

# Marzio Ganassini

Italian painter  
c.1570-c.1622

GANASSINI (Canassini, Fiore, Ganasini, Ganacini, Ganascini, Ganasselli, Ossini), Marzio (Marco, Mario, Martino, Marzio di Cola Antonio). -

He was born in Rome in a period that can be circumscribed between 1560 and the middle of the next decade. The father was the painter, specialized in grotesque decoration, Antonio Orsini or Ossini, recalled by Baglione with the name of Cola Antonio.

The rediscovery of Canassini is due to L. Salerno who first recognized his identity with Marzio di Cola Antonio, of whom Baglione (1649) traced a synthetic biography recalling the most important works. This proposal has found a well-documented statement in the payment order "to Marzio Canassini" concerning the frescoes of the Roman church of S. Maria della Consolazione, which makes indisputable the identification between Canassini and Marzio di Cola Antonio; Röttgen's studies on Canassini Cesari, known as Cavalier d'Arpino, and his circle finally allow him to frame his personality.

Some of the edited documents, but which had not been linked to each other, now allow to establish the bond between Antonio Orsini and the Ganassini. In particular, in the Book of Camerlengo of the Accademia di S. Luca the name of the painter "Antonio Orsini de 'Ganassino" and the same volume as well as the academic inventories , it is found several times in the form of "Orsini" and "Ossini", and, on one occasion, as "Antonio Ganassino". Such a change in the surname concerns G the same as in the payments relating to the work performed in Rome at the church of the Madonna dei Monti (1599), is called both "Marco Ganassini" and "Martino Ossini". Antonio Orsini, who, on the basis of Noack's research, was known to have been a member of the Virtues of the Pantheon, had actively participated since 1594 at the life of the Academy of St. Luke, which was on several occasions camerlengo (1595-96, 1602). Father and son collaborated for a long time, at least until 1614, one year before the death of Antonio (1615); the emergence in the archives of the Academy of Documents relating to Canassini only from 1614 could confirm that father and son worked within the same shop.

Canassini's debut took place in the years of the pontificate of Clement VIII (1592-1605), especially at the end of the last decade of the sixteenth century, in that febrile decorative activity which, after the jubilee expiration, invested a large number of Roman churches. The decoration of the vestibule vault of St. Cecilia in Trastevere, commissioned by Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrati, dates back to 1599. Canassini painted putti and festoons framing the glory of the saints, according to an illusionistic system that echoes and simplifies the time of chapel Olgiati of Cavalier d'Arpino in the Roman church of S. Prassede. Numerous putti mark the vault, and it is evident that the use of a moving and flimsy line that often distorts the figures, treated with violent shadows, is a feature that has suggested to Röttgen the name of Andrea Lilli as a reference for the Ganassini

debut. In fact, this way seems much more eclectic and sensitive to some of Cherubino Alberti's findings in the Clementine Room in the Vatican.

Canassini's placement in Arpinate orbit seems to be confirmed by the episodes in the life of S. Onofrio (1600) in the cloister of the homonymous Roman monastery assigned to him by Röttgen. It is a collective enterprise where different hands can be identified. Based on a comparison with the later frescoes of Ss Trinity of Viterbo, the scholar's proposal does not seem to be groundless and Canassini's hand could actually be recognized in the three lunettes with stories of the eponymous saint arranged on the north side.

In November 1599 the presence of Canassini was documented in another Roman site, that of the church of the Madonna dei Monti, where they were at work C. Nebbia, B. Croce and O. Gentileschi. The archive records remind us of a 25 scudi payment to "m.ro Marco Ganassini painter" for his intervention in the pictorial decoration of the dome, identified by Barroero in the scene of the Nativity.

In the last years of the pontificate of Clement VIII and the first of that of Paul V date back to the paintings performed in Rome at the cappella dei Pescatori at S. Maria della Consolazione, also assigned by Baglione. Their payment orders range from 1601 to 1607, but only in the last one is named Canassini, while the first one is the father.

The set of frescoes appears stylistically unified, despite the difference in the setting of *St. Andrea* at the altar, and of *St. Mark* and *St. John the Evangelist*, painted on the pillars, marked by musical severity. The stained and distorted putti are a true quote from those of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, proving that the two companies are the fruit of the same workshop. In the crucifixions of St. Peter and St. Andrew, arranged on the side walls, the spatial setting with figures of a repoussoir that refers to the late Roman mannerism is accompanied by a deforming and almost grotesque tendency, as well as a taste for precise references to the Roman topography that recurs in other works of Canassini: in the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* a view of St. Peter in Montorio and door S. Spirito, while the tower of the Militias is painted in the opposite scene. The unit of pictorial decoration emphasizes that father and son collaborated within the same shop and, perhaps, the two witnesses in the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, behind the Roman soldier, look to the spectator, they are their self-portraits.

