

Carlo Gavardini

Italian painter
1811-1869

He was born in Pesaro on February 21st. 1811 by Count Antonio and Giovanna Marinelli of Cesena

The news of the young Gavardini, initiated to the same pictorial career of his uncle, added to the biographical note of this, was automatically interpreted as a sign of close kinship. The presumed pictorial production of Cesare Gavardini in different places in the city of birth stands on a misunderstanding: the churches mentioned as the theater of his lost activity are those - Roman, not Pesaro - that host the main works of his nephew; in fact, Vanzolini (1864), drawing up the list of the works of Gavardini, names him with the only surname thus engendering a misunderstanding in subsequent historians that refer to the same *body* of works to the two different painters.

Gavardini received his first artistic education at home, at the school of GB Consoli, integrating it with humanistic and literary studies, as it emerges from his erudition that the sources do not fail to underline.

It seems that Gavardini wrote some *archaeological discoveries*, with a section related to the Jewish cemetery, and a *history of sculpture and Christian painting in the first eight centuries*, both unpublished. The same family sphere must have been rich in cultural stimuli if the grandfather, his namesake, and his father were poets and prominent figures in the eighteenth-century Pesaro *milieu*. The family, of recent nobility but financially solid for the past in the trade of "fettuccia e refe", owned works attributed to Veronese and Titian.

Gavardini moved to Rome at least from 1833, when he took part in the painting competition organized by the Accademia di S. Luca. The following year, however, due to the death of his father, he returned home and remained there until at least 1835. He then returned to Rome, where he settled permanently. Here he gathered with other artists and writers at the Caffè Bagnoli, in via delle Convertite. Gavardini was a close friend of Nicola Consoni, with whom he took part in the illustration of the *history of figurative France*, published in 1846, for which many other artists, including T. Minardi, offered their contribution. Of the latter Gavardini was in fact a pupil and, according to Ovidi, a guest for a certain period in the master's house.

One of the first known works by Gavardini is the completion of the fresco decoration of the church of S. Maria sopra Minerva, left interrupted by the sudden disappearance in October 1854 of Bernardino Riccardi, a Parma painter who died while he was drawing the last four figures of the nave. At the commission, composed among others by Minardi, who presided over the restoration and embellishment of the church, Gavardini proposed to complete the work without any personal advantage but in favor of Virginia Barlocchi, widow of the missing painter, who but he refused the offer. In any case obtained the commission, Gavardini executed the figures of the saints *Tommaso, Filippo, Taddeo, Barnaba*, and *Filippo* on the vault of the central nave remaining faithful to Riccardi's drawings, "both in respect of his late partner and for the sincere esteem of his

work". Along the walls of the same nave painted twelve quadrilob medallions with saints and saints Dominicans.

By 1856 Gavardini executed for the Somaschi fathers of S. Maria in Aquiro the tempera decoration of the chapel of S. Girolamo Miani, their founder, representing, in the vault, *S. Girolamo Miani who is led by the angels to receive the crown immortal*, while on the side walls the *saint who welcomes the poor children in the countryside of Lombardy* and the *saint who teaches children in one of the orphanages promoted by him*. The contemporaries admired the studied simplicity of the composition and the excellent design formed on the study of the classics, a formal traditionalist outcome to legitimate the subjects of recent news, still unrelated to historical iconography.

The following year the Somaschi fathers called him to Velletri, to St. Martin of Tours, where he frescoed the plumes of the dome of the Chapel of the Sacrament with the *Four Evangelists*, and again in Rome, in the church of Sts. Bonifacio and Alessio, visited twice by Pius IX during the restoration and decoration works that continued until 1860. The overall result of the enterprise - to which Gavardini contributed with the *four Evangelists*, the *Redeemer* and two *angels* in tempera in the vault of the apse, while O. Ottaviani realized the decorative motifs that frame them - he did not meet the favor of his contemporaries because of his overly gay character, not adequate to the building. For the same church Gavardini also painted the altarpiece depicting *St. Jerome Emiliani who prays the Madonna*, placed on the altar of the chapel dedicated to the saint.

Later he took part in the decoration of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, promoted by Pius IX in 1857 and carried out in three years, painting the panels with *L'incontro di s. Paul and the Romans in the forum Appius* and *St. Paul living in Trastevere teaches the Jews of the south*. Between 1861 and 1863, by the will of Pius IX, the women's ward in the hospital of S. Giacomo in Augusta was renewed: Gavardini frescoed the lost *Immaculate Conception* flanked by two *Angels* in a small chapel demolished in 1953-54. In 1862 he took part in the celebratory apparatus created in St. Peter on the occasion of the canonization of twenty-seven blessed by performing two lunettes depicting *St. Francis of the Franciscan Pariglia with the sign of the cross heals an Indian woman and with the holy waters of baptism regenerates her in Christ* and *The meeting between the Jesuit martyr s. Giovanni De Goto going to the torture and the father*.

Precedent to 1864, because they are mentioned in the *Guide of Pesaro* di Vanzolini, are his intervention in S. Maria della Quercia in Viterbo and the decoration of the oratory of the Congregation of Merchants in the convent of Jesus, which he performed with C. Mariani. In 1865 the artist asked to participate in the decoration of the Roman church of S. Nicola in Carcere, which had just been restored and whose original design, later abandoned for the offer of Gavardini Guidi to work for free, the assignment of the fourteen panels to as many artists.

Testimonies of a not only religious production and of a not only public commissioning remain some portraits, a mythological subject in a private urban collection (Calegari, 1986, page 517) and the news of a "Dante's composition" to which he worked between 1856 and 1862 drawing the subject from the eighth canto of *Purgatory*.

Some letters written between 1867 and 1868 document him in Rome, residing at the Roman College after a trip to Naples and about to leave for Paris. In 1868 he suddenly went mad and was interned in the asylum in Perugia, where he died on 19 April. 1869.

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