



ITINERARIO LIBERTY



Galileo Chini

Born in Florence on 2nd. December 1873 from Elio Chini and Aristeo Bastiani. On 13th. December 1884 he remained fatherless. The precarious economical conditions of the family induced him to find a job in the factory of chemical products "Pegna". After abandoning this activity and embarking upon others without success, he was accepted as an apprentice in the decorating and restoring enterprise of his paternal uncle Dario.

After a year and a half of attendance at the School of Professional Arts of Santa Croce in Firenze, he was forced to abandon his studies because of work commitments. In 1887 he enrolled at the evening school in Via Maggio and at the Dazzi Sunday schools in Florence.

The following year he met the painter Giulio Bargellini who worked with Augusto Burchi. These would entrust him, soon afterwards, with the assignment of carrying out some decorations in the Budini - Gattai Palace in Florence. In 1893 he supported the group of Nino Costa, the promoter of a return to the Italian tradition in painting.

In 1895 he met Volterra Elvira Pescetti, who was to become his wife. In this period he attended the Free School of Nude at the Academy of Beautiful Arts in Florence. Again in this same period he became a member of the Club of the Artists and a friend of Telemaco Signorini, Plinio Nomellini, Lodovico Tommasi, Salvino Tofanari, Libero Andreotti, Enrico Sacchetti, Sem Benelli and Giovanni Papini.

In 1896 he began his collaboration with the magazine "Fiammetta", for which he was to idealize some illustrations of pre-Raphaelite taste. In this same year he founded the manufacture Ceramic Arts together with Vittorio Giunti, Giovanni Vannuzzi and Giovanni Montelatici, in Florence, in Via Arnolfo. After a short time, his cousin, Chino Chini also joined these partners. In 1898 the products of Ceramic Arts were presented at the International Exposition of Arts in Turin, where they won the gold medal.

The success of this young manufacturing, of which Galileo Chini was the artistic director, was also repeated in following exhibitions, amongst which that in Paris in 1900. In 1901 he participated in the Venice Biennale presenting the painting 'La Quietè'. Meanwhile, the production was transferred to larger premises in the locality of Fontebuoni.

On occasion of the National Floriculture Show in Florence in 1902, they collaborated in the construction of the pavilion of ceramics with the architect Castellucci. Again in the same year, they took part with ceramics of the manufacturing in the Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Turin, winning the diploma of honour and two important prizes. In 1903 they exhibited the canvas "The Sphinx" at the Venice Biennale.

Again for this artistic manifestation, they collaborated in the setting up of the Tuscany Hall.

In 1904 Galileo abandoned the manufacturing for differences of opinion with the management. In this same year, he carried out the decoration of the Palace of the Cassa di Risparmio of Pistoia, of the La Pace Hotel in Montecatini and frescoed a part of the Villa Targioni in Calenzano internally. At the Venice Biennale in 1905 he exhibited two paintings: "Triumph" and "The Country". He took part in the setting up, again in this manifestation, of the Tuscany Hall.

In 1906, he founded the manufacturing San Lorenzo Furnaces, together with his cousin, Chino Chini, for the production of ceramics and stained-glass windows. In the same year, he carried out the decorations of the Cassa di Risparmio of Arezzo, and at the Exhibition of Sempione in Milan he carried out three panels for the reconstruction of the Italian section, destroyed by fire. In 1907 he exhibited the paintings "Icarus", "The

Yoke” and “The Baptist” at the seventh Venice Biennale.

For this Biennale, he fitted out the Hall of Dreams, together with the sculptor De Albertis. In 1908 Antonio Fradeletto gave him the task of decorating the entrance environment of the Venice Biennale. He carried out, in about twenty days, the frescos in the eight segments of the dome of such an environment, representing the cycles of the arts. In 1909 he realized the scenes and the placards for the “Dinner of Practical Jokes” by Sem Benelli, which was presented at the Argentine Theatre in Rome.

At the International Exhibition in Brussels in 1910, he decorated the Italian pavilion. In 1911, he carried out the illustrations for “The Love of the Three Kings” by Sem Benelli. Again in this year, together with the architect Giusti, he obtained the assignment from the Chamber of Commerce in Florence, to design the Tuscan Pavilion for the Ethnographic Show of the Italian Regions in Piazza d' Armi in Roma.

1911 was also the year of his departure for Bangkok, invited by the Thai sovereign to decorate the Throne Room of the homonymous palace. In 1914 he returned for good to Italy to realize eighteen decorative panels for the Venice Biennale, for the hall dedicated to the sculptor Ivan Mestrovic. In that year he obtained the professorship of decoration at the Academy of Beautiful Arts in Florence.

In 1917 he published the placard “Renewing, We Renew Ourselves” together with Cifariello, Grubicy, Casorati, De Carolis, Michetti, Morbelli, Sartorio and Soffici. This placard proposed the abolition of the Academies, and hoped for the foundation of industrial artistic schools. In 1918 he executed a sketch for “The Tabard” of Giacomo Puccini and the scenes for Gianni Schicchi. For the Venice Biennale in 1920, he decorated the central hall drawing inspiration from wartime.

In 1921 he carried out the decorations of the Scalini Villa in Carbonate on Lake Como. In 1923 he did the scenography for ‘Turandot’ of Giacomo Puccini. In this year he completed the decoration of the grand staircase of the thermal establishment Lorenzo Berzieri in Salsomaggiore, and decorated the Moresco Hall and the Red Tavern at the Hotel des Thèrmes, again in the same locality.

In 1927 he carried out the decorations inside the Donegani Villa on Lake Como. From the end of the Twenties, he devoted himself more and more to painting at an easel, continuing to exhibit at the Venice Biennales until 1936. Despite progressive blindness, he continued painting until the end of the Fifties.

On 23rd. August 1956 he died in Florence, in his house in Via del Ghirlandaio.