

Saint Artists from the Seventeenth Century to Today. Exhibition and conservation history

1700

Carlo Maratti, upon his appointment as Principe perpetuo of the Accademia di San Luca, presented the institution with fourteen portraits of canonized or blessed artists. The images portray: sculptor Nicodemus; the five stone-carvers Castorius, Claudius, Simplicius, Nicostratus and Symphorian; architect Julius; painters Lazarus, Methodius, Dunstan, Félix of Valois, Giovanni of Fiesole, Giacomo Grisienger and miniaturist Maddalena de' Pazzi. The canvases were exhibited in the "Academic room", in gilded frames, arranged in four groups of three paintings, plus a pair.

About 1715

In an inventory of the collection of the Accademia di San Luca of around 1715 fourteen portraits of saint artists are listed, including Saint Julius painter and architect, and Simplicius sculptor, today lost. The then-complete series is shown in the so-called "Large room of the Accademia".

1787-1788

An inventory of 1787-88 reports that in the "Upper salon", at both sides of the picture of "Saint Luke by Raphael Sanzio there are 12 heads of Saint painters", thus certifying, first of all, the disappearance of two canvases from the original set. This description also attests that the series of the Marattaesque portraits was already altered in function and arrangement. The twelve saints shown around Saint Luke clearly referenced the apostles around Christ and seem to be used in order to suggest a new "Pantheon" of the three major arts, presided over by the patron saint of the Roman academic institution.

1831

The inventory of the portraits lists the images of the saint artists, with the exception of those of Saint Dunstan and Saint Nicostratus, evidently then separated from the series, and yet still today preserved at the Accademia, what proves that the series was no longer considered as a coherent corpus.

1832

In an inventory dating from 1832, fourteen "portraits of saints and blessed who have professed the fine arts" are recorded in the first room of the gallery. The pictures are inserted within a suite of portraits of modern artists, hung below the ribbon formed by 73 portraits of ancient artists.

1864

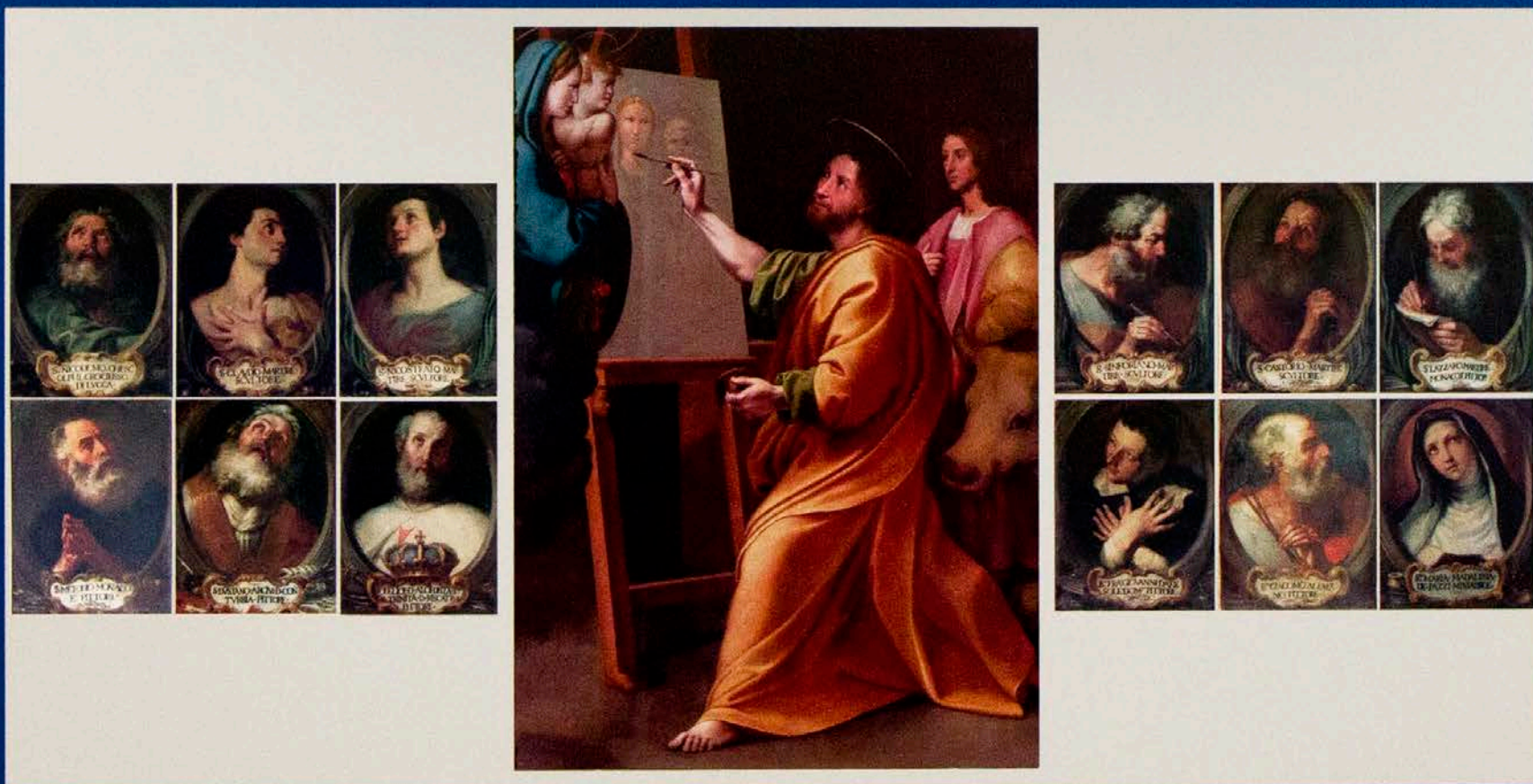
In the Guidebook to the Gallery all fourteen paintings are reported, including Saint Julius and Saint Simplicius, whose whereabouts is today unknown.

1882

In the Guidebook to the Gallery, which gives evidence of the new hanging, only Saint Giovanni of Fiesole is attested in the series of the portraits of academician artists. Possibly considering unavoidable the presence of the Tuscan painter, due to the then ongoing reevaluation of the Quattrocento, the figure is picked out of the Marattaesque group, which is instead removed from viewing in the gallery.

At Palazzo Carpegna

The pictures of the saint artists could be found in the ante-chamber connecting the Borrominian ramp of Palazzo Carpegna and the conference room. In this small room, narrow and high, which houses various portraits of artists, the pictures of the saints were hung on opposite-facing walls. Giacomo Grisienger was taken out of the series, and placed within the row of paintings exhibited in the reading room of the historical archives. Documents are inexplicit as to the arrangement of the pictures in the occasion of the opening of the new seat of the Accademia in 1934, when the latter relocated to Palazzo Carpegna. The canvases were arguably hung in the anti-chamber that has housed them until recently. As of today, no documents have been found explaining the putting aside of the portrait of Giacomo Grisienger, more difficultly comprehensible than the previous isolation of that of Giovanni of Fiesole. The portraits of Saint Julius the architect, and Simplicius the stone-carver, are still currently missing.



Ricostruzione della collocazione dei dipinti nel 1787-88

Graphic reconstruction of paintings' display in 1787-88