

## GRAZIANI, Francesco (aka *Ciccio Napoletano*)

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**GRAZIANI**, Francesco, called Ciccio Napoletano. - The date of birth of this painter, active in Naples and Rome in the second half of the seventeenth century, is unknown. He was probably born in Capua, being mentioned in some inventories as "Ciccio da Capua" (Roethlisberger-Bianco).

Scarce, the news on his training; only Lanzi (1808) recalls among the pupils of Jacques Courtois, called il Borgognone, a certain Graziani, who could be identified with Francesco. Perhaps already in the seventies of the seventeenth century the GRAZIANI had moved to Rome, if we give credit to the news reported by Buchowiecki (p.672), but so far not confirmed by any direct or indirect source, that he starting from 1671 painted a series of paintings (lost) with *Stories of the Old and New Testaments*, placed in the central nave and in the choir of the Basilica of the Ss. Apostoli in Rome.

It is certain that in the ninth decade the GRAZIANI was in Rome and was an established painter, as shown by the two public commissions reported by Filippo Titi (1686): an oil painting with the *Preaching of the Baptist* in the Cimini chapel in S. Antonio dei Portoghesi, datable around 1683, still preserved *on site*, and another with the *penitent Magdalene* for the church of S. Croce della Penitenza (or Scalette) in Lungara, identified with the *Crucifixion and s. Mary Magdalene*, now in the parish church of Ardea.

Important in particular is the first, realized on behalf of Caterina Raimondi, executor of the last will of her husband, Giovan Battista Cimini, to complete the decorations of the chapel entrusted in large part to Giacinto Calandrucci (Ferraris). It is a rather large canvas (150 x 230 cm), characterized by a crowded composition, where the contrasts between light and shadow areas recall similar solutions by Mattia Preti, while the features and garments of some figures show reminiscences of the Neapolitan painting of the first half of the century, from Bernardo Cavallino to Massimo Stanzione.

In 1686 the Barberini inventories listed his unidentified paintings of horses, marinas and battles (Salerno, 1984, p.154). Also the testimonies of Titi and De Dominicis (1743) let us understand that the artist owed his fame to this kind of painting and in fact today he is remembered above all, if not exclusively, as a battalists.

For the reconstruction of the catalog of GRAZIANI, Zeri (1959) he considered fundamental the two *Battles* of the Pallavicini Gallery in Rome, which in an inventory of 1708 are referred to as "Napolitano" and in one of 1713 as "Gratiani". Around these two works, which reveal a figurative culture oscillating between Jacques Courtois and Salvator Rosa, a very nutritious catalog has thus formed, still far from being completed by virtue of the continuous appearance on the antiquarian market of works by GRAZIANI, or attributed to him.

In addition to the Pallavicini couple, it is worth mentioning the series of large Tempera *Landscapes* preserved in the Galleria Doria Pamphili, once attributed to Gaspard Dughet and now considered largely by Crescenzo Onofri, but of which at least three are by G.: *Paesaggio con scene of banditry*, *coastal landscape with a farmer knocking down a fence*, *coastal landscape with boat* (Waddingham).

Closely related to the works Pallavicini and Doria Pamphili are the two oil-on-copper *battles* of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (Zeri, 1976). The two small paintings clearly depend, for the composition and the definition of the episodes, from the models of the Borgognone, but the style is typical of the G.: the characters, placed on clear landscape backgrounds, are outlined with a quick and nervous stroke, revived from effective touches of light. The merit of these battles on a reduced scale consists precisely in their uniform chromatic vibration which, in the best examples, assumes dominant silver and gray-blue tones, with solutions similar to those of the Venetian battalists, such as Francesco Simonini.

Also attributed to GRAZIANI are two *Battles* of the Musée d'art et d'histoire in Geneva. Already believed by Courtois, these two oil paintings were returned to the GRAZIANI on the basis of comparison with the works Pallavicini (Christmas); very similar are in fact the chromatic draft and the almost negligent pictorial treatment, which recalls the influence of Salvator Rosa.

Of considerable interest, due to the quantity and quality of the paintings, is the group of eight *Battles* of the Municipal Museum of Deruta, one of which bears the autograph of Lyon Pascoli on the back, a passionate collector of the genre: "of the excellent painter Graziani" ( Galassi, pp. 86).

In these canvases the cut of the composition is not heroic but realistic, the pictorial touch is snappy and lively, the chromatic matter flakes brightened by very pure filaments of pure color, with a technique similar to that of the Courtois. However, there is no shortage of Rosian memories, found in the use of violent glimpses to represent horses and riders.

