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***Nicola Fumo (1649-1725) e la sua bottega.
La scultura in legno barocca nel circuito del
Mediterraneo.***

ABSTRACT

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The aim of the research was to examine the phenomenon of the circulation of wooden sculpture in the Mediterranean from Naples - the center of this traffic - to Spain, since the seventeenth century the Spanish Viceroy became not only the right place for artists and their meetings but also a production and supply center of the works.

These were destined to the wealthy commission, local clerics, aristocrats and in addition to foreign costumers. In that age the huge interest shown by people for the art and its different products, consecrated those apparently more artisanal and minor aspects of the activity of the workshops, giving the polychrome statuary a privileged position. This condition furthermore made a plenty favored to the progress of the specialist in the sector, close to the stylistic orientations of the marble slaves and painters but somewhat involved in the cultural climate of the century.

Recent studies have offered an opportunity to consider in particular the exchange relations between Italy and Spain with the affirmation of thriving market of '*hechura de Nápoles*' aimed at major artists. An extraordinary example is the commission in Fanzago by Viceroy Don Manuel de Zuñiga y Fonseca, VI Count of Monterrey, of the rich altar decorated in the church of the Agustinas Recoletas in Salamanca; or the precious silver figures representing the *Four parts of the World* that Vaccaro made on the order of Francisco de Benavides, IX Count of Santisteban, for the sovereign Charles II, which today are part of the Treasury of the Cathedral in Toledo. In 1692, then, the painter Luca Giordano moved to the Spanish court, working for the royal residences such as the Escorial, the Buen Retiro, the Alcázar, the Aranjuez and for various noble churches and chapels.

Moreover, the behalf was also addressed to the painted wooden sculptures and the most important case is certainly the *Cristo Caído con la cruz auestas* by Fumo, of which De Dominicis preserves vivid memory thanks above all to the circulation of a copper engraving made before the work left for Spain. The figure completed the decorative apparatus of the chapel of the Santo Cristo de la Redención in San Ginés together with the *Cristo atado a la columna* by Giacomo Colombo and an *Ecce Homo*, donated by the 2nd Marquis of Mejorada y de la Breña to the congregation by 1699.

The choice to start from a thorough archival investigation was important to better understand the growing export of wooden statues, that along the Mediterranean trade routes arrived in southern Italy and Spain to the great fortune reserved for artists. In this context, Nicola Fumo has been identified as the sculptor who conditioned the production of the main workshops and the Neapolitan artistic market. The search was complicated by several factors: the alterability of wood compared to stone and marble, the conditionings of time, the change of destination or simply the invasive restoration; and the small consideration of the sources, which in the few

cases they offer information on the works even though the author was unknown. Thanks to on-site inspections and many archival finds, it was possible to establish a more precise panorama identifying the many collaborators of the great artists of the period, Aniello and Michele Perrone, Nicola Fumo, the brothers Patalano and Giacomo Colombo.

This new scenario suggested to prefer a fluid approach to the theme that was not addressed to a single personality, given the relevance of some factors of the social sphere connected to the context of the *atelier* already present in the *Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti napoletani* by Bernardo De Dominici. The biographer recorded totally the vivid cross-section of the baroque statuary in the capital, corroborating as a distinctive feature of this sector the considerable attendance of artists engaged in the most eclectic modeling of sculptural material, from marble to bronze, from stucco to wood. Main proponent of this configuration was Cosimo Fanzago, who with a “managerial” approach given to his workshop stimulated exponentially the propensity for a fruitful collaboration between the workers. An advance in this direction was achieved, above all, in the final phase of the sculptor’s career with the possibility given to young artists to work on construction sites under his direction or to exploit his designs and models. The placement of Nicola Fumo’s training in the Fanzaghian workshop was decisive both for the suggestions due to the different workshop practices and for the fruitful interaction with Lorenzo Vaccaro and Francesco Solimena, fundamental for the subsequent achievement of the unity of the Arts, understood as a fusion of plastic and pictorial parts in a single lexicon.

The work carried out offered the opportunity to have a biographical profile of the artist, originally from Saragnano (SA), allowing to recover the terms of kinship of the family unit and to define the reasons for the subsequent insertion in the context of the capital. It was possible to broaden the knowledge on its production, allowing to specify the initial phases of the career and to increase the number of known works, also in relation to group work, conducted in collaboration with different specialized workers and especially with Cosimo Fanzago. It then emerged as the Neapolitan sculptor was deeply embedded in the cultural context of his time and had frequent and personal contacts with key figures in the role of coordinators and supervisors of scenographic and architectural projects such as Lorenzo Vaccaro, Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena. The relationship with the latter resulted more significant for the definition of the artist’s mature stylistic code, whose influence was then identified in the context of the workshop. A first reconstruction of the personalities gravitating around the teacher is presented was thanks to a series of several elements, such as that of his son-in-law Nicola De Mari.

