

The Art and Industry of Stucco Decoration

03-04.02.2022
Conference

Organisation committee: Giacinta Jean, Alberto Felici (Istituto materiali e costruzioni, Dipartimento ambiente costruzioni e design, Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana), Letizia Tedeschi (Archivio del Moderno, Accademia di Architettura, Università della Svizzera italiana)

Scientific committee: Giacinta Jean, Alberto Felici, Marta Caroselli (SUPSI-DACD-IMC), Letizia Tedeschi (USI-AAM-Archivio del Moderno), Serena Quagliaroli, Giulia Spoltore (Centro Studi per la storia dello stucco in Età Moderna e Contemporanea), Jana Zapletalová (Palacký University Olomouc)

Stucco decoration has been traditionally studied considering its formal and artistic qualities. Despite much research and numerous publications have explored the works of the *stuccatori* and their cultural context, there has been little attention on the “art and industry” of these artists, and on how their practical and technical “know-how” contributed to the great professional and artistic success that they enjoyed. Many stucco decorations all over Europe have been realized by masters coming from the region between Lombardy and Ticino and their working methods spread all over Europe.

This international conference aims at examining the techniques and the artistic processes with which stucco decoration has been realized in different European countries from the 16th to the 17th Century, by foreign or by local masters. Stucco is very versatile and composite artwork, it can be executed using different materials and production methods according to what is available on site and the ability of the masters to manipulate the mortar. The conference will examine this and other related topics with an interdisciplinary approach, considering art and social history, technical art history, material science as subjects of enquiry.

Key question:

- The role of stucco makers in the design of decorative schemes
- Materials used to create stucco decoration: relationship between their provenance, technical characteristic and working properties
- Artistic techniques used to create stucco decoration: supporting structures, coarse and fine layers, polishing
- Organisation of the working site and collaboration with architects, builders, and other artists as sculptors or painters

Presentations will be held in Italian, English and French (no translation provided).

Organized by Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana (SUPSI) and Università della Svizzera italiana (USI). With the support of Swiss National Science Foundation.

Programme:

Thursday, 03.02.2022

H10:00-10:15 – **Maria Böhmer** (Head of Science, Istituto Svizzero), *Welcome address*

H10:20-10:40 – **Giacinta Jean, Alberto Felici** (SUPSI – Istituto materiali e costruzioni), *The art and industry of the Ticinese stuccatori from the 16th to the 17th century*

H10:40-11:00 – **Jessica Gritti** (Politecnico di Milano – Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani), *Notes on the use of stucco in Milan between 15th and 16th centuries*

H11:00-11:20 – Online: **Laura Stagno** (Università degli studi di Genova – DIRAAS), *Notes on Palazzo del Principe's stucco decoration: a focus on the Loggia degli Eroi and the Galleria Aurea*

H11:20-11:40 – Discussion

Moderator: **Serena Quagliaroli**

H11:40-12:00 – Coffee break

H12:00-12:20 – **Serena Quagliaroli** (Università degli Studi di Torino), **Giulia Spoltore** (Archivio del Moderno – Università della Svizzera italiana, USI), *Domenico Fontana and the Art of Stucco: Roman Worksites*

H12:20-12:40 – Online: **Francesco Freddolini** (Sapienza Università di Roma – Dipartimento di Storia Antropologia Religioni Arte Spettacolo), *Pietro da Cortona and Stucco Decoration between Rome and Florence*

H12:40-13:00 – **Torsten Tjarks** (Art historian), *Una questione di controllo. L'esecuzione degli stucchi negli edifici del Borromini*

H13:00-13:30 – Discussion

Moderator: **Alberto Felici**

H13:30-14:30 – Lunch break

H14:30-14:50 – **Carla Giovannone** (Istituto Centrale del Restauro, Roma), *Leonardo Retti a Roma: la decorazione in stucco di Santa Marta al Collegio Romano*

H14:50-15:10 – **Vittoria Brunetti** (Art historian), *Materials and artistic processes in Late Baroque Rome: from the working site of Santa Cecilia chapel in San Carlo ai Catinari to the restoration of the Sala Regia*

H15:10-15:30 – **Carlotta Brovadan** (Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali, Roma), *An overview of stucco decoration in 17th-century L'Aquila*

H15:30-15:50 – Online: **Valentina Burgassi** (Politecnico di Torino – École Pratique des Hautes Études), **Mauro Volpiano** (Politecnico di Torino – Dipartimento di architettura e design), *Plasterers at the Savoyard court: the construction of royal residences in 17th Century Piedmont*

H15:50-16:10 – Discussion

Moderator: **Giulia Spoltore**

H16:10-16:30 – Coffee break

H16:30-16:50 – Online: **Nicolas Cordon** (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), *Is there a French Stucco Gypsum Ornament in Seventeenth Century France: Jacques Sarrazin and the Castle of Maisons*

H16:50-17:10 – **Wijnand Freling** (Dutch Stucco Guild), *The rise of interior ornamental Stuccoworks in the Netherlands from the 16th till the 18th century*

H17:10-17:30 – Online: **Barbara Rinn-Kupka** (Art historian), *'50 Shades of Stucco' – Techniques and market development lines of stucco-masters in the German countries of the 16th and 17th century*

H17:30-17:50 – **Pietro Delpero** (Art historian), *La collaborazione tra gli architetti e gli stuccatori nei cantieri della Germania meridionale (secoli XVII – XVIII)*

H17:50-18:20 – Discussion
Moderator: **Giacinta Jean**

H18:20-20:00 – Aperitivo

Friday, 04.02.2022

H09:30-09:50 – **Veronika K. Wanková** (Charles University Prague), **Renata Tišlová**, **Peter Majoroš** (University of Pardubice), *Collection of Renaissance stucco statues at Bučovice Castle*

H09:50-10:10 – **Martin Krumholz** (Palacký University Olomouc), *Carlo Lurago: Stucco worker and / versus Architect*

H10:10-10:30 – **Michał Kurzej** (Jagiellonian University – Institute of Art History), *Profession of stucco maker in 17th century Lesser Poland*

H10:30-10:50 – Online: **Beata Klimek** (Lublin University of Technology – Department of Historic Building Preservation), *Giovanni Battista Falcony's moulding workshop 1630-1658*

H10:50-11:10 – Discussion
Moderator: **Jana Zapletalová**

H11:10-11:40 – Coffee Break

H11:40-12:00 – **Alberto Felici**, **Marta Caroselli**, **Giovanni Nicoli**, **Medea Uccelli** (SUPSI – Istituto materiali e costruzioni), **Jan Válek** (Czech Academy of Sciences – Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics), **Jana Zapletalová** (Palacký University Olomouc), *A preliminary study of techniques and materials in the stucco decorations of Baldassare Fontana in the Gallery of the Angels in the castle of Uherčice (CZ)*

H12:00-12:20 – Online: **Marta Bensa** (Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia – Nova Gorica Regional Office), **Katarina Šter** (Slovenian National Building and Civil Engineering Institute), *Gli stucchi nella chiesa di Kostanjevica a Nova Gorica, Slovenia (1639 – 1691)*

H12:20-12:40 – **Gaetano Giannotta** (Universitat Jaume I, Castellón de la Plana), **José Luis Regidor Ros** (Universitat Politècnica de València – Department of Conservation and Restoration), *Gli stucchi della chiesa de los Santos Juanes di Valencia, Spagna (1693-1702).*

H12:40-13:00 – **Mickaël Zito** (Musée des beaux-arts et d'archéologie de Besançon), *Sabbia, gesso e calce: gli stucchi dei Marchi della Valsesia*

H13:00-13:20 – Discussion and conclusion

H13:30-14:30 – Lunch Break

H15:00 – Visit (to be confirmed according to the COVID restrictions)



Carona, Santa Maria d'Ongero, Santo vescovo, unknown artist, second half of the 17th century



Morbio Inferiore (Canton Ticino), Santa Maria dei Miracoli, vault St. Joseph's chapel, Agostino Silva, end 17th century

The art and industry of the Ticinese stuccatori from the 16th to the 17th century

Giacinta Jean, Alberto Felici

Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana – Istituto materiali e costruzioni

The conference *The Art and Industry of Stucco Decoration* was inspired by the questions that emerged during the research project *The Art and Industry of Ticinese Stuccatori from the 16th to the 17th century*, financed by the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research, which involved a group of researchers from SUPSI (<http://p3.snf.ch/project-160092>). The aim of the project was to understand the *modus operandi* of stucco artists from the southern part of what is now the Canton Ticino, in order to understand whether it is possible to describe a typical regional stucco art, beyond the obvious formal differences, or whether each artist interpreted the use of materials and techniques in a personal and original way.

In order to study these aspects, the research was carried out with a strongly interdisciplinary approach, linking:

- information on the materials and the building site founded mainly in the archive documents (specifications, contracts, payments), which to date have been little researched but that revealed to be very rich sources;
- direct investigation of these works to understand their technical and executive characteristics; and finally
- the scientific analyses for the characterization of materials and techniques that made possible to compare historical data and observations with analytical results.

Some workshops active south of Lugano that produced important works in their home villages were investigated more closely, such as those of the Silva family (with father Francesco, son Agostino and grandson Gianfrancesco), the works of Alessandro Casella and Giovanni Antonio Colomba. Considering the limited chronological and geographical span, it can be assumed that they all had the same materials and stylistic references.

It is also important to consider the particular situation of Ticino's patrons, where there were no great princely or noble commissions, but rather plasterers who worked for local communities and confraternities, often playing the role of executors and active patrons at the same time.

Direct observation of the works was carried out on Ticino case studies, but the archival research also considered the Como area or Valtellina - where the Silva family and Alessandro Casella were particularly active - and this made it possible to gather useful material to highlight differences and similarities.

Analytical research made use of techniques already tested in the study of historic mortars, with microscopic observations in polished and thin sections to characterise binders and aggregates and calculate their ratio. On the other hand, it was really surprising and useful to experiment with X-rays to observe the internal reinforcements that make up the skeleton of the stucco statues. It was very difficult to identify the presence of organic material: we often assumed the presence of additives such as oil, casein or glues, but the analytical results obtained gave discordant results, which are not easy to interpret.

Research has shown great diversity in both the composition and the technique with which stucco was used among different workshops.

