

Niccolò Martinelli

(aka *il Trometta*)

Italian painter
(1535-1611)

Son of Michele, was born in Pesaro in about 1535.

MARTINELLI is remembered by sources with different names: Becci calls him "Nicolò da Pesaro of Surname Trometta"; in ms. 378 of the Oliverian Library of Pesaro (I, 25, cf. 335 p.) Is simply referred to as "Nicolò Martinelli da Pesaro"; the nickname of "Nicolò Severi" is used only by Lanciarini and is not found in other testimonials.

MARTINELLI was definitely called "Nicolaus Martinellis," as he himself signs in the frescoes of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. His activity has been documented since 1561 when he appeared to be active in the Zuccari circle and work at the Pius IV casino in the Vatican. In 1562, he was among the founding members of the Compagnia dei Pittori who became the Accademia di S. Luca, of which he will be consul (1575, 1594) and rector (1593).

On June 2, 1563, the contract between MARTINELLI and Giovanni Pietro di Cordova for the construction of a chapel, of which there is no trace, in the church of S. Giuliano at Mount Giordano. The work, which was completed before 26 July, had to succeed because the buyer "contentus fuit et bene satisfactus" (Masetti Zannini, p. 56). The 6th Jan. 1565 was assigned to him the decoration of the chapel of Paolo De Castro in the Roman church of S. Maria della Consolazione. Perhaps MARTINELLI did not finish the work, since on 30 January of the same year Flaminia Margani requested the decoration of the apse of the church of S. Maria in Aracoeli to replace the frescoes by Pietro Cavallini, destroyed in the reconstruction wanted in 1561 by Pius IV.

The established price was 350 scudi; the client would have added another 50 if the work had been welcomed. Subject of work is the medieval legend of the appearance of the Virgin to the Emperor Augustus, following the prophecy of Tibetan Sibyl. The painter decided to divide the vault into a complex series of boxes with *Stories of Virgin's Life and Augustus legend* framed by stucco frames. On the parchment placed among the books at the foot of the evangelist Marco is the signature of the artist Nicolaus Martinellis Pisarenensis. In the vault is the end date of the decoration: 1568. Of the decoration there is also the series of design drawings. The sensitivity with which the work was realized resented the taste of Late Roman Mannerism and the work of the Zuccari. There is a story of an episode that happened while MARTINELLI working in Aracoeli: a certain Friar Alberto who had made the vault in masonry, bothered by the fact that the painter chiseled the plaster to give it stucco and colors, concealed "the mortar certain marble flakes." The two clashed violently, not just words. The episode highlights the operative practices of the artist who personally performed the execution of the stuccoes and frescoes.

In the same church, MARTINELLI was called to decorate the chapel of S. Antonio (the third in the left nave) with Paradiso (1570) and that of Vittoria Orsini (the sixth always in the left nave) with Ascension on the vault and personifications (*Victory, Glory, Perseverance, Prudence*) on the walls (1582-84). After 1568 he performed the Last Supper for the Church of the Confraternity of the Sacred Sacrament of Pesaro (now Tavullia in the church of S. Lorenzo).

For his hometown he also painted *The Virgin and Saints*, today in the Museum of Fine Arts of Budapest, a *St. Michael the Archangel* and a *S. Antonio Abate* for the Church of St. Archangel (then St. Joseph); in the church of *St. Francis* there is a *Trinity* venerated by the *SS. Elisabetta d'Ungheria, Margherita da Cortona and Francesca Romana*.

May 31, 1584 is the contract for the decoration of the first chapel to the left in the Roman church of S. Omobono: MARTINELLI promised to carry out his work at his own expense. On June 18, 1585, the name of the artist is indicated in a contract for the decoration of "four rooms of the Palace of Borgovecchio of Cardinal Cesi" with grotesques and allegories of the months. The frescoes, which were difficult to read today, had to be completed within three months "at the price of scudi 200". In the years 1591-95 the pictorial decoration of two chapels, today deteriorated, dates back to the Romanesque church of S. Maria dell'Orto (chapel of the Crucifix with *Stories of the Passion* and chapel of St. Francis with *Stories of the life of the saint*). In 1599 he collaborated, with Giacomo Stella, Ferdinando Sermei and Sebastiano Bartolucci, in the decoration of the Sistine Lane of the S. Spirito Hospital in Sassia with scenes depicting the pontificate of Sisto IV. Three years later for the s church. Mary in Trastevere performed the vault of the chapel. Giovanni Battista: On the spot there is only a *Madonna with a Child* much deteriorated.

MARTINELLI died in Rome in 1611, as evidenced by a document from the Archives of the Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon.

by Bernardetta Nicastro - Italian Biography Dictionary - Volume 71 (2008))

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