An important aspect in considering the repercussions of the phenomenon of artistic migration was the investigation conducted on the Iberian territory, following the traces of the

Viaje de España of Abbot Antonio Ponz of 1772-1794, aimed as much to deepen the salient aspects of the circulation of polychrome statuary as to the rediscovery of forgotten images.

The research, conducted in bi-national supervision with the University of Granada, was initiated by the consultation of the Madrid archival collections at the Archivo de Protocolos and the private one of Casa de Alba, which made it possible to detect the collection entity of the '*hechura de Nápoles*' in the inventories of assets or legacies numerous testamentaries personality of the time and above all how it corresponded to a high consideration of authors of Neapolitan origin. The revision of the documentation produced by the academics of the Real Academia de San Fernando, during the period of the *desamortización*, offered the opportunity of closely following the conservative history of the *Inmaculada* of Nicola Fumo of the Corpus Christi of Afuera in Alcalá de Henares or to return to the artist the *Santo Tomás de Villanueva* giving limosna to dos pobres of the convent de San Felipe El Real, today in San José in Madrid.

Fundamental stages of this itinerary were the Museo Nacional de Escultura in Valladolid, where alongside the famous processional *pasos* of Francisco de Rincón, Gregorio Fernández or Andrés Solanes there are also recent acquisitions such as the *Sagrada Familia* of Fumo and the majestic *Santa Catalina de Alejandría*, brought back to Aniello Perrone. The analysis of the latter figure introduced the question of attributing the *San Miguel* to the Country Museum in Los Angeles, which once served as a *pendant* in the convent of Las Agustinas Recoletas in Salamanca. Moreover, the tour in the province of Salamanca has facilitated the discovery of art treasures in the two museums of the Carmelitas Descalzas of Peñaranda de Bracamonte and Alba de Tormes, both rich in Niños Jesús Neapolitan donated over the years as a sign of devotion by the families of the nuns retired there in the cloister.

Continuing the journey along the coast of Andalusia, some places were identified as crossroads of commercial traffic along whose routes various art objects arrived, as in the case of Cádiz characterized by a large Italian presence, in particular, Genoese and Neapolitan. The cult of the guardian angel is interesting in the city: between the various examples examined made it possible to connect the *Angel de Guarda* of the Castrense church by Nicola Fumo to the pictorial model by Luca Giordano of the Provincial Museum of Bellas Artes, of which the preparatory sketch has been identified in that of the Fabius Frères collection. The relationship between Fumo and Giordano was favored by the cohabitation of the two artists in the same area of the Neapolitan city, the so-called '*sotto Palazzo*', which undoubtedly also favored the preference that the Iberian collectors accorded them, gravitating around the Viceroy's residence. The attention of the Spaniards was directed above all to sculptures of reduced size, or three thirds of the natural, in whose execution Fumo was the most skilled, as shown by the two *scarabattole* with the *Inmaculada* and the *San José* of the Conventual de las Descalzas

Museum in Antequera or, again, the *Magdalena* and the *Santa Teresa* in Cathedral in Málaga. The artist was confronted with the representation of the saint on several occasions and, above all, in the last years of activity as evidenced by the *Santa Teresa* of the convent of Santa Ana in Sevilla or the extraordinary *Transverberación de Santa Teresa de Jesús* at the Real Monasterio de Carmelitas de Santa Teresa of Madrid.

The sculptor, on the basis of Luca Giordano's fortune in Spain, almost hegemonized the flourishing market aimed at polychrome statuary to later turn to a more modern character of "classicized" baroque promoted by Francesco Solimena at the beginning of the new century. A membership that was completely gradual and perceived with the hope of both customers and the circle of students, as evident the precise affinity to the production of Nicola De Mari, an artist whose catalog is reconstructed here for the first time, offering essential clarifications on his family relationships, and of the many artists of the next generation. The thesis reconstructs the story of a sculptor, Nicola Fumo, deeply integrated into the society in which he lived but also that of his workshop with the identification of the sculptors who established themselves in the capital under his aegis, considering the implications of workshop practices and the design of models that from the late seventeenth century influenced the taste of the client for almost the entire following century.