

Bequiling STRUCTURES

ARCHITECTURE IN EUROPEAN PAINTING

1300 – 1550

Abstracts of Papers

Alice Delage, Université François-Rabelais, Tours, France.

‘Architecture in Cassoni Panels: Identification, Role & Function’.

During the second-half of the Fifteenth Century, the *cassoni* (wedding chests) panel paintings develop Antique scenes influenced by the new Neo-Platonic culture. Conventionally, these scenes have been studied from the angle of their iconography or the social context of the commission. However, the architectural settings of the painted stories are usually left aside by scholars. Through the juxtaposition of architectures from different cities the story is situated in a chronological and geographical plurality charged with complex implications that deserve to be explored.

The *cassoni* are studied here with three observations. First, at the narrative level, the architecture structures the space and the story in the saturated paintings of *cassoni* panels to make it readable and understandable. Then, the presence of ancient, imagined and Florentine buildings indicates both the antiquity of the characters and the modernity of the story which becomes an efficient way of moral teaching. This didactic function is also based on the opposition between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ of the buildings which reflects and secures the upholding of a social order based on the role of men and women in Florentine society. Finally, the presence of the city in paintings destined for the nuptial bedroom holds a social and ethnological meaning. This significance is closely connected with the role of the *cassoni* during the wedding ceremony and to the interdependence between the wedding, the whole city and its citizens.

In summary, the representation of architecture is a part of the visual culture of the wedding and contributes to the efficacy of the *cassoni* panel paintings. Consequently, it can be considered a key for the modern study and understanding of these objects.

Chloé Demonet, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France.

‘From Survey to Pictorial Drawing: The Fantastic Antiquities of Giuliano da Sangallo’.

Architectural survey emerged in the Fifteenth Century as an essential discipline in the architectural practice of this time. Analysing the remains of Antiquity, artisans and artists of the Renaissance became architects and looked, in the remaining buildings of the greatness of Rome, for technical and formal solutions that would enable them to renew architectural creation. That research had a great impact on the representation of architecture, not only by developing a specific architectural drawing method, but also influencing that same representation in pictures: antique monuments could be used simply in pictorial representations, but they also became the basis for creating new depicted architectures. So the artist could make a synthesis between Antique remains and their own creativity. The albums of artist-architects took an important part in this process of assimilation for pictorial creation; they also show a real inventiveness in graphically rewriting the Antique.

Giuliano Da Sangallo was one of the greatest surveyors of Antique architecture of his time, and left two sketchbooks that show a surprising diversity of representations. Beyond his perfect mastering of architectural drawing, Da Sangallo shows an extraordinary sense of pictorial representation. For proper representational requirements to be fully respected, his drawings often use perspectival effects. However, they are also a pretext for the architect to express his creativity and fantasy on the basis of Antique architecture. Based on the aspects of Antique monuments, his ‘technical’ drawings are the background of fantastic antiquities, where ruins are extrapolated to show material, structure, volume and to express the magnificence of a lost civilisation.

Irene Di Bernardino, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy.

‘The Measure of the Ideal: The Painted Architecture of Ideal Cities’.

This present study of the panel paintings preserved at Urbino, Baltimore, Berlin, and the city of Sforzinda described and drawn by Filarete, is inspired by a Masters degree thesis. This work aims to explore the environment of the *città ideale* (ideal city) metrically and virtually. It starts from the role of the laboratory or linguistic experimentation that painted architecture played in the theoretical and artistic context of the Italian Renaissance.

The remarkable correspondence of this works to a logical perspective is the starting point for applying a geometric restitution of perspective, in order to submit these painted spaces to metric and volumetric analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to focus and emphasise how much the architecture is at the service of the perspectival construction and, vice versa, how much the perspectival image is at the service of a specific (ideal) planimetric disposition. The deconstruction of the urban structure into its architectural components allows for two different approaches. On the one hand, it allows for hypothesising on their specific functional role in the urban context. On the other hand, it enables comparison between ‘ideal cities’ and the buildings of Sixteenth-Century Masters, according to dimensional, typological and stylistic terms.

