

# Isaia Ganti

(aka *Isaia da Pisa*)

Italian sculptor  
(c.1410-1464),

It is not known the date of birth of this original sculptor of Pisa, son of Filippo di Giovanni, marble worker documented in the Tuscan town from 1414 to 1427.

It is possible that GANTI arrived in Rome before 1431, when his father was employed at the Lateran Palace building.

There is no evidence of GANTI's life and activity before the mid-forties, when the sculptor probably had to perform the baptismal font of the church of S. Maria Maddalena in Gradoli; of this first work attributed to GANTI there is a hexagonal well decorated with figures of saints within niches that perhaps was placed on a base in the center of a basin, imitating the structural pattern of the baptismal font of Siena. At this same time, the Eucharistic tabernacle has to be traced back to the convent of S. Giusto in Tuscania and now in the cathedral.

On the other hand, on the date of 1449, the Sepulcher Farnese in the church of the Ss. Giacomo and Cristoforo at Bisentina Island, also assigned to GANTI and now only partially preserved, consisting of a parietal sarcophagus hanging on shelves, surmounted by a pair of angels, which in turn support a large arcade decorated with a motif with trilobial archetypes.

GANTI reveals in this group of works, stylistically very homogeneous, a late-dated culture with decorative motifs of classical matrix drawn from Tuscan protorazine sculpture.

Perhaps at the end of the forties, GANTI received the commission of the funeral monument of the cardinal of Portugal Antonio Martinez de Chávez, who died in 1447, to be erected in Rome in the basilica of St. John in the Lateran.

From a letter dated 8 Feb. 1448 sent by the Signoria of Florence to their ambassador to Rome, it is learned that the company had at first been offered to Filarete (Antonio Averlino), who was forced to stop work soon after a charge of theft of relics that cost him the arrest and then the departure from the city. There is therefore the possibility that the architectural scheme of the work reflects a project of the Filarete, but the sculptural elements that survive today belong exclusively to the hand of GANTI and his collaborators.

The monument, dismantled around 1650, is now reconstructed on the basis of a design by a collaborator of F. Borromini, but it does not reproduce the original layout of the complex but a subsequent set-up, dating back to 1596, which made changes in the underlying area the sarcophagus. It consisted of a tapered arch flanked by a triple order of niches with personifications of Virtue, inside which was inserted the sarcophagus with the figure of the lying superseded by *Our Lady with Child* between *Faith* and *Charity*. The sculpted marbles that decorated the tomb are now freely assembled in a tabernacle in the far right nave of the

basilica, apart from the two reliefs with *Prudence* and *Temperance* that were joined to the sixteenth-century Acquaviva monument in the same church.

The Chavez sepulcher is the first example of funeral monument of Renaissance forms made in Rome; reveals a careful recovery of the formal and decorative repertoire of ancient art, which will be a constant feature of the entire sculptural production of Ganti.

Inspired by classical motifs, it is the bas-relief depicting a vase with acanthus leaves between a couple of angels who today ornaments a basin in S. Maria Maggiore, but probably belonging to a dismembered eucharistic tabernacle made by the master at a time near the works for the Chavez monument.

In an ode devoted to GANTI by the humanist Giovanni Antonio de 'Pandoni, known as Porcellio, who celebrates him as novelist Fidia, Policleto and Prassitele, there is mention of two lost business of the sculptor, a Madonna with Child between angels and equestrian monuments of Nerone and Poppea, as well as of the "sepulcher urn" of Pope Eugene IV.

The funeral monument of Eugene IV, commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, pope nephew, between 1447 and 1453, to install it in the far left nave of St. Peter, today preserves the sculptural apparatus of GANTI the only figure of the lying ; in 1591 this statue was inserted, together with the epigraph and the blazons of the original complex, in an anonymous late 19th-century funeral monument re-assembled in the oratory of S. Salvatore in Lauro.

In September 1450 GANTI, "magistral expert", was summoned by the Orvieto cathedral opera houses, through the captain Giovannino di Meuccio da Siena, to provide a drawing about the crowning of the facade under construction, immediately exposed to the citizens.

In the ode of Porcellio, a fourth work by GANTI, the tomb of Blessed Monica, erected in the church of S. Agostino in Rome around 1455, is left in the porcelain, with the figure of the lying side and some fragmentary reliefs, which do not seem to reveal the master's hand.

From May 1456, GANTI was documented in Naples, where he was engaged in the sculptural yard of the Aragonese arch of Castel Nuovo, inaugurated the previous year; from two certificates of payment of 1458, he learned that the artist was to collaborate, from that date, with Antonio da Pisa, Pietro da Milano, Domenico Lombardo, Francesco Adzara and Paolo Taccone, Paolo Romano.

