

Fra Caius D'Andrea

Italian Painter
(1849-1906)

Descended from a noble family of Cortina d'Ampezzo, he was born on January 5, 1849 in Innsbruck. He studied with the Friars Minor of Bolzano and, dressed in the Franciscan habit (25 August 1869), followed the philosophical and theological courses in the convents of Bolzano and Hall. From a young age he showed a particular aptitude for art and even in the convent he continued to practice drawing, coming into contact with the painters J. Hintner and FX Pernlochner. After ordination to the priesthood (December 21, 1873), he was a professor of drawing at the gymnasium of Bolzano for some years (1875-78). A portrait made for the priestly jubilee of the brother *Marco Vergeiner* is remembered.

In 1878 the superiors sent him to Rome to specialize, with Ludovico Seitz, in the art of painting. The two years of study and work, spent in the Roman environment of the Pre-Raphaelites under the direct guidance of the versatile artist, definitively determined the purist and eclectic character of D'Andrea's painting.

In Rome he copied the *delivery of the keys* of the Perugino and the *S. Stefano* of France. His first original composition was a *Virgin and Child* (1880). He already had many of the artistic qualities that would later characterize his art: accurate, precise design, soft colors, a deliberately archaizing style, which approaches the Florentine 15th century. In 1881 he visited Florence and Siena and copied works by Giotto, Beato Angelico and Pinturicchio of which he had already been able to study, in his convent of Aracoeli, the frescoes with the *Stories of S. Bernardino*. Back in Bolzano, he made a copy of the *Immaculate Conception* for the parish church of Prato all'Isarco by A. Felsberg. He also composed a small representation of the *Annunciation* (1881), in which he approached the fifteenth-century Flemish school. 1882 are two half figures, *S. Louis King of France* and *S. Elizabeth of Hungary*, of which oleographs were printed. In the same year, on the occasion of their beatification, he painted an altarpiece with *Carlo da Sezze and Umile da Bisignano* for his brothers of Puppung in Germany. Meanwhile he had resumed his drawing lessons (1882-84) at the gymnasium of Bolzano, which from 15 Nov. 1882 had been moved to a new location on Vintlerstrasse (via Vintola). Here, in the chapel of the gymnasium, D'Andrea left his most important paintings.

In addition to the table for the altar with *S. Antonio di Padova* (1882), the decoration of the chapel (1882-92) still includes six large paintings on the side walls with the *Life of Christ*: the *Nativity*, the *Dispute with the doctors*, the *Baptism*, the *Blessing of the children*, the *Entrance in Jerusalem* (with self-portrait) and the *Salita al Calvario*. In the ornamental band of the ceiling are inserted the figures of *Christ the master*, *Mary crowned with the Child* on her knees, *Moses* and *Elijah*, while the four *cardinal Virtues* are depicted in the center of the ceiling. Between the windows, at the top, he painted, in rounds with a gold background, the images of the saints *Marco, Pietro, Giovanni*, and *Matteo, Paolo, Luca*, at the bottom, in chiaroscuro, detached like statues in their niches, there are, from a side, the images of Saints *Bernardino of Siena, Tommaso d'Aquino* and *Bernardo*, and, on the other, *Luigi Gonzaga, Bonaventura* and *Francesco d'Assisi*. The whole is connected by friezes of leaves, festoons with colorful birds, dolphins, putti and bizarre monsters, in the best fifteenth-century style.

All these murals reveal that D'Andrea, rather than an artist, is a technical task of art; meticulous in design, delicate in the choice of colors and shades, even refined in details. But he does not go beyond the simple rendering of the model, incapable or reluctant, in principle, to give life to a character.

In this period he also painted a *Madonna who adores the Child*, in which admiration for the 15th century Florentine is evident. In 1887 he was called to Rome to make a large canvas for the new church of S. Antonio di Padova in via Merulana. *Sacret Heart*, on whose sides the saints *Louis IX king of France* and *Elizabeth of Hungary* are kneeling. Two *old heads* (perhaps studies for one of the scenes from the *life of Christ*) are dated and signed in Rome in 1887; they are kept in Rome at the General Archive of the Friars Minor.

Another work of considerable effort occupied him in the years 1893-96. It is the decoration of two lateral apses of the collegiate church of San Candido in Val Pusteria in Bolzano. In the one on the right he depicted the *Queen of S. Rosary with S. Dominic and angels*, and in the left one the *mystical press with the Madonna, Leo XIII and angels*.

Meanwhile, on the occasion of the beatification of Blessed *Leopoldo da Gaiche* (1893), he painted an altar picture that currently adorns the large hall of the Bolzano convent. In the Tyrolean national exhibition (Innsbruck 1893), in which he participated with a small, delicate painting of the *Madonna*, he was awarded the imperial gold medal "Viribus unitis". At about this time performed a *S. Nicola* on the ceiling of the church of Villa Sarentino, a *Mater dolorosa*, copied by L. Kupelwieser for the refectory of his convent in Bolzano, and a painting depicting the *stigmata of s. Francis* (1894), then reproduced in numerous oleographs. For the sacristy of his convent he made a small canvas, very devoted, with *Christ and the Eucharist* (signed and dated 1895), exhibited in the Holy Sepulcher on Holy Thursday. A *Madonna and Child Enthroned* was painted, painted in 1897 on the external facade of S. Francesco near Castel Firmiano. No better fate fell to the decoration of a span of the loggia of the cemetery of Bolzano, where the minor friars are buried. Only the main scene, painted on sheet metal, is kept in a warehouse in the convent of Bolzano. It represents *S. Francesco mediator for the souls of purgatory* (with self-portrait).

In the years 1897-98 D'Andrea undertook the restoration of numerous paintings of his Bolzano convent: a cycle of twenty-eight great scenes from the *Life of S. Francis*, various *Saints of the Order* and four doors of the ancient organ were refurbished with particular technical skill.

Good pictorial qualities the artist also showed as a portrait painter. This is demonstrated by about ten paintings made in the last years of life. He was sought after to design sacred furnishings in the Gothic style, such as altars (Bolzano, Steinach, Naturno), benches and confessionals (Bolzano), religious banners (Vilpiano) and mosaics (Bolzano). Many of his drawings and some unfinished works, preserved in the drawing room of the gymnasium of Bolzano, where he returned to teach in the years 1899-1906, were destroyed during and after the last war. Similarly, the mosaics of the external facade of the convent church were destroyed, made from cartoons by D'Andrea (the *Immaculate Conception*, *Saints Gioachino and Anna*, the *Disciples of Emmaus*) and the others above the doors leading to the cemetery (*Saints Francis and Anthony*). A *Christ with S. Francesco* was greatly damaged above the cloister entrance.

The last dated work of D'Andrea is a picture of *S. Elena* (1904) with the cross of the Savior in her hand, preserved in the parish church of Gries (Bolzano). D'Andrea died in Bolzano on December 14th. 1906, suffering from podagra and tuberculosis. By temperament and by education he was an eminently religious painter, tenaciously faithful to the canons of his school which he placed at the service of his Franciscan apostolate.

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