

## Angelo Cesselon - Biography

### **Angelo Cesselon, painter of films.**

Angelo Cesselon was born in Settimo di Cinto Caomaggiore, province of Venice, February 17th 1922.

He belongs to the group of artists who brought new modalities of expression into the world of Italian movie placards between years 1945 and 1975.

His nature of shy and solitary man, reluctant to be at the centre of attention, refrained him from participating in art exhibitions. He preferred, during the last period of his activity, to leave Rome and his deep love towards cinema and to retire into the country-side of Velletri in order to rediscover in his life and in his artistic expression the contact with nature and faith which had been his first input to arrive to painting.

The very beginning of the career of Angelo Cesselon was tied to the friendship with Tony Paissan: Paissan was in the habit to decorate the churches of the small village in Veneto where both of them were born and which represented his first attempt to the art of painting. Few years later after transferring to Rome with his family, he moved his interest on a different plan; he started to have close contacts with artistic studios, publicity and cinema people, starting to enter that fascinating world which tied him for the rest of his life. In 1949 he began to move his artistic personality towards a completely original profile. Till that moment, in fact, descriptions of films referred to the analytic description of their plots, therefore often limiting artists' liberty in expression.

The young artist was not disposed to strictly obey to these rules and soon found out new solutions letting him to respect both needs of purchasers and his creativity.

The style of cinema's posters, so strictly tied to that traditional publicity posters, was moving - in that period, after the flatness of the beginning of the century and the deep signs of the Thirties - towards a more naturalistic style, with a more delicate chromatism and almost "water colours" which well indicated soft languor of movie stars in the Forties.

Cesselon, in spite of the first studies of posters painted by Ercole Brini with technical instruments till tied to the tradition, soon started to newly interpretate his job.

This way to renew arose from his way to study the subject; in spite of proposing the plot as a series of anedoctic moments, he chose figures at *primo piano*, usually faces, and gave particular evidence to mouths and eyes catching of them, through his cleverness of portrait painter, their whole expressive efficacy.

Often, while at work, he poses a scene or a symbolic element which suggest an evocated but willingly unstructured space.

His style is mostly marked by interpretation of a theme being represented, in which the artist gives more evidence to the mutual exchange of the space-time functions, which is the basic elements of films, the fundamental moment or a psychological situation in which the whole atmosphere of the film is definitely and fully clear.

His style to condensate, finally, into an image matching the various plans of composition culminating into 'primo piano' abandoning those mere descriptions till that moment been used.

These novelties in the Fifties, which confirm originality of his artistic talent for what concerns proposal of subjects and its compositions, were mostly based on his pictoric and chromatic technique.

His colours result more brilliant and vivid when compared to those of previous compositions: bold matching of bright red purple, turquoise and blue reveals a deep chromatism, rooted on his Venetian origins.

Richness of his colours brings more value by using small signs in every stroke of his brush, above all in defining faces of people which moves to a cutting technique in a full of colours palette which never forgets impressionism.

His full of body colours, but not always covering bodies, which take advantage from properties of light refraction, comes to realization not only by using brush, but by means of clever spatula strokes, which vibrating break softness and transparency of flesh: all this confirms the renewing way in art by Angelo Cesselon and makes possible that his technique became popular in the sixties as being an overall new style.

Till 1978 the artist goes on realizing passionately those images which made many generations to have day dreams: but he will use, in this last period, a more graphic style which sometimes outlines any contour of images and colour his widely spread only preferring in some peculiar areas to make reference to spatula end to matteric colours.

Some time later, the artist moved his way of living towards something that devoted himself to religious painting, with a similar care and dedition which he had till that moment applied to the trasgressive world of the cinema fiction.

He was a shy and solitary man: against to be centre of attention, shortly disposed to propose himself in art's exhibitions, he preferred, in his last period of activity, to move from Rome end from his great love to cinema to retire in the country nearby Velletri to refind - in his life and in his artistic expression - that contact with nature and faith that had really been his first way to painting.

In the last twenty years of his life he had devoted himself above all to sacred art, to realize big portraits of saints and founders of religious orders, created through a vigorous style and intense chromatism which made him become famous into the world of movie placards.

Even into sacred portraits the artist pointed out by means of vivid movements the inner psychology of characters, with the same intensity he had realized in all his life portraits of greatest international actors, arriving to the result of renewing and making up to date any classic religious iconography.

Among those paintings we recall a *San Francesco*, a *San Francesco from Paola*, *San Maximilian Kolbe*, *Saint Theresa*, and many others now into churches, for the care of religious orders and of the Vatican.

Also in sacred portraits the artist outlined through vivid touches inner psychology of characters by adopting the same intensity he used during the whole of his life portraits of the most popular movie stars, touching the result to renew and give new life any classical religious iconography.

Angelo Cesselon, extremely severe in practicing art and progressively refining his techniques - especially those on 'paper tempera' - lived with and from his painting, to which he was in the habit to spend nine to ten hours per day, constantly searching his realization in the very act of using brushes.

Cesselon in the arch of his career painted a very high number of outlines, of which a complete index Spellbound has not been possible till now

Among these we must remember the most beautiful portraits of international movie stars such as those of *Gina Lollobrigida (La Romana)*, *Marilyn Monroe (Asphalt jungle and Don't bother to the knock)*, *Ingrid Bergman*, *Gregory Peck (Notorius and Spellbound)* *Ava Gardner (One touch of Venus)*, *Kirk Douglas (The great champion)*, *Burt Lancaster*, *Gary Cooper (Vera Cruz)*, *Paul Newman (The left handed gun)*, *James Dean (Giant)*, *Marlene Dietrich (Der Blauer Engel)* *Totò*, *Fernandel*, and many others.

He worked also for the leading production and distribution films *Metro Goldwin Mayer*, *Twenty Century Fox*, *Minerva*, *Paramount*, *Columbia*, *Cineriz*, *Enic and Titanus*.

Cesselon won in 1955 the prize "Spiga Cambellotti" as the best cinema painter. In 1958 he was mentioned as the best international portrait painter: in the same year he was invited to realize portraits of political people and of Pope John XXIII.

Angelo Cesselon, absolutely jealous of his pictorial secrets, notwithstanding pressing and continuous requests, never accepted to teach and he did not leave any heir of his style even if many others tried to reproduce his technique.

The artist died in Velletri in 1992.

In 1991, notwithstanding his sickness, he accepted to take part in a personal exhibition care of "*Palazzo delle Esposizioni*" in Rome. The exhibition itself was cared by Franco Montini, within the aegis of an event promoted by ANICA "Promoimmaginecinema".

In the same event twenty original outlines (among them portraits of the most famous actors between the end of the Forties and the Seventies) were shown: they witnessed his so personal unmistakable style in the arch of a long career.

Angelo Cesselon is unanimously judged as the best painter and portraitist of Italian movie production. (Contact: Dott.ssa Alessandra Cesselon: email, [alexandrella@yahoo.it](mailto:alexandrella@yahoo.it))