

“Chi compra per rivendere, vuole travendere”. I coronari e il commercio dei quadri nella Roma del Seicento attraverso il caso di Giovan Domenico Atanasio

Abstract

This essay focuses on the role that the *coronari* (sellers of rosaries and other religious items) played in the 17th-century Roman art trade and in the appraisal of paintings, thus directing attention to a professional group that art market studies have until now largely neglected. Even though these merchants primarily sold low-priced merchandise to pilgrims and other travellers, they would also offer works of art of great artistic and material value in their workshops (especially small, highly prized oil paintings on stone or metal). Such works attracted the attention of aristocratic clients, as evidenced by the accounting records of prominent Roman families and some court records. Many artists (especially foreigners) used the *coronari* as art dealers, just as many high-ranking families entrusted them with valuable paintings from their collections for resale – a practice that these families also observed in their dealings with traders of second-hand goods, the so-called *rigattieri*. Archival documentation leads us into an underworld populated by unscrupulous brokers, crafty painters, and art appraisers, all centred around the workshops of the *coronari*, who, along with gloves, necklaces, and fans, dealt in works by Claude Lorrain, Jean Turpin, and Nicolas de la Fleur, often without paying the fee due to the Accademia di San Luca. In particular, the essay examines the activity of Giovan Domenico Atanasio, a native of Positano (a small village not far from Amalfi) but living in Rome near Tor Sanguigna, whose clients included Alessandro Peretti Montalto, Maurizio di Savoia, Bernadino Spada, and Olimpia Pamphilj. A signed and dated 1631 work by this little-known figure is also presented, which appears to be strongly influenced by Antonio Tempesta.