The restoration of 1976 revealed the excellent quality of the two oil paintings of the Civic Museum of Pistoia: a *Battle with a ruined bridge* and a *Battle with a castle in the background* .

Both of considerable size (117 x 180 cm), have a brown-red color, typically seventeenth-century. The attribution to GRAZIANI is supported by the comparison with the paintings of the Civic Museum of Deruta: in these works the figures no longer have outline, but leap from the dark background through spots of color, marked by large brush strokes, with subtle highlights of white lead. The "great fury" and the "practice and bizarre", already noted by De Dominici, correctly define the style of the two canvases, which by invention and size acquire the epic breath of the compositions of Courtois. The dependence on the latter links the GRAZIANI to other painters battaglisti such as Francesco Simonini, Marco Ricci, Pandolfo Reschi and Joseph Parrocel.

The works of GRAZIANI listed so far, for which it is currently impossible to trace a stylistic evolution and define a plausible chronological scan, can be added many others reported in private collections in Parma, Rome, Brescia, Modena and Turin (Sestieri , pp. 94-97, 360-371).

Consciously integrated into the tradition of battle painting, inaugurated in Naples by Belisario Corenzio and then continued by Aniello Falcone and Scipione Compagno, GRAZIANI seems rather impressed by the experience of Micco Spadaro (Domenico Gargiulo) and Filippo Napoletano (Filippo di Liagno) who first developed this iconographic strand from the primitive historical-celebrative address to that of genre painting. The originality of GRAZIANI is in reviving these precedents with the innovations of Courtois, Simonini and Rosa, but accentuating the tendency to disengaged and decorative painting, in line with the incipient rococo trends of the Roman and Neapolitan schools, in particular Jordanian , and preferring in principle the use of reduced sizes, perhaps because they are more easily placed on the market.

The date of death of GRAZIANI is not known.

The situation in itself already difficult, given the substantial lack of documentary appeals, has recently become even more complicated, because some works by GRAZIANI, including the two battles Pallavicini (Chiarini, 1989), have been attributed to Pietro Graziani , of which De Dominici does not say if he was a son of GRAZIANI or just a relative. Even Pietro did not know the biographical details, but he was certainly younger than GRAZIANI and, like him, a painter of battles. Still in the catalog of Pietro are the two *Battaglie* preserved at Hopetoun House, Linlightow collection, noted under the name of Pietro Graziani in local inventories of 1733, 1750, 1817 (Salerno, 1977-78, p.654); the pair of *Landscapes* of the Gasparrini collection in Rome, on the frame of one of which appears the ancient writing "Pietro Graziani" (ibid.); a canvas in a private Bolognese collection depicting a *battle with a trumpeter* carrying a written inscription, if not certainly coeval, "Original by Pietro Graziani 1726" (Sestieri, p.95). Four oil *battles* on copper are attributed to him by the ancient Florentine inventories, preserved in the Uffizi but from the Feroni collection (Chiarini,

1979). Peter is then referred to with a certain amount of certainty as the *battle on a bridge* of the National Gallery of Ancient Art of Palazzo Corsini in Rome, which bears traces of a "PG" symbol (ibid., P. On the basis of these works, new acquisitions were attempted in recent years (Chiarini, 1988 and 1989). Among these there are two small paintings in the galleries of the Florentine Galleries (Chiarini, 1989, pp. 35 s.) And four *Battles of oil- knighted horsemen* on the Prato Municipal Gallery (Mannini).

This being the case, the group of paintings "Graziani" has shown itself in recent decades as a privileged field and very demanding for the investigative eyes of the *connoisseurs*, even if it appears honestly very difficult to distinguish the hand of one from that of other. The critical reconstruction of the figure of Peter is based on the fact that his name also appears, like that of GRAZIANI, but less frequently, in eighteenth-century inventories: he would have been quoted less because, being younger, he would have assumed the nickname 'other for convenience of the market or inheritance of commissions. According to this hypothesis the majority of Pietro's works would have been generically assigned to the so-called "Ciccio Napoletano" only in the wake of the previous attributions (Chiarini, 1989). This solution, however, ends up resizing the figure of GRAZIANI which, despite everything, is historically better defined and the only one that has offered evidence of greater commitment, as shown by the commission for the Roman churches. Not only that, but the two *Battles* of the Florentine Galleries, which are now considered a staple of Pietro's catalog, in the Pitti inventory of the early eighteenth century were attributed to GRAZIANI (ibid., P.196). It is then possible, as Sestieri pointed out (page 34), that in the abundant catalog, ascribed to one or the other name, one can identify works to be attributed to other painters, for example to Gerolamo Cenatempo.

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