

# Giuseppe Napolini

(Napolino, Napolioni, Napoleoni)

Italian sculptor  
(18th century)

The place and date of birth of this sculptor who was active in Rome between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the following century are unknown.

He had to carry out his training at Domenico Guidi's studio: in 1683 two payments were recorded that the master made in his name, presumably for the provision of a service he performed in the scope of the atelier's activities.

The small corpus of the surviving works does not allow to delineate a stylistic profile of the artist, but only to trace the possible lines of development of his manner, which can be placed, in any case, in the late Roman Baroque culture and close to the ways of Vincenzo Felici, with whom he shared his apprenticeship and, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the spaces of the workshop.

On April 24, 1689 he was proposed for admission to the Pantheon among the Virtuosi. Accepted the candidacy, he attended the meetings of the congregation until the assembly of 18 July 1700.

In October 1690 he received a compensation of 150 scudi for having collaborated in the preparation of the ephemeral apparatuses for the canonization of Giovanni da Capestrano in S. Pietro, with Lorenzo Ottoni, Pietro Papaleo and Giacomo Antonio Lavaggi. Between 1693 and 1714 his name appears several times, in relation to unspecified works, in the account books of Prince Giovan Battista Borghese and, less frequently, in the accounting records of Monsignor Carlo Agostino Fabroni.

As part of the construction of the new facade of the cathedral of S. Pietro in Frascati, designed by Girolamo Fontana in August 1696 and inaugurated in 1700, he executed the statue in the round of *S. Giacomo Apostolo*, alongside Felici in the undertaking, Gerolamo Gramignoli and Pietro Mauri, authors of the other sculptures located in the external niches of the cathedral.

In the last years of the seventeenth century, with Andrea Fucigna, Lavaggi and Felici, he took care of some restorations of the antiquities owned by the Colonna in the building near the basilica of the Ss. Apostoli in Rome. Between 1699, the year in which he received a down payment of the agreed 60 scudi, and, probably, before 1706, the year of the dedication of the sacred environment, he was part of the team formed by Lavaggi, Fucigna, Alessandro Rondone and Giuseppe Raffaelli, in charge of the decoration project of the Altieri chapel in S. Maria in Campitelli, designed and coordinated by Giuseppe Mazzuoli: on the occasion, he sculpted the *Putto holding the cartouche with the name of the deceased* for the tomb of Angelo Altieri.

Between January 1702 and August 1703 the execution of the statue of *S. Damiano*, made for the left arm of the colonnade of S. Pietro and for which he obtained a payment of 80

scudi. The sculpture appears characterized by a dynamic and screwed pose; however, the poor conservation conditions due to atmospheric agents and a restoration carried out at the end of the eighteenth century, when the left arm and hand were redone, as well as the palm of martyrdom, to which subsequent maintenance works were added in 1833, hinder a 'detailed analysis.

As evidenced by a lease stipulated on November 2, 1702, from that date Napolini obtained the opportunity to share the studio, located behind the church of the Holy Spirit of the Neapolitans in via Giulia, which Felici had inherited from Guidi. In the same church, he participated in the reconstruction of the choir, coordinated by Carlo Fontana starting from 1702. The main ornamental interventions were carried out between 1704 and 1708: probably within those dates the sculptor had to make four *Angels holding a festoon* in stucco, which completed the decoration together with the *Putti* by Felici. These works, for which he was paid for by the Arciconfraternita dello Spirito Santo of the Neapolitans on 25 October 1710, were lost following the works that involved the apse during the nineteenth century. Again with Felici, he performed, in 1704, for the Organ fountain in the gardens of the Quirinale palace a pair of *Putti* hiding musical automatons.

Between August 1705, the starting date of the works, and 1709, when the scaffolding was removed, he participated, with Pierre Le Gros, Pierre-Étienne Monnot and Pietro Papaleo, in the decoration of the counter-façade of the basilica of the Holy Apostles, modeling in stucco the personification of *Charity*. The location of the sculpture, in a very high position in the counter-façade, does not allow a detailed examination that can reveal the minute characters of the work: clearly conceived to be observed from below, it is however distinguished by the dynamism of the pose, generated by the vigorous twisting of the neck, such as to give a clear reference to the statue, located to his left, depicting *Religion*, sculpted by Le Gros and conceived in close compositional relationship with it.

For unspecified works, in 1706 he obtained 600 scudi from Vincenzo Santoni, while on March 18 of the following year he received 50 scudi from Felici. Between 1706 and 1708, on behalf of Clement XI and under the direction of Carlo Fontana, Napolini and Felici completed the restoration of the pedestal of the Antonina column, discovered in May 1703 in the Montecitorio area. On 17 December 1706 he received a payment from the shareholder for the works. According to a notarial deed, on 17 May 1715 he undertook to pay the heirs of Felici, who died on 9 January of that year, the arrears of the rent of the studio.

The place and date of death are unknown. In the manuscript files of the Hertziana Library in Rome, reports that he died in Rome in 1720.

by Francesco Sorce - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 77 (2012)

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