

# the Road to Recognition

*Strategy and identity in the careers of sixteenth century  
Venetian painters*

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# Introduction

Art history has always had the tendency to focus on the accomplished painters at the top of the artistic food chain. In reality, however, many talented painters struggled immensely to reach that top, while an even larger number of mediocre painters could only dream of fame and glory. This research is not primarily concerned with the elite artists, nor does it cover the many anonymous painter-craftsmen in the periphery of the art market. Instead, it is devoted to the middle group of ambitious and skilled artists trying to break out of the margins of the art world.

Sixteenth-century Venice was a city with an abundance of churches, *scuole* and palaces, and was governed by a culturally sophisticated elite. This provided fertile ground for the visual arts, and indeed many talented artists flocked to the lagoon city to make their fortunes. In practice, however, the lion's share of the high-profile commissions (such as altarpieces, church decorations, governmental commissions, and large scale private decorations) was divided between a relatively small group of extremely talented and ambitious painters such as Bellini, Giorgione, Sebastiano del Piombo, Veronese, Tintoretto, and, above all, Titian. The rivalry between these painters, as is documented by the excellent 2010 catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Titian – Tintoretto – Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice*, was intense, and constantly pushed less business-savvy Venetian painters to the margins, while it also prevented outsiders from breaking through in the Venetian art market.<sup>1</sup> These often very capable artists had to invent new or adapt old business strategies to break the hegemony of the elite circle of Venetian artists. Some painters were forced to work in provincial towns in Venice's sphere of influence, such as Piacenza, Brescia, or Bergamo, and tried to use these markets as a spring board for a Venetian career. Others remained in or near Venice, but only produced paintings for customers of a relatively low social and financial status. One can logically assume that these painters were not satisfied with this situation, and did everything in their power to improve their status.

For these ambitious painters it was of vital importance to build and maintain a good reputation. They used their paintings to construct a unique artistic and professional identity and to brand themselves as artists capable of filling certain niches in the art market. Thus, the paintings became their primary vehicle for social and financial mobility. This also influenced their clients, who were eager to (re)shape their identities and enhance their social status as well.<sup>2</sup> In this research, I analyse the position of both these artists and the clients in the competitive art world and society of Renaissance Venice. To do so, I examine which strategies these painters used to enhance their careers, and how these strategies

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<sup>1</sup> Exh. Cat. Boston and Paris, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Belozerskaya, 2002, p. 225.

influenced their art. These strategies are analysed and compared thoroughly, while special attention is devoted to their influence on the painters' clients.

To conduct this analysis, I have used extensive case studies of three painters working in early cinquecento Venice and the Veneto: Lorenzo Lotto, Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone, and Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo. I have selected these three artists because they were active in the same years, they all faced difficulties in building their (Venetian) career, and employed comparable but distinctive strategies to try and overcome these difficulties. Furthermore, sufficient primary and secondary source material was available on these artists to conduct my analysis, while it was lacking for others. As it is impossible to take the entire careers into account, I selected two or three important transitional periods for all three artists. These periods were chosen for their relevance to my research theme, not for their artistic merit. Lotto's years in Bergamo, which were very productive and saw the conception of various masterpieces, for example, are omitted, as are Pordenone's highly praised fresco cycles in Piacenza. The selected periods feature important transitions in the artists' careers or social standing, and are focused on Venice or the road to get there. I chose to focus my research on Venice and its territories because of the unique artistic climate briefly touched upon in my first paragraph and discussed further in the first chapter. The scope of this thesis does not allow me to make comparisons with other major artistic centres such as Florence or Rome, although this would be interesting for further research.

Of the three artists, only Lotto was born in Venice. He left the city shortly after he completed his apprenticeship, however, and consequently had great difficulty in regaining a foothold on the Venetian market. Lotto's search for new opportunities brought him to Treviso, Rome, Bergamo, and the Marches, but he never lost track of his goal: Venice.<sup>3</sup> Pordenone, who was named after his hometown in the rural Friuli, was arguably the most cunning of our painters. Although he initially faced great difficulties as a provincial artist, he evolved into a recognised master *frescante* in Venice. Pordenone favoured aggressive tactics, and used his highly modern style to fashion an identity as the 'embodiment of the new'.<sup>4</sup> Savoldo came from a more privileged background than the other two painters, as he was a scion of a (minor) patrician family from Brescia.<sup>5</sup> Despite these good credentials, however, he

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<sup>3</sup> Of the three artists, Lotto has received the most academic attention. He was 'rediscovered' by Bernard Berenson, who devoted an authoritative monography on the artist in 1901. More recent publications are the catalogue of the landmark 1997 exhibition in Washington, Bergamo, and Paris, and the monographies written by Bonnet (1996) and Pirovano (2011). The 2011 exhibition in the Quirinale in Rome was especially important for Lotto-related research. Not only was it accompanied by Villa's monographic catalogue, but it also spawned a number of research projects focussing on Lotto's work in the Veneto (Poldi and Villa, 2011), and the Marches (Garibaldi and Villa, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> The first serious academic publications on Pordenone appear in the 1980s. The 1984 retrospective in the artist's hometown was vital in renewing interest in the artist. In 1988, Furlan published the first comprehensive monography on the artist. Cohen's two-volume monography of 1996 is so thorough and indeed exhaustive that few publications on Pordenone have appeared ever since.

<sup>5</sup> Savoldo is the least researched of the three artists. Gilbert wrote his dissertation on the artist (1955, revised in 1986), and was largely responsible for renewing academic interest in Savoldo. Another publication that

struggled immensely in gaining a foothold on the Venetian art market. Savoldo used his training in the 'realistic' Lombard tradition and his knowledge of the highly popular styles from the Netherlands and Germany to attract innovative Venetian patrons. Savoldo worked mostly in the private sphere and never had much success with public commission.<sup>6</sup>

My methodological framework, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, features a number of concepts and theories on social stratification, economic activity, ideology, identity, the painter's profession, patronage, and artistic innovation. In addition to my conceptual framework, I employ a number of art historical methods, including literature study, stylistic analysis, and the thorough study of contemporary sources, to conduct my research. Furthermore, much attention will be devoted to the social-economic context of *cinquecento* Venice and its empire.

The first chapter is devoted to methodology and social-economic context. Additionally, the unique patronage situation in *cinquecento* Venice will be discussed in detail. This provides context for the other three chapters, which are each devoted to one case study: chapter two analyses Lotto's career, chapter three focuses on Pordenone, and the final chapter is about Savoldo. In my conclusion, I compare and contrast the three case studies.

The patronage and rivalries of Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto have been studied extensively, most importantly in the previously mentioned catalogue accompanying the 2010 exhibition in Boston and Paris. No comprehensive study, however, has yet appeared on the large and diverse number of *cinquecento* artists that were by effect left out of the highest regions of the Venetian art market exists. Comparable yet distinctive studies of different era's or art centres do exist. Goldwaithe's *Wealth and the demand for art in Renaissance Italy* (1998), on which the next chapter will elaborate, thoroughly analyses the economic dimension of Renaissance art, but is primarily focused on demand, production, and consumption, and not on the works of art themselves. Sohm and Spear's 2010 study of the economic lives of seventeenth-century Italian painters also serves as a point of departure for this research, as it devotes an excellent chapter on Venice, but their research does not cover the first half of the *cinquecento*. The same goes for Cavazzini's *Painting as business in seventeenth-century Rome* (2008), in which the author innovatively demonstrates that Roman commoners were a vital part of the art market. All three publications have in common that they focus on the demographical and societal dimensions of art production and consumption, and while their insights are of vital importance to this research, I am primarily concerned with a more individual level of the paradigm, focusing on individual artists, their customers, and their careers. O'Malley does something similar in her 2013 *Painting under pressure*, but her research covers the late *quattrocento* in Florence, and, more importantly, is concerned with painters at the top of the artistic food chain.

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should not remain unmentioned is Ebert-Schifferer's 1990 catalogue accompanying a retrospective in Brescia and Frankfurt.

<sup>6</sup> Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990

Admittedly, many monographies on Lotto and Pordenone have appeared, but they have not been discussed in the context of the aforementioned phenomena. This research wants to fill this vacuum by focusing on those artists who, despite their obvious artistic talents, were struggling to gain a foothold in the elite spheres of the Venetian art world. On the other hand, the position and demands of their clients – who were often of a relatively low social standing – will also be taken into account. By doing so, I hope to broaden the scope of Renaissance art history, which, for understandable reasons, has for a long time only focused on the top segment of painters and patrons. By examining how the less well-off artist and their clients attempted to climb the social ladder, I intend to make our knowledge of Renaissance art more complete.

# 1. Vantage points

*In the first part of this chapter the methodological groundwork of this research is elaborated upon. The second part deals with the socio-economic context of Venetian society in early cinquecento, while the last part of this chapter analyses with the unique patronage situation in the Serenissima.*

## 1.1 Theoretical framework

### Ten basic assumptions

This research uses multiple theories and concepts as a methodological framework, all of which will be discussed in this chapter. At the heart of this thesis, however, lie ten basic assumptions on the position of artists, their relationship with their clients, and the function of their art. These ten points will be elaborated on below.

(1) The modern notion of the ‘prophet-artist’ is not applicable to the painters of the Italian Renaissance. While men like Vasari insisted that the painter’s profession was intellectual rather than manual, and many artists and intellectuals must have agreed with him, the overwhelming majority of *cinquecento* painters still functioned as artisans. (2) Art is not only a calling, it is also a profession. Most artists had to produce art to earn money. Indeed, the majority of Venetian painters came from humble backgrounds, and many were sons of painters as well.<sup>7</sup> Painting was not a hobby, but was almost always a family’s only source of income.<sup>8</sup> (3) To increase this income, painters had to be entrepreneurs as well as artists. They had to think consciously about the organisation of labour, the minimisation of costs, and the maximisation of profit. Therefore, painters employed a wide range of business strategies.<sup>9</sup> (4) Producing outstanding works was not only a matter of artistic satisfaction, but also one of career advancement. As labourers are primarily judged by the quality of the goods they produce, a painter’s primary proof of quality was a masterpiece. (5) Since the downward penetration of wealth was substantial in *cinquecento* Italy, a larger and more diverse group of people was able to buy art than is traditionally assumed.<sup>10</sup> (6) As a rule, wage and artistic quality are directly related. If a customer pays less, he or she can expect a painting of lesser quality. (7) Both artists and their customers constantly attempted to climb

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<sup>7</sup> Sohm in Spear and Sohm, 2010, 227. Sohm concludes that out of the 50 Venetian painters under consideration in his research, 26 were sons of painters. Although Sohm’s research concerns *seicento* Venice, there is reason to assume that this number was significantly different in the preceding century. With over half of the Venetian painters being sons of painters, it is important to note that Lotto, Pordenone, and Savoldo were not.

<sup>8</sup> Spear and Sohm, 2010, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Spear and Sohm, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, pp. 40-48. This point will be elaborated on further below.

the social ladder. In many ways, their interests were the same.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, many paintings functioned as vehicles for social mobility in more ways than one. (8) Art can be a powerful tool for self-fashioning for the artist as well as the customer, as the awareness of the adaptability of both private and collective identities increased in the Renaissance. Often, art works had to (re)shape identities, (re)affirm affiliations to certain individuals or collectives, and legitimise existing or desired power structures.<sup>12</sup> (9) Style as well as taste are not random, but ideological. Consciously or subconsciously, the choice for artists as well as the preference for certain subject-matters or styles was motivated by the client's social, economic, political, and ethnic position.<sup>13</sup> (10) As a result of several factors, the Venetian art world was extremely competitive, and although this competition often served as a motivation for ambitious artists, it also constantly pushed less strategic artists to the margins.<sup>14</sup>

These ten points, most of which will be discussed in further detail later on, attest that artists, and especially Venetian artists, had to think very carefully about how they conducted their business, but also about how and what they painted, which commissions were beneficial for their career and which ones were not.

## **Reputation and style**

As O'Malley notes in her 2013 study on the business practices of Florentine painters, a painter's success was mostly dependent on his reputation, and his reputation depended on the prestige of his clients as well as on his style.<sup>15</sup> While the former aspect will be dwelled upon later in this chapter, it is important to analyse the function and the moldability of style before going any further. In this thesis, I use O'Malley's definition of style: "Style, a term in our lexicon but not in that of the Renaissance, describes the way a painter manipulated form and colour to create figural compositions with character and atmosphere that were individual and distinctive".<sup>16</sup> We are used to seeing style as the primary carrier of artistic genius, something intrinsically personal. While this view is far from untrue, it does require significant nuance. Style is not only a personal artistic expression, but it is also subject to cultural, political, ideological, social, and financial factors. To a certain extent, painters made conscious choices to adopt stylistic elements from other artists or cultural traditions, accommodate their style to their clients' preferences, or create something entirely novel if the situation demanded it. As such, establishing and constantly adapting a signature style was of vital importance for the painter's reputation, and therefore career. Throughout the Renaissance, many artists discovered that style was not only constructible, but also that it

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<sup>11</sup> Belozerskaya, 2002, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> Woods-Marsden, 2000, pp. 1-6.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu, 1984, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> Exh. Cat. Paris, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> O'Malley, 2013, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> O'Malley, 2013, p. 64.



“could be devised or altered as a marketing tool”.<sup>17</sup> As we shall see, all three painters discussed in this research repeatedly revised their style to respond to the market, either by constructing a style that would attract more or different customers, or by using style to fashion themselves a certain identity.

If an artist’s style is ideological, then so is a customer’s taste. Bourdieu, critiquing Kant’s universalist notion of taste, famously asserts that: “Whereas the ideology of charisma regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, scientific observation shows that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education.”<sup>18</sup> According to Bourdieu, taste articulates and defends class distinctions, leading members of different classes to constantly contest and redefine the meaning of ‘good taste’ to use it for their own agenda.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the preference for certain artists, subject-matters or genres is far from random, but is dictated by class, education, and the desire to either climb the social ladder or prevent others from ascending it. Consequently, taste excludes people from certain groups, but by strengthening the identity and social parameters of that group, it also creates cohesion amongst its members.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see, patrons, customers, and collectors were very conscious about which artists they commissioned or bought. This was sometimes a handicap for our three painters, but it also often worked to their benefit.

## Five strategies

Artists were dependant on patronage to make a living, and used a myriad of strategies to attract patrons. It is important to note that the commonly used term ‘patronage’ is not quite accurate when referring to the complex system of social and financial contacts between artists and their customers. In Renaissance Italy, there were two kinds of patronage. The first, and most important, was *clientelismo*, or political patronage, which was rooted in ancient Roman customs and operated through a network of family members, friends, and neighbours. This political patronage, which saw powerful men and women surround themselves with clients who offered services in exchange for political, financial, or physical protection, did not necessarily have anything to do with the commissioning of works of art. Instead, Italians referred to this more specific form of patronage as *mecenatismo*.<sup>21</sup>

Although many different business strategies have been analysed by art historians, often in a monographic context, it has never been attempted to conduct a broader analysis of the business strategies of Venetian artists of the early *cinquecento*. During my research of the careers of Lotto, Pordenone, and Savoldo, I have been able to discern five main strategies employed by the three artists in varying degrees of frequency and success.

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<sup>17</sup> O’Malley, 2013, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu, 1986, p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> Appadurai, 1986, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Cooper in Wilkins and Wilkins, 1996, p. 27.

With *service*, the artist ties his professional fortunes to an influential patron or a small group of influential patrons, becoming, in effect, a court artist. These patrons are typically of high rank and sociocultural status, and can be rulers, noble(wo)men, high-ranking clerics or wealthy merchants. Often, but not always, the artist is treated as a member of the patron's *famiglia* of courtiers and clients and is given some official position in his or her household.<sup>22</sup> The advantages of *service* are many: the artist is often paid well, his living and travelling expenses are often accounted for, he does not have to move, and the prestige of a powerful man or woman rubs off on him. The downsides are that the artist is often significantly limited in his personal as well as artistic freedom, and if the patron dies or falls out of favour with greater powers, the artist is left to his own devices.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, most works executed for a private patron would be portraits, devotional paintings, or interior decorations, which were as a rule less visible to a broader audience than a public commission.<sup>24</sup>

When opting for *presence*, the artist attempts to establish a foothold on a new market by creating an impressive work for a prominent location like a church, governmental building or public space. These works are typically altarpieces, but can also be fresco-cycles or painted façades. If the artwork is received well, the artist develops a good reputation and new commissions will automatically follow. As many citizens were active in all kinds of organisations, and ecclesiastical institutions were organised hierarchically, the painter's reputation would spread by word of mouth as well.<sup>25</sup> *Presence* has the benefit of making a painter less dependent on his existing network of clients, as the high visibility of a *presence piece* can entice anyone who appreciates the work to contract the painter for a new painting.<sup>26</sup> The success of *presence* does not only depend on the artistic quality of the artwork, but also on the taste of the intended audience and the visibility and prestige of the location. The use of *presence* is a gambit; as the intended audience is often unlikely to know many of the artist's works, his reputation is tied to the *presence piece*. If it is not received well, his reputation in the new market will suffer considerably.

The most aggressive of tactics, *challenge* is a wilful and bold confrontation to another, often more established, artist. The goal of *challenge* is to enhance the artist's own career at the expense of someone else's. Often, the challenger will try to emulate the challenged artist by executing a work in the same space. Sometimes, the challenger employs a similar subject-matter as the challenged. The success of *challenge* depends on the success of the emulation, although the visibility of the more successful challenged artist automatically increases the visibility of the challenger. *Challenge* can be more abstract, however, as an artist can also attempt to create an emulating work in a different space. In a Venetian context, both Pordenone and Tintoretto tried to break Titian's hegemony through *challenge*, and although

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<sup>22</sup> Haskell, 1971, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Talvacchia in Wilkins and Wilkins, 1996, p. 183.

<sup>24</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> O'Malley, 2013, p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> O'Malley, 2013, p. 63.

they were unable to dethrone the older master, their attempt to enhance their own careers was successful.<sup>27</sup>

When the artist fails to obtain commissions through traditional methods, he can try to create a whole new genre, subgenre, style or business method through *diversion*. By creating something entirely innovative, the artist creates a distance between him and his rivals. Often, these new genres attract customers from the middle-classes who, in their turn, are looking for new methods of representation as well. *Diversion*, if executed successfully, causes the artistic paradigm to shift, creating new options, and, over time, obsoleting old practices. If the innovation is either too weak or too radical, however, *diversion* is likely to fail. My conceptualisation of *diversion* is based on the work of Monika Schmitter, although she originally uses the term to describe the collecting practices of Venetian citizens. Schmitter, citing theorist Bourdieu and anthropologist Appadurai, insists that taste is not random, but ideological. Questioning the traditional view that *cittadini* imitated the patronage strategies of the patriciate in order to climb the social ladder, she argues that they must rather be seen as innovators trying to emulate the patricians. Analysing Appadurai, she notes that in collecting, those of a high social rank constantly try to limit the circulation of goods by claiming categories as their own and increasing their price. This is called *enclaving*. If we translate this into *cinquecento* Venice, the *enclaving* of patrician collectors can be seen in the high number of Giorgiones (or later Veroneses) in patrician private collections, or in the popularity of certain genres (the mythological nude) or subject-matters. The *cittadini*, unable to get their hands on a Giorgione, would as a response engage in what Schmitter calls *diverting*. *Diversion*, as Schmitter explains, “is the introduction into the competition of new kinds of valuables, which may be easier for those with less wealth or connections to procure”, allowing them to enter into the competition of collecting.<sup>28</sup> In Venice, *diversion* would cause citizens to collect less well-known artists – such as Savoldo or Lotto! –, different subject-matters, or even new genres (for example, landscapes or genre painting), leading to significant artistic innovation.<sup>29</sup> While Schmitter is mainly interested in the practice of collecting, there is no reason why the same model should not hold true for patronage in general (either public or private). Furthermore, we can also use the same model to look at it from an artist’s perspective. Socially and professionally superior artists like Giorgione or Titian were great innovators, but also tried to *enclave* certain subject-matters (Giorgione’s pastorals) or genres (Titian’s mythological *Poesie*). Our artists, while certainly trying to imitate the great names from time to time, also engaged in *diversion* to emulate them. Lotto’s highly allegorical portraits from his first Venetian period, Savoldo’s Northern-Lombardic realism, and Pordenone’s bold and violent frescoes can all be seen in this light.

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<sup>27</sup> Exh. Cat. Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 915.

<sup>29</sup> Schmitter, 2004, pp. 914-915.

*Damage-control* is not as much a strategy as it is a necessity. It happens when the artist has run out of all other options. Having to choose between painting and starving, the artist is forced to take on any commission he can get his hands on.<sup>30</sup> The downsides of *damage-control* are many: artistic freedom and capability is severely limited, while social prestige is compromised, making it very hard to work oneself out of this state. Often, the artist will attempt to create a *diversion* to renew his career.

## Connections

I have also researched the network of relations enabling artists to go from one commission to another. Due to the close-knitted social structure of Renaissance Italy, these often overlap.

A very important category is the patron's connections. If the artist has a patron of considerable social status, new commissions will often flow from the patron's friends, allies, connections, or family members. Both the citizens and the nobles of early modern Italy formed close-knitted networks, and would meet each other frequently at church, the market, governmental institutions, and confraternities.<sup>31</sup> The artist can also look amongst his own friends, family, and acquaintances for potential clients. The effectiveness of this approach is heavily dependent on the artist's own social status and network. Institutional connections could also greatly benefit painters. If the artist has attracted the patronage of an institution, such as a religious order, confraternity, or *scuola*, new opportunities will often come from other locations where this institution is present. Especially religious orders such as the Dominicans or Franciscans could be of great benefit an artist throughout his career.

If a painter's art works are highly visible in a community, and his art is well-received by its members, new commissions will often come automatically, as this artist's reputation will spread by word of mouth. This 'vogue' is the desired result of *presence*.

Especially in Venice large commissions were often awarded by committees. This method of selecting artists was practised by the government as well as most *scuole*, and was designed to prevent personal glorification to the expense of the unity of the State or the *scuola*.<sup>32</sup> In many cases, these committees would hold a contest between three or four artists to decide who would receive the commission. Enrolling in a competition often ensured publicity, and the honour of winning one was great.

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<sup>30</sup> Spear and Sohm, 2010, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, pp. 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> Fortini Brown in Paris and Boston, 2010, p. 42.

## 1.2 Consuming and social stratification in Renaissance Venice

### Level and structure of wealth

Before we can turn our attention to the individual painters, we must first gain an understanding of the artistic climate they worked in. As the cultural scene of a city is influenced and conditioned by its level, structure and transition of wealth, I will first assess how the economic and political structure of Renaissance Venice influenced the production and consumption of painting. Richard Goldthwaite's thorough study on wealth and the demand for art in Renaissance Italy forms an excellent departure point for this analysis.

Goldthwaite's structural analysis of wealth in Renaissance Italy results in three major conclusions. First of all, the wealth in Italy was distributed among a relatively high number of consumers, who were mostly concentrated in urban centres. Secondly, the ranks of these consumers were subject to constant change, causing demand to renew and redevelop continuously. Lastly, the rich became ever richer, resulting in a rise in the level of individual spending.<sup>33</sup>

For us, the first two of Goldthwaite's conclusions are the most important and are worth dwelling upon. The downward penetration of wealth, as Goldthwaite calls it, was substantial in the Italian *commune*. While hard figures for the distribution of capital in *cinquecento* Venice do not exist, we do have access to similar numbers of the wealth in *quattrocento* Florence. Careful study of the 1427 *catasto* reveals that the richest hundred man in Florence (approximately 0,16% of the total population) possessed 16,7% of the total wealth in the commune. However, more than half of the total wealth was divided between 3,000 men (almost 33% of the total population!). These data show that the concentration of wealth was extremely low in comparison with other places in Europe in the fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> In other words: the Florentine middle-class was substantial and its members were relatively wealthy.

What held true for Florence, Goldthwaite argues, also held true for Venice, as "there is no reason to believe that the distribution of wealth was much different in Florence from that in Genoa, Venice, and other cities in a period when, with few exceptions, entrepreneurs did not operate through cartels, monopolies, and other large-scale business organizations that might have facilitated more massive concentrations of personal wealth."<sup>35</sup> As in other Italian cities, the wealth in Venice was distributed widely enough for the middle class to have access to the market for luxury goods, which is also confirmed by Vasari.<sup>36</sup> The implications of these conclusions are of paramount importance for this research, as they confirm that a large and diverse number of Venetian citizens was able to buy paintings. Cavazzini confirms

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<sup>33</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, pp. 46-47.

<sup>35</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, pp. 47-48.

that many artisans and small business owners bought art works, stating that: “[...] notaries, doctors, apothecaries, pasta-makers, smiths, and laundry women filled their dwellings with canvases, often imitating what was common in aristocratic circles, but sometimes following individual preferences in ways that are never so visible or understandable in the major collections of the time.”<sup>37</sup> While Cavazzini’s research concerns early *seicento* Rome, there is no reason to assume that the situation was fundamentally different in Venice, although we must bear in mind that the Italian art market developed significantly over the course of the sixteenth century.

Of a different nature, but equal importance, is Goldthwaite’s insistence on the decentralisation of the Italian economy. When Venice forged her mainland empire in the fifteenth century, it made little effort to incorporate her newly acquired territories either economically or culturally, allowing towns like Verona, Bergamo, and Pordenone to retain a high degree of economic freedom.<sup>38</sup> Due to this economic decentralisation, the cultural ties between the capital and the (semi) periphery were also quite loose, which does not mean they were non-existent. The Venetian decentralisation of capital resulted also in a decentralisation of art. While the painters of Venice were amongst the most celebrated and sought-after artists of the known world, smaller cities in the Terraferma had proud artistic traditions of their own and the influence of painters like Bellini and Titian on these regional schools should not be overstated. While Venice was politically, economically and culturally superior to the provincial towns, these communes were vibrant cities in their own right before they were annexed by the Serenissima. When looking for an artist to decorate their churches or palazzi, the inhabitants of these towns would not, therefore, automatically turn their heads towards the capital, but would rather select an appropriate painter already present in the city.

### **Social structure of Venice and the empire**

Venetian society was both hierarchical and conservative, and its fabric changed astonishingly little from the fourteenth century until the fall of the republic. The population of Venice was divided by law into three groups – patricians, *cittadini* and *popolani* – and social mobility between these groups was scarce.

The patricians made up approximately four per cent of the total populace. From the fourteenth century its numbers were fixed to some three hundred families, and it was not until the seventeenth century that new families were raised to the patriciate.<sup>39</sup> This means that in the period examined in this research one could only become a patrician through birth

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<sup>37</sup> Cavazzini, 2008, pp. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, p. 41.

<sup>39</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 101.

or marriage, while the latter had to be approved by the Collegio, the executive arm of the Venetian government.<sup>40</sup>

The government was under firm patrician control. The gargantuan Great Council consisted of all adult male members of the patriciate, and the holders of all major offices of state were patricians. In fact, all *cittadini* and *popolani* members were prohibited by law from filling public office.<sup>41</sup> The Church, too, was dominated by the patriciate. The patriarch of Venice was always a patrician, as were the heads of most monasteries and convents, and the laymen supervising the vast wealth of San Marco.<sup>42</sup> The patriciate's right to rule was supported by the state ideology that emphasised the importance of civic duty and selfless devotion to the State, which, by law, was reserved only for the most ancient families.

Traditionally, the Venetian patricians had been merchants rather than aristocrats, engaging in international trade and acquiring great wealth through the riches of the eastern Mediterranean. In the course of the fifteenth century, however, the Serenissima lost many of its oversea possessions to the Ottomans, while vastly expanding her Italian territory at the expense of Milan. This shift of political and economic emphasis from sea to land deeply affected the patriciate, which gradually transformed from a mercantile elite into a land-based aristocracy, causing a rise in individual spending often associated with aristocrats.<sup>43</sup> It is important to stress that this shift took place in the early *cinquecento*, exactly the period examined in this research.

The *cittadini*, or citizens, amounted to about eleven per cent of Venice's populace. The citizenry was a vibrant upper middle class of doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and, above all, merchants. They were excluded from public office, but could practice some influence on government by working in civil service. One could only become a Venetian citizen after having lived in the city for at least 25 years and providing proof of at least two generations of non-manual trade.<sup>44</sup> As status in Venice depended on birth rather than on wealth, successful citizens were often richer than some patrician families.

