L'arte e la tecnica delle decorazioni a stucco in Europa

The Art and Industry of Stucco Decoration in Europe

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Dalla fine del XV alla metà del XVIII secolo

The Art and Industry of Stucco Decoration in Europe

From the Late 15th to the Middle of 18th Century

A cura di / Edit by
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Baldassarre Fontana in Cracow*

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Baldassarre Fontana (1661–1733) from Chiasso in the Bailiwick of Mendrisio[1] was the most brilliant stucco maker active in Poland at the end of the seventeenth century, so he has attracted significant scholarly attention for many years. However, recent methodologies have enabled new discoveries. Julian Pagaczewski published the first study on Fontana's Cracow works in 1909, presenting the main facts about the artist, his origins and background. Drawing on archival sources and attributions, Pagaczewski also assembled a list of Fontana's works in Poland that has since undergone only minor adjustments.[2] Research on Fontana progressed with Mariusz Karpowicz's monograph. He situated the artist's work in the context of Roman art and addressed foreign literature in an attempt to reconstruct Fontana's full artistic biography. But in some crucial respects he misinterpreted the written sources and adjusted some facts to fit the pre-adopted thesis about Fontana's exceptional work profile and artistic status. Karpowicz tried to prove that in important cases Fontana acted not only as stucco maker, but also as an architect and designer of church decoration and furnishings. Moreover, Fontana's designs were supposed to be the turning point for local art, as he was presented as the protagonist of the new style, rooted in the Roman art of Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680).[3] This thesis must be challenged, at least in relation to Fontana's works in Cracow.

Although Fontana's works reveal quite a good understanding of Berninesque Roman sculpture, there is no evidence of a stay in the Eternal City. He probably learned his sculptural skills in one of the artistic centres of Northern Italy, or in his home near Lake Lugano. However, his professional activity there is also undocumented, and all attempts to identify his works in the Bailiwick of Mendrisio have proved unsuccessful.[4]

First mention of Fontana's presence in Poland coincided with a very important change in the fine arts in Cracow. In 1692 Sebastian Piskorski (1637–1707) was appointed supervisor of the construction works (*director fabricae*) at the new church of St Anne. Piskorski was a professor at the Jagiellonian University, with close connections to the royal court of John III Sobieski. He became famous as a poet, theatre

director, expert in art and architecture, and designer of a pilgrimage site in Grodzisko near Skała distinguished by its extremely elaborate iconographic programme. St Anne's was the most ambitious artistic endeavour ever undertaken by Cracow University; it was carried out under Piskorski's careful supervision in just ten years. As well as being an acknowledged expert in art and architecture, Piskorski was in charge of the financial administration of the whole construction process and was responsible for employing all the contractors and artists. In that position he had a major impact on the final artistic expression of the work, like a director in a play. This metaphor, also used to describe Bernini, is justified, at least to some extent, because the Cracow professor also had significant experience in directing theatre performances.[5]

It is not known exactly when Piskorski met Fontana for the first time. The artist was active in the vicinity of Cracow in 1693, when he, together with a co-worker named Pakosz Trebeller, was hired to decorate the Morsztyn family chapel at the parish church in Wieliczka. The chapel's dome was destroyed in 1787 by an earthquake caused by work in the famous salt mines nearby, so their work is known only from modest wall decorations.[6] However, it seems very likely that Fontana passed through Cracow on his way to Wieliczka and used the opportunity to offer his services to Piskorski at St Anne, where decorative works were about to start. Some clues were left by Andrzej Buchowski (1662–1709), a well-informed professor of mathematics, who published the first monograph on the new university church. He mentioned that Fontana was chosen for the job because of he was a very sharp minded man at the peak of his powers who came with a recommendation from the Bishop of Olomouc, Karl von Liechtenstein-Castelcorno (1624–95).[7] Presumably Fontana left the letter of recommendation in Cracow in 1693 and two years later Piskorski offered him the new job. According to Buchowski, the artist 'was firmly determined to secure evidence for his future fame in this very city and place, to which the hand-made works of all provinces of the Kingdom turned themselves as to their expert and critic'.[8] The quotation sounds exaggerated, but the clues indicate that Fontana undertook his work in St Anne's with exceptional diligence.

To understand Fontana's role in this endeavour, the whole complicated process of the church construction must be considered. Buchowski reported that Fontana quickly gathered some apprentices, and came to Cracow to examine the construction site, where 'he enquired about the invention and disposition of the decoration' (*ornatus inventionem, dispositionemque*), which Piskorski provided. Before work started, he presented a sketch of the proposed layout (*praesentata inprimis monogrammae dispositionis icone*).[9] This short report is not completely clear, but it seems certain that Fontana was not involved in the construction of the church but only its decoration.[10] Piskorski's original proposal for the project is unknown, and we can only assume that it was a detailed description, rather than a drawing. However, it is obvious that Piskorski paid close attention to the content programme, carefully arranging not only the iconography, but also its reception by various groups of viewers, and even how

the most important altars and statues could be revealed by means of natural light at particular moments of the year **(fig. 1)**. The use of light must have been planned in advance before the exact location of the church was chosen and coordinated with the final architectural design, so Piskorski must have played an important part in making those decisions.[11] It is known that the church was designed by the Dutch architect Tilman van Gameren (1632–1706, Pol. Tylman Gamerski) who was active in Warsaw at the court of Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski (1642–1702), Grand Marshal of the Crown.[12] But Tilman's drawings had a preliminary role, and were implemented with changes that were probably required by some professors – most likely Piskorski and Buchowski.[13] Tilman was known not only for designing palaces and churches, but also their decorations and furnishing, but there is no clue if he made any drawings for the interior of the Cracow church. There is, however, a record in a detailed account book of the church construction and decorative works that indicates that detailed designs for church decoration had been made in Warsaw. On 4 January 1695 Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski (1660–1711) – the court painter of John III Sobieski (1629–96), received a small fee (27.33 złoty – equivalent of about 4.3 thalers) for designs for the chapel of St John Cantius 'according to a given invention' **(fig. 2)**.[14] Siemiginowski was quite a capable painter, but above all he was a brilliant designer, who had trained at the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome and could produce new and independent figural composition on given topics. Piskorski had known him well, from the time of his work as a tutor to the king's sons, and had entrusted him with an important work before, namely a set of etched illustrations for his book about the blessed Salomea. Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski also painted the altarpiece for the high altar in St

Anne's church. More designs, in three portfolios, were sent by post from Warsaw on 30 March 1695. As there is no further fee mentioned in the accounts, it seems possible that it was covered in another way – maybe Piskorski used his own money. Nevertheless, it appears that Siemiginowski sent many more drawings for other parts of the church, not just the shrine of Cantius. Piskorski had taken some time to analyse the drawings and probably add comments, on 17 April he sent the annotated drawings to Fontana, who was at Kroměříž at the time.[15]

The design for the interior of St Anne's introduced a new approach to the combination of arts. Two and three-dimensional parts were joined together in several innovative ways and in many places the borders between fresco and stucco are obliterated **(fig. 3)**, but in some compositions the two arts seem to engage in a deliberate dialogue, creating the impression that the established convention has been broken consciously and even with a sense of humour. For example, stucco *putti* below the *Brazen Serpent* fresco are playing with snakes, as though they were mocking the famous Laocoön Group **(fig. 4)**. Moreover, works of each art are put in places traditionally occupied by the other. The huge altarpiece of the Holy Cross **(fig. 5)** overturns the custom of making such works on canvas and resembles the finest Roman works from Bernini's time. On the other hand, the cycles of Apostle figures on the pillars and angels in niches of the dome drum were illusionistically painted *en grisaille* to look like statues.[16]

Fontana probably received the designs for the decoration of St Anne's while he was engaged on a commission from Bishop Liechtenstein, whom he served from 1688.[17] The artist's last work for this patron may have been the decoration of the *sale terrene* in the castle of Kroměříž, which, according to the latest research, was

fig. 4

Baldassarre Fontana, *Putti struggling with snakes*, 1698. Cracow, Church of St Anne, Holy Cross chapel.

finished in 1695. Paolo Pagani probably filled the stucco frames on the ceiling of the main garden hall with frescoes in the first half of the year. But comparison of these almost contemporary works in Cracow and Kroměříž reveals a notable difference. Jana Zapletalová rightly observed that the composition of the ceiling decoration at Kroměříž is more traditional, in other words, the arts of painting and sculpture are not integrated in the way that can be observed in later works.[18]

Current research on the dating of several works indicates that Fontana only encountered the new type of interior decorating in 1695, when he received designs from Piskorski. This way of integrating arts was at that time unknown (or at least disregarded) in Moravia, even in the circle of such an enlightened patron as Bishop Liechtenstein-Castelcorno. The same observation can be made in the bishop's earlier commissions, where stucco and paintings were used for internal decoration. The same traditional approach to ceiling composition, where two- and three-dimensional parts have their clearly delineated fields, can be observed in all Fontana's work prior to 1695.

