



MARIA MARTINETTI

BIOGRAPHY

Maria Martinetti was born in Rome in 1864 to Teresa Gasparri and Salvatore Martinetti, owners of the restaurant “Il Fagiano” located in Palazzo Wedekind in Piazza Colonna, rebuilt in 1838 by architect Pietro Camporese the Younger at the behest of Gregory XVI.

Her parents supported Maria’s artistic inclination, and in 1880, at the age of 16, she joined the studio of Gustavo Simoni (1845-1926), an artist specialising in oriental subjects, genre scenes, and historical themes.

Under Simoni’s guidance, young Maria honed her technical skills, demonstrating stylistic qualities and chromatic sensitivity both in watercolour – a favoured medium for oriental and genre scenes – and in oil technique, of which the only currently known example is the painting *Malaria* exhibited at Castel Gandolfo Museums Complex from 20 September 2024.

In 1883, at the age of 19, she debuted on the Roman art scene at the Fine Arts Exhibition with *The Mandolin Player*, and in 1887 on the Italian scene at the National Artistic Exhibition of Venice with the acclaimed work *Will I See Him Tomorrow?*. Both watercolours are lost, as are many of her works, making it difficult, given the current state of research, to provide a thorough critical evaluation of her production.

In 1889, Maria participated in the Universal Exposition in Paris, an international event celebrated with the construction of the Eiffel Tower. Here she exhibited *Malaria*: an oil painting created in 1887, extensively thought out in its thematic composition, earning her the significant recognition of a silver medal.

Maria presented the painting a second time in 1893 at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, along with a watercolour titled *Beggar*. This opportunity opened the doors to the North American market, leading her to the decision of moving to the United States.

In 1895, following her father’s death, she returned to Rome to manage the family’s restaurant, which was left to her and her sister Ida.

In the dynamic political and social climate of Rome, Maria Martinetti met journalist and literary critic Giacinto Stiavelli, whom she married in April 1896. The couple had four children, of whom only Giacinta Maria Cesarina, born in 1900, and Cesare, born in 1902, survived.

Despite her work at the restaurant and family commitments, Maria continued her artistic activities, as evidenced by her participation in exhibitions of the Society of Amateurs and Cultivators of Fine Arts in Rome and some exhibitions abroad.

In the 1920s, Maria opened a studio for ladies interested in pursuing their passion for art and painting at a time when it was still difficult for women to receive a complete and independent education.

Maria Martinetti Stiavelli died in Rome in 1937, at the age of 73.