

Domenico Maria Muratori

Italian Architect and medalist
(1661-1742)

Son of Biagio and Orsola Natali, he was baptized on 14 April 1661 in Vedrana (Bologna).

He studied in Bologna with Lorenzo Pasinelli and attended the drawing academy of the Ghisilieri house, of which he was declared prince, i.e. the best student, in 1688. Of the years in Bologna we currently know only the engravings of 1685 from prototypes by the master and by Simone Cantarini and two engravings, based on drawings by Bartolomeo Veronesi, of the funeral arrangements made for the death of the Marquis Alessandro Facchinetti.

On 22 April 1689 he left for Naples and stayed there for nine months, then he arrived in Rome at the beginning of 1690 and in that year he was registered in the State of Souls at the Collegio Celestino. Perhaps in that year he executed the painting on the wall depicting the Madonna in the chapel of the Archetto, in the Trevi district, for Alessandra Muti Mellini, derived from a work by Sassoferrato.

Probably around 1698, and in any case before 1704, he completely decorated the chapel of S. Giovanni da Capestrano in S. Francesco a Ripa with the fresco depicting the *Glory of the Saint* on the vault and five canvases. On the altar there is the *Saint at the Battle of Belgrade*, on the walls the *Miracles of the Saint in Vienna* and *St. John burns the tools of vice in Perugia*, in the lunettes the *Death of the saint* and the *Miracles of the saint after his death*. The set of works fully reveals the Emilian and classicist training of the painter, with references to Reni and Domenichino, without yet revealing an assimilation of Roman elements.

The painting conserved in the Capitular collection of the cathedral of Amelia, in Umbria, depicting the *Education of the Virgin*, to which is connected the drawing conserved in the Kunstmuseum der Stadt of Düsseldorf, a work full of Cantarini memories and perhaps, for this reason, referable to the first decade of the eighteenth century.

In 1702 he created the *Death of Marcantonio* and, in 1706, the pendant with the *Death of Cleopatra* for Cardinal Fabrizio Spada, kept in the Galleria Spada. For the cardinal he executed various other works and acted as his trusted merchant. These canvases can also be combined with similar creations with the *Death of Cleopatra* in the Carella collection (donated to the Louvre) and to the Rhode Island School of design. The painting, signed, with *Artemisia drinks the ashes of Mausolo* is stylistically very close to the latter work. While there is still a basic classicism that favors the drawing setting and the plastic rendering, there is an approach to the ways of the Roman Baroque, combined with a discreet interest in still life.

Probably from the first decade of the 18th century are the paintings with a *Miracle of St. Lorenzo Giustiniani* in S. Croce and Bonaventura dei Lucchesi in Rome and the *Madonna with Child and Saints* in S. Lorenzo in Turin, considered an ex voto for the positive

outcome of the siege of the city in 1706.

In 1703 he was enrolled in the Congregation of the Virtuosi al Pantheon and in 1705 in the Accademia di S. Luca, as an academic of merit. In 1708 he painted some untraced paintings for the Strozzi residence in Rome. In the same year he was already busy painting, thanks to the protection of Cardinal Giuseppe Renato Imperiali, the apse of the church of S. Giovanni Evangelista in Montecelio, near Rome, with scenes depicting the *Crucifixion with the pious women and S. John*, in the center of the wall, and, on the sides, the monochromes with *St. John resurrecting Drusiana* and the *Death of the saint*, all covered by subsequent paintings.

In 1709 is mentioned the *Miracle of S. Thomas Aquinas* in the church of Spirito Santo dei Napoletani in Rome, ordered by Cardinal Tommaso Ruffo. A model, probably from Ruffo, has been found in the castle of Caccuri (Crotone) and a preparatory drawing for a figure is known. Among the paintings of this decade it appears to be the most solemn and composed, still reminiscent of Carracci elements.

In 1710 the decoration of a door in the current gallery of Tapestries in the Vatican was completed, in which Muratori directed the decoration works and created the two lost fresco medallions depicting the *Allegory of spiritual power* and the *Allegory of temporal power*. Probably around 1710 he undertook the decoration of the chapel of S. Pio V in the convent of S. Sabina in Rome, carried out for Cardinal Tommaso Maria Ferrari, including the altar canvas with *S. Pio V adoring the crucifix*, the picture with *S Filippo Neri prophesies to Cardinal Ghisilieri* his assumption to the pontificate and the oil paintings on the wall with *St. Pius V freeing a possessed woman*, *The saint sees the outcome of the battle of Lepanto*, *The saint gives the Polish ambassador a relic of Rome*. The paintings in the refined environment, expressing a serene trust in divine intervention, have a measured tone and a clear legibility that appealed to the exponents of Roman Arcadian culture. In 1712 he created the medallions for the canonization ceremony of Pius V. The painting conserved in the Museum at the convent of S. Sabina with *S. Pius V and the miracle of the crucifix which rescues the poisoned feet from the saint's kiss* must also be connected to this moment, of which two printed versions are also known, one engraved by Girolamo Rossi and included in the biography of the pontiff written by Paolo Alessandro Maffei in that year, and some derivations.

