

Niccolò Ricciolini

Italian painter
1687-1772

RICCIOLINI, Niccolò (Nicolò, Nicola). - Born in Rome on February 1, 1687, son of Michelangelo and Anna Cecilia Sementi.

He had an early education with his father and already in 1702-03 won some prizes at the Clementini Academy of St. Luke Accademies. In 1709 he painted the chapel of Villa Sora in Frascati, with an altarpiece representing the Assumption of Mary and frescoes on the vault and on the walls, probably benefiting from some paternal suggestion. He donated the model of the painting to St. Luke's Academy, where he still preserved, when he became part of it.

Based on the stylistic analysis it is believed that he has collaborated with his father in the Orsini Barberini palace frescoes at Monterotondo, in the naked monochrome at the sides of the vault, and probably in the Frascati Fisherman's Casino. In 1713-15 he went on several occasions to work in the Buonaccorsi building in Macerata to complete the fresco of the salon performed by his father and paint the vault of the chapel, and sent from Rome the six overlays depicting Pairs of putti with insignia and allusive emblems at history of Rome.

In 1713 he made the painting depicting *St. Francis of Paola*, already in S. Lorenzo in Piscibus and now at the S. Giuseppe Calasanzio institute in Rome, created for a church where his father had long worked in his career.

In 1715 he collaborated with Michelangelo in the decoration of the chapel of SS Sebastiano and Rocco in S. Maria in Vivario in Frascati, completing the decorations after the death of the parent.

In all these works his style closely follows the paternal ways with expressive intensity and vivacity of gestures in the figures, as well as chrome light.

On 17 April 1717 he married Laura Trevisani, granddaughter of the painter Francesco, whom Michelangelo Maria (1718-1780) was also a designer, painter and architect scholar.

In 1719 he became part of the Congregation of the Virtuous at the Pantheon, and in 1721 he was appointed Academician of St. Luke, an institution whose life took part in a certain degree of assiduousness and retained his self-portrait, while another more marshal was found in the Uffizi.

In 1718 he began a long collaboration with the Reverend Fabbrica di S. Pietro, consisting in performing preparatory paintings, so-called cartons, for the mosaics of the basilica.

In 1718-20 he copied *the Navicella* by Giovanni Lanfranco and the cartoon was

subsequently sent to the church of S. Domenico in Urbino and is now in the Brera Art Gallery.

In 1720-21 he performed the canvases with *Moses praying supported by Aronne and Hur and King Ozia scolded by Azaria*, so a preparatory drawing is known in private collection, destined for deaf for the vestibule of Chorus Chapel in St. Peter.

Between 1721 and 1726 he made the cartoons for the cupola of S. Michele, with three pairs of angels for each clove (cherubim, small and large figures).

Many preparatory canvases were quickly dispersed, but some of the smaller figures were still preserved by the St. Peter's Workshop, while another one related to one of the largest angels went on the antique market. Here is an approach to the ways of Trevisani, with a gentle expression that reappears in other successive works.

In 1728-29 he painted the *Crucifixion of St Peter*, regularly paid by the buyers, but which for unknown reasons was not copied to mosaic, while the painting, with an overcrowded composition and evident emphatic tone, was moved to the church of S. Maria degli Angeli.

Similarly, he had the decorative design for the dome of the Madonna of the Column of St. Peter, which he painted in 1730-34 the cartoons depicting the *Virgin and the Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit*. The eight canvases are also preserved in S. Maria degli Angeli, while two 'memories' have recently been recognized.

On this occasion, the artist made boldly baroque figures, animated and educated in complex poses, rich in pathos.

The painter repeatedly worked at the service of the Reverend Factory as a restorer, for example in 1729 on the cartoons of Ciro Ferri for the mosaics of the dome of the vestibule in front of the chapel of the Crucifix (then of the Pietà) in St. Peter, now in the church of S. Chiara in Urbino.

Orazio Marrini remembers that Ricciolini painted a painting depicting S. Teodoro (dispersed), while the paintings of St. Peter appeared at the Teodoro mansion and the pendant with S. Abbondio healed a maiden, today in Ottoboni's sacristy of the basilica, they can not spoil him because of the stylistic differences with his other works.

Relations with the Fabbrica di S. Pietro no longer attested after 1736, but they certainly constituted the fundamental part of the artist's work. In the meantime, Ricciolini had also painted a *Madonna with the Child and saints* sent to S. Maria della Mercede in Collegentile, signed and dated perhaps, since it was unclear, 1721, still close to the fatherly style.

In 1739 he made his *Transit of St Joseph* for the Duomo of Mantua, signed and dated, of which he knows the preparatory drawing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, executed for Antonio Guidi of Bagno, bishop of the city.

Subsequently Brother Riccardo would ask Ricciolini for the paintings for the chapel of

the family in S. Alessio in Rome, which should be shortly after 1751 and depict the Trinity.

Remained a widower, until in 1743 Niccolò married Anna Maria Beati, from whom she had Cecilia and Vincenzo.