The bulk of Venice's population, 85 per cent, was neither patrician nor citizen, but *popolano*. The *popolani* were the lowest caste, with almost no political power and little social status. They were further divided in the *popolo menudo*, the labourers, laundrywomen and sailors, and the *popolo grande*, the upper lower and lower middle classes of shop keepers, ship masters, and arsenal foremen.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For more information on the fascinating aspect of upward mobility through marriage in early modern Venice, see: Cowan, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 102.

<sup>42</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 136-137.

<sup>44</sup> Iordanou, 2016, p. 803.

<sup>45</sup> Iordanou, 2016, p. 802.

Social mobility between the lower and the middle class was nothing unheard of. Foreign merchants from Flanders, Germany or other Italian states often successfully applied for full citizenship after having lived in Venice for 25 years, as did inhabitants of terraferma cities like Padua and Bergamo. Successful artisans-turned-merchants, too, could move up the social ladder after two generations on non-manual labour. Upward mobility from citizen to patrician, however, was all but impossible in the Cinquecento, meaning that even the most wealthy and culturally refined citizens could formally never acquire a higher status. All they could do, and did, was try to enhance their status in an informal way through wealth, piety, civil service, and art.

### **Ideology and identity**

It is impossible to overstate the impact of ideology on the production of art in Renaissance Venice. The most obvious examples of ideology are the state-sponsored propaganda projects in the Palazzo Ducale or grandiose altarpieces in the major churches, but often, ideology was conveyed in more subtle (or even subconscious) manners. Ideology, as I understand it, exists to: “[...] veil overt power relations obtaining in society, by making them appear to be part of the natural, eternal law of things. Power can only be exercised with the complicity of those who fail to realize that they submit to it [...] Ideology is successful precisely to the degree that its views were shared by those who exercise power and those who submit to it.”<sup>46</sup>

The concept of self-fashioning, coined by Stephen Greenblatt in 1980 and vastly expanded ever since, is of great importance to this research. Influenced by humanism and sciences, the Renaissance saw a growing awareness of the self as a manipulable concept that could be shaped by a person’s language, behaviour, or spending patterns. The result was an “increased [...] self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.”<sup>47</sup> Clothing, poetry, and literature were used frequently to fashion identities, but the visual arts, too, were an important tool for self-fashioning. Members of the upper class often tried to legitimise their power and privileges, while social climbers from the bourgeoisie used works of art to fashion an identity that justified their claims to more power, money, and status.

The social ambitions of the bourgeoisie were an important factor in the increased production of painting in the cities of the Renaissance. As Wilson, studying fifteenth-century Bruges, notes, the middle class tried to follow the social behaviour and art patronage of the Burgundian dukes, but did not have access to the vast resources of the nobility. Therefore, they had to work with limited resources:

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<sup>46</sup> Chadwick, 1990, preface.

<sup>47</sup> Greenblatt, 1980, p. 2.



“While ‘living nobility’ would certainly not be within reach of most of the urban population, the principal preoccupations of the nobility – giving evidence of lineage, honour, resources, and generosity – would provide exempla that could be emulated, albeit on a reduced scale, by those interested in demonstrating their potential suitability for inclusion within the ducal circle or by those who hoped to establish and advance the position of their families within the society of Bruges. It is in this increasingly powerful desire for representation that I situate the rise of an interest in panel painting [...] the pictorial field would come to be perceived by the haute bourgeoisie as an arena in which personal wealth and social standing might be represented.”<sup>48</sup>

Wilson’s insightful observations are not applicable to Bruges alone, as Belozerskaya notes, but to urban centres throughout Europe.<sup>49</sup> We must not forget that painting was far cheaper than sculpture, jewellery, tapestry, or architecture, and therefore more accessible to the citizenry. While the *cittadini* of Venice had no dukes to emulate, they were surrounded by a dominant caste of patricians providing ample examples to emulate. As the middle class lacked the financial means and social status to imitate the patriciate’s high level of expenditure, they instead tried to emulate it by practicing *diversion*.

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<sup>48</sup> Wilson, 1998, p. 39.

<sup>49</sup> Belozerskaya, 2002, p. 225.

## 1.3 Patronage in Renaissance Venice

The Venetian patronage situation was unique for three main reasons, all of which are of vital importance for this research. As in any Renaissance city, the Church, government, and nobility provided Venetian artists with a steady flow of commissions. Rather unlike most other cities, however, Venice was a republic and therefore did not have a hierarchic court culture so prominent in most Italian cities. Florence, of course, had a republican government as well, but was a republic in name alone for the better part of the Renaissance. Another Venetian peculiarity was the social and cultural prominence of the scuole, which played an extremely important role in art patronage. Lastly, Venice was one of the places in which the emergence of the free art market in the sixteenth century took place rather early.<sup>50</sup>

### Painting for the State

In a city with an extremely dominant state ideology of civic duty, patriotism, and the sanctity of the State, government commissions were the most prestigious option available for any painter. As the myth of Venice could only be effective if it was firmly established in the heads and hearts of both its denizens and its visitors, Venetians and foreigners alike had to be reminded constantly of the city's unique and sacred status. For the State, painting was one of the most potent transmitters of this message, providing Venetian painters with a steady flow of propagandist governmental commissions. As most of these commissions involved the (re)decoration of rooms in the Palazzo Ducale, which was frequented the most powerful men of Venice and foreign dignitaries alike, the paintings were visible for a large number of potential future clients, making painting for the State even more attractive.

While governmental commissions brought honour and visibility to painters, they were not very lucrative.<sup>51</sup> Successful painters like Titian and Tintoretto often worked for low wages, as the honour of painting for the State was more fulfilling than financial gain. Offering to work for low wages or even for free could also be a cunning strategy to eliminate competition, as the government was always short of money and therefore could easily be persuaded to contract the cheapest artist. In the long run, these under-paid artists would benefit greatly from the fame and recognition painting for the Serenissima often yielded.

A complicating factor for painters was the government's insistence on artistic cooperation between different masters. Commissions for large scale decorative programs were often awarded to two or even three different artists, who then had to work together. The underlying thought of this remarkable approach, which sometimes caused serious friction between artists, was that the Republic had to refrain from favouring a single artist, as personal glory was subjected to the greater good of the State. The motives for using this

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<sup>50</sup> For an in-depth study of Italian art markets, see: Fantoni, Matthew, and Matthews-Grieco, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 42.

'team-work method' were not merely ideological, however, as the government also hoped that the artists, unable to resist the urge to outshine their collaborating rivals, would challenge each other to achieve ever greater artistic success, providing the State with the most beautiful paintings imaginable. Finally, an added benefit of this approach was that multiple artist could work at the same time, and, by consequence, finish the project much sooner than a single artist could.<sup>52</sup>

To ensure that no individual would influence the paintings' iconography to serve his own needs, state commissions were awarded by committees, which consisted of three to five patricians.<sup>53</sup> Apparently, however, art was too important for the State to entrust it completely to these patrician committees, as the Senate kept a close eye on the iconography of any pictorial programme in the Palazzo Ducale and the Council of Ten was responsible for its financing.<sup>54</sup>

### Church commissions

The San Marco, built over the bones of Saint Mark, was by far the most powerful, wealthy, and prestigious church of the Veneto, but it did not become the city's cathedral until after the fall of the Republic.<sup>55</sup> Instead, it was the doge's chapel, accessible through his palace, and as such, it functioned as the state church. All major processions, celebrations, and ceremonies were performed at San Marco and its square, and not at the small and inconveniently located cathedral of San Pietro di Castello. This unique situation is telling of the relationship between Church and State in the Serenissima, as unlike other Italian states, Venice kept a wide a distance from papal authority in Rome, while the doge exercised much influence on the Venetian Church and its affairs.<sup>56</sup> As Haskell notes, "The Church [...] was maintained with the greatest splendour only at the price of absolute submission to the State."<sup>57</sup> In Venice, the State was sacred, and the Church was thoroughly political.

The leadership of the Venetian Church was dominated by patricians, although the bulk of the clergy was from the middle and lower class. No *popolano* or *cittadino* would ever dare to dream of becoming patriarch, but yet the Church was an effective vehicle for social mobility.<sup>58</sup>

While all parish churches payed homage to the state-controlled patriarch, large monastic orders such as the Dominicans and the Franciscans answered to their priors, and not to the

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<sup>52</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 42.

<sup>54</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 42.

<sup>55</sup> The patriarchate of Venice was established in 1451, but its cathedral was the insignificant San Pietro di Castello.

<sup>56</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 99.

<sup>57</sup> Haskell, 1971, p. 247.

<sup>58</sup> Goldthwaite, 1993, p. 50.

State. The mendicant orders operated internationally and transcended the borders of Venice and the Veneto. These monastic networks could be used with great effect by painters struggling to establish a foothold in the Venetian art world, as the monks and nuns of the *terraferma* cities kept close contact with their brethren and sisters in Venice.<sup>59</sup>

As in all Italian cities, the Church was one of the most important art patrons. Churches were cramped with tombs, chapels, and altars in need of appropriate decoration. The commissions for major decoration or renovation projects were, as we have seen before with state commissions, awarded by committees of elected procurators. These procurators were selected out of the most prominent parishioners, who often were patricians, but could also be wealthy citizens.

### ***Juspatronatus***

The majority of the church altars, of which there must have been at least a thousand in Venice, did in fact not belong to the clergy, but to laymen, whether it were *scuole*, families, or private persons, resulting in an overlap between ecclesiastical and private patronage. Laymen were dependant on the Church for the often costly purchase of a *jus patronatus*, the right to dedicate an altar in a church, while the Church was dependant on the financial support of the laity to decorate the building with artworks.<sup>60</sup> Most *scuole*, as we shall see, celebrated daily votive masses at their altars or chapels, while patrician families generally did not worship at their altars or chapels, but joined their fellow parishioners at Sunday mass.<sup>61</sup>

For families and private persons, an altarpiece was not only a religious, but also a political instrument. An altarpiece or chapel in a prominent church presented an ideal opportunity to showcase civic pride and define identities. Although donor portraits were not as common in Venice as in other Italian cities (personal glorification was widely seen as the undermining of the unity of the State), family symbols and coats of arms often appeared on altarpieces. As altarpieces functioned as carriers of individual as well as collective identity, quality and lavishness were a matter of considerable importance, although Venetians were ever wary to maintain an image of austerity.<sup>62</sup>

### **Scuole Grandi and Piccole**

The *scuola* was a phenomenon unique to the Venetian republic. Although the Venetian *scuole* were similar to confraternities in their focus on devotion, brotherhood, and charity,

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<sup>59</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 102.

<sup>60</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 50.

<sup>61</sup> Humfrey, 1993, pp. 60-61.

<sup>62</sup> Humfrey, 1993, p. 104.

they were set apart by their sworn allegiance to the doge and their central role in Venetian society.<sup>63</sup> There were five prestigious *scuole grandi*, which had an all-male membership and wielded vast social and cultural influence, and numerous *scuole piccole*, which were less prestigious, but had a more narrow focus on devotion, trade, nationality, or certain kinds of charity, and often also welcomed female members.<sup>64</sup> The *scuole*, and especially the *scuole piccole*, were meant to unite the denizens of Venice, as patricians, citizens, and *popolani* alike could join. The *scuole* functioned on the principle of social balance; the wealthy provided the less well-off with food, clothing, and a professional network, while the poor prayed for their benefactors and marched in their funeral processions.<sup>65</sup> In this way, the wealthy lightened the material burdens of their brethren, while the poor spared their souls from eternal damnation.

The governance of all *scuole* was, however, the sole right of the citizenry, giving them considerable status and power within Venetian society. This was a deliberate governmental policy aiming to counterbalance the low influence the citizenry had in affairs of state. By giving the *cittadini* (informal) power in the *scuole*, the patrician government won the allegiance of this potent, wealthy, and relatively numerous group, equating their interests to the interests of the State, and thus making them as eager to maintain the status quo as the patriciate was.<sup>66</sup>

As the larger *scuole* owned lavish chapter houses, and all *scuole* had patronage rights of at least one altar in the many churches of Venice, they were ardent patrons of the visual arts. Chapter houses were decorated with large pictorial cycles, which were often – but not always – executed over larger periods of time by different artists. It should not surprise us by now that the commissions for all important artworks were not awarded by individuals, but by the full chapter. Once awarded, the further details and day-to-day supervision was delegated to the *banca*. Serving on the *banca* was as honourable as it was costly, as its members usually had to provide funding for the project as well.<sup>67</sup> The suppression of the individual in favour of the collective ensured there was little competition between different patrons of one *scuola*. However, vehement artistic competition existed between the six *scuole grande*.<sup>68</sup>

## The private sphere

While the patronage of a family chapel or the membership of a *scuola* were excellent means to fashion one's identity in cinquecento Venice, the cultural importance of the semi-private

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<sup>63</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010 p. 47.

<sup>64</sup> In the mid-sixteenth century, Venice counted at least two hundred *scuole piccole*.

<sup>65</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 47.

<sup>66</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 49.

sphere of the palazzo must not be overlooked. The majority of private commissions for the decoration of Venetian palazzi, which were not only private houses but also the signs of the family's public presence in the city, were relatively small-scale devotional pieces and portraits. Patricians were very conscious about which painter they contracted to paint their portraits, and often based their choice for a certain artist on popularity as well as family ties. Until the 1550s, Titian was the go-to artist for expensive portraits, while Tintoretto took over the portraiture market in the late century.<sup>69</sup>

Large decorative programmes were rare in Venetian houses, as they were not only wildly expensive, but also seen as ostentatious and un-Venetian excesses.<sup>70</sup> In the desperate years of the War of the League of Cambrai (1508-1510), old laws restraining luxury and the display of wealth were re-introduced. These laws, which were enforced by the hated Magistracy for Pomp (*Tre savi sopra le pompe*), not only targeted painting, but also ostentatious clothing and jewellery, luxurious furniture, and sumptuous feasts. These laws were, however, frequently deliberately ignored by patricians to show that they were culturally sophisticated and to create a collective identity distinguishing them from the *cittadini*.<sup>71</sup>

Many Venetian patricians owned villas on their estates on the *Terraferma*, which functioned as a retreat from the city as well as a status symbol. The countryside villa, in contrast to the Venetian *casa*, was often lavishly decorated with frescoes and paintings depicting mythological cycles, historical scenes, landscapes, and allegories.<sup>72</sup>

## The collectors

Some aristocrats compiled substantial collections of artworks in their homes. While collecting was mainly seen as a patrician occupation, a number of wealthy citizens (such as Francesco Zio and Andrea Odoni) had intriguing collections as well.

The period under examination is particularly interesting when it comes to private patronage, as the new genre of easel painting was introduced in the private sphere by Giorgione in the first decades of the cinquecento. While Giorgione's mythological and pastoral subjects were widely popular, most paintings destined for the private space were still of a devotional nature. Portraits, too, could be seen in palazzi in great numbers.<sup>73</sup> The notes of the patrician connoisseur Marcantonio Michiel, who described eleven private collections, are our main source for understanding the functioning of private collecting in cinquecento Venice.<sup>74</sup> From

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<sup>69</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 53.

<sup>70</sup> Fortini Brown in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 52.

<sup>71</sup> Tafuri, 1995, pp. 6-7.

<sup>72</sup> Haskell, 1971, p. 249.

<sup>73</sup> Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 153.

<sup>74</sup> Michiel documented the collections of Taddeo Contarini, Hieronimo Marcello, Antonio Foscarini, Zuanantonio Venier, Domenico Grimani, Gabriel Vendramin, Michiel Contarini, Antonio Pasqualino, Andrea Odoni, Francesco Zio, and Giovanni Ram.

Michiel, who visited patrician as well as non-noble collectors, we learn that the chosen artists, genres, mediums, and subject-matters vary significantly between patrician and *cittadino* collectors. While all examined collectors had an interest in northern painting, modern painters like Bellini and Giorgione, which were prominently featured in patrician collections, were almost completely absent in *cittadino* palaces.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, paintings by less well-known artists, including Lotto and Savoldo, first appeared in *cittadino* collections.<sup>76</sup>

This social stratification of Venetian collections can partly be explained by the sparseness and high cost of prominent painters like Giorgione and Bellini (especially after their deaths in the second decade of the century), making it very difficult for *cittadini* with lack of wealth and appropriate connections to obtain these works. On the other hand, the sparsity would have made it far more prestigious for patrician collectors to include one of these paintings in their collections. What is striking, however, is that the *cittadini* who could not obtain a Giorgione or Bellini did not resort to commissioning copies or contracting painters who painted in similar styles, but rather bought painters of unknown yet innovative artists like Lotto and Savoldo.<sup>77</sup>

The prominence of these new artists in civilian collections suggests that the *cittadini* were not merely trying to copy the style and taste of the patriciate, as has long been assumed. Instead, as Monika Schmitter points out in her 2004 article on *cittadino* identities, citizens would rather try to invent new genres and methods of collecting than emulate the traditional collections of the patriciate.<sup>78</sup> This claim is of paramount importance for this research, as it can explain why almost all of the examined artists initially found employment within the middle circles of Venetian society and had to make their way up from there.

While the collecting habits of Venetian patricians have been studied extensively, and *cittadino* collections have received more scholarly attention over the past two decades, almost nothing is known about the collections of *popolani* – if these ever existed. It is not very likely that the lower classes owned extensive art collections, but it is very possible that some of them owned several paintings. These paintings were probably no Giorgiones or Titians, but the case of Lorenzo Lotto (see chapter 2) proves that devotional works and portraits were often affordable for financially capable proletarians.

### Open markets and lower classes

In *cinquecento* Venice, there was no open art market in the strict sense of the word, and most paintings were still sold on commission basis. The market was, however, more open

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<sup>75</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 923.

<sup>76</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 925.

<sup>77</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 943.

<sup>78</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 915.

than has often been imagined, and many Venetian painters sold devotional images “off the shelf”.<sup>79</sup> An official document from 1518 states that painters sold their goods from their shop windows as well as on the Rialto bridge, and even had apprentices sell small works on the streets of Rialto and San Marco. Additionally, painters sold their works on fairs in Venice as well as in other Italian cities, produced duplicates of popular paintings, and even donated portraits and devotional pieces in the hope of return favours.<sup>80</sup> While these new practices must have made a decisive mark on the Venetian art market, they complemented rather than replaced the tradition commission-based system.<sup>81</sup>

We can assume that the paintings sold in the semi-open market were cheaper than the ones created on commission, and that many of these paintings were bought by *popolani* rather than by wealthier consumers. This would match with the way Roman commoners bought paintings in the *seicento*, as is described by Cavazzini.<sup>82</sup>

### Rivals in Renaissance Venice

As is noted by Frederick Ilchman in his landmark catalogue on the rivalry between Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, the Venetian art world was extremely competitive.<sup>83</sup> This is a logical consequence of Venice’s high concentration of artists, mercantile spirit, and, above all, by the aforementioned policy to award commissions by contests and committees.<sup>84</sup> The fierce competition forced painters to strive to absolute perfection and employ unconventional business tactics. In Venice, emulation was not only a matter of pride; it was also one of survival. This did not only hold true for the artists themselves, but also for their patrons. The selection of motifs, the use of certain styles, formats, or dimensions, the placement and paintings were all subject to this competitive atmosphere.

The fierce rivalry pushed the most successful artists to to accomplish the impossible. The downside, however, is that many excellent artists had serious trouble in keeping their feet on the ground in this tense atmosphere. Many of these painters were pushed to the margins of the art world and were unable to attract prestigious commissions. As we shall see, these marginalised artists consorted to a range of tactics to (re)gain a foothold on the highest zones of the Venetian art market. The tactics of three of these painters, Lorenzo Lotto, Giovanni da Pordenone, and Gerolamo Savoldo, will be analysed in detail in the three following case studies.

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<sup>79</sup> Matthew in Fantoni, Matthew, and Matthews-Grieco, 2002, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Matthew in Fantoni, Matthew, and Matthews-Grieco, 2002, pp. 253-254.

<sup>81</sup> Matthew in Fantoni, Matthew, and Matthews-Grieco, 2002, p. 253.

<sup>82</sup> Cavazzini, 2008, pp. 199-152.

<sup>83</sup> Ilchman in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> Ilchman in Boston and Paris, 2010, p. 21.



## 2. Lorenzo Lotto: the wanderer

*The first case study concerns the work of Lorenzo Lotto (1480 – 1556/57). This Venetian-born painter is probably the most studied, but perhaps also the least understood of our three artists. In this chapter, I will analyse Lotto's career strategy and his clientele. To maintain a clear focus, I have selected three distinctive periods in his career: his early career in Treviso, the Marches and Rome (1503-1513), his first Venetian period (1523-1533), and his late career in Venice, Treviso and the Marches (1538-1556).*

### Biography

Lotto was born around 1480 in Venice.<sup>85</sup> It can be assumed that he also followed his training there, perhaps under Giovanni Bellini, but no documentation from this period survives. It appears that he left Venice for Treviso shortly after his training, as his earliest documented works (1503) were created there. In Treviso, he enjoyed the patronage of bishop Bernardo de' Rossi. Three years later, he left for the Marchian city of Recanati to further his career, and painted a number of prestigious and well-received altarpieces for the Dominican Order. In 1509, Lotto was summoned to Rome, where he collaborated with Raphael on the *Stanze*, but an unimpressed pope Julius II had Lotto's work demolished within five years.<sup>86</sup> Lotto probably left the Eternal City immediately after the completion of his ill-received ceiling decoration, returning to the Marches in 1510.

Two years later, in 1512, the artist moved to Venetian-controlled Bergamo after he had received a commission to paint the *Martinengo altarpiece* for the Dominican church of San Bartolomeo. As in Recanati, the highly praised altarpiece provided Lotto with a steady flow of commissions. Lotto flourished for thirteen years in Bergamo before returning to his native Venice in 1525. For the third time in his career, the Dominicans facilitated his move, as he was commissioned to paint the *Saint Antoninus altarpiece* for the powerful Dominican church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo. Lotto did not, however, execute the altarpiece until 1542. Unable to cement his reputation in Venice with a major altarpiece, Lotto had considerable problems in securing prestigious commissions during the first years of his stay in Venice. It was not until he painted the portrait of the innovative collector Andrea Odoni in 1527 that his fortunes changed for the better, as he received commissions for portraits and even an altarpiece in the Carmini. It appears that Lotto moved back to the Marches around 1533, although this period is badly documented.

Lotto moved back to Venice in 1540, where he finished the *Saint Antoninus altarpiece*, but he received little other notable commissions there. Lotto briefly lived in Treviso, the city where his career had started so promisingly in the early years of the century, but returned to

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<sup>85</sup> In his 1546 will, Loto stated he was approximately 66 years old.

<sup>86</sup> Humfrey in Washington, Bergamo and Paris, 1997, p. 6.

Venice a year later, complaining about his low income and the hostile atmosphere in Treviso.<sup>87</sup> In 1549, Lotto left for the Marches once again, this time to paint an altarpiece depicting the *Assumption of the Virgin* for the San Francesco alle Scale in Ancona. He stayed in Ancona for three years, receiving a handful of commissions from local patrons. He spent the last years of his life in Loreto, where he joined the religious community of the Santa Casa as a lay brother in 1554, and died in obscurity in either 1556 or 1557.

## Documentation

Lotto's career is exceptionally well documented. Many contracts and juridical records have survived, especially from his early life. During his first Venetian period, Lotto kept close contact with the Misericordia in Bergamo by letter, and many of these letters have survived in the MIA's archives.

One of Lotto's account books, covering the years between 1538 and 1556, has survived. In this *Libro di Spese Diverse* he meticulously recorded all his spendings and incomes, providing us with valuable information on his financial status. Although it can be assumed that Lotto, and most other artists as well, used account books throughout his career, his last one is the only surviving document of this kind.

Lastly, a considerable number of secondary sources comment on Lotto's career. Vasari includes the painter in his life of Palma Vecchio, and the later Dolce and Ridolfi comment occasionally on Lotto's works.

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<sup>87</sup> Testament of Lorenzo Lotto.

## 2.1 A promising start

*Treviso, Recanati and Rome: 1503-1513*

### Lotto as a court painter in Treviso

In 1503 a Trevisian notary describes the young Lotto as a “*pictor celeberrimus*”.<sup>88</sup> This classification has been cited with an astonishing frequency as proof of Lotto’s excellent reputation, but might not be entirely reliable. The notarial act dates from April 1505, when Lotto had only executed a handful of paintings, and all but one – the *Santa. Cristina altarpiece*, which had just been completed – were in private hands. The notary’s remark might therefore be more illustrative of his lack of knowledge of the art world than of Lotto’s high social status.

Famous or not, the young Lotto was fortunate enough to attract the attention of Treviso’s new bishop, Bernardo de’ Rossi. The ambitious bishop was the scion of a powerful noble family from Parma, and had received the diocese of Treviso in 1499 through the interference of the Venetian Senate. De’ Rossi gathered a small court of retainers, family members, and artists around him, and Lotto was also admitted.

For three years, Lotto would work almost exclusively for De’ Rossi, functioning as a court artist in all but name. The first strategy Lotto employed was therefore *service*. The advantages of this situation are many. The bishop provided him with a steady flow of commissions, and might also have paid for his lodgings and other expenses. Lotto’s position was therefore a comfortable one. Furthermore, the artist, who was now a member of the bishop’s small court, would also have seen his own social status improve. For the young Lotto, the bishop’s refined taste also meant that he was able to develop himself in a wide range of pictorial genres, as he executed devotional works, portraits, allegories, and an altarpiece.

That Lotto’s training bore fruit can be seen in the ingenious portraits of Bishop de’ Rossi (Fig.1) and a noblewoman (Fig. 2), who must be Giovanna de’ Rossi, Bernardo’s recently deceased sister.<sup>89</sup> Lotto’s portrayal of the siblings is marked by its realism and its psychological depth. The ambitious Bernardo has apparently just turned around to meet the beholder’s gaze with his piercing blue eyes, his lips slightly opened as if he is about to speak, while Giovanna is portrayed as a demure widow. Lotto – or Bernardo, for that matter – clearly had no intention to idealise the siblings. The bishop’s warts are clearly visible on his

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<sup>88</sup> April 7, 1505, Treviso: “in domo habitationis magistri Laurentii Loti da Venetiis q. ser Thome, pictoris celeberrimi [...]” (cited in Zampetti, 1969, p. 321.)

<sup>89</sup> Bonnet, 1996, p. 25. The two portraits are clearly pendants, as the man and woman are depicted as sitting before the same green curtain and are facing each other. The woman wears a widow’s cap and black clothes, which corresponds with Giovanna’s biography. Furthermore, it would make perfect sense for Bernardo to commemorate his sister, who had died in 1502, in this fashion.

jaw, and Lotto did not try to hide Giovanna's plain features and under chin. It is tempting to assume that the bishop's apparent preference for verism attests of a 'simple' taste or a lack of cultural capital, but this is far from true. Both portraits originally had an allegorical cover, and both painted covers have survived, although they are now separated from the portraits they were meant to cover. Bernardo's cover is an *Allegory of virtue and vice* (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.), while his sister's portrait was covered by an *Allegory of chastity* (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.).<sup>90</sup> Both allegories have a sophisticated humanistic iconography, which is very likely to be conceived by an educated member of the court, and are telling of the bishop's fascination for classical antiquity and humanism.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the bishop had spent a considerable amount of time in the university city of Padua, a centre of Renaissance philosophy, and several members of his court were noted humanists.<sup>92</sup>

### **The *Santa Cristina* altarpiece: Lotto as the artistic heir of Bellini**

Although being a court painter was lucrative, most artworks commissioned by private patrons were inaccessible for a larger audience, making it hard for the painter to enhance his reputation by spreading his *presence*. Lotto tackled this problem early on, in 1504, when he had De' Rossi recommend him to Franchino de Geromei, the rector of the Trevisian church of Santa Cristina del Tiveron, which needed a new altarpiece for its high altar.<sup>93</sup> Father Franchino complied, either out of enthusiasm for Lotto's paintings, or out of respect for his bishop.<sup>94</sup> The result was the *Santa Cristina altarpiece* (Fig.3), Lotto's first public commission. The altarpiece depicts a *sacra conversazione*; the Madonna and Child sit on a high throne in a splendid Renaissance apse, surrounded by saints Peter, Catherine, Liberale, and Jerome. Lotto's painting is heavily influenced by his presumed master Giovanni Bellini's *San Zaccaria altarpiece* (Fig. 4), which was finished a year before Lotto created his painting. Although Lotto had lived in Treviso since at least 1503, documents show that he visited his native city from time to time, making it entirely possible that he saw Bellini's painting. The similarities between the two altarpieces are striking; both Madonnas hold court beneath a golden apse mosaic with floral motives, the choice of saints is almost exactly the same, and both Jeromes are wearing the same hooded red cloak. Lotto even copied Bellini's floor tiles. Although many of Lotto's early works are strongly influenced by the older master, he never came so close to Bellini in style as in the *Santa Cristina altarpiece*.

