

展覧会評: Artemisia and the Count's Painters:  
The Collection of Giangirolamo II Acquaviva d'Aragona in Conversano  
From April 14 to September 30, 2018  
Castle and Church of San Giuseppe, Conversano

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### 1. Exhibition in Conversano

From the spring to the fall of 2018, an exhibition that focused on a lost collection of Count of Conversano Giangirolamo II Acquaviva d'Aragona (1600–1665) was held in Conversano, a city in Apulia that is situated 20 km South of Bari. The exhibition was divided into two parts. The first part was held in the Castle where the Count and Countess Isabella Filomarino, his wife, had lived; the castle comprised eight rooms.<sup>1</sup> The second part was held in the Church of San Giuseppe, which was deconsecrated and opened for the public.

Each section coincided with the nine chapters of the catalogue edited by Viviana Farina (Accademia delle belle arti di Napoli), one of the two curators and a specialist in Neapolitan painting.<sup>2</sup> The other curator Giacomo Lanzilotta (Pinacoteca Metropolitana Corrado Giaquinto, Bari) who once had organized an important exhibition of works by Paolo Finoglio, a court painter of the aforesaid Count.<sup>3</sup> This time, the exhibition was rather grand and a number of paintings of many authors on various subjects were displayed. While focusing on the context of collectionism in seventeenth century, the curators attempted to make a sense of unity for the exhibition.

### 2. Inventories

As an introduction, two inventories were presented in Exhibition Room 2. The first one was the Inventory of Giangirolamo II, who was popular due to his military career and was also an enthusiastic art collector.<sup>4</sup> The Inventory of 1666 (fig. 1) was drafted soon after his death in 1665, and it notes many paintings in his possession.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, a large part of the Count's collection has been dispersed over the centuries. This document tells us the richness of the artistic collection that existed in Conversano. The second was the Inventory of 1814 (presented only as a digital copy).<sup>6</sup> It shows us an outline of the collection that survived and its shape before the final dispersal in the twentieth century.

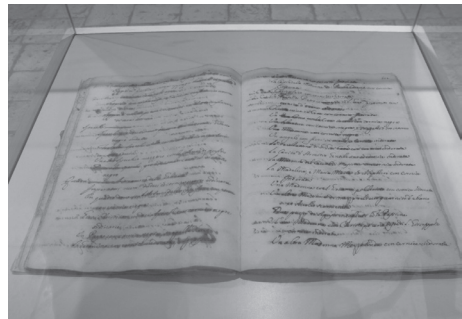


fig. 1 Inventory of 1666.

Rosaria Colaleo, a specialist in archival research, was in charge of these documents.<sup>7</sup> Based on these precious documents, in following rooms, the exhibition revealed the wealth of artistic exchange between Apulia and Naples under the Spanish monarchy.

### 3. Artemisia Gentileschi and *Roman Charity*

As the exhibition title suggests, an important figure of the Conversano art scene was Artemisia Gentileschi, a famous woman painter in the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> Born in Rome in 1593, and

the daughter of the painter Orazio, after working in Florence and Venice, Gentileschi settled circa 1630 in Naples.<sup>9</sup> Her painting *Roman Charity* (Cat. 30 / fig. 2), which was once documented in the Count's Inventory of 1666 and rediscovered in 2015 in a private collection in Conversano, was presented for the first time as a public exhibit.<sup>10</sup> In the painting, a scene from the ancient Roman story of Cimon and Pero is depicted. Old Cimon is imprisoned and Pero, his daughter, who has a newborn baby, saves her father from dying of hunger by secretly breastfeeding him. This theme was occasionally considered to be Christian charity as presented in the *Corporal Works of Mercy*.<sup>11</sup>

For example, in the famous painting by Caravaggio, *The Seven Works of Mercy* (Church of Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples / fig. 3), the figures of Cimon and Pero can be seen on the right hand side with a street at night in the background. They represent simultaneously the two works: "to feed the hungry" and "to visit the imprisoned."<sup>12</sup> Artemisia also used the same scenario to depict her *Roman Charity*. In Artemisia's painting, a haggard old man is imprisoned with handcuffs against

a black background, and beside him a young woman in a blue dress is standing, looking off to the side and keeping lookout as she breastfeeds him. Artemisia might have also referred to Baltromeo Manfredi's picture that is based on the same subject (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence).<sup>13</sup> Although it was executed in those decades, the painter had already passed the peak of her caravaggism, and yet in this painting, an intense tenebrism can be verified. This work is one of the most Caravaggesque of her output in her late career and may indicate the taste of the Conversano court.

