

Gaspare Salvi

Architect
(1786-1849)

Salvi was born in Rome on 6 January 1786 by Antonio di Salvo Salvi and Maria Clementina Costa.

The family, of Florentine origins, had not long since moved to Rome, where Antonio carried out the duties of "master of the domestic economy" of the Carpegna household. Complying with the interest of Gaspare as an adolescent in mathematics, his father placed him under the guidance of the Camaldolese monk Mauro Cappellari. Later it was formed in the study of Joseph Subleyras and then in the academic schools of St. Luke, which became state following the Napoleonic reform; the prizes awarded in the competitions Clementino (1805) and Balestra (1810) are proof of profit in the studies. Giuseppe Camporese wanted him in his studio as an assistant; here he met, among others, Clemente Folchi (1780-1868), with whom he established a lasting friendship.

In 1810 Salvi went to Florence, where he resided for some time: in 1812 he was elected professor at the Academy of the arts of design. Called back to Rome following the death of his father and the difficulties faced by his family, deprived of the only sustenance, he did not hesitate to take the place of Antonio in the Carpegna house, dedicating his free time to study.

In 1813 he took part in the competition announced by the French government for the construction, on the Mont Cenis, of the monument commemorating the bloody battle held in Bautzen (Saxony); he was therefore appointed engineer of the district delegation of Rieti.

As a member of the newly established Tiberina Academy, and of which he would later be president in 1838, he delivered the necrological prayer in memory of Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Georges Seroux d'Agincourt, published in 1815.

With the restoration of the papal government, Pius VII, following the documentary legacy of the Cadastre of the Italic kingdom promoted by Napoleon, had initiated "systematic surveying and graphic restitution operations" throughout the territory. For the city of Rome the assignment was entrusted in 1818 to Salvi and Giacomo Palazzi and completed some years later; the two architects made use of a 'base', consisting of the plan of Giovanni Battista Nolli, where 'every indication useful for the cadastral use to which it was destined [...] was used, using the "icnographic design" so much in relation to the different properties, both to the different uses they serve, or to the different kinds of cultivation".

In 1818 Salvi was admitted among the members of the Academy of St. Luke; in 1821 he took care, on behalf of the Marquis Bartolomeo Capranica, of the re-establishment of the arcoscenio of the Valle theater, ruined on the night of November 16th a few months after its realization.

In 1822, after the death of Camporese, Salvi obtained the chair of theoretical architecture

at the academic schools; in the following years the reorganization of a building in via di Tor Sanguigna dates back, object of some notes by Francesco Gasparoni.

In the 1920s, Cardinal Giulio Maria della Somaglia, who became bishop of Ostia and Velletri, designated him as the creator of numerous works: named "chief engineer of the bishopric and government" of Velletri, overseeing the works of arrangement of the city aqueduct. The restoration of the town hall built by Giacomo Della Porta and the new palace of the delegate (1822-35) were also carried out on his project.

In 1825, on the proposal of the prefect of the public treasury Belisario Cristaldi, he was appointed consultant engineer of the Apostolic Treasury; in Frascati he worked on the project of the Algidosia aqueduct, already undertaken by Prospero Ferrari.

In Rome following the fire in S. Paolo fuori le Mura, Gaspare developed in those same years a project proposal, which he did not find accepted, for the rebuilding of the basilica. As architect of the French Pii Establishments he took care of the maintenance and restoration of some of the congregation's buildings, including the church of S. Luigi, the adjoining church of S. Salvatore (S. Salvatorello) and that of S. Nicola dei Lorenesi . In 1827 he wrote a preliminary report on the restoration work on the chapel of S. Sebastiano in S. Luigi; in a subsequent report he described the general conditions of the church, not showing any particular signs of degradation. The following year the project to embellish the chapel dates back to which Salvi proposed the insertion of two columns of cipollino marble "which exist idle within the atrium". Still for the congregation he created the apparatuses for the coronation of Charles X, set up in Piazza di Spagna, and for the funerals of Duke Ferdinand of Orléans.

The ascent (1831) to the papal throne of Cappellari with the name of Gregorio XVI marked for Salvi the beginning of a period of even more intense professional activity in Rome, but not only. In the architectural and archaeological field, the pontiff promoted "limited but interesting initiatives": the architect was chosen to draw up the project to reorganize the monastery of S. Gregorio al Celio; appointed as inspector and member of the art council, he also had a control role over the works carried out throughout the State.

In 1832 he was elected vice-president of the Academy of St. Luke; became president the following year, remained in office for four years devoting himself to the reorganization of the statute and the reform of education. From the end of the thirties he also curated, in collaboration with Antonio Sarti and Pietro Camporese the Younger, the construction of the new headquarters of the academic schools at the Ripetta promenade.

As part of the excavations that have been in progress for some time in the Roman forum, and because of the consistent earth movements that had prevented access to the portico of the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda, Salvi provided for the evacuation of the surrounding "humble habitations" and the construction (1835) of a masonry bridge, demolished in 1875; then traced a road - the street called Maurina - laterally to the cell of the adjacent temple of Antoninus and Faustina. The drawing and the start of the works of what would have formed the first nucleus of the Campo Verano cemetery, designed in different forms and completed by Virginio Vespignani, date from the same period. Of great interest for its landscape value is the redevelopment of the area from the Arch of

Constantine to the Celio, which involved the construction of the square of S. Gregorio and the 'promenade': Salvi also executed the arrangement of the botanical garden with the realization of the propylaea and a small casino that took its name, later used as *Antiquarium*.

Appointed architect of the Sacred Apostolic Palaces, he took care among other things of the new construction of the upper courtyard of the Belvedere and the construction (1836-38) of the Gregorian-Etruscan Museum; at the Quirinale he performed various internal works, and then the restoration of the *coffee-house* and the elegant building used as a pineapple greenhouse.

In Terracina he realized, as a hydraulic inspector, the pier named after Gregory XVI and the canal port: the work earned him the conferral of the order of the Order of St. Gregory the Great (1847).

Among the numerous works carried out in the Forties were, in Rome, the restoration of the Chapel of the Crucifix in the church of Jesus and Mary and the restructuring of the Customs of the port of Ripa Grande; in 1845 the questionable intervention in St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows dates back to.

As an architect of the Tuscan nation, he carried out numerous restoration and restoration works in the church of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. Finally, the consolidation works (1843) prepared at the portico of Octavia following the collapse of an arch are known.

Salvi died in Rome on 8 December 1849. The funeral took place in private form, expressed in the will; his wife Maria Fusignani, however, wanted to renew them with a solemn ceremony on December 22nd at the church of the Roman Archiginnasio. He was buried in the church of S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini.

Known and respected in life, Salvi received no critical attention thereafter; recent studies have re-evaluated the figure of this architect, archaeologist and restorer who, while linked to a stylistic code "of classicist and neo-Renaissance imprint, [however] managed to insert innovative ideas in the Roman artistic language of the first half of the nineteenth century".

A drawing attributed to Salvi depicting some architectural ornaments, including the *detail of a sopracamino*, is kept at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York.

by Raffaella Catini

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