<sup>90</sup> Bonnet, 1996, p. 25. The *Allegory of chastity* is often called *The maiden's dream*, but as the maiden's eyes are wide open, it is highly unlikely that she is either sleeping or dreaming.

<sup>91</sup> Lotto himself appears to have had little interest in classical antiquity. Throughout his career, he painted only a few allegorical or mythological scenes. This is confirmed by the *Libro di Spese Diverse*.

<sup>92</sup> Villa and Villa, 2011, p. 36.

<sup>93</sup> Villa and Villa, 2011, p. 50.

<sup>94</sup> Francescutti in Poldi and Villa, 2011, p. 14. As Franchino was well versed in theology and philosophy (a contemporary document from the Santa Caterina al Tiveron mentions that Franchino was the "scolastico in domo"), it is likely that he at least contributed to the conception of the painting's iconography.

The question remains why Lotto chose to follow Bellini this closely. Lotto may very well have tried to emulate his former master, who, despite the rising stars of Giorgione and Titian, was still widely seen as the champion of Venetian painting. Dürer, for example, observed in the very year Lotto was painting his altarpiece that Bellini was “still the best painter in Venice”.<sup>95</sup> By closely following Bellini’s style, Lotto attempted to assert himself as the true artistic heir of the aging master, in opposition to similar claims by Giorgione, Titian, and Sebastiano. To truly outshine his hypothetical master, however, Lotto had to do more than copy his example. He had to show that he could do even better. Lotto did this by making his figures more engaging than Bellini’s introvert saints. In the *San Zaccaria altarpiece*, as Francescutti notes, the mood is serene and meditative, alluding to the Christian ideal of the *vita contemplativa*. Lotto’s figures are more engaging and refer to the opposing idea of the *vita apostolica*.<sup>96</sup> Catherine and the Christ child, whom Mary holds protectively, interact with each other, Peter reads his book with the utmost concentration, while Jerome observes him sternly, and Saint Liberale looks directly at the beholder.<sup>97</sup> The vivacity and subtle emotionality of Lotto’s figures stand in clear contrast with Bellini’s more aloof altarpiece, while the careful rendering of the mosaic, the Ottoman carpet, and Liberale’s armour suggests that Lotto tried to prove that he was able to rival Bellini’s outstanding depiction of the texture of various materials. Finally, the extremely prominent signature on the marble base of the Virgin’s throne (which would, hanging above an altar, have been at eye-height for the beholder), forcefully shows everyone who looked at this painting that it was Lorenzo Lotto who made it. This might all sound rather far-fetched, but we must not forget that this was Lotto’s first public commission, and he must have been determined to make a lasting impression. This altarpiece was from its conception intended to be Lotto’s first *presence piece*, and was apparently successful. Immediately after its completion, the artist received the commission for an altarpiece of the cathedral of nearby Asolo and painted a number of high-quality devotional works for various patrons, further spreading his *presence* in the Veneto. The altarpiece’s lasting effect was cut short, however, by Lotto’s move to Recanati later that year.

The story of the *Santa Cristina altarpiece* did not end with its completion, however, as Lotto came into conflict with Franchino over his payment. The painter was offered a sum of 40 ducats for his work, which is indeed rather meagre for an altarpiece of this size.<sup>98</sup> It is telling of the young artist’s self-esteem that he insisted on a higher fee of 90 ducats, which he, through the mediation of De’ Rossi, would eventually receive in 1508.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in: Crawford Luber, 2005, pp. 112-113.

<sup>96</sup> Francescutti in Poldi and Villa, 2011, p. 14.

<sup>97</sup> The grim faces of the two older saints are remarkably similar to the facial types used by Albrecht Dürer, whom the young Lotto might have met when the German artist visited Venice in 1495.

<sup>98</sup> In the same year, Lotto was offered a sum equal to 320 ducats in the contract for his *Recanati polyptych*.

<sup>99</sup> Francescutti in Poldi and Villa, 2011, pp. 13-14, and Lucca in Garibaldi, Paraventi and Villa, 2013, p. 51. The bishop had the ecclesiastical tribunal of Treviso issue an order to pay Lotto as much money as he had asked for, although the exact amount of Lotto’s demand is unclear.

## To Recanati

Only a few months after the completion of the *Santa Cristina altarpiece*, Lotto left Treviso – and the service of Bernardo de' Rossi – for the Marchian town of Recanati, where the Dominicans of the San Domenico had commissioned him to paint a polyptych for their high altar. Lotto's move to Recanati raises two major questions; how did the painter receive the commission, and, more importantly, why did he leave the Veneto for the politically, economically, and culturally rather insignificant Marches? While it is impossible to fully answer the first question, it is likely that De' Rossi recommended Lotto to the Dominicans of Recanati, although the Bishop was not a member of any religious order.

This does not answer, however, the question why Lotto wanted to leave his service. In Treviso, he had a promising career, enjoyed the patronage of a powerful man who was willing to mediate with other patrons on his behalf, and, perhaps most importantly, was close enough to Venice to make a career move if his good reputation would spread. While we can only guess at Lotto's reasons for leaving all this behind, two motives are very plausible. First of all, Lotto might have been moved by the most banal of human urges, financial gain. We have seen that in Treviso, he had to go to great lengths to increase a puny salary of 40 ducats to a still meagre sum of 90 ducats. The Dominicans of Recanati offered to pay him 700 florins for their polyptych, which equals 320 Venetian ducats.<sup>100</sup> This means that he was paid more than thrice of what he had earned in Treviso. Secondly, it is unlikely that Lotto intended to stay in the Marches for long. He rather would have wanted to use Recanati as a springboard to Rome, where pope Julius II employed artist after artist to embellish the Vatican.<sup>101</sup> Recanati, while not the most vibrant of towns, had excellent connections to the Holy See. Its bishop, cardinal Girolamo Basso della Rovere, was not only the governor of the pilgrimage site of the Santa Casa in nearby Loreto, which enjoyed the special favour of Julius II, he was also the Pope's relative.<sup>102</sup> While Recanati was a temporary setback from Treviso, Lotto was looking at the bigger picture; a successful career in Recanati might attract the attention of its bishop, who would either employ him at Loreto, which was frequented by the Pope, or send him to his cousin in Rome right away.

## Performing *venezianità* in the Marches

The *Recanati polyptych* (Fig. 5) was Lotto's first Dominican commission, although many more would follow throughout his career. The choice for the somewhat archaic polyptych over the more modern *pala* was not made by the artist, but by the friars of San Domenico, and is illustrative of Recanati's modest cultural status.<sup>103</sup> As this was Lotto's first commission in the Marches, where most people would never have heard his name, he must have been dead set

<sup>100</sup> Lucca in Garibaldi, Paraventi and Villa, 2013, pp. 50-52.

<sup>101</sup> Lucca in Garibaldi, Paraventi and Villa, 2013, p. 53.

<sup>102</sup> Lucca in Garibaldi, Paraventi and Villa, 2013, pp. 58-59.

<sup>103</sup> The contract, dated June 17 1506, specifically states that Lotto was to make a "cona magni".

on delivering a work of exquisite quality to cement his reputation. The fact that this was by far his largest commission to date, and his ultimate goal was to expand his *presence* all the way to the Vatican, would only have made Lotto more determined.

The result is an elaborate and refined altarpiece. As in Treviso, Lotto tried to brand himself as the true champion of Venetian painting, which would have been highly praised, but scarcely present in Recanati. Once more, his figures are more engaging than Bellini's or Giorgione's contemplative saints, and especially the crowning panel of the *Dead Christ mourned* is almost shocking in its direct emotionality. As has been noted by Lucca, Lotto devoted particular attention to the very modern architectural space in which his figures are situated. The same prominent use of architecture in religious paintings can be seen in many contemporary Venetian altarpieces, such as Bellini's *San Giobbe altarpiece* (Accademia, Venice) and Vivarini and Basaiti's *San Ambrogio altarpiece* (S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice).<sup>104</sup>

The polyptych was extremely effective as a *presence piece*, as it provided Lotto with a large number of commissions for devotional paintings and altarpieces in Recanati, but also in nearby Jesi. After his failed sojourn in Rome, Lotto had no problems whatsoever in continuing to work in the Marches as a successful and highly praised master.

### **Collaboration with Raphael in the Roman Stanze**

More important than local recognition in the Marches, however, was attracting the attention of the Pope. And in this, too, Lotto succeeded, albeit briefly. Although the exact chain of events remains unknown, papal account books record a payment to "Laurentio pictori pingendi in camera nostra" on March 7 of 1509, a room which is later specified as "cameris superioribus [...] prope libreriam superiorem" in the entry of Lotto's next payment on September 18 of the same year.<sup>105</sup> The room "close to the upper library" seems to refer to the *Stanza della Elidorio*, which was close to the library in the famous *Stanza della Segnatura*.<sup>106</sup> Both rooms, of course, were being decorated by Raphael and his workshop.<sup>107</sup> Lotto must therefore have collaborated with Raphael, or, more accurately, have worked on the frescoes under his supervision. Many art historians feel considerable resistance to this hypothesis, and are unwilling to even consider the option that Lotto, who had been working as an independent master for at least six years, was 'demoted' to the studio assistant of the (slightly) younger Raphael. Bonnet, for example, writes that "Qualifié de '*magister*' en 1509, il pouvait difficilement rétrograder au statut de '*garzone*' quelques mois plus tard.", citing a

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<sup>104</sup> Lucca in Garibaldi, Paraventi and Villa, 2013, p. 63.

<sup>105</sup> Villa and Villa, 2011, p. 70.

<sup>106</sup> Nesselrath, 2004, p. 733.

<sup>107</sup> Nesselrath attributes the fresco of *Tribonian presenting the Pandects to emperor Justinian* in the *Segnatura* too Lotto as well. Although direct documentary evidence for his activity in the *Segnatura* is lacking, I find Nesselrath's arguments plausible. For more information, see: Nesselrath, 2000, pp. 4-12.

bold yet completely unfounded statement by Volpe (1981) that Lotto was either “in Rome or in Venice, an artist that was second to none”.<sup>108</sup> Bonnet’s and Volpe’s unwillingness to accept that Lotto worked under Raphael’s supervision is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the structure of a Renaissance workshop such as Raphael’s, and, more specifically, the function of a *garzone*. A *garzone* did by no means have to be an inexperienced painter charged with minor tasks, but could also be an established artist with considerable autonomy temporarily working under the supervision of another master. The identities of *garzoni* were diverse and, in fact, a *garzone* did not even have to be a boy, but could also be a woman.<sup>109</sup> It is therefore likely that Lotto, like Sodoma, Peruzzi, and Bramantino, worked under Raphael’s supervision on the *Stanze*, and it was probably the ceiling decoration of the *Elidorio* that was executed by Lotto.<sup>110</sup> The aforementioned entries in the papal accounts confirm that Lotto received 150 ducats for his work, less than half his fee for the *Recanati polyptych*. It is unlikely that Lotto minded his relatively low wages, however, as his primary goal was to establish *presence* in the Vatican, after which he hoped to receive more prestigious and lucrative commissions from the Pope.

This never happened, however. The frescoes were unable to please Julius, who had them destroyed by 1510 (only a few months after completion), and immediately redone by Raphael’s workshop. It was the first major setback in Lotto’s so-far glorious career, although many would follow in his later life. We cannot be sure if the painter remained in Rome in a futile attempt to mend his broken reputation or returned to Recanati right away, but we do know that he was back in the Marches by 1512.<sup>111</sup> That his second Marchian period was so productive attests to the lasting success of his *presence* strategy started six years earlier in San Domenico. During his second stay there, he also expanded his production to nearby Jesi. It is, however, very unlikely that Lotto was satisfied with recognition in the periphery, even after the Roman debacle. In 1513, therefore, he jumped at the opportunity to paint the *Martinengo altarpiece* in the Venetian-controlled city of Bergamo. The commission for the gigantic altarpiece, which was to be placed in the family chapel of the nobleman Alessandro Martinengo Colleoni in the Dominican church of SS. Stefano e Domenico, must have been awarded to Lotto by the mediation of the Dominicans of Recanati.<sup>112</sup>

Lotto’s original plan probably was to establish a name in Bergamo, using the *Martinengo altarpiece* as his *presence piece*, in order to attract the attention of Venetian patrons, who were in frequent contact with their Bergamask subjects. Nevertheless, the painter would

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<sup>108</sup> Bonnet, 1996, p. 47.

<sup>109</sup> Laura Overpelt, whose dissertation on the workshop of Giorgio Vasari is due to be finished in the summer of 2017, pointed this out to me.

<sup>110</sup> Nesselrath, 2004, pp. 732-741

<sup>111</sup> Some authors suggest that Lotto might have visited Florence in the years between 1509 and 1512, as his later works in the Marches appear to be influenced by the style of Fra Bartolommeo. While a visit to Florence is certainly not impossible, there is not a single document that confirms his presence in Tuscany.

<sup>112</sup> Pirovano, 2011, p. 45.



eventually spent twelve years in Bergamo, where he was never short of commissions for altarpieces, devotional paintings, and portraits.

## 2.2 Problems and Solutions in Venice

*Venice: 1525-1533*

*Lotto came to Venice in 1525, and stayed there until at least 1533. There is decent documentation on these eight years, as Lotto frequently sent letters to the Misericordia in Bergamo, for whom he had designed inlay works for the choir stalls of Santa Maria Maggiore, which were being executed by the woodcarver Giovanni Francesco Capoferro. On the other hand, few contracts or legal documents from this period survive, making it impossible to discover what Lotto earned for his various commissions.*

### **The *Saint Antoninus altarpiece*: a missed opportunity**

Lotto, already in his mid-forties, returned to his native city in 1525. Although he had visited Venice from time to time when he was living in Treviso, and possibly also during his Bergamask period, he had neither lived nor worked there for over twenty years. The reason for his move was a joyous one, as he had been awarded a commission to paint a large altarpiece for the newly erected altar of Saint Antoninus (who had been canonized only two years earlier) in the immensely prestigious Venetian church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo. Sanzanipolo, as the church was commonly known in Venetian vernacular, was the major Dominican church of the Serenissima. As it was also the burial ground of a substantial number of doges and other notables, the church was also of great symbolic importance to the State. Once again, the goodwill of the Dominicans proved to be of great value to Lotto, as word of his artistic capabilities must have reached the ears of the friars of Sanzanipolo through the grapevine of the hierarchical Dominican order.<sup>113</sup> Lotto was given a private cell and studio in the convent, where he lived for the better part of 1526.<sup>114</sup>

Lotto must have hoped that the *Saint Antoninus altarpiece* would become his *presence piece* in Venice. The same strategy had worked flawlessly in Recanati and Bergamo, and might have worked in Venice as well, if Lotto had been more tactful. On July 18 of 1526, he wrote a lengthy epistle to the Misericordia in Bergamo. Apparently the woodcarving friar Damiano had criticised the abilities of Capoferro in Bergamo, which Lotto took as a personal insult.<sup>115</sup> He characterised the Dominican as “ignorante et di poca religione de Cristo”, and underlined that he had vigorously protected the honour of Capoferro and the Misericordia.<sup>116</sup> The row remains unmentioned in later letters as well as in the administration of Sanzanipolo, but it seems that Lotto decided to leave the convent and postpone the execution of the *San Antonino altarpiece* until 1542. The decision to abandon the commission must have come from the painter, and not from the Dominicans, as they would simply have contracted a

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<sup>113</sup> Villa and Villa, 2011, p. 185.

<sup>114</sup> Altissimo in Poldi and Villa, 2011, p. 99.

<sup>115</sup> Lotto, letter to MIA, July 18, 1526.

<sup>116</sup> Lotto, letter to MIA, July 18, 1526.

different artist to execute the altarpiece instead of waiting for sixteen years.<sup>117</sup> This episode is the first sign that Lotto's often cited 'difficult personality' was a serious threat to his professional advancement, as the abandonment of the commission had far-reaching consequences on his further career.

If executed successfully, the *Saint Antoninus altarpiece* had every potential to become a *presence piece* of great impact; it was a large altarpiece dedicated to a popular new saint, and it was to be located at a highly prestigious and visible location. Even if commissions from patricians and the Venetian clergy would turn out to be disappointing, the patronage of the friars of Sanzanipolo alone was more than enough to keep Lotto occupied for quite some time. Although it might be suspected that even a successful *presence* strategy had less impact in a metropolis like Venice than in small communities such as Recanati, this is far from true. In 1518, Titian skyrocketed his already promising career with his highly praised *Assunta* in the Frari, while his rival Tintoretto took the Venetian art world by storm with his bold *Miracle of the Slave* for the Scuola Grande di San Marco in 1548. Lotto's inability to control his temper proved to be a fatal flaw, as it robbed himself of the abovementioned opportunities. Instead, left without a positive *presence* in Venice, and probably shunned by patrons as a bad contractor, Lotto's next year in his native city was marked by an inability to attract new commissions, while later successes were only temporarily.

Indeed, most of the works Lotto produced in the closing years of the decade were not made for Venetian customers, but for old patrons in the Marches or in Bergamo.<sup>118</sup> Many of these works were large altarpieces – as is often pointed out – and Lotto must have received decent fees for his work, but this does not change the fact that he failed to attract the cosmopolitan patrons of Venice.<sup>119</sup> If he had, he would not have had to export works to the *Terraferma*.<sup>120</sup> Matthew, determined to prove that Lotto maintained a successful career in Venice, states that he exported works to the Marches because the Venetian art market was less active in the closing years of the decade, but she brings up no evidence to support this claim, nor do comparisons with other Venetian painters confirm her statement.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> The fact that no different artist was contracted strongly suggests that they did not suspect to be kept waiting for sixteen years.

<sup>118</sup> Bonnet, 1996, p. 102. In these years Lotto exported, amongst many other paintings, the *San Francesco altarpiece* (1526) to Jesi, an *Assumption* (1527) to Celana, a *Crucifixion* (1531) to San Giusto, while still sending his designs for the inlay work in Bergamo to the Misericordia until 1532.

<sup>119</sup> Lotto exported one altarpiece to Bergamo and had four shipped to the Marches in the years between 1525 and 1533.

<sup>120</sup> Villa and Villa, 2012, p. 185.

<sup>121</sup> Matthew in Exh. Cat. Washington, Bergamo and Paris, 1997, pp. 31-32. Titian, too, exported many works to the mainland in this period, but these were meant for powerful patrons like the Duke of Mantua, and not for parish churches in the Marches. Other artists do not appear to have had any out-of-the-ordinary difficulties on the Venetian market.

## Odoni and *diversion* in portraiture

Under these unfavourable circumstances Lotto changed his strategy. Abandoning *presence*, and turning to *diversion*, he started a series of symbolically charged and horizontally orientated portraits. This choice cannot be seen separately from Titian's popularity in the portrait genre. The master from Cadore dominated the Venetian portrait market with his rather simple portraits often showing a single person against a monochrome background. The power of Titian's portraits was not in their elaborateness or complexity, but in his flawless ability to imbue his portraits with subtle emotion and his accurate renditions of sumptuous textiles.<sup>122</sup> Lotto, on the other hand, invented a new method of representation to usurp Titian's position as leading portraitist in Venice, or at least to present himself as a (cheaper) alternative for Titian.

Having read Schmitter's theory on *diversion*, it should not surprise us that this innovation started with a *cittadino* patron, Andrea Odoni. Odoni was a merchant and a prolific collector of antiquities, curiosities, and paintings. As a high-ranking member of the Venetian bureaucracy, Odoni wielded a decent amount of power, while his collection put him in frequent contact with patrician patrons.<sup>123</sup> Odoni's collection was described by Michiel in 1532, giving us excellent insight in his collecting practices. Although we do not know how Lotto came to Odoni's attention (he might have seen his works in Treviso or Bergamo), we do know that the merchant had an unconventional taste, as he bought works by Savoldo, Cariani, and many central-Italian artists.<sup>124</sup> The choice for Lotto, even when he was probably not well-known in Venice, was therefore not surprising.

In his *Notizie*, Michiel accurately describes Lotto's painting (Fig. 6) as: "El retratto de esso M. Andrea a oglio, meza figura, che contempla li fragmenti marmorei antichi, fu de man de Lorenzo Lotto."<sup>125</sup> Indeed, Odoni is surrounded by antique statuary, contemplating his collection with a tiny model of the famous *Ephese Artemis* in his hand. Lotto's greatest innovation, beside the use of a horizontal format for portraiture, is the use of a myriad of different objects to construct the identity of the sitter, which had never been done before in Venice.<sup>126</sup> What could have been a factual depiction of a collector and his collection, is much more symbolical, as Michiel's thorough description and subsequent inventories reveal that only the stucco head of Hadrian in the lower right corner was actually in Odoni's collection. The other objects must therefore have been included for their symbolical significance.<sup>127</sup> Although all kinds of iconographical analyses have been put forward to explain the choice of

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<sup>122</sup> See, for example, Titian's portraits of Laura Dianti (c. 1529), Federico Gonzaga (1529), and Andrea de' Franceschi (c. 1530-1535).

<sup>123</sup> Schmitter, 2004, pp. 939-942.

<sup>124</sup> Schmitter, 2004, pp. 942-947.

<sup>125</sup> Michiel, 1532, p. 62.

<sup>126</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 954.

<sup>127</sup> Dezuanni in Villa, 2011, p. 214. Some of the depicted objects, such as the statuette of *Hercules and Antaeus*, were in the Papal collections. Lotto's drawing of this statue, now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, confirms that the artist had seen these fragments during his Roman sojourn in 1509.

objects, this is not the place to dwell upon them.<sup>128</sup> What is more important for this research, is that the *cittadino* Odoni, through Lotto's painting, was able to fashion himself an identity of a gentleman-collector. By doing so, he claimed an identity that was normally reserved to patricians, as collecting was usually reserved for high-born noblemen such as the famous Grimani. Interestingly, Odoni ordered a highly innovative and *diverting* painting by an artist dead-set on emulation, in order to appropriate, if not imitate, a patrician identity.

For Lotto, painting Odoni's portrait was a clever choice. Odoni, while not of noble birth, had a high social status due to the cultural significance of his collection, which provided him with an elaborate network of possible patrons. He was obviously on good terms with the patrician Michiel, who published a description of his collection, and received amiable letters from Pietro Aretino, who compared Odoni's palazzo with Rome itself.<sup>129</sup> And indeed, in the years between 1527 and 1531, Lotto painted a number of highly sophisticated symbolical portraits such as the *Gentleman with a lion's paw* (Accademia, Venice), *Portrait of bishop Tommaso Negri* (Convent of Poljud, Split), *Portrait of a young gentleman at his study* (c. 1530), and the *Portrait of a lady as Lucretia* (National Gallery, London). While only the identity of Tommaso Negri, the bishop of Venetian-controlled Split, is known for certain, it is highly plausible that the sitter of the *Young gentleman at his study* is the Trevisian noble Cristoforo Rover, while circumstantial evidence suggests that the woman portrayed as Lucretia is Lucrezia Pesaro, member of a powerful Venetian patrician family.<sup>130</sup> If these identifications hold, we must conclude that Lotto's *diversion* was successful, as he attracted the patronage of a number of high-ranking Venetian patricians. Indeed, Vasari (who visited Venice twice in the years between the first edition of *Le Vite* in 1550 and the second one in 1568) writes that there are many excellent paintings by Lotto's hand in the houses of Venetian *gentiluomini*, although it is unclear how many of these private houses Vasari actually visited.<sup>131</sup> Michiel, on the other hand, who certainly did visit a high number of private collections in Venice, only mentions the *Portrait of Andrea Odoni*.

### **The *Saint Nicholas in Glory* and Lotto's reputation in Venice**

Although all of the aforementioned portraits were in private hands, the success of Lotto's newfound formula provided him with a new opportunity to paint an altarpiece in a major Venetian church. In 1527, the Scuola di San Nicolò dei Mercanti commissioned Lotto to paint the *Saint Nicholas altarpiece* (Fig.7) for their re-erected altar at the Chiesa dei Carmini. Odoni was not a member of this *scuola piccola*, but as the bulk of its 200 all-male members

<sup>128</sup> See: Dezuanni in Villa, 2011, pp. 214-216 for a discussion of various iconographical interpretations.

<sup>129</sup> Aretino, letter to Andrea Odoni: "Non son prima costì guinto che l'animo piglia di quell piacere, che soleva sentire nel giugner a Belvedere in Monte Cavallo o in qualcuno dei luoghi dove si vegono di sì fatti torsi di colossi e di statue."

<sup>130</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the *Portrait of a young nobleman at his study* and *Portrait of a Lady as Lucretia*, see: Dezuanni in Villa, 2011, pp. 195-245.

<sup>131</sup> Vasari, 1568, IV, p. 552.

were Rialto merchants, it is entirely possible that he knew some of them and had acted as an intermediary. Lotto's official commissioners were two high-ranking members of the scuola, the *guardiano*, Giovanni Battista Donati, and the *vicario*, Giorgio de' Mundis. Both men were not only honoured in the inscription on the stone framework, but also on the painting itself with their onomastic saints: Saint John the Baptist, and Saint George, who is slaying the dragon in the lower right corner of the picture plane. The third saint, Lucy, was probably included because one of her relics was venerated in the Carmini.<sup>132</sup>

Like the slightly earlier *Portrait of Andrea Odoni*, the *Saint Nicholas altarpiece* is highly innovative, and Lotto must have been determined to keep the momentum of his recent successes going. The distinctive colouring has often been cited as a direct challenge to Titian, and it is true that Lotto's cool hues of blue, pink, and orange are very different from the warm colours Titian used in his altarpieces from this period in the Frari, such as the *Pesaro Madonna* (1519-1526) and the *Madonna and Child in Glory with Six Saints* (c. 1520-1525).<sup>133</sup> That this new approach to *colore* was not appreciated by everyone is attested by Dolce's testimony, who writes in 1557 that the altarpiece is an "assai notabile esempio di cattive tinte".<sup>134</sup> Vasari does not mention the colouring, but did express his appreciation for the seascape in the lower background.<sup>135</sup> This landscape is indeed the most innovative aspect of Lotto's altarpiece, and appears to be heavily indebted to contemporary northern painting, which was widely popular in Venice.<sup>136</sup> Northern paintings by Dürer (who visited Venice around the turn of the century), Bosch, and Patinir were eagerly collected in Venice, and were subject to vehement *enclaving* by patrician collectors such as Grimani.<sup>137</sup> One notable exception was Jan van Scorel's *Crossing of the Red Sea* (Galleria Franchetti, Venice), which was in the collection of the *cittadino* Francesco Zio, whose collection was inherited by his nephew Andrea Odoni after his death in 1523.<sup>138</sup> Lotto must have seen the painting in Odoni's palazzo, as the similarities with the land/seascape in Van Scorel's painting are striking.<sup>139</sup> By combining the highly valued northern tradition of landscape painting with the monumental saints reminiscent of Raphael and Michelangelo and the supreme *colorito* of Venice, Lotto created a cosmopolitan, if slightly eclectic, altarpiece. This was a daring move, as a revolutionary *presence piece* such as this one was bound to raise some eyebrows, which can be seen in Dolce's low opinion of the painting.

<sup>132</sup> Battaglia in Poldi and Villa, 2011, p. 72.

<sup>133</sup> Villa and Villa, 2012, p. 202.

<sup>134</sup> Dolce, 1557, p. 286.

<sup>135</sup> Vasari, 1568, IV, pp. 552-553.

<sup>136</sup> The popularity of northern painting is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

<sup>137</sup> Battaglia in Poldi and Villa, 2011, p. 72.

<sup>138</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 939.

<sup>139</sup> Exh. Cat. Washington, Bergamo and Paris, 1997, p. 167.

## Critical acclaim and critique

The years between 1527, when Lotto executed the portrait of Odoni, and 1529, when he finished the altarpiece in the Carmini, must have been very fruitful. While Lotto was working on the altarpiece, he also painted the abovementioned portraits of various high-ranking members of Venetian society. Lotto's prosperity during this period is confirmed by his letter of December 8 1528 to the Brescian painter Moretto, whom he addresses as "carissimo fratello",<sup>140</sup> In this letter, Lotto writes that he has recommended Moretto to the Bergamask Misericordia to execute a painting, as he is too busy to take on any new commission himself.<sup>141</sup> As it is unlikely that Lotto would have let a sizeable commission slip through his fingers if he did not really have to, there must be some truth in his words.