A significant example of the traditional approach to interior decoration is the church in Stará Voda – the bishop's most important undertaking in the field of religious art, where stucco decoration is limited to arcades, capitals, frieze and floral framings on vaults. The church was built under the careful supervision of Liechtenstein-Castelcorno, who himself decided about the type of decoration and selected the
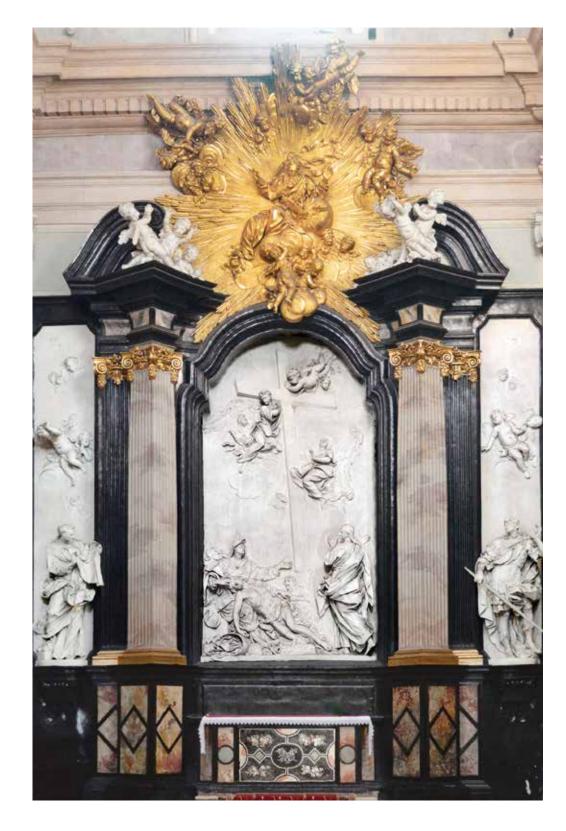

fig. 5

Baldassarre Fontana, altar, 1698–1700. Cracow, Church of St Anne's, Holy Cross chapel.

artists. For stucco decorations Matteo Rezzi and Fontana (not indicated by name, but most likely Baldassarre) were chosen; they executed their work in 1688.[19] Nor do Fontana's minor works from that time show a striving for integrating fine arts – whether it is the modest furnishings of the chapel in Castle Hukvaldy, where Fontana presented his own designs for altars in 1689,[20] or St Ottile chapel at the parish church in Vyškov, where he may also have worked following his own drawings in 1690–92.[21]

These observations should be included in discussions of Fontana's skills as a designer. There is little evidence in the form of drawings, because the only known set is for stuccoes in the great hall of Kroměříž Castle (probably executed after February 1691 and before November 1695). Unfortunately those drawings cannot be compared to the executed work, because the decoration of the great hall was damaged by fire in 1752, and later destroyed to make space for a new interior design.[22] Moreover, one of the drawings was definitely made by another hand,[23] and the other three, showing two slightly different versions of architectural decoration, have Fontana's name added probably afterwards, by an archivist,[24] so also their authorship is uncertain. However, even if Fontana's authorship of the three drawings should be accepted, they can hardly be taken as evidence of his innovative approach to the problem of *bel composto*. They show clear separation of modelled ornaments above windows or stucco sculptures in the lower part of the ceiling from the wall paintings, which were to be enclosed in simple rectangular frames. This conclusion indicates that, even if Fontana had been in Rome, he did not learn how to design an interior with a combined sculptural and pictorial decoration in the way implemented by Bernini while he was there, or – at least – his alleged training had no significant impact on central-European art.

The peculiar conservatism of Liechtenstein-Castelcorno's artistic patronage may seem strange, when we consider the bishop's deep interest in matters of art, and the great care taken in designing programmes for internal decorations. In this matter the bishop used the services of Antonín Martin Lublinský (1636–90), who determined the iconography of the wall paintings in the *sala terrena* at Kroměříž Castle and designed sculptures for the interior, as well the adjacent garden.[25] He also played key role in planning the decoration of the churches at Svatý Kopeček near Olomouc, and most likely in Stará Voda.[26] Lublinský was a mediocre painter, but a renowned expert in rhetoric, symbolism and theology.[27] His position as a 'conceptor'[28] in Moravia can be compared to that of Piskorski in Cracow, but there are also differences. Both were born in the same year, but Piskorski lived longer, and created his greatest work at St Anne's only after Lublinsky's death, but it was possible only thanks to his close cooperation with a designer as brilliant as Siemiginowski. Apparently Lublinský and the bishop were lacking such a collaborator, as no available artist, including Fontana, had sufficient skills at the time.

Yet the influence of berninesque *bel composto* has its early and unique evidence in the lands of the Bohemian Crown, rather than in Poland, namely the St Elisabeth chapel at Breslau (Pol. Wrocław) Cathedral, founded by Bishop Frederick of
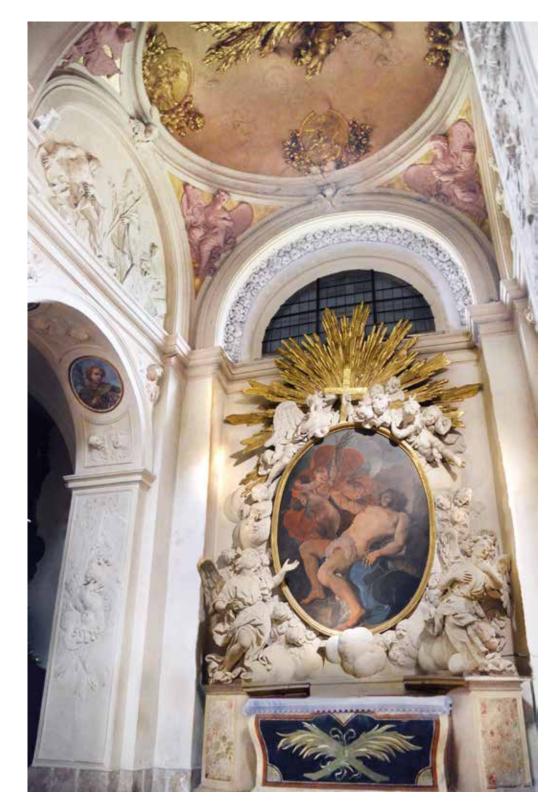
Hesse-Darmstadt (1616–82) and planned as a synthesis of architecture, sculpture and paintings of the highest artistic quality. Those frescoes, by Giacomo Scianzi (dates unknown) between 1680 and 1683, are among the earliest in Central Europe that transcend architectonic frames in a manner that had significant impact on the art of the region.[29] So it is not surprising that first such experiments in Poland were also linked with Karl Tanquart (d. 1704; Pol. Karol Dankwart) – a painter of Swedish origin, who settled in Silesian Neisse (Pol. Nysa, Czech Nisa), but who was also known from works in Jesuit churches in Bohemia (Kladsko, Pol. Kłodzko) and Moravia (Znojmo). Unfortunately, nothing is known of Tanquart's training, but it is clear that he was one the first artists in Central Europe to specialise in uniting wall paintings with stuccoes by extending his painting over the three-dimensional frames, which were partly covered with specially formed plaster surfaces. The painter gave good evidence of this ability, working in 1694–95 in the church of Jasna Góra in Częstochowa, where he succeeded in achieving a decent artistic effect despite the low quality of the stucco works, and this success was the reason why Piskorski chose him as principal painter at St Anne. In Cracow Tanquart must have worked according to the same designs as Fontana, but (on the evidence of their payments) they never worked on any part of the church at the same time. Decorative work usually started with stucco, and later it was the painter's job to complete the composition and give it its final appearance.[30]

Even though the sources exclude the significant role Fontana played in designing Cracow university church or even its decoration, the stucco maker became its most significant contractor. It can be assumed that he had liberty at least to shape minor elements – faces, postures of secondary figures and ornaments. Piskorski was probably well aware that Fontana's talent outranked every other stucco maker available to him, so when the artist left Cracow on 29 October 1695 after his first season at St Anne's, the professor honoured him with farewell gifts to encourage him to return.[31] Piskorski decided to start decorative works in St Anne's with the chancel and the chapel that he personally had founded, which was dedicated to his patron saint, Sebastian (fig. 6). To encourage other donors, this small space was shown to the public in 1696 as the first part of the new church, while the rest of the building was still a construction site. According to a contemporary report, 'this chapel had started the process of decorating the future church in a manner that had not been seen before'.[32] The design of the chapel foregrounded Fontana's stuccoes, and united them with small frescoes by Tanquart, but the most important work is the exquisite altar – the first in Cracow in which architectural structure is totally replaced by sculptures. Moreover, it incorporates the fine painting of St Sebastian by Paolo Pagani – the brilliant painter from Valsolda on the shore of Lake Lugano, who might have been recommended for the job by Fontana, who knew him well from Kroměříž.[33]

In the following years, Piskorski became Fontana's main patron in Poland, entrusting him with not only subsequent parts of the university church, but also two important works in Poor Clares churches in Stary Sącz and Cracow. Those two convents

enjoyed significant wealth and great prestige, as the oldest of that order in Lesser Poland, established by influential members of the Piast Family – Blessed Salomea (1211/12–68), and Saint Kinga (1234–92) – the sister and the wife of the High Duke of Poland Boleslaus the Chaste (1226–79). But to carry out an ambitious artistic endeavour, the cloistered nuns needed the help of a trusted adviser and middleman. Piskorski easily found himself in this position as he had been confessor and preacher to the Cracow convent since 1676. So, probably on his initiative, Fontana was hired at Sącz in 1699 to make three magnificent altarpieces (with paintings by Tanquart), which dominated the look of the medieval church interior (fig. 7). Shortly afterwards

fig. 8
Baldassarre Fontana,
stucco decorations;
Innocenzo Monti (?),
frescos, 1701-2. Cracow,
Poor Clares' church.

fig. 9
Baldassarre Fontana, altar
and stucco decoration of
the dome, c. 1695-1703.
Cracow, Dominican church,
St Hyacinth chapel.

