**Tanzio da Varallo**

**Realismo, fervoree contemplazione in un pittore del Seicento/**

**Realism, fervour and contemplation of a 17th-century painter**

Milan, Palazzo Reale

from 5 April to 2 July 2000

More than sixty works, some of which never seen before and some recently restored, make up the exhibition *Tanzio da Varallo - Realismo, fervore e contemplazione in un pittore del Seicento/ Realism, fervour and contemplation of a 17th-century painter*, which is promoted by the Council of Milan, Culture and Museums Department, and by the Lombardy Region, Culture Department, and is held atPalazzo Reale from 5 April to 2 July 2000.

Curated by Marco Bona Castellotti with the co-operation of a scientific committee whose members are Paola Astrua,Simonetta Coppa, Giovanna Di Matteo, Filippo Maria Ferro, Francesco Frangi, Carlenrica Spantigati, Richard Townsend and Paolo Venturoli, the exhibition offers a wide overview of the most significant works by Tanzio da Varallo, an artist who today may be slightly neglected, but is still able of great realism and intense spiritual involvement.

The exhibition stands like a monograph: it gathers forty works on canvas coming from different Italian regions (Piedmont, Lombardy, Abruzzo and Campania) and from the United States, as well as more than twenty drawings from various European collections and a group of polychrome sculptures of full size figures, shaped in terracotta by the artist's brother Giovanni d'Enrico and then painted by Tanzio himself, that comes from the museum of Varallo Sesia in Piedmont, the mountain town where the brothers were mostly active around 1620 and left their permanent mark in the Sacro Monte Chapels.

In addition the exhibition is a unique occasion in order to discover the frescos left by Tanzio in some Milanese churches, such as Saint Mary of Peace where the visitor can admire a beautiful series of frescos very recently restored by the Cariplo Foundation, and Saint Antony where there are other frescos still awaiting restoration.

Who discovered and "launched" this great artist was Giovanni Testori, who, through a first memorable solo exhibition at Palazzo Reale in Turin (between 1959 and 1960) and an exhibition on the 17th Century in Lombardy, held at Palazzo Reale in Milan in 1973, claimed the greatness of Tanzio as the protagonist of Caravaggio's season in the North. Since then the studies on his works have progressed a lot: from the archives unknown documents came out, new works resurfaced from the scholars' scouting (in Colledimezzoin Abruzzo,in Gerenzano in the Milanese area, in various private collections in Italy and abroad) and paintings on canvas and many frescos which underwent important and informative restorations.

The artistic career of Antonio d'Enrico, who used to be called 'Tanzio da Varallo', underwent a turning point after his journey to Rome in 1600 when he became fascinated by the painting of Caravaggio who was then at the peak of his artistic career. Leaving Varallo in Piedmont he travelled towards the Jubilee City to receive the Indulgence together with his brother Melchiorre, a painter as well, the young man from Valsesia quickly learnt the lessons of realism and spiritual intensity handed out by Caravaggio. Once back in the North, after a period of activity in Campania and Abruzzo(in Pescocostanzo, Colledimezzo, and Fara San Martino), Tanzio da Varallo became a very original propagator of the Rome lessons of reality in Piedmont and Lombardy, and started to paint frescos and altar canvases of very intense spiritual flare and deep realism, and portraits of moving intensity.

The set-up, curated by Giorgio Gandolfi, is displayed in some rooms on the main floor of Palazzo Reale, the first one to open to the public after a very recent restoration. The fine catalogue, published by Federico Motta Editore, allows the reader to go deep into the artistic life of one of the most illustrious exponents of 17th-century painting in Northern Italy. His personality is here interpreted through more up-dated studies and shows the recent restorations done on the series of frescos in Piedmont and Lombardy.

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