Although it is hard to assess the impact of the *Saint Nicholas altarpiece* on Lotto's reputation, it appears that it was unable to expand the momentum started by the successful *Portrait of Andrea Odoni* beyond the first two years of the 1530s. Dolce's later harsh judgment is the only written evidence to support a lukewarm reception, but no other major altarpiece commissions came forth from the altarpiece. While the production of the aforementioned symbolic portraits carried on in the early thirties, Lotto also felt the need to continue his export to Bergamo and the Marches, suggesting that he was not in very high demand in Venice. While Vasari, as we have seen, claimed that Lotto's paintings were well represented in Venetian collections, the better informed Michiel only documents one. Furthermore, Aretino, who would later write the painter a rather vicious letter, did not include the artist in his in 1534 list of famous Venetian artists in his *Cortegiano*, which consisted of Titian, Pordenone, Serlio, Sansovino, and Caraglio. This suggests that, at least in the opinion of the very influential Aretino, Lotto was certainly not to be placed amongst Venice's most prodigious artists.<sup>142</sup>

Although sufficient documentation for this period is lacking, it appears that Lotto was unable to maintain his career in Venice. In 1532, he is documented in Treviso. Three years later, he is in Jesi. In 1538, he re-emerges in Ancona, probably having spent the years in between in the Marches as well.<sup>143</sup> In the same year, he begins his *Libro di Spese Diverse*, providing us with a plethora of information on his late career, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>140</sup> Lotto, letter to Moretto da Brescia, December 8 1528.

<sup>141</sup> Lotto, letter to Moretto da Brescia, December 8 1528. "Dal quale sono richiesto de nova impresa a lor abisogni et io per esser luntano et molto occupato non possendo satisfarli, me han richiesto consigliarli chi sia al proposito loro."

<sup>142</sup> Firpo, 2001, p. 50.

<sup>143</sup> Bonnet, 1996, p. 148.

## 2.3. Running to Stand Still

*Venice, Treviso and the Marches: 1538-1556*

During the last eighteen years of his life, Lotto was constantly on the move. In 1538, as we have seen, he was in the Marchian city of Ancona. Two years later, he had returned to Venice, where he lived in the house of his nephew Mario d'Armano, and finally completed the Saint Antoninus altarpiece in 1542. In the same year, he left for Treviso. The reason for this move is recorded in the *Libro*: “Volendo io levarmi de casa a far piu quieta vita in Treviso.”<sup>144</sup> As in Venice, Lotto lived in the house of a long-time friend, in this case Giovanni dal Saon, who is already recorded in the *Libro* ten years earlier.<sup>145</sup> In Treviso, people of all ranks and social groups sat model for his portraits, including the nobles Febo da Brescia and Laura da Pola, and the surgeon Giovanni Giacomo Stuer. In 1546, he returned to his native city, where he initially rented some rooms in the house of Giovanni della Volta della Corona for 20 ducats a year, although he changed residence a few times in Venice.<sup>146</sup> A year later, he stipulated his last will, in which he stated to be “senza fidel governo et molto inquieto dela mente.”<sup>147</sup> Lotto left his native city for good in 1549, when he returned to Ancona after he had accepted the prestigious commission to paint the Assumption of the Virgin for the high altar of San Francesco alle Scale, living in the adjacent Franciscan convent. After he finished work on the altarpiece, he rented some rooms of Gerolamo Scalamonti for 14 scudi a year.<sup>148</sup> In the following years, Lotto executed works across the Marches in Ancona, Jesi, and Loreto. He painted some altarpieces as well as portraits of noblemen, citizens, and artisans, and many devotional pieces. He joined the Santa Casa of Loreto in 1554 as a lay brother, executing some works for the basilica and the convent until his death in 1556 or 1557.

### The *Libro di Spese Diverse*

Lotto's account book provides valuable information on his total production in these 18 years, and gives clear numbers on the genres he or his customers preferred. Often, we can also deduce from Lotto's accounts who his clients were, what their occupation and social status was, and, by effect, which genres were popular amongst various social groups. Finally, the *Libro* shows us how much Lotto received for his paintings, and in many cases also how much he asked.

However, we should also be cautious to draw hard conclusions from the *Libro*. While we can safely assume that Lotto logged all of his commissions from this period in the book, he was

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<sup>144</sup> *Libro*, July 1542, p. 215.

<sup>145</sup> Bonnet, 1996, p. 161.

<sup>146</sup> *Libro*, November 21 1545, p. 99. “Die haver miser Joanne dala Volta dela Corona in Rialto apresso Santo Mathia per afitation de una parte de la sua casa in dicta volta per ducati vinti a l'ano et debo pagarli de sei mesi in sei mesi.”

<sup>147</sup> Testament, March 25 1546.

<sup>148</sup> *Libro*, March 19 1551, pp. 116-117.



often quite vague in the recording of his customers. Sometimes, the customer is not recorded by name, while in other cases a name is given, but it is no longer possible to determine the customer's occupation or social rank. For these reasons, I have been able to determine the full identity of exactly two-third of Lotto's clientele. This is a relatively high percentage that can be used to make plausible estimations, but is by no means enough to draw hard conclusions. As the account book only covers Lotto's late career, which appears to have been less successful than his early career, we should also be very careful not to use the *Libro's* figures to draw conclusions on the entirety of Lotto's professional life. Lastly, while every Renaissance artist must have kept account books, Lotto's is one of the very few that has survived to this day. Given this lack of comparing material, it is hard to assess if Lotto's financial ups-and-downs were representative for this entire period or not.

That being said, the *Libro* yields some very interesting figures.<sup>149</sup> The numbers on the frequency of genres are the most precise, as these are based on 100% of the recorded commissions (156 in total). The most numerous category of Lotto's works are devotional pieces (38%), while portraits come up second with 37%. Although there is a lack of comparative material, we can assume that the same figures would more or less apply to most Renaissance artists. Lotto produced 13 altarpieces in 18 years (9%), which is decent. On the other hand, his production of mythological and allegorical paintings, the trademark of the Venetian school, is very low, and constitutes no more than 4% of his total output. The same number applies to temporary decorations such as banners and procession standards.

Secondly, it can be stated that Lotto's identified clientele was very diverse. 34% of his identified customers were ecclesiastics (half of which were public institutions such as churches and convents, while the other half were private clerics such as priests and bishops), a number that should be hardly surprising. More interesting are the numbers on Lotto's secular clients. 21% of his identified clientele were *popolani*, while 19% hailed from the *cittadino* class, and 16% were of noble birth. While the numbers for artisans are slightly higher than the other two classes, we should bear in mind that these numbers are based on only two-third of Lotto's customers, and therefore all fall within a margin of error. However, it is significant in itself that Lotto had roughly as many *popolani* as *cittadino* clients. It is also interesting to note that Lotto produced quite some artworks (10%) for family members, whom I have counted as a separate category, but were all *popolani* as well.

The preference of social groups for certain genres can also be estimated. The artisan class appears to have favoured devotional painting over portraiture, while patricians were more likely to commission a portrait than a religious work. The *cittadini* do not appear to have had a special preference for either genre.

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<sup>149</sup> See appendix 1.

Finally, as will be discussed later on, it is important to note that Lotto quite frequently offered paintings as a gift. This was the case with 16% of the *cittadino* customers, 20% of the patricians, and even 25% of the private religious patrons.

The works documented in the *Libro* give us a paradoxal image of Lotto's late career.<sup>150</sup> On one hand, the artist received some prestigious commissions, such as the aforementioned San Francesco *Assumption of the Virgin*, and as many as three Venetian altarpieces. He also painted portraits and devotional paintings for various nobles in Ancona, such as Gian Maria Pizzoni and Vincenzo de Nobili, the cousin of pope Julius III. On the other hand, Lotto was in constant financial difficulty, as he executed many works for *popolani*, and was forced to device unconventional business tactics to increase his market value.

### **Prices and identities in Lotto's *popolano* portraits**

Although ignored by most art historians, the relatively high number of *popolano* customers is telling of Lotto's meagre success in his late career. The occupations of these men and women were diverse, and many of them must have been professional contacts of Lotto's, as goldsmiths and gilders are well represented in Lotto's *Libro*. Apothecaries, who would have provided Lotto with pigments, and glassblowers, who produced pigments like *giallolino*, also appear frequently.<sup>151</sup> Other *popolani* in the *Libro* are shoemakers, crossbowmen, and surgeons. The presence of artisan customers is consistent throughout the account book, meaning that Lotto worked for them in Ancona, as well as in Venice and Treviso.

These artisans paid rather low prices for both devotional paintings and portraits. They rarely had to pay more than 10 scudi, although Lotto was paid significantly less than his asking price very frequently. The Venetian apothecary Alessandro Catanio Catani, for example, had to pay 10 scudi for a painting of *Christ in Emmaus* (now lost). Although this is already a meagre sum, Catani never paid it, but received the painting after all.<sup>152</sup> A few years later, the diamanter Rocco commissioned an allegorical painting that was estimated by Lotto to yield 3 or 4 scudi, but was given away for free in the end.<sup>153</sup> Even more telling is the example of the surgeon Giovanni Giacomo Stuer, who commissioned a double portrait of himself with his son (Fig.10). After receiving the commission, Lotto writes in his *Libro* that he estimates the price at 15 scudi (which is relatively high), but strangely enough states that he would be content with whatever Stuer deemed to be a reasonable price. Stuer, of course, went far below Lotto's estimate, paying him only 12 lire, which is just under 2 scudi.<sup>154</sup> These prices are quite decent considering that Lotto had to pay 20 scudi a year to rent some rooms in Rialto. The question is, however, why Lotto, who as a young man received 320 scudi for a

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<sup>150</sup> Barucca in Exh. Cat. Turin, 2013, pp. 139-140.

<sup>151</sup> Kühn in Roy, 1993, pp. 83-98

<sup>152</sup> Libro, 1546, pp. 8-9.

<sup>153</sup> Libro, 1549-1550, pp. 88-89.

<sup>154</sup> Libro, 1544, pp. 88-89.

single altarpiece, worked for these low wages as an experienced master painter. The only possible answer can be: out of necessity. For some reason, Lotto had been unable to stop his career from spiralling downwards after his first Venetian period, and now had to turn to *damage control*. The portrait market was very active in *cinquecento* Venice, giving a struggling artist like Lotto ample opportunity to work, but as portraits were quite cheap, he had to produce many of them to make a profit.<sup>155</sup> The portraits and devotional pieces he executed for shoemakers and apothecaries were apparently unable to do so, moving Lotto to keep looking for new opportunities to meet this goals.

While Lotto probably benefitted little from the artisan commissions, his new customers had much to win by their patronage. Devotional works, which were probably bought after completion rather than commissioned, had a clear function, as they were meant to guide the beholder in his or her prayers, but could also be used to construct an image of piety and financial potency. As none of the religious paintings Lotto created for *popolani* survive, it is difficult to analyse how his clients used these works to fashion their identities. We shall therefore turn our attention to Lotto's artisan portraits, of which some do survive.

The first portrait is that of the surgeon Stuer, who, as was already mentioned, managed to bring Lotto's asking price of 15 scudi down to 1,92 scudi. The painting was executed in Treviso in 1544. Lotto's relatively high asking price suggests that Stuer was quite well-off, while the surgeon's refusal to pay 15 scudi probably says more of his cunning than it does of a supposed inability to pay the higher price. The second painting is the portrait of the probably poorer Battista, which is known as the *Crossbowman from Rocca Contrada* (Fig. 11). Lotto executed this painting in 1552 in the Marchian town of Rocca Contrada (today called Arcevia). Stuer's portrait depicts the sitter while fatherly embracing his young son, holding his surgical instruments in his right hand. He had just been reading a (probably anatomical) book, and looks up at us as if we had just interrupted him in his study. The portrait's simplicity and monochrome colouring contrast strikingly with Lotto's earlier portraits of *Andrea Odoni* or the *Lady as Lucretia*. The portrait of Maestro Battista is even more simplistic, and depicts the soldier showing his crossbow to the beholder. The complex iconography and lush colouring characterising the Venetian portraits are completely absent from the austere *popolani* portraits. While this has been seen as a general shift in Lotto's style, this does actually not appear to be the case. One year before painting Stuer's portrait, Lotto was commissioned by the Trevisian noble Febo da Brescia to paint two portraits of him and his wife Laura da Pola (Figs. 8 and 9). These portraits, while less complex than the earlier examples in Venice, are painted with rich colours and an astonishing attention to detail, which can be seen in the fur lining of Febo's coat, the white feathers of Laura's fan, and the luminous green of the curtain behind her. The style Lotto used for *popolani* portraits is therefore notably different from the one he used for more prominent clients. The principal reason for this discrepancy is obvious: Febo paid far more for his portraits than Stuer, and

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<sup>155</sup> Matthew in Exh. Cat. Washington, Bergamo and Paris, 1997, p. 33.

could therefore also expect a product of higher quality. While Stuer only paid 1,92 scudi (12 lire), Febo was charged 29 scudi (182 lire) for two portraits, making the price per portrait more than 7 times higher than the surgeon's. If we take Lotto's original asking price of 15 scudi into account, as Stuer might have refused to pay this price only after the completion of his portrait, the nobleman Febo paid slightly less for a portrait than the surgeon was asked, although Lotto might have offered discounts for two portraits.<sup>156</sup> Battista, who we can assume to be less well-off than the surgeon, paid 8 scudi (49 lire) for his portrait, which is higher than the price Stuer eventually paid, but considerably lower (almost half Stuer's original price) than the latter's original price.<sup>157</sup>

While we have seen that wealthy citizens such as Odoni had the financial means to emulate and/or imitate the patriciate, a *popolano* lacked financial and cultural capital to do so. Instead, they appear to have emphasised the virtues of their own identity. Both Stuer and Battista, as Dezuanni notes, proudly present the tools of their trade (surgical instruments and a crossbow, respectively) to the beholder. Instead of hiding their humble background, these men appear to take great pride in their hard work and artisanship.<sup>158</sup> The sober colours and austere clothing also suggest a preference of simplicity over a life of wealth and lavishness. As competition with citizenry and nobility was futile, these *popolani* forcefully assert an alternative identity of humility, hard work, and honesty.

Lotto's inability to maintain a successful career must also have been influenced by his lack of a stable workshop.<sup>159</sup> The *Libro* only records several *garzoni* as workshop members. None of them stayed with Lotto for long, and he only employed one *garzone* at a time. Working either in situ (for large commissions) or, presumably, in the rooms he rented and inhabited from different acquaintances, he lacked a workshop in the proper sense of the word.<sup>160</sup> While Lotto's proneness to frequent travelling would certainly have made it difficult to maintain a stable workshop even under favourable circumstances, it was certainly not impossible. Perugino, for example, supervised a workshop in Florence as well as in Perugia and travelled between these two art centres.<sup>161</sup> Lotto's lack of a real workshop, which he must have had at least in Bergamo, had some very negative consequences. First of all, he did not have the man power to take on many commissions at the same time, and often worked very slowly. However, major altarpieces executed in situ must have been made with the help of more assistants than just one *garzone*. It is likely that in these cases, the patron contracted several assistants to help Lotto, as he himself had been commissioned by the Pope to assist Raphael in the Stanze. This would explain why payments to workshop members do not appear in the *Libro*, as it was not Lotto, but his patron who paid them.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>156</sup> *Libro*, April 19 – June 2 1543, p. 57.

<sup>157</sup> *Libro*, June 29 1552, p. 28.

<sup>158</sup> Dezuanni in Villa, 2011, p. 238.

<sup>159</sup> Humfrey in Rome, 2011, pp. 61-62.

<sup>160</sup> Villa and Villa, 2012, p. 188.

<sup>161</sup> O'Malley, 2013, pp. 166-167.

<sup>162</sup> In 1509, as we have seen, the Roman curia – and not Raphael – paid Lotto for his work on the *Stanze*.

Secondly, even with the occasional help of contracted assistants, Lotto had to build his career up from the start every time he changed his residence. This will certainly have contributed to the difficulties Lotto encountered in his late career.<sup>163</sup>

### Three Venetian altarpieces

Although the general image of his late career is that of one spiralling downwards, Lotto still received a number of high profile commissions. In Venice, he painted as many as three altarpieces. In 1542, he completed the *Saint Antoninus altarpiece* (Fig. 13) for Sanzanipolo, and in the same year he painted a *Michael defeating Lucifer* for the church of San Lio. While the *San Lio altarpiece* is now lost, the painting for the Sanzanipolo is still in situ, and is a work of great monumentality and bold colouring. Both altarpieces never really had the chance to serve as a *presence piece*, however, as Lotto left for Treviso in the same year. When he returned to Venice in 1546, his reputation proved to have endured after all, as he was quickly commissioned by the Scuola della Concezion to paint a *Sacra Conversazione* – by now a rather archaic subject-matter – for their altar in the San Giacomo dell’Orio (in situ). The commissioner, *gastaldo* Defende de Federigo, was a painter himself, and might have known Lotto personally.<sup>164</sup> This altarpiece was, however, not able to charm Venetian patrons, as did not receive Lotto a single high profile commission until his departure for Ancona in 1549. If we observe the painting this might not surprise us, as it clearly ranks amongst the artist’s most unconvincing works.<sup>165</sup> The *Saint Antoninus altarpiece*, while generally recognised as one of Lotto’s masterpieces, shows little stylistic development from Lotto’s altarpieces from the 1530s, leading Humfrey to wonder if Lotto’s once highly valued art was by now considered to be archaic and out of fashion in Venice.<sup>166</sup>

The three commissions, while prestigious, did not bring in the amount of money Lotto would have made as a younger man. The friars of Sanzanipolo paid Lotto a generous amount of 125 ducats, but withheld 35 as a compensation for Lotto’s newly acquired funeral rights in the convent, and another 40 for “cerche delle prediche di fra Lorenzo da Bergamo”, leaving Lotto with the modest sum of 50 ducats.<sup>167</sup> The priest of S. Lio paid Lotto a rather meagre wage of 20 ducats, while the artist was promised the same amount for his altarpiece for the Scuola della Concezion, but eventually received no more than 9 ducats.<sup>168</sup> When compared with the 320 ducats Lotto received for the *Recanati Polyptych*, or the 150 ducats he was paid for his work on the *Stanze*, or even the 40 ducats he was initially offered for his first public commission, these figures are very low. After Lotto’s move to Ancona, the 50 ducats he

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<sup>163</sup> Humfrey in Rome, 2011, pp. 61-62.

<sup>164</sup> Altissimo in Poldi and Villa, 2011, p. 112.

<sup>165</sup> This is stated by almost every author. Altissimo notes the “debolezza espressiva”, while many other academics do not even include the altarpiece in their monographies.

<sup>166</sup> Humfrey in Rome, 2011, pp. 61-62.

<sup>167</sup> Libro, March 1542, p. 84.

<sup>168</sup> Altissimo in Poldi and Villa, 2011, pp. 112-113.

received for the large altarpiece of the San Francesco were apparently not enough to ease his financial difficulties, as he engaged in some truly innovative business practices to enhance his career.

### **Diverting business strategies in Lotto's late career**

As Louisa Matthew notes, Lotto became more and more experimental in his business strategies in his final years. In the hope of binding his customers to him, he offered discounts and sometimes even gave away paintings for free.<sup>169</sup> He also tried to sell his paintings (especially devotional pieces) on the open market, and frequently gave friends who were about to embark on a journey elsewhere paintings to sell at the point of his destination. In 1544, for example, Lotto copied two of his own paintings (a *Nativity* and a *Baptism of Christ*) and gave them to Lauro Orso, a jeweller and a pupil of Lotto's friend Bartolomeo Carpan. Orso took the paintings with him to Sicily, and Lotto hoped his replicas would sell for a price of 40 scudi. Instead, Orso bartered the paintings for eighteen cloths of black satin, which Lotto then must have sold in Venice for an unknown price.<sup>170</sup> Lotto also sent some of his paintings to consignment shops in Venice, Rome, Loreto, and Messina. While it is unknown how much profit these new business methods yielded, they do attest that Lotto was still constantly trying to take his career to the next level.

In August of 1550, just after having finished the *Assumption of the Virgin*, Lotto organised a lottery of his paintings in Ancona. He was hoping to sell 42 paintings in total; the 30 *cartone* he made for the inlay work of the S. Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, and 12 devotional paintings.<sup>171</sup> This lottery, however innovative, has often been seen as a clear sign of Lotto's desperate situation. Matthew, on the other hand, begs to differ, arguing that the lottery was actually a very effective method to make more money, with the added benefit of emptying his probably cramped studio.<sup>172</sup> While Matthew is certainly right about the innovative nature of the lottery, her argumentation becomes extremely problematic if we consider the next entry in Lotto's *Libro*, which records that only four of the 42 submitted paintings were actually sold, and yielded no more than 39 scudi in total.<sup>173</sup> The lottery, therefore, was a complete failure, and it is important to note that the artist never organised a second lottery. Lotto had hoped to execute a new method of *diversion*, this time not with a new genre or style, but with a new business tactic. But the *diversion* failed, leaving Lotto no other choice than returning to control the damage in a still very cramped studio.

The last business strategy I would like to discuss is Lotto's frequent practice of offering paintings as a gift to prominent men. As we have seen before, 16% of the works produced

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<sup>169</sup> Matthew in Exh. Cat. Washington, Bergamo and Paris, 1997, p. 33.

<sup>170</sup> *Libro*, November-December 1544, pp. 124-125.

<sup>171</sup> *Libro*, August 1550, p. 128.

<sup>172</sup> Matthew in Exh. Cat. Washington, Bergamo and Paris, 1997, p. 33.

<sup>173</sup> *Libro*, August 1550, p. 130.

for *cittadino* customers, 20% of the paintings for patricians, and even 25% of those for private religious patrons were donated by Lotto. The idea, of course, was that these donations would attract the attention of the receiver and entice him or her to commission more paintings. Other Venetian artists such as Titian and Tintoretto used this method to great effect, but surprisingly, none of Lotto's donations led to new commissions. In one instance, the gift was even refused. The Anconese nobleman Francesco Bernabei received three religious paintings; a St. Francis, a St. Chiara, and a painting depicting the history of the Madonna of Loreto. For reasons unknown, the patrician returned the gift, after which Lotto donated the first two paintings to another nobleman from Ancona.<sup>174</sup> These various gifts, which were also offered to bishops, cardinals, and noblemen, were a conscious attempt to attract *service*, which had so promisingly started his career under bishop Bernardo de' Rossi in Treviso. This time, however, Lotto failed to attract new patrons.

## Conclusion

The career of Lorenzo Lotto, as we have seen, is full of paradoxes. As a young artist, he employed the *service* strategy to lay a foundation for his career in Treviso, but quickly switched to *presence*, which he used to great effect in the Marches, building a presence there that was lasting enough to turn the region into his safety net after the failed Roman sojourn. The young artist also constantly tried to fashion himself an identity of the quintessentially Venetian master and the true heir of Giovanni Bellini, which would certainly have helped his career in provincial Recanati.

When he returned to Venice in the late twenties, he once again trusted in the *presence* method, but made a fatal mistake when he withdrew from the very prestigious commission for the *Saint Antoninus altarpiece* due to personal issues. This made his first Venetian period considerably less successful than it could have been, and the fact that he kept exporting altarpieces to Bergamo and the Marches suggests that he had a hard time attracting Venetian customers. His supposed career crisis, however, moved him to reinvent his art. He launched a successful *diversion*, challenging Titian by inventing a new genre of elaborate symbolical portraits, of which the *Portrait of Andrea Odoni* was the first. The *diversion* in this portrait, as we have seen, concerned the artist as well as the *cittadino* customer, who tried to use this portrait to fashion himself an identity of a sophisticated gentleman-collector, emulating his patrician rivals. The *diversion* was successful and yielded prestigious new commissions such as the *Saint Nicholas altarpiece*, in which Lotto once again tried to emulate Titian by fusing Venetian *colore*, central-Italian monumentality, and Netherlandish landscape painting into one cosmopolitan painting. It is possible, but not certain, that this last innovation was not well received, as no major Venetian commissions resulted from the altarpiece and Lotto left once again for the Marches in 1533.

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<sup>174</sup> Libro, March 25 – March 31 1551, pp. 62-63.

The last chapter, concerning Lotto's late career in Venice, Treviso, and the Marches, had the benefit of being able to draw upon the *Libro di Spese Diverse*'s vast amount of data. We have seen that Lotto mostly produced paintings in the traditional genres of portraiture and devotional painting, and that his clientele was diverse. While he painted a fairly decent amount of paintings for citizens and noblemen, he produced even more paintings for commoners. This must be seen as a sign of his fading fortunes, as he made little money and gained even less fame by working for these clients. The *popolani*, however, benefitted much from the opportunity of having their portraits painted by Lotto, as it gave them the means to shape their own identity. While their rejection of patrician and citizen lavishness was partly born out of financial necessity, it also gave them the opportunity to fashion an artisan identity of honesty, austerity, and hard work. The *Libro* also shows that Lotto was constantly looking for diverting strategies to escape his state of *damage control*. Most notable was the lottery he organised in 1550 in Ancona, which must be seen as a failure, as he sold less than 10% of the submitted paintings. His inability to get his career back on track must also have been heavily influenced by his lack of a proper workshop, meaning that he had to start all over again every time he moved to a different region.

Lotto's preferred method of enhancing his career was *presence*, as he often tried, with mixed success, to announce his presence on a new market by executing a large altarpiece. After being unsuccessful in prolonging the successes of his early career in Treviso, Recanati, and Bergamo, into his later career, however, Lotto was forced to use diverting methods. The *Portrait of Andrea Odoni* was the most successful in this regard, although later attempts to reinvigorate his career failed.



### 3. Pordenone: the embodiment of the new

#### Biography<sup>175</sup>

Giovanni Antonio de' Sacchis, better known as Pordenone, was born in the Friulian town of Pordenone in either 1483 or 1484. His father was a master mason and building entrepreneur, so he was of a well-to-do, but socially low ranking family. The painter is first documented as an independent master in 1504, and he worked exclusively in Friuli until at least 1516. In that year, he probably made his first trip to Rome, where the monumental works of Raphael and Michelangelo made a tremendous impact on his stylistic development.

This impact first came to full expression in his first major non-Friulian commission. In 1519 he was commissioned to decorate the Malchiostro Chapel in the Duomo of Treviso, greatly expanding his fame. At the same time, he also decorated the facades of some palazzi in Treviso and Mantua with secular subjects. As his reputation spread rapidly across Northern Italy, he received a very prestigious commission to paint some frescoes in the Duomo of Cremona, where he worked from 1520 until 1522. These were received very well, but interestingly, he returned to provincial Friuli in 1523, where he took on many commissions from cathedrals, parish churches and private patrons.

In 1526, Pordenone first came to Venice, where he decorated the choir of the church of San Rocco, and the cupola of San Giovanni Elemosinario, making a significant mark upon the art world of the Lagoon City. During this period, he lost the competition of the Saint Peter Martyr altarpiece in the Sanzanipolo to Titian, who would later become his fierce rival. In 1529, Pordenone left Venice to create two major fresco cycles in Piacenza and nearby Cortemaggiore, returning three years later. Pordenone probably visited Genoa in 1532 or 1533 to paint frescoes for the palace of Andrea Doria, but he did not stay for long. In 1533 he was back in Friuli, where he stayed for two years, and took on prestigious as well as small-scale commissions for various towns.

Pordenone returned to Venice in 1535, probably with the intention of staying there for good. He quickly consolidated his position as one of the leading Venetian artists by constantly seeking competition with Titian. In Venice, Pordenone received commissions from the highest state levels, and even worked in the Palazzo Ducale itself. He also provided designs for some mosaics in the atrium of the San Marco, and was commissioned to paint a large canvas in the *albergo* of the Scuola Grande di Carità. In 1538, he was summoned to Ferrara by duke Ercole II to design tapestries, but he suddenly took ill soon after his arrival and died three days later under strong suspicions of poisoning. He was recorded in the Ferrarese book of the death on January 14 1539.

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<sup>175</sup> The biographical information is based on the monographies by Caterina Furlan (1988) and Charles Cohen (1996).

