

Cesare Conti

Italian painter
(1550-1622)

He was born in Ancona probably around the middle of the sixteenth century; it was his brother Vincenzo, also a painter. Still young he went to Rome where his presence is documented as early as 1564 when he appears to live with the Mantuan embroiderer Girolamo de Avanzi in a house in Trastevere, owned by the Confraternita del Gonfalone .

Conti arrived in Rome at the end of the century as an aid to Pasquale Cati.

Trained in that group of late Mannerist artists who, coming from various parts of Italy, performed numerous frescoed works under the pontificates of Gregory XIII and Sixtus V, Conti specialized in "grotesque, weapons, ornaments and other beauties". In Rome he performed the highly praised fresco frieze in the frame of the central nave of the church of S. Maria in Trastevere (today completely redone), the frescoes of angels and prophets on the counterfaçade of the church of S. Spirito in Sassia, which framed a lost fresco of Jacopo Zucchi depicting the *Apostolic See with the four parts of the world that adore it*, a decoration in a hall of the Campidoglio and, in 1592, some paintings in the rooms of Innocent IX in Vatican. Conti also participated in the frescoes of the Scala Santa, but his name is never mentioned in the documents relating to that pictorial enterprise. After his stay in Rome, Conti, with his brother Vincenzo, moved to Macerata where he took a wife and spent the rest of his life.

Conti was called in this city by the guild of the ploughmen in 1575 to paint the altar pair (depicting the *Last Supper at the top* and in the lower part the *Wedding at Cana*) of the main chapel of the church of S. Maria delle Vergini purchased by that company.

On March 27, 1593, the nobleman Bernardino Pellicani entrusted Vincent and Conti with the decoration of the main chapel of the cathedral; but the bishop then had to incarcerate the two brothers to force them to complete the work. Pellicani himself later commissioned a painting depicting the *Crucifix among the Franciscan saints* to be frescoed in the large loggia of the convent of S. Francesco in Macerata.

On April 17th 1596 Vincenzo Berardi commissioned him to decorate the chapel of the Immaculate Conception in the cathedral of Macerata. In the same year the brother and Conti executed frescoes in the church of S. Maria dei Lumi, in Sanseverino Marche.

The last news relating to the activity of Conti is that 21 Jan. 1615 he worked with Baldassarre Croce on the paintings of Pomarancio in the dome of the basilica of Loreto. Conti died in Macerata in 1622.

An artist esteemed by his contemporaries above all as the author of scrubs and adornments, Conti was in the following centuries almost completely finished; his memory has survived only thanks to some scholars from the Marche such as Ricci, Ferretti and in particular Paci, who in a recent study has reconstructed through a series of documents the activity of Conti in Marche, attributing, among other things , some frescoes, executed mostly in collaboration with his brother Vincenzo, never mentioned in the previous bibliography. To this, however, Conti proves to be far inferior in the execution of figures, which are generally heavy and awkward.

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