

# Lorenzo Gramiccia

Italian Baroque painter  
(1702-1795)

He was born in Cave, near Palestrina, in 1702, as is commonly reported in the literature, or in 1704, according to what is deduced from a document published by Petrarola. Here we read that in 1721 Gramiccia was "seventeen years old" and lived in Rome, as a disciple, with the Emilian painter Bonaventura Lamberti, who died in September of that same year. The fact that Gramiccia completed one of the four cartoons, the one with *S. Pietro baptizing S. Petronilla*, confirms this relationship, commissioned to the Emilian painter in 1719, for the mosaics of the sordini of the chapel of the Angels and of S. Petronilla in S. Pietro in Vaticano.

Until 1745, Gramiccia was a guest of the *ateliers* of Palazzo Farnese even if no work from this period has reached us.

In 1749 the artist married Clemente Frusinetti's sister. In the same year he painted the frescoes, still *in situ* and carried out together with Sebastiano Ceccarini, for the Benedictine church of the Roman monastery of Tor de 'Specchi.

In 1748-49 the two artists had already worked together, in the destroyed church of S. Maria Liberatrice at the Roman forum, where they had carried out the two lateral panels depicting miracles of the saint for the chapel of S. Francesca Romana. Of the canvas by Gramiccia, which was perhaps to represent *S. Francesca healing a sick person*, is known that in 1970 it was kept in a private collection.

In the chapel of the choir of the monastery of Tor de 'Specchi, Gramiccia frescoed, in the apsidal basin, *L'Eterno e s. Michele with musician angels*, work completely lost in the lower part and covered by heavy repaintings in the upper part; in the pendentives of the apse arch angels with crowns of flowers and branches of palm trees, and finally in counter-façade, on the sides of the organ, two groups of musical angels.

In this, which is the first work known to us by Gramiccia, the formal character of the figures, purely neo-seventeenth-century and classicist in taste, probably reminiscent of the pupil at the Emilian Lamberti, marries with a clearly eighteenth-century taste of color in the range soft chromatic, cyclamen and light green, adapted to an often metallic general intonation, illuminated by a skilful "use of iridescent and silky effects, even golden".

In 1753 Gramiccia painted, for the church of the conventual minors of S. Carlo a Cave, a cycle of canvases placed in the chapel dedicated to S. Giuseppe da Copertino. The altarpiece depicts *Iss. Bonaventura and Giuseppe da Copertino and the blessed Andrea Conti*, on the right wall the picture illustrates the *Miracle of s. Bonaventura who rescues a young man*, on the left wall a painting, almost illegible, represents *The saint who restores sight to a girl*; finally a lunette above the altar shows *St. Joseph of Cupertino reviving a flock hit by hail*. In this small complex Gramiccia used a simplified language that best interprets the provincial destination of the works and therefore their purely devotional character.

In 1756 the princess Olimpia Caffarelli Pamphili commissioned Gramiccia from the canvas with the *Assumption of the Virgin* for her palace church (Valmontone, collegiate church of the Assumption). In this work the painter tried to merge the elements of his classic Emilian culture in a monumental register with the updates of the Roman school from Carlo Maratta onwards.

The *Vision of S. Antonio da Padova* presents the same formal characteristics, preserved in S. Dorotea in Rome, executed by Gramiccia in the same year.

A fundamental change in the artist's life occurred in 1765, when, after a brief stop in Bologna, where he did not stay because he probably did not receive work commissions, Gramiccia went to Venice, the city in which he remained until his death, guest, of the noble Cavalli family, who owned several works by the painter.

In Venice Gramiccia alternated his production of altarpieces and paintings for churches, of classicist taste, with that of genre scenes that were affected by evidence of Pietro Longhi's lesson.

The first painting done in the lagoon city dates back to 1765, when Gramiccia signed and dated the *Madonna del Rosario with the ss. Domenico and Caterina*, for the church of Ss. Giovanni e Paolo.

For the School of Charity, in 1769, he painted *Elia with the angel* (Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia); a year later he signed the canvas depicting the *Addolorata with the symbols of the Passion* for the church of S. Giacomo dell'Orto.

The *Holy Family with ss. Giovannino, Elisabetta, Anna and Zaccaria* (Québec, Musée du Séminaire), dated and signed by Gramiccia in 1771, probably corresponds to the *Holy Family* in the church of S. Simeone Grande.

All these works are characterized by an archaizing sixteenth-century taste, which already heralds "the most reactionary nineteenth century Veneto" and consciously rejects the rococo style then in vogue in Venice, helping to underline the painter's Roman origins, proudly also declared in the inscription signed by the *Addolorata* altarpiece.

On the other hand, his production of genre scenes. In the small painting called *The visit*, or *Family conference*, preserved in the Civic Museum of Udine and bearing the signature of Gramiccia, appeared after a cleaning of the pictorial surface, the small figures in contemporary clothes are characterized by a solid volume and set in a large room, animated by the light that comes from the windows.

In Venice the painter had to enjoy esteem and notoriety, as is clear from the words of Pietro Gradenigo, his contemporary, who saw the Venetian works of Gramiccia, still existing, and also praised a "beautiful painting representing Jacob aspiring to the wedding of the vague Lia promised to him by Abraham ", exhibited by the painter on 3 wk. 1769 in Piazza S. Marco.

Gramiccia did a series of works, already variously attributed to Longhi and his circle, which presents undoubted stylistic consonances with the interior scene of the Civic Museum of Udine: the *Geography Lesson* (Venice, Gramiccia Franchetti Gallery), the *Goldoni in the studio*, already in Milan in the Crespi-Morbio collection, and the *Family Conference* (Venice, Venetian Eighteenth Century Museum), all works characterized, based on an explicit reference to Longhi's manner of the eighties, from a stiffening of his formal language, which takes on more stunted forms and less bright colors, while maintaining, on the whole, a lively note of liveliness.

From the inventories of the Corsini Collection in Rome, it appears that in 1808 there was a painting of Gramiccia depicting *St. Peter reviving the tabita*, currently owned by the Accademia dei Lincei. The attribution to Gramiccia of an allegorical painting depicting a sleeping child resting on a skull, preserved in the deposits of the Gallerie dell'Accademia is very uncertain.

Gramiccia died in Venice in 1795.

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