

Andrea Procaccini

Italian painter of the Baroque period
1671-1734

He was born in Rome in 1671 by Carlo and Angelica Vela. Painter and architect, he was among the principal pupils and followers of Carlo Maratti before moving to Spain in 1720, a country where he ended his career at the service of Filippo V.

The reconstruction of the Roman period appears to be lacunose. Pascoli described his vocation to painting as coming from a well-to-do family. Carlo Procaccini married Angelica Vela with an excellent dowry, but the documents tell of a progressive indebtedness that would have fallen on his son Andrea. Only the offices received in Spain would have allowed him to raise his condition.

So Andrea entered the workshop of Maratti driven by necessity. After training in drawing, the first pictorial works were copies of Marquis models: the first painting (1690 circa) was a *Cleopatra* identifiable with the canvas of the Krannert Art Museum copy of the canvas of the National Museum of the Venice Palace in Rome.

He still painted a portrait of Francesca Gommi, Maratti's wife. To be identified with the portrait of the woman who, assigned to Procaccini, finds herself in the inventory of the assets of the Gommi.

He became a valuable collaborator of Maratti during the last years of the teacher's life, afflicted by illness, and was reciprocated with gestures of esteem. One of the most important was his involvement in the restoration of the frescoes of the Vatican Rooms, directed by Maratti in 1702. This work allowed him a comparison with a figurative repertoire that would always accompany the artist; a patrimony that would have been enlarged with references of Bolognese matrix.

In the fresco with the *Four Evangelists* on the vault of the chapel of S. Brunone in S. Maria degli Angeli (1700-02) the painter referred to Dominican models. In S. Maria dell'Orto fresco between 1702 and 1703 two oval depicting the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* and *St. Anne and St. Gioacchino*, reinterpretations of models of Reniani and maratteschi updated to the new century. The renal example also inspired the recently discovered *Saint Francis Caracciolo* (Saint Michael Seminary Ramsey, New Jersey, United States), painted between 1701 and 1703 and until now only known thanks to a press and to documents. All works that reveal a path already started, but still dependent on the interests of the 'marattesca' company. The sources indicate that the works of S. Maria degli Angeli and S. Maria dell'Orto were conducted under the supervision of Maratti, who also provided the design for *S. Francesco Caracciolo*.

The *Madonna with the Child, the SS. Giovanni Battista and Eusebio and the beati Amedeo and Margherita di Savoia* of the church of S. Filippo Neri in Turin was instead a collective work of Procaccini and of the disciples of Maratti, called to take the place of a teacher no

longer able to cope with work. Exemplary is the complex story of the *Baptism of the Centurion Cornelius*, painted for the chapel of the Baptistery of the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. The chapter of the basilica was not satisfied and asked for its removal. Maratti wanted the intervention of Clement XI, attributing to himself merits and demerits since, as he explained in a letter to the pontiff, it would have been him to conceive and to paint in part the work, making use of Procaccini as an instrument; so the painting was left in place.

After the defense of Maratti, Andrea appears diminished and downgraded to the role of shop assistant. But the physical conditions of the master in 1710 allow to assign the autograph of the painting and the sketch to Procaccini, granting the invention to Maratti. The story, however, explains the limits of a pictorial career, that of Andrea, matured in the shadow of the Marches.

It was Maratti who introduced Procaccini to the Marquis Niccolò Maria Pallavicini, a well-known patron. The sources tell this report, but few works attributed to Procaccini in the inventory of Pallavicini's assets certify it. Contemporary documents clarify the substance of this bond. These are the testimonies of the artists who claimed payments from the marquis's heirs. Among these, a declaration by Procaccini that reveals the intention of Pallavicini to found an academy, destined to be decorated with paintings by Andrea described by the painter: at the time of the Marquis's death they were in his studio and ended up missing. Various designs referable to the artist allow the reconstruction of the project

The death of Maratti and Pallavicini deprived Procaccini of the main support for his activity. To this period (1713-14) date the quadroni representing the *Meeting of Abraham with Melchizedek* and the *Idolatry of Solomon* recently assigned definitively to Andrea. Loads of Marquis quotes, telling the will to claim the master's legacy.