Fontana worked for the Poor Clares in Cracow, where he decorated the whole interior of a small eleventh-century basilica, leaving spaces for wall paintings, which were probably added by Innocenzo Monti (1653–1710) (fig. 8). Fontana's other works in Cracow left almost no archival records, so the circumstances of their commissioning are uncertain, but it seems likely that they came mostly from religious orders or private persons who had some link with Piskorski or the university. The Academy had close relations with the local Dominicans and Discalced Carmelites. For the first order Fontana decorated the chapel of Saint Hyacinth and its reliquary altar (fig. 9). The church of the second order was totally rebuilt, but in its former chancel there is still a damaged group of the Annunciation, of the same composition as is preserved in the equivalent place in the university church.[34]

Fontana's other two known works in Cracow were made for institutions that had no significant connection with the university, but were certainly well-known to Piskorski, as he used to preach there. The first was the Carmelite church in the suburb of Piasek, where in 1700 the artist moulded three large figures on the facade (fig. 10). This rare example of external stucco work, which is preserved in rather bad condition, with the heads and hands of the lateral figures replaced, has angelic heads and drapery that are typical of Fontana's work. The second is the Italian Confraternity Chapel in the Minorite friary. Its interior, furnished between 1697 and 1700 housed a marble altar with wooden figures of St John baptising Christ, carved by Wojciech Brzeski (dates unknown). This case is interesting, because archival records reveal that here Fontana was not only supposed to make stuccoes, but also to provide designs for

stone carvers.[35] This case also shows the strong connection between Fontana and Italian society in Cracow, where he must have been well known and highly appreciated.

Piskorski might also have recommended Fontana to secular commissioners – especially those who made significant donations to St Anne's. Among them were the Lubomirski family, for whom the artist decorated at least one room, which was preserved in the Palace under the Rams (Pol. Pałac pod Baranami), and the Wodzicki, who hired him to make a stucco work in the *studiolo* at the St Christophorus Palace (Pol. Pałac Pod Krzysztofory) (fig. 11). Both those palaces in the main Market Square of Cracow were later repeatedly rebuilt, so it is possible that Fontana's stuccoes originally covered more rooms than survive now. Two more commissions came from people who Piskorski most likely knew very well from the royal and episcopal courts. Jan Żydowski (d. 1721) – standard-bearer of Cracow, and Secretary to King John III, hired Fontana to make a distinguished decoration in Under the Pear House (Pol. Kamienica pod Gruszką) (fig. 12). Mikołaj Ludwik Grabiański (c. 1650–1714), the entrepreneur and trusted assistant to Bishop Jan Małachowski, hired him for a small decoration in the apse of the country church at Ludwinów. Piskorski must also have known Zygmunt Zaleski (d. 1709) – the wealthy merchant and city councillor who hired the stucco maker to decorate a room in his house near St Mary's church[36] (fig. 13).

Obviously, Fontana was able to make contact with commissioners by himself, but it seems that in Cracow Piskorski's protection boosted his career by creating a special fashion for his works in his social circle. To some extent, Piskorski behaved as though Fontana was acting under his personal patronage. On the other hand, we know that

Fontana appreciated the work for the university and was fully aware that it would be particularly important in his career. The stucco maker intended to establish a foundation with significant capital of 3000 florins (not much less than his annual income), from which the interest would be spent on the conservation of the church (*pro conservatione fabricae ecclesiae*).[37] It should be emphasised that such an action was quite exceptional, even if one takes into consideration all early modern artists.

These observations are relevant to any discussion about the profile of Fontana's profession. It seems that in Poland (where he worked intermittently until 1703) he acted almost exclusively as a stucco maker – the guild system of the time was traditionally limited by the material used. There is no suggestion that his workshop involved any painters or carvers, nor did he make any designs for any places or pieces to be executed without his involvement in stucco work. Moreover, in his main work in St Anne, Fontana followed projects made by others, at least for the main outlines. Church works for the Poor Clares were executed according to the concept made by Piskorski in collaboration with the Abbesses Anna Eufrozyna Tyrawska (d. 1711) and Konstancja Apolinara Jordanówna (d. after 1714).[38] However, Fontana was certainly capable of composing minor works independently and might have had significant freedom in shaping peripheral parts of the greatest decorations.

Despite that, in older literature designs for numerous works in metal, wood and stone were attributed to Fontana solely on the basis of vague similarities with his works. This was particularly due to Mariusz Karpowicz who considered the artist to be the only designer present in Cracow at the turn of the seventeenth century who was familiar with the Roman art of Bernini and his circle.[39] Those suppositions had already been proved to be baseless,[40] but they are still sometimes repeated without sufficient caution.[41] Misconceptions regarding particular works in Cracow might also affect other conclusions, as can be observed in the reconstruction of the monument to the founders in the monastery of Hradisko suggested by Pavel Suchánek. The

monument, made by Fontana in 1718, has been compared to the mausoleum of St John Cantius, which the stucco maker certainly did not design, and a perceived basis in the shape of the epitaph to Bishop Jerzy Denhoff (1740–1702)[42] – which the artist might never have seen, as it was only founded more than two years after his last known presence in Cracow.[43]

The results of recent research on Fontana in Poland allow for such small corrections and they fully confirm previous observations made by Miloš Stehlík, who stated that the artist gained important experience in Poland, which he subsequently used in his later works in Moravia.[44] One of the first interiors there in which stucco and painted decoration were integrated in the new berninesque way is the library of Hradisko abbey, decorated by Fontana and Innocenzo Monti in 1703–4, their first project after the busy time in Cracow.[45] In his later works Fontana frequently repeated not only the poses of previous statues, as was quite normal for a popular and quick working artist, but also the composition of some reliefs. He might have copied designs passed to him by his patron or used prints – as can be seen in the composition of the *Dream of St Joseph*, which Fontana carried out in stucco firstly in Cracow, and later in Šternberk, Moravia. Its source was probably a print, showing in reverse a painting by Carlo Maratti in the church of Sant'Isidoro a Capo le Case in Rome. It is hard to determine whether the model was chosen by the stucco maker, by Siemiginowski or even Piskorski, as we know that both of the latter were well-versed in Roman art of

the period.[46] Part of a composition from Under the Pear House was also repeated by Fontana in the castle of Uherčice.[47] He might have learned how to run a big artistic undertaking being in charge of many other artists and contractors of various professions. Archival sources suggest that he may have acted in such a position during works in the churches on the Svatý Kopeček near Olomouc, which started in 1722.[48]

Jana Zapletalová noticed that it was Fontana who brought the art of stucco in Moravia to a new level of artistic quality,[49] and the same conclusion also undoubtedly applies to the situation in Poland. But the new way of combining the painted with the moulded parts of a decorative scheme, and the consequent revolution in approach to artistic illusion and the synthesis of arts can hardly be observed in his early works. The means by which artistic ideas were transmitted from Rome to Central Europe in the late seventeenth century seems to be more winding. As well explaining it through an artist's education and design activity, future studies should take account of the role of patrons, artistic advisors, and the complicated process of creating an elaborate artwork. Regarding the last point, special attention must be given not only to the problem of the division of labour within a single workshop, but also to cooperation among artists of different professions.

1 The Bailiwick of Mendrisio was the southernmost territory dependent on the Swiss Confederation. In 1803 it became part of the newly created Canton Ticino, so in later literature Fontana is sometimes called Ticinese. In Poland he was described as Comensis (from Como), the closest city and diocesan capital.

2 J. Pagaczewski, 'Baltazar Fontana w Krakowie', *Rocznik Krakowski* 11 (1909, pp. 3–50). For recent conclusions on Fontana's oeuvre in Poland see M. Kurzej, *Siedemnastowieczne sztukaterie w Małopolsce*, (Cracow, 2012, pp. 171, 435, 443–46, 464, 512, 513). Pagaczewski did not include the

figures on the facade of the Carmelite church at Piasek, a suburb of Cracow (archival confirmation, 1700), and the decoration of the apse in the small church in Ludwinów. But he did attribute the statue of St Michael in St Mark's church and the decoration in the great salon of the St Christopher Palace (Pol. Krzysztofory), which appears to be unjustified.

3 M. Karpowicz, *Baldasar Fontana 1661–1733. Un Berniniano Ticinese in Moravia e Polonia* (Lugano, 1990).

4 Karpowicz attributed some minor works in Mendrisio, Chiasso, Morbio Superiore and Cabbio to Fontana (Karpowicz [op. cit. note 3], pp. 213, 227–28), but his arguments are not convincing. The most notable of those works is the fireplace hood at the Cantoni house in Cabio. The figurative elements of its decoration, particularly the manner of

modelling the faces, are distinctly different from any of Fontana's works. See Kurzej (op. cit. note 3), p. 169.

5 For example, the lamb seated on top of the shrine of St John Cantius is illuminated for a short time in the evening on the days close to the summer solstice – the date of the saint's birth – which was apparently meant to illustrate the idea that the Lamb of God himself is a source of divine illumination.

6 Pagaczewski (op. cit. note 2), pp. 11–13; Kurzej (op. cit. note 2), p. 616.

7 A. Buchowski, *Domini super Templum S. Suum ad Solennes Enaeniorum primitas Ecclesiae Collegiatae S. Annae Ope Divinae Providentiae recentar a fundamentis erectae* [...] (Cracoviae, 1703), f. E2v.

8 '[...] serio animadvertens exemplum posterae suae famae sibi parari in ea ubre, illoque

loco, ad quem reliquarum provinciarum regni manufacta opera, veluti ad censorem aestimatoremque suum confugiunt [...]'. Ibid., f. E3r.

9 Ibid., f. E3r.

10 For the whole duration of construction works Piskorski was employing the architect Francesco Solari, who was responsible for technical aspects of the process and on 29 February 1699 he provided the design for the church dome (M. Kurzej, *Depingere fas est. Sebastian Piskorski jako konceptor i prowizor* [Cracow, 2018, p. 55]).

11 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 48–9.

12 S. Mossakowski, *Tilman van Gameren. Leben und Werk* (Munich, 1994).

13 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 48–9.

14 Ibid., p. 57. Original document in the Archive of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, manuscript 318, *Rationes Perceptorum et Expensorum Pro Fabrica Ecclesiae S. Annae Crac.*, 233.

15 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 44, 274. For Siemiginowski see M. Karpowicz, *Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz Siemiginowski malarz polskiego baroku*, (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk, 1974).

16 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 44–65, 113–68.