## Documentation

Unlike in Lotto's case (which is exceptional), Pordenone left us no cash books or diaries. Nevertheless, his career is very well documented because of two reasons. Firstly, more than 216 entries in several religious, provincial, and municipal registers survive.<sup>176</sup> These include a number of his contracts, as well as records of payments, yielding insight in how much the artist received for various commissions. A more extensive source on Pordenone's financial status are the many recordings (33) of his purchases or leases of pieces of land in Friuli. We also learn much of Pordenone's personal life through the surviving documents; we know that he married thrice, and fathered at least four daughters and two sons, and was stepfather to his second wife's son from her previous marriage. We also know that his daughter Graziosa married her father's assistant, Pomponio Amalteo, and that the latter probably took over Pordenone's Friulian workshop when his master moved to Venice in 1535. Furthermore, criminal records attest of Pordenone's aggressive behaviour, and of the stormy relationship with his brother Baldassare, who accused the artist of plotting against his life.<sup>177</sup>

As Pordenone became a celebrated artist in his own time, the many biographies published after his death form an important group of secondary sources. Vasari included his biography in the 1550 edition of *Le Vite*, and Dolce must have known the artist well, as Pordenone designed the frontispiece of his 1532 *Sogno di Parnaso*.

These documents give us quite an accurate, if incomplete, view of Pordenone's career, and are extensively used in this research.

As in the preceding case study, I will not treat Pordenone's entire career, but focus on three major transitional periods. The first one, from 1516 to 1522, covers the artist's transition from a provincial painter in Friuli to a recognised frescante in Northern Italy. The second part covers his first Venetian period (1526-1529), in which the painter laid the foundations for his conquest of the Venetian art world. The last part deals with the years between 1532 and 1538, and focuses on Pordenone's vehement rivalry with Titian.

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<sup>176</sup> Goi in Exh. Cat. Pordenone, 1984, p. 265.

<sup>177</sup> The full body of these documents was first published by Goi (1984) and extended by Furlan (1988) and Cohen (1996).

### 3.1 From provincial artist to recognised master

*Friuli, Alviano, Treviso, Mantua and Cremona: 1516-1521*

#### Training and early works in Friuli

It took Pordenone unusually long to develop his style and artistic identity. Although he is documented as an independent master in his hometown in 1504 (one year after Lotto was first documented as a painter in Treviso and four years before Savoldo applied for membership of the Florentine painter's guild), he remained in the remote Friuli until at least 1516. It is only in the years after his presumed first trip to Rome in 1516 (when he was already 32) that his style started to develop, and it was not until his first master works in Treviso and Cremona in the early 1520s that it had fully matured. By then, Lotto had been thriving in Bergamo for more than five years, while Raphael (who was one year his senior) was already nearing the end of his successful career in Rome. Pordenone's remarkably slow artistic formation must have been heavily influenced by the peripheral artistic climate of his native Friuli, where he worked exclusively for the first fourteen years of his career.<sup>178</sup>

Friuli was a remote land ravished by plagues, famines, earthquakes and raiding Turks. Although its people had lived under the shadow of Austria as well as Venice for centuries, it was ruled by impoverished feudal nobility until it was annexed by the *Serenissima* in 1420. The *commune* of Pordenone, however, remained under Habsburg control as an enclave until the Venetians conquered it in 1508. While Germanic influences from the north were certainly present in Pordenone, they appear to have been minimal. The growing prominence of Venice in the west, however, did make its mark on Friuli even before 1508.

It goes without saying that the socio-economic situation of Friuli provided little fertile grounds for ambitious artists like Pordenone. Although the young artist was never shy of commissions, none of them were particularly prestigious or challenging. His style, too, can be seen as rather provincial in his early years.<sup>179</sup> An education in the provinces also had its benefits, however. Cohen discerns four main consequences of Pordenone's Friulian training, which, according to him, hold true for any 'provincial' artist: a freer acceptance of artistic influences from the outside (due to a lack of a strong native artistic tradition); a willingness to integrate stylistic elements from the local culture with outside elements from the metropolis; a freedom to break with certain rules of decorum; and, lastly, an element of *popolaresco*, coming from more extensive contact with the lower ranks of society.<sup>180</sup> While all four characterisations hold true for Pordenone, the causal relationship that Cohen implies is questionable. Surely, artists in the cosmopolitan cities of Venice or Rome, which were

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<sup>178</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 1.

<sup>179</sup> Cohen, 1996, pp. 75-76.

<sup>180</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 7.

certainly not as homogeneous as Cohen would have it, were just as open, if not more so, to accept foreign stylistic influences. Furthermore, *popolano* artists (that is, almost all artists) from the city would also come into frequent contact with the lower ranks of society, which were by no means concentrated in the countryside.

After the Venetian pacification of Friuli, Pordenone's art showed increasing influences from Bellini and Giorgione, as can be seen in his 1511 *Sacra Conversazione* (Accademia, Venice). The awkward position of the figures and the rather self-conscious *venezianità* in this painting gradually evolved in a freer and more subtle Venetian-inspired style, as can be seen in the 1514 *Sacra Conversazione* (San Ruperto, Vallenoncello).

### The impact of Rome

In the years between 1516 and 1519 the artist must have come into contact with Roman art, and Pordenone's style changed more radically than had been the case with the gradually increasing Venetian influence from the years before. His figures became more voluminous and monumental, and his execution more daring. This new boldness can especially be seen in two frescoes; the Udine *Madonna della Loggia* (Museo Civico, Udine) and the *Madonna and child with saints and donor* (Santa Maria Assunta, Alviano). As the influence of Raphael and Michelangelo is evident in these works, it has been widely accepted that Pordenone must have made at least one journey to Rome. The consensus is that this trip must have been made in 1518, and that Pantasilea Baglioni, regent of Pordenone from 1515, was instrumental in sending Pordenone to the south. It is almost certain that Pordenone's fresco in the Umbrian town of Alviano, where the regent, who appears to have been on good terms with the artist, had lived prior to moving to Friuli, was made on her request.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, she never employed Pordenone as a court artist, and it appears that the painter made no attempts to use the *service* strategy.

While we know almost nothing about the Alviano fresco, the heavily damaged *Madonna della Loggia* in the Friulian city of Udine is documented. The communal annals record a payment of 12 ducats on September 8 1516 to Pordenone, "qui pinxit sub logia palatii Comunis Utini imaginem Beatissimae Virginis Mariae."<sup>182</sup> The Udine fresco is therefore probably earlier than the one in Alviano, which is often dated in 1518-1519, and would also predate Pordenone's Roman trip in the same years. Although it is hard to read in its present ruinous state, the gentle monumentality of the Madonna owes much to Raphael. For Cohen, this is reason enough to propose another trip to Rome in 1516, and although this is possible, Pordenone might also have come into contact with Raphael's works through prints or drawings, which circulated throughout Italy.

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<sup>181</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 117-118.

<sup>182</sup> Cited in: Furlan, 1988, p. 86.

The journey(s) to Rome did not only have a profound impact on Pordenone's art, it also deeply affected his career. While the aforementioned Madonnas borrow much from Raphael, it was Pordenone's forceful Michelangelism that would earn him great fame in Treviso and Cremona. The Roman modernity of Pordenone's style made him a sought-after artist in the North, where few painters had actually visited Rome. Those who had, like Lotto, often were unable to exploit the lessons learned in Rome to their full potential, but Pordenone was. The artist also successfully applied the technical innovations he must have seen in Rome, as the aforementioned frescos are his first to be made with the aid of *cartoni*.<sup>183</sup> Although the artist had been a productive fresco painter in Friuli for more than a decade, he does not appear to have used them before, and it is possible that this technique was unknown in the region. As it goes without saying that Pordenone would never have been able to execute his daring frescoes in Treviso, Cremona, or Piacenza without *cartoni*, the importance of this technical innovation on his career must not be overlooked.

After the completion of the undated Alviano fresco in Umbria, Pordenone probably returned to Friuli, although it is also possible that he went to Treviso right away. There, he started decorating the Malchiostro Chapel in 1519.

### **Outdoor and indoor *presence* in Treviso**

The frescoes of the Cappella Malchiostro (Fig. 13) in Treviso Cathedral are signed and dated 1520. It was the chapel of canon Broccardo Malchiostro. The lavish decoration of the prominent chapel was Pordenone's most prestigious commission thus far, and it has until now been entirely unclear how the Friulian artist, who cannot have been well known in the Veneto, came under the attention of Malchiostro. While Treviso is relatively close to Friuli, its sophisticated patrons looked to Venice for artistic guidance, and not to Pordenone. It is possible that Pantasilea Baglione recommended the artist to Malchiostro, but there is no evidence of contact between the regent of Pordenone and the Trevisian canon.<sup>184</sup> While Pordenone had just completed an ambitious decoration project in Travesio, it is not very probable that Malchiostro knew of the frescoes in this very remote town.

Instead, I propose that Pordenone originally came to Treviso to decorate the façade of the Palazzo Sugana-Tiretta with frescoes. This palace was destroyed during the bombing of 1944, but photographs show that the fragments of Pordenone's frescoes are stylistically close to the ones in the Duomo, making a dating of c. 1520 very probable.<sup>185</sup> Although little of these frescoed façades survive, it was common for wealthy citizens to have the exterior of their houses decorated with mythological scenes, and Pordenone appears to have been extremely proficient in this genre. Pordenone, who, unlike most painters in humid Venice, was an

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<sup>183</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 119.

<sup>184</sup> Malchiostro, as we shall see, was of relatively low birth and widely unpopular because of it. It is unlikely that the high-born Pantasilea would maintain amiable contacts with him.

<sup>185</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 570.

outstanding fresco painter, probably sensed a niche in the market, and might have moved to Treviso on his own initiative. While not nearly as prestigious as altarpieces or chapel decorations, a frescoed façade was a *presence piece* par excellence, as hundreds of people would walk past it and see it every day. Malchiostro, too, must have seen the Sugana-Tiretta façade almost daily, and was probably impressed enough to commission the Friulian artist to decorate his chapel.

In the Malchiostro Chapel, Pordenone showed the impact of his Roman sojourn for the first time on a grand scale. As it was his first prestigious commission in the Veneto, it was of paramount importance to show what he was truly capable of. The result is a highly illusionistic space full of looming figures in extravagant poses. Although the scale is much smaller, Pordenone's chapel is clearly inspired by the boldly gesturing men and women of Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel*. The vigorous *Eternal Father* in the cupola (also destroyed by the 1944 bombing) was heavily indebted to Michelangelo's figure of the Father in the *Creation of Adam*, who also moves through the sky in a nebula of putti, or in the *Separation of Land and Water*, which shows similar body language. The Michelangelism, which in that time was synonymous to modernity, is omnipresent and must have been a conscious choice by the artist as well as the patron. Pordenone probably tried to brand himself as the northern equivalent of Michelangelo, effectively tying his reputation and artistic merit to his Roman style. He was in a better position to do this than Venetian painters, who had not yet visited Rome, and had little training in the fresco technique.

The Treviso commission also must have resulted in Pordenone's first interaction with Titian, who painted the chapel's altarpiece at the same time or immediately after Pordenone was painting his frescoes.<sup>186</sup> Whether the altarpiece was finished, in progress, or not even started when Pordenone was working on the frescoes matters little, as the artist must at least have known that the celebrated Titian would be painting an *Annunciation* in 'his' chapel. This would have made the commission even more attractive to Pordenone, as its visibility would increase considerably by the presence of a painting by a famous master.

The artist was, however, by no means the only one who tried to enhance his status with the commission, as the patron too had much to gain and more to lose. Broccardo Malchiostro, a canon from the small Emilian town of Berceto, managed the diocese of Treviso as *vicarius generalis surrogatus*, after his long-time protector De' Rossi was ousted by the Venetians in 1509. As the son of a provincial notary, Malchiostro was a commoner, and his recently acquired power made him highly unpopular with the Trevisian clergy and nobility.<sup>187</sup> His power was entirely dependent on De' Rossi, who was by now a notable member of the Roman Curia. The bishop therefore had the power, money, and influence to either protect or control his Trevisian surrogate, but was dangerously far away from the Veneto. Malchiostro's grip on power was rather weak, as he had to keep De' Rossi and the Trevisian

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<sup>186</sup> Humfrey, 1993, pp. 311-314.

<sup>187</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 145.

clergy, as well as the Venetian podestà content. He therefore had every reason to commission a highly propagandistic fresco cycle to assert his authority and to show his gratitude to his bishop. The Holy Roman Emperor had created him Count Palatine in 1518, and it is likely that the chapel was primarily meant to commemorate his newfound status.<sup>188</sup>

Malchiostro showcased this status in various ostentatious ways. Inscriptions bearing his name appear in the vestibule, on the arch, on his tomb, and on the *Adoration of the Magi* (Fig. 14), while his new coat of arms appears in the chapel an astonishing nine times. Furthermore, he had Titian include his portrait in the *Annunciation*. This last move was considered to be so braggart that an angry mob of Trevisians attacked Malchiostro's effigy in 1526, giving clear testimony to his lasting unpopularity.<sup>189</sup> The frequent presence (eight times) of De' Rossi's coat of arms shows that Malchiostro felt an urgent need to keep the absent Bishop on his side. It is likely that Pordenone included the portraits of the two men, along with their friend Ludovico Marcello, in the faces of the three magi, as their coat of arms appear on the three tents in the background of the fresco.<sup>190</sup> Painfully aware that the powerful Bishop was the only source of his own authority in Treviso, Malchiostro also had a lifelike terracotta bust of De' Rossi installed in the drum of the cupola to oversee the chapel with authorative force.

The fresco decoration of the *Malchiostro Chapel* was therefore not only a *presence piece* for Pordenone, it also was one for Malchiostro and for De' Rossi. The three men had different interests, as the painter wanted to create a foothold on the art market of the Veneto, the canon had to strengthen his shaky grasp on power by demonstrating his newfound noble status as well as his obedience to the Bishop, while the latter used the chapel to show the Trevisians that he, although absent, was still the man in charge. Indeed, *presence* is not the exclusive domain of the artist, but is also used by patrons to assert their status or authority.

### **Pordenone's facades in Treviso and Mantua as the vehicle of his fame**

While painting the frescoes in the Duomo, Pordenone continued his *presence* strategy on another front: the decoration of façades. We have seen that he decorated the façade of the Palazzo Sugana-Tiretta, but we have little clue of its reception or success. We do know more about the façade of the Casa Ravagnino, also in Treviso. This façade, too, is now gone, but Ridolfi did include an interesting, if not verifiable, account of the artist's payment in his *Maraviglie*. He writes that the Ravagnino family was appalled by Pordenone's asking price of 50 scudi (much more than the 12 scudi he received a few years earlier for the Udine *Madonna della Loggia*) and summoned Titian, who was also in Treviso at the time, to arbitrate. The Venetian painter then urged the family to take no further action, as

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<sup>188</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 144.

<sup>189</sup> Bernini, 1969, pp. 39-59.

<sup>190</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 144.

Pordenone's frescoes were actually worth much more than 50 scudi.<sup>191</sup> Fact or fiction, Ridolfi's account does demonstrate that Pordenone's façade decorations were not seen as menial projects, but were highly valued, and probably earned him quite a lot of money.

Ridolfi, who would have seen the frescoes in damaged, but still visible shape, mentions two similar projects in 1520, one in Conegliano (near Treviso), and one in Mantua.<sup>192</sup> The project in Mantua is especially relevant for this research, as sources indicate that it was a prestigious commission, and that the (semi)finished product was of great influence on Pordenone's reputation. In Mantua, he decorated the façade of Paris Ceresara's palazzo. Ceresara, who was an influential humanist, poet, astrologer, and inventor, was a good friend of the Gonzagas.<sup>193</sup> Pordenone probably never finished the project, as he went to Cremona in the summer of 1520 to paint frescoes in the Duomo. While working in Cremona, the painter received petitions from Ceresara (on July 25, 1521) and even from Federico Gonzaga (September 26, 1522) to return to Mantua in order to complete his work, which demonstrates that the project was clearly of high importance even to the Duke of Mantua.<sup>194</sup> Even more telling of the Palazzo Ceresara's high impact is a remarkable phrase in Pordenone's contract with the *Massari* of the Cremona Duomo, which states that the Cremona frescoes had to be "at least as good as the work done on the palace of Paris Ceresara in Mantua".<sup>195</sup> The *Ceresara façade*, it seems, was the primary vehicle of Pordenone's rapidly growing fame in Northern Italy. It is remarkable that the Cremona contract refers to the probably secular frescoes in Mantua, but makes no mention of the *Malchiostro Chapel*, although it should be noted that the city is much closer to Mantua than to Treviso, and the *Massari* would have had better odds of having seen the Mantuan façade than the Trevisian chapel.

Even more so than the *Malchiostro Chapel*, the façades in Treviso and Mantua were highly successful *presence pieces*. While they might not always have been particularly rewarding projects in themselves, they provided Pordenone with prestigious and challenging commissions in churches. The use of outdoor *presence pieces* meant that nobody could avoid them, as would be possible with a private chapel. This "in-your-face method" is typical of Pordenone, and foreshadows the very aggressive tactics he would use in Venice ten years later.

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<sup>191</sup> Ridolfi (I), 1648, pp. 115-116.

<sup>192</sup> While the humid climate of the Lagoon would cause frescoes to deteriorate rather quickly, the Terraferma did not have this problem. It is probable, but not certain, that Pordenone's frescoes in the Veneto survived considerably longer than his projects in Venice proper.

<sup>193</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 157.

<sup>194</sup> Quoted in: Cohen, 1996, pp. 760.

<sup>195</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 580.



## The Cremona commission: the workshop practices of a modern painter

The aforementioned commission to decorate the nave arcades and inner façade of the Cremona Duomo (Fig. 15) was Pordenone's most prestigious commission thus far, and is still seen as his masterpiece. This is not the place to dwell too long on the iconography of the frescoes, but it is fruitful to have a closer look at the administrative aspects of the Cremona commission, for these are very well documented and yield valuable information on Pordenone's fees and working methods. The contract, which was concluded on August 20 of 1520, states that Pordenone was to paint the three arcades of the nave next to those painted by Romanino (who was replaced by Pordenone), as well the internal façade with scenes of the Passion of Christ.<sup>196</sup> His salary was stipulated to be 1.500 lire; 1.000 for the three arches, and 500 for the internal façade.<sup>197</sup> This equals a sum of 242 scudi. Subsequent payments, however, record that Pordenone eventually received a much higher sum of 454 scudi, and it is likely that the more than 200 extra scudi were used to pay Pordenone's assistants, and not the master himself. The dates of the payments provide us with some information on Pordenone's working process, which has often been described as particularly speedy. On August 30 of 1520, the *Massari* provided Pordenone with pigments, which were purchased for 40 soldi (0,32 scudo).<sup>198</sup> This means that the artist could not have started painting before that date, although he could have made sketches, preliminary drawings, and *cartoni*.<sup>199</sup> Pordenone would have started working on the frescoes before September 17 of the same year, as the *Massari* paid 6 lire to a workman for making and taking down of scaffolding for the painting of "magistrum Johannem Antonium Furlanum pictorem modernum" on that day.<sup>200</sup> As scaffolding had to be taken down, Pordenone must have finished the upper part of the first nave arcade by then. The decoration of this arcade was finished before October 9, when the *Massari* and "the entire city" examined and praised the first completed fresco, permitting Pordenone to continue his work.<sup>201</sup> From these recordings, we can deduce that it took the artist less than a month to finish the first fresco. He probably worked more slowly on the other two arcades and the large inner façade, as the entire project was documented as completed on October 8 of 1521.<sup>202</sup>

Regrettably, the *Massari* documents yield limited information on the organisation of Pordenone's workshop in the 1520s. While later projects, such as the decoration of San Rocco, record payments for a *garzone*, the Cremona documents only mention payments to

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<sup>196</sup> As is stated in a clause to the contract, Romanino was originally awarded the commission, but was replaced by the new *Massari* (who were elected annually) because the contract the old *Massari* had agreed upon with Romanino was now deemed invalid, as it had been agreed upon on the last day of the old *Massari*'s term.

<sup>197</sup> Contract between the *Massari* of Cremona Cathedral and Pordenone, August 20 1520, quoted in: Cohen, 1996, p. 580.

<sup>198</sup> Payment of August 30 1520, quoted in: Cohen, 1996, p. 580.

<sup>199</sup> The contract stipulated that Pordenone had to submit his *cartone* for approval to the *Massari* before painting a particular scene.

<sup>200</sup> Payment of September 17 1520, quoted in: Cohen, 1996, p. 581.

<sup>201</sup> Record of October 9 1520, quoted in: Cohen, 1996, p. 581.

<sup>202</sup> Payment of October 8 1521, quoted in: Cohen, 1996, p. 581.

Pordenone and frequent payments to the man who had to build and take down the scaffolding.<sup>203</sup> As it is inconceivable that Pordenone executed the entire decorative programme by himself (he would, at the very least, have been assisted by Pomponio Amalteo), it is likely that Pordenone paid his workshop assistants from his own salary. This could also explain why his salary was increased from 242 to 454 ducats, as the scale of the project might have moved Pordenone to take on more assistants. This was perfectly normal, as Pordenone was, despite his prominence in Friuli, only a beginning artist in this part of Italy, and beginning artists would typically only employ one assistant (Amalteo, in this case) on a permanent basis, while taking on local workers for ambitious projects such as the Cremona frescoes.<sup>204</sup>

Stylistically, the Cremona frescoes carry on the Michelangelesque path first explored in Treviso, but take its monumentality and vigour to new extremes. At the same time, the passion cycle has a highly distinctive *popolaresco* expressionism, which Cohen links to the provincial art of Friuli as well as the German tradition.<sup>205</sup> With this explosive fusion of Friulian expression, German brutality, Venetian *colore*, and Roman monumentality, Pordenone created a highly personal, and, more importantly, a highly innovative style. It was this style that probably caused the *Massari* to characterise the artist as a “Pictor modernus” in one of their documents.<sup>206</sup> As we have seen before, Pordenone constantly links his identity to his modern style, fashioning an identity as the embodiment of modernity to attract new customers.

## Back to Friuli

Immediately after completing the Cremona cycle, Pordenone returned to Friuli, where his presence is documented in 1521, and stayed at least until 1526. In Friuli, he appears to have returned to the career he had built there before moving to Treviso in 1519, and he took on many rather insignificant commissions in Pordenone and surrounding towns. It has long puzzled art historians that the artist abandoned his very successful career in the Veneto and Lombardy to return to the periphery of Friuli, and no satisfactory answer has yet been given (nor suggested, for that matter). The most plausible explanation is that the artist had to return to his workshop in Pordenone. The artist had left an incomplete altarpiece in Rorai Grande and had to settle a dispute with the *commune* of Torre over an completed altarpiece, and it is possible that his presence was sorely needed in Friuli. This does not explain, however, why he remained in the region for at least five years, while a promising career was waiting for him in the west.

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<sup>203</sup> The five payments to the workman equal a total sum of 37,1 lire (approximately 6 ducats).

<sup>204</sup> O'Malley, 2013, pp. 160-161.

<sup>205</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 178.

<sup>206</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 170.

Pordenone evolved from a provincial artist in Friuli to a celebrated “pictor modernus” in the Veneto started rather slowly in the beginning, but extremely fast in the merely four years between 1518 and 1521. His trip(s) to Rome made a lasting impact on Pordenone’s expressive style, as he was – unlike Lotto – capable of successfully blending the lessons from Rome with Venetian *colore* and Friulian *popolaresco*. This new, truly modern, style manifested itself first in Treviso, and came to a climax in Cremona. Both prestigious commissions served as highly effective *presence pieces*, but we have seen that the primary vehicles for Pordenone’s unconventional *presence* strategy were his now destroyed façade decorations. It is interesting to note that Pordenone’s *presence* spanned a much wider scope than Lotto’s. While the latter’s *presence* was usually a regional one (The Marches, Bergamo, Venice), Pordenone’s works in Treviso projected his *presence* all the way to Mantua, and eventually even to Cremona.

## 3.2 Establishing a foothold in Venice

*Venice 1526-1531*

Pordenone must have come to Venice around 1526 to enrol in the contest to paint the *Saint Peter Martyr altarpiece* for the Sanzanipolo in Venice. Although he lost the competition to Titian, the artist stayed in Venice and received a very attractive commission to decorate San Rocco with frescoes and a large painting in either 1527 or 1528. At the same time, or slightly later, he must have painted the cupola of San Giovanni Elemosinario in Rialto. It is likely, but not certain, that he also painted the *Giustiniani altarpiece* for the influential patrician Federico Renier during this period.<sup>207</sup> Pordenone also continued his *presence* strategy of painting palazzo façades in Venice. In 1529, he left Venice for Piacenza to decorate the cupola and some chapels of the Santa Maria di Campagna with frescoes.

In his first Venetian period Pordenone laid the groundworks for his conquest of the Venetian art market in the 1530s. Although he failed to receive the Sanzanipolo commission, he created *presence* with facades, an altarpiece, and two decoration projects in churches.

### Challenging the status quo with the Sanzanipolo contest

Pordenone must have come to Venice to participate in the contest for the altarpiece of Saint Peter Martyr in the Sanzanipolo. Contests, as we have seen in the first chapter, were used often by the Venetian State, but also by *scuole* and churches, to decide which artist would get a prestigious commission. For the patrons the advantages of this method were many. Not only would the contest move the participating artists to bring out their best, it also ensured publicity, and ensured that individual patrons would not play favourites. For the artists, contests also yielded publicity, and winning one brought great honour.

Although the Sanzanipolo contest is not documented by primary sources, strong secondary evidence suggests that it did take place, that the competitors were Pordenone, Titian, and Palma Vecchio, and that it was held between January 1526, when the Council of Ten revoked a previous granted permission to set up an altarpiece, and July 1528, when Palma died.<sup>208</sup> A highly detailed drawing by Pordenone of the *Death of St. Peter Martyr* (Fig. 16) must have served as the competition piece, as Pordenone is not known to have ever painted a different painting with the same subject.

For Pordenone, the competition was a perfect opportunity to invade the Venetian art world, a move which he might have anticipated at least since Treviso. As his opponents, Titian and

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<sup>207</sup> For a detailed discussion of this painting's dating and patronage, see: Pierguidi, 2006, pp. 764-766.

<sup>208</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 260.

Palma, were the champions of the classical Venetian school, Pordenone was in an excellent position to present himself as a revolutionary innovator and as an exponent of the modern Roman style. If we look at the Uffizi drawing, however, Pordenone appears to have subdued the violent turbulence of the Cremonese cycle. Instead, the composition is remarkably balanced. Is it possible that the artist tempered his *terribilità* to accommodate to Venetian tastes? If this is true, Pordenone miscalculated, for Titian's winning design was highly praised exactly because of its novel vigour and dynamism.

The Sanzanipolo completion marks the first time Pordenone really tried to employ *challenge*, and as such also the first (recorded) skirmish in the ensuing rivalry between Pordenone and Titian. Although the Friulian artist lost the first battle, his participation in the contest likely yielded him fame, as there was no shame in losing to Titian. With his presence in Venice announced rather dramatically, Pordenone could easily recuperate from his set back and move to acquire new commissions.

### The San Rocco project

Participation in the Sanzanipolo contest did indeed bore fruit, as Pordenone received his first major Venetian commission in 1528. A (now lost) contract with the Scuola Grande di San Rocco was signed on March 9 of that year to decorate the choir of the Chiesa di San Rocco with frescoes. Pordenone also painted two large wooden doors of a cupboard with *Saints Martin and Christopher with Suppliants* (Fig. 17) for the same church. According to Cohen, he finished these doors before signing the contract for the choir, meaning that he started to work for the Scuola Grande immediately after the Sanzanipolo contest.<sup>209</sup> This is entirely possible, but it is equally plausible that Pordenone worked on several (undated) façades in the Lagoon City in the year between Sanzanipolo and San Rocco. The ending date of the San Rocco commissions is crystal clear, however, as a final payment is recorded on March 21 of 1529.

Before we turn to Pordenone's works in the church, we must first get an understanding of the Scuola's history. The San Rocco was by far the youngest of Venice's five Scuole Grandi, and was founded relatively recently in 1478. In 1485, the *Scuola* managed to transfer the relics of their patron saint, Roch, from Montpellier to Venice, and had the ostentatious Chiesa di San Rocco built (1489-1508) to commemorate this.<sup>210</sup> Although the Scuola was young, it flourished financially in the years of Pordenone's contract. The presence of the Saint's body, and also of the miracle-working *Christ carrying the Cross* attributed to Titian or Giorgione, brought in many donations and generated great wealth for the San Rocco. Indeed, in 1527 (when Pordenone was about to start working for the *Scuola*), one of their members boasted that "so many benefits and alms which have been pouring in daily in the

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<sup>209</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 265.