This study will focus upon the Urbino *città ideale*. It will be reproduced by using three-dimensional images, created using both the traditional wooden *maquette*, of 1:50 scale (3×2.5metres), as well as a geometrical digital version. An animation extracted from this digital model relaxes the constraint of a fixed point of view by moving into the space of the *città ideale* with the purpose of evaluating the perspectival relationships and spatial connections. These connections are produced by the experimental space sequences. This ‘perspective walk’ shows the reasons for a visual harmony in the Western World’s aesthetic manifesto.

Claudia Gaggetta, Université de Genève, Switzerland.

‘Visionary Urban Agglomerations in Bramantino’s Religious Paintings’.

Throughout his Milanese career (1480-1530) and, especially in his treatise on perspective and architectural theory, Bramantino showed a great interest in the Antique. Therefore, in his religious paintings, he usually depicts imaginary Classical landscapes that contribute to the idiosyncrasy of his pictures, whose awkward and non-canonical iconographies are still questioned today by specialists. His favourite settings are visionary urban agglomerations whose constructions are inspired by Classical architecture (temples, obelisks and porticos with colonnades). These architectural creations are sometimes enclosed by walls and high towers crowned with battlements or conceived as an extensive and dense metropolis. The unconventionality and eccentricity of these settings are such that sometimes one might wonder if they are not simply imagined buildings.

In this paper, my intent is to investigate the way Bramantino’s original backgrounds reinforce the meaning of the pictorial representation, both in its main devotional message and in its underlying criticism of the Church. My aim is to question the idea that, in religious paintings of the period, landscapes with architectural structures are a mere setting for the narrative scenes. Because Bramantino realised his architectural landscapes during the first two decades of the Sixteenth Century, that is, both under the French domination of the Duchy of Milan and the schismatic Council of Pisa-Milan (1511-1512), I will emphasise how his architectural Classical settings contribute to reinforce the archaic vision of the Church held by the French Reformist Movement. Hence Bramantino’s urban landscapes also have a political and theological dimension.

Samantha Heringuez, Centre D’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours, France.

‘Structuring Pictorial Space through Ancient & Renaissance Architecture: Processes used by Flemish Painters during the First-Third of the Sixteenth Century’.

While landscape tends to become an independent pictorial genre, especially with Joachim Patenier who inaugurates a panoramic vision, many Flemish painters preferred, for the first years of the Sixteenth Century, to enrich the background of the compositions with architecture inspired by the monuments of Roman Antiquity and the Italian Renaissance. Represented by a simple decorative motif or an impressive structure, these architectural settings *all’antica* (after the ancient) gradually pervade the paintings of Flemish artists in search of Italianism, such as Jan Gossart, who stayed in Rome in 1509, and Bernard van Orley, who discovered Raphael’s Cartoons when they arrived in Brussels in 1516. Often conceived after models found in books and architectural treatises published during the Renaissance, these feigned architectures are cultural landmarks; references that reveal to the spectator the modernity of the artist by its taste and its knowledge of Italian culture, but they are also for him the means to create the illusion of perspective and to easily suggest depth. Through the study of some

architectural settings designed by Jan Gossart and Bernard van Orley, we shall see that, behind their modern Italian ornament *all'antica*, the processes used are still in the tradition of Flemish Primitives of the Fifteenth Century.

James Hillson, University of York, United Kingdom.

'Architecture within Architecture: Re-examining the 'Italianate Question' in the Murals of Saint Stephen's Chapel, Westminster.