Towards the end of the 1740s he painted the *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Asnaghi Chapel in S. Maria delle Grazie alla Fornaci, for which there is a preparatory drawing in the Crocker art museum in Sacramento, California, and also the *Deposition of Christ from the cross* in S. Giuseppe alla Lungara, to which a preparatory sheet is attached to the Uffizi, as well as the replica with variants from S. Martino ai Monti and today in the Madonna institute of the Carmine of Sassone, near Rome.

Even in these works there is a reminder of three-dimensional ways and a more controlled chrome than the young works.

Probably around 1750, *St. Philip gives shelter to the pilgrims*, in the sacristy of the Ss. Trinità dei Pellegrini but from the seat of the homonymous congregation, characterized by a controlled sentimental effusion and a delicate palette.

In that year were already in the church of the Ss. Nome di Maria two paintings depicting *St. Michael the Archangel* and the *Appearance of Our Lady to S. Bernardo*, signed and dated 1751, whose design is known in the Musée Rouge des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels.

The Resurrection of Lazzaro at the Fondazione Roma should also belong to this decade, to which the painting with the *Family of Dario in the presence of Alexander the Great* can be stylistically approached.

Between 1753 and 1757, Luigi Vanvitelli insisted on getting him a commission for the palace of Caserta, though not considering the works of Ricciolini's vision in a good way, but met with the clear opposition of Queen Maria Amalia, who he judged the artist very insignificant.

In 1754 Ricciolini painted the great canvas with the *Coronation of the Virgin by the Trinity and the SS. John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Chiara, Antonio of Padua and Francis* kept in the Municipal Picture Gallery of Todi, which could be the altarpiece of the church of the nuns of St. John the Baptist, always in Todi, possibly performed with other works that seem to be alluding to in an anonymous report kept at the Municipal Archives of the Umbrian town.

He was then attributed the fresco over the access portal to the monastery of Tor de 'Specchi depicting the *Madonna with the Child between s. Benedict and s. Francesca Romana*, with an indicative dating to 1755.

Between 1755 and 1756 he painted the palace of the main altar in S. Michele and Magno depicting the *Ss Michele, Magno and Gregorio*, signed and dated 1756, which is very traditional in the setting.

In 1756 he painted the *Charity of the venerable Angelo Paoli*, signed and dated, for the room of the chapter of S. Maria in Traspontina, canvas made for Father Pier Tommaso Cacciari for the cause of beatification, with figures expressively expressive.

They belong to 1758 the canvases depicting the *Risen Christ*, *Christ appears to the apostles*, *Doubting Thomas* (signed and dated) and *Christ in front of Pilate*, already owned by Abbot Giuseppe Nicola Carbone, who had stayed in Rome and from which they passed to the cathedral of Oria in Brindisi.

These works are well represented of his advanced style with accentuated expressionistic features and a quicker and crisp invoice.

In 1760 he sent to the Cathedral of Paliano, in Frusinate, the canvas depicting the *Martyrdom of s. Catherine*, signed and dated, with a strong theatrical taste, expressed in the dynamic gesture of the executioner and in the devoted resignation of the saint, and a vibrant chromatic range.

He was given the decoration of the Cesi palace at Acquasparta, with monochrome figures of prophets on the walls and angels in the vault, referring to about 1760.

In 1764 he contributed to the decoration of the Salon of the Battles on the second floor of Barberini Palace in Rome with paintings depicting *St. Pius V nominating Giulio Cesare Colonna prince of Palestrina* (signed) and *Cardinal Giuseppe Colonna prisoner of the Turks* (signed and dated) who was reported a preparatory drawing at the Uffizi), reposing, especially in the second canvas, his impressive figures made with a quick brush and vivid colors.

It is not documented the single-chromatic decoration of the hall of the same building, belonging to Ricciolini on the basis of the stylistic characters and probably attributed to around 1770, depicting telamons, fantastic figures and putti, framed with fake bas-reliefs with sacred stories.

Ricciolini can also be attributed to the great painting depicting the *Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes*, erroneously attributed to Francesco Caccianiga, sent in 1769 to the Trisulti charter refectory, but from the Roman legacy of lawyer Scaramelli. For this work, whose author was alive at the time of purchase, was granted by the painter Ludovico Mazzanti the export license in which the painting is attributed to "Ricciolino l'Vecchio e non il Giovane", meaning with the latter Michelangelo .

The vast artwork of the artist has been repeatedly investigated in recent years by identifying sheets in numerous public and private collections.

Alongside the prevailing pictorial activity, Ricciolini also occasionally took care of architecture, as evidenced above all by a project prepared in 1722-23 for the so-called third arm of the colonnade in St. Peter's Square and the drafting of an opinion on the projects for the facade of S. Giovanni in Laterano (1732) and another for the restoration of the Vatican cupola (1743).

An unpublished practical treatise of proportions and proportionality was also

mentioned among the parties that make up the body of the work in architecture, composed before 1758, of which it is now possible to report a copy of 1767 in the central National Library of Florence, probably belonged to Leonardo de 'Vegni, who was going to print the study. The work, rich in references to Vitruvio and Leon Battista Alberti, is accompanied by tables dedicated to 'Vitruvian man', architectural orders, ancient and modern monuments, studied in proportional relationships, seen in relation to musical harmony.

He died in Rome on October 15, 1772.

by Maria Barbara Guerrieri Borsoi - Biography of Italians (2017)

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