

# LAPIS, Gaetano

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LAPIS, Gaetano. - He was born in Cagli on the 13th of August. 1706 by Filippo and Olimpia Orlandini of Cantiano, a wealthy family of wool merchants.

LAPIS was born in the hometown by studying letters and drawing. After moving to Rome in the third decade of the century, after a brief apprenticeship with the notorious Sebastian Creo, he entered the studio of S. Conca, an artist perhaps known by the Lapis family thanks to the paintings he painted for the town of Cagli: a *Madonna with Child and St. Teresa* for the cathedral and a *St. Andrew* for the homonymous church.

As reported by De Rossi, LAPIS, in the study of the Conca, showing a clear autonomy of course with respect to his teachings, was nicknamed by his companions the "carriage", in witness to the pictorial reference models assumed by the young artist who, he began addressing seventeenth-century classicism deserved by C. Maratta and, through him, Raffaello and Correggio.

Around 1730 he painted in Rome for the Loreti family of Cagli the five large canvases with Stories of Jerusalem released (*Tancredi's dream*, *Chorinda's baptism*, *Armida tries to kill Rinaldo*, *Armida tries to kill*, *Armida retains Rinaldo*). The paintings, today at the premises of the Pesaro savings bank, indicate the terms of the formal and compositional adoption of the proper features of the Bolognese painting of the seventeenth century, as well as a meditated assimilation of the Roman classicism of the 1920s borrowed from the works of F. Trevisani, B. Luti and GR Imperial; researches equally evident in the shovel with the *Madonna della Neve* for the altar of patronage of Causidici in the church of S. Francesco a Cagli (canvas signed and dated 1730).

Among the first Roman works are the frescoes, destroyed, with Episodes of the Via Crucis performed on the facade of the church of S. Bonaventura at the Polveriera, already of the Franciscan burial Spanish, while given to 1732 the glory of s. Clear on the vault of the church dedicated to the saint to Cagli. In this work, besides revealing a decisive interest in the famous baroque compositions preserved in the papal capital, L. is the debtor of the compositional modules adopted by Conca in the decoration of the ceiling of the basilica of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, performed in 1725 and to whom perhaps L. took part as a helper. Still in the style of the master is the canvas with Christ dead and the Virgin that the artist painted around 1733 for the chapel of the Roman Mount of Mercy. In the same year he performed the Pietà for the former convent of S. Chiara in Cagli; a painting derived from a similar carriage-shaped composition (today in Naples, the National Museum of Capodimonte) and therefore witness to the variety of stylistic registers assimilated in the juvenile phase of its production.

Two years later, inspired by the painting with a similar subject performed by Maratta in 1679 for the church of Jesus in Rome, L. finished the *Death of St. Francesco Saverio* for the church of S. Filippo in Cagli (signed and dated), while in 1737 the palae with *Pope St. Cornelio in the Sts. Armenia and Gennara* for the Roman Church of the Ss Celso and Giuliano. At the end of the thirties, the canvas was placed with the *Madonna del Rosario and St. Domenico* performed for the church of the Dominican monastery of S. Nicolò in Cagli (following the previous Napoleonic requisitions, transferred in 1815 to the parish church of Casorate Primo, where it is still preserved), resulting from a careful reflection on Raffaello and above all first, important, pictorial essays fired by P. Batoni.

In 1739 he was named among the Virtues of the Pantheon. On the occasion of his acceptance among the academics of St. Luke, on 3 October. 1741, performed as reception piece the Renaissance *Mary Magdalene*, then settled in the Roman Church of the Ss. Luca and Martina.

Between 1743 and 1744 there are two important paintings for the city of Jesi: the monumental canvas with the *Martyrdom of St. Lorenzo* for the newly erected Trionfi's Altar at the town's cathedral, and S. Antonio Abate of the Adoration Church.