The aim of this paper is to examine closer the question of what it meant to artists and patrons to employ Italianate ideas about architectural depiction during the mid-Fourteenth Century in England. Built 1292-1363 under three successive kings, Saint Stephen's Chapel, Westminster in its final guise included an extensive programme of painted narratives (*circa* 1351-1363) which have been placed centre stage in an ongoing debate surrounding the ingress of Italianate artistic innovations into Fourteenth-Century England, not least for their architectural contents. Incorporating quasi-perspectival architectural settings, these paintings have traditionally been linked to proto-Renaissance innovations of Florence and Siena, and subsumed into a wider narrative of 'Ducciesque' and 'Giottesque' episodes in Northern Europe.

Whilst the majority of scholarly approaches thus far have focused upon identifying the sources and patterns of this Italian influence, comparatively few have addressed the reasons behind such transfers, or why English artists found Italian-derived techniques and motifs particularly desirable. Beyond speculation regarding its articulation through interconnecting Court circles, the underlying mechanics of stylistic translocation has attracted little attention outside assumptions of responsiveness to a more advanced, perspectival art form. By considering 'Italianate' architecture's employment at Saint Stephen's in relation to pre-existing trends in English painting, and to their specific iconographic and spatial context within the building, this paper aims to examine the potential ideas behind such transfer and by extension develop a more cogent understanding of what it meant to depict architecture in quite this way at this time and in this place.

Joost Joustra, Courtauld Institute of Art, London, United Kingdom.

'The *Sacra Conversazione* Reconsidered: Visual Unity & Division in the *Pala Quadrata*'.

The 1430's saw the emergence of a new type of Florentine altarpiece that scholars have labelled the *sacra conversazione* (the sacred conversation). These were also some of the first altarpieces of the new *pala quadrata* (single-panel altarpiece) type. Anachronistic saints, that were once visually separated by polytych panels and frames, now inhabited a shared space on the single-panel altarpiece. However, painters such as Fra Angelico, Domenico Veneziano and Fra Filippo Lippi developed new painterly strategies to retain division in the *pala quadrata*.

This paper challenges historiographical concepts about the newly found 'visual unity' of painting, by examining the painted spaces in these *sacra conversazioni*. Pictorial space, defined by painted architecture, landscape and other compositional elements, was a tool to create tension between unity and divisions in the sacred subject matter of these altarpieces. This tension exists both within the pictorial realm, as between painting and viewer. This paper traces the painterly tradition of these altarpieces beyond the typological confines of the altarpiece, *sacra conversazione* and *pala quadrata*, and looks at how pictorial space was created through the first-half of the *Quattrocento* and the end of the *Trecento*. These altarpieces will be contextualised through polyptychs, relief sculpture and mural painting. Analogously, the structure of religious texts from the liturgical environment of these altarpieces will be explored. Altarpieces and sermons, as well as the sermon manual (the *artes praedicandi*) share a structural concern with both unity and division.

Livia Lupi, University of York, United Kingdom.

'Inhabitable & Uninhabitable Places: Altichiero's Apertures in the Oratory of Saint George, Padua'.

The frescoes painted by Altichiero in the Oratory of Saint George in Padua (1379-1384) are remarkable for their architectural settings. The innovative façades, sections and elaborate ornament of his buildings not only complement the lives of Christ, Saint George, Saint Catherine and Saint Lucy, they are an integral part of the narrative, articulating it in spatial and chronological terms and establishing a relationship with the viewer. The present paper will focus on this last aspect of Altichiero's work in the Oratory. The first device the artist used to connect his painterly decoration to the real space of the Oratory is the fictive frame wrapping around the walls and acting as an imaginary substitute for the invisible, real architectural structure of the building. A more overt dialogue with the viewer is articulated in the narrative scenes encased by the frame.

Splayed buildings, archways, loggias and settings ambiguously placed between indoors and outdoors, open the scenes up for the beholders and invite them to enter and inhabit the frescoes' architectural settings. This invitation is reinforced by numerous half-open doors and windows scattered across the fresco cycle, but is at the same time frustrated by subtle, yet meaningful reminders of the architecture's painterly nature. This paper examines Altichiero's ornate, complex structures and the ways in which he plays with the viewer's desire to explore and inhabit them.

A graduate conference to mark the exhibition

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