

## FACT SHEET No 133

### Francis Bernasconi

The son of ornamental plasterer Bernardo Bernasconi, who settled in Buckingham and worked on Claydon Hall, Buckinghamshire (1770-84), Francis, or Francisco, Bernasconi (d. 1841) became one of the most successful ornamental carvers and plasterers in Georgian Britain.

He was frequently employed on executing scagliola work and carving mouldings and sculpture for Royal residences, aristocratic stately homes, town houses, and churches and colleges.

Working at the height of the Gothic Revival, he produced Gothic stucco work for Cobham Hall (1800-9); the mouldings, heraldic shields and Angels in Windsor Castle (1805) and the Gothic ornaments at Chicksands Priory (1816).

His ecclesiastical and collegiate work includes the plasterwork in the Great Tower of Westminster Abbey (1803); repairs to Trinity College, Cambridge, **where he used 'Roman Cement' to cover the east side of the great court** (1810); the repairs to the screen in York Minster (1814-18); the carving of the canopy of the Cardinal Wolsley statue, Christ Church, Oxford (1819) and the Altar-Piece, Westminster Abbey (1825).

In Glasgow, he worked for architect [Peter Nicholson](#) on the interior plasterwork in Laurieston House, 51-2 Carlton Place (1806), which, although the finest intact Georgian house in the city and listed Grade A, stands boarded up, inaccessible and largely forgotten.

His work at Laurieston House was in the Neo-Classical, Adam-style, which dominated the arts in Scotland, and was done in collaboration with a team of Italian craftsmen. Together, they produced a profusion of decorative plasterwork, figurative mouldings and reliefs inspired by examples found in the recently excavated Pompeii and Herculaneum, and characters from Classical mythology, e.g., *Castor and Pollux*, *Hector and Andromache*, *Aeneas Carrying Anchises* and *The Temptations of Hercules*.

A statue of *Minerva* is also a feature of the house, but whether Bernasconi was responsible for this and the other figurative sculpture is unclear.

In 1820, he was employed by the Prince Regent to model four sculpture groups for the grand staircase in Buckingham Palace from designs by Alfred Joseph Stothard.

Sources:

[Gunnis Foreman \(2001\)](#)

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