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Skilled Scientific Instrument Makers in Rome in the 19th Century: the Lusvergh Family

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There are numerous scientific instruments scattered in museums, scientific institutions, schools and private collections in Italy and throughout the world, which bear the signature of the Lusvergh family. This distinctive family, originally from Munich, settled in Rome around the middle of the seventeenth century and worked there from father to son until the first half of the nineteenth century. Their surname is known in different variants: from Lusuerg to Lusverg and then, especially in the 19th century, Luswergh or Lusvergh. It was undoubtedly the most extraordinary and long-lived family of scientific instrument makers operating in Italy. Their production initially focused on mathematical, gnomonic, astronomical and surveying instruments, became specialized in the nineteenth century in physical, astronomical, and, towards the middle of the century, photographic ones. In this period, four members of the family worked as makers, machinists and keepers of scientific instruments: the brothers Domenico and Luigi, then Angelo, Domenico's son, and finally Giacomo, Angelo's son. Their presence is documented in all the strategic places in Rome where studies in physics and astronomy were cultivated, i.e. the Observatory of the *Collegio Romano*, the Observatory of the University on the Capitoline Hill, the *Accademia dei Nuovi Lincei*, the *Collegio Nazareno* and the Physics Cabinet of the *Sapienza* University. During the century the Lusverghs collaborated with important Roman scientists such as Feliciano Scarpellini, Saverio Barlocchi, Paolo Volpicelli, Angelo Secchi, Giambattista Pianciani and Ignazio Calandrelli. Angelo and Giacomo also worked in the Rome fire brigade, making themselves useful in constructing some models of portable hydraulic fire pumps. In 1829, Angelo personally tested with a singular experiment for this brigade, the effectiveness of a new fireproof suit having an asbestos head protection designed in Rome by Marquis Origo.

Short bibliography

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