



ANDREA MANTEGNA (1431-1506)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

1431

Andrea Mantegna, son of the carpenter Biagio, was born in Isola di Carturo in Padua, a village that was at that time part of the Vicentine countryside and renamed Isola Mantegna in 1963 in honour of the illustrious artist who was born there.

1445

He enrolled in the *fraglia* (guild) of painters in Padua, where he was registered as the adopted son of master Francesco Squarcione.

1448

Having dissolved his association with Squarcione, the artist, who was already qualified as a *magister* and had painted an altarpiece for St. Sophia on his own, realized with Nicolò Pizolo the fresco for the Ovetari family chapel in the Church of the Eremitani in Padua. Completed by 1457, the paintings with the *Stories of Saints James and Christopher* were bombed during the Second World War and are now in a fragmentary state.

1449

The painter is documented in Ferrara in the service of Marquis Leonello d'Este.

1452-1454

In Padua, he painted the lunette of the main portal of the Basilica del Santo with *St. Anthony and St. Bernardine of Siena with the Trigram of Christ* (now in the Museo Antoniano) and the polyptych for the chapel of St. Luke in the Basilica of Santa Giustina (now in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan). In 1453 he married Nicolosia, the daughter of Iacopo Bellini, father of Gentile and Giovanni, thus becoming related to the most important family of Venetian painters of the time.

1457-1459

In Verona, commissioned by Abbot Gregorio Correr, he painted the grandiose altarpiece for the high altar of the basilica of San Zeno, which is still in its original location except for the *predella* panels, which were confiscated by French troops in 1797 and are currently preserved in Paris (Louvre) and Tours (Musée des Beaux-Arts).

1460-1462

He now resided permanently in Mantua, where he was in the service of Marquis Ludovico III Gonzaga. The *Triptych of the Uffizi* and the *Death of the Virgin* date back to his first Mantuan period. This work is now divided between the Prado Museum in Madrid (*Funeral of the Virgin*) and the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Ferrara (*Christ with the soul of the Virgin*) and was originally in the marquis' private chapel in the castle of San Giorgio.

1465-1474

Also in the castle of San Giorgio, at the request of the marquis Ludovico III Gonzaga and his consort Barbara of Brandenburg, the artist painted one of his masterpieces on the piano nobile, the *Bridal Chamber* or 'camera picta', as it was referred to in the documents. In a small space (805 x 807 cm), using a mixed technique of fresco and tempera, Mantegna succeeds in creating admirable illusionistic effects with spaces that open outwards, as the famous oculus with foreshortened cherubs painted on the vault demonstrates.

1488-1490

He is documented in Rome, summoned by Pope Innocent VIII to paint a small chapel in the Palazzetto del Belvedere, demolished between 1776 and 1778 under Pius VI. As recounted by Vasari, to whom the work appeared to be 'a thing illuminated', the chapel contained *Stories of St. John the Baptist and the Infancy of Christ*.

1497-1502

He executed the decoration of the studiolo of Isabella d'Este, wife of Francesco II Gonzaga, in the castle of San Giorgio, with canvases depicting *Parnassus* and *Minerva banishes the Vices from the garden of Virtues*, both conserved in the Louvre.

1506

He died on 13 September, while he was busy decorating his own funeral chapel in the basilica of Sant'Andrea, to which the *Holy Family and the Family of the Baptist* and the *Baptism of Christ*, still *in situ*, were destined.