Deprived of his support, Procaccini had to look for a way to get into the institutional system of the clients. In 1714 he was appointed by Clement XI as the director of the newly created St Michael's Tapestry Factory. His cartoon for *Purification*, one of the tapestries produced for the Pauline Chapel of the Quirinale (today in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican). The result of frequent visits to Curia was probably the *Allegory of the pontificate of Clement XI* (1714; Rome, Palazzo Braschi, Museum of Rome). The canvas, already attributed to Giuseppe Chiari, is a celebration of the pontiff in conjunction with the peace of Utrecht.

The project of a complete series of prints taken from Raphael's tapestries preserved in the Vatican should also be connected to a papal commission. It makes him think of a plea to the pontiff in which the artist asks for help to finish the work, then remained unfinished: only a part was made (Rome, National Institute for graphics), received by us along with a large amount of relevant drawings.

Academic of S. Luca in 1716, Procaccini delivered as a work of presentation a *Mercury and Argo* still in the deposits of the Academy. This role allowed him to enter the construction sites promoted by the pontificate Albani: he painted a *S. Ninfa* (lost) for the church of S. Maria in Monticelli and participated together with representatives of pictorial officiality (Sebastiano Conca, Francesco Trevisani, Benedetto Luti, Giuseppe

Chiari, etc.) to the decoration of the basilica of S. Giovanni in Laterano, where ovals depicting the prophets were placed. To Procaccini it was up to the execution of the *Prophet Daniel* (1718,).

There are not many presences on the altars: a *S. Pio V* in S. Maria sopra Minerva, uniformed to the academic canons; for the church of S. Maria della Concezione a no longer preserved *S. Felice da Cantalice*.

Pascoli reported the frequent patrons of foreign travelers. In Holkham Hall (Norfolk, England) there is a *Tarquinio and Lucretia* bought by Sir Thomas Coke, but certainly painted by Procaccini for Pallavicini.

For the Marquis of Annandale instead he realized a portrait.

In private commissions that could be placed at the end of the second decade and on the move to Spain, Procaccini achieved the best quality outcomes. Among the last Roman works, the ceiling with the *Aurora* at the Palazzo de Carolis (1720), set on neorenaissance accents, and a *S. Cecilia* painted for Cardinal Acquaviva, ambassador of Spain to Rome, who in 1720 managed the negotiations that led the artist to Madrid. The painting could be identified with the canvas today in Real Sitio de El Pardo, in Madrid. During the journey the artist stopped in Genoa (frescoes in the Palazzo Durazzo Pallavicini).

As soon as he arrived in Spain he realized the *portrait of Cardinal Borgia* (1720), his best painting. Evident a Marattian setting, however, the artist imprinted on the work a new energy from the compositional point of view and the pictorial choices, closer to the seventeenth century nerve than to the previously privileged academic models.

It was an isolated trial. Called to Spain as a portrait painter, Queen Isabella preferred the French Jean Ranc. Procaccini was used in the production of devout paintings (among others, a *S. Marta*, a *S. Barbara* and two unfinished paintings depicting the *Adoration of the shepherds* and the *Purification*) and genre paintings (a *View of Oran* and a *Still Life with Figures*), preserved between the Real Sitio de El Pardo (Madrid) and the Royal Palace of Riofrío (Segovia), which recount a decline in artistic skills. Far from the Roman stimuli, Procaccini adapted his art to the taste of the court. The amount of work requested by the sovereigns contributed to this involution, which rewarded him with trust and emoluments: he oversaw the real manufactories; became an agent for the purchase of art collections; and was absorbed by the construction of the Granja de San Ildefonso palace, architecture that expresses a cosmopolitan artist, master of a Roman aesthetic verb open to international instances.

For the palace chapel he created two paintings: the *Imposition of the planet to S. Ildefonso* (1723) and the *Madonna del Rosario and patron saints of the royal family*, today in the church of the Rosary. However, this altarpiece was completed by his workshop, because the artist died at the Granja de San Ildefonso in 1734.

In 1727 he married Rosalia O'Moore, who later sold the collection of drawings that belonged to her husband at the Academy of Fine Arts of S. Fernando: it represents a fundamental instrument for the knowledge of the artist.

by Gonzalo Zolle Betegón - Biographical Dictionary of Italians - Volume 85 (2016)

Translated from:

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