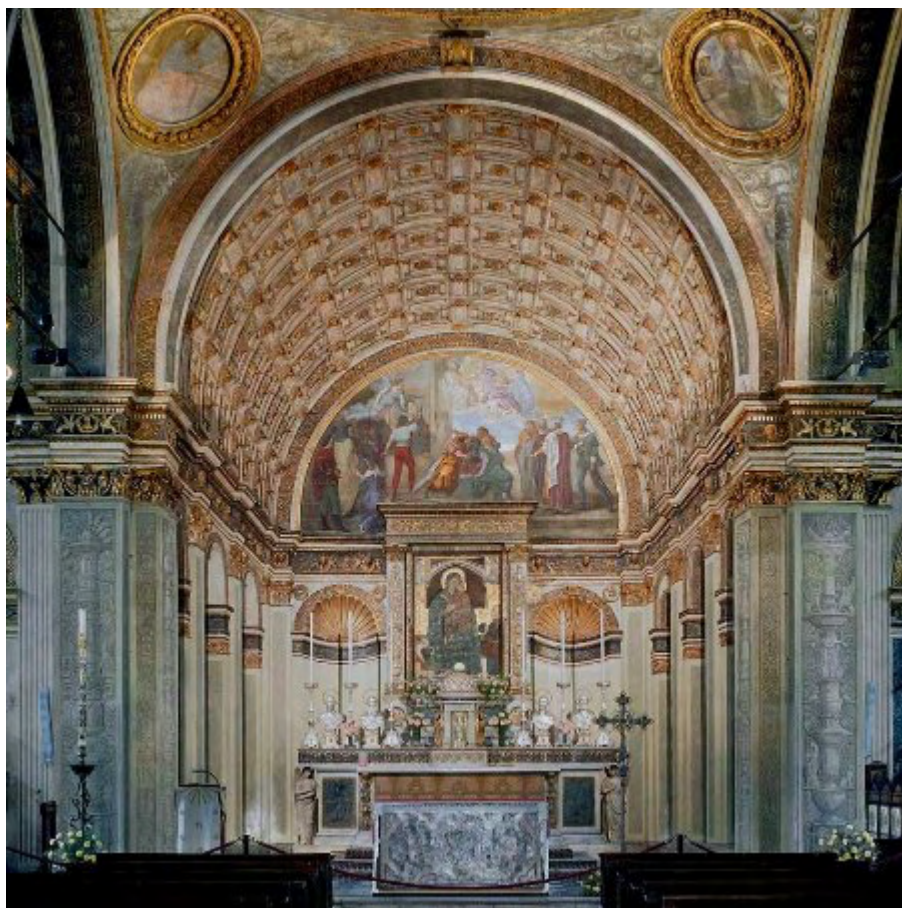
Today the conference in Rome opens up for the first time a comparison with other centres in Italy and abroad in which stucco workers from the same areas we have studied were active. Understanding how they worked, how they were able to adapt their knowledge to the materials, the climate and the different demands of the new patrons is a small but important step towards gaining a better understanding of the technical skills of these artists, the ability to organise their work and to adapt their skills to new contexts.

Giacinta Jean graduated from the Milan Polytechnic, PhD at the Lausanne Federal Polytechnic and the Turin Polytechnic in History of Architecture and Town Planning. Active as a freelance professional and lecturer in architectural restoration. Since 2005 she is responsible for the Bachelor and Master degree course in Conservation-Restoration at SUPSI. Responsible for several research projects on the conservation of 20th century architecture, on the Ticino tradition of stucco decorations, on preventive conservation and maintenance. Author of numerous scientific publications and member of institutions active in the protection of cultural heritage (SKR, NIKE, ICOMOS Suisse, DOCOMOMO).

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Alberto Felici graduated in History of Art from the University of Florence. Restorer of wall paintings and stuccoes at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence and, after working freelance, lecturer from 2001 to 2019 at the Florentine institute. Since 2008 he has been a lecturer at SUPSI, where he conducts master courses and research on the technique and conservation of stucco and plaster. He has been associated with the ICVBC of the CNR since 2001, since 2019 he has been working at the SABAP in Florence and currently he is a researcher within the project ARTECA (Czech Republic).

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Milano, Santa Maria presso San Satiro, the fictive choir



Milano, Santa Maria presso San Satiro, detail of the fictive choir

Notes on the use of stucco in Milan between 15th and 16th centuries

Jessica Gritti

Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi urbani

Stucco decorations have never been out of the Lombard tradition, as it is obviously demonstrated by the so famous and extraordinary preserved medieval examples. It is thus not surprising that the 15th century widely used this kind of technique in the building sites, even if the comprehension of the real diffusion of stucco decorations is conditioned by the lacking of surviving works. It is probably not necessary to stress again the fact that, in an area where constructions are mainly in masonry and the use of stone is reserved to structural elements like columns, painted terracotta and stucco decorations could easily find a logical application.

This general framework implies of course the existence of specialised workshops, or better societies, which could fit the patrons' necessities in articulated building sites. Probably the great diffusion of the stucco decorations in Milan starting from the mid-16th century is quite investigated, instead, the rising of the technique during the second half of the Quattrocento and the beginning of the succeeding century is less known. The last twenty years of the 15th century in Milan seems in particular promising thanks to the documents, which report about a certain number of examples, and to several building sites in which it is possible to recognise their rests.

The contribution presents three cases of the use of stucco decorations in relevant building sites of the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento in Milan: the new churches of Santa Maria presso San Satiro, Santa Maria della Passione and Santa Maria presso San Celso, all involving the activity of the Battagio workshop, that comprises, aside from the most famous Giovanni (engineer and architect) and his son-in-law Agostino Fonduli (terracotta sculptor), the stucco decorator Gabriele, one of Giovanni's brothers. The Battagio brothers are documented in the building site of Santa Maria presso San Satiro (1482-1486), in which stucco appears not only in the renowned fictive choir, but also in the decoration of the pilasters of the sacristy, as recent studies demonstrate. Then we find the activity of Giovanni Battagio in the chapel with the tomb of Daniele Birago in Santa Maria della Passione (1489), which again involves the use of "gesso"; and Gabriele Battagio is present in the building site of Santa Maria presso San Celso in 1500, when he agrees to make the stucco coffers for the vault inside the tiburio, under the supervision of Gian Giacomo Dolcebuono.

Even if these examples are few to represent an organic overview, they allow to make observations about the precise technique used, the ways of its application, the organisation of the work. It is worth also proposing questions about the impact that this kind of decorative technique could have on the architectural culture, according to the taste of the patrons, the coexistence or the rivalry with the use of stone, and the role of consolidated artistic societies in the choices. Moreover, the research tries to collect information about the local tradition in the use of gypsum, thanks to documentary and theoretical sources, like the Vitruvius translated and commented by Cesare Cesariano. Following the traces given by such sources, the paper reports on the use of stucco in the ducal residences and in some occasions that involve Donato Bramante, like the rooms realised for Ludovico Sforza in Vigevano and, last but not least, the ephemeral apparatuses created for important dynastic celebrations in Milan.

Jessica Gritti, PhD in the History of Architecture at the Università IUAV in Venice, is adjunct professor at the Politecnico di Milano, where she bases also her research activities being co-curator of the *Corpus of architectural drawings of the Cathedral of Milan* and the project *The duke's city. Policy of images in Sforza's Milan*, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies. She is also guest professor in the History of modern architecture at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Her studies focus on the architectural culture of the 15th and 16th centuries, especially in Northern Italy, with particular attention to architectural drawings, relations between Florence and Milan, the activity of Bramante in Lombardy and, more recently, to the relationships between real architecture, fictive one and urban spaces, topics for which she is also the winner of the Luigi and Sandro Angelini prize for History of architecture 2021-2022.

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Genova, Palazzo del Principe, Loggia degli Eroi



Genova, Palazzo del Principe, Galleria Aurea

Notes on Palazzo del Principe's stucco decoration: a focus on the Loggia degli Eroi and the Galleria Aurea

Laura Stagno

Università degli studi di Genova - DIRAAS

Palazzo del Principe's outstanding decoration is the result of the patronage of its two first owners, Andrea Doria (1466-1560) and his heir, Giovanni Andrea Doria (1540-1606). Perino del Vaga and his workshop had the leading role in the first campaign: for Andrea, Charles V's great admiral, they executed a complex cycle (1529-1533) in which stucco had a major role alongside the frescoes, in the main rooms and especially in the central Loggia. The latter is the most "Roman" space of the palace (as is well known, Perino had been a pupil and collaborator of Raphael's, and a prominent player on the artistic scene in Rome before the 1527 Sack), and elaborate, inventive plasterwork dominates its five small vaults' decoration. The plasterwork is organized around the five central painted octagons, bearing images of ancient Roman heroes (while idealized portraits of the most illustrious ancestors of Andrea Doria are portrayed on the wall); it comprises *grottesche* as well as images of gods (Neptune, Apollo, Diana and Diana Ephesia), which, according to some scholars, symbolize the Four Elements. Heavily repainted in the 19th century, with a complete loss of the chromatic scheme originally intended by Perino, the stucco decoration of the loggia was restored in 2001-2002; the restoration allowed some new information about the stuccoes to be gathered.

Andrea's heir, Giovanni Andrea Doria, doubled the size of the palace, and – as far as the "piano nobile" was concerned – he entrusted the decoration of all the rooms he had added to Marcello Sparzo from Urbino, in the 1590s: in six rooms, Sparzo and his collaborators used stucco as the only means of decoration, for the narrative scenes too, an absolute novelty for Genoa. Central medallions bear mythological scenes (the *Feats of Prometheus* in the west wing, a *Judgement of Paris* and a *Rape of Deianira* in the east one – the latter lost as a consequence of World War II bombings) and episodes of Furius Camillus's confrontation and triumph over the Gauls. In the Galleria Aurea, by far the most important ceremonial space, plasterwork had a role at least on the same level of importance as the central "quadri", to be painted. It included ornate framing, bas-relief figures and in-the-round statues of the most renowned members of the Doria family, in the attire of Roman emperors. Only one payment is recorded, but some letters written by Giovanni Andrea while he was having the gallery prepared for the new Queen of Spain's visit, in 1599, allow us to follow the progression of the work closely, including the gilding of the stuccoes, now lost, which gave the "Galleria Aurea" its name.

Laura Stagno is associate professor of Early Modern History of Art at the University of Genoa, as well as Scientific Director of Palazzo del Principe. Her main fields of research are Iconography and Genoese art, patronage and art collecting in the Early Modern period (which she teaches at the undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level). Her activities include the participation in a number of Italian and international research projects (including the COST Action *Islamic Legacy: Narratives East, West, South, North of the Mediterranean, 1350-1750*). She has published extensively on the Doria family's palaces and vast art patronage, including monographs (*Palazzo del Principe*, 2005, and *Giovanni Andrea Doria (1540-1606). Immagini, committenze, rapporti politici e culturali tra Genova e la Spagna*, 2018). laura.stagno1@gmail.com



Monumental Shell with Mask, 1572, Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, ground floor



Stucco decoration (detail), 1585-1590 ca., Rome, Santa Maria Maggiore, Sistine Chapel

Domenico Fontana and the Art of Stucco: Roman Worksites

Serena Quagliaroli,

Università degli Studi di Torino

Giulia Spoltore

Università della Svizzera italiana - Archivio del Moderno

This paper is part of a broader research on the Ticinese architect Domenico Fontana and his brothers (Giovanni, Marsilio and Santino), conceived and carried out by the Archivio del Moderno, Università della Svizzera italiana.

Domenico Fontana (1543-1607) is one of the most representative figures of Roman artistic culture at the end of the 16th century: analysing how he uses stucco during his entire career and how he manages stucco within the architectural worksites which he is responsible for allows us to shed new light not only on his professional career but also on the way Roman worksites of the time are organised and functioned. The paper, in fact, aims to investigate Domenico Fontana's attitude towards stucco, analysing this matter in the two fields of his activity, that of plasterer and that of architect/site manager. Investigating these issues gives us the opportunity to focus on and address two fundamental aspects for Domenico Fontana's career: how he deals with patrons and what kind of partnership and cooperation strategies he established with other architects, artists, and in general the workforce employed on his worksites. Although we are referring to largely lost works, it is possible to reconstruct the first Roman experiences of the Ticinese architect through several literary sources and archival documents. Domenico arrives in Rome in 1563 following his brother Giovanni's footsteps and starts his Roman activity in the industry of construction like many other Ticinese and Lombard artists and architects. Here he works with the "maestri di muro" and trains as a plasterer. For this specific activity he is recorded in 1568 in the worksite of Villa D'Este in Tivoli and, in 1572, in the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Campidoglio hill; the following year, he is documented at the service of Cardinal Ricci for his villa on the Pincio hill (later Villa Medici) and for the palace in via Giulia (now Palazzo Ricci Sacchetti). Retracing the Roman beginnings allows to clarify what kind of stuccoworks Fontana is able to fashion within the architectural worksites. In fact, the question that arises is whether the stucco used by Domenico should be considered among the "lavori di muro". As pointed out, 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» ("works that belong to the mason"). This definition embodies a conviction that must be traced back to his previous experience as a construction worker, but it also opens up to numerous more general questions on the role - or roles - of plasterers in Roman worksites of the late 16th century, urging us to analyse the procedures with which Domenico and the Fontana "enterprise" organise and manage the stuccoworkers within their building.

