

The San Lorenzo in Lucina Crucifixion

by
Guido Reni
1575 – 1642

Guido Reni was born in Bologna to a family of musicians. At an early age he was apprenticed to the Flemish painter Denys Calvaert (1540-1619) where his fellow students numbered Dominichino and Albani. Eventually he moved to the *Accademia degli Incamminati* which had been founded by Annibale, Ludovico and Agostino Carracci and drew on the influence of Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian and Correggio. It would become the epicenter of the Bolognese school of painting of which Reni would, in time, become the principal exponent. In 1601 he joined Annibale Carracci in Rome for the fresco decoration of the Palazzo Farnese. His career as an independent painter began in Rome under the patronage of Popes Paul V, Urban VIII and the Borghese and Barberini families.

In 1618 he accepted a commission to paint the ceiling of the chapel of San Gennaro in the Cathedral at Naples but returned to Rome soon after its completion. By 1620 he had returned to Bologna where he set up a studio which specialised in biblical and mythological subjects and to a lesser degree in portraiture. He died in 1642 and was buried in the Basilica of San Dominico.

The Crucifixion in San Lorenzo in Lucina was painted towards the end of his career and dates from about 1638. It was installed over the high altar of the church shortly after 1669 when the picture was given to the church in the will of marchesa Cristina Duglioli Angelelli, a Bolognese noble lady, who had settled in Rome in the parish of San Lorenzo in Lucina in 1643 following the assassination of her husband Senatore Andrea Angelelli.

The picture shows Christ before his death on the Cross interceding with the Father for the world. It lacks the lance wound in his side and depicts Christ without the more gruesome aspects of his passion. The body of Christ is painted in a translucent white colour which contrasts with darkness enfolding the landscape representing a fallen world. As a work of chiaroscuro, it emphasises Christ as light and life of the world.

A second version of the Crucifixion, painted in 1636, distinguished by a stark background and a white perisoma is in the collection of the Dukes of Este in Modena, while a third version painted about 1620 is in the collection of the Palazzo Pallavicini in Rome.

A copy of the San Lorenzo version was recently acquired for the parish church. It was painted by the Cork artist Richard Lyster (1828-1863) having been begun by him in Rome in 1848 during his sojourn in the city and completed in 1859.