17 M. Pavlíček, 'Sculptors and Sculpture in the Milieu of Bishop Karl von Liechtenstein-Castelcorno', in O. Jakubec (ed.), *Karl von Liechtenstein-Castelcorno (1624–1695). Bishop of Olomouc and Central European Prince* (Olomouc, 2019), p. 309.

18 J. Zapletalová, 'Saly terreny zámku v Kroměříž a návrhy soch pro podzámeckou zahradu', *Umění Art* 65 (2017, no. 3, pp. 269–82); J. Zapletalová, 'Decoration of the Chateau Halls and Staircases', R. Švácha, M. Potůčková, J. Kroupa (eds.) *Karl von Liechtenstein-Castelcorno (1624–1695). Places of the Bishop's Memory* (Olomouc, 2019), pp. 130–31.

19 J. Zapletalová, R. Švácha, 'The Pilgrimage Church of St James the Great and St Anne at Stará Voda', ibid., pp. 402–7. The stucco decoration was made by Matteo Rezzi and some by Fontana (probably Baldassarre) in 1688.

20 S. Jemelková, 'Modifications to Hukvaldy Castle, 1667–1691', ibid., pp. 429–30.

21 T. Parma, '*Wisscovia elegans et instaurata*. Reconstruction and Completion of the Vyškov Chateau, 1667–1682', ibid., pp. 256–57.

22 Zapletalová (op. cit. note 18), pp. 130–32; J. Kroupa, "*In perpetuam sui memoriam*". Reconstruction of the Residence in Kroměříž, 1664–1668, 1687–1698', ibid., pp. 118–19.

23 M. Kurzej, 'Autorstwo architektury kościoła św. Anny w Krakowie a problem twórczości architektonicznej Baltazara Fontany', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 79 (2017, no. 3, p. 467).

24 M. Smýkal, 'Světské stavby Giovanni Pietra Tencally na Moravě' (MA thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, a.y. 1975), p. 60). Some designs for the great hall were also made by Giovanni Pietro Tencalla, as mentioned in his letter published in Švácha, Potůčková, Kroupa (op. cit. note 18), p. 149.

25 Zapletalová (op. cit. note 18), 269–82; M. Pavlíček, *Sala terrena*, in Švácha, Potůčková, Kroupa (op. cit. note 18), pp. 135–47.

26 Zapletalová, Švácha (op. cit. note 19), p. 412; M. Mádl, '*Fundamenta eius in montibus sanctis*. Biskup Karel a premonstráti', Švácha, Potůčková, Kroupa, p. 420.

27 M. Togner, *Antonín Martin Lublinský 1636–1690* (Olomouc, 2014), pp. 33–8. Lublinsky, born in Leschnitz (Pol. Leśnica) in Silesia, was also known as an art consultant in the region. In 1685 Johannes Reich, cistercian abbot of Leubus (Pol. Lubiąż), turned to him for recommendation of a fresco painter. See A. Kozieł, 'Gdzie ci Włosi, prawdziwi tacy [...] Barokowe malarstwo freskowe na Śląsku a włoscy malarze-freskanci', in R. Sulewska, M. Smoliński (eds.), *Artyści znad jezior lombardzkich w nowożytnej Europie. Prace dedykowane pamięci Profesora Mariusza Karpowicza* (Warszawa, 2015, p. 156).

28 A conceptor or iconographer was a specialist in designing programmes for complex artworks. About this profession see Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 74–81.

29 Kozieł (op. cit. note 27), pp. 157–58.

30 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 61, 279–80.

31 According to the source, Fontana received a crystal watch, a bear (probably only a fur), a box and an inkwell from Kleck, a bag of Częstochowa groats, a walking stick and knives (Archive of the Jagiellonian University, *Rationes*, p. 96).

32 Buchowski (op. cit. note 7), F4r–Gv.; Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), p. 52.

33 J. Zapletalová, 'Fresco Painters in the Service of Karl von Liechtenstein-Castelcorno and the Transformation of Visual Culture in Moravia' in Švácha, Potůčková, Kroupa (op. cit. note 18), pp. 242–44. Despite futile attempts to excend Pagani's *oeuvre* (M. Karpowicz, 'Paolo Pagani in Moravia e Polonia', *Arte Lombarda* 3-4 [1991, pp. 103–17] and M. Karpowicz, 'Paolo Pagani a Cracovia. Addenda', *Arte Lombarda* 2 [1999, pp. 62–4]). The altar painting of St Sebastian is the only known work by Pagani in Poland and it is not certain if it was painted *in situ* or sent from elsewhere (Kurzej [op. cit. note 11], p. 277).

34 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 68–73, 276.

35 S. Tomkowicz, 'Włoscy kupcy w Krakowie w XVII i XVIII w.', *Rocznik Krakowski* 3, 1900, p. 17; According the agreement, Fontana has also promised to facilitate the works of masons and building materials («[...]ha promesso fare ogni gevoleza quanto poi alli muratori et materiale cui doveva procurare [...]». Karpowicz quoted this fragment wrongly – changing the object of the sentence from *gevoleza* to *gerenza*. In this way he tried to justify his hypothesis, that Fontana was put in charge over all other contractors employed in the chapel (see Karpowicz [op. cit. note 3], p. 258). The altar was destroyed at the turn of the eighteenth century and its appearance is unknown. Only the crowning shape of the stucco glory and some ornaments on the ceiling are preserved. Some hypothetical remarks on the altar's design were made by Andrzej Kusztelski, 'Prace Baltazara Fontany w kaplicy Włoskiej przy klasztorze Franciszkanów w Krakowie', M. Szyma, M. Walczak (ed.), *Sztuka w kręgu krakowskich franciszkanów i klarysek* (Kraków, 2020), pp. 391–98.

36 Kurzej (op. cit. note 2), pp. 460–70.

37 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 275–77. According to the archival source (Archive of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, manuscript 319, *Liber Perceptorum et Expensorum pro Ecclesia Collegiata S. Annae*, 16), Fontana entrusted the money to 'the noble Marchetti, merchant and citizen of Cracow'. The foundation did not come to fruition, probably because of the Swedish invasion and occupation of Cracow in 1702 and plagues in the following years. It was only in 1745, after a long lawsuit, that the university recovered a certain amount of valuable silk fabric from Marchetti's daughter, then the widow of Giuseppe Gherardini. This Marchetti may have been a relative of the painter Francesco Marchetti, whom Fontana probably met during his work in Kroměříž. Francesco Marchetti was applying for a commission to paint the vault of the great hall of the episcopal castle and proposed a written idea for its iconography (see Zapletalová 2019 [op. cit. note 18], p. 130).

38 Kurzej (op. cit. note 2), pp. 179, 447, 592; Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), pp. 70, 73.

39 Karpowicz (op. cit. note 3), pp. 97, 191–98, 205, 207, 210, 214.

40 Kurzej (op. cit. note 2), pp. 170–72.

41 See for example F. Bulfone Gransinigh, 'Baldassarre Fontana (1661–1733): Some Notes and Considerations about Roman Languages in the Polish and Moravian Building Sites', *ArcHistoR* 8 (2021, no. 15, pp. 100–33). The paper has also multiple minor slips in dating and descriptions of Polish works by Fontana.

42 See P. Suchánek, *K větší cti a slávě* (Brno, 2007, pp. 121, 307).

43 Kurzej (op. cit. note 2), p. 171.

44 M. Stehlík, 'Nástin dějin sochařství 17. a 18. věku na Moravě', *Studia Minora Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis* 19–20 (1975–76, pp. 23-40, p. 27); M. Stehlík, 'Italien und die Barockbildhauerei in Mähren', in K. Kalinowski (ed.), *Barockskulptur in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (Poznań, 1981, pp. 127–33).

45 M. Mádl, '*Fundamenta eius in montibus sanctis*. Biskup Karel a premonstráti', in *Švácha, Potůˇcková, Kroupa* (op. cit. note 18), p. 482.

46 Kurzej (op. cit. note 10), p. 56. On Fontana's work in Štenberk see 'Sochařská výzdoba lateránské kanonie a kostela Zvěstování Panny Marie ve Šternberku', in F. Hradil, J. Kroupa (eds.), *Šternberk. Klášter řeholních lateránských kanovníků* (Šternberk, 2009, p. 72).

47 On Fontana's works in Uherčice see T. Kubová, 'Interiérová výzdoba zámku v Uherčicích' (MA thesis, Masaryk University in Brno, 2015, pp. 29–46).

48 Karpowicz (op. cit. note 3), pp. 261–63; Suchánek (op. cit. note 42), pp. 218–28.

49 Zapletalová (op. cit. note 33), p. 246.

Abstracts

Notes on the Use of Stucco in Milan from the Fifteenth to Sixteenth Century

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Stucco decorations have long been part of the Lombard tradition, as is clearly demonstrated by the famous and extraordinarily preserved medieval examples. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the building sites of the fifteenth century would see extensive use of this kind of technique, although our understanding of the true diffusion of stucco decorations is limited by the loss of works. Clearly, in an area where construction is mainly in masonry, and the use of stone is reserved for structural elements such as columns, then painted terracotta and stucco decorations would find logical applications. This general framework of course implies the existence of specialised workshops, or rather 'companies', which could meet the patrons' needs in complex building sites.

The great diffusion of stucco decorations in Milan, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, has been quite well investigated, however the rise of the technique during the second half of the 1400s and beginning of the succeeding century is less known. The last twenty years of the 1400s seem particularly promising in terms of documentation, with reports on a certain number of examples, and several building sites where we can recognise surviving works.