Serena Quagliaroli holds a Ph.D in History of Art from the Sapienza - University of Rome (2019). Since February 2022 she is a Researcher at the University of Turin. Previously, she worked for almost four years at the Archivio del Moderno, Università della Svizzera italiana, at first as a Research Assistant and then as a PostDoc Researcher, both funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Her academic interests focus mainly on the use of stucco in architecture and decoration during the Modern Era. She is one of the two coordinators of the "Centro Studi per la Storia dello Stucco in Età Moderna e Contemporanea" and, since 2016, she has organised several academic events and published articles and contributions on this topic.

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Giulia Spoltore is a PhD graduates in the History of Art at the Università degli studi Roma Tre (Rome 2018) with a dissertation on the church of Sant'Isidoro agricola in Rome. At present, she is a Post-Doc Researcher at the Archivio del Moderno (Università della Svizzera italiana – Accademia di architettura) in the Sinergia research project (n. 177286) *Milan and Ticino (1796-1848): Shaping the Spatiality of a European Capital* financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Since 2019, she is one of the coordinators of *Centro Studi per la Storia dello Stucco in Età Moderna e Contemporanea*. She studies stucco decoration from 16th until 20th century and she's currently involved in several research projects and publications on this matter.

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Pietro da Cortona and Stucco Decoration between Rome and Florence

Francesco Freddolini

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“Stuccasti sì, ma troppo al fin stuccasti.” These words conclude a sarcastic poem written in 17th-century Florence to criticize Pietro da Cortona and his extensive use of stucco in interior decorations, especially in the Sale dei Pianeti (Pitti Palace).

This verse epitomizes the importance of stucco for Pietro da Cortona and his willingness to experiment with this material, especially in the 1640s, and this paper will explore the role of stucco decoration in the Sale dei Pianeti, in relation to the overall decoration and in relation to the ceremonial function of such rooms. Too often, in fact, these rooms are discussed only as frescoed interiors, without considering the stucco decoration. However, both Filippo Baldinucci and Francesco Saverio Baldinucci praised those stuccoes, with a terminology that assimilated them to sculpture (not simply as a decorative filler).

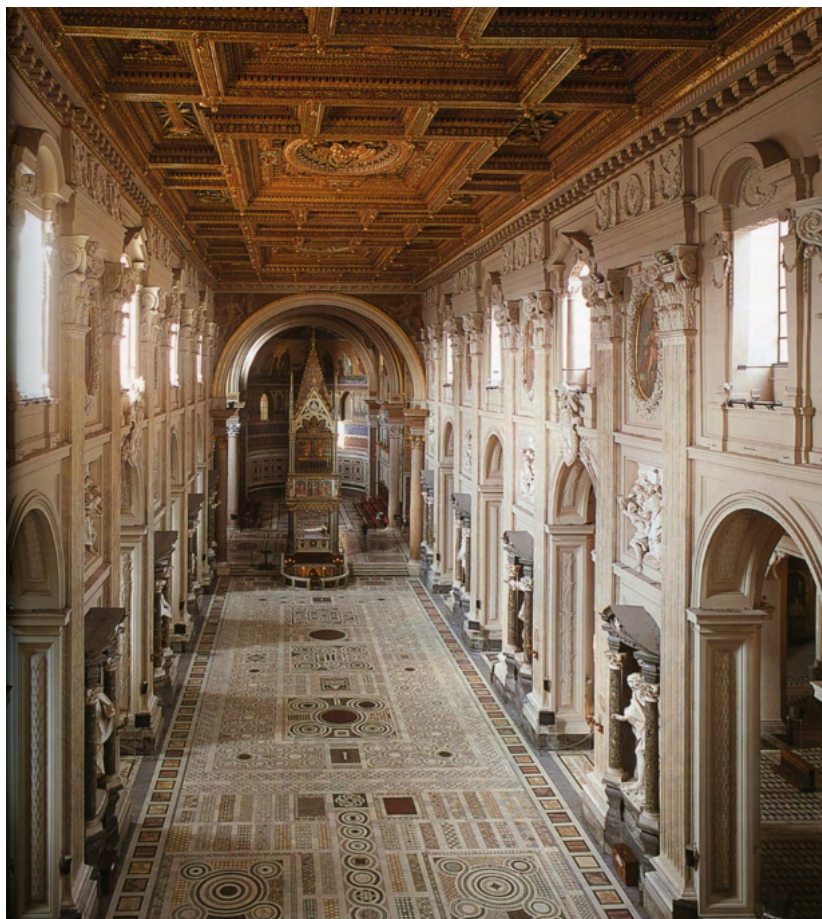
This paper will be divided into three sections: The first part explores the early modern vocabulary used to describe these stuccoes, while the subsequent section explores how Pietro da Cortona controlled the activity of collaborators such as Giovanni Maria Sorrisi. Exploring the practice of such collaboration, the concluding section of the paper will situate this commission within the larger context of Cortona’s involvement with—and interest in—stucco as a decorative material.

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Selected Recent Publications:

- 2020 Francesco Freddolini and Marco Musillo, eds., *Art Mobility and Exchange in Early Modern Tuscany and Eurasia* (New York: Routledge, 2020), ISBN: 978-0-36746-728-9 (forthcoming)
- 2014 Gail Feigenbaum with Francesco Freddolini, eds., *Display of Art in the Roman Palace, 1550 -1750* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014), ISBN: 978-1-60606-298-2, 384 pp.
- 2014 Guest Editor, *Journal of Art Historiography* (special section): Francesco Freddolini and Anne Helmreich, eds., *Inventories and Catalogues: Material and Narrative Histories*, special section of the *Journal of Art Historiography* 11 (December 2014), <http://arthistoriography.wordpress.com>, ISSN: 2042-4752
- 2013 *Giovanni Baratta, 1670-1747. Scultura e Industria del Marmo tra la Toscana e le Corti d'Europa* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2013), ISBN: 978-88- 8265-925-7, 364 pp.



Roma, San Giovanni in Laterano, the interior after Borromini's intervention



Roma, San Giovanni in Laterano, the interior after Borromini's intervention, detail

A Question of Control. The Execution of Stuccowork in Borromini's Buildings

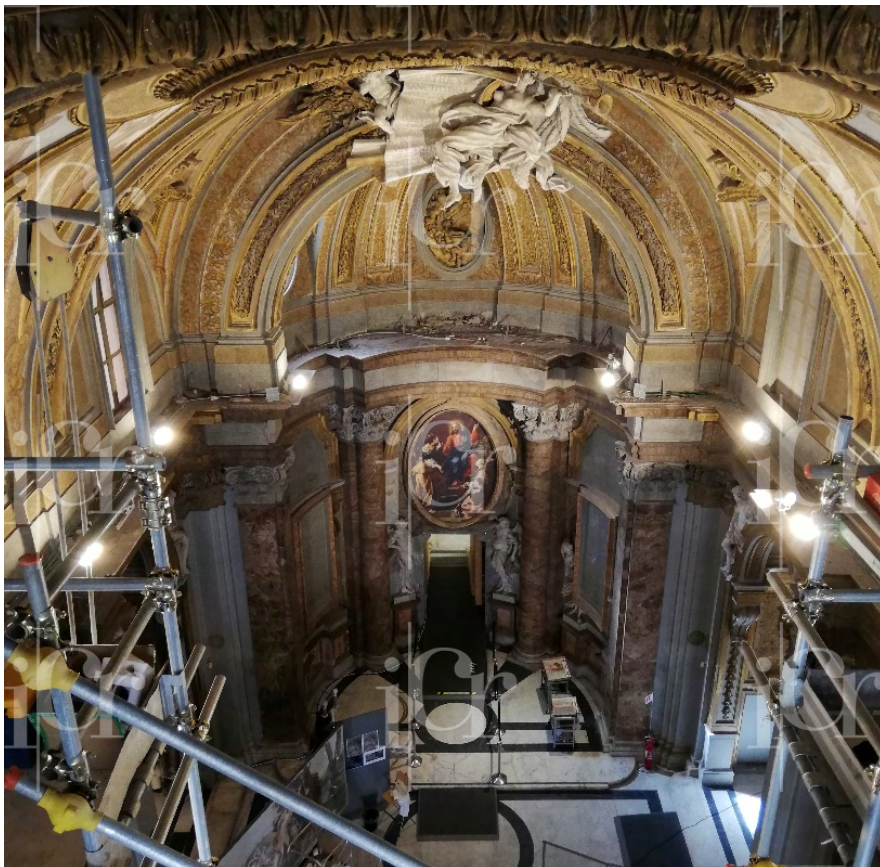
Torsten Tjarks

Art historian

The central role that stucco played in Francesco Borromini's architecture is beyond question. The white stucco covering walls, architectural members and vaults in his interiors is one of the most striking features of his oeuvre. Without this material, he would have been hardly able to realize some of his most outstanding architectural creations in which – as in the most famous example, the lantern of S. Ivo alla Sapienza – the boundaries between structure, ornament and a free sculptural design are dissolved. The plastic, malleable, homogeneous substance suited Borromini's architectural conception in a congenial way. It favoured a rich interplay of light and shadow on the architectural relief and made the building appear as if it were formed from a single piece, with flowing movement and at the same time accentuated, rhythmic subdivision. In his mature work, even the smallest details, which are deliberately designed in contrast to the conventional formula, show the inventive spirit of the architect and a marked family resemblance. This poses the question how the transfer of his designs in the big scale of architecture actually took place and which role the hand of the executing plasterer played in the process. The paper will reconsider a contemporary source that can shed some light on these issues. In a detailed account Virgilio Spada, appointed by the Pope to superintend the renovation works of the Lateran Basilica for the Holy Year 1650, reports a long series of conflicts on the construction site that took place in the first half of 1648, right at the stage, when work on the stuccos was to be started. At the centre of the quarrel was a chief plasterer (*capomastro stuccatore*) hired by Spada, in addition to the one Borromini had designated for the task. The fact, that Borromini strictly refused to cooperate with the former, illustrates clearly the kind of relationship he wished between himself and the artisans of the building site, a relationship of absolute dependency and loyalty. The conflict furthermore highlights the crucial role that so called *mostre* played in both the creative process and the execution of the stuccowork. These were a kind of prototype for a particular building element or section of stucco, which was to be created by the *capomastro stuccatore* himself under the guidance and supervision of the architect. Made with the same materials and to the original scale as the later stuccos, they formed the basis for determining the workload and prices in the contracts and were used by the plasterers as a guide in the subsequent work. To Spada's astonishment, Borromini had *mostre* made in the size of complete members, e.g. of a whole colossal pilaster or window frame – in contrast to the practice of an architect like Pietro da Cortona who had temporarily replaced Borromini on the building site. Cortona's *mostre* were only a few *palmi* in size and created in a few days. The reason for Borromini's unusual approach was undoubtedly that he thus could check the visual effect of these parts in their entirety and, if necessary, order changes. It is not unlikely that some of his ideas received their final shape only during this process. Finally, during the execution by the stucco team, the architect used to supervise and guide them on the scaffolding in person, correcting their work "even with his own hands". Seen from this angle and taken into account the time-consuming and intense collaboration between plasterers and architect, Borromini's seek for a nearly absolute authority on the construction site seems less bizarre and presumptuous than on first sight. It guaranteed that he could influence the execution without restriction until it wholly pleased him and the architecture ultimately bore his signature down to the minutest detail.

