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Kauffmann, Angelika, *Selbstbildnis*, um 1780, Öl auf Leinwand, 93 x 76,5 cm (Objektmass), Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur. Depositum: Gottfried Keller-Stiftung, Winterthur

Documentation level



Name

Kauffmann, Angelika

Other version/s of name

Angelica
Kauffman, Marianna Angelica
Kauffman(n)-Zucchi, Maria Angelica
Kauffmann, Angelica
Kauffmann, Maria Anna Angelika (Angelica) Catharina
Kaufman, Angelica
Kaufmann, Angelica

Dates of birth and death

* 30.10.1741 Chur, † 5.11.1807 Rom

Municipality of origin (CH)

Chur

Nationality

CH

Brief biography

Malerin, RadiererIn und Musikerin. 1742-1765 in Italien und Österreich, 1766-1781 in London, 1782-1807 in Rom. Porträt, Allegorie, Mythologie und Historienmalerei

Fields of activity

Malerei, Deckenmalerei, Zeichnung, Fresko, Wandmalerei, Radierung, Reproduktion

Lexicon article

She begins with an education that is unusually broad for a girl of her time: Angelika's talent is fostered at an early stage

by her father, [Joseph Johann Kauffmann](#), a mediocre portraitist and fresco painter; her mother, Cleofea Luz, teaches her music and languages. In 1742, the family leaves Chur for Italy – moving initially to Morbegno, and in 1752 to Como, which is governed by Kauffmann's most important clients, the Counts di Salis, who will also become those of his daughter. Angelika produces her first painting, *Self-portrait at the Age of 13 as a Singer with Sheet Music* (Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum). From 1754–57, sojourn in Milan at the court of the Duke of Modena d'Este; *Portrait of the Duchess* and the Austrian Governor, *Carlo Firmian* (both lost). In Milan, following the death of her mother, Angelika definitively chooses painting as her profession. She documents the decision with her *Self-portrait in Bregenzwald Costume with a Paintbrush and Palette* (1757, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi). Forty years later, in retrospect, she paints the *Self-portrait at the Crossroads between Painting and Music* (1792, Moscow, Pushkin Museum; circa 1794, Nostell Priory, Collection of Lord St. Oswald). In 1757, her father executes ceiling frescoes for the parish church in his home town of Schwarzenberg in Austria; his daughter paints the *12 Apostles* after Piazzetta for the lateral walls. In 1802, she donates her largest altarpiece, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, to the parish.

In 1758, a second sojourn in Milan is followed by a study trip to Florence via Parma, Modena and Bologna. The student copies works by the Carraccis, Correggio, Domenichino, Guercino and Raphael held in important collections. On 5.10.1762, she is made an honorary member of the Accademia di Bologna, of the Accademia di Disegno in Florence shortly afterwards, and on 5.5.1764, of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome (acceptance piece: *Hope*, Rome, Galleria dell'Accademia Nazionale di San Luca). She establishes key contacts with English Grand Tourists, whose portraits she paints. These include her important patron, *John Parker* (1764, Plymouth, Saltram House Collection, The National Trust), colleagues Nathaniel Dance (1735–1811), Gavin Hamilton (1723–1798), Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), Giovanni Battista Casanova (1728 or 1730–1793), Benjamin West (1738–1820, subsequently director of London's Royal Academy), as well as Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein (1719–1793), from whom she later learns the technique of etching (portrait drawings in sketchbook, London, Victoria and Albert Museum). From 1763, she secures her breakthrough in Rome by painting the *Portrait of Johann Joachim Winckelmann* (1764, Kunsthau Zürich, and etching), and even at this early stage, she lays the foundation for her career as a history painter with *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1764, Bregenz, Städtische Sammlung, Town Hall) and *Penelope with the Bow of Odysseus* (1764, Hove Museum and Art Gallery). From July 1763 until April 1764, sojourn in Naples and on the island of Ischia. Kauffmann copies works

in the royal collection, the Galleria di Capodimonte, and paints a portrait of the Shakespearean actor *David Garrick* (1764, Stamford, The Burghley House Collection). In 1765, before her arrival in London, she celebrates her début at the Free Society of Artists with this portrait.