This essay presents three cases of the use of stucco decorations in relevant locations dating from the late 1400s and early 1500s in Milan: the new churches of Santa Maria presso San Satiro, Santa Maria della Passione and Santa Maria presso San Celso, all of which involved the participation of the Battagio workshop. This workshop, aside from the famous Giovanni (engineer and architect) and his son-in-law Agostino Fonduli (terracotta sculptor), also included Giovanni's brother, the stucco decorator Gabriele. The Battagios are documented at the 1482–86 building site of Santa Maria presso San Satiro, where stucco appears not only in the renowned fictive choir, but also, as recent studies demonstrate, in the decoration of the pilasters of the sacristy. Then, in 1489, we find the activity of Giovanni Battagio in the chapel with the tomb of Daniele Birago in Santa Maria della Passione, which again involves the use of 'gesso'. Finally, in 1500, Gabriele Battagio is present in the building site of Santa Maria presso San Celso, where he agrees to make the stucco coffers for the vault within the *tiburium*, under the supervision of Gian Giacomo Dolcebuono.

These examples allow observation of the specific techniques used and the organisation of the work, raising issues concerning their possible influences on the architectural culture, the coexistence or 'rivalry' with the use of stone, and the role of consolidated artistic 'companies' in the choices. The current research also aims to collect information on local traditions in the use of gypsum through documentary and theoretical sources, such as the Vitruvius translated and commented on by Cesare Cesariano and it reports on the use of stucco in the ducal residences, as well as on occasions involving Donato Bramante.

Domenico Fontana and the Art of Stucco: Roman Building Sites

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This paper reports on part of a research project on the Ticinese architect Domenico Fontana conceived and implemented by the Archivio del Moderno, Università della Svizzera italiana.

Domenico Fontana (1543–1607) is one of the most

representative figures of Roman artistic culture of the late sixteenth century. By analysing the use of stucco throughout his career, and how he manages the material within the architectural building sites under his direction, we can shed new light not only on his professional career but also, more generally, on the way Roman building sites of the time were organised and functioned. The paper examines Fontana's attitudes towards stucco, analysing the matter from the perspective of both his activity as an artisan in plaster and as architect and site manager. In investigating these issues we are able to illustrate two fundamental aspects of Fontana's career: how he dealt with patrons and what kind of partnership and cooperation strategies he established with other architects, artists, and the general labour force active on his worksites.

Although relating to largely lost works, the first Roman experiences of the Ticinese architect can be reconstructed through several literary sources and archival documents. Domenico arrived in Rome in 1563 following in his brother Giovanni's footsteps; he began his Roman activity in the construction industry in the manner of many other Ticinese and Lombard artists and architects. Here, he worked with the *maestri di muro*, training as a plasterer. In 1568, he is recorded in this specific activity on the building site at Villa D'Este at Tivoli, and in 1572 in the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Campidoglio. A year later, the records show him in the service of Cardinal Ricci, for his villa on the Pincio (later Villa Medici) and for a palazzo in via Giulia (now Palazzo Ricci Sacchetti). By retracing these Roman beginnings, we can clarify the kinds of stucco works fashioned by Fontana within the architectural worksites. A question that arises is whether these works should be considered among the *lavori di muro*. In a measure and estimate of the works at the Lateran palace, Domenico himself states that the *hornamenti di stucco* should be considered as *lavori che appartengono al muratore*, or 'works pertaining to the mason'. This conception embodies a conviction that can be traced to his previous experience as a construction worker, but also opens more general questions on the role – or roles – of plasterers in Roman building sites of the late sixteenth century, enabling analysis of the procedures with which Domenico and the Fontana 'enterprise' organised and managed the stucco workers within their architectural operations.

'Cartellami, cameos, grotesques, and other similar extravagances': Actors and Processes in the Spread of Stucco Decoration in Genoa between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

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Although the importance of Genoa and the craftsmen from around the lakes of Lugano and Como who lived there in the adoption and international diffusion of late Baroque and Rococo plastic art is well known, the origins of this artistic expression in the Genoese sphere remain incomplete, mainly due to the lack of a guild of *stuccatori*. The activity of plasterers, essentially decorative but strongly linked to building, thus remains halfway between masons and sculptors, not by chance two arts that were originally united.

Following the traces found in archive documents, this contribution focuses on the elusive workers who were active between the second half of the sixteenth century and the first two decades of the seventeenth century in Genoa's building sites, mostly managed by architects and painters. After mentioning the beginnings of the technique by Perin del Vaga in the Villa of Prince Doria and Galeazzo Alessi's predilection for it, some sixteenth-century stucco works, largely destroyed but mentioned in the sources, are considered. In 1674 Raffaele Soprani mentioned only Urbino Marcello Sparzo among the stucco decorators active in the city, but nineteenth-century research by Federico Alizeri brought to light other stucco decorators, some from Genoa (Oberto Piccardo, possibly Stefano Storace) and some from the area of Lake Lugano (Antonio da Lugano, Andrea and Battista Aprile).

Reviewing the archive documents allows us to reflect on the stucco workers' dependence on site managers, in particular Giovanni Battista Castello 'il Bergamasco', a multi-faceted and original painter, architect and decorator under whose control the stucco workers acted, to whom he supplied cartoons and templates. Documents relating to the construction site of the Chapel of the Conception in the church of San Pietro in Banchi are also contextualised here. In 1626, under the supervision of Daniele Casella da Carona, sculptors and stucco makers from his entourage worked there, including Antonio Casella, who made three marble statues, and the latter's brother, Francesco, who executed the stucco work on the vault. Sculpting marble

and shaping stucco represented two sides of the same coin for the Casella brothers, with Francesco sculpting marble for the addition to the sixteenth-century Imperial Palace in 1628 and Antonio again making stuccoes in the choir of the cathedral of San Lorenzo in 1619. He accomplished this task together with his brother and especially with Marcello Sparzo. This notarial deed, in addition to adding to our knowledge of the city's most important church, provides evidence of a new and probably extreme 'Genoese' work by the elderly Urbino, a full thirteen years after his last documented work, the stuccoes in the church of San Rocco di Granarolo.

Salzburg as an Early Centre of Ticino Stucco Work

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Around 1600, under the art-loving Archbishop Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, the city of Salzburg experienced a particular flourishing of architecture and art. The decoration of the state rooms in the Old and New Residenz with white and coloured stuccowork was of particular importance. The white stucco consisted of dolomite lime with alabaster and quartz grains, materials that were all available in the city itself. In addition, there were ceiling reliefs and stucco ornaments with a white stucco core and coloured fine stucco layers in smalt blue, iron oxide red and malachite green. Finally the surfaces were encrusted with blue, red and coloured glass chips, the chemical composition of which is similar to that of stained-glass windows dating from the Middle Ages in Salzburg. It is suspected that this coloured glass was 'recycled' when the medieval cathedral was demolished for Wolf Dietrich's new buildings. Unfortunately, the restoration history of these delicate stucco works, for which the Ticino artist Elia Castello is documented in 1602, caused severe damage to the overpainted surfaces in the 1950s through scratching during 'uncovering' by 'dilettantes' (sculptors, gilders) and, above all, the loss of the incrustation effects.

Techniques and Market Conditions: Stucco Masters in German Countries in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

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At the end of the sixteenth century, stucco decorations in present-day Germany showed an initially surprising variety of material and design, which only ended around 1610.

This can be explained by the different ways in which Germany received information about the ancient Roman stuccowork that had been discovered. Five main paths can be identified:

1. execution by building artists who had worked in Rome and Northern Italy;

2. arrival of building artists who had seen imitations of antique works, or had been trained in their production;

3. observation of the 'signs of the times', by people already operating as artists and craftsmen in the areas;

4. via drawings and graphics that showed decorative content;

5. via artists and craftsmen who had to look for new places to work and opportunities to earn money and who brought the corresponding knowledge with them.

Thus, with the beginning of the Renaissance in Germany, the most diverse types of craftsmen and building artists were able to become 'plasterers', who imitated stucco decorations with the materials available to them, such as clay and lime. This gave rise to the German special way of a stucco craftsman who could, but did not have to, rise to become a nationally active stucco artist. From around 1610, this experimentation led to the specifically German tradition of lime stucco. Mostly designed on a clay base, lime stucco was used by both stucco craftsmen and stucco artists. Among the craftsmen stuccoers, the artistically low-threshold use of press moulds at first, then after 1600 almost predominantly models, remained popular until the end of the seventeenth century. Along the way, high-class works in gypsum continued to be created on individual buildings.

This phase only ended with the technical revolution introduced by the Italian Swiss and Lombard plasterers, most of whom were much better trained, who began to arrive in the country from 1670 onwards. With them, after 1700 gypsum-stucco became the material of choice for craftsmen stuccoers too.

Artists working in Germany, including those from the lime stucco tradition, liked to use graphic models (mostly of Dutch/Flemish origin) for stuccoed pictures and larger figures. Framing and border designs were often freely created from the workshop's own repertoire of motifs. The assessment of their work as pure (building) craftsmanship places these masters between the research disciplines, to their disadvantage. In their time, artist stuccoes were seen as part of the free arts. The makers had the same standard of living as well as the same wages as other artists, including most of the painters.

Interior Stucco Work of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in The Netherlands

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Over the past three decades, research on ornamental stucco and plaster in the Netherlands has yielded new knowledge and views on the design, makers and use of materials involved in these kinds of interior decorations, particularly ceilings. Today, the knowledge and awareness of these works affords them greater protection.

Ornamental stuccoworks: most of the surviving sixteenth and seventeenth-century ornamental stucco works of the Netherlands are made from mud and clay, covered with a stucco finishing layer, on ceilings between tiebeams and joists. One of the oldest is a stucco ceiling of the Berckepoort monumental residence in Dordrecht, made in 1565–72, showing rich renaissance decoration with ornaments made in techniques of casting, press moulding and hand modelling.

Mud and clay: in the period considered in this paper, the most common stucco works are ceilings in clay plasters, sculptured around the ceiling beams. Many examples have been found along the Rhine and Meuse rivers, in some cases showing connections with the ceilings of Cologne, known as *Kölner Decke*, and probably made by German craftsmen.