<sup>210</sup> Gramigna and Perissa, 2008, pp. 53-54.

past seven years – it must be a heavenly miracle that there is such a concourse of people and so much devotion and we have such a reputation both in this illustrious city and in all Christendom.”<sup>211</sup> Money, however, did not automatically mean prestige, and as the competition between the five *Scuole Grandi* was severe, the San Rocco appears to have spent large sums on grandiose projects to showcase an identity of potency and venerability. The fact that many leading members of the *Scuola* were immigrants or sons of immigrants, must have made the urge to fashion a potent collective identity even stronger.<sup>212</sup> The lavish church and chapter house built by Bartolomeo Bon in the years before 1508, the costly marble high altar of the church, and Tintoretto’s enormous painting cycles in both buildings later in the century confirm this image. Pordenone’s commission to decorate the choir and paint the cupboard doors must be seen in this same light of conspicuous spending.

As most of the frescoes in the choir have been destroyed and reworked in the eighteenth century by Giuseppe Angeli, it is hard to deduce what Pordenone’s originals looked like. The *Saints Martin and Cristopher with suppliant*s, has survived in its entirety, however, and gives us a good insight in Pordenone’s bold monumental style during his first Venetian period. The colossal saints move away from each other with dramatic gestures, and if the frescoes were executed in the same style, the San Rocco choir would truly have been a sight to behold. It is clear that the *Scuola*, who had previously commissioned Bon to design a strikingly modern church and chapter house, and would later contract Tintoretto to execute his daring paintings, was ambitious and progressive in its choice for artists. Not being able to boast a long and venerable legacy, the San Rocco branded itself as the ambitious newcomer. Furthermore, Pordenone’s *Suppliant*s underlined another important aspect of the *Scuola*: its focus on charity and its care for the poor and the sick.

Lastly, the San Rocco commission gives us some insight in the functioning of Pordenone’s workshop. Only the final payment (dated March 21, 1529) has been recorded. In this document, Pordenone acknowledges that he has received 30 ducats from the San Rocco, plus an additional 5 ducats for the salary of Pordenone’s *garzone* (“la mercede del mio garzon”).<sup>213</sup> Although it is impossible to know how many payments Pordenone received in total, we can reasonably assume that the wealthy *Scuola* paid him well. More interesting is the mentioning of Pordenone’s *garzone*, who received one-sixth of what Pordenone earned. It is unclear if Pordenone had more than one assistant in the San Rocco, but given the scale of the enterprise this is very likely. It remains a mystery why only one *garzone* is mentioned in the document, but the most plausible explanation is that the one mentioned is Amalteo, Pordenone’s chief assistant, who also must have been the most well-paid workshop member. The others were probably paid from Pordenone’s own salary. It should be noted that in the case of Cremona, of which extensive documentation survives, not a single

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<sup>211</sup> Quoted in: Pullan, 1971, p. 158.

<sup>212</sup> De Maria, 2010, pp. 51-55.

<sup>213</sup> Quoted in: Cohen, 1996, pp. 628-629.

workshop member is mentioned, while it is completely out of the question that Pordenone executed an entire fresco cycle all by himself.

### **Andrea Gritti and San Giovanni Elemosinario**

The paintings in the San Rocco, and probably also a number of painted façades, gave Pordenone the valuable *presence* he needed to gain a foothold in Venice. That this approach was successful, is attested by the (undocumented) fresco decoration of the cupola of San Giovanni Elemosinario (Fig. 18), which is generally considered to have been executed between 1528 and 1531. The church was small, but had enjoyed the patronage the doges of Venice for ages, and played an important role in state ceremonies. The church had been heavily damaged in the Rialto fire of 1513, and was rebuilt until 1527 under the patronage of doge Andrea Gritti (r. 1523-1538), whose coat of arms is depicted on the cupola.<sup>214</sup> Although previous art historians have failed to notice this, Pordenone's frescoes in the San Giovanni must have laid the foundation for his employment by the Venetian State a few years later.

The cupola was likely completed in 1531, when Pordenone was already in Piacenza, so it must have been finished by workshop assistants. In 1664, Boschini writes that Pordenone did not only paint the cupola, but also executed an image of the church's patron saint, which another writer, Barri (1671), locates on the exterior wall behind the altar.<sup>215</sup> Writing in the mid-*seicento*, it is entirely possible that both writers could still see (the remnants of) this fresco.

While working on the cupola, Pordenone left for Emilia to paint large fresco cycles for churches in Cortemaggiore and Piacenza, further enhancing his name and spreading his *presence*. He would return to Venice a few years later to continue his promising career there.

In the few years between 1526 and 1530, Pordenone successfully improved his status from a sought-after *frescante* in the provinces to a successful Venetian artist. With a dramatic entrance unto the Venetian art world, he branded himself as a bold challenger of the status quo. Although he lost the *St. Peter Martyr* contest, his Venetian career was consolidated with the San Rocco commissions, which enabled the ambitious artist to create a *presence* in Venice and enhance it with multiple façade commissions. The decoration of San Giovanni Elemosinario marked Pordenone's first association with the Venetian State itself, albeit indirectly. This small-scale commission would in the second half of the 1530s set the tone for Pordenone's employment at the Palazzo Ducale itself.

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<sup>214</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 274.

<sup>215</sup> Boschini, 1664, p. 259. "Passando per Rialto Nuovo, per andar alla Chiesa di S. Giovanni Elemosinario, detto di Rialto, si vede sopra detta Chiesa à fresco S. Giovanni Elemosinario, che dipensa il suo a Poveri: opera del Pordenone". Barri, 1671, p. 49.

### 3.3 The Conquest of Venice

*Friuli and Venice: 1535-1539*

#### Leaving Friuli behind

By 1533, after a second stay in Venice, Pordenone had returned to his hometown, where he would stay until 1535, when he moved to the Lagoon city permanently. During his final two Friulian years, Pordenone took on many commissions, both major projects like the high altar piece of the Pordenone Duomo, as well as low-key projects. It has often been said that the painter expanded his workshop during these years, and although there is not documentary evidence to support this, it might very well be true.

Once again, it is unknown why the increasingly successful Pordenone interrupted his Venetian career to return to the provinces. The death of his second wife, who had remained in Pordenone while her husband was in Venice and Piacenza, might have had something to do with it.<sup>216</sup> He may also have returned home to supervise his workshop in Friuli, which was presumably still in function in Pordenone. Whether he had planned to or not, the artist would stay in his native region for two years.

It is remarkable that Pordenone worked in a distinctively different style in Friuli than he had done in the Veneto and Emilia. In comparison with the complex compositions and elongated figures of the Piacenza frescoes or the *Corrieri altarpiece* (Accademia, Venice), his Friulian paintings like the *Noli me Tangere* (Fig. 19) are far less complicated. Cohen explains this remarkable discrepancy in style by arguing that Pordenone consciously adapted his style to accommodate to the tastes of his customers. In Venice, he would paint complicated, thoroughly Venetian, paintings for his high-brow clients, while the Friulian commissioners would receive paintings more suitable to their provincial tastes.<sup>217</sup>

In 1535, Pordenone moved to Venice for good. It is likely, as Cohen suggests, that he transferred control of his Friulian workshop to Amalteo, and relocated part of his assistants and associates to the Lagoon. This thesis is supported by the fact that Amalteo married Pordenone's daughter Graziosa in that year, thus becoming his (former) master's son-in-law, and that Amalteo completed several of Pordenone's unfinished projects in the years after 1535. If Cohen's thesis holds true, then Pordenone must have made quite a drastic, but clever decision. It is unclear, by the way, if the painter had maintained a second workshop in Venice during the previous years or if he had used makeshift teams of assistants for his

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<sup>216</sup> Documents mention Elisabetta dei Quagliati eight times in the years between 1513 and 1530, usually when purchasing land on behalf of her husband. This indicates that she did not accompany her husband on his travels, but remained in Friuli. As Pordenone remarried in 1535 and Elisabetta was still conducting business in 1530, she must have died between 1530 and 1535. It is therefore possible, but not certain, that she died in 1533.

<sup>217</sup> Cohen, 1996, pp. 437-439.



Venetian projects. While the lack of documentary evidence for a Venetian workshop prior to 1535 makes the second option more plausible, Pordenone would not be the first artist to supervise multiple workshops. Filippino Lippi, for example, maintained two Florentine workshops, while Perugino had a workshop in Florence as well as in Perugia for more than twenty years.<sup>218</sup>

### **Working for the Venetian State: Pordenone as a foil to Titian**

After arriving in Venice and presumably setting up his new workshop there (he had joined Venice's painter's guild in 1530), Pordenone immediately resumed his successful career in the Lagoon city. It appears that he started with a highly successful *presence piece*: the painted façade of the palazzo Talenti d'Anna on the Grand Canal. Although the frescoes are now lost, multiple contemporary writers attest to the project's very good reception. Dolce praises the work, but it was the Florentine writer Francesco Doni who in 1549 included Pordenone's façade in his very brief list of Venice's absolute masterpieces. Doni's list features only four items: the bronze horses of San Marco, the paintings of Giorgione, the art works of Titian, and the façade of the Palazzo Talenti d'Anna.<sup>219</sup> Like his first arrival in Venice years earlier, Pordenone entered the Laguna with a bang.

Once again, the positive *presence* did not only affect the artist, but also the patrons. These patrons were, contrary to popular belief, not the Flemish d'Anna family, but the Florentine Talenti, which would also explain Doni's praise of the façade.<sup>220</sup> Ludovico Talenti, the patron, was a textile merchant and a second-generation immigrant. He had only recently become a *cittadino*, and must have wanted to display his newfound status by building a palazzo at the Grand Canal and having it lavishly decorated by one of Venice's most popular artists.<sup>221</sup>

Doni was obviously not the only one that was impressed by Pordenone's façade, as the artist received a very prestigious governmental commission in the same year. He was contracted to decorate the ceiling of the Sala della Libreria in the Palazzo Ducale, which he must have finished within two years.<sup>222</sup> It is possible that Doge Gritti was directly involved in the choice of artist, as he was the patron of the San Giovanni cupola Pordenone completed earlier. Pordenone, with his virtuosity in fresco and his grand Roman manner, seamlessly fitted in Gritti's programme to restore Venice to its (presumed) former glory. Pordenone's ceiling was destroyed by the great fire of 1577, so we can only guess what it originally looked like. It is

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<sup>218</sup> O'Malley, 2013, pp. 166-167.

<sup>219</sup> Doni, 1549, p. 51v.

<sup>220</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the patronage, see: De Maria, 2004, pp. 548-549.

<sup>221</sup> De Maria, 2004, p. 548.

<sup>222</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 407.

clear, however, that it greatly pleased the Senate, as it granted Pordenone a lifelong *onorata provizione*.<sup>223</sup>

Furthermore, Pordenone received a commission to paint “one or more” additional painting(s) in the Palazzo Ducale in 1577. While this is further proof of the Senate’s appreciation of the artist’s work, it has also been suggested that he was played out against Titian, to move the latter to finish his *Battle of Spoleto* in the Palazzo Ducale. The government probably wanted the slow Titian to feel Pordenone’s breath in his neck. The Friulian artist worked extremely fast and was eager to compete with the master from Cadore, making the situation more volatile and the stakes higher than is often suspected. And indeed, Titian would finish his famous *Battle of Spoleto* in 1538.<sup>224</sup>

For Pordenone, the Palazzo Ducale paintings yielded favourable *presence* in the highest regions of state patronage. The palace was not only the single most prestigious location in Venice, but was also a hub of international politics, and it would have been interesting to see how his career would have developed further if he had not died unexpectedly in 1539. In the two years between the governmental commissions and his death in Ferrara, however, he took on many more prestigious commissions in Venice. He designed mosaics for the atrium of the San Marco, and painted for *scuole* and churches. Many, if not all, of these commissions would in some way involve a competition with Titian, but this competition is most tangible in Pordenone’s never executed commission for the *Scuola Grande della Carità*.

### **The *Carità* and rivalry with Titian**

The *Carità* was one of the five *Scuole Grandi* of Venice, and therefore an important patron. The contract for Pordenone’s commission to paint a large painting in the *Sala del’Albergo*, dating from March 6 1538, describes the painter as “lo ingeniosissimo et prudentissimo homo miser Zuan Antonio da Pordenon alli tempi nostril homo di grandissimo ingegno.”<sup>225</sup> It is not hard to see why Pordenone was eager to accept this commission; not only was the *Scuola* a prestigious patron, and would a large painting in its most important hall yield a positive *presence*, it also offered him a new opportunity to emulate Titian, who had just completed his famous *Presentation of the Virgin* (Fig. 20) for the same room. Vasari even mentions that Pordenone actively sought commissions in places where Titian had also painted, and given what we have learned so far about Pordenone’s aggressive tactics, we can take Vasari’s assessment at face-value.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Cohen, 1996, p. 415.

<sup>224</sup> Cohen, 1996, pp. 411-412.

<sup>225</sup> Cohen, 1996, pp. 432-433.

<sup>226</sup> Vasari, 1568, IV, p. 433. “[...] cercava egli gareggiando sempre mettere opera dove Tiziano aveva messo le sue”.

Although Pordenone never even started the work on the painting before his sudden death, documents of the *Scuola* dating from two months after the painter's death give detailed information of Pordenone's attempted emulation of Titian. The *banca* reports that it had suggested an *Assumption of the Virgin*, but that Pordenone had objected. According to the document, Pordenone gave three reasons for his objection. First of all, the horizontal space was not suitable for the subject (which logically requires a vertical orientation), secondly, the same subject was already represented in another room of the building, and, most importantly, the *Assumption* was not a logical sequence after Titian's *Presentation*. Instead, Pordenone proposed to paint a *Marriage of the Virgin*, which was accepted by the *banca*, and subsequently prepared in cartoons.<sup>227</sup>

Not only does this document attest to Pordenone's autonomy as a painter, it is also telling of his conscious desire to emulate Titian. The painter knew that his *challenge* would be more effective with a *marriage* than with an *assumption*, which would not only have been difficult to execute because of the horizontal format, but would also force him to compete with the other painting of the same subject in the same building, and therefore divert attention from his emulation of Titian. Additionally, Pordenone's *Assumption* would also have attracted comparisons with Titian's famous altarpiece in the Frari, and this was a battle Pordenone knew he would be unable to win. Instead, he cleverly convinced the *banca* to change the subject, providing him with more favourable circumstances for his *challenge*.

The *Carità* project was one of Pordenone's last commissions. In 1539, he was summoned to Ferrara to design a series of tapestries for the duke, but suddenly fell ill soon after arriving there. He died within a few days amidst strong suspicions of poisoning, cutting short his successful career.

## Conclusion

As Pordenone's life and career ended so abruptly, it is difficult to make assessments about the efficiency of his business strategies, as there is no way of telling how they would have worked out in the long run. There is no reason to believe, however, that his fortunes were about to make a turn for the worst.

We have seen that Pordenone, despite a slow start, evolved from an average provincial artist in Friuli to a celebrated "pictor modernus" in the Veneto in the merely four years between 1518 and 1521. His (undocumented) trip(s) to Rome made a lasting impact on Pordenone's expressive style, as he was – unlike Lotto – capable of successfully blending the lessons from Rome with Venetian *colore* and Friulian *popolaresco*. This new, truly modern, style manifested itself first in Treviso, and came to a climax in Cremona. Both prestigious

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<sup>227</sup> Quoted in: Cohen, 1996, p. 433.

commissions served as highly effective *presence pieces*, but we have seen that the primary vehicles for Pordenone's unconventional *presence* strategy were his now destroyed façade decorations. It is interesting to note that Pordenone's *presence* spanned a much wider scope than Lotto's. While the latter's *presence* was usually a regional one (The Marches, Bergamo, Venice), Pordenone's works in Treviso projected his *presence* all the way to Mantua, and eventually even to Cremona.

After entering the Venetian art world, Pordenone's unconventional tactics became more aggressive. He often employed *challenge* to benefit from Titian's publicity, and constantly branded himself as "the embodiment of the new", as Tintoretto would do after him.<sup>228</sup>

While Pordenone never succeeded in actually supplanting Titian as the major artist in Venice, his *challenge* strategy was effective, as it provided him with many prestigious Venetian commissions. The many purchases of land conducted by Pordenone and his second wife confirm the painter's successful enterprises, and also prove that the painter remained firmly rooted in Friuli for the better part of his career. These ties were cut when Pordenone handed over his Friulian workshop to his new son-in-law, Pomponio Amalteo, finally enabling the master to focus completely on his Venetian career.

Interestingly, Pordenone appears to have been very conscious about his style. He exploited his Roman manner to brand himself as a revolutionary modern painter in Treviso and Cremona, blended it with Venetian *colore* to enhance his chances on the Venetian market, and effortlessly returned to a rudimentary provincial style to suit the needs of his Friulian customers. With Pordenone, it seems, everything was strategy. Not only the way he conducted his affairs and attracted new commissions, but also the way he behaved and even the way he painted.

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<sup>228</sup> Exh. Cat. Paris and Boston, 2009, p. 112.

## 4. Gerolamo Savoldo: the original avant-garde

### Biography

In comparison with Lotto and Pordenone, Savoldo's biography is shrouded in mystery. He was probably born around 1480 in or near Brescia, and his will suggests that he hailed from a minor patrician family.<sup>229</sup> There is little documentation on his career before 1508, when Savoldo was in Florence to apply for membership of the painter's guild. It is unknown if Savoldo stayed in Tuscany, and if so, for how long he remained there. It is speculated that he moved from Brescia to Venice around 1514. The beginnings of his Venetian career were probably very hard, as he received no public commissions, and his name seldomly appears in written sources. He painted easel paintings for private patrons, and was heavily influenced by art from the Netherlands (where his wife hailed from) and Germany. In 1524, he painted a large altarpiece for the Dominicans of Pesaro, although the lords of Pesaro might also have been involved in the commission.<sup>230</sup> The excellent reception of this altarpiece appears to have benefitted his career considerably. In the following years, Savoldo painted for sophisticated patrons such as the Averoldi of Brescia and the Sforza of Milan.

Savoldo's late career was spent almost entirely in Venice, although he continued to work for patrons in his native Brescia. In 1548, Savoldo (who must have been in his late sixties) was still alive, although sources imply that he was not painting anymore. The exact date of his death is unknown, but he probably died in the late 1540s or early 1550s.

This chapter focuses on two slightly overlapping periods of Savoldo's career, which were spent almost entirely in Venice. The first one (c. 1518-1525) analyses his struggling early years in the Veneto, while the second (1524-2535) deals with his short-lived breakthrough on the Venetian art market.

### Documentation

Savoldo's life and career are badly documented. Unlike in Lotto's and Pordenone's cases, few examples of written correspondence, contracts or payments survive. Remarkably, not a single piece of documentation is handed down for the period between 1508 and 1521, and for the years between 1540 and 1548.<sup>231</sup> What we do have, however, is Savoldo's will (stipulated in 1526), which provides us with a wealth of personal information, and a number of legal documents. Furthermore, Savoldo's student Paolo Pino comments on his former

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<sup>229</sup> Panazza in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 27.

<sup>230</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 44.

<sup>231</sup> As shall be discussed below, the latter gap can most likely be explained by Savoldo's retirement.

master's career and reputation in his *Dialogo di Pittura*, published in 1548. In the same year, Pietro Aretino wrote a letter praising the retired painter. Vasari, too, mentions Savoldo in his *Vite*, albeit briefly.

While the absence of extensive source material is disheartening, circumstantial evidence and comparisons with the richly documented careers of Lotto and Pordenone enable us to gain an accurate understanding of Savoldo's business tactics and clientele.

## 4.1 Fashioning a marketable identity

*Venice: 1518-1525*

### A troublesome start

Although we do not know exactly when Savoldo moved to Venice, he is first documented there in 1521. At that point, he must already have been living in the city for some years. He may have fled Brescia after its sack by the French army in 1512, or he may have arrived in the Lagoon a few years later.<sup>232</sup>

The lack of proper documentation on Savoldo's first Venetian years alone suggests that he created few notable paintings in this period, and indeed he is not known to have painted any altarpieces or have conceived works for the Venetian elite during this time. Although the painter must have been well into his thirties and had been a master painter since at least 1508, his reputation apparently did not enable him to make use of *presence*, *challenge*, or *service* tactics. Instead, Savoldo practised *diversion* to make himself more attractive to Venetian customers.

Savoldo's *diversion* consisted of the appropriation of Northern European styles, pictorial elements, and iconography. These northern influences, which will be discussed in further detail below, were blended with the Lombard realism Savoldo was trained in, as well as Venetian *colore*, creating a highly distinctive style. As we have seen with Lotto's *Santa Cristina altarpiece* and Pordenone's paintings for the San Rocco, style was often used consciously as a tool to fashion a positive artistic identity in the hopes of attracting new customers. Savoldo, too, attempted to make himself attractive to the Venetian market with his new style, although he did so in a different manner than the previously discussed painters.<sup>233</sup>

Before we look at some individual paintings, it is important to explore why Savoldo chose to refer so often to northern painting. Paintings and prints from the Netherlands and Germany were highly popular in Venice, and some key works by northern artists were present in the city. Albrecht Dürer and Jan van Scorel had actually visited Venice and produced some paintings there, while works by Bosch, Patinir, and David are documented in various public and private collections.<sup>234</sup> Therefore, there were enough northern paintings available as point of reference and source of inspiration.<sup>235</sup> Furthermore, Venice was an important hub in

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<sup>232</sup> Panazza in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 31.

<sup>233</sup> Ebert-Schifferer in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, pp. 81-82.

<sup>234</sup> Aikema in Aikema and Brown, 1999, pp. 83-84.

<sup>235</sup> Aikema and Brown, 1999, pp. 19-25.

the circulation of northern prints.<sup>236</sup> Engravings and woodcuts by masters such as Dürer, Cranach, and Van Leyden were not only popular amongst collectors and connoisseurs, but were also frequently used by Venetian artists as sources of artistic inspiration.<sup>237</sup> Luckily for Savoldo, northern paintings, which had to be imported, were much scarcer than Italian paintings, and the demand for northern art must have been considerably higher than its availability. This created an opportunity for Savoldo to exploit this niche for his own benefit by producing “northern-style” paintings.

### **Pictorial appropriation and the creation of a fusion style in Savoldo’s early easel paintings**

This point is best illustrated by analysing Savoldo’s two versions of the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, which both must have been made between 1515 and 1520. The first painting is now in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow (Fig. 21), while the second is on display in San Diego’s Timken Museum of Art (Fig. 22). In both cases the clients are unknown. In the Moscow panel Anthony is tormented by vicious devils. He experiences an unsettling vision of an old man with a skeleton-faced mutant on his back, while an inferno blazes in the background. The group of two men running away from a fire is a pictorial quotation of Raphael’s fleeing Romans in his *Fire in the Borgo* in the Vatican Stanze, although Savoldo obviously mirrored the group and added some bizarre elements. This witty pictorial appropriation provides us with a terminus post quem for Savoldo’s painting, as Raphael’s workshop began working on the *Stanza dell’Incendio* in 1514 and completed it in 1517.<sup>238</sup> This would imply that Savoldo had visited Rome in or shortly after 1517, although he also may have derived the motif from prints after Raphael, which were widely available in Venice.<sup>239</sup> The impish demons pummelling the hermit saint must have been based on the devils in Lucas Cranach the Elder’s woodcut of the same theme, which Savoldo might have seen in a Venetian collection.<sup>240</sup> The rocky landscape, finally, is undoubtedly indebted to the works of Patinir, which were also available in Venice.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Hollingsworth, 1996, p. 145. Venice was not only a hub in the circulation of northern prints, it was also by far the largest Italian centre of printing in general. By the 1550s, Venetian publishers printed more than three times as many works as the print houses of Rome, Milan, and Florence combined.

<sup>237</sup> Van der Sman in Aikema and Brown, 1999, p. 151. Besides the wide-spread circulation of northern prints, many northern printmakers, such as Dürer, Cort, and Goltzius, lived in Venice for varying periods of time.

<sup>238</sup> Exh. Cat. Madrid and Paris, 2012, p. 33. Although Ebert-Schifferer mentions that the *Fire in the Borgo* was finished in 1515, documentary evidence is lacking to back up this claim. Raphael and his assistants were working on the *Stanza dell’Incendio* until 1517, although it is theoretically possible that the *Fire in the Borgo* was finished earlier.

<sup>239</sup> Pon, 2004, pp. 40-66. Marcantonio Raimondi made many printed copies of Raphael’s work, which circulated all over Italy, and were especially popular in Venice. Raimondi had lived there in the first decade of the *cinquecento*, and his works were published in Venice for decades by Niccolò and Domenico dal Jesus.

<sup>240</sup> Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 108. The mountains and castle in the background of the same woodcut might have been a source of inspiration for the lower left background of the San Diego painting, but the comparison is not entirely convincing.

<sup>241</sup> Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 108.



The macabre bzarities of the Moscow painting are taken one step further in the San Diego panel. Here, a terrified Anthony flees from a hellish vision populated by strange devils and demons. While Savoldo must have based his running saint on Giovanni Bellini's 1509 *Assassination of St. Peter Martyr*, and the landscape on the left once again betrays Patinir's influence, the hell on the right recalls the work of Jheronimus Bosch. As many as three paintings by the Netherlandish artist were in Venetian collections during Savoldo's lifetime, but none of them provides direct visual links to Savoldo's vision of hell. The right wing of Bosch's Bruges *Last Judgement*, however, does bear a striking resemblance to our painting. Indeed, several sources attest that this painting was taken to Italy shortly after its completion in 1510.<sup>242</sup>

At first glance, the Boschian hell seems rather out of context in a *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, and the iconography of the saint running away from a hell is unusual. The general tone of the two paintings does fit in with the cultural climate of the 1510s. As is attested by similarly eerie prints by Campagnola and Raimondi, Venetians were fascinated by the dream-like and the occult in this decade, and the influx of paintings from the north greatly enhanced this fascination.<sup>243</sup> Savoldo responded to this fascination with his two *Temptations*, in which he cleverly mixed northern elements (Patinir, Cranach, and Bosch) with modern Italian art (Raphael and Bellini). In these early works, the references to northern art consist of more or less literal visual quotations, and appear to be somewhat forced. Over the years, however, Savoldo would allow these foreign influences to fully blend in with his Lombard-Venetian manner, becoming one of the few Italian artists to fully capture the mood of northern painting.<sup>244</sup> This can for example be seen in his later night scenes, which were praised highly by Venice's cultural elite. While the *diversion* set in motion with the two *Temptations* was not immediately successful, it was the first step in an ultimately very ingenious strategy. As we have seen, many Venetian painters sold their works on a semi-open market, and it is not unlikely that Savoldo sold his early paintings from his shop window or on the Rialto bridge.<sup>245</sup>

We can see the same fusion of northern, Venetian, and Lombard elements in all of Savoldo's religious easel paintings from this period. In the *Hermits* (Accademia, Venice) and the *Elijah* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), which were probably pendants and can both be dated in the early 1520s, Savoldo blended stark Lombard realism with visual quotations from Dürer and Patiniresque landscapes. The iconography of Savoldo's many versions of the *Rest during the flight to Egypt*, which were created in the 1520s, derives from northern sources, and pictorial elements in the paintings refer to Dürer, David, and Patinir.<sup>246</sup> Apparently, Savoldo

<sup>242</sup> Ebert-Schifferer in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 78.

<sup>243</sup> Ebert-Schifferer in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 82. Especially Raimondi's *Dream of Raphael* (c. 1508) and Campagnola's *Astrologers* (1509) are exemplary of this macabre fascination, which must have been influenced by the works of Bosch and Dürer.

<sup>244</sup> Ebert-Schifferer in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, pp. 84-85.

<sup>245</sup> Matthew in Fantoni, Matthew, and Matthews-Grieco, 2002, p. 254.

