

Giovanni Francesco de Rossi (1628–1686): a Sculptor of Polish and Italian Baroque

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The subject of my Ph.D. thesis is Giovanni Francesco de Rossi (1628–1686), an Italian Baroque sculptor active in both Rome and Poland. My research objective is to verify and expand the catalogue of Rossi's works. While his Roman output has been relatively well documented, his Polish works remain largely unexplored. Although his name appears in scholarly literature, there is still no comprehensive monograph dedicated to his biography and oeuvre. My aim is to fill this gap by presenting an artistic biography of Rossi, with a particular focus on his time in Poland. His career, which unfolded in two distinct artistic environments, serves as a valuable case study for analyzing broader issues such as the status of Baroque sculptors, competition in the art market, and the migration of Italian artists to the North.

Rossi began his career in the Roman art scene in the 1640s. He was the son of Domenico de Rossi, who worked in Gianlorenzo Bernini's workshop, and his godfather was Bernini himself, as I recently discovered in archival records called *Stati delle Anime*. Despite these prestigious connections, Rossi decided to leave Rome in search of new opportunities abroad. By 1651, he had moved to Poland, where he was soon appointed court sculptor to King John II Casimir Vasa. Though he achieved considerable success in Poland, he returned to Rome around 1654–1655, likely due to family obligations following his father's death. The exact reasons behind this decision remain unclear.

Rossi is best known in Poland as a portrait sculptor, but he was probably also active as a stucco artist, possibly contributing to the decoration of Villa Regia in Warsaw. The scarcity of

surviving works from his Polish period raises questions about the impact of historical events, particularly the Swedish Deluge, on the preservation of his sculptures. Some of these decorations, looted during the Swedish Deluge, may still be preserved in Swedish museums. Another important center of Rossi's activity was Vilnius, yet this aspect of his work has been largely overlooked in scholarly research.

An important aspect of my research is the analysis of Rossi's workshop practices and artistic style. His works should be seen either as direct imports of Italian Baroque aesthetics or as products of a creative synthesis between two artistic cultures, depending on how he adapted Roman sculptural conventions to Polish artistic traditions.

From a methodological standpoint, my study integrates archival research with formal and stylistic analysis. In addition to traditional art historical tools, I employ a diffusionist approach, viewing artistic migration as a multidirectional exchange rather than a simple transfer of influences from a dominant center to a peripheral region. I believe this perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of the interactions between Italian and Polish artistic environments in the 17th century.

I hope that by examining Rossi's career in both Rome and Poland, my dissertation will contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of the significance of foreign artists in shaping the artistic identity of East-Central Europe. His trajectory not only enriches our understanding of Baroque sculpture in the region, but also sheds light on the broader mechanisms of artistic migration, patronage networks, and the transnational movement of artistic ideas in early modern Europe.