Cast elements: Over the past two decades we have also found examples of mantelpiece parts cast in stucco. Dutch craftsmen knew Cennino Cennini's handbook *Il Libro dell'Arte* (1437) and other published descriptions provided examples of mould-making for cast ornaments.

Sculpture and stucco: the stucco ceilings of renaissance Europe can be truly sculptural with three-dimensional ornaments, statues and scenes emerging from the surface, executed by the stucco makers or sculptor in stucco and plaster over wooden substructures. This type of craftsmanship peaked in the mid-seventeenth century.

Design and translation: Daniel Marot, a Huguenot refugee from Paris, influenced late-seventeenth-century design in the Netherlands, particularly in the north, through works of many kinds, including ceilings. The stucco makers were responsible for 'translating' the two dimensions of the design into three-dimensional decorations on walls and ceilings.

Italians in the Netherlands: the first generation of Italian stucco makers arrived in the Netherlands at the end of the seventeenth century. There were no guild organisations or other administrations imposing restrictions on their work, although in some places they collaborated with local stucco makers. The practice of stucco and plaster interior decoration exploded in the first half of the eighteenth century, with the arrival of Swiss and Italian stucco makers such as Bollina, Albisetti, Barberino, Beretta, Castelli, Castoldi, Laghi, Luraghi and in some cases their activity was continued by the next generation. At the same time the work of local masters and sculptors, such as Van Logteren, Husly, Viervant and Van Gorkum, was much in demand.

An Introduction to Danish Stucco Decoration *c.* 1550–1750

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This paper offers an introduction to the history of stucco works executed in Denmark between 1550 and 1750. The basis for this introduction is the extensive research of the Danish art historian Bredo L. Grandjean (1916–86) formulated in a somewhat unfinished book manuscript that was published after his death in 1994 under the title *Stukarbejder i Danmark 1660–1800* (*Stucco Works in Denmark 1660–1800*).

Starting with the stucco decorations for the chapel of Sønderborg Castle in southern Denmark made in 1568–1570 and ending with the extensive decorations made for Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen in 1730–*c.*1750, this paper covers a number of examples of predominately foreign stucco specialists working in Denmark. In those cases where it has been possible to identify the foreign specialists their biographical data is provided and so are potential sources for inspiration that may have influenced their work.

Naturally, stucco work was a phenomenon reserved for members of the Danish elite who could afford such extravagance. Consequently, all the examples of this form of art presented in this paper were made for royal residences or for the homes of the Danish nobility.

Following Grandjean's approach to the history of stucco in Denmark, the listed examples are divided into four periods: pre-1600; 1600–1660; 1660–1700; and 1700–1750.

The examples of stucco work presented should not be seen as an exhaustive list of preserved as well as lost cases of stucco works made in Denmark. However, the examples should be seen as representative of general tendencies of how these decorations were realised more broadly in Denmark in those two hundred years. This paper does not provide in-depth analyses since its main ambition is to offer a sufficiently comprehensive while still clear introduction to the Danish history of stucco to those that are not familiar with the Danish language. Hopefully, this will allow more international scholars to include Danish examples in their analyses in the future. The Kingdom of Denmark was on the periphery of Europe but in no way disconnected from it and thus the history of Danish art and architecture at large constitutes an interesting part of a broader European cultural history.

The Profession of Stucco Maker in Seventeenth-Century Lesser Poland

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In Lesser Poland the most important artistic centre was Cracow. This city was influenced by Italian culture and served as an economic magnet for migrating artists. Among them there were stucco makers of confirmed or supposed origin from the area of Lake Lugano. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the most important personage was the royal architect Giovanni Trevano from Lugano who rebuilt the royal castle and completed the large and sophisticated Jesuit church designed by Giovanni de Rossi. Both structures were decorated with fine stuccowork by the same author: the first high-quality works made in stucco in Poland. The author of those decorations is unfortunately unknown, as is his connection with Trevano.

The second phase of decorations comes from the 1630s. The outstanding set of decorations from that time is preserved in the Camaldolese church in Bielany near Cracow. One of its authors was an artist named Philibert, who may be identified with Filiberto Lucchese from Melide, who later became the famous architect at the imperial court in Vienna. In Poland he can also be linked with decorations in Nowy Wiśnicz and Zamość. In the next decade Giovanni Falconi, possibly from Rovio, was active. The sole documentary record of him is in the diary of Stanisław Oświęcim, a courtier of King Ladislaus IV, who hired the stuccoist to decorate his family chapel in Krosno. The artist can also be considered the author of a group of stucco decorations – mostly singular chapels, including works in Niepołonice, Podkamień, Podhorce, Rzeszów, Cracow, Baranów Sandomierski, Łowicz and Lublin. The most brilliant stucco artist active in Poland before Baldassarre Fontana was the anonymous artist known as the Master of Tarłów. His main work, in the parish church of a remote small town, includes a series of reliefs of excellent quality with genre scenes showing people of various ages, status and profession, meeting their deaths. Their maker probably worked solely with one architectural workshop of northern-Italian origin. He has also been linked with nearby works in Gołąb and Kazimierz Dolny.

The period of wars in the mid-seventeenth century extinguished the demand for architectural investments and decorations made by exquisite foreign artists. And they didn't come back in the following decades of 1660s and 1670s when the market reopened widely for rebuilding. In that time stucco decorations of significantly lower quality were made, mostly by local artists trained as woodcutters or stone carvers who tried to emulate fine stucco with their insufficient skills. The situation changed only with the arrival of Baldassarre Fontana who raised the art of stucco in Lesser Poland to the highest level.

The Dichotomy between Sculptors and Plasterers in the Late Roman Baroque: The Working Site of the Chapel of Santa Cecilia in San Carlo ai Catinari (with a Note on the Restoration of the Vatican Sala Regia)

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In 1691 the Congregation of Musicians commissioned Antonio Gherardi to design the chapel of Santa Cecilia in the church of San Carlo ai Catinari in Rome (1691–1700). The architect, who was also a painter, conceived a programme of imposing stucco decorations on a musical theme. The eminent sculptors Michel Maille, Simone Giorgini, Jean-Baptiste Théodon and Lorenzo Ottoni created most of the figurative elements, while the decorative elements were modelled by three teams of stucco makers, under the respective leadership of Francesco Barozzi, Giuseppe Bilancioni and Pietro Porciani. The financial records of the Congregation of Musicians documented the names of the artists involved, their salaries, and the various phases of the artistic process.

This paper provides in-depth examination of the work site, including the relationships between the different personnel involved in the executive process: the architect Gherardi, who received wax for shaping models and may have sketched outlines of the decoration on the walls; the teams of stucco makers; the sculptors and other roles, including those of apprentices and suppliers. The essay also considers the use of materials in the stucco practices of Rome, and the making and repairing of tools for the site, such as scaffolding, brushes, sieves etc., as well as the unique record of the supply of a palm tree, to be copied by the sculptors.

Finally, the paper examines the difference between the works outlined in the contracts and those delivered, as well as some aspects related to colour finishing and later restorations. Stucco restorations would often take place just a few years after the initial execution, due to their fragility, typically involving the remaking of the most projecting parts. In the case of the chapel of Santa Cecilia, the reconstruction of the angels' limbs and other elements—likely carried out periodically—is particularly evident on the right wall, to the point that it alters the perception of the seventeenth-century work. Depending on the economic capacity of the patron, the individuals chosen for the restoration works were usually sculptors, more or less adept at replicating the styles and techniques of their predecessors. For example, Lorenzo Ottoni—who played a key role at the Santa Cecilia worksite—was responsible, in 1711, for overseeing the restoration of the sixteenth-century stucco decoration of the Sala Regia in the Vatican Palaces. His *giustificazioni di pagamento* offer insight into stucco remaking from the point of view of the sculptor. This account provides a wealth of information regarding his approach: the descriptive parameters of documentation, specific terminology, the respect for the original iconography, the sequencing of interventions and handling of scaffolding, as well as details about some practical obstacles encountered. As a side benefit of this research, we are also able to provide a contribution to the debate on attributions for the sixteenth century works of Sala Regia.

Stucco Decoration in L'Aquila in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century: Projects, Designs and Masters

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In L'Aquila as in other relatively peripheral Italian areas, diffusion of the stucco technique, following the Roman experiences of Giovanni da Udine, arrived late. Nevertheless, by the 1600s stucco was widely used to decorate and renovate the city's most important buildings, both civil and religious. In this respect, the devastating earthquake of 1703 was a crucial watershed for L'Aquila, bringing destruction, but serving also as the starting point for an age of architectural and artistic transformation, with results that are still visible today.

This paper considers the stucco campaigns of the seventeenth century, more difficult to analyse because of the extensive destruction caused by the 1703 earthquake, and in some cases by the so-called *restauri di liberazione* carried out in the 1970s, such as in Santa Maria di Collemaggio. Still, as pointed out by Raffaele Colapietra in his key studies on Abruzzi in the early modern period, it is possible to retrace the stucco decorations of the period through archival sources. This contribution focuses specifically on the interventions of the second half of the century, between the two earthquakes of 1646 and 1703. This was a period when features of Roman Baroque spread throughout L'Aquila, marked in particular by the brief stay of Ercole Ferrata in the city (1646–47), and above all by the leading position of the painter Francesco Bedeschini, who was entrusted with the design of many of the stucco cycles.

In several cases, the available documents have already cast light on the chronology of the artistic campaigns and involvement of the masters. However, they deserve reconsideration, together with drawings and prints, and the surviving decorations. With this methodology it is possible to examine the identity of the stucco makers, whether local or from Lombardy; their role on the worksites; their interactions with Bedeschini; the planning and execution of the interventions.