Torsten Tjarks graduated at the University of Bonn. For his PhD thesis, which deals with Francesco Borromini's treatment of architectural detail, he conducted research in Rome from 2005–2009, first with a doctoral fellowship at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, later as a collaborator in the project "Lineamenta - a database for architectural drawings". He has taught at the University of Bonn since 2010, interrupted by another stay at the Bibliotheca Hertziana 2012–2014. His thesis (published under the title *Das Architekturdetail bei Borromini*, 2015) focuses in particular on the artist's innovative approach to the classical orders, but also touches on questions of his design process and the building practice. Other publications on Borromini are dedicated to the motif of the herms and the aspect of monochromy in his work.

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Rome, Santa Marta



Rome, Santa Marta counter-façade

Leonardo Retti in Rome: the stucco decoration of Santa Marta at the Collegio Romano

Carla Giovannone

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The baroque restyling of the sixteenth-century church of S. Marta al Collegio Romano began in 1672 with a project directed by Carlo Fontana. Giovan Battista Gaulli was called to fresco the vault of the nave. He painted the *Glory and the miracles* of the titular Saint with the collaboration of Girolamo Troppa and Paolo Albertoni. The works of stucco sculptures were entrusted to Leonardo Retti or Reti, known as *Leonardo Lombardo*, and to Antonio Roncati. The architectural elements were made by the master mason Simone Broggi.

To the stucco artist Leonardo Retti was assigned the figures located in the chapels' arches, the angels on the counter-façade, those on the apse wall and the *Fama reggicartiglio's* statuary group on the top of the apse. The angels on the ledge and those on the windows' sides have been lost, but they are recorded in the engraving by Domenico de' Rossi of 1721. As the payment documents are not clear and Retti and Roncati worked together, it's difficult to distinguish the work of the two artists.

In September 2019 the ICR interdisciplinary group and its students started the restoration of the counter-façade's decorations and of the church nave's first span. This was an opportunity to study the executive techniques and material used by Leonardo Retti to create stucco decoration.

In Parma Leonardo, who belonged to a well known family of Ticino plasterers, realized the *Altare Beccaria in San Vitale* with his brother Domenico and the *Cappella Torelli* in the *Annunciata's* church under the supervision of his uncle Luca. When Leonardo moved to Rome, he started using the roman technique and local materials like pozzolana, marble powered and lime putty. Those materials were investigated for a greater understanding of the baroque worksite's organization.

Carla Giovannone is conservator of cultural heritage at the Ministero della Cultura, in service at the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro since 2001, professor at the Laboratory of murals paintings, plasters and stuccoes. She graduated from the ICR in 1988 and in Art History at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" in 2004. She worked as a freelance professional in Italy and abroad responsible for the restoration works at San Carlino alle Quattro Fontane in Rome, and supervisor of several conservation projects such as Palazzo Rivaldi, the Loggia di Galatea alla Farnesina, the former church of Santa Marta al Collegio Romano, the Borrominian arch of the Academy of San Luca, the chapel of San Pietro in Santa Pudenziana. She was supervisor on behalf of the ICR in collaboration with other institutions for the conservation of the fountains of Villa d'Este in Tivoli; the Galleria dei Caracci in Palazzo Farnese and some detached paintings by Domenichino; the apse of San Pietro in Tuscania; Ambient 24 of the Domus Aurea; the Upper Basilica of Assisi; of the lower basilica of San Clemente in Rome and takes care of the maintenance interventions of the Last Supper in the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. She carries out research and is the author of about 40 publications in scientific journals, texts and proceedings of specialist conferences. carla.giovannone@beniculturali.it



Rome, Vaticano, Sala Regia



Rome, San Carlo



Rome, San Carlo

Materials and artistic processes in Late Baroque Rome: from the working site of Santa Cecilia chapel in San Carlo ai Catinari to the restoration of the Sala Regia

Vittoria Brunetti

Art historian

In 1691 the Congregation of Musicians commissioned Antonio Gherardi to design the chapel of Santa Cecilia in the church of San Carlo ai Catinari (1691-1700). The architect, who was also a painter, conceived an imposing stucco decoration with a musical theme. The eminent sculptors Michel Maille, Simone Giorgini, Jean Baptiste Théodon and Lorenzo Ottoni modelled most of the figurative elements, and three teams of stucco makers headed respectively by Francesco Barozzi, Giuseppe Bilancioni and Pietro Porciani created the decorative elements. The accountants of the Congregation of Musicians specified the names of the artists involved, their salary and the various phases of the artistic process (Ferraris 1991). Today's rediscovery of part of the documentation – which had been pointed out by Giazotto in 1970, but not in fact documented by later scholars due to the long reorganisation of the historical archive of the Academy of Santa Cecilia – allows for an in-depth examination of several different aspects of the artistic process. The findings include contracts signed by the artists (the ones of Théodon and Ottoni reported by Alicja Adamczk), lists of expenses for tools and materials – to be integrated with what is already known about the allocation of the latter to the various artists – and the documentation regarding some later whitewashing work that explains the current appearance of the side walls.

This paper carries out an in-depth examination of the working site of the chapel of Santa Cecilia, taking into account several different aspects of the executive process such as the relationship between the different figures involved: the architect Gherardi, who received wax for shaping models and maybe sketched an outline of the decoration on the walls; the teams of stucco makers; the sculptors, with a focus on the degree of autonomy given to them; the other professionals employed (such as apprentices and suppliers) who were all instrumental to the organisation and delivery of the working site.

It will also be considered the use of specific materials related to the stucco practices implemented in Rome – the French artists involved on this site had long been integrated into the roman arts system, although with different stylistic results – and the making and repairing of tools for the working site: scaffoldings, brushes, sifters etc. as well as the supply of a palm tree to be copied by the sculptors.

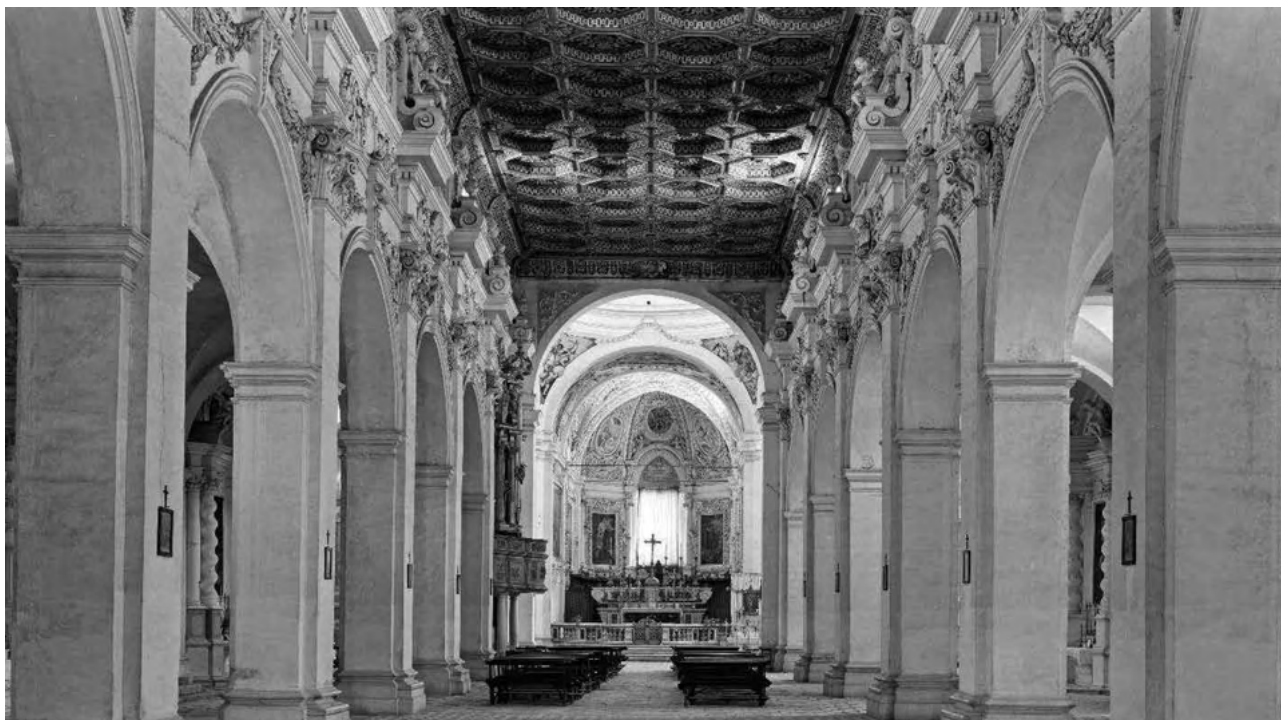
Finally, it will be examined the difference between the works actually delivered and those outlined in the contracts as well as some aspects related to colour finishing and later restorations.

The evident remaking of the angels' limbs and other elements on the right wall – so visible to alter the perception of the seventeenth century work – will allow to discuss the practice of stucco restoration that frequently took place a few years after the first realisation due to the fragility of the medium, often subject to remaking, especially in those parts that strongly emerge from the walls.

This activity was usually conducted by professional sculptors – depending on the economic capacity of the patrons – more or less able to imitate the style and the techniques of their predecessors. Although this was not the case for the right wall in San Carlo ai Catinari, there are interesting documents regarding this practice in Lorenzo Ottoni's career – the sculptor, whose stucco was strongly remade in San Carlo. His 'giustificazioni di pagamento' offer an insight of stucco remaking from the point of view of the sculptor – the only type of document missing from the working site of San Carlo. Ottoni was very active in the Vatican Palaces during the age of Clemente XI (1700-1721) and in 1711 was in charge of the restoration of the sixteenth century stucco decoration of the Sala Regia. This account (mentioned by Dorati da Empoli 2017 and never discussed) provides us with a wealth of information regarding his approach to the job: the sequence of the interventions on the walls, the handling of the scaffolding, the descriptive parameters of the documents, the specific terminology used, the respect for the original iconography as well as some practical obstacles encountered (providing us, as an indirect result, with an overall contribution to the debate on the attributions of the fifteenth century working site).

Vittoria Brunetti received her PhD in 2021 with a thesis on the Roman sculptor Lorenzo Ottoni (1648-1736). She collaborated on a number of exhibitions (such as *Il ritratto ritrovato*, 2017; *Bernini*, 2017) and is the author of articles and essays on Carlo Maratti, Lorenzo Ottoni, Giovanni Baratta, Alessandro Algardi and Bartolomeo Pincellotti (the latter in press). In 2018 she studied as an Occasional Student at the Warburg Institute in London and in 2019 she presented a paper on the use of the drill in sculptural practice (Florence, Bargello and Palazzo Strozzi). In the same year, she took in the summer school "Stuccos and stucco workers from Ticino in Rome" at the Swiss Institute in Rome. From 2020 collaborates as scientific editor for the General Catalogue of Sculptures of the Galleria Borghese.

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L'Aquila, Santa Maria di Collemaggio before restoration of 1970s



L'Aquila, San Filippo Neri, cappella dei Magi

An overview of stucco decoration in 17th-century L'Aquila

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The diffusion of stucco decoration in L'Aquila – as happened in other relatively peripheral Italian contexts – dates to a later period than the spread of that technique following the Roman experience of Giovanni da Udine. Nevertheless, stucco became widely used to decorate and renovate the city's most important buildings, both civil and religious, in the 17th century. In this respect, the great earthquake of 1703 was a crucial watershed: it brought destruction to L'Aquila, but it was also the starting point of an age of architectural and artistic transformation, whose effects are still visible.

The paper considers the stucco campaigns of the 17th century, which are more complex to analyze because they were largely destroyed in the earthquake of 1703 (or, in some cases such as Santa Maria di Collemaggio, by the so-called 'restauri di liberazione' carried out in the 1970s). However, they can still be retraced through archival sources as pointed out by the historian Raffaele Colapietra in his key studies on the Abruzzi in the early modern period.

