

The immaculate conception with saints francis of assisi and anthony of padua

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The Immaculate Conception with Saints Francis of Assisi and Anthony of Padua Cardinal Girolamo Verospi commissioned the painting by Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, "The Immaculate Conception with saints Francis of Assisi and Anthony Padua", in 1649, for a new church in Osimo at the Capuchin monastery in Italy. The church was built as a dedication to the Virgin Mary, so the painting was commissioned to depict the Immaculate Conception. Castiglione did not follow the codified representation by Francisco Pacheco, who had codified "The Immaculate Conception representation", in "The Art of Painting". He based his painting on "The Assumption of the Virgin Mary". The painting itself was an inspired work of art that captured both saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Anthony of Padua in their elements; that is obedience, poverty and humility. The Virgin Mary is also depicted as holy and pure. The painting is an apt depiction of what we would expect of these three holy personalities, both by the pose he gives them and the delicacy of his fluent oil and brush drawings. This paper seeks to delve into the mastery of this piece, and its excellent execution.

Castiglione hailed from Genoa, and is understood to have studied under Sinibaldo Scorza. He was a passionate student of paintings by Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck, whose paintings were readily available in Genoa. Rembrandt also heavily influenced him. Castiglione was one of the earliest masters of monotype, while also being one of the earliest practitioners of Chiaroscuro woodcut art. He became known for combining emotion and high drama in his works with elements of Flemish naturalism and Venetian colorism (Lipshultz 106). His earliest works include Noah's ark, The Nativity of Christ, which is regarded as his best work, St. James defeats the Moors for

and Mary Magdalene and Catherine among others. In 1649, he was commissioned to paint *The Immaculate Conception with Saint Francis and Anthony of Padua*. At this point, Castiglione was at the peak of his powers, having mastered the art of being a draftsman and also pioneering oil sketch development (Lipshultz 108).

The essential features of this painting include the Virgin Mary, based on “The Woman of the Apocalypse” in the book of Revelations. She is depicted standing, a crown with twelve stars on her head, fully illuminated, floating on clouds. There is a crescent shaped moon under the woman’s feet and behind her head is an orange glow (Medici 98). St. Francis of Assisi is depicted on her right behind her, kneeling and awed, in a monk’s habit. There is a cord around Assisi’s waist bearing three knots, while the outstretched hand has the stigmata of Christ, which he got in a vision. On her left is St. Anthony of Padua, also kneeling with a lily and a book on him. He has his arms crossed in a gesture of differentiation, across his chest. In the background, the lower part is not legible, while the plants are not easily identifiable. There is a bush of thorns and a flower. On the lower left is the Fiorenzi family crest, the Fiorenzis being the principal financiers of the painting. Around Mary’s feet in the middle of the painting are angels, apparently welcoming her (Medici 99). Castiglione in this painting was attempting to depict the assumption of the Virgin Mary, witnessed by Saints Francis and Anthony, into heaven with the angels (Lipshultz 120). To achieve this, he uses motion as depicted by Mary’s fluttering clothes and Saint Francis and Padua looking up at her. He also utilizes color to show Mary’s holiness in the assumption by painting her clothes in brighter colors than the rest, while her face is glowing as, too, are

the angels faces. Mary and the angels also contrast beautifully with the background and the mortal saints kneeling beneath her. Balance is another principle of design used in the art; Saint Francis and Saint Anthony are on both sides of Mary balancing the painting and making her the focal point (Medici 140).

Conclusion

Castiglione wonderfully does this painting, both in its inspiration and its execution. It was done during Castiglione's peak after he had pioneered monotype and oil sketch development, thus was painted by a master. He was well versed in the works of other masters like Rembrandt and Rubens, and his use of high emotion and drama ensured that he would create a masterpiece, right alongside the nativity. In addition, being born to catholic parents ensured his use of biblical imagery was on the point.

Works Cited

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