<sup>246</sup> Ebert-Schifferer in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, pp. 79-80.

repeatedly returned to northern sources to shape his identity as an innovative artist. His marriage to Maria, a Netherlandish widow who is believed to have been part of Venice's sizeable Flemish community, gave Savoldo a better knowledge of northern culture than most.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, we must not rule out that the painter indeed visited his in-laws in the Netherlands at some point between 1508 and 1515.<sup>248</sup>

### Finishing Pensaben's *Sacra Conversazione* in Treviso

In the summer of 1521 a unique, if also demeaning, opportunity presented itself to Savoldo. The Dominican friars of the San Nicolo in Treviso commissioned the painter to continue the work on a large altarpiece which their previous contractor, the obscure Venetian Dominican Marco Pensaben, had left unfinished after he had rode off in the middle of the night. The monumental *Sacra Conversazione* (Fig. 23) had the potential to become a *presence piece*, but on the other hand, the very idea of a master painter in his forties finishing the work of an unreliable friar was insulting. Be that as it may, Savoldo took on the commission. The entire commission process was meticulously recorded by the friars of San Nicolo, giving us ample information on Pensaben's and Savoldo's payments and contributions. Pensaben worked on the painting for at least 250 days, while Savoldo only worked for 80 days. It is however unlikely, as Gilbert points out, that the sickly and tardy friar actually painted all 250 days.<sup>249</sup> While Savoldo only executed one-third of the commission, he was paid considerably more than his predecessor, who received 193 lire and 9 soldi in contrast to Savoldo's wage of 248 lire.<sup>250</sup> This means that Savoldo's day wage was four times higher than Pensaben's. A satisfactory explanation would be that Savoldo, being a more respected artist, demanded or was offered more money, but all contemporary statements confirm that he was not a well-known painter. It is more likely that the Dominicans simply paid Savoldo the remainder of the fixed price agreed upon in the (lost) original contract with Pensaben.<sup>251</sup> Based on the total amount paid to each painter, we can also deduce that Savoldo actually painted a larger portion of the altarpiece than friar Pensaben, who was not only a procrastinator, but was also likely occupied with the design, the ground layers, and the underpaint. This is confirmed by a stylistic analysis of the final product, which shows many similarities to Savoldo's contemporary works.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Gilbert, 1988, p. 18. In Savoldo's 1526 will, his wife (and sole heir) is referred to as: "Maria fijamenga de Tilandrija". It has been suggested that Tilandrija refers to the Dutch town of Tiel.

<sup>248</sup> Although Aikema and Brown (1999) call a trip to the Netherlands 'improbable' and any documentary evidence to support such a journey is lacking, I do not deem it completely impossible.

<sup>249</sup> Gilbert, 1988, p. 25.

<sup>250</sup> This equals a sum of 40 scudi, which is less than the 50 scudi Pordenone received for the contemporary fresco decorations of the *Casa Ravagnio* (also in Treviso), but much more than the mere 20 scudi Lotto received for his *San Giacomo altarpiece*.

<sup>251</sup> Gilbert, 1988, p. 26.

<sup>252</sup> Gilbert, 1988, p. 26. It should be noted, however, that a stylistic analysis is rather tricky, as none of Pensaben's other works survive.

If Savoldo had hoped for a positive *presence*, he was surely disappointed. Unlike Lotto, he was unable to use the Dominicans' institutional network to generate new commissions, and did not receive altarpiece commissions for many years after 1521. If anything, the Treviso commission proves that Savoldo was a painter of little renown during the early years of the 1520s.<sup>253</sup>

### **An early adapter: Savoldo in the collection of Francesco Zio**

In his *Notizie*, Michiel records two now lost paintings by Savoldo (a *Christ washing the feet of the disciples* and one with an unspecified subject) in the collection of Francesco Zio. The latter was a merchant from of an ancient *cittadino* clan that had lived in Venice for centuries. As the *gastaldo* of the convent of Santa Maria delle Vergini and a prominent member of the Scuola Grande della Carità, he wielded considerable power in Venetian society. Along with his previously discussed nephew Andrea Odoni, Zio was one of the few *cittadino* collectors in Venice and practised many diverting tactics in his collecting habits.<sup>254</sup> According to the account of Michiel, who visited the Zio collection in the early 1520s, Zio did not own any of the highly valued works by Bellini or Giorgione or paintings by northern artists like Van Eyck or Memling. Likewise, Michiel also records few antiquaries in the Zio collection. Instead, Zio introduced new commodities on the Venetian market. Examples of these diverting valuables are natural specimens and curiosities, which feature heavily in Michiel's account of the collection. As for painting, Zio appears to have had a preference for 'new talent', and non-Venetian artists.<sup>255</sup> He owned, for example, paintings by the Dutch Van Scorel and the Bergamask Cariani.

While the presence of two Savoldos in the collection of a highly innovative collector is a sure sign of the painter's slowly increasing fame, the nature of Michiel's recording of the two works is unusual. The connoisseur first attributed the *Christ washing the feet of the disciples* to a different painter, then corrects it into Savoldo, only to change the attribution to a third painter later.<sup>256</sup> Uncharacteristically for the very precise Michiel, the subject of the second painting is not even recorded. All of this suggests that the writer, who was very well informed on Venetian art, did not know Savoldo or his work.<sup>257</sup>

The Zio case therefore gives us a paradoxal view of Savoldo's career in the early 1520s. On one hand, his works were probably collected by one of the most innovative collectors of the city (who also had a keen interest in northern painting), suggesting that his *diversion* strategy was bearing fruit. On the other hand, the single most well-informed connoisseur of Venice appears to have been unacquainted with Savoldo's work, leading us to the inevitable

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<sup>253</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 41.

<sup>254</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 924.

<sup>255</sup> Schmitter, 2004, p. 925.

<sup>256</sup> Michiel, 1520-1524, p. 180.

<sup>257</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 41.

conclusion that Savoldo was, after having spent years in the Lagoon, still operating in the margins of its art market.

### **The Contarini will and Savoldo's serial production of easel paintings**

If Michiel's notes offer an ambiguous image of Savoldo's early career, then so does the will of Pietro Contarini, which was stipulated in 1527. In this will, the sophisticated and powerful patrician orders four canvases of the *Flight to Egypt* ("Quattro teller de la madona che va in Egipto") from Savoldo for his not yet realised family chapel in the SS. Apostoli.<sup>258</sup> While the fact that Savoldo received a commission from an influential patrician is in itself a sign of his growing reputation, it is highly unlikely that the four canvases were actually meant to decorate the chapel. There is no tradition, either in Venice or abroad, of a fourfold pictorial cycle of the Flight to Egypt, and even if there was one, its presence would, iconographically speaking, make no sense in a funerary chapel. Instead, as has been suggested before, Contarini probably ordered four paintings with a similar subject in order to sell them for a higher profit to generate funds for his chapel, which had yet to be built.<sup>259</sup>

Once again, the sources are paradoxal. If the hypothesis that Contarini only ordered the four paintings to sell them later for profit holds true, then we must conclude that Savoldo was still not (universally) seen as prolific artist. However, as has not yet been noted, this would also mean that although Savoldo's wages were probably quite low, the market value of his paintings was high enough for Contarini to invest in them. As the patrician specifically asks for four paintings of the *Flight to Egypt*, it appears that Savoldo had considerable success with this theme. This is confirmed by five surviving paintings depicting the *Rest on the Flight to Egypt*, which might or might not be amongst the four canvases bought by Contarini.<sup>260</sup> The precise characteristics of these five paintings vary, but they are all small-scale easel paintings with more or less similar compositions and iconographies. Significantly, the paintings are once again a product of the fusion of Venetian (especially Giorgione and the early Titian) and northern (Patinir and David) elements. Even if Savoldo's four paintings were not commissioned to decorate a prestigious family chapel, his previously discussed *diversion* was by 1527 successful enough to attract the attention of prominent figures in Venice's cultural scene, such as Pietro Contarini but also Francesco Zio.

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<sup>258</sup> Will of Pietro Contarini, 1527.

<sup>259</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 41.

<sup>260</sup> The five surviving paintings are now in the Episcopal Collection in Dubrovnik and in various private collections.

## 4.2 Breakthrough and oblivion

*Venice, Pesaro, Brescia and Milan: 1524-1535*

In this period, which partially overlaps with the first one, Savoldo was arguably at the height of his career. Through a number of clever business strategies, he received prestigious commissions in Pesaro, Brescia, and even painted for the ducal court in Milan. His career in Venice, which remained his base, was also in the lift.

### ***Venezianità and presence in the Pala di Pesaro***

On June 15 of 1524, Savoldo signed a contract to paint a monumental altarpiece depicting the *Madonna in glory with angels and four saints* for the San Domenico in Pesaro (Fig. 24). As his career took a positive turn after 1525, it seems that the Pesaro altarpiece was a turning point in Savoldo's professional life.<sup>261</sup> Apparently, Savoldo had employed a successful *presence* strategy, but one has to wonder why this had to be in Pesaro, which was far away from Venice's cultural sphere of influence.

The contract, which promised Savoldo a very handsome sum of 200 ducats, was signed by the Dominican prior of the San Domenico. Gilbert and others, however, argue that it is likely that the duke of Urbino and Pesaro, Francesco Maria della Rovere, was also involved in the commission. The Duke's Pesaro residence was located at the same square as the San Domenico, which functioned as the ducal parish church. The involvement of Francesco Maria is supported by the fact that he had visited Venice in the very month the contract was signed. It is entirely possible that he had met Savoldo, or the very least had admired some of his works, and suggested the painter to the Dominicans of Pesaro.<sup>262</sup> It is also possible, that Savoldo was recommended by the Trevisian Dominicans of San Nicolo and received the Pesaro commission through the grapevine of the Dominicans' institutional network.<sup>263</sup> This is made less likely, however, by the fact that three years had passed since Savoldo had completed the Treviso altarpiece, and we have no evidence of other Dominican commissions during these years.

The commission called for a huge altarpiece in the parish church of one of Italy's most prolific families. Therefore, it had every potential for featuring as a *presence piece*. Interestingly, the altarpiece is almost completely devoid of the northern elements by now so characteristic of Savoldo's style. Instead, it features monumental figures in a simple but classical composition. It appears that Savoldo, who had included northern elements to make himself attractive for Venetian customers, now adapted his style to the preferences of his

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<sup>261</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 41.

<sup>262</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 44.

<sup>263</sup> Olivari, 2008, p. 10.

central Italian patrons. This once again shows that in the Renaissance, style was not only an artistic and political, but also a social and financial construct, and could be molded at will.

While Savoldo seemingly suppressed his trademark 'northern style', the Brescian artist made a huge point of his allegiance to the Venetian school by depicting a prominent *veduta* of Venice in the background of the painting (Fig. 25). This was the neither first nor the last time Savoldo featured Venetian cityscapes in seemingly unrelated scenes. The *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* (Private collection, Milan), which might have been painted for the San Domenico as well, features a view of San Marco, while the *Mary Magdalen* (National Gallery, London), painted for a Brescian patron, also has a view of Venice, although its precise location is rather ambiguous.<sup>264</sup> The inclusion of Venetian *vedute* is something of a recurring theme with other Venetian artists too. Giorgione painted a view of San Marco in his *Madonna and child reading* (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), as did Sebastiano del Piombo in his *Death of Adonis* (Uffizi, Florence). Like Savoldo, Sebastiano painted his canvas for a non-Venetian patron; the Sienese banker and Roman Maecenas Agostino Chigi. Both painters were eager to underline their *Venezianità* to brand themselves as the quintessentially Venetian champions of modern painting. Their patrons, on the other hand, may have had similar agendas. The Della Rovere or the Dominicans of Pesaro (or both) apparently wanted to underline their connection with Venice as much as Savoldo did. Indeed, Francesco della Rovere fought as *capitano generale* of the Serenissima in the Italian War of 1521-1526. As he had previously fought against the Venetians as commander-in-chief of the Papal forces and as he was surrounded by enemies in Central Italy, showcasing his allegiance to Venice was a matter of vital importance for the Duke. The Dominicans, too, must have been eager to confirm their affiliation with their Venetian brethren, as the Sanzanipolo was one of the most powerful Dominican convents in Italy.<sup>265</sup> Indeed, the very choice for a Venetian artist instead of a local, and presumably cheaper, one must be seen as another strategy chosen by the patrons to underline their connection with Venice.<sup>266</sup>

### **The *Magdalens*: a successful formula**

In 1527, Savoldo received a commission to paint two paintings for the prominent Averoldi family from his native Brescia. While the subject of one of the works is unknown, the second painting must be the *Mary Magdalen* now in the National Gallery (Fig. 25), as Rossi writes in

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<sup>264</sup> Zampetti, 1985, pp. 54-55. Zampetti points out that in an 18<sup>th</sup>-century inventory of the San Domenico, three additional paintings by Savoldo are recorded: a *Death Christ*, a *Thomas Aquinas* and a small unspecified canvas which might be the Milan painting.

<sup>265</sup> The precise location of Savoldo's *veduta* is interesting in this context, as he adapted it to his Dominican audience. While most discussed cityscapes feature San Marco, the Pesaro altarpiece shows a view of the Fondamenta Nuove (presumably from San Michele), and fittingly features the Dominican Sanzanipolo prominently in the centre.

<sup>266</sup> Olivari, 2008, p. 32.

1620 that it was in the collection of “dottore Lorenzo Averoldo”.<sup>267</sup> The Averoldi were prolific patrons of the arts and their patronage must have been of great importance to Savoldo. Previously, bishop Altobello Averoldi (who had close ties to Venice as its papal nuncio) had commissioned Titian to paint the famous *Averoldi Triptych* for the Brescian church of SS. Nazaro e Celso.

*Seicento* writers attest that the *Mary Magdalen* was, at least in their time, a beloved and famous painting. Rossi describes the London painting as “very beautiful”, while Ridolfi claims it to be a “famous painting” that was copied often.<sup>268</sup> Indeed, the painting is very innovative in its realism as well as in its ambiguity. Stylistically, it is undoubtedly one of Savoldo’s masterworks, but the iconography is even more interesting. As Pardo points out, the exact moment depicted is when Mary realises that Christ has resurrected and is standing right in front of her.<sup>269</sup> At the sound of her name, the saint realises that her lord has arisen, and Savoldo captures her moment of realisation with great skill.<sup>270</sup> The painting is more than just a devotional image, however, as the sensual realism had caused scholars to interpret the woman a gypsy or even a prostitute.<sup>271</sup> It is likely that this ambiguity was intended by Savoldo, who wanted to create an attractive or even witty easel painting.<sup>272</sup> As such, the *Magdalen* is a secular painting as much as a religious one. Once again, the painter used *diversion* to redefine old genres and conventions, creating an attractive painting for private collectors and patrons, as well as fashioning an identity of sophistication and witticism.

As Ridolfi recorded, many versions of Savoldo’s *Magdalen* were in circulation. Five autograph *Magdalens* survive, and it is important to note that the Averoldi painting was probably not the first Savoldo painted.<sup>273</sup> Stylistic comparison with his other works suggests that the Averoldi painting and the one now in Florence are later than the Zürich and Los Angeles paintings.<sup>274</sup> If this is true, then the Averoldi must have seen and appreciated one of Savoldo’s earlier *Magdalens* in Venice before commissioning theirs, which would grow to be the most famous painting of the series. The merit of the Averoldi *Magdalen’s diversion* does therefore not only lie in its own style and concept, but also, like the previously discussed *Rest on the Flight* paintings, in the successful formula of the entire series.

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<sup>267</sup> Penny, 2004 p. 352.

<sup>268</sup> Ridolfi, 1648, p. 272

<sup>269</sup> John 20: 15-16: “Jesus saith to her: ‘Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?’ She, thinking it was the gardener, saith to him: ‘Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where you hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her: ‘Mary’. She, turning, saith to him: ‘Rabboni’ (which is to say: master).”

<sup>270</sup> Pardo, 1989, pp. 67-91.

<sup>271</sup> Penny, 2004, p. 348.

<sup>272</sup> Pardo, 1989, pp. 70-71. Mary Magdalen is often implied to be a repenting prostitute. In most versions of Savoldo’s painting, the Magdalen wears a golden mantilla, which has been interpreted as a reference to the yellow cloak Venetian prostitutes had to wear.

<sup>273</sup> The other paintings are now in the Galleria Palatina (Florence), the Gemäldegalerie (Berlin), the Getty Museum (Los Angeles), and in a private collection in Zürich.

<sup>274</sup> Penny, 2004, pp. 350-352.

## The Milanese sojourn

Savoldo's apprentice Pino, writing in 1548, states that although his master received little recognition during his career, he did work for the last Duke of Milan for some time.<sup>275</sup>

Understandably, Pino presents this feat as the greatest honour of Savoldo's working life. He fails to mention, however, what Savoldo produced specifically during his time in Milan.

Vasari is more specific, and writes that the Brescian master painted four "very beautiful pictures of night and fire" for the *Zecca* (mint) of Milan, which was a government building.<sup>276</sup>

As Francesco II, the last Sforza duke of Milan, ruled from 1530 until 1535, Savoldo must have painted his four works during these years.<sup>277</sup>

Vasari specifically refers to four paintings "of night and fire", leading Gilbert to argue that the *Tobias and the Angel* (Fig. 27) and *Saint Matthew and the Angel* (Fig. 28) must have been painted for the *Zecca*. As the two canvases have (almost) the same dimensions and both feature an iconography of an angel assisting a Biblical figure, it is likely that the two paintings are pendants.<sup>278</sup> However, this does not automatically mean that the pendants had to be made for the Milanese mint, as the *Tobias* can hardly qualify as either a night or a fire painting. Be that as it may, the *Matthew* does offer us a good example of Savoldo's new chiaroscuro paintings. These new paintings, of which this work is the earliest example, were apparently popular in Venice, as Vasari, Pino, and Aretino all mention the painter's proficiency in painting light effects. This indicates that Savoldo's diverting new genre was a highly successful one.

Although we know precious little of the four Milanese paintings, the Duke of Milan was beyond doubt Savoldo's most prestigious patron. It is likely that the painter received the commission because of the successful *presence* of his altarpiece in Pesaro combined with the dynastic contacts of its patrons, as Francesco Sforza was a cousin of the lady of Pesaro.<sup>279</sup> With the Milanese commission, Savoldo must have hoped to enter the household of the Sforzas as a court painter, employing the *service* strategy. This never happened, however, and the direct impact of the commission on his career is hard to assess. The fact that Savoldo only received one commission from the Sforzas does not necessarily indicate that they did not like his work, as his affiliation to the Milanese Sforzas was cut short when the house became extinct after Francesco died childless in 1535.

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<sup>275</sup> Pino, 1548, fol. 5r-5v. Original text in Italian: "Vedete messer Girolamo Bresciano maestro di Paolo Pino, huomo raro nell'arte nostra. & eccellente imitator del tutto, come ha ispesa la vita sua in poche opera, & con poco preggio del nome suo. Vero e ch'un tempo fu proviggionato dall'ultimo Duca di Melano."

<sup>276</sup> Vasari, 1568, V, p. 430. Original text in Italian: "Di mano di Giangiolamo Bresciano si veggiono molte opera in Vinezia et in Milano, e nelle dette case della Zecca sono Quattro quadri di note e di fuochi, molto belli".

<sup>277</sup> Gilbert, 1988, p. 34.

<sup>278</sup> Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 164.

<sup>279</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 44.



## Andrea Odoni and Lorenzo Lotto

In 1532, Michiel recorded the presence of two paintings by Savoldo in the collection of the previously discussed *cittadino* Andrea Odoni.<sup>280</sup> This time, Michiel is more precise in his account, indicating that Savoldo had formed a recognisable artistic identity by the early 1530s. Odoni, as we have seen in Lotto's case study, was a highly innovative collector, and the presence of two paintings by Savoldo in his collection is a clear sign of the painter's growing status.<sup>281</sup> As Odoni was the only heir of his childless uncle Francesco Zio, one should expect that the two Savoldos owned by the latter would reappear in his nephew's collection. This is not the case, however, and the two older paintings may have been sold by Odoni before Michiel visited his palazzo.<sup>282</sup>

In Odoni's collection, Savoldo must have seen Lotto's famous *Portrait of Andrea Odoni*, and it has been suggested that he tried to emulate the latter's popularity in the portrait genre (see chapter 2) with his *Portrait of Gaston de Foix* (Louvre, Paris), which was made in the final years of the 1520s.<sup>283</sup> Indeed, Savoldo appropriated Lotto's innovative horizontal format, and the sophisticated postures of De Foix and Odoni resemble each other to a certain extent. It is unlikely however, that the *Portrait of Gaston de Foix* was meant for a Venetian patron, as De Foix had been one of the Serenissima's most hated enemies in the War of the League of Cambrai (1508-1516). Instead, it is more likely to have been executed for a French patron, who would probably have little knowledge of Lotto's art. A wilful emulation of Lotto is therefore improbable, although Savoldo certainly used elements of the latter's style.

## Contemporary sources on Savoldo's (lack of) success

In making an assessment of Savoldo's professional success, we can make use of three already mentioned writers: Paolo Pino, Paolo Aretino, and Giorgio Vasari. The first two testimonies were both published in 1548, and both attest that Savoldo was still alive, but no longer painting due to what Aretino calls "his present decrepitude".<sup>284</sup> The two texts are also the last sources referring to Savoldo as still being alive, so we can assume that he passed away sometime after 1548.

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<sup>280</sup> Michiel, 1532, p. 160. The two paintings described by Michiel are a *Contigence of Scipio* ("La tela della giovane presentata a Scipione fu de man de Giarolamo Bressano") and a *Nude*, which was fittingly displayed in the bedroom ("La nuda grande destesa da drietto el letto fu de mano de Jieronimo Savoldo Bressano").

<sup>281</sup> Gilbert in Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990,, p. 41.

<sup>282</sup> It is theoretically possible that Zio had sold the paintings after Michiel recorded his collection in the first years of the 1520s. This is highly unlikely, however, as Zio died in 1523.

<sup>283</sup> Exh. Cat. Brescia and Frankfurt, 1990, p. 152.

<sup>284</sup> Aretino, 1548, letter to Gianmaria (quoted in Gilbert, 1988). Original text in Italian: "[...] lui decrepitudine ormai".

Pino's statements about Savoldo in his *Dialogo di Pittura* are of exceptional importance, as he was the latter's pupil, and therefore must have been in a knowledgeable position. Pino proudly boasts that he was Savoldo's student, and praises his former master highly, stating that: "I have seen by him certain dawns with reflections of the sun, certain darks with a thousand clever details, truer to life than the Flemish."<sup>285</sup> Pino states that his master excelled the most in painting light, and gives his laudation additional praise by arguing that Savoldo was so good at it, that he even outshone the Flemish painters.<sup>286</sup> As has been discussed in the paragraph on the Milanese mint, Pino also laments the fact that Savoldo received little recognition for his artistic prowess: "Sometimes, just because a hand or a fold of a painter is displeasing, he will be rejected. Thus it has been with Savoldo, Paolo Pino's master, a man rare in our art and excellent in representing everything, who has spent his life with few works and little appreciation".<sup>287</sup> Although Pino praises his master highly, it is evident that only few would have agreed with him. Pino's claim that Savoldo had neither painted much nor received significant appreciation for the few things he did paint is of high value to this research. As Savoldo's pupil, downplaying the fame of his master was counterproductive to his own interests, as it also reflects badly on him. Therefore, the only logical reason why Pino would have written down the sentence is because it was true.

This image of a brilliant yet unrecognised master is confirmed by Aretino's letter to Savoldo's otherwise unknown pupil Gianmaria. In this letter, Aretino offers Gianmaria his publicising services, writing:

"Meanwhile make use of whatever I have power to do and can, just as you would with that excellent old man who has been to you as master and father. Without his name being mentioned I know that the estimable Gian Girolamo of Brescia [=Savoldo] is meant. *Certainly, he ranks with the exceptional among those who handle colours by vocation upon wall, canvas and panel: in fresco, guazzo, and oil he is fine; he knows much and works well.* Hence the pity of his now being all too aged. One comfort is to be found in his present decrepitude, in his knowing that the beautiful works which have come from his hand will make him live again in infinite places in the spirit of memory, *so that the fame of his name through all Italy will be greater than at present.*"<sup>288</sup> (My italics)

<sup>285</sup> Pino, 1548, fols. 29v-30r. Original text in Italian: "Messer Gierolamo Bresciano in questa parte era dottissimo, della cui mano vidi già alcune aurore con rifletti del sole, certe oscurita con mille discriitioni ingeniosissime, & rare, le qual cose hanno piu vera imagine del proprio, che li Fiamenghi."

<sup>286</sup> The boast that a painter was so good at something that he emulated even the Flemish in truth to life was a common trope in Renaissance art treatises.

<sup>287</sup> Pino, 1548, fols. 5r-5v. Original text in Italian: "[...]che spiarendogli una figura, una mano fatta da un pittore, lo pigliano in esoso di maniera, che mai piu se compiacerono nell'opre sue. Vedete messer Giarolimo Bresciano maestro di Paolo Pino, huomo raro nell'arte nostra. & eccellente imitator del tutto, come ha ispesa la vita sua in poche opera, & con poco preggio del nome suo."

<sup>288</sup> Aretino, 1548, letter to Gianmaria (quoted in Gilbert, 1988). Original text in Italian: "In tanto prelevatevi del cio chi'io vaglio e posso, secondo che fareste di quell vecchione ottimo, che vi e stato come maestro e padre. So, che senza proferirgli il nome, del valente Gian Girolamo di Brescia s'intende. Certo, tra gli esercitanti il maneggiar de' colori nelle mura, nelle tele, e in le tavole, egli e de' rari: in fresco, a guazzo e a olio vale: molto

Aretino, in his usual fashion, exaggerates greatly. It is, for example, unlikely that Savoldo ever executed any works in fresco, nor should his offer to promote the already retired painter's work be taken seriously. His praise of the old Savoldo seems genuine enough, however, and he confirms Pino's claim that Savoldo did not receive the recognition he deserved.

Vasari, devoting only a single paragraph to Savoldo, does not mention the painter's lack of success, but is generous with his praise. Vasari thought the Milanese paintings, which have already been discussed, to be "very beautiful", and he used the same classification to describe a *Nativity by night* which he had seen in Venice. Vasari's next sentence is rather ambiguous: "And there are some other things with similar fancies, of which he was master. But since he did nothing but such things, and nothing large, one can only say of him that he was of a fanciful and sophisticated mind, and what he did merits such commendation."<sup>289</sup> Here, Vasari seemingly refers to bizarre paintings like the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, claiming that Savoldo only produced these 'trivial' kind of paintings and created few altarpieces, although we must bear in mind that the writer was notoriously biased against Northern Italian painters. Calling him *capriccioso e sofisticato*, Vasari confirms what the former two writers already hinted at: that Savoldo's art was too complex and particular to satisfy a larger audience. Only a small circle of high-brow connoisseurs, including Pino and Aretino, appreciated Savoldo's art, and this just barely enough to maintain a successful business.

Although Savoldo received some commissions for altarpieces in the following years, Pino's and Aretino's testimonies, which are written after Savoldo's retirement and therefore take his entire professional life into account, show that their *presence* was not successful enough to significantly alter the course of the painter's career.

It is important to note that, in contrast to Lotto and Pordenone, Savoldo hardly ever moved to other cities to take on commissions after having settled in Venice. He occasionally produced paintings for clients in his native Brescia, and worked briefly in Pesaro, Milan, near-by Treviso, and possibly in Verona. All of these short stays, however, seem to be connected to one single commission. While Lotto had to work all over Italy to maintain his career and Pordenone moved back and forth between various towns to expand his, Savoldo lacked the ability or interest to tap into new markets. While the lack of support and his limited artistic output suggest that the painter must have been in a dire financial situation, his funds were sufficient enough to remain in Venice, which must have been a very expensive city. We know that Savoldo had at least two other painters working in his workshop (although not necessarily at the same time): Paolo Pino and Aretino's

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sa, e bene adopra. ONde e peccato il purtroppo mature dei suoi anni in la vita. Un conforto in se tiene la di lui decrepitudine ormai. Il sapere egli che le belle e laudate cose, dalla mano uscitegli, lo ravviveranno in infiniti luoghi nello spirit della memoria, talc he la fama saragli per tutta Italia al nome, piu che al presente, maggiore."<sup>289</sup> Vasari, 1568, V, p. 430. Original text in Italian: "e sono alcune alter cose di simili fantasie, delle quali era maestro. Ma perché costui si adoperò solamente in simili cose e non fece cose grandi, non si può dire altro di lui, se non che fu capriccioso e sofisticato, e che quello che fece merita di essere molto comendato."

correspondent Gianmaria. It is not clear, however, if these men were pupils (who would typically pay for their education, and therefore yield money) or assistants (who would have to be paid by Savoldo, and therefore cost money), as in both cases Savoldo is referred to as “maestro”, which can mean teacher as well as boss.<sup>290</sup> Therefore, the question remains what provided Savoldo with sufficient money to maintain his workshop and his family. It is theoretically possible that he sold the few works he made for private patrons for rather high prices, although this is unlikely given his meagre reputation, and would also be out of sync with the common assumption that altarpieces generated more money than easel paintings (which is confirmed by the numbers in Lotto’s account book). Another explanation might be that Savoldo, who hailed from a (minor) patrician family and was married to the widow of a Flemish merchant, was in a more comfortable starting position than the *popolani* Lotto and Pordenone.

