

Ruggiero Boscovich: astronomer, man of science and letters, 300 years after his birth.

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FOREWORD

With this meeting, the Brera Astronomical Observatory celebrates 300 years since the birth of its founder, Ruggiero Boscovich (1711-1787), among the most famous and prestigious scientists of the eighteenth century. Born in Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in Croatia, he studied at the Roman College of the Society of Jesus. Heir to the encyclopedic tradition of the 1700's, his contributions span across many subjects and disciplines: from general physics - he proposed a new theory for the unification of forces - to astronomy, from algebra to geometry, he acted as a civil engineer and devised applications in optics, geodesy, meteorology and hydraulics. He was also a poet: his work on the Solar and Lunar eclipse is reminiscent of the great poem by Lucretius. As a broadly educated, famous Jesuit, he was called upon to act in delicate diplomatic missions, at a time when scientific and technological skills were valued in settling political conflicts and in promoting the proper choices in civil society. At the time of his death he was celebrated as "one of the most famous man of the century based on his skills".

Along with a celebration of his famous accomplishments, this meeting will present less well-known aspects of Boscovich's activities, as a writer, a philosopher, and a cartographer. As an engineer he studied the statics of the domes of two major cathedrals: Saint Peter's in Rome and the Duomo in Milan. He also was actively involved in the discussion of the ecclesiastic orders in Milan at the time.

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