In 1766, she travels from Venice, stopping over in Paris, to London, where she opens a prestigious studio on Golden Square. Her father joins her with her cousin, Rosa Florini. Kauffmann falls prey to a fortune hunter, but has the marriage annulled, after four months, on 10.2.1768. Good relations with the English court: she is commissioned by King George III's mother, Augusta, Princess of Wales, to paint a portrait of her daughter, *Augusta, Duchess of Brunswick, with her Son* (London, The Royal Collection) and by the Queen herself (*Queen Charlotte with her Son*, location unknown). Numerous female patrons support her career. She is appointed a founder member of the Royal Academy by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) and thus remains, with the Swiss still-life painter [Mary Moser](#), one of only two female members for the next 200 years. Kauffmann exhibits her first history paintings at the Free Society as early as 1768; in 1769, at the exhibition staged for the opening of the Royal Academy, she presents *Hector and Andromache* and *Venus Showing Aeneas and Achates the Way to Carthage* (both Plymouth, The National Trust, Saltram House Collection). In 1770, Kauffmann produces her first painting related to ancient English history, *Vortigern and Rowena* (Plymouth, The National Trust, Saltram House Collection). Her enthusiasm for literature and her friendships with the leading men and women of letters of her time lead her to create new types of images: examples include *Samma Possessed* (1770, lost) from Klopstock's *Messiah* and *Poor Maria* (1777, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum), inspired by Lawrence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. From 1770, thanks to the newly developed stipple lithograph technique, her works begin to be disseminated on a huge scale.

After her six-month trip to Ireland (family portraits for the Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Townshend), she is chosen, as the only woman, to create the painted decoration of St. Paul's Cathedral together with Reynolds, Dance, James Barry (1741–1806) and Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727–1785). However, the project is not realised; nor is the commission of 1774 to depict scenes from British history together with London's most important history painters in the grand salon of the Adelphi Building housing what is now the Royal Society of Arts. In 1780, her four ceiling paintings, *Invention, Composition, Design and Colour*, are installed at Somerset House, home of the Royal Academy. At the same time, William Wynne Ryland (1732–1783) exhibits approximately 150 engravings after her works. Countless murals, mantle and ceiling paintings based on her designs decorate houses built in the Adam style. Furniture, fabrics, porcelain and Wedgwood wares are also created after her designs; and her oil paintings are reproduced as "mechanical paintings" by Matthew Boulton of the Polygraphic Society.

On 14.7.1781, Kauffmann marries the Venetian *vedute* painter, Antonio Zucchi (1726–1795). She returns to Italy via Flanders, Schwarzenberg and Innsbruck. Zucchi begins a list of her paintings (*Memorie delle pitture*, London, Royal Academy, archives). His impressive roster of international clients includes members of the high aristocracy and the very rich. Kauffmann's most important patrons in Venice include

the future Tsar of Russia, Paul I, with his wife (*Leonardo da Vinci Dying in the Arms of Francis I*, 1782, lost). In 1785, for Catherine II, she paints *Servius Tullius* and *Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes* (1785, lost; 1789, art trade). Before she finally settles in a palazzo once inhabited by Anton Raphael Mengs (1728–1779) on the Via Sistina 72 near Trinità dei Monti and opens one of Rome's most renowned studios, Kauffmann responds to the call of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples and paints her largest group portrait, *The Royal Family of Ferdinand IV* (1784, Neapel, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte). She completes several important history paintings: *Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi*, and *Julia Faints* (Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar). With *Valentine, Proteus, Sylvia und Julia in the Forest* (1788, Wellesley, Massachusetts, Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College), Kauffmann proves that she is still one of England's foremost figure painters, and is invited by John Boydell (1719–1804) to the *Shakespeare Gallery*. The same year, her *Self-portrait* (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi) is hung beside that of Raphael in the famous gallery of the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

In 1787, Goethe, and subsequently Herder, come to Rome in the entourage of Duchess Anna Amalie of Sachsen-Weimar. Kauffmann becomes an intimate member of Goethe's circle (correspondence, *Italian Journey*). In 1789, she completes the altarpiece of the *Holy Family* commissioned by Cardinal Carrara for the Bartolomeo Colleoni Chapel in Bergamo. In 1791 she is awarded her first and only papal commission through Cardinal Ignazio Buoncompagni, Secretary of State of Pope Pius VI, to paint a *Virgin Mary with Saint Anne and Saint Joachim* for the Santa Casa in Loreto. In 1798, French troops occupy Rome. Kauffmann's studio is spared from looting, but her assets are devalued.

Religious themes gain the upper hand in her later work. In 1802, she stays in Como for a cure. In 1805, she receives her last major portrait commission, to depict *Crown Prince Ludwig I of Bavaria* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek). She dies after a brief illness, leaving behind a rich art collection and library. Her friend Antonio Canova (1757–1822) organises a solemn funeral. In imitation of Raphael's obsequies, her coffin is borne by fellow academicians and accompanied by her last major works. Large crowds and numerous dignitaries take part in the interment at the Church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. A bust of the artist created by Peter Kauffmann (no relation), is placed beside Raphael's portrait in the Pantheon.

