

# Pietro Gagliardi

Italian painter  
(1809-1890)

Born on the 9th of August. 1809 in Rome by Francesco, of Campana origin, and by Angela Zucchi, Roman. He first studied architecture at "Prof. Francesco Lanci", but after the death of his brother Giovanni, he painted. He attended the courses of the Accademia di S. Luca, having such teachers as V. Camuccini, G. Landi and T. Minardi; He took part in the competitions of the nude school, obtaining second place in 1827 and in 1828 the medal of encouragement.

Gagliardi worked mainly in Rome, in the studio located in Palazzo Giustiniani, in Piazza S. Luigi dei Francesi. The first important assignment dates back to 1834 when Frascati, for Prince Francesco Borghese Aldobrandini, decorated with A. Capalti the chapel of S. Sebastiano in the villa Aldobrandini (or Belvedere). Further commissions, for mythological and historical paintings, he performed in other aristocratic residences: in the villa Torlonia in Castel Gandolfo (circa 1841); in the Torlonia palace in Piazza Venezia (about 1842; demolished); in the new section of the Aurora casino wanted by Prince Piombino Antonio Boncompagni Ludovisi (1855-58); in the palace Sangermano-Rappini in Arpino (1871).

During the 1840s he was especially established as a painter of sacred paintings and was active in Rome and especially in Corneto Tarquinia, where he worked with his grandchildren, Francesco and Giovanni. But the great occasion came in 1847 with the completion of the fresco decoration of the Roman church of S. Girolamo dei Croati.

Following the wishes of the commissary of the Congregation of the Illyrian Expedition, Gagliardi programmed and realized in the aisle and in the transept an extended iconographic, new testament cycle on the theme of Redemption, which has its conclusion on the vault with the Exaltation of the Cross: the triumph of the militant Church and its ideal value of spirituality is proclaimed at a time when rationalistic and secular issues were spreading during the traumatic events of the Roman Republic.

The greatest glory came from the frescoes on the wall of the transept, the *Adoration of the Magi* and the *Crucifixion*: within scenographies marked by light, numerous figures, neoclassically set up and revitalized by

cangiantism, appear animated by accents of strong religious participation, completely devoid of academicism. Emperor Franz Joseph gave him the cross of merit in gold, and praise was reserved to him by the Roman academic environment; in the words of L. Mussini, now near to new pictorial experiences: "Then there is Gagliardi, the man of the day, who painted churches from top to bottom without grace at a palm of the wall, forgive God!".

Pius IX, visiting in 1853 at chiesa di S. Girolamo, expressed his satisfaction for Gagliardi's work (which would then be followed by the paintings of the chapels and the sacristy). The work was consistently involved in the new or renewed church decorations that the pope promoted during his pontificate. And it is to the papal commissions which are linked to the notoriety of Gagliardi, the author of paintings offered for beatification and canonization, or destined for restored or restored churches.

To remember the frescoed interior and exterior decoration of the restored Roman church of the Spirito Santo dei Napoletani (1852-68); the fresco with the martyrdom of S. Agnese in the basilica of Nomentana (1854-56); the vault of the church of the Ss. Quirico e Giulitta (1856); the altarpieces and ceiling of the sacristy of the renewed church of S. Salvatore in Lauro (inaugurated in 1862); the extensive intervention at S. Maria in Aquiro (1866-68); two of the thirty-six frescoes in St. Paul's Basilica Outside the Walls with the Stories of S. Paul, commissioned by the pope in 1857 for the major naves and cross of the church devastated by the fire of 1823; paintings in the church and in the convent of St. Mary Magdalene (1868); the façade of S. Pudenziana (circa 1870). In addition, following the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), he painted the canonical image of the Virgin for various churches and Roman oratories: S. Rocco, S. Maria dell'Orto, S. Vito and Modesto, S. Ignazio at the Collegio Romano, the oratory of S. Francesco Saverio, said of Caravita.

Between 1854 and 1868, Gagliardi was active in his second great Roman construction after Saint Jerome's: the frescoed decoration of the church of S. Agostino, performed with his nephew Giovanni and E. Marini. Technically precious for chromatic texture and compositional refinement, the execution of paintings is sometimes hampered by rhetorical atmospheres and the tendency to decorativism.

The *stories of the Virgin's life* on the walls of the central nave (the sketches are preserved at the Museum of Rome), which correspond to the *Jewish*

*Eroines*, prefiguring the Virgin, and, on the turn, *Abraham and David*; On the pillars are represented the *Prophets of Mary* and, at the end of the cycle, in the chorus, there are *Scenes of the triumph of Mary after her death*.

He was a member of the Congregation of the Virtues of the Pantheon since 1857. He was several times President and Regent since 1888. In 1861 he participated in the unfinished project of the so-called "Shakespearian Gallery", promoted by the Impressionist Romualdo Gentilucci, creating four sketches drawn from Anthony and Cleopatra two are at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, where other works are still preserved). As an academic professor of St. Luke, he was a member of the commission of painting for the Roman Exposition of Catholic Art in 1870.

He is also known for his other works in Rome and elsewhere, still existing (Frascati, Albano, Rieti, Tolfa, Viterbo, Vigevano, Ravenna) and no longer traceable, and his paintings in America, Ireland, France, Spain and "especially in the island of Malta". The canvases were also dispersed for the curtains of the Argentinean theaters of Rome and the Union of Viterbo. St. George's Self-Portrait is preserved at the S. Luca Academy, which he himself donated in 1883.

Gagliardi died in Frascati on 19 September. 1890 and was buried, like his relatives and wife Vittoria Roscioli, in the Roman church of S. Agostino, in the chapel of St. Joseph, which he restored and painted.

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