## Conclusion

Due to a lack of primary sources, it is more difficult to assess the effectiveness of Savoldo’s business strategies than it was for the previous two painters. Authorative secondary sources, however, state clearly that the output of Savoldo’s workshop was limited and that the master received little recognition from the general public. These remarks are supported by the fact that Savoldo received few public commissions, making his *presence* rather limited. While he appears to have made some attempts at establishing *service*, for example with the Della Rovere, Averoldi, and Sforza, he was unable to maintain a lasting relationship with his patrons. Instead, he focused almost exclusively on easel paintings for private customers. It is possible that he did so to specialise and maximise his profit, but it is more likely that his emphasis on the private sector was born out of a lack of success in the public one.

Savoldo constantly practiced *diversion* in his easel paintings, as did his collectors such as Zio and Odoni. The primary aspect of Savoldo’s *diversion* consisted of his fusion of Lombard, Venetian, and northern elements. This ‘fusion-style’ developed from visual quotations from northern artists, as we have seen in the *Temptation of St. Anthony*, to a more intrinsic northerness, as is apparent in his highly praised “night and fire paintings”.

Reviewing all this information, it becomes apparent that, despite several highs and lows in his career, Savoldo was not an artist operating in the margins of the Venetian art world. Indeed, he made works for various sophisticated patrons, and his works are praised by champions of Venice’s cultural elite such as Pino and Aretino. Instead, the most problematic aspect in Savoldo’s career is that he was unable to break out of the avant-garde circles of Venetian society. Neither representative enough to secure prolific commissions from the

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<sup>290</sup> Aretino even states that Savoldo has been “come maestro e padre” to Gianmaria, which would be more indicative of a teacher-pupil relationship than of a master-assistant interaction. As Aretino often exaggerates and we do not know how well he actually knew Gianmaria, Savoldo, or his workshop, we cannot take his words at face-value.

government or church, nor popular enough to work for a broader audience, Savoldo, like many artists after him, was trapped in the sophisticated, yet unrewarding, circles of the avant-garde.

# Conclusion

## Summary

We have seen that the fierce rivalry between painters in *cinquecento* Venice, fostered by a competition-driven patronage system present in all layers of society, pushed many painters to the margins of the Venetian art market, while it prevented others from entering it. Being entrepreneurs, these painters had to make conscious choices about how to enhance their professional, social, financial, and cultural status, and therefore used a diverse range of strategies. As their (starting) positions were unsatisfactory, they had to be ambitious as well as creative.

The three painters discussed in this thesis used overlapping yet also distinctively different tactics to enhance their careers. Of all three artists, Lotto had the most promising starting position. He was born and raised in Venice, presumably educated in the Bellini workshop, and commenced his career as a court artist of the sophisticated bishop de' Rossi in Treviso. In his early career he made frequent and successful use of *presence*, and his *presence* was usually intertwined with his self-fashioning as a quintessentially Venetian painter. Not bound by a wife or children, Lotto was able to move frequently and change residence multiple times. Lotto's fortunes changed for the worst during his first Venetian period, as his *presence*-strategy failed when he allowed personal feelings to get into the way of the completion of his *Saint Antoninus altarpiece*. Forced to try out different approaches, Lotto switched to *diversion*, and was temporarily successful with his highly innovative portraits for private patrons. This success did not last, however, as Lotto left Venice a few years later and divided his late career between the Marche and the Veneto. Although he received some high-profile commissions during this late period, Lotto appears to have grown increasingly out of sync with modern tastes, especially in metropolitan Venice. He often painted for clients of low social standing, constantly had to go far below his asking prices, and never managed to recover from this state of *damage-control*.

Although Pordenone eventually built the most successful career of all, he actually began in the least promising starting position. As an ambitious artist trapped in rural Friuli, his style and status matured slowly during his early career. After his encounter with the art of Michelangelo during his trip(s) to Rome, however, Pordenone's career changed dramatically. He fully absorbed the monumental modernity of the Roman school into his own style, and presented himself as a radical and innovative master *frescante* in Northern Italy. Pordenone successfully employed *presence* in prolific church decorations, but also increased his *presence* drastically by painting many house façades. In Venice, Pordenone constantly and aggressively sought competition with Titian, once again presenting himself as the champion of modern art. His *challenge*-approach bore fruit, as he received many prestigious commissions from churches, *scuole*, and the Venetian State.

The Brescian Savoldo appears to have faced great difficulties during his early Venetian career. He had no access to public commissions and was probably unknown to most Venetians, so he specialised in diverting easel paintings for private patrons. Making use of the popularity of northern art in Venice, Savoldo tried to find a niche in the market by referring heavily to Netherlandish and German painting in his works, presenting himself as a cheap and witty alternative to the expensive painters from the North. His serial production of certain subjects suggests that he tried to increase his visibility in the Venetian art world. His *diversion* eventually had a positive impact on his career, as he attracted influential patrons such as the Della Rovere of Pesaro, the Averoldi of Brescia, and the Sforza of Milan. He remained, either out of necessity or out of specialisation, heavily focused on easel painting, and received only a handful of altarpiece commissions. Authoritative second-hand sources strongly suggest that Savoldo gained little recognition from a general audience, but was highly appreciated by a small circle of culturally innovative artists and intellectuals.

### **Convergence and divergence**

All three artists made, in varying degrees of frequency and success, use of the previously discussed strategies. It is interesting to see that especially *presence* and *diversion* were used in different ways by the artists. Lotto's *presence* was almost exclusively dependent on altarpieces, which were often commissioned by the Dominican Order. Lotto's *presence* was also very locally concentrated, as it covered only small and separate regions. Pordenone's *presence*, on the other hand, spanned a much wider geographical scope, as projects in Mantua would yield commissions in Cremona. His strategy was also different, as he preferred fresco decorations over altarpieces as *presence pieces*, and frequently executed outdoor decorations to increase his *presence*, making himself very hard to ignore. Savoldo, finally, hardly had any public *presence* at all, as he concentrated on easel paintings.

While the more successful Pordenone had little need to practice *diversion* in the purest sense of the term, Lotto and especially Savoldo did. Often, *diversion* led to significant innovation, and involved the patronage of social climbers. Examples are Lotto's symbolically charged Venetian portraits in the 1530s and Savoldo's 'fusion-style' easel paintings in the 1520s.

In different yet comparable ways, the artists constantly tried to fashion their identities for artistic as well as socio-economic reasons. Style was the primary vehicle for this artistic self-fashioning. As we have seen, all three painters employed their style to pledge artistic allegiance, create a marketable identity, attract new customers, or accommodate to the tastes of old ones. While style was first and foremost an artistic construct, it must therefore also be seen as an ideological, social, and financial one.

Lotto appears to have been preoccupied with self-fashioning mostly in his early career, and had the least defined artistic identity of the three painters in his later years. In his early

*presence pieces* in Treviso and Recanati he made a point of his *venezianità*, presenting himself as the true artistic heir of Bellini in these provincial centres. During his first Venetian period, he employed highly distinctive *colore* to present himself as an innovative alternative for Titian, but it seems that his attempt backfired. His lack of a distinctive identity in his late career may have contributed to its downwards spiral.

Pordenone was far more obvious in his self-fashioning. In Friuli, he always painted in a rather crude style to accommodate to the more provincial tastes of his patrons there. In Venice and beyond, however, he constantly used his bold Roman style to fashion an identity of otherness, radicalism, and modernity. Not only his style, but also his way of conducting business contributed to his image of a radical challenger to the status quo. By showing his deep knowledge of Michelangelesque modernity, and attacking Titian's 'old-fashioned' Venetian style, he successfully built a career in Venice.

Savoldo, too, presented himself as a proponent of otherness and modernity, albeit of a different kind than Pordenone's. Savoldo's modernity was a Northern European one, which bore different connotations than the Roman manner, and the painter used it to fashion an identity of sophistication and witticism, which made him attractive for a small circle of culturally refined clients. Although his early 'northern' easel paintings were rather artificial with their literal artistic quotations, he later internalised his northernness and fully incorporated it in his paintings, making himself popular amongst the cultural avant-garde of Venice.

As is proven by these case studies, Renaissance painters painted for all layers of society, although we can reasonably assume that they primarily wanted to paint for the higher classes. Lotto's *Libro* gives a detailed overview of his clientele and shows that he mostly worked for the middle and lower classes, although he also received some patrician commissions and painted frequently for the Church. The *Libro* also shows that almost all of Lotto's acquaintances were *popolani*, and that he rarely moved outside these circles.

Ever the social climber, the mason's son Pordenone started his career by working for Friulian parish priests and impoverished feudal nobility, but eventually received commissions from patrician families, wealthy churches, prestigious *scuole*, and even the Venetian State. His increased purchase of land holdings in Friuli and his knighthood received from the king of Hungary show that he had successfully climbed the social ladder by the time of his unexpected death.

As the scion of a minor patrician family, Savoldo was of a higher social rank than Lotto or Pordenone, but his title was of little help in his career, and may have been irrelevant in Venice. While the information on his clientele is incomplete, he eventually attracted some very sophisticated patrons. The serial productions in his early career, however, were probably meant for less prominent buyers.



The three painters all often worked for ambitious newcomers. Many of their clients were social climbers such as Malchiostro, *cittadino* collectors such as Zio and Odoni, foreigners such as Talenti, and newly formed institutions such as the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. Lacking money or connections to commission or collect established artists, these social climbers were more likely to contract 'new talent' and engage in diverting tactics. As they were unable to boast a legacy of wealth or venerability, they fashioned an identity of innovativeness and modernity. In this way, the interests as well as the strategies of painters and their clients were often surprisingly similar.

Lotto's case is particularly interesting, as some of his *popolani* portraits have survived, although many more painters must have executed similar paintings. In Lotto's portraits, it becomes apparent that the *popolani* sitters used art to fashion an identity of craftsmanship and simplicity. Further research would be more than welcome on this intriguing group of paintings and similar works of arts, as *popolano* art has, despite its potential to reshape our understanding of Renaissance art, long been ignored by art historians.

Further research could also widen the scope of this one by examining other artists working in Venice such as Bonifazio Veronese or Jacopo Bassano. It would also be interesting to see if artists from Venice's colonies, such as Marco Basaiti, Andrea Schiavone, and El Greco, made use of similar tactics or employed different ones than their Italian peers. Another worthwhile approach is to compare artists working in different mediums, such as sculptors, goldsmiths, or architects into account. Of course, it is also possible to extend the geographical coverage of this research by analysing the position of marginalised painters in other major Italian centres like Milan, Florence, Rome, or Naples.

Besides the results discussed above, my research gave a critical evaluation of the careers of Lotto, Pordenone, and Savoldo, providing new insights and nuancing the often too optimistic view of their contemporary success. It also attempted to make art history more inclusive by focusing on painters who were not active at the top of the artistic food chain, but often operated at its lower regions, where art was a matter of eating or being eaten. More importantly, I hope to have contributed to a different way of looking at Renaissance art, which does not only see painting as a cultural phenomenon, but also as a social and a political one. While this notion is commonly accepted by scholars of modern and contemporary art, there is still much work to be done in Renaissance studies. If we are to fully understand the Renaissance artist, we must first demystify him and nuance the trope of the society-shunning genius that started in the very period under consideration and has only intensified since. Some may worry that a focus on the entrepreneurship of painters will lead us to diminish their artistic creativity, but as this thesis draws to a conclusion, I would argue that this more complex reality only makes the multi-layered life and art of the Renaissance painter more intriguing.

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# Figures



Figure 1: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Bernardo de' Rossi*, 1505, oil on wood, 54 x 41 cm, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples. Source: wga.hu



Figure 2: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Giovanna de' Rossi (?)*, 1505, oil on wood, 36 x 28 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon. Source: wga.hu

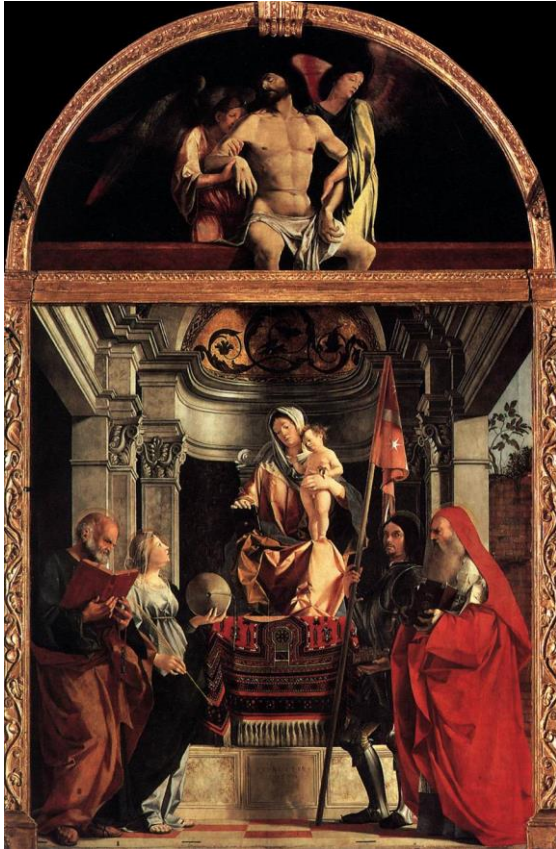


Figure 3: Lorenzo Lotto, *Santa Cristina altarpiece*, 1505, oil on wood, 177 x 162 cm, Santa Cristina al Tiverone, Treviso. Source: wga.hu



Figure 4: Giovanni Bellini, *San Zaccaria altarpiece*, 1501, oil on canvas (transferred from wood), 402 x 273 cm, San Zaccaria, Venice. Source: wga.hu





Figure 5: Lorenzo Lotto, *Recanati polyptych*, 1508, oil on wood, 227 x 108 (central panel), Pinacoteca Civica, Recanati.  
Source: wga.hu



Figure 6: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Andrea Odoni*, 1527, oil on canvas, 104 x 117 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court.  
Source: wga.hu



Figure 7: Lorenzo Lotto, *Saint Nicholas in glory*, 1527-1529, oil on canvas, 335 x 188 cm, Chiesa dei Carmini, Venice. Source: wga.hu



Figure 8: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Febo da Brescia*, 1544, oil on canvas, 82 x 77 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Source: wga.hu



Figure 9: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Laura da Pola*, 1544, oil on canvas, 90 x 75 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Source: wga.hu



Figure 10: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of Giacomo Stuer and his son*, 1544, oil on canvas, 89 x 75 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Source: philamuseum.org





Figure 11: Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of maestro Battista of Rocca Contrada*, 1552, oil on canvas, Musei Capitolini, Rome. Source: museicapitoloni.org



Figure 12: Lorenzo Lotto, *The alms of Saint Antoninus*, 1542, oil on wood, 332 x 235 cm, Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice. Source: wga.hu





Figure 13: Pordenone, *Fresco decoration of the Malchiostro Chapel*, 1520, Duomo, Treviso. Source: [wikicommons.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duomo_Treviso_Malchiostro_Chapel.jpg)



Figure 14: Pordenone, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1520, fresco, Malchiostro Chapel, Duomo, Treviso. Source: [wikicommons.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duomo_Treviso_Malchiostro_Chapel.jpg)



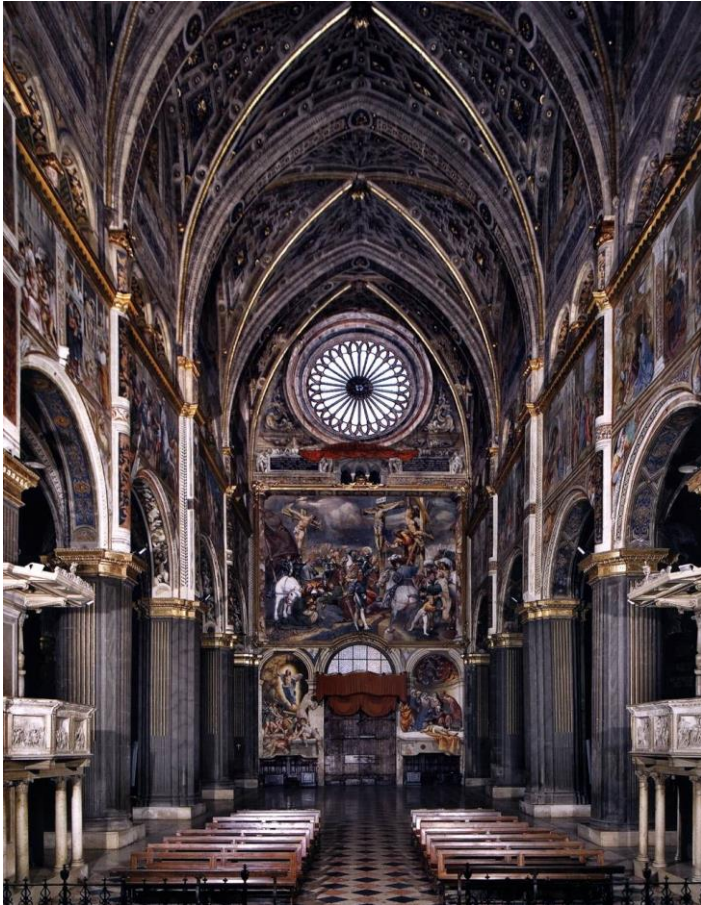


Figure 15: Pordenone, *Fresco decoration of the Duomo di Cremona*, 1521, Duomo, Cremona. Source: wga.hu



Figure 16: Pordenone, *Death of Saint Peter Martyr*, 1526, drawing, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Source: wga.hu



Figure 17: Pordenone, *Saints Martin and Christopher with suplicants*, c. 1527-1528, oil on panel and fresco, 250 x 140 (panels), San Rocco, Venice. Source: wga.hu



Figure 18: Pordenone, *God the Father with putti, the church fathers, and the evangelists*, c. 1527, fresco, San Giovanni Elemosinario, Venice. Source: C. Wijnands





Figure 19: Pordenone, *Noli me Tangere*, 1534, oil on canvas, Museo del Duomo, Cividale del Friuli. Source: [wikicommons.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Noli_me_tangere_Pordenone.jpg)



Figure 20: Titian, *Presentation of the Virgin at the temple*, 1534-1538, oil on canvas, 345 x 775 cm, Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice. Source: [wga.hu](https://www.wga.hu)





Figure 21: Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1515-1520, oil on poplar wood, 58 x 86 cm, Puschkin Museum, Moscow. Source: wikicommons.org



Figure 22: Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1515-1520, oil on panel, 70 x 120 cm, Timken Museum of Art, San Diego



Figure 23: Marco Pensaben and Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *San Nicolò altarpiece*, 1521, oil on panel, 553 x 330 cm, San Nicolò, Treviso. Source: [palazzospinelli.com](http://palazzospinelli.com)





Figure 24: Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Madonna in Glory with Angels and Four Saints (Pala di Pesaro)*, 1524-1526, oil on panel, 475 x 307 cm, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Source: [pinacotecabrera.org](http://pinacotecabrera.org)



Figure 25: Detail of Figure 24.



Figure 26: Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Mary Magdalene*, c. 1528-1530, oil on canvas, 89 x 82 cm, National Gallery, London. Source: [nationalgallery.org.uk](http://nationalgallery.org.uk)



Figure 27: Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Tobias and the Angel*, c. 1530-1532, oil on canvas, 96 x 124 cm, Galleria Borghese, Rome. Source: [wga.hu](http://wga.hu)





Figure 28: Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, c. 1530-1532, oil on canvas, 93 x 125 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Source: metmuseum.org

# Appendices

## 1. Lotto's *Libro di Spese Diverse*

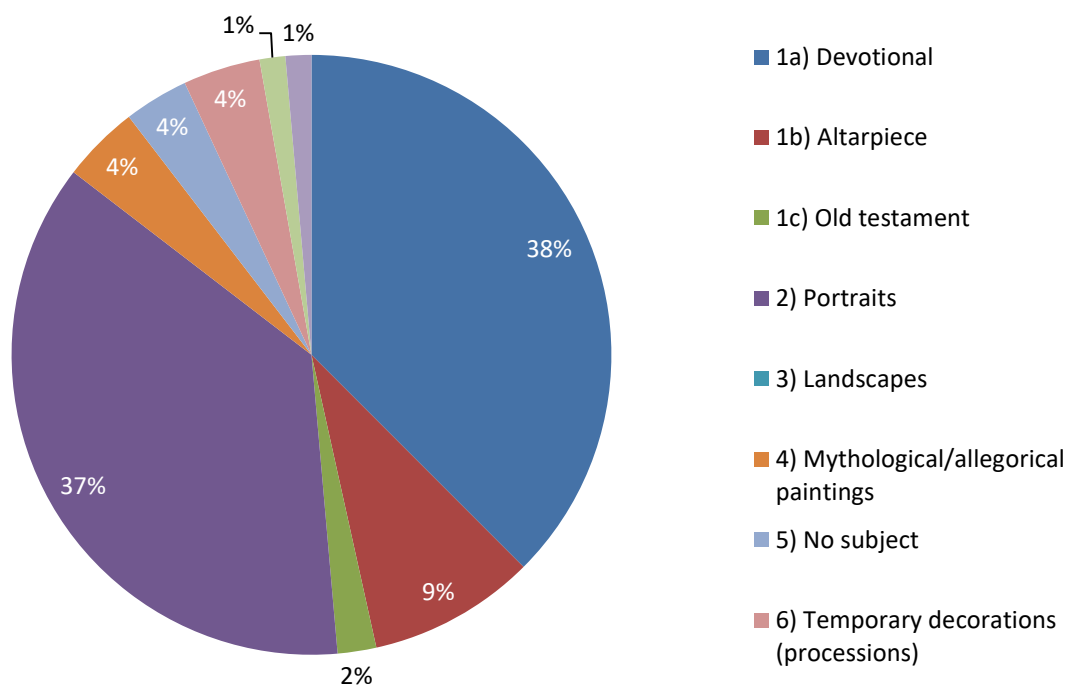
GENRE	TOTAL	ARTISAN	CITIZEN	PATRICIAN	RELIGIOUS PUBLIC	RELIGIOUS PRIVATE	FAMILY
<b>1) Religious</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
1a) Devotional	54	10	6	6	6	6	2
1b) Altarpiece	13		3		9		
1c) Old testament	3					1	1
<b>2) Portraits</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3) Mythological/allegorical paintings</b>	<b>6</b>					<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4) Unspecified subject</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>5) Temporary decorations (processions)</b>	<b>6</b>					<b>1</b>	
<b>6) Painted sculptures</b>	<b>2</b>						<b>2</b>
<b>7) Replicas</b>	<b>2***</b>						
TOTAL COMMISSIONS	144	20	18	15	16	16	9
DONATIONS	11		3	3**		4**	1
<b>8) Restorations</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>				<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>9) Finishing other artists' works</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>					
<b>10) Miscellaneous</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	
TOTAL OTHER PROJECTS	12	3	2		1	3	1
TOTAL	156*	23	20	15	17	19	10

\*It is important to note that in 1/3 of the cases, it was impossible to determine the social rank of the client, either because Lotto did not name the client or did not state his or her profession. The remaining 2/3 should therefore be seen as an indication rather than as an absolute number. Although it is theoretically possible that a high number of the 53 unspecified patrons consisted of merchants, making it the largest group in Lotto's clientele, it is far more likely that the occupation of the missing clients is relative to that of the known ones.

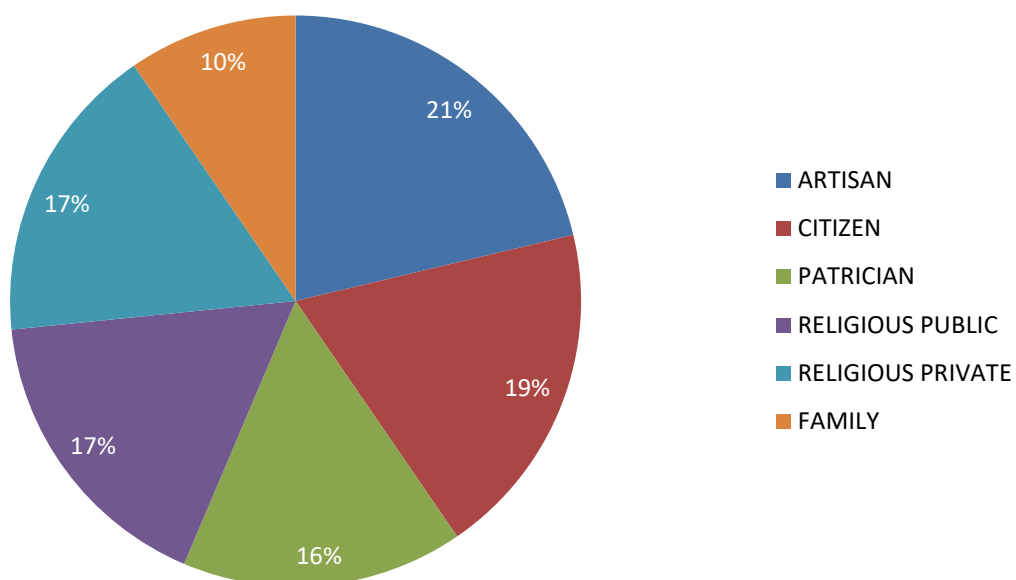
\*\* Lotto relatively often offered one or more of his paintings as a gift to noblemen or high-ranking clerics, most likely in the hope of enhancing his career. Significantly, these gifts never resulted in new commissions by the receiver.

\*\*\* On two occasions, Lotto made replicas of his own devotional pieces to have them sold in Sicily. It is not clear if these paintings were sold and if so, who bought them.

### Genres in Lotto's *Libro*



### Identifiable clients in Lotto's *Libro*



## 2. Wages for projects mentioned in the text

Painting	Date	Genre	Patron	Location	Wage in ducats	Comments
<b>LOTTO</b>						
<i>Santa Cristina altarpiece</i>	1504	Altarpiece	Padre Franchino (rector of Santa Cristina del Tiverton)	Santa Cristina del Tiverton, Treviso	90	The original price was 40 ducats.
<i>Recanati Polyptych</i>	1506	Altarpiece	Dominicans of San Domenico	San Domenico, Recanati	320	
<i>Vatican Frescoes</i>	1509	Fresco decorations	Pope Julius II	<i>Stanze</i> , Vatican (now lost)	150	
<i>Saint Antoninus Altarpiece</i>	1542	Altarpiece	Dominicans of Sanzanipolo	Sanzanipolo, Venice	125	The Dominicans withheld 75 ducats for various reasons, making the final price 50 ducats.
<i>San Lio altarpiece</i>	1542	Altarpiece	Rector of S. Lio	San Lio, Venice (now lost)	20	
<i>Sacra Conversazione</i>	1548	Altarpiece	Scuola della Concezion	San Giacomo dell'Orio, Venice	9	Lotto was originally promised 20 ducats.
<i>Assumption of the Virgin</i>	1549	Altarpiece	Franciscans of San Francesco	San Francesco, Ancona	50	
<i>Portraits of Febo da Brescia and Laura da Pola</i>	1544	Portrait	Febo da Brescia	Pinacoteca di Brera	29	
<i>Portrait of Giacomo Stuer and his son</i>	1544	Portrait	Giacomo Stuer	Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia	1,92	Lotto's asking price was 15 ducats.
<i>Portrait of Maestro Battista</i>	1552	Portrait	Battista of Rocca Contrada	Musei Capitolini, Rome	8	
<b>PORDENONE</b>						
<i>Casa Ravagnino</i>	c. 1520	Façade	Ravagnino family	Casa Ravagnino,	50	



<i>façade</i>				Treviso (now lost)		
<i>Cremona frescoes</i>	1520-1521	Fresco decoration	<i>Massari</i> of Cremona Duomo	Cremona Duomo	454	The contract originally promised Pordenone 242 ducats, but payment records show that he eventually received 454.
<i>San Rocco decorations</i>	1527-1529	Fresco decoration and paintings	Scuola Grande di San Rocco	San Rocco, Venice	At least 30	Only the record of the final payment has survived.
<b>SAVOLDO</b>						
<i>San Nicolo altarpiece</i>	1521	Altarpiece	Dominicans of San Nicolo	San Nicolo, Treviso	39,68	