Johann Gottfried Herder acknowledged Angelika Kauffmann as "perhaps the most cultivated woman in Europe." Her intelligence, profound knowledge of the arts and sciences, and amiable character earned her considerable social prestige. She skilfully packaged herself as a rapturous "beautiful soul" and immortalised herself as the soulmate of many artists, both male and female. Her professional career, unusual for a woman, and her financial success were seen as a sensation and offered plenty of fodder for dramas and novels, but often obscured her artistic achievements as one of the most important representatives of classicism in Europe's artistic centres. Particularly in England, she provided important stimuli, also contributing towards the renewal of history painting there, for she was the first to exhibit paintings on themes from ancient English history. She thus found many followers, although the fashion for sensitivity

that she created with her more easily marketable pictures on literary, allegorical and mythological themes, usually in the appealing tondo format, would later be considered cloying. As a result, criticisms were voiced even in her lifetime, causing her work to be devalued as “pseudo-classicism” in the 19th century. Since the 1960s her work has been reappraised, and gender studies have brought to light new findings on her life and work.

It is a fact that, as broad as her thematic repertoire was, she in no way contravened the standards of virtue expected of women, and due to her deeply religious sentiments also avoided extreme depictions. She usually portrayed her graceful female figures and often androgynous-looking men in moderate emotional states. She imaginatively translated her broad knowledge of literature and her exchanges with the men and women of letters of her time into her pictures, and in doing so sought the “axis of the piece” (Goethe). She illustrated situations in which a crucial decision has to be taken with a fixed repertoire of “espressioni,” using tried and tested compositions that she repeated with a certain uniformity.

Angelika Kauffmann was particularly felicitous in her treatment of colours and materialities, which she executed with the lightest of brushstrokes – “a pennello volante,” as she expressed it. She owed her rich but subtly harmonious palette to the masters of the northern Italian and southern German Baroque, as well as the new English School (Gainsborough). Inspired by Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787), Mengs and Hamilton, she found her style, and a masterfully assured depictive manner, in Rome in the years around 1764. In England, she refined the painterly elements of her work and applied specific stylistic devices in her paintings, depending on their theme and genre. However, these were in no way applied arbitrarily: for her historical compositions, she adopted a classicism in the manner of Poussin and Reni; for her cabinet-format works in the allegorical genre she cultivated a style after Correggio.

By appropriating Reynolds’s concept of the “historicising portrait” for her portraits of women as Hebe or Sibyl and cleverly adapting fashions such as the fad for van Dyck or the vogue for all things Turkish, she became the first port of call on the English portrait market. Throughout her career, this specialisation remained a quick way to earn money. Nonetheless, she also enjoyed respectable successes with her works depicting elevated subject matter, all the while avoiding the cool rigidity of the “gravitas romana” in favour of a more winsome painterly style. As early as 1767, she contributed to the revival of antiquity in painting with her depictions of the classical scenes of *Hector’s Farewell to Andromache* and *Andromache Mourning at the Urn of Hector*. In numerous deathbed scenes, produced well before Jacques-Louis David’s (1748–1825) *Death of Marat*, she reacted to her contemporaries’ reception of Poussin (*Death of Alcestis*, Bregenz, Vorarlberger Landesmuseum).

Not without reason, Angelika Kauffmann was known as the female Raphael of art. This epithet referred not only to her noble character and her allusions to works by Raphael, but also to her depictions of graces, nymphs and cupids. Her œuvre reveals a lofty grace, apparent in the “beautiful line,” sensitive gestures and centred, harmonious compositions of her paintings. For this reason, she was given the sobriquet

“pittrice delle grazie.” In the 1780s, she was able to establish herself as the leading painter in Rome, as the major studios were closed; Mengs and Joseph-Marie Vien (1716–1809) were out of the country, Batoni had died, and the next generation of artists had not yet asserted themselves. Kauffmann’s late style, with its monumental figures and rich, local colour, makes references to Guercino and Reni. Her strength lay in her ability to combine Roman, Venetian, French and English stylistic elements in highly cultivated paintings that combined sensitivity with classical pathos.

Works: Austria: Bregenz, Town Hall; Bregenz, Vorarlberger Landesmuseum; Schwarzenberg, Heimatmuseum; Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseen, Ferdinandeum; Vienna, Albertina, Collection of Prints and Drawings; Vienna, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere; England: London, The British Museum; London, Kenwood House, Iveagh Bequest; London, National Portrait Gallery; London, Tate Britain; Plymouth, The National Trust, Saltram House Collection; London, The Royal Academy of Arts; London, The Royal Collection; Stamford, The Burghley House Collection; Italy: Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte; Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca; Switzerland: Chur, Bündner Kunstmuseum; Kunsthau Zürich. Works in other countries: Moscow, Pushkin Museum; St. Petersburg, Staatliche Eremitage; Warsaw, Muzeum Narodowe; Weimar, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe-Nationalmuseum; Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar; Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek.

Bettina Baumgärtel, 1998, updated 2015

Translation: Toby Alleyne-Gee

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Website

<http://www.angelika-kauffmann.com>

<http://www.angelika-kauffmann.de/akrp-home/akrp>

Direct link

<http://www.sikart.ch/kuenstlerinnen.aspx?id=4022820&lng=en>

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