GANTI's contribution to the decorative apparatus of the arc is acknowledged in the figure of the Fortress belonging to the series of *Virtues* affixed to the crowning, in some passages of the great bas-relief depicting the *Triumph of Alfonso d' Aragona*, particularly in the quadriga led by Victory, and in the sculpted base of the lower order, which has a motif with putti reggifestoni.

Back in Rome, GANTI began an intense period of collaboration with Paolo Taccone, together with which he was active at the same time in several workshops opened in those years by Pius II in the basilica and Vatican palaces.

The 23rd Oct. In 1460 GANTI was paid for the processing of some marbles to be used for the monumental staircase to access to the Basilica of St. Peter, to which they had been called, besides Paolo Taccone, Manfredo da Como and Pagno d'Antonio, who executed the parapets

(Quinterio); a few days later, Taccone and GANTI, "His companion", ensured the supply and transportation of cannonballs.

On Dec 8th 1461 a garrison of GANTI received a payment from the canons of the church of the Trinity of Viterbo for carrying the drawing of a tabernacle of the Madonna; once realized, the marble tabernacle was placed on the main altar of the church where it remained until the second century. XVIII, and is today, re-assembled by fragments, in the local Civic Museum; the quality of his decoration suggests that G is responsible, in addition to the project, also of a good part of the execution.

Work for Pope Piccolomini continued with the supply of marble and fireplace frames destined for an apostolic palazzo, for which GANTI was paid on 7 May 1463, while from July 1463 to June 1464 the master is engaged with Taccone in the work for the demolition of the blessing pulpit in St. Peter's Square, whose sculptural apparatus seems to be limited to architectural finishing elements; Iacopo da Pietrasanta was also a member of the company, as well as the sculptors Mino da Fiesole, Pagno d'Antonio da Settignano, Giovanni da Verona and the stone-carver Marco da Firenze. In August 1463, always in collaboration with Taccone, GANTI worked on the crowning of the tower that dominated the entrance of the apostolic palaces, together with a group of workers already active in renovations within the palaces, and formed by the painter Pietro Giovenale, the bricklayers Alfredo Lombardo and Egidio di Tocco and the carpenter Giovanni da Firenze.

On March 8, 1463, the first payment for the Tabernacle of St. Andrea erected by the pontiff inside the Vatican basilica to guard the relic of the apostolic head from Patras in 1462; GANTI and Paolo Romano led up to 1464 a group of craftsmen composed by Iacopo da Pietrasanta, Pietro Giovenale, the Roman carpenter Antonio Pacioli, the German blacksmith Arrigo, the stonecutters Pellegrino da Viterbo, Giovanni d'Agostino Romano and Matteo Chelvi, a bricklayer Marco from Florence, who prepared the countertop for the architectural structure, and Florentine goldsmith Giovanni Ghini, who made the reliquary.

The lost monument, whose structure is known by a Grimaldi album design, consisted of a quadrangular architraved canopy supported by columns, on which a marble tabernacle containing the reliquary was placed. There are three carved lunettes depicting his head. Andrea is held by pairs of angels kept in the Sacred Grottoes, one of which seems to be in the hands of Ganti.

Still in the Vatican Sacred Grottoes there is a bas-relief depicting the *Madonna with Child between Sts. Peter and Paul*, in which GANTI appears profoundly influenced by the monumental statuary produced by Paolo Romano between 1461 and 1464, although the work was also related to the altar dedicated to the Virgin and the two apostles from Eugene IV in the Basilica of St. Peter, which was completed in 1451, after the death of the pontiff.

The name of GANTI is mentioned in the Treaty of Filarete, composed between 1461 and 1464, among the masters wanted to Sforzinda to realize the monumental portals of the castle.

GANTI's latest certificate of activity is a payment order of 29 Aug. 1464 which also documents the end of the works for the Tabernacle of St. Andrew; it is assumed that the master died shortly afterwards.

by Carlo La Bella - Biographical Dictionary of the Italians - Volume 52 (1999)

Translated from:

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ganti-isaia-detto-isaia-da-pisa\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ganti-isaia-detto-isaia-da-pisa_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

### Main works

- Sepulcher of Pope Eugene IV - Church of San Salvatore in Lauro , 1455 , Rome
- Angels Reggicandelabro - Basilica of Santa Sabina at Aventino , Rome
- Eucharistic altar of the Cardinal d'Estouteville - Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore , Rome
- Sarcophagus of St. Catherine of Siena - Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva , Rome
- Madonna - Vatican Grotto
- Baptismal font in the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria Maddalena - Gradoli
- Bas-reliefs on the Triumphal Arch of Castel Nuovo - Naples
- Bas-relief of St. Mark's Evangelist - Portal of St. Mark's Basilica , Rome
- "Prudence" - Basilica of St. John Lateran , Rome
- Sepulcher of Cardinal Antonio Maria de Chavez - Basilica of St. John Lateran, Rom

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