Fontana in the late seventeenth century.

Taking over the death of his uncle as architect of the confraternity of the S. Casa, from March 1727 Rusconi Sassi directed the works of the cross of S. Salvatore in Lauro (church rededicated in October 1731), completing the transept, defining the scenographic presbytery chapel and raising the dome on the lantern. Inherited the role of architect of the pious workers, from 1729 he directed the construction of S. Giuseppe alla Lungara; in the "very singular interior" of the small church, consecrated in January 1734, the architect reformulated "the theme of S. Carlino" in an abstract antiplastic version of "new spatial significance".

On 11 June 1724 he was appointed academician of S. Luca.

For the award ceremony of the Clementino competition celebrated on December 9, 1729, in the "great hall of the Campidoglio" the architects Francesco Ferrari and "cavaliere" Rusconi Sassi, "undersecretary" of the Academy, prepared "the prospectus of a magnificent theater", consisting of a cavea of seats in "double turn" for arcades and academics centered by the "chair for the orator" and surmounted on the back by "a

wide, vaguely curved stage" for the "instrumental musicians"; in the front half of the hall, the stalls, intended for cardinals and prelates, had along the three walls "many boxes with two orders" for ambassadors, "princes and knights, both Romans and foreigners".

In 1732 Rusconi Sassi still held, as he had done since 1725, the duties of "Sindic and architectural estimator and builder".

Also in 1732, while he was busy with the Borghese in the Tuscan factories (he is credited with the project of the chapel of Villa Taverna Borghese in Frascati), he participated in the competition for the facade of S. Giovanni in Laterano , which saw him third place after Alessandro Galilei and Luigi Vanvitelli.

According to the current attribution of the large wooden model preserved by the Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro, the project is characterized by the bizarre elliptical bulb dome, which on the façade marks the shot of the large forepart on the rear and contracted second order. The secretary of S. Luca Niccolò Ricciolini, while judging it "the most executable" in terms of "regulated construction", found the "minute style" unsuitable for large external openness and the "majestic" interior: an opinion shared by Antonio Valeri, "first councilor of the Academy".

In 1734 Rusconi Sassi built the monastery of the Silvestrini in via Piè di Marmo, and as long-time architect of the Pia Casa degli orphans he always took care in 1734, on the occasion of the formation of the Montecitorio antipiazza, reform of the building, carried out in 1736 by the pupil Mario Asprucci.

Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, commendatory of S. Lorenzo in Damaso, financed the reconstruction of the chapel of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in the basilica, "decorated with marble and gilded stucco with a design by Cavalier Lodovico Rusconi Sassi, and painted by Cavalier Casale" , and finally inaugurated on 9 August 1736.

The architect died on August 18, 1736 at the age of 58, and was buried in S. Stefano del Cacco, " his parish"; his brother Giovanni Battista and his wife Antonia Virgili dedicated the floor plaque to him.

by Cristiano Marchegiani - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 89 (2017)

Translated from:

[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ludovico-rusconi-sassi_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ludovico-rusconi-sassi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)