

Smuglewicz, or “Francesco Polacco”

Franciszek Smuglewicz was born in Warsaw in 1745, where he began his general education at the Piarist college and his painting training at the studio his father ran with Szymon Czechowicz, educated in the Eternal City. Following in the latter’s footsteps, he continued his artistic apprenticeship in Rome. In 1763 he began his studies under Anton von Maron at the Academy of the Nude on the Capitoline Hill and then at the Academy of St. Luke, receiving first prize in the Clementine competition in 1766 for his drawing depicting the *Sacrifice of Melchizedek*. Following this success, he received financial support from the Polish king Stanislaus Augustus amounting to 100 ducats per year. He earned additional means of support by producing drawings of famous antique and modern works of a high artistic level. After his studies, the artist remained in Rome until 1784 portraying British visitors to Rome and by making copies of the Old Masters’ works. As early as 1764, the artist made, probably through Maron, the important acquaintance of the Scottish architect James Byres, who commissioned him to draw five Etruscan hypogea excavated in the early 1760s in the necropolis of Tar-



6. F. SMUGLEWICZ, from *Vestigia delle Terme di Tito*, 1776, Marigliani Collection.



7. F. SMUGLEWICZ, *Rea Silvia and Mars*, watercolor etching, 1776. Warsaw, National Museum.

quinia and some antiquities he owned. However, his most famous achievement in Rome is the great work at the Domus Aurea (in the so-called Baths of Titus).

The engravings in *The Vestiges of the Baths of Titus and their Interior Paintings* (1776) denote a certain imagination and freedom when compared to the originals; the case is the so-called Golden Vault. The authors themselves report changes and additions made during their work in the most difficult conditions and with little lighting. In spite of the freedom shown by Smuglewicz and Brenna, their copies are a fundamental tool for understanding the overall aesthetic conception of ancient painting. The Polish painter thus contributed to the dissemination of the figurative repertoire of the Domus Aurea throughout Europe. Prints, which were cheaper and more easily transportable than paintings, played a great role in disseminating the taste for classicism on a large scale.

Mirri involved Smuglewicz in another prestigious project for the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican, which he realised with Vincenzo Pacetti, Marco Carloni and Stefano Tofanelli. In 1776, he also received important commissions from Paolo Borghese to decorate his villa in Frascati and palace in Rome.

Returning to Warsaw in 1784, Smuglewicz founded his own School of Painting that was active until 1797 when he moved to Vilnius in Lithuania, where he became a professor of painting. He died in 1807, leaving behind numerous followers such as Józef Peszka, the author of a beautiful portrait of the master. To the artistic life of Warsaw and Vilnius, the artist made an important contribution, which is still not very well studied.



8. JÓZEF PESZKA, *Portrait of Francesco Smuglewicz*. Warsaw, National Museum.



9. F. SMUGLEWICZ, Carlo Antonini, from Orazio Orlandi, *Ragionamento sopra un'Ara Antica...*(1772). Warsaw, National Library.

The Rediscovery of the DOMUS AUREA:

SMUGLEWICZ, or “Francesco Polacco”

Prints from the Marigliani collection

ARICCIA, Palazzo Chigi

september 28th - november 24th 2024

exhibition curated by
Professor Jerzy Miziolek
IUVaR

with the collaboration of
Francesca Ceci
Elisabetta Gnignera
Francesco Petrucci

The Rediscovery of the Domus Aurea and “Francesco Polacco”

The main focus of the exhibition are fourteen prints from the Marigliani collection, and one more belonging to Vitalius Kodis, that illustrate the decorations of the *Domus Aurea*. They are the result of an archaeological exploration that took place in the years 1774 -75, near the Colosseum. The site of this exploration, promoted by a Roman antiquarian, Ludovico Mirri, was since Renaissance times until the 19th century wrongly identified as the ‘Baths of Titus’.

For the first time in the archaeological history of Rome, the excavations were accompanied by precious volumes lavishly illustrated with high-quality engravings. The work containing sixty prints was published in two versions, the first as black-and-white prints, the second illuminated with watercolour and gouache on washed outlines.



