

Riccardo Grifoni

Italian Sculptor
(1845-1933)

He was born in Florence on 5 June 1845 to Ferdinando and Elisa Granati, belonging to the parish of S. Salvi.

Grifoni was trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence under the guidance of Grifoni Duprè, from whom he derived the formula of beauty in life. The influence of L. Bartolini's theory of copying in the sense of realism and realism did not, in fact, lead to the complete renunciation of following the forms elaborated by classicism and purism.

Grifoni's activity is documented in Florence and Milan, but the first certain news dates back to 1870 when he appears to be resident in Rome with his studio in Piazza S. Nicola da Tolentino. In the same year he presented a sketch for the *Monument to the brothers E. and G. Cairoli*; but, despite having declared himself willing to work without reward, the model awarded by the Municipality, and furthermore sanctioned by G. Garibaldi, was that of E. Rosa, then placed on the Pincio and inaugurated in 1883.

In 1872 he moved his studio to no. 57 of via Sistina and exhibited the *Oreste* statue in Milan. The related plaster was presented the following year at the Milanese exhibition of the Society of Amateurs and Fine Arts Enthusiasts. In 1873 Grifoni was one of the collaborators of the journal *Art and Science. Journal for libraries, academies and theatres*.

In those years he began to create various busts for the sculptural decoration of the Pincio: the patriot and man of letters *A. Brofferio* (1873), modeled keeping in mind the physiognomic features of the monument by the sculptor G. D'Ambrosio in Saluzzo; the bust of *Eleonora d' Arborea* (1873), never placed; the portrait of the triumvir of the Roman Republic *C. Armellini* (1878); the bust of *C. Benso, count of Cavour* (1882). In 1874 he also executed seven pedestals for Pincian busts.

The correspondence between Grifoni and the Municipality of Rome, preserved in the Capitoline historical archive documents these commissions, often following the explicit and repeated requests of the sculptor, eager to collaborate in the Roman enterprises of those years old and in need of coping with his difficult financial situation. Fifty-eight busts were made between 1870 and 1880; for each one the sum of 500 lire was paid, including the marble and the installation; the approval of the plaster model was sanctioned by a commission made up mostly of municipal councilors who were experts in the subject (often a painter and a sculptor were present). With regard to the busts signed by Grifoni, for example, the sculptor's request for an increase in the fee for *Armellini's* bust is preserved, given the high quality of the work. Even the assignment of the bust of Cavour in 1882 took place on the basis of the numerous letters that Grifoni had sent to the mayor E. Ruspoli since 1879. The herm was to replace the one decreed in 1871, badly executed by F. Fossi and therefore rejected by the municipal councilors. In 1890 Grifoni applied to execute the bust of *E. Pistolesi*, accompanying it with the recommendation of high personalities including L. Amadei, A. Baccharini, C. Menotti

and L. Pianciani.

Reported as one of the most up-to-date sculptors active in Rome, Grifoni had the merit of modeling the *Portrait of King Umberto I* for the Chamber of Deputies (not identified): this earned him the praise of the king and his commission of the portrait of *Prince of Naples Vittorio Emanuele in torpedo boat uniform* "masterfully sculpted from life in full figure".

In 1879, Grifoni participated in the competition for the monument to Giordano Bruno (later performed by E. Ferrari and inaugurated in 1889).

Four artists (T. Giannini, A. Cencetti, G. Moschetti and Grifoni) had undertaken to execute the sketches for the monument to be placed in Campo dei Fiori without compensation, as the monument responded to the ideal - very widespread in the lay environment of the Risorgimento - to symbolically represent freedom of thought against clerical oppression.

The marble bust of *Q. Sella* for the Chamber of Deputies (1884) belongs to the ninth decade; the participation in 1887 in the Exhibition of amateurs and connoisseurs with the terracotta figure of *La Ciociara* and the *Portrait of Alessandro Lamarmora*. Of greater importance was the bronze monument to General Alessandro Lamarmora for the promenade of the Gianicolo garden (1886), which in those years was being transformed into a sort of park of remembrances of the Risorgimento, thanks to the presence of portraits of the most famous Italian patriots.

The bust of *Lamarmora* - the first to be placed there, on 18 June 1886 - was a particular case: the municipal council decided that a bust of the general be placed in the Janiculum promenade on the fiftieth anniversary of the body of sharpshooters he founded. However, in a letter from the mayor's cabinet addressed to C. Tenerani it was communicated that the Association of former non-commissioned officers of the Bersaglieri had had the sculpture modeled by Grifoni in 1884 with its own means and offers, then executed in bronze by the Nelli foundry. The bust of Lamarmora was therefore exceptionally accepted as a gift and, despite the non-conformity of the measurements and materials (the only one in bronze and with a larger pedestal than the others), inaugurated on the foreseen day. Another monument to Lamarmora sculpted by Grifoni is kept in the Villa Corsini in Rome.

In 1892, however, the sculptor experienced failure in the competition for the bust of *G. Nicotera*, again for the walk to the Gianicolo, later completed by D. Pagano.

The sepulchral monuments sculpted by Grifoni are located in Verano: the *Monument of Monsignor de Mérode*, the tomb of *A. Fumagalli* (dramatic artist who died in 1874) and the portrait of *Lieutenant G. Ballio*. Since 1906 he has been indicated as professor of drawing in the Royal Technical Schools of Rome (De Gubernatis; Callari) and resident at no. 106 of via di S. Francesco a Ripa. For the church of the same name, Grifoni created the *Monument of Cardinal Francesco di Paolo Cassetta* (1922), on the pillar of the chapel of S. Giovanni da Capistrano.

In 1930 he received the title of grand officer.

Grifoni died in Rome on 17 November. 1933.

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