

Corrado Veneziano

Painting Cavalcaselle. A third-hand (and third life) work

curated Francesca Barbi Marinetti and Lucia Calzona

Corrado Veneziano - an Italian artist whose works are permanently exhibited in European and intercontinental institutional museums, invited to France under the patronage of the Louvre Museum, as well as the author of the work that became the Italian State postage stamp dedicated to Dante's Inferno - studied for a long time Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, and has reinterpreted his sketches and notebooks.

The presentation of the entire cycle of works dedicated to the scholar from Legnago is scheduled to take place at Palazzo Altemps-Museo Nazionale in Rome in 2024. But there could not be a more representative place to pay homage to him than the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, in Venice, where the Cavalcaselle Fund is preserved. It is no coincidence that Antonello da Messina's "St. Jerome in the Study" was given preponderant prominence here, as it represents a dazzling synthesis of painting, "studiolo" and book, peculiar to the Renaissance and seeming almost to be linked to the most important donation made to Marciana Library, that of the erudite Cardinal Bessarione.



Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (Legnago 1819- Rome 1897) one of the founders of the discipline of art history, beginning with his seminal publication, the first in post-unification Italy, of *Storia della pittura in Italia*, with J. A. Crowe (first published in English under the title *A new history of painting in Italy from the second to the sixteenth century*, 1864-66; ed. it. enlarged, 1886-1908), marked by a vast amount of material collected personally by the author and attested by his notebooks of drawings.

Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle, Disegno dal S. Girolamo nello studio di Antonello da Messina Fonte: Fondo Cavalcaselle. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Ms. It, IV 2037 (=12278) Tacc. XIV f. 11r.

Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle, Disegno dal S. Girolamo nello studio di Antonello da Messina Fonte: Fondo Cavalcaselle. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Ms. It, IV 2037 (=12278) Tacc. XIV f. 9v.

The partnership with Englishman Joseph Archer Crowe lasted a lifetime, so much so that the Crowe-Cavalcaselle pairing represents a unicum in art history. The two Funds - Crowe's at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and Cavalcaselle's at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice - remain, for scholars, connected by inextricable threads and are still a reservoir of valuable information and insights for researchers.

After long wanderings, by study and by political choices that conditioned his life (he was, in fact, an ardent republican), in the 1870s he was appointed to the ranks of the Ministry of Education, the first post-unification step in the direction of a Ministry of Culture to which the Veneto scholar would make a pioneering contribution both in terms of management and conservation of the artistic heritage.

"Connoisseur" of art, especially Renaissance and medieval art, Cavalcaselle distinguished himself by a strongly "investigative" strain: tying his research to the concrete issue of "attributions" and operating a systematic study of works in order to understand with certainty which was the true author.



To arrive at the correct attributions of the works, Cavalcaselle would record impressions and reflections by taking notes in "travel notebooks." He would fill them with sketches and then write beside them, in the margins of the paper, deductions, doubts, insights and "discoveries." His sketches were thus filled with images and words, arrows and annotations, to arrive-among shapes, faces, clothing, utensils: all diligently redrawn-to trace surprising and renewed lines of art history and the history of Italian artists.