Though for the next few years there is no reliable chronology of his frequent travels between Rome and the hometown, he agreed to date his definitive transfer to the papal capital in 1754, the year following his father's death. Meanwhile, the commissions, both for Rome and for Umbria and the Marche, became more and more numerous and prestigious. It dates back to 1750, *St. John de Matha* for the church of the Spanish trinitarians of Rome (updated work on innovative ferments directed towards a more radical classicism), and the following year the *Martyrdom of the Sts. Pietro and Marcellino* for the homonymous Roman church. Between 1754 and 1756 he performed, for the hometown, the *Ecstasy of St. Filippo Neri* for the Church of St. Philip (1754), the *Fall of Manna* and the *Communion of the Apostles* for the Chapel of the Sacrament of the Cathedral.

The works of the second half of the 1750s, the result of the artistic maturity of the painter and of a professional prestige already consolidated, were more often characterized by the results of careful research aimed at achieving formal perfection and a naturalistic rendering of affections, also in reference to the model, now dominant in the Roman environment, constituted by Batoni and the imposition of a renewed classicism whose theoretical foundations AR Mengs and J.J. Winckelmann (who came to Rome in November 1755) was being worked out.

In 1756 he dismissed his *Miracle of Nicola di Bari* for the church of S. Nicolò in Cagli, a building for which in 1759 he also painted the four medallions with the allegories of his virtues. Nicola. In these years there are also two paintings for the city of Gubbio: *St. Lucia* for the homonymous church and *St. Francis of Paola* for the Madonna del Prato. Now, at the height of its success, in 1757 he held the position of director of nude school at the Capitol.

Even the sixties were rich in prestigious commissions. The decade opens with the altarpiece *Madonna and St. Louis of France and Elizabeth* for the S. Giacomo a Cingoli. It is from 1762 the *Estasi of s. Giuseppe da Copertino* for the church of S. Francesco al Prato of Perugia (whose meticulous genesis is documented by a dense map between the artist and the buyers, made known by Rossi); of the same year is also the *Annunciation* for the church of the cemetery of Fossombrone, a replica of a similar youth painting performed for the monastery of *Annunciation* in Rome. The following year he painted the shrub with S. Camillo de Lellis for the Roman church of S. Giovanni della Malva, while around 1764 there were two works for Umbria: the *Madonna with the Child* and the *Sts. Giovanni, Andrea and Bernardino da Siena* for S. Bernardino in Perugia and the imposing *Crucifixion* for the Church of S. Filippo in Spoleto, resulting from further investigation around the 16th century classic of our pictorial history. *S. Giuseppe Calasanzio* of the Sanctuary of the Madonna of the Pie Schools of Frascati is 1765.

On commission of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, in the framework of a wider decorative work - designed by architect P. Posi - which concerned the whole building and to which the best artists participated on the Roman scene, L. painted between 1767 and 1768 the *Sposalizio of St. Catherine of Siena* for the homonymous Roman church of Via Giulia. Here, where from the late sixties to the mid-seventies a neoclassical style was developed also for religious and church production, L.'s blade assumes the tone of a more rigorous formal and compositional performance, anticipating some stylistic outcomes would have been widespread only a few years later. For the same church painted the two ovals with *Jesus offering the cross to s. Catherine* and *Jesus show the cost to s. Catherine*.

In view of this reform of the artist's style and inspiration, the wall decoration, laid off by L. in 1770, with the *Birth of Venus* for the ceiling of a room of the Borghese palace in Rome, is commissioned by that Prince Marcantonio (IV), who would soon start the most significant and significant episode of patronage and patronage of Rome by Pius VI Braschi: works of architectural modernization and plastic and pictorial

decoration of the Borghese casino out of Pinciana. In addition to forming, together with the juvenile Stories of the liberated Jerusalem, the only other example of the painter's production of the painter, the Birth of Venus of the Borghese palace was also the last important work to which L. devoted himself.

He died in Rome by April 1773, when a document from the Archives of the Accademia di S. Luca records the payment of celebrated "for the deceased academic Gaetano Lapis" (Honorable to GL ..., p. 47; Barroero, 1996, p. 677).

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