

Marco Tullio Montagna

Italian Painter
(c.1594-1649)

Son of Lucantonio and Vittoria, he is defined as a native of Velletri in all the documents and the date of birth, based on the indications of the States of souls and the death report, can be placed around 1594.

The date of arrival in Rome is not known but on 16 Oct. 1616 he married Caterina di Giovan Battista Verri, with whom he had at least seven children, cohabiting with his father in 1643: Margherita, Orsola, Fabrizio, Girolamo, Giovan Battista, Francesco, Giuseppe.

In 1617 he participated in the congregations of the Academy of S. Luca, where in 1634 he was an esteem for ordinary painters and gilders; in 1640 his association was proposed to the Congregation of Virtuosi al Pantheon.

He certainly had a workshop and collaborators, as evidenced by Ludovico di Cesare Rossetti who claimed to have attended him to learn how to draw because he was a good painter.

Montagna has often been confused with the painter Marco Tullio Onofri. Montagna was certainly greatly influenced by Giuseppe Cesari and his style is in fact characterized by strong harpines accents on which cortonesque components are slowly and cautiously grafted, found above all from the 1930s onwards.

In 1617 Montagna was at the service of Duke Alessandro Sforza for works not yet identified. The following year he painted in various rooms in the palace of Tarquinio Capizucchi with Giacomo Gallo known as Spadarino, who appears prominent in terms of remuneration and duration of the commitment, but the building, located in the Largo Argentina area, between the Origo and Cesarini palaces, was destroyed.

In 1618 he also worked in S. Agnese fuori le Mura for Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, creating countless *Saints* between the arches of the central nave, then he continued to paint in that church for the next abbot, Cardinal Fabrizio Veralli, frescoing the apse. In the center the *Coronation of Mary, between S. Agnese who was pierced by the tyrant and S. Emerenziana stoned while praying on the tomb of S. Agnes*, also destroyed, but visible in ancient engravings. Instead, the ruined scene of the *Madonna appears on S. Agnese*, with the underlying *Cardinal Virtues*, and two figures of *Angels* in the room of the staircase leading to the convent, from 1619.

In 1620 Cardinal Veralli also entrusted him with the entire decoration of nearby S. Costanza, a work that would have transfigured the entire building.

Montagna had to paint in the dome *Paradise with the angelic hierarchies*, in the ambulatory a false colonnade and in the niches of that the figures of *Christ and the*

Apostles. Twelve scenes with the *Life of S. Gallicano and S. Costanza* should have been placed in the drum, and also the façade had to be transformed from a fake graffiti and painted perspective. For the conspicuous work, to be carried out in one year, a fee of 250 scudi was agreed. Some parts of the decoration of the dome survive from this extensive cycle, fragments of the figures in the ambulatory, while the drum scenes, documented by photographs, have been destroyed, except for two preserved in the headquarters of the Superintendence for Architectural Heritage and the Landscape of Lazio.

In 1624 Montagna and Giacomo Scaccia painted the compartments of five windows in the gallery of Palazzo Mattei with landscapes, grotesques, *Stories of Samson* and the *Sacrifice of Manoaah*.

In 1626-27, Montagna worked in the garden of the villa of Cardinal Carlo Emanuele Pio di Savoia at the Colosseum for interventions that are not better defined and not identified.

In 1627, for Cardinal Scipione Borghese, he executed gilding and modest decorative interventions in S. Crisogono and the following year he was paid for two frescoes in the sacristy of S. Sebastiano outside the walls depicting the *Madonna and SS Sebastiano and Lucina and the Eternal and Martyrs*.

Relations with the cardinal culminated with the commission to paint, with Agostino Tassi and with the gilder Fausto Tucci, some rooms in the palace in Ripetta. In one room the intervention of Montagna has been identified, who created decorative female figures and allegorical scenes there. Based on stylistic bases and given the links with Tassi, Montagna's participation in the decoration of Palazzo Pamphilj in Piazza Navona was also proposed, in particular in the *Stories of Moses*.

In 1631 he intervened in the Veralli chapel in S. Agostino where he restored the previous paintings by Advance Nucci in the vault and executed from scratch the two figures of *Sts. Giovanni Battista and Giovanni Evangelista*, recently re-emerged.

Around 1631, and in any case after 1629, he painted the *Fall of Manna*, the *Passage of the Red Sea*, *Daniel in the lions' den with Abacuc and the angel* in the vaults of three rooms in the Rocci part of Villa Arrigoni in Frascati, works already attributed to Pietro da Cortona but closely related to the paintings in the Veralli chapel in S. Agostino.

Also in 1631 Montagna carried out important works in the church of S. Lucia del Gonfalone, consisting of restorations on the pre-existing works and additions of invention, in particular the wall decoration of the chapel of S. Francesco, painted dry. The church was completely renovated in the 18th century and nothing survives of these works.