The contribution focuses more specifically on the interventions executed in the second half of the century, between the two earthquakes of 1646 and 1703: a fifty-year period when Roman Baroque features spread throughout L'Aquila, marked by Ercole Ferrata's brief stay in the city (1646-1647) and, above all, by the leading position of the painter Francesco Bedeschini, who was entrusted with the design of many of the stucco cycles ordered in that time.

The above-mentioned documentary materials have in several cases made it possible to cast light on the chronology of the various artistic campaigns and on the masters involved. However, they deserve to be reconsidered – together with graphic models to be found in drawings and prints, as well as still existing decorations – to examine how those interventions were planned and executed. The aim is to analyze who were the stucco makers (both local and from 'Lombardy') active in L'Aquila in second half of the 17th century, which was their role in the working sites, and how they interacted with Bedeschini.

The importance of the stucco cycles undertaken during this period is easily understood if we consider the relevance of some of the buildings that were renovated: the Basilica of S. Bernardino – heart of the Franciscan Observance in Italy – , S. Maria di Collemaggio, the Cathedral dedicated to S. Maximus of Aveia and S. George, the church of S. Filippo Neri, and the Palazzo della Camera.

Among the stucco masters active in the city, specific attention is paid on one hand to Ercole and Francesco Ferradini, members of a 'Milanese' family documented in L'Aquila – where a large community of people from 'Lombardy' was present – at least since the beginning of the 17th century; on the other hand, to Tommaso Amantini, a prolific artist from the Marche region, where he took part in more than one decorative campaign ordered by the Congregation of the Oratory. This circumstance may also have played a role in his transfer in L'Aquila, where he was involved, among other things, in the working site of the church of S. Filippo Neri.

Carlotta Brovadan graduated in Art History from the University of Florence and earned her doctoral degree from the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", with a dissertation on gift giving and cultural exchanges between Florence and France under Ferdinando II de' Medici (1621-1670). She held a research fellowship at the Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'Arte "Roberto Longhi", collaborated with the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (2011-2017) and the Uffizi Gallery's Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe (Euploos Project), and currently works for the Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali in Rome.

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Torino, Castello del Valentino, plasterwork in the Magnificence Room



Venaria Reale (Torino), plasterwork detail of a decorative mask in the Garove façade

Plasterers at the Savoyard court: the construction of royal residences in 17th century Piedmont

Valentina Burgassi, Mauro Volpiano

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Towards the end of the 20th century, the residences of the Savoy court began to attract renewed interest, particularly regarding their historiography and architectural conservation. Great attention has been given to communicating the architectural and art-historical value of the buildings. This generated a rich historiographic Italian and international literature, through foreign scholars and contributions in this field.

More recent studies have shown that by looking at different contexts it is possible to detect an ongoing and long-term refinement of construction techniques and of local traditions, which interacted with the knowledge and skills of the great protagonists of Savoyard architecture.

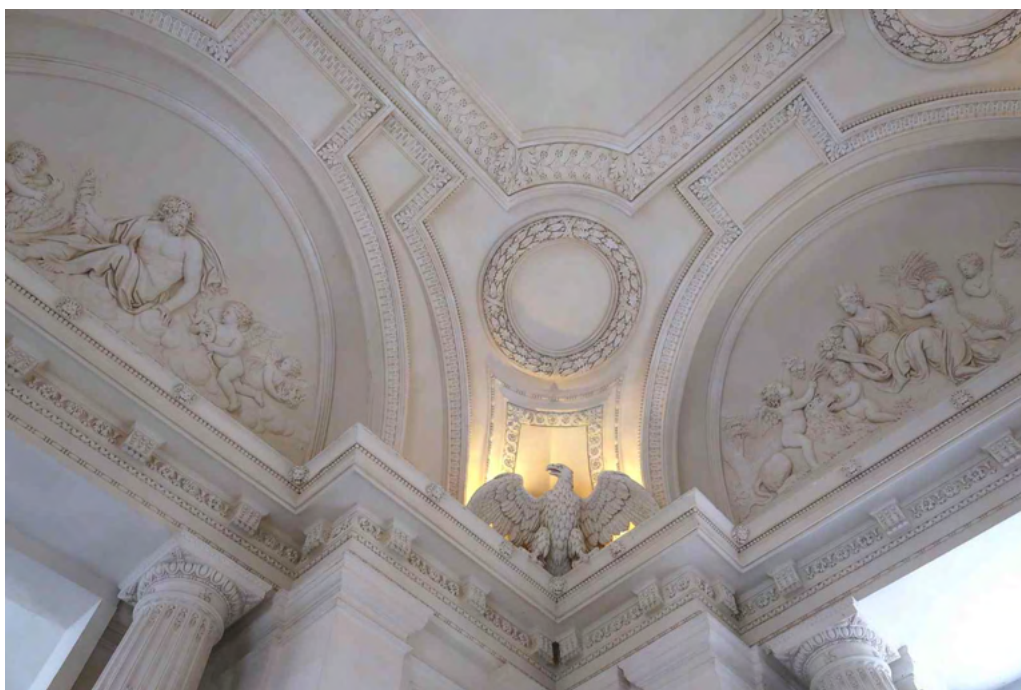
In this framework, some first results of a project started by our research group at the Politecnico di Torino (Construction History Group of DAD Department) will be presented, which analysed the organisation of the construction site and the role of professional figures in 17th-18th century Piedmont, and also the evolution of construction techniques paying attention to the international scenario. This paper will examine the emergence of a historiographic interest on Ticino Lake workers in Piedmont (in particular, on plasterers), and it will look at several specific construction sites (such as Venaria Reale and other court palaces) besides the archival sources. It will take into account the role of plasterers at the Savoyard court during the second half of the 17th century, considering the organisation of the working site and the collaboration with architects, builders, and other artists as sculptors or painters. This work still in progress can now take advantage of the extensive restoration campaigns of the royal residences completed in the recent years, which could be considered today a driving force for knowledge on the role of the stucco makers and on the materials used to create the decorations.

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Mauro Volpiano is associate professor of architectural history at the Politecnico di Torino. PhD, faculty since 2004. He authored more than 150 publications on built heritage related to modern and contemporary age Piedmont and Italy. His research focuses on the architectural and construction history in the Savoyard States in the late modern and early contemporary age and on the architectural profession and sociability. He is also interested in studies connected to historic landscapes and cities in the context of cultural heritage policies and planning. In recent years, he has been involved in research and didactic projects with the universities of Nagoya, Tokyo, Hosei-Tokyo, Hokkaido, KIT Kyoto, Grenoble, Aix-Marseille, TU Delft, MIT Boston (Awardee of a MISTI Grant with the research *From Tradition to Innovation. Exploring Ancient Structures and Technologies of Northern Italian Baroque Architecture*). For ten years he was the coordinator of the "scientific monitoring group" of the restoration sites of the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale and, before that, a member of the team of architects involved in the restoration project.
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Castle of Maisons, staircase



Castle of Maisons, vestibule

Is there a French Stucco? Gypsum Ornament in Seventeenth Century France: Jacques Sarrazin and the Castle of Maisons

Nicolas Cordon

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Formally as well as aesthetically, stucco decoration in France during the classical period is quite dependent on the Italian tradition, although its iconography adapts to the symbolic needs of the Realm. Vaux-le-Vicomte, the Louvre, Versailles are famous examples where French sculptors have emulated their Italian colleagues, using the possibilities of stucco for the display of *all'antica* ornaments and allegorical figures. The decorative works supervised by Jacques Sarrazin from 1642 in the castle of Maisons, the sumptuous residence build by François Mansart for René de Longueil 20 kilometres north west of Paris, are representative of these connexions. A sculptor trained in Rome – he worked with Domenichino – Sarrazin was prone to interpret an aesthetic and vocabulary he was familiar with. However, from a material point of view, the stucco technique used by its associates in Maisons – Philippe de Buyster, Gérard Van Opstal, Gilles Guérin – strays from Renaissance theory (at least from Vasari's), as gypsum plaster is to a great extent preferred to lime either on low-relief motifs or free-standing figures, like in many other decorative working sites in Seventeenth century France. This is partly due to local conditions, as gypsum deposits are abundant in France, especially in regions like the Île-de-France, the French Alps or Provence. A local tradition of gypsum ornamentation arose in Provence (called "gypseries", with Aix-en-Provence as its main centre) in the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, prior to the importation of the Italian Renaissance stucco during the reign of François I^{er}. In the Île-de-France, the gypsum quarries of Montmartre provided the material for a lot of working sites in the numerous *hôtels* and castles decorated during the classical period. Taking into examination the technical analysis of the particularly varied and profuse stuccoes of Maisons, we will reflect on the consequences of their gypsum materiality, in terms of working methods, special effects and treatment, in order to build comparisons with other sites in France or other traditions of the use of gypsum, in Spain, Islamic art, or Seicento / Settecento Italy. The very aim is to contribute to a discussion of "What is Stucco?" – to quote the fundamental article of Claire Gapper, 1999 - and try to bring some French specificities to light.

Nicolas Cordon holds a PhD (2018) in History of Early Modern Art from the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His thesis: « Aux frontières du décor: le stuc dans l'art romain de la Renaissance. Marginalité, simulacres, transgressions » focused on the cultural background and originality of the renewal of stucco decoration in Rome during the Sixteenth century. He is the author of several articles on the topic, and he most recently co-organised, with Émilie Passignat, the international workshop *Union from Division : (S)partimento in Renaissance Art*, Florence, Villa Finaly/ Kunsthistorisches Institut, December, 12-13, 2019. He has been a teaching assistant in the University of Paris, the University of Aix-Marseille, and the University of Tours.
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The rise of interior ornamental Stuccoworks in the Netherlands from the 16th till the 18th century

Wijnand Freling

Dutch Stucco Guild

Old ornamental stuccoworks

Most of the old stuccoworks in the Netherlands in the 17th century are plastered and ornamented ceilings between the tie-beams and others beams, made from mud and clay, covered with a stucco finishing layer. One of the oldest the stucco-ceiling in Dordrecht Berckespoort. Made in 1565-1572 with a rich renaissance decoration with ornaments, partly casted, partly stamped and also partly made by hand. Other examples with late renaissance decorates plastered ceilings with ornaments can be found in the South of the Netherlands: into the castles of Grasbroek and Limbricht, dated in the period 1627-1634. Wall-decorations from 1634 are found in the castle of Wolfrath with portrayals of various Church Fathers. Specially was the discovery of parts of an old stucco-ceiling in the North of the Netherlands in Groningen, Poelestraat 37, made round 1620 and related to renaissance stuccoworks in Germany and Denmark.

Mud and clay

More common are the stucco-ceilings from earthen plasters sculptured around the beams and made in the 17th century. Alongside the River Rhine and Meuse there a lot of examples to find. In some cases related to the "Kölner Decke" (Ceilings from Cologne) and probably made by German craftsmen such as Jan Craeckenberg von Cleef (a little town just on the other side of the border). In Utrecht and Leiden we have found the same ceilings.

Casted elements

The last two decades we have found examples of casted parts of mantelpieces. Craftsmen had knowledge of the handbook *Il Libro dell'Arte* from Cennio Cennini (1437) and other descriptions how to make mould for casted ornaments. Most of the time less expensive as the marble or sandstone sculptures and a good substitute. Stuccoists used moulds from the 16th century. Best known are the casted parts in the Gallery of Francois the First in the Castle of Fontainebleau made by the Italian stuccoists Francesco Primaticcio and Nicolò dell'Abate (1531-32). From the middle of the 17th century in Leiden Holland the family Van der Mey had a firm of casted plaster ornaments and statues.