The importance of the stucco cycles undertaken is reflected in the relevance of the buildings being renovated: the Basilica of San Bernardino, heart of Franciscan Observance in Italy; Santa Maria di Collemaggio; the Cathedral dedicated to St Maximus of Aveia and St George; the church of San Filippo Neri; the Palazzo Pubblico.

Among the stucco masters active in the city, the research examines Ercole Ferradini, member of a Milanese family documented in L'Aquila, where a large community of 'Lombards' was present from at least the beginning of the seventeenth century; and Tommaso Amantini, a prolific artist native to the Marche, where he took part in more than one decorative campaign ordered by the Congregation of the Oratory, a circumstance that played a role in his transfer to L'Aquila, where he was involved in the work at the churches of San Filippo Neri and San Bernardino.

Some Examples of the Use of Drawing in the Workshop Practices of Lombard and Luganese Plasterers in the Seventeenth Century

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The issue of drawing within the diverse and variable practices of stucco workshops during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is complex and not easily addressed. This study examines several Lombard cases, emphasizing the relationship between the drawing and the evolution of stylistic and technical practices. For stucco artists, the practice of drawing developed primarily in specific contexts, paralleling the stucco artist's pursuit of autonomy from architects or artist-contractors. In cases where they depended on designs provided by others, stucco artists were as highly specialized craftsmen but remaining subordinate to the architects or artists leading the projects.

While numerous preparatory drawings for stucco decorations from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have survived, very few can be directly attributed to stucco artists. However, we know that plasterers knew how to draw. For example, some documentary evidence regarding apprentices' drawing practices exists: apprentices were required to practice using models available in the workshop, such as albums, prototypes, sketches, decorative projects and prints.

This study illustrates several significant examples, starting with early seventeenth-century Milan, where the culture of Mannerism was still vibrant, and the relationship between artistic practices and inventions was complex. Artists like Giulio Cesare Procaccini and Giovan Battista Crespi (Il Cerano) are considered multifaceted figures capable of leading diverse workshops on high-profile projects, integrating artistic work with technical research and applications. In this context the use of drawing played a crucial role, both for presenting the project to the clients and for managing the various workers involved in the construction site (for example in the Chapel of San Michele Arcangelo in Sant'Angelo and in the chapels of the church of San Celso in Milan).

Instead, the role of drawing takes a back seat in projects managed by stucco artists with great creative autonomy and technical expertise, such as Alessandro Casella.

Materials and Constructions: *Stuccatori* at Work in Basso Ceresio. Archival Sources and Material Evidence

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This paper presents how some of the most important *stuccatori* from the area around Lake Lugano worked between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, researching their working conditions as described by their contracts with patrons and the materials they used: bricks, lime, gypsum and ironware; tracing the types, their properties, the preparation needed before use, provenance, and costs.

Through documentary records (more than seventy archives, were consulted concerning the assignment of works to plasterers and the exchanges between artists and

clients) we could follow day-by-day how the work of the *stuccatori* proceeded, their relationships with clients and the involvement of other workers and artists during the decorative phases.

This is research that requires an interdisciplinary approach, in which historical data from the archives are interlinked with direct observation of the works realised, conducted by a conservator able to read the material, and by a contemporary stucco master who understands the challenges in shaping such ductile mixtures, using traditional procedures and materials. Finally, the role of the scientific expert has been indispensable in validating the hypotheses on the composition of the mortars and their use, as these are formulated during the observations.

Direct and close comparisons between written sources and works is a fundamental working method, especially in the systematic analysis of documents and works that refer to the same geographical, artistic and chronological context.

Our research focused mainly on works made by Agostino (1628–1706) and Gianfrancesco Silva (1660–1738), in the area comprising Basso Ceresio, Lake Como and Valtellina. The examples cited in this paper are thus case studies relating to a restricted geographical area and a well-circumscribed historical period. Despite that, the conclusions drawn have broad value since they represent the potential of current research methods and illustrate a working situation and workshop organization that can also be found, with some differences, in other historical contexts.

Crossing the Eighteenth Century with the Portogalli Plasterers: Work Organisation, Materials and Tools

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Art historian

The aim of this contribution is to use previously unpublished data to shed new light on the organisation and workshop practices of the Portogalli family, stucco artists from the Lugano region who worked in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany between the end of the seventeenth century and the end of the following century. Leaving aside traditional stylistic considerations, the article focuses on aspects of stucco work that are often overlooked and sometimes neglected by researchers and delves into workshop

organisation and practices. The question of the timetable and chronology of building sites is also addressed.

Using the example of the decoration of the church in Rosano (1707–8), we follow the day-to-day comings and goings of Giovanni Martino and his brother Filippo, who were joined by collaborators when the work was busier. In addition to the stucco workers, several other examples from the eighteenth century also show the painters and gilders involved in stucco colouring. The materials used by this dynasty over the course of the century are also highlighted. Archival documents have made it possible to identify the nature of the materials, some of the names of suppliers, prices and quantities. Finally, an analysis of the accounts of the carpenter Liborio Bracci, who was present during work on the Pitti Palace in the 1760s, provides rare and precious information about the tools and materials used by the stucco workers Visetti, Rusca and Portogalli. His accounts reveal all the supplies provided for them, from boxes for nails and floats to scaffolding, lighting systems and moulds, which he repaired or reworked as needed.

Fontainebleau 1530. The Age of Stucco

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In the 1530s at Fontainebleau a new type of decoration was created, combining wood panelling, frescoes and stuccoes. Designed by large teams of artists – many of whom came from Italy to work at the court of François I – such decorations were at the heart of what was later called the 'School of Fontainebleau.' Although many such creations are lost, the chimneypiece of the Queen's bedchamber, the Galerie François Iᵉʳ, the Porte Dorée, the Duchesse d'Étampes' bedchamber and the Great Ballroom all show the creativity of this art form and its evolution between 1530 and 1560.

This paper examines the genesis of Fontainebleau's first stucco decorations, realised between 1530 and 1540, and presents their technical and artistic features in the context of their contemporary transalpine counterparts.

The decoration process in the Palace of Fontainebleau can be documented through the *Comptes des Bâtiments du roi*, compiled in the first half of the nineteenth century by the historian Léon de Laborde, from a 1680 manuscript copying the original sixteenth-century royal accounts. This source is crucial to the study of work at the royal residences,

especially for Fontainebleau. The structure follows accounting ledgers, listing the sums paid out for various functions, starting with structural work (masonry, carpentry, roofing), then the finishing works and lastly so-called 'extraordinary parts' made by Rosso Fiorentino, Primaticcio and their team.

The Collection of Renaissance Stucco Statues at Bučovice Castle. Technologies, Techniques, and Materials Used

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Bučovice Castle, in southern Moravia, Czech Republic, was built in the 1580s for Jan Šembera Černohorský of Boskovice. As commissioner of the works, he was in contact with Jacopo Strada, architect of the Hapsburg Imperial Court, with whom he collaborated in designing the layout of the renaissance castle's interior decoration. During Šembera's life, only five rooms on the ground floor were decorated. The Imperial room, intended for the representation of Šembera himself, featured spectacular decoration, of which the dominant elements are four three-dimensional stucco statues in the lunettes, portraying Charles V, Europa, Diana and Mars. These are complemented by four semi-relief portraits of Roman emperors. This decoration is consistent with the figurative stucco decoration in the next room, portraying Diana and Leda.

This building offers the exceptional assemblage of ten stucco statues in full relief and semi-relief. The remarkable quality of these works distinguishes them from decorations by local artisans, leading to the hypothesis that they are the work of an Italian plasterer or a plasterer who had worked in Italy.

This study, prepared within the framework of complex inter-disciplinary research into the renaissance interior of the castle, concentrates on examining technological issues concerning the creation of the figural decoration, technical solutions applied and materials. The resulting outcomes suggest how the artist and his workshop could have worked on the statues. The major discovery, in direct contrast with previous findings, was that none of the statues had been cast. In fact, the stucco was applied layer by layer to an

inner supporting framework. The reverse side of the statues was only roughly finished and thus provides unique evidence of the artist's approach to his work. The stucco material was applied to a wooden supporting framework (*Charles V*, *Europa*, *Diana*), which was slightly reinforced with nails and fabric. Only *Mars* contains a terracotta core. This work assembled from at least six individual parts, is finished with the application of a layer of white stucco according to the *all'antica* recipe. The individual parts were linked with nails and covered with drapery modelled in stucco. The surfaces of the statues were unified with a white stucco layer, enhanced with gilded details and encrusted with colourful pieces of glass (a typical feature of renaissance statues intended for *grottos*). The statues of Diana and Leda are examples of another sculpture method featuring a stucco core, but with an exterior finish imitating terracotta.

Given the documentation of the wide range of technological processes, solutions, and materials used, the knowledge acquired provides a unique contribution on the general issue of renaissance figurative stucco. The identity of the artist and workshop are still unknown but these data lead to a deeper understanding of the workshop's methods and characterisation of the artist's style.

The Stuccoes in the Church of the Annunciation to Mary in Kostanjevica at Nova Gorica

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This paper reports on the stuccoes inside the Monastery church of St Mary of the Annunciation at Kostanjevica, between Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia). The rich stuccoes, executed in the mid to late seventeenth century, originally decorated the entire nave and presbytery, however most were destroyed during the First World War. Only fragmentary parts of the nave decoration are now preserved, and although most of the decorations of the presbytery are still extant, these are heavily altered by restoration. The first part of this paper, drawing on archival documentation and the existing bibliography, provides an art-historical analysis of the decoration, concerning the technique and its historical evolution, including terms of the use of different constituent materials. The second part reporting on the close examination of the plasters and their

compositions of sandy aggregate and binder, provides a scientific-methodological characterisation of the material, establishing the stratigraphic sequence of the internal mortar layer and external finishing layer. From this reporting, the paper then defines the artistic techniques used for the stucco decoration of the church, in terms of the technical characteristics and working properties.

