

## Annibale Carracci

Annibale Carracci was born on November 3, 1560 in Bologna. In the Bologna of the early 1580s, his cousin Ludovico Carracci along with Annibale's brother Agostino, opened a painter's Academy of Desiderosi (Desirous of fame and learning), later it was called the Academy of Incamminati (progressives); and finally the "School of the Eclectics" for training artists. The 17th century critic Giovanni Bellori, in his survey titled *Idea*, praised Carracci as the epitome of Roman Baroque. While the Carraccis laid special emphasis on draftsmanship, they also worked in a style mediating between the Florentine emphasis on linear drawing and the Venetian attention to the glimmering use of color leading to a mistier edge of objects. These qualities became particularly associated with artists of the Bolognese School, including their most prominent trainees of the Carraccis: Domenichino and Reni.

It is difficult to distinguish the individual contributions by each Carracci brother in many early works, including frescoes in the Palazzo Fava in Bologna (c.1583-84), where worked together until 1595, when Annibale, the best known, was called to Rome by Cardinal Odoardo Farnese to decorate the gallery in the Palazzo Farnese.

Annibale first decorated a small room in the Palazzo Farnese with stories of Hercules; aptly because the room housed the famous greco-roman sculpture of the hypermuscular Farnese Hercules. Starting 1597, he led a team painting the ceiling of the grand salon with the secular themes of *The Loves of the Gods*, or as Bellori described it, 'Human Love governed by Celestial Love'. Although the ceiling is riotously rich in the interplay of illusionistic elements, it is framed in the restrained classicism of High Renaissance decoration, drawing inspiration from Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling as well as Raphael's Vatican Loggia and Villa Farnesina frescoes. His work would later inspire the untrammelled stream of Baroque illusionism still to begin in the work of Cortona, Lanfranco, and in later decades Andrea Pozzo and Gaulli.

Throughout 17th and 18th centuries, the Farnese Ceiling ranked alongside other cycles as an influential masterpiece of fresco painting. They were not only seen as a pattern book of heroic figure design, but also as a model of technical procedure; Annibale made hundreds of preparatory drawings for the ceiling, which accepted as a fundamental part of composing any ambitious history painting. In this sense, Annibale exercised a more profound influence than his late contemporary Caravaggio, for the latter never worked in fresco, which was still regarded as the test of a great painter's ability and the most suitable vehicle for painting in the Grand Manner. Other significant works painted by Annibale in Rome include 'Domine, Quo Vadis?', which reveals a striking economy in figure composition and a force and precision of gesture that influenced on Poussin and through him on the language of gesture in painting.

Annibale was one of the first Italian painters to paint canvasses wherein the landscape took priority over figures, such as his masterful *The Flight into Egypt*; this is a genre in which he was followed by his favorite pupil Domenichino and Lorraine. After 1606, Annibale was overcome by melancholia and gave up painting almost entirely. He died in Rome on July 15, 1609 and was buried, according to his wish, near Raphael in the Pantheon, Rome. It is a measure of his achievement that artists as diverse as Bernini, Poussin, and Rubens praised his work.

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