Sculpture and stucco

Renaissance stucco-ceilings are sometimes real sculptured ceilings, such as Rosenborg castle in Denmark and Güstrow castle in Germany. Scenes in three-dimensional statues and ornaments grow out of the surface, made by the stuccoist or sculptor from stucco and plaster and framed on wooden structures. In the mid 17th century this craftsmanship came to a peak by Jan Christian Hansche in Belgium and Germany with statues, beasts and other sculptures those who came nearly one meter out of the ceilings.

Design and translation

Influences in design in the Netherlands in the late 17th century by Daniël Marot, an Huguenot fled from Paris to the Northern part of the Republic: ceilings and lots of other things. By print spread to other artists as inspiration for designs of interiors and stucco ceilings. The craftsmen had the responsibility and knowledge to "translate" the two dimensions of the design into the three dimensions on walls and ceilings and they were also responsible for the perspective from the place to notice this interior art or representation. In that case we will distinguish the craftsmanship of these stuccoists as artists.

Italians in the Netherlands

First generation Italian stuccoists came at the end of the 17th Century into the Northern part of the Netherlands. There were no restrictions for them, except Amsterdam, because there were no guild organisations. In some places they worked together with local stuccoists. The main entrance hall and staircase from Middachten castle has been decorated by the Italians Francesco Orsolino and Johannes Sima with the aid of the local craftsman and stuccoist Jacob Heusely. Several times we have noticed this comakership. An explosion of stucco-interior decorations came in the first half of the 18th century. Italian stuccoists, such as Bollina, Albisetti, Barberino, Beretta, Castelli, Castoldi, Laghi, Luraghi came to Holland in one or two generations and made lots of stucco and plaster ceilings. But there are also local stuccoists and sculptors at work, such as Van Logteren, Husly, Viervant and Van Gorkum. The research in the Netherlands of the past thirty years about ornamental stucco and plaster has given us a new view about the design, the makers and use of materials in these kinds of interior decorations. Today the knowledge and awareness give some more protection to these ceilings.

Wijnand Freling is an architect and received his PhD from the faculty of architecture at the University Delft in 1993 with his thesis "Stuccoworks in Dutch houses in the 17th and 18th century". He runs a consultancy firm Rocaille B.V. on the restauration of historical stucco and plasterwork. He is Patron of the Dutch Stucco Guild and made the inventory of the Silberling collection, a late 19th century mould collection for stucco-ornaments. w.freling@rocaille.eu



Zons, Kreismuseum. Part of the Ceiling from Emmerich/Lower Rhine, dated 1652, during the restoration



Limburg/Lahn, Saltzgasse 21, built shortly after 1573. Stucco on the façade

'50 Shades of Stucco' – Techniques and market development lines of stucco-masters in the German countries of the 16th and 17th century

Barbara Rinn-Kupka

Art historian

The talk is about stucco work and its framework conditions in the areas that today belong to Germany. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, stucco decorations show a diversity of material and execution variants that will not be matched later. The somewhat lurid part of the title plays on this important observation for research. So far, unfortunately, many of the examples have been poorly researched; destruction during the Second World War and the modernisation phase of the 1960s destroyed objects and sources. Until now, scholars' attention is also primarily focused on the artistically significant examples, and the assessment as pure (building) craftsmanship also leaves the performers "caught between the chairs" of the research disciplines. Despite the difficulties described above, it is possible to formulate theses on the question of why, after the rediscovery of Roman stucco decorations in Renaissance Rome, such a wide variety of decorations in stucco and related building materials came into execution in Germany. The main thesis here is that the variations in execution reflect the various ways in which news and knowledge about Roman decorative forms came to modern Germany: 1. via building artists who were present in Rome and were recruited; 2. via building artists who knew the imitations from Rome or were trained by them; 3. via building artists and craftsmen who recognised the signs of the times; 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. The Cologne stucco-workers put it in a nutshell when they describe in retrospect: when wooden ceilings went out of fashion - and this brings us to the time around 1560 - they came to terms with the new ideas and thus developed forms of decoration that were similar to stucco-work. Just at the beginning of this particular period, under point 3, it were all kinds of craftsmen, sculptors and stonemasons who could become "stucco makers", although this term was virtually unknown at the time. There was little "real" stucco as a mortar-like mixture with gypsum as a component in northern and central Germany. Clay, loam and lime were known in the building trade and used to start with. The people who carried out these decorations therefore first had to find their job title. They were new specialists, whose performers were not mentioned separately in the sources until around 1600, then first as lime- or plaster cutters ("Kalk- oder Gipsschneider"), then later as limers, plasterers or stuccoers (Kalker, Gipser oder Stuckateure). However, a change in room decoration fashion alone can hardly explain this striking range of new forms in stucco (and its substitutes). The new fashion was also multiplied by religious refugees who, because of their faith, had to leave the places then known as centres of art in what are now Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as by builders and clients who, e.g. because they had accepted the new religion, were also looking for new room decorations, and finally through the new medium of letterpress printing. The example of the Lower Rhine (Fig. 1) can be used to explain this special situation: with the approximately 5,000 refugees in Wesel alone in the period around 1575, people came to the new places, which had already heard about the new discoveries in Rome and talked about it. In places like Kalkar/Lower Rhine, they encountered a woodcarving tradition that was now running out of church-oriented commissions in the late 16th century due to changes within society. The same in the City of Cologne, where the stagnating construction of the cathedral released forces among the stonemasons. And also in the free imperial city of Frankfurt on the Main, new ideas and interestingly bizarre illustrations reached the open ears of forward-looking artisans and craftsmen with the fled merchants, artists and craftsmen, promising them new earning opportunities simply by hearsay (Fig. 2). Around 1630, the great period of experimentation with plastic, predominantly white-coloured decorations was over, culminating in the German special path of lime stucco work, which only became unfashionable in the late 17th century with the technical revolution of the Ticino and Lombard stucco artists who were now increasingly coming to the country.

Barbara Rinn-Kupka is an art historian at the City of Wesel, Head of the Deichdormuseum Bislich and specialist in German stucco-history. She wrote her PhD thesis on the work of Italian stuccoers (most of them were from Ticino) in northern Germany (ca. 1685-1740). She also works as a lecturer in stucco history at Propstei Johannesberg gGmbH Training in heritage conservation and renovation. She extensively published on stucco decoration, among other titles *Stuck in Deutschland. Von der Frühgeschichte bis in die Gegenwart*, Regensburg 2018.

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Passau, Cathedral, Carlo Lurago 1668-1684



Ludwigsburg Palace, Diego Francesco Carlone, about 1730

Collaboration between Architects and Plasterers on Construction Sites in Southern Germany (17th-18th Centuries)

Pietro Delpero

Art historian

This report focuses on the organization of the workshops of sculptors and plasterers in the building sites of southern Germany during the 17th and 18th centuries and on their relations with other artists, builders and architects. Information will be provided about the organization of Italian sculptors and plasterers within the system of artistic enterprises specific to Bavaria. The artists who received commissions and worked in contact with well-known architects and builders in worksites north of the Alps hailed mainly from the Lombard lakes area. Attention will be paid to the fundamental role of the construction site of the Benedictine abbey of Ottobeuren as a magnet for workers—mostly Italian sculptors and plasterers—who were either coming or going to the major construction sites in southern Germany, such as Passau, Ludwigsburg, Würzburg, Nymphenburg and Schleissheim. Starting from Ottobeuren, we will follow the professional path of some of these plasterers and sculptors, who were at the forefront of a stucco industry that had developed on a family basis in the area of the Lombard lakes and were drawn to the construction sites in southern Germany, where the demand for skilled workers had increased considerably after the Peace of Westphalia. Specific mention is made of the families of plasterers of Maini, Bossi, Ferretti, Lucchese, Mola, Volpini and Carlone. My paper will highlight four case studies. First, the worksite of the Cathedral of Passau and the families of architects, builders, plasterers and painters such as the Lurago, Carlone, D'Allio, Bossi and Tencalla. Second, the Ludwigsburg Palace, where Donato Giuseppe Frisoni as architect worked with the plasterer Tommaso Soldati, the sculptor Giorgio Ferretti and the painter Luca Antonio Colomba. Third, the Ansbach Residence, site of a collaboration between the architects Gabriel de Gabrieli and Leopoldo Retti and the plasterers Domenico Ferretti, Giuseppe Volpini and Diego Carlone. Finally, the activity of the Italian decorators and plasterers in Munich, particularly on the Schleissheim Palace, and their relation to the architect Enrico Zuccalli will be investigated.

1. In 1668, the architect Carlo Lurago was hired by Bishop Wenzel Thun von Hohenstein to reconstruct the Cathedral of Passau, destroyed by fire. Alternating his presence in Passau with his commitments in Prague, for about twenty years, Lurago made the cathedral's overall plan and designed the models for its interior stucco decorations, made by Giovanni Battista Carlone and his workshop.

2. Everhard Louis, Duke of Württemberg, began the construction of the Ludwigsburg Palace in 1704. The architect Johann Friedrich Nette hired the plasterers Tommaso Soldati, Donato Giuseppe Frisoni and Riccardo Retti away from Prague. After the death of Nette in 1714, Frisoni finished much of the palace facades and he brought in the plasters Giacomo Antonio Corbellini and Lorenzo Mattia Retti, his brother-in-law and son-in-law respectively, who were followed by Diego Carlone in 1718.

3. Georg Friedrich Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach started the reconstruction of the Ansbach Residence and his brother the Margrave Wilhelm Friedrich finished it. Before 1709, the architect Gabriel de Gabrieli, appointed as Court Architect, created the southeast wing with the main facade and he collaborated with the sculptor and plasterer Giuseppe Volpini. The interior dates from 1734 to 1745 under architect Leopoldo Retti, who collaborated with the painter Carlo Carlone and the plasterer Diego Francesco Carlone.

4. The Prince-elector Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria commissioned the Schleissheim Palace between 1701 and 1726 to the architect Enrico Zuccalli, who had already worked for the Prince's mother Enrichetta Adelaide of Savoy. Numerous artists, from all over Europe, were called to work on that site, including the venetian painter Jacopo Amigoni and the lombard sculptor and plasterer Giuseppe Volpini.

Pietro Delpero studied Baroque art and sculpture, focusing the investigation on relationships between Italy and Germany. During his PhD in the History of Art at the University of Augsburg, he wrote and published a thesis on Italian Baroque sculptors and plasterers in Germany. In 2004-05, he received a postdoctoral fellowship from the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome to study Lombard Baroque sculptors and he participated as a speaker at several conferences regarding baroque sculptors and plasterers (e.g. Campione d'Italia 2006, Trento 2009, Como 2011).

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Bučovice Castle



Diana and Leda, detail

Collection of Renaissance stucco statues at Bučovice Castle

Technological, technical and material solutions

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Bučovice Castle is a Renaissance castle located in south Moravia, Czechia. Bučovice Castle was built in the 1580s for Jan Šembera Cernohorsky of Boskovice, a Moravian aristocrat who was in contact with the imperial antiquarian Jacopo Strada. Their collaboration led to the layout of the interior decoration of the castle rooms. During Šembera's life, only five rooms in the castle ground floor were decorated. The Imperial room, intended for the representation of Šembera himself, was decorated in a most spectacular manner. Four three-dimensional stucco statues in the lunettes are the dominant elements of the decoration of the room (Charles V, Europa, Diana and Mars), and are complemented by four semi-relief portraits of Roman emperors. It is necessary to include a further two stucco statues located in the neighboring room (Diana and Leda) in the overall amount of figural stucco decoration, as these match the concept of the decoration in the Imperial room itself. Thus, in one building, we have the opportunity to view an exceptional collection of ten stucco statues in fully-relief or semi-relief-form. Moreover, they differ markedly from similar local work with their remarkable quality and are therefore considered to be the work of Italian plasterers or of a plasterer who had previously worked in Italy.