Despite the impact of her name being in the title of the exhibition, only four works of her works were displayed, including *Roman Charity* and a recently attributed dessin.<sup>14</sup> The curator also lamented that one of Artemisia's paintings documented in the inventories, *Bathsheba* (fig. 4), was unable to be displayed on this occasion.<sup>15</sup> To cover the volume of the Exhibition Room, works of Onofrio Palumbo, a collaborator of Artemisia, were also seen. This solution gave some interesting results for reconsidering the relationship between the two artists. If her works had been presented in greater number, the resulting exhibition would have been more sufficient as a study of this particular artist.

#### 4. The Count's Painters

However, the main purpose of the exhibition was to reconstruct and show the artistic environment



fig. 2 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Roman Charity*, circa 1640–1645, oil on canvas, 121×147cm, private collection (Cat. 30)



fig. 3 Caravaggio, *The Seven Works of Mercy*, 1606–1607, oil on canvas, 390×260cm, Church of Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples



fig. 4 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Bathsheba*, circa 1640–1645, oil on canvas, 280×220cm, private collection

of Conversano in the seventeenth century. The exhibition was collocated into the series of art historical events in Conversano such as *Paolo Finoglio and His Age* (from April 18 to September 30, 2000) and *Paolo Finoglio and His Followers* (from September 8 to October 28, 2012).<sup>16</sup> It seems that the title of the exhibition also showcases respect for the early monograph of Apulian art history, *I pittori del Guercio* by Michele and Pina d'Elia.<sup>17</sup>

Besides Artemisia, then, who were the painters of the Count? Obviously, the first of them was Paolo Finoglio, a Neapolitan artist who settled in Conversano circa 1635.<sup>18</sup> He left a famous cycle titled *Jerusalem Delivered* based on the widely known epic by Torquato Tasso and composed of ten large paintings.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the exhibition did not contain this brilliant cycle or the self-portrait of the court painter that had been rediscovered, although these works are conserved in the Conversano castle today. This was a regrettable aspect of this exhibition.

The other important figure on the Conversano art scene was Massimo Stanzione, a highly esteemed painter in the first half of the seventeenth century, who was the so-called "Neapolitan Guido Reni."<sup>20</sup> Exhibition Room 5 was solely dedicated to him. Although his works documented in the Count's inventories were not identified in existing works, such as *Christ at the Column* (Cat. 15) and *Supper at Emmaus* (Cat. 21), these paintings in the exhibition demonstrate his harmonic style that is marked by both elegance and Neapolitan Caravaggism. It is not difficult to imagine the Count having been fascinated by his style. In the catalogue, Viviana Farina, a curator, diligently studied this artist and published a new essay that was dedicated toward his fledgling career, which were almost ambiguous until today.<sup>21</sup> To understand this artist's activity, this exhibition offered a positive occasion.

In addition, another painting from the Count's collection must be mentioned, *Leda and the Swan* (Cat. 37 / fig. 5), whose author is anonymous in the Inventory of 1666, and that is documented erroneously as *Venus Holds a Swan in Her Arms*. It is a characteristic work that has relevance to the Viceroy of Naples. It has been revealed that this painting has been discussed as being based on a copy of an antique relief in possession of the Viceroy Duke of Alcala at his residence, Casa de Pilatos.<sup>22</sup> It may reflect a taste for the antique and favor for Caravaggesque chiaroscuro with a Spanish connection between Conversano and Naples. By displaying this rare work that precisely has been identified in the description of the Inventory, it was indicated to be an important result of archival research on art history.<sup>23</sup>

### 5. Church of San Giuseppe

In the second part of the exhibition, at the Church of San Giuseppe, many large pieces could be seen (fig. 6). For example, *Triumph of Bacchus* (Cat. 39 / fig. 7) by Finoglio, which was executed for the Spanish King



fig. 5 Anonymous painter, *Leda and the Swan*, 1630/1631, oil on canvas, 113.5×76.5cm, private collection (Cat. 37)



fig. 6 Exhibition Room: Church of San Giuseppe.

