

Giovanni Battista Pozzo

In recent years, the artistic melting pot that was Rome from 1572 until 1605, during the papacies of Gregory XIII Buoncompagni (reg. 1572-85), Sixtus V Peretti (reg. 1585-90), and Clement VIII Aldobrandini (reg. 1592-1605), has more clearly come into focus.

One of the artists who has been largely ignored, in part because he died before he reached the age of thirty and thus few independent works from his hand exist, is Giovanni Battista Pozzo (c. 1563-1591).

Little is documented about Giovanni Battista's origins, but we know that he was a member of the Lombard Pozzo/Pozzi dynasty of artists from which Andrea Pozzo (1642-1709) is said to have emerged. His birth date may be deduced from a statement made by Giovanni Baglione (a close contemporary of the artist) in his *Vite* that Pozzo died at the age of twenty-eight, along with Maria Barbara Guerrieri Borsoi's discovery of the artist's death certificate dated 22 May 1591. A document published by Antonino Bertolotti implies that Pozzo was born in Valsolda, a small town on the shores of Lake Lugano, about 60 km north of Milan.

Both Baglione and the death certificate, however, record Pozzo as Milanese, which suggests that Pozzo's formative training may have taken place in the orbit of painters active in Milan, such as Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1600), who, however, turned blind in 1571, Aurelio Luini (c. 1530?1593), or Giovanni Ambrogio Figino (1548-1608). According to Baglione, Pozzo had learnt "qualche buon principio nel disegno, e nel colorito" (the basic rudiments of drawing and painting in colors) before transferring at a young age to Rome, where he died. Pozzo's first Roman works were apparently created no earlier than 1586, in the papal work shop of Sixtus V, where Pozzo assisted on the fresco decoration of the Lateran Palace, the Benediction Loggia next to the Lateran Palace, the Vatican Library, and also frescoed, among other scenes, the *Massacre of the Innocents* in the Sistine Chapel in S. Maria Maggiore.

Pozzo's major commission came in 1590, when, for the pope's sister, Camilla Peretti (b. c. 1528), he decorated a chapel dedicated to St. Lawrence and the two early Christian martyrs Eleutherius and Genesius, in the church of S. Susanna in Rome. Multiple scenes in fresco of the lives of Sts. Eleutherius and Genesius, whose relics were translated to S. Susanna, decorate the walls of the chapel rations.

Source:

Eitel-Porter, Rhoda; "Giovanni Battista Pozzo as a Draftsman"; *Master Drawings*, Vol. 47, No. 4, Articles and Notes in Honor of Karen B. Cohen; (Winter, 2009), pp. 437-442