This project, prepared within the framework of complex, inter-disciplinary research into the Renaissance interior of the castle, concentrates on researching 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 *alla prima* 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 individual approach to his work. The stucco material was applied to a wooden supporting framework (statues of Charles V, Europa, Diana), which was slightly reinforced with nails and fabric. Contrastingly, only the statue of Mars contains a terracotta core; it was assembled from at least six individual parts that were put together and finished with the application of a layer of white stucco carried out according to the *all'antica* recipe. The individual parts were connected with nails and covered with drapery modelled in stucco. The surfaces of the statues were all unified with a white stucco layer and enhanced with gilded details and incrustated with colorful pieces of glass (a typical feature of Renaissance statues designated 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.

Thanks to the resulting wide range of documented technological processes, technical solutions, and wide spectrum of the materials used, the knowledge acquired is a unique contribution towards the general issue of Renaissance figural stucco. One particular conclusion focuses on information concerning the artist and its workshop involved which is inconclusive to date; the analysis of the technological, technical and material issues used in the creation of Bučovice Castle may lead to a deeper understanding of the workshop's working methods and characterisation of the artist's style.

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All authors are currently co-working on the research of Renaissance stucco in Bohemia and Moravia (project supported by Czech Ministry of Culture).



Carlo Lurago – workshop (attributed), interior design, Stuttgart – Württembergische Landesbibliothek



Carlo Lurago – workshop, decoration of the garden summerhouse in Gorzanow (Kłodzko), 1653 – 1658

Carlo Lurago: Stucco worker and / versus Architect

Martin Krummholz
Palacký University Olomouc

Carlo Lurago (1615 Pellio Superiore – 1684 Passau) is one of the most important figures of the early Baroque architecture in Central Europe. Since 1635, he was documented in Prague, from where he left for Passau in 1669. Although Lurago is commonly referred to be an architect, his original training was a plasterer, and all indications are that this profession has remained closest to him throughout his entire life. As a very capable manager, Lurago had established and run a very efficient workshop employing his numerous relatives and compatriots, which was able to comprehensively execute even very demanding commissions. These included fortifications, churches (mainly Jesuit), chateaux and palaces. With its scope and significance, Lurago's workshop crossed the borders of Bohemia and extended into neighboring regions of Kłodzko, Silesia, Upper Austria and Bavaria. It is not yet possible to reliably determine whether the initial architectural designs for the building constructions were made directly by Lurago himself or by his closest collaborators (Giovanni Domenico Orsi et al.). Carlo seems to be mainly focused on the plastic decoration. Such presumptions would be supported by the strong stylistic coherence of "Luragesk" stucco. The production of the Lurago workshop connects two artistically remarkable epochs: the fading era of the so-called Rudolphinian Mannerism of the first third of the 17th century and the High Baroque period of the 1680 – 1720. Both milestones are, in fact, organic transitions, where formal and compositional continuity as well as direct personnel overlaps are evident. The first half of the 17th century is characterised by an 'atectonic' approach to stucco decoration, with the walls and ceilings marked by a fair amount of homogeneity. The axially symmetric arrangement of rectangular or orbicular decorative frames and fills (cartouches and painted fields) is dominated by a central field, to which the other fields are subordinated, both in terms of composition (axial and diagonal) and scale. As of the second third of the 17th century, stucco décor gained in plasticity, which became a defining element in the character of the interior (known in German as the *Stuckbarock*). As with architecture at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, stuccowork became significantly anthropomorphic. What had previously been a small figural element, barely noticeable in the intricate profusion of floral ornamentation, cartouches, and other decorative detail, now asserted itself and grew in size. Since the beginning of the 17th century, ceilings were adorned with various types of putti, cherubs and winged heads, hermae, and, later, atlantes. Fully three-dimensional stucco sculpture was usually mounted on the main cornice and pendentives of domes, where these figures served as transition elements between the wall and the vault. Figural stuccowork also shifted from the small, unconvincing, puppet-like, purely decorative figures towards proportional, expressive, and functionally integrated architectural sculpture. The style of the 'Lurago group' seems to have been rooted in the Piedmont region, where many of the artists active in Bohemia and Austria had verifiably worked. Such relations are proven not only by formal analogies, but also by some of the artists' surnames. Isidoro Bianchi himself is documented to have been in Prague in 1605. Giovanni Battista Bianchi was active in Nové Město nad Metují between 1657 and 1660, and already two decades earlier (before 1637) Bernardo Bianchi worked in Bučovice, decorating the local chateau chapel. Recent investigations have brought a number of new findings and opened up a view in a broader European perspective. These findings will certainly be verified and concretized by the following research. It will thus be possible to replace the hitherto vaguely formulated "interregional relations" with a much more plastic, complex and to the period reality much more adequate image.

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Krosno, Oświęcim family chapel



Cravow, St. Anne's church

Profession of stucco maker in 17th century Lesser Poland

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The Lesser Poland province included several major artistic centers. The most important of them was Cracow, traditionally influenced by Italian culture, and being a remarkable market for migrating artists. Among them there were some stucco makers of confirmed or supposed origin from the surroundings of Lake Lugano. The paper presents the latest state of research concerning mostly their collaboration with other artists and profile of professional activity and it will focus on the cases of Giovanni Falconi and Baldassare Fontana. The former was previously considered the most important stucco maker active in Poland at the time, so almost every decoration had been included in his *oeuvre* basing only on superficial likeness to any of previously attributed works. This encouraged some scholars to link him with sculptures made in other materials (eg. Tombstone of princess Anna Vasa in Toruń) as well as projects of internal decorations. In fact, Falconi is known from the unique mention in a diary of Stanisław Oświęcim (a courtier of king Ladislaus IV) who hired the stuccoist to decorate his family chapel in Krosno (Fig. 1). Falconi can be considered the author of only a relatively limited group of stucco works, which are the most similar to this one, considering not only the general scheme, but first of all minor decorative motifs. Among such works there are decorations of the chapels of Cetner family in Podkamień and Tyszkiewicz family in Lublin, the studiolo in Baranów Sandomierski, and some minor works in Cracow, Rzeszów and Łowicz.

The *oeuvre* of Fontana was harder to enlarge, due to the exquisite quality of his works which could be hardly mistaken with creations of any other artist. Nevertheless, he was believed to work as an architect, delivering designs of several marble and wooden epitaphs and altars, and even monumental church architecture. Those suppositions, however, turned to be based on misread sources and unfounded belief that he was the only artist with Roman education active in Cracow at that time. Thorough analysis of archival records leads to the opposite conclusion: there is no indication that in Poland this exquisite stucco maker had taken up jobs other than making stuccos. Even his masterpiece, which is the decoration and furnishing of St. Anne's church in Cracow (Fig. 2), wasn't made according to his design. The church was carefully planned in every detail by prof. Sebastian Piskorski, who supervised the construction and the decorative works as the representative of the University, to whom the church belonged. Piskorski commissioned designs of stucco works from Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski – the royal painter educated in the Roman Accademia di San Luca.

Aside from numerous anonymous artists of mediocre talent, I'd like to mention an outstanding one, known as the Master of Tarłów. His main work, in a small town north of Sandomierz, is famous for its series of excellent-quality reliefs resembling paintings. Their maker had probably been associated with one architectural workshop, of the same north-Italian origin. Another interesting example, however not because of the artistic quality, is the Cracow craftsmen Kazimierz Kaliski, one of the few versatile artists, who worked not only in stucco, but also in wood, stone, and even made models for metal works. The analysis of the examples from Lesser Poland suggest that such situations were exceptional. Bringing those matters to international discussion seems important, not only for Polish art history, but also for understanding the real contribution of stucco makers in such peripheral artistic milieus, where the question of the scope and nature of their professional position is crucial.

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<https://jagiellonian.academia.edu/Micha%C5%82Kurzej>. Among most important there are *Seventeenth century stucco decorations in Lesser Poland* (2012, including monographs of several influential Italian artists – e.g. Giovanni Trevano, Giovanni Battista Falconi, Baldassare Fontana) and *Sebastian Piskorski as a conceptor and provisor* (2018; a monograph about influential artistic expert advisor, who turned out to be one of the most interesting personalities of Cracow art society during the reign of king John Sobieski). Recently involved in research on the influence of Charles Borromeo's artistic patronage on the art of Central Europe and prepared the first Polish translation of the Milanese *Instructions for ecclesiastical buildings and furnishing*.

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Klimontów. The presbytery of the collegiate church of St. Joseph. Angel in the frieze in the presbytery (circa 1647), workshop of Giovanni Battista Falconi, with the participation of the master of the Czarnecki Chapel.

Giovanni Battista Falcony's moulding workshop 1630-1658

Beata Klimek

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Giovanni Battista Falconi - stucco artist and sculptor - was active between 1630 and 1658 in Poland. The material and stucco in Giacomo Falcony's technique has not been properly researched. Contemporary documents and notarial deeds, which allowed to establish "historical technologies" of most of Falconi's decorations, materials and technologies used by Falconi are not known. The first documented work is the stucco decoration of the collegiate in Klimontów. He was invited by the great chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński before 1647. In 1647 Stanisław Oświęcim, commissioned him to decorate the family chapel at the Franciscan's church in Krosno. In the years 1654-58 Falconi decorated Tyszkiewicz chapel at the Dominican's church in Lublin, of which he designed the interior architecture. On the basis of these documented works, other decorations are attributed to Falconi, recognizably thanks to the typicality of his formal repertoire and to the ways of execution: the vault of the chapel of S. Carlo Borromeo in the church of Niepołomice, that of the chapel of S. Dominic in the church of Podkamień and later the decorations of the Podhorce castle chapel for Koniecpolski, the vault of the presbytery of the church of the Piarist's Fathers in Rzeszów, the vault of the one chapel S. Trinity in the church of Ss. Pietro e Paul in Kraków, that of the bastion of the castle of Baranów, the presbytery of the collegiate church of Łowicz. The others also attributed to him are: the funeral chapel for the chancellor Jan Zamoyski in the collegiate church of Zamość, that of a room in the hermitage of Rytwiany, that of the chapel of St. Stanislaus Kostka in the cathedral of Lublin. The main purpose of this paper is to combine data on inorganic and organic constituents and to establish a "recipe" of the stuccowork of Giovanni Falconi.

Twenty representative samples have been collected from five important stucco-works by Battista Falconi, which were realized in Klimontów, Krosno, Lublin, Podkamień, Podhorce. They were analyzed using chemical and mineralogical techniques and the results interpreted with the help of art historians in order to enlighten the artistic techniques. The characterization of the binder, aggregate and organic fractions was carried out through optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy with microprobe, X-ray powder diffraction, and other chemical analyses.

