



Self-Portrait as Allegory of Painting, 1638-1639

Artemisia Gentileschi,

the first female painter to
be admitted to the Accademy of Disegno in Florence

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She started painting thanks to her father



- The first-born child of painter Orazio Gentileschi and Prudenzia Montone, who died in childbirth when Artemisia was only twelve years old, she demonstrated a precocious and marked pictorial talent that matured in the studio of her father, already a leading exponent of Roman Caravaggio. Her activity in the workshop of her father ends as a result of the trial in 1612, wanted by Artemisia and the family after the violence of Agostino Tassi, his master of perspective, which at the time of the event was engaged, along with Orazio, in the decoration of Palazzo Pallavicini Rospigliosi in Rome.
- Tassi came out of the trial practically unscathed, while the Gentileschi family had to suffer heavy moral condemnation, in addition to the crudeness of the Court's inquisitorial methods, of which there is ample documentation . It is worth mentioning that Artemisia agrees to testify under torture, to prove her virginity before the rape, and is subjected to the sibyl, a torture designed for painters, which consists in binding their fingers with ropes until they bleed.

After the violence by Agostino Tassi



Judith Beheading Holofernes, 1614-1620, Uffizi
Gallery, Florence

- After the trial, the father manages to arrange a marriage for his daughter with Pierantonio Stiattesi, a Florentine painter, which determines the move to Florence and a new season, definitely as a "soloist" for Artemisia. In Florence her first daughter is born (she will have three more? the news are discordant) and is accepted, contrary to her husband, at the Academy of the Arts of Drawing: she is the first woman to obtain this prestigious recognition.
- Caravaggio's Judith (on the right) has an intimidated look, frightened by the sight of blood, as if the woman were not slitting Holofernes' throat by her own will but saw his hand doing it, forced by a will that is not her own. Artemisia's Judith (on the left), on the other hand, is an alter-ego of the painter, and she carries out the murder against Holofernes/Tassi in a conscious way: her eyes do not flee, she is strong, determined and aware of her act.

Promoted a break with the past by depicting strong, powerful women



Judith with her maid, 1618-1619, Palazzo Pitti, Firenze

- It obtains important commissions from the Florentine families (Medici included) and tightens friendship with Galileo Galilei that nourishes for she great esteem, and with Michelangelo Buonarroti the young one, which commissions her a cloth in order to celebrate its illustrious ancestor and entertains with she a correspondence, that she acquits having from little learned to write. Of this period they make part the Conversion of the Maddalena and the Giuditta with its ancella of Pitti Palace and a second version of the Giuditta that beheads Oloferne, preserved to the Uffizi.
- The possibilities of a career in art for a woman of the 16th century were almost non-existent, even more so if - like Artemisia - one did not come from an aristocratic family.

Artemisia's fame lays on her being a great innovator as a painter

- Artemisia's fame is great among her contemporaries, although her more recent fortune is perhaps more linked to the dramatic and fictional aspects of her life, and to her courage in facing them, which have almost naturally made her a feminist heroine ante litteram.



Conversion of Magdalene, 1615-1616,
Palatine Gallery of Palazzo Pitti, Florence



Susanna and the Old Men, 1610, oil on canvas, 170×119
cm, Graf von Schönborn Collection, Pommersfelden



An ante litteram feminist

- In the seventeenth century, in an art world almost entirely dominated by men, Artemisia Gentileschi is proposed as a Caravaggio-style artist with a modern, brave and determined character. A woman in art, a strong figure who makes her way among prejudice, violence and abuse. Artemisia Gentileschi was born on July 8, 1593 in Rome, in what was then known as the Papal States. She was a talented painter and a feminist at a very young age back then!



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