In 1631 he was commissioned to decorate the oratory at the church of S. Giuseppe dei Falegnami for an agreed fee of 200 scudi, but paid at 263 for various additions. The works lasted until 1637 and consisted in the execution of *Stories of Jesus among Sibyls, Prophets, Kings of Israel*. In the Museum of Art of the Rhode Island School of Design, a

preparatory drawing for an entire wall of great quality is preserved. He also made the painting in the vault of the sacristy with *St. Joseph in glory among angels* in 1636.

Probably starting from around 1633 a long period of collaboration with Simone Lagi began, as evidenced by the news relating to the activity of copyists of ancient paintings carried out in the service of Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Some accounts present the common painting works concerning the years 1634-35 and 1637-38, but the company must have already been active before what is documented. In 1632 the wooden ceiling of the church of Ss. Cosma e Damiano was gilded and painted, at the center of which was the *Gloria of the Holy Martyrs with the Madonna and Child*, painted on wood (reappeared in 1999), then covered with a similar subject made on canvas also by Montagna. For the second version, a preparatory drawing was also found, now preserved in the Uffizi Gallery. Starting from 1634 the walls were decorated with eight Stories from the life of the titular saints and ten figures of Saints and Popes, as well as trophies with instruments of martyrdom. All payments for the ceiling and walls are made payable to Lagi, even if the bill of 1634 specifies Montagna's participation in the wall works and critics agree in assigning the scenes to him. Montagna are also entitled to the two central images of the ceiling due to the similarities with his known works.

Between 1634 and 1635 the two partners painted about thirty views (only sixteen remaining) relating to the new buildings and the events of the pontificate of Urban VIII in the Quirinal Palace.

The scenes were linked by largely lost grotesque decorations. Long attributed to Tassi or to his school, these views reveal elements of affinity with the latter painter while remaining closer to the truth. In the palace, the vaults of the rooms of the Bees and the Ladies are also attributed to Lagi and Montagna, with putti and heraldic emblems from Barberini.

Still together, the two painters in 1635-36 decorated the Vatican Armory with chiaroscuro, no longer existing; in 1635-38 they restored the Gallery of geographic maps in the Vatican; in 1637 they drastically repainted the medieval scenes of *S. Urbano* of the Caffarella.

In 1637-38 Montagna and Lagi intervened in three rooms of Julius III's apartment in the Vatican, repainting part of the sixteenth-century decoration and inserting various figures and beautiful urban views of *Castel Sant 'Angelo with the pinwheel* and of *Piazza S. Pietro*, as well as medallions relating to the main interventions of Urban VIII.

More modest and of a decorative nature, must have been the interventions of Montagna in Castelgandolfo, where Lagi had also painted in previous years and with other collaborators.

In 1639 Montagna, alone again, signed the contract for the decoration of the vault, two lunette and the side walls of the church of the Ss. Annunziata at the Forum of Augustus for a fee of 350 scudi; the decoration of the counter-façade was added and the balance for 500 scudi was paid in 1642. The destruction of the church resulted in the almost total

loss of these paintings, but the two lunettes, depicting the *Birth and Assumption of Mary*, are documented by photographs and some fragments exist in the Museum of Rome. The church belonged to the brotherhood of catechumens of which Cardinal Antonio Barberini was protector who may have favored the painter's call.

Certainly Montagna was at the service of the family on other occasions as well, as evidenced by the payment of 1644 for decorative works in the Palazzo dei Barberini, then in the Monte di Pietà.

In about 1645 he created the lunettes with pairs of saints - *S. Caterina d'Alessandria and S. Cristina of Bolsena; S. Chiara and S. Barbara* - and the dome with *God the Father between the SS. Peter and Paul* fresco in the Paolini chapel in S. Maria degli Angeli in Montopoli, which were assigned to him on a stylistic basis.

In 1649 he worked for the Colonnas in the hall of the palace of the Holy Apostles, but the work, worth a total of 136 scudi, was left interrupted due to his death and completed by Giovan Battista Magni. It must be identified with the large vault depicting *Sirens, tritons and the coats of arms of Casa Colonna*.

In the field of mobile paintings he is attributed the *S. Andrea* in S. Angelo in Pescheria, for which a preparatory drawing of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge is also known, both not certain, while the painting depicting *The Cavalcade by Taddeo Barberini along the Corso*, of the Rome Foundation, which had been hypothetically assigned to him, was subsequently considered by Giovanni Ferri. A "storm" was in the Vianelli collection in 1790.

Apart from his activity as a painter, he was also a draftsman, also in this case associated with Lagi, with copies of ancient and early Christian works, in the service of the Barberini.

Montagna died in Rome on 12 June 1649 in the parish of S. Andrea delle Fratte, according to the author of the document at the age of fifty-five.

Translated from:

[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marco-tullio-montagna_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/marco-tullio-montagna_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

by Maria Barbara Guerrieri Borsoi - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 75 (2011)