The Kostanjevica stuccos are of extraordinary quality and were very probably executed by traveling artists from the Lake Region of northern Italy, who moved from city to city carrying out commissions for the decoration of civil and church buildings. Given the constant movement of these stucco workshops, the identification of the authors of the Kostanjevica stuccos is difficult. In this case, an inscription was discovered on a shield to the right of two stucco *putti* in the choir: FRANC.S ROSINA DE SALA VALLIS LUGANI F. / ANNO SALUTIS MDCXXXIX. The search for works in Ticino and the northern part of Lombardy that would approach the style of our master was unsuccessful. The closest example, in some places almost identical, are the stuccoes on the façade of the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Locarno. The presbytery of the Kostanjevica church presents an 'in-between' style before the evolution of the mature baroque, and was decorated later than the nave, probably at the end of the seventeenth century. Their features invite the hypothesis that some stucco decorators from Val d'Intelvi working in Vienna at the end of the first half of the century were later called to Gorizia to decorate the church of the Carmelites, which in the meantime had become an important place of pilgrimage.

Leonardo Retti in Rome: The Stucco Decoration of Santa Marta at the Collegio Romano in collaboration with Antonio Roncati

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The baroque restyling of the sixteenth-century church of Santa Marta at the Collegio Romano began in 1671 with a project directed by Carlo Fontana. Giovan Battista Gaulli was called to fresco the vault of the nave, where he painted the *Glory and the miracles* of the Saint, with the assistance of Girolamo Troppa and Paolo Albertoni. The architectural elements in stucco were to be made by the master mason Simone Broggi. The works of stucco sculptures were entrusted to Antonio Roncati and Leonardo Retti, also known as Leonardo Reti or Leonardo Lombardo.

Retti was assigned the high-relief angels on the counter-façade, the figures located at the arches of the chapel entrances and on the apse walls, and the statutory group of the *Fama reggi cartiglio* on the height of the apse. Although the cycle of sculptural decoration is no longer complete, due to the loss of some of the angels from the ledges and at the sides of the windows, these are recorded in a 1721 engraving by Domenico de' Rossi. The payment documents for the works are not clear, and since Retti and Roncati worked together, it is difficult to fully distinguish the work of the two artists.

In September 2019, the Istituto Centrale del Restauro interdisciplinary team began the restoration of the decorations of the counter-façade decorations and of the first span of the nave, simultaneously taking advantage of this opportunity to study the executive techniques and materials used by Leonardo Retti in the creation of stucco decoration.

Leonardo was one of a well-known family of Ticino plasterers. Before the commission at the Collegio Romano, he is known to have completed two works in Parma: the Beccaria Altar in the church of San Vitale, with his brother Domenico, and the decorations of the Torelli Chapel in the church of the Annunziata, under the supervision of his uncle, Luca. When Leonardo moved to Rome, however, he began using the roman plastering techniques, using the local materials of pozzolana, marble powder and lime putty. The current paper includes reporting on the use of these materials, investigated for greater understanding of organisation on the baroque worksite.

The Stuccoes in the Church of Los Santos Juanes in Valencia (1693–1702)

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For the city of Valencia, the Baroque renovation of the church of Los Santos Juanes, conducted between 1693 and 1702, represented an unprecedented change in the way of making and understanding decoration.

Two stucco workers, Giacomo Bertesi (1643–1710) and Antonio Aliprandi (1654–1728), arrived in Valencia from Lombardy, bearing their own specific technical competences and stylistic models. These were mixed with Valencian traditions and culture, giving rise to a complex decorative and iconographic programme in which fresco painting and stucco sculpture express a common and innovative theological message.

Drawing on the malleability and versatile technical character of stucco, the decoration emerges from its traditional ornamental role and becomes a message in itself. The iconographic programme of the church of los Santos Juanes depends on the stucco statues of Jacob and his twelve children leaning against the buttresses and the allegorical sculptures reclining on the arches, also in stucco, as integral and essential elements. Moreover, even the strictly ornamental work, showing a varied profusion of plant elements, flowers, mannerist masks and shells, demonstrates a variety, naturalism and vitality that was unusual in the city.

The preliminary studies for the comprehensive restoration of the architectural and decorative complex, carried out between April 2018 and February 2019 from the Polytechnic University of Valencia and the Jaume I University of Castellón de la Plana, provide new data on the technique for the Santos Juanes stuccos. They show the difference between rougher finishes in the vegetal surroundings and perfectly polished ones in the sculptures and mouldings. The analysis shows that the main binder for the mortar is a mixture of lime and gypsum in various proportions, with the finishing layers being the richest in lime.

In 1936, a devastating fire caused much damage, leaving most of the sculptural elements mutilated and black, and further alterations resulted from poor restorations aimed at solving the enormous losses. At different times in the 1940s, several reconstructions were carried out. In 2005, the sculptural correction of ten of the Tribes of Israel statues was approached, based on the investigation of historic photographs. The current restoration project aims to solve two major problems: reintegration of lost volumes and correction of volumes incorrectly reconstructed, and recovery of the original finishes, considered an essential part of the stucco technique.

This paper shows the importance of formal, technical and iconographical analysis to understand stucco production within local architecture, revealing the Lombard expertise and its success in Valencia.

Baldassarre Fontana in Cracow

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Baldassarre Fontana (1661–1733) was present in Poland at the time of a very important change in the fine arts in the region. In Cracow, its main work was the construction of St Anne's church. This important collegiate and pilgrimage church, belonging to the University, was built, furnished and decorated under the careful supervision of a distinguished art expert and iconographer, Sebastian Piskorski, in a surprisingly short time – between 1693 and 1703. The general shape of the church architecture was established by Tilman van Gameren, while designs for the internal decoration were most likely made by Jerzy Siemiginowski – the court painter of King John III educated in the Roman Academy of St Luke. Those designs brought a new approach towards the combination of arts. Two and three-dimensional parts were joined together at ceilings in several innovative ways. It seems that Fontana only encountered the new type of interior decorating in 1695, as he was chosen by Piskorski as the contractor for the church stucco decoration. This conclusion necessitates relinquishing a theory about Fontana's education in Rome that supposed he had learnt how to design an interior with combined sculptural and pictorial decoration in the way implemented by Bernini.

Piskorski became Fontana's main patron in Poland, also entrusting him with two important works in Poor Clares churches in Old Sącz and Cracow. Other commissions for Fontana came mostly from religious orders or private persons who had some links with Piskorski or the University. The Academy had close relations with local Dominicans

and Discalced Carmelites. For the first order Fontana decorated the chapel of St Hyacinth and his reliquary altar. The church of the second order was totally rebuilt, but in its former presbytery a damaged Annunciation group survives. It has the same composition as the one in the same position in the university collegiate church. Fontana's other two known works in Cracow were made for institutions certainly well-known to Piskorski, as he used to give his sermons there. The first was the Carmelite church in Piasek (a western suburb of Cracow), where in 1700 the artist moulded three large figures on the facade. The second is the Italian Confraternity Chapel in the Minorite friary. Piskorski might have also recommended Fontana to some secular commissioners – especially to those who made significant donations to St Anne's. Fontana appreciated the work for the university and was fully aware that it would be particularly important to his career. The stucco maker intended to establish a foundation with a significant capital of 3000 florins, from which the interest would be spent on the conservation of the church. It should be emphasised that such an action is exceptional and indicates the artist's awareness that this work would be considered his masterpiece.

Baldassarre Fontana's Stucco Work, First Notes on Execution Times, Materials and Techniques: The Study of the *Gallery of Angels* at Uherčice Castle

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The sculptor Baldassarre Fontana (1661–1733), from Chiasso, is known to have been present in Moravia from 1688 where he operated a well-organised workshop in the execution of an important series of commissions. Here he created some of his greatest works, thanks to his collaboration with other artists including the architect Giovanni Pietro Tencalla (1629–1702), and painters Paolo Pagani (1655–1716) and Innocenzo Monti (1653–1710).

In preparation for a restoration intervention, in-depth studies were conducted on the stucco decorations created by Fontana and his workshop in the Castle of Uherčice in the Czech Republic, in particular those located in the Gallery of the Angels. This paper presents the first results obtained from this study, including consideration of archival documents, analysis of constituent materials, and most importantly, direct observation of these and other decorations, for understanding of the techniques employed in their creation.

Fontana had a large workshop, with very talented artists and assistants of proven experience, enabling the completion of numerous and difficult commissions in short periods of time, and the assumption of many projects over a wide geographical area. In the case of the Gallery of Uherčice, there is no archival documentation concerning the stucco decorations, apart from the identity of a *stuccatore* named Giovanni Battista Bussi. These decorations are attributed to Fontana and his workshop only on the basis of stylistic analysis, proposing a date between 1690 and the first decade of the 1700s.

The Gallery provides a complete repertoire of the decorative characteristics of Fontana' work: *stacciato* or shallow bas relief; wall 'draperies' and ovals containing figures; on the ceilings, frames with flowers and fruit, pronounced relief and almost full-round reliefs of *puttini* and eagles. The study included investigation of the material composition of the stucco decorations. The mineralogical characterisation of the mortars demonstrates a composition consisting mainly of lime, gypsum and sand, but with differing selections and quantities of these components in the mortar mixture.

The innermost part of the stucco decoration is thick and free of cracks. The mortar was applied in two layers of different composition. The first, containing unsorted aggregates of coarse grain size, was used to model the volume and to give a first suggestion of the figures. The second layer, containing more selected finer aggregates, provided for the final definition of the forms. Finally, the finishing layer varies from a very thin coating to a thickness of up to several millimetres.

In cases where specific archival documents are lacking, the only possibilities for gaining information about the *modus operandi* of an artist and his workshop are direct observation and interdisciplinary study. The results of the current research shed new light on the organisation of the stucco works of Baldassarre Fontana and support further studies into the chronological sequence of his artistic production.

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