

Natale Carta

Italian Painter
(1790-1884)

He was born in Messina in 1790, to a family from Palermo. He showed pictorial talent very early. At eight years old he was already painting, at twelve he was assistant to his father, a mediocre portraitist, and at fourteen he composed two large works in historical style. On the advice of Agostino Gallo, he studied with Giuseppe Patania, with whom he improved his drawing technique. He painted the portrait of his father and his teacher, then moved on to the school of Giuseppe Velasco. Benefiting from the generous help of the Princess of Paternò, he moved to study in Rome, for twelve years, as a pupil of V. Camuccini. Under his guidance he acquired great skill in portraying the nude; he remained faithful to the neoclassical direction, but also followed his natural tendency which led him to change the ancients, in the manner of Guido Reni. He took part in the competition for the chair of painting at the Royal School of Naples, on the theme of *Adonis departing from Venus to go hunting*. However, Camillo Guerra was preferred and Carta had to settle for the Order of Francis I.

He then chose Rome as his habitual residence; he lived in Palazzo Barberini. In Rome he acquired a certain prestige and fame. In 1839 he was elected member of the Academy of S. Luca where, on 23 May 1848, he was appointed professor of painting and in 1868 professor of drawing.

Carta was among the painters who, under the guidance of Francesco Podesti, frescoed (1857-1860) the walls of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, rebuilt after the fire of 1832; his are the frescoes depicting *Paul resurrecting the young heretic* and *Paul escaping being flogged in Jerusalem*.

In two other churches in Rome we have works by Carta: in S. Maria d'Itria there is a painting of *S. Rosalia*, patron saint of Palermo, which was donated to the church by the plenipotentiary minister of the king of the Two Sicilies. In S. Andrea delle Fratte, in the chapel of the Apparition, an altarpiece of the *Immaculate Conception* was considered among his best works.

His works are preserved in many Italian cities; the portraits in the Casteltermini house in Palermo and those in the Trapani Museum; the *Death of Atala*, from 1830, is exhibited in the Galleria dell'Ottocento di Capodimonte in Naples. Other portraits and works in neoclassical style are in the National Museum of Palermo and in the Roman residences of the Torlonia princes. In the royal palace of Turin there is his painting *Recognition of Orestes and Edward of Savoy*, painted on behalf of Queen Maria Cristina. In Naples, in the church of S. Francesco a Ripa, in the first altar from the right, there is his *S. Nicola da Tolentino*, in the Hotel Turistico a life-size portrait of the *Duchess of Berry*, while a painting belonging to the Filangieri Museum, which represented *Gaetano Filangieri and his family*, was destroyed in 1943.

Overall his style fluctuated between the classical and the romantic; Carta did not neglect historical subjects, but his only merits are perhaps the impeccable drawing and the rhythmic colors with which he constructed the portraits. In particular, family portraits are the genre where the artist best expresses his qualities.

Carta died in Messina in 1884.

by Agnese Fantozzi

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