

The Assumption of Mary with Saint Rocco and the customer

“Saint Rocco, the Assumption of Mary and a mysterious customer in a masterpiece by Vincenzo Campi from Cremona”

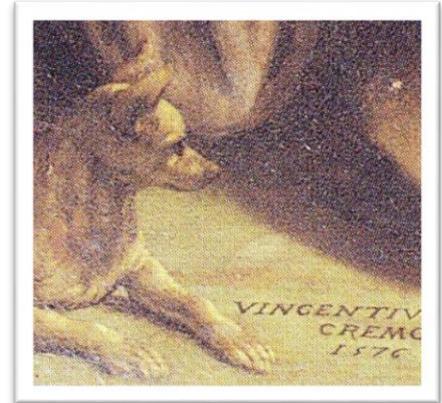
- oil painting on canvas
- 16th century (1576)
- Vincenzo Campi (Cremona, 1536-1591)



The painting portrays the Virgin Mary taken up to Heaven, revered by Saint Rocco and the customer, who chose to be portrayed in the painting (as the one who commissioned and financed the work), as a sign of devotion and self-celebration. The customer has been identified as either Giulio Pallavicino or Giulio Rancoveri, two local nobles. One of them would have ordered the construction of the chapel in Gazzino dedicated to the “Assumption of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Rocco”, located between San Pietro in Corte and San

Giuliano, as requested in the last will and testament of Gilberto Pallavicino (father-in-law of the former or father of the latter).

The figure of Saint Rocco has considerable relevance in the painting. He is represented with the traits traditionally attributed to him in popular iconography: the cloak, the pilgrim staff, the small dog and a sore on his thigh. Saint Rocco was widely venerated throughout the Middle Ages, invoked against the plague, natural disasters and diseases of the livestock. Veneration for this Saint spread from his birthplace, Montpellier, to all over Italy, especially around Brescia and Piacenza.



It is told that he was coming back to Montpellier from Rome when he came across a pestilence in Piacenza (probably the plague of 1348, described by Boccaccio in his Decameron). He assisted the sick until he too got infected. According to tradition he retired in a solitary cave, where a dog brought him bread every day, until he was completely healed and resumed his journey.

Pallavicino: One of the most important and ancient families in Northern Italy. They ruled over the area comprised between Cremona, Parma and Piacenza, where they set up a State, called Stato Pallavicino, which included Busseto, Zibello and Cortemaggiore.