The information gathered by Casimiro da Roma allows to date in 1613 the pictorial decoration of the chapel of Our Lady of Loreto to Aracoeli. The frescoes with *Stories of the Virgin* placed along the side walls and in the cupola are accompanied by Baglione, which also reminds of his father's participation in the grottoed pillars. Finally, in the testament of the commissioner, Alessandro Muzi, in April 1620, the testator claims to have commissioned Canassini the altarpiece which must represent the *Madonna of Loreto*. The painting currently on the site is certainly later and can not be considered Canassini's work, which may not have had time to complete the job entrusted to him.

In the paintings of Aracoeli, adherence to the harp language is very evident both in the sharp and astonishing construction of the figures, and in the typology of the Sibillas at the top of the cupola similar to Virtues that Canassini will then paint in Bagnaia. In addition, the introduction into the compositions of recognizable places of the Roman

landscape - the rope of the Campidoglio or the arch of Septimius Severus - will be redesigned by Canassini in the later later Venerbia businesses.

Half of the second decade of the seventeenth century seems to be the most intense activity of Canassini, which on 6 April 1614 made an effort to make an altarpiece for the church of the Accademia di S. Luca free of charge - instead of paying a contribution in money; such "tribute in nature", to which the painters Girolamo Massei and Alessandro Bottoni also underwent, is so far the most remote testimony of Canassini's affiliation to the Academy. In 1612, Canassini was able to live or hold a workshop at the Course; while in June 1615, according to a document reported by Bertolotti, he had to live at the foot of the Capitol, "on the rise of Marforio", near S. Pietro in Carcere. In September 1614 and July of the following year there are some payment orders for the frescoes of the Montalto Palace in Bagnaia, which is perhaps the most significant undertaking to which the painter participated with his father.

It is evident that the presence of Canassini and his father in Bagnaia was the result of their relationship with Cavalier d'Arpino who remained in the Viterbese residence until November 1613, the time needed to paint some frescoes and let the designs help to complete what he had been entrusted with. Canassini's intervention seems to have been rather extensive and connoted by the close adherence to Cesari's language: *Glory* is attributed to a room of the noble floor, the divinity figures in the ceiling of the main salon, as well as *Virtues* in the loggia which opens on the parterre.

The frescoes in the cloister of the convent of the Holy Trinity in Viterbo were made following the testamentary legacy of the patriarch of Viterbo Giacomo Nini (died in 1605) who allocated 200 shields for their execution, as evidenced by the documents of the Doria Pamphili archive in which also makes explicit mention of Canassini. The documentation so far found does not allow you to get a certain chronology. However, in the paintings of Viterbo, there are clearly citations from the frescoes painted by Canassini to Aracoeli (1613) and from the Montalto Palace in Bagnaia (1615).

Along the walls of the quadrangle were painted 42 Scenes of the *Life of Augustine* (some damaged during the bombing of the last war) over which there are as many lunettes with old-time landscapes and stories of hermitic life. In the Augustinian stories the painter has now developed his peculiar version of the tongue that has been studied, already recognizable in the paintings of the Araceli, which here are directly reused by transforming the *Nativity of the Virgin* into a *Birth of a. Agostino*. Cesari's language is reduced to a more discrete and discourteous expression in which, in need, the marinade finds of Agostino Tassi (which in Bagnaia took over at Cavalier d'Arpino on the 16th of December), appeared in the jail with the coat of arms Borghese that appears in the *Journey of S Augustine to Italy*. The cycle is very wide and there is no shortage of stylistic features that make us think of the weaker hands, perhaps hired by the workers of Bagnaia. The local periodic literature from the nineteenth century affords to Canassini the painter Giacomo Cordelli, a follower of T. Ligustri who Faldi feels responsible for lunettes with landscapes. Even in this case one can not speak of a single hand considering the strongly supported quality of the lunettes on the north side of the rest.

Beside the overwhelming number of commissions for ecclesiastical buildings, the profane commission should also be remembered. In addition to the paintings of

Bagnaia, Canassini painted in Rome, in the Cesi palace at S. Marcello al Corso, "various very funny and very bizarre battles in cool"; to these one may perhaps add the paintings of a room on the noble floor of Palazzo Petrucci to Amelia where the allegorical figures are very close to those painted by Canassini in the loggia of Bagnaia.

Since 1615 the documentation is lacking or there are significant traces of its Roman activity. It can be assumed that Canassini went to Piedmont following Cardinal Maurice of Savoy, interested, as Baglione writes, to the small-scale battle scenes that the painter dedicated to the end of his activity.

Some documents of 1621 seem to confirm Canassini's activity in Piedmont; In fact, his name appears twice in the book of accounts of Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia who, meanwhile, had returned to Rome. Around this date should be the death of Canassini, if it is exactly what Baglione reports, according to which the artist died during the pontificate of Paul V.

by Enrico Parlato - Biographical Dictionary of the Italians - Volume 52 (1999)

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