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Nova Gorica, church of Kostanjevica, choir, detail



Nova Gorica, church of Kostanjevica, intrados of the window

The stuccoes in the church of Kostanjevica in Nova Gorica, Slovenia (1639 – 1691)

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This paper presents the 17th century stuccoes inside the convent church of the Annunciation to Mary at Kostanjevica, between Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia). Originally the stuccoes were a rich large size decoration covering the whole nave and the whole presbytery, carried out between the middle and the end of the 17th century, but most of it was destroyed during the World War One. Now only fragmentary parts of the nave have been preserved, while most of the decoration of the presbytery is still intact, but affected by a heavy restoration. The first part of the paper is the art-historical analysis of the decoration through the historical documentation and the existing bibliography, considering the point view of the stucco decorations' technique and its historical evolution according to the variety of the constitutive materials used. The second part is a scientific-methodological research on the characterization of the material, allowing to establish the stratigraphic sequence, a close examination of the plasters and the compositions of the sandy aggregate and of the binder, in the internal mortar layer as well as in the external finishing layer. It was thus possible to define the artistic techniques such as the technical characteristics and the working properties of the materials used for the stucco decoration in the church. The quality of Kostanjevica stucco is extraordinary, very probably the authors of these stuccoes were traveling craftsmen - artists who came from the lake region of northern Italy, moved from city to city and created works on civil and church buildings. However, due to the constant movement of stucco workshops, it is not easy to identify the authors. In the case presented, an inscription was discovered on both right shields of two putti: FRANC.S ROSINA DE SALA VALLIS LUGANI F. / ANNO SALUTIS MDCXXXIX. We tried to find some comparisons in the northern part of Lombardy and Ticino that would approach the style of our master. The closest, in some places almost identical, are the stuccoes on the façade of the church of Santa Maria Assunta o Nuova in Locarno. A style in-between, before the evolution of the mature baroque, it is well represented by the stuccoes of the presbytery, decorated later than nave, probably at the end of the 17th century. Considered the mobility that characterized the stucco decorators from Lombardy and the many requests they had to handle, which moreover were coming from regions very distant one to the other, one could suppose 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 became an important place of pilgrimage.

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The stuccoes in the church of Santos Juanes in Valencia, Spain (1693 – 1702)

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Between 1693 and 1702 the Baroque renovation of the church of *Santos Juanes* represented, for the city of Valencia, an unprecedented change in the way of making and understanding decoration.

The two stucco workers, Giacomo Bertesi (1643-1710) and Antonio Aliprandi (1654-1728), came from Lombardy to Valencia with their own specific technical competences and their stylistic models and mixed them up with the Valencian traditions and culture, giving rise to a complex program, both decorative and iconographic. The result was the conversion of the Church of *Santos Juanes* into a total work of art in which fresco painting and stucco sculpture were combined to express an innovative theological message. By the celebration of the titular saints' lives and virtues, it resumed the History of the Salvation, emphasising the role of the Valencian sainthood. By a technical point of view, stucco played a fundamental role, unusual in the Valencian context but typical of the Italian precedents such as the most famous decorative reforms of the Roman seventeenth Century.

Thanks to the technical characteristics of the stucco, to its malleability and versatility, the decoration overcame its traditional ornamental role to become a message in itself. The iconographic program of the Church of *Santos Juanes* can be considered complete and homogeneous only thanks to the statues of Jacob and his twelve children leaning against the buttresses and also to the allegorical sculptures reclining on the arches, in stucco too. Moreover, even about what is a strictly ornamental element - a varied profusion of plant elements, flowers, mannerist masks and shells - it is possible to detect a naturalism, a variety and vitality that was unusual in the city.

Realized between April 2018 and February 2019, the preliminary studies for the comprehensive restoration of the architectural and decorative complex have allowed to discover some unpublished data on the technique used to carry them out.

Generally, the original *Santos Juanes* stuccoes correspond to the white and gold dichromatism that was prevailing in that moment in Italy. They alternate rough layers in the vegetal apparatus and perfectly polished ones in the sculptures and mouldings. Regarding the constituent materials of the mortars, the analytical techniques have revealed that the main binder of all the layers is a mixed aerial one based on lime and gypsum in variable proportions; the finishing layers are the richest in lime.

This original state had been altered by the devastating fire of 1936 and the restoration attempts that were made later. Exposure to fire produced many alterations, leaving most of the sculptural elements mutilated and blackened. To solve the problem of the enormous losses in the sculptures, in the 1940s, numerous volumetric reconstructions were carried out at different stages. In 2005, the sculptural correction of ten of the Israel tribes' statues was approached, thanks to the investigation of historical photographic material. In despite of that, the stuccoes still show very significant deficiencies. Mainly in the disproportionate reconstructions of the sculptures of the virtues seated on the arches: their formal and aesthetic errors as well as iconographic inconsistencies are clearly evident.

After the deep historical, technical, and iconographical investigation that was carried out by researchers from the Polytechnic University of Valencia and the Jaume I University of Castellón de la Plana, a general intervention process was been proposed. About the stuccoes, it is focused on solving the two major problems presented: the reintegration of the volumes lost, or the correction of those that were incorrectly reconstructed in previous restorations, and the recovery of the original finishing surfaces, that we consider now an essential part of the stucco technique itself.

In conclusion, formal, technical, and iconographical analysis of the Church of the *Santos Juanes* in Valencia allowed to go beyond a local and limited approach of stucco production and to go deep through the Lombard know-how and the reasons for its success in Valencia.

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Giovanni Antonio Marca (attr.), *Altarpiece and mural decoration*, 1727, stucco, Church of the Nativity of our Lady (église de La-Nativité-de-Notre-Dame), Villers-Chemin-et-Mont-lès-Étrelles (Haute-Saône, France)



Giacomo Francesco Marca, *Altarpiece* (damaged altarpiece with visible internal structure), 1756, stucco, Church of the priory, Rosey (Haute-Saône, France)

Sand, plaster and lime: the stuccoes of the Marca from Valsesia

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The study of the Marca dynasty, active in Piedmont and Eastern France between the end of the 17th century and the first half of the 19th century, gives us the opportunity to dive into the heart of a stucco workshop and to approach the technical and organizational issues related to their know-how. By cross-checking the data provided by archival documents, mainly in France, the analyses of restorers as well as the study of altarpieces, pulpits and other decorations produced, it is possible to dissect the *modus operandi* of these sculptors.

The composite nature of stucco places material considerations at the forefront. The data collected allows us to establish the list of ingredients used for over a century: sand, lime, plaster and crushed stone. They can be described as "poor" because of their nature - it is important to note that there is never any mention of marble powder - and they are easy to find, allowing to guarantee relatively low prices unlike the local woodcarvers. The supply of materials - systematically brought on site - does not follow a precise rule. It is either the stucco workers or the clients who take charge of supplying them from the list that appears in the contract and, probably, from additional indications given by the artists. We can also see that there is sometimes a division between the supply of materials and that of the necessary scaffolding and bridges. The indications of origin are not numerous, but it would seem that the supply was done in "circuit-court", as the quality sand extracted from the local rivers, over distances not exceeding 50 km. Other elements, such as the nails, the iron bars used to consolidate the structures or the fir strips for the panelling, were supplied by specialized local craftsmen, sometimes friends of the stucco workers. However, it is not clear whether the molds used were supplied by a carpenter (as in the case of Visetti, Rusca e Portogalli stucco workers from Lugano employed at the Pitti Palace in the 1760s) or made by the Marca themselves. Furthermore, there is no evidence to indicate whether the Marca encountered problems related to the quality of the materials supplied by the clients or delays in delivery or any conflict with other craftsmen. We also have no information on quantities or prices, except for a few projects - mainly private hotels and castles - dated between 1775 and 1815, for which the stucco artists were responsible for supplying all the materials they needed.

The observation of a few damaged altarpieces and the analyses carried out on a set preserved in the church of Recologne (Doubs, Franche-Comté) provided precious information on the use of the materials we have just mentioned. The stucco used for altars and pulpits is made up of three distinct layers of mortar, whereas for the bas-reliefs the composition is simpler with only two layers. The deepest level is made of masonry made of an agglomerate of stones and pieces of ceramic (tiles, bricks...) bound by a coarse mortar made of sand, aluminosilicate, a carbonated part (calcium carbonate, lime) and plaster. The second level, whose thickness varies between one and two centimeters, is composed of plaster and lime in higher proportions, as well as sand and aluminosilicate. The third level appears as a very thin white layer of only a few millimeters, composed of lime as well as almost pure plaster and often a little aluminosilicate. This layer was most probably polished or sanded to form a smooth surface that served as a support for the colors prepared on site and apply in the most favourable season.

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Figure and drapery, stucco decoration, *Gallery of the Angels*, detail, Uherčice castle, Uherčice (CZ)



Detail of the head of an eagle, stucco decoration, *Gallery of the Angels*, Uherčice castle, Uherčice (CZ)

A preliminary study of techniques and materials in the stucco decorations of Baldassare Fontana in the *Gallery of the Angels* in the castle of Uherčice (CZ)

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Baldassarre Fontana (1661-1733), the Ticinese sculptor from Chiasso, was in Moravia from 1688 where he executed an important series of commissions thanks to a well-organised workshop. In this region he created some of his greatest works, thanks to his collaboration with other artists of the time such as the architect Giovanni Pietro Tencalla (1629-1702), the painter Paolo Pagani (1655-1716), and Innocenzo Monti (1653-1710). In preparing for a restoration intervention, it was possible to study in depth 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*. The aim of this research is to present the first results obtained from the study of his work through the consideration of archival documents, analysis of constituent materials and most importantly through direct observation of these and some other decorations, to understand the techniques employed in their creation. Archival material relating to other sites where Fontana worked has in some cases explicitly demonstrated that in certain projects, he would entrust his team to one of his colleagues during his absences, later inspecting the work and personally intervening only in the most complex parts. Other examples demonstrate that he was able to manage two commissions simultaneously by moving between one worksite and another. His was a large workshop, with very talented artists and assistants with proven experience that allowed them to complete numerous and difficult commissions in short periods of time, and to take on many projects spread over a wide geographical area. For the Uherčice's *Gallery*, there are no archival documents relating to the stucco decorations and the only known information is the name of a *stuccatore* called Giovanni Battista Bussi. Thus, these decorations are attributed to Fontana and his workshop exclusively on the basis of a stylistic analysis and they could be dated to between 1690 and the first decade of the eighteenth century.

In the *Gallery*, there is a complete repertoire of the decorative characteristics of the work of this artist: the "schiacciato" or shallow bas relief, the drapery on the walls, the ovals containing figures, and the frames with flowers and fruit on the ceiling, the almost fully in the round reliefs of *puttini* and eagles, and the pronounced relief. In the course of this study, it was possible to investigate the composition of the materials of the stucco decoration in the *Gallery*. The mineralogical characterisation of the mortars, demonstrates a composition mainly based on lime, gypsum and sand, but the different selection and quantity of these components in the mortar mixture provided many points for discussion relating to the artistic techniques used. The artist has created complex decorations in a limited time, in an effective, efficient and durable way thanks to expertly designed mortars, internal support structures and anchoring systems.

The most internal part of the stucco decoration is thick and without cracks and was applied in two layers with different characteristics. The first layer, containing not sorted aggregates with coarse grain size, was used to model the volume and a first draft of the figures. The second layer, containing finer aggregates with higher sorting, creates the final form of the decoration. With this second layer the artist modelled the definitive relief, using a mortar that set slowly thanks to a specific work sequence of lime and gypsum, in order to have an extended working period for modifications and corrections. Finally, a finishing layer was applied, as a thin coating in some areas where in others it can measure several millimeters. From these observations it can be inferred that the worker with the greatest expertise, or the same artist, constructed the decorations until their final form. Conversely, the finishing layer could also have been added by assistants or other workers as in this case no specific expertise was required in creating and modeling. In cases like this, where specific archival documents are lacking, the direct observations and the interdisciplinary study are the only possibilities to obtain information on the *modus operandi* of an artist and his workshop. The results of the study can shed new light on the organization of the stucco works of Baldassarre Fontana and support the research of the chronological sequence of his artistic production over time.

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Giovanni Nicoli trained as a stucco plasterer in the workshop of his father Gianmario Nicoli, with whom he carried out numerous decorations in *stucco forte* and plaster for private commissions in Italy and abroad. Since the early nineties, he has devoted himself to the restoration and conservation of stucco, mainly in the Lombardy region of Italy. Since 1999, he has been teaching at SUPSI in the Bachelor and Master courses in conservation restoration and in the techniques of stucco and plaster work; currently he is a researcher within the project ARTECA (Czech Republic).

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