1. F. SMUGLEWICZ, *The Entrance to the Baths of Titus (Domus Aurea)*, coloured print, c. 1780, private collection.



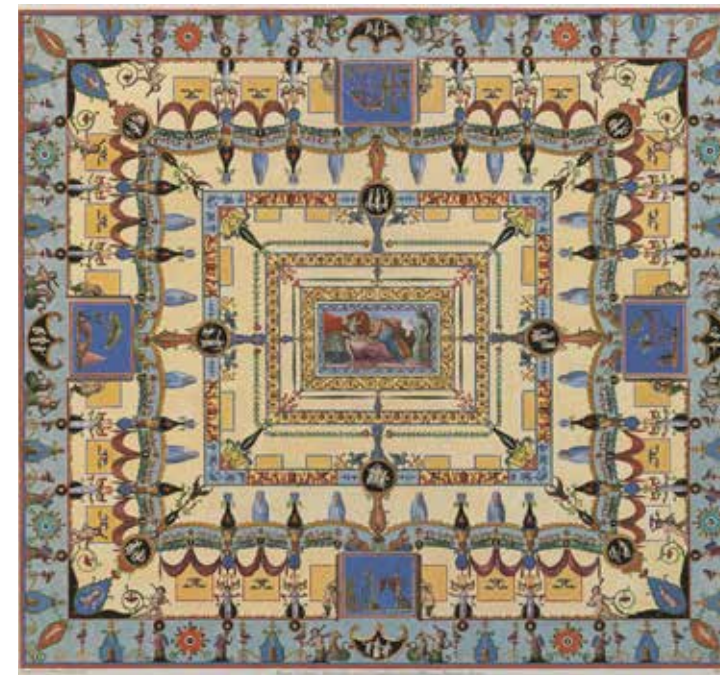
2. PIRRO LIGORIO, *Ancient Rome*. Ariccia, Palazzo Chigi, inv. 677, detail.

Looking at the large volume of the *Vestiges of the Baths of Titus and their Interior Paintings* of 1776, published by Mirri with the learned commentary of Giuseppe Carletti, one thinks first of all of Mirri and Marco Carlone, author of the engravings that adorn it, but even more important work was done by the two artists: Francesco Smuglewicz (1745-1807) and Vincenzo Brenna, who copied the paintings with their pencils under the most difficult conditions. Thirty-four of these reproductions are executed by Smuglewicz alone and almost all the rest together with Brenna, as evidenced by the numerous signatures on both the black and white and the coloured prints; under some of them we read: ‘Francesco Smuglewicz Polacco’.

Giuseppe Carletti, in his commentary accompanying Mirri’s album, enthusiastically praised Smuglewicz’s contribution, of which the colour prints in Clemente Marigliani’s collection are a good example.

The exhibition, which celebrates the 250th anniversary of the archaeological excavations promoted by Mirri with the permission of Pope Pius VI, includes not only the above-mentioned fifteen coloured prints but also a beautiful 16th century plan of Rome by Pirro Ligorio, re-printed at the behest of pope Alexander VII, a portrait of Nero and other prints. The exhibition in Palazzo Chigi is well complemented by the works in the Locanda Martorelli by another Polish painter, Tadeusz Kuntze known as Taddeo Polacco (1727-93), who was active in Rome, Lazio and Ariccia in the second half of the 18th century.

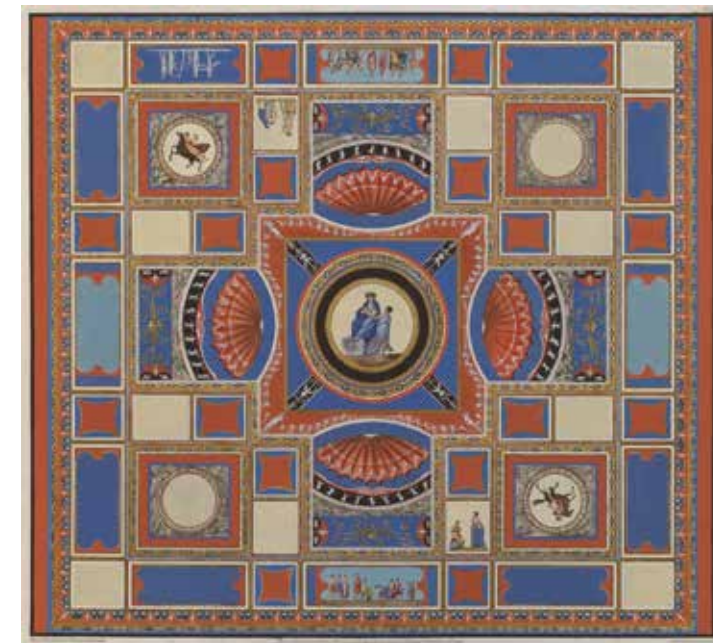
The exhibition catalogue discusses all the colour engravings and many of Smuglewicz’s drawings held in the University of Warsaw’s Print Room.



3. F. SMUGLEWICZ, *V. Brenna*, from *Vestigia delle Terme di Tito*, 1776, Marigliani Collection.



4. F. SMUGLEWICZ, *V. Brenna*, from *Vestigia delle Terme di Tito*, 1776, Marigliani Collection



5. F. SMUGLEWICZ, *V. Brenna*, from *Vestigia delle Terme di Tito*, 1776, Marigliani Collection