The relationship between Muratori and Cardinal Imperiali, of whom he was a «virtuoso», must have been established very soon since already in 1705 one of his paintings had been lent by the cardinal for the exhibition at S. Salvatore in Lauro. Muratori also painted for Imperiali the canvas with *The entry into Milan of the cardinal, legate to Charles III of Spain*, which took place in 1711 (current whereabouts unknown), in which he favored a emphatic and celebratory. It was Imperiali who got him the commission of the huge oil painting on the wall on the high altar of the church of the Ss. Apostoli in Rome representing the *Martyrdom of the ss. Philip and James*, in progress in 1715-16. A large model is known, probably the one attested in the Imperiali collection, now in the Duca di Martina Museum in Naples. The work is a surprising act of homage to Domenichino, but with a complex and overcrowded composition, more enjoyable in the single characters than in the theatrical concatenation of the groups.

The Madonna of the Rosary and saints, kept in the church of S. Maria degli Angeli in Assisi,

should date back to around 1715. In 1716 he painted the medallions displayed on the facade of St. Peter's on the occasion of the beatification of St. Giovanni Francesco Regis, including in particular an enormous painting with the *Saint carried to heaven by angels*.

In 1718 he executed the *Nahum* in oil on canvas for the series of prophets in S. Giovanni in Laterano, commissioned from the leading Roman artists of the time and therefore a sign of considerable appreciation. In the same year he created *S. Ranieri heals a possessed woman*, sent to the cathedral of Pisa, a painting that appears conceived with the same characteristics found in the works in S. Francesco a Ripa and at the Ss. Apostoli, demonstrating a remarkable stylistic continuity in his activity.

A model conserved in the National Museum of S. Matteo in Pisa is connected to the canvas of the cathedral; a large preparatory drawing has also passed on the antiques market, with small differences compared to the painting, perhaps coinciding with the one reported in the Mancini house in Città di Castello. A «charcoal cartoon» for this work was kept by Giuseppe Renato, the painter's son, in 1766.

Probably in the third decade of the century, the painting depicting the *Madonna and Child with the SS Leonardo and Francesco di Sales* was sent to the church of S. Sisto in Pisa, commissioned by Simone Francesco Seghieri Bizzarri, executed with the participation of assistants, today at the local Superintendency. In the church of S. Andrea a Vetralla, in the Viterbo area, rebuilt by order of Cardinal Imperiali, a *Martyrdom of S. Andrea*, executed in 1719, an *Assumption with St. Clement and S. Eustachius* and an *Immaculate Conception and St. Ippolito*, from 1723.

Probably towards the beginning of the 1920s, Muratori tried to win the commission for the canvas for the high altar of the church of S. Eustachio, as suggested by the two paintings depicting the rare theme of the martyrdom of the saint (the larger one, signed).

In 1724 the painting depicting *Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist, Magdalene, Agnese and Carlo* was sent to the cathedral of Orvieto, commissioned by Cardinal Filippo Antonio Gualterio, characterized by an evident inspiration in the ways of Maratti. The preparatory cartoon is also preserved, owned by the Opera del Duomo, and critics have ascertained that the cardinal owned a significant number of works by the artist.

Probably the canvas with *Christ, the Madonna and S. Serafino da Montegrano*, preserved in the Capuchin convent of Ascoli Piceno, can be approximated to the date of the saint's beatification, which took place in 1729.

Without certain chronological references is the so-called *Allegory* in oil on canvas in Palazzo De Carolis in Rome, an undocumented work and prudently attributable to Muratori, whose chronology could be placed in the third decade of the century. There are numerous Roman works attributable to the 1930s. The *Crowning with thorns* in the church of the Stigmata of S. Francesco should be a little earlier than 1731, when the *Flagellation* of Marco Benefial created as its pendant was executed, and the small canvas from the Rome Foundation, formerly in the Lemme collection, is connected to it, to be considered as a first idea, albeit still far from the definitive solution. In 1735 he signed and dated the painting depicting *St. Praxedes pouring the blood of martyrs into the well of*

her house, placed on the high altar of the church of the same name, and, the following year, St. Augustine defeats heresy, exhibited in the church of the Child Jesus. Above all, the first reveals shapely and matronly forms that re-propose intensely classicist Emilian models. In 1737, on the occasion of the multiple canonization, he painted *S. Giovanni Francesco Regis assisting the plague victims*, a canvas donated to Cardinal Neri Corsini and conserved in the Gallery of the same name.

Probably around 1740 he executed the painting with *St. Charles Borromeo praying during the plague*, donated by Archbishop Girolamo Crispi to the Liberian basilica (Santa Maria Maggiore) where it is still located. It could be from around 1741 the *Blessed Alessandro Sauli communicates a plague* (Vatican Museums), which reveals notable stylistic affinities with the painting of 1737.

He died in Rome on August 17, 1742 and was buried in the church of S. Maria ad Martyres (Pantheon), his parish.

Among the sons, Giuseppe Renato (1708-1766) certainly inherited a large part of his father's assets since he owned many dozens of paintings, without attributions but some of which coincide in theme with those made by his father. These works were left to his priest brother Ignazio (1719-1782) who worked as an architect.

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