Philip IV, was dedicated to the decoration of the Buen Retiro Palace, and is now in the Madrid Royal Collection.<sup>24</sup> As Nicola Cleopazzo suggests, it resembles one of the paintings of *Jerusalem Delivered* cycle, *Orindo and Sofronia* (fig. 8), and shows the activity of Finoglio in Naples in the first half of the 1630s along with that of Artemisia Gentileschi and Massimo Stanzione. These three painters collaborated for another commission for the Buen Retiro Palace, *The Life of Saint John*.<sup>25</sup> Although Finoglio's painting in the *Saint John* cycle has been lost, in the exhibition, Artemisia's *Birth of Saint John* (fig. 9) was presented, which also belonged to the cycle.<sup>26</sup> His *Triumph of Bacchus* indicated that Finoglio's Neapolitan experience, with an interrelationship with Artemisia and Massimo, offered a rich impact on his creation in Conversano, such as in *Jerusalem Delivered* cycle.

Besides the relationship of those three artists, a notable difference between Finoglio and Cesare Fracanzano, his successor, was emphasized. Finoglio died around 1645 and left the decoration of the Church of Santi Cosma e Damiano in Conversano unfinished. Fracanzano completed this decoration work and filled in the position of the court painter. Fracanzano's painting *Family of Satyrs* (Cat. 42 / fig. 10) is one of the most unique genre paintings in the Count's collection.<sup>27</sup> This work depicts a light and graceful movement, or a slight comical style, of the painter in contrast to his predecessor, Finoglio, with his heavy realism and intense tenebrism.



fig.7 Paolo Finoglio, *Triumph of Bacchus*, circa 1635, oil on canvas, 231×360cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (Cat. 39)



fig. 8 Paolo Finoglio, *Orindo and Sofronia*, circa 1642–1645, oil on canvas, 260×300cm, Castle, Pinacoteca comunale, Conversano



fig. 9 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Birth of Saint John*, 1634/1635, oil on canvas, 184×258cm, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (Cat. 38)



fig. 10 Casare Fracanzano, *Family of Satyrs*, 1640/1650, oil on canvas, 205.7×255.8cm, private collection (Cat. 42)

## 6. The Outcome

An important aspect of the exhibition is that it reconstructed the elements of the lost collection and showed them to the public. With the rediscovered work by Artemisia and other works that had been identified in Inventory descriptions, the paintings testify to the artistic relationship between Naples and the city of Apulia. Reflecting some new research results and focusing on the Count's collection and its documents, the exhibition successfully presented the artistic culture of the Conversano court. Today, Conversano is a modest city, but in the seventeenth century, as the exhibition eloquently showed, it could have been recognized as one of the most powerful artistic centers in Apulia.

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## Notes

- 1 Each of the sections are as follows: 1) *Simbolo e Pentimento*, 2) *Santi Patroni: Giovanni Battista e Gioramo*, 3) *La fuga in Egitto del Cavalier Guido*, 4) *Maestri Caravaggeshi*, 5) *Massimo Stanzione*, 6) *Baccanale e Battaglie*, 7) *Artemisia Gentileschi e Onofrio Palumbo*, and 8) *Santi e nude*.
- 2 See catalogue: Farina, Viviana, ed., *Artemisia e i pittori del conte: la collezione di Giangirolamo II Acquaviva d'Aragona*, Cava De' Tirreni, 2018. Apart from the nine chapters, one chapter is dedicated to the dessins, which were scattered and shown in places of exhibition.
- 3 See catalogue: Lanzilotta, Giacomo and Francesco Lofano, eds., *Paolo Finoglio e il suo seguito: pittori a Conversano nei decenni centrali del Seicento*, exh. cat. (Conversano, Pinacoteca Comunale), Galatina, 2012.
- 4 About Giangirolamo II, called "Guercio delle Puglie," see Spagnoletti, Angelo Antonio, and Giuseppe Patisso, eds., *Giangirolamo II Acquaviva: un barone meridionale nella crisi del seicento*, Conversano, 1999, pp. 1–24.
- 5 The inventory was transcribed and published in 1983. See Centro Conversanese Ricerche di Storia ed Arte, *Inventario delli beni remasti nell'heredità del quondam eccellentissimo Signor Don Giovanni Geronimo Acquaviva d'Aragonia, Conte di Conversano*, Galatina, 1983.
- 6 For the second Inventory, see Colaleo, Rosaria, "I pittori del conte nelle carte d'archivio," in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–154.
- 7 She works for several important archival projects in Conversano. See *ibid.*
- 8 Farina, Viviana, in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 262–266.
- 9 For Artemisia's Neapolitan career, see the following: Garrard, Mary D., *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art*, Princeton, 1989; Bissell, R. Ward, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art, Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné*, University Park, 1999; Locker, Jesse, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Language of Painting*, New Haven and London, 2015.
- 10 Nicola Spinosa indicates that in 2015 he observed this painting at a private property in Conversano. See Spinosa, Nicola, "Artemisia Gentileschi e Onofrio Palumbo: insieme o 'separati'?", in *Una vita per la storia dell'arte*, Pietro di Loreto, ed., Rome, 2015, pp. 379–388, esp. p. 387, note 16; Farina, Viviana in Farina *op. cit.*, pp. 262–266.
- 11 Traditionally, the *Corporal Works of Mercy* has seven categories as follows: 1) "to feed the hungry," 2) "to give water to the thirsty," 3) "to clothe the naked," 4) "to shelter the homeless," 5) "to visit the sick," 6) "to visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive" [Matthew 25: 35–45]. The seventh work of mercy, "to bury the dead," comes from the Book of Tobit [Tobit 1: 16–22].
- 12 On the paintings of Caravaggio, see Schütze, Sebastian, *Caravaggio: the Complete Works*, Cologne, 2015, pp. 244–245, 412–413.
- 13 On this topic, see author's essay "Roman Charity by Artemisia Gentileschi: Image Sources and Reception in the Acquaviva d'Aragona Collection," will be published on *Ronso* [Journal of the Faculty of Fine Arts] of Tokyo University of the Arts, on March 2020.
- 14 On the dessin, the author of the catalogue entry is Roberto Contini, a famous scholar on Artemisia Gentileschi and curator of exhibitions of her works held in 1991, 2011, and 2013. See Contini in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 348–349. See also following catalogues: Contini, Roberto, and Gianni Papi, eds., *Artemisia*, exh. cat. (Casa Buonarroti, Florence), Rome,

- 1991; Contini, Roberto, and Francesco Solinas, eds., *Artemisia Gentileschi: Storia di una passione*. exh. cat. (Palazzo Reale, Milan), Milan, 2011; Contini, Roberto, and Francesco Solinas, eds., *Artemisia: La musa Clio e gli anni napoletani*. exh. cat. (Palazzo Blu, Pisa), Rome, 2013.
- 15 Farina, Viviana, "Un sogno di grandezza: Giangiolamo II: la vita e l'amore per le arti," in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–37, esp. 26.
- 16 For these exhibitions that were held in Conversano, see catalogues: Fonseca, Cosimo Damiano, ed., *Paolo Finoglio e il suo tempo: Un pittore napoletano alla corte degli Acquaviva*, exh. cat. (Pinacoteca Comunale, and Chiesa di San Giuseppe, Conversano), Naples, 2000; Lanzilotta, Giacomo and Francesco Lofano, eds., *Paolo Finoglio e il suo seguito: pittori a Conversano nei decenni centrali del Seicento*, exh. cat. (Conversano, Pinacoteca Comunale), Galatina, 2012.
- 17 D'Elia, Michele and Pina d'Elia, *I pittori del Guercio: l'ambiente artistico conversanese ai tempi di Giangiolamo II e di Isabella Filomarino*, Conversano, 1968–1969.
- 18 On Paolo Finoglio (called also Finoglia), see De Dominici, Bernardo, *Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti napoletani*, Fiorella Sricchia Santoro, and Andrea Zezza, eds., vols. 1–2, Naples, 2003–2008 [1742–1745].
- 19 See Fonseca, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–168.
- 20 On Massimo Stanzione, see Schütze, Sebastian, and Thomas Willette, *Massimo Stanzione. L'opera completa*, Naples, 1992.
- 21 Farina, Viviana, "Nuove prospettive per la gioventù di Massimo Stanzione," in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–139.
- 22 Farina, Viviana, in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–289.
- 23 Lofano, Francesco, "La collezione Acquaviva d'Aragona nel castello di Conversano: nuove opere rintracciate e alcune ipotesi," *Studi bitontini*. 88.2009 (2010), pp. 95–99.
- 24 Cleopazzo, Nicola, in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 249–297.
- 25 For the Saint John cycle, see Vannugli, Antonio, "Stanzione, Gentileschi, Fignoglia: Le storie di San Giovanni Battista per il Buen Retiro," *Storia dell' arte*, vol. 80 (1994), pp. 59–73.
- 26 For Artemisia's painting, see Cleopazzo, in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 292–293.
- 27 Farina, Viviana, in Farina, *op. cit.*, pp. 306–309.

### Illustration sources

Photo by author (figs. 1, 6) / Farina, *op. cit.* (figs. 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10) / Schütze, *op. cit.* (fig. 3) / L'Abbate, Vito, *Il ciclo pittorico di Paolo Finoglio sulla "Gerusalemme liberata" nella Pinacoteca comunale Conversano*, Conversano, 1999 (fig. 8)