

IVAN DUKNOVIĆ

I KRUGOVI NJEGOVE DJELATNOSTI

GIOVANNI DALMATA

E LE OPERE DELLA SUA CERCHIA



Zbornik radova



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ON THE VENETIAN MISFORTUNE OF GIOVANNI
DALMATA: A HYPOTHESIS ON THE FAÇADE
DECORATION OF THE SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN MARCO

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The essay focuses on motives that might have caused the alienation of Giovanni Dalmata from Venice, where he had spent two years (1498-1500) working for the *Scuola grande di San Marco* on a sculpture for the grand marble altar of the chapter house. A series of documents and stylistic traits allow us to hypothesize that certain parts of the Scuola's façade decoration, e.g. the false porticos in perspective and the lower frieze of the first order might have been created by Dalmata, whose taking part at the architectural building site seems to have been the true reason of his alienation from the Venetian circle of sculptors guided by Pietro Lombardo with the support of Giovanni Bellini, both hostile to the arrival of fearsome competition.

Key words: Giovanni Dalmata; Venice; Scuola Grande di San Marco; Sculpture

Turning the pages of the Italian art history it should not be too difficult to run into cases similar to the one of Giovanni da Traù (*Translator's Note – also known in Italian as Giovanni Dalmata and in Croatian as Ivan Duknović*), who had spent the period between 1498 and 1500 in Venice working on a project which, unfortunately, did not go well. He was supposed to sculpt the left part of a bas-relief as a decoration of the grand altar's frontal, and which (according to the conditions of the assignment contract of which we have come into possession, and which was drawn up on October 22nd 1498), was supposed to be placed »at the bottom of the grand hall« of the Scuola di San Marco »in three parts, i.e. one in the middle, one on the right and the third one on the left«. Giovanni's task was to create the left panel by portraying the school's saint patron's life scene, »with buildings in perspective and marble figures as is presented in master Giovanni's wax model. The aforementioned panel needs to have a nice base, from where the story will start developing towards the top, through the marble figures and edifices, and at the bottom of the perspectives behind the figures the author needs

to use the stones as follows: all figures need to be made of Carrara marble from the coast of Pisa«¹.

These meticulous indications leave no doubt: it was very important for the great guardian of the School, Bernardino de' Grassi, that Giovanni accept all requirements made by the clients, to the extent of the type of stone or marble crusts of *spolia* (typical of Venetian architectural decoration used between 15th and 16th century) that should be inserted at the bottom of the marble figures in the forefront. There were supposed to be seventeen of them, out of which »9 whole ones« i.e. sculpted in the round, »and behind them as many as can proportionally fit« into the scene, which was supposed to be 13 feet wide (more than three and a half meters). The figures were to be around 5 feet tall, i.e. of normal size, considered to be average height of the time. The agreed compensation was considerably high, as befitted a well known and appreciated artist: Giovanni was to be given four hundred fifty gold ducats at the consignment of the job up to two years, paid during the performance of work according to indications of Giovanni di Simone, a goldsmith and one of the most influential brethren of the Scuola. From a different document we learn that on February 2nd 1500 the contract was contested by the new grand guardian in order to not continue »the mentioned work since it did a great damage and caused shame to the Scuola«, so the issue got to the court of *Giustizia Vecchia*, as we could learn from a third document, which refers to a possible deal with the sculptor who in the meantime received only eighty ducats despite the fact he had already finished two thirds of the work.

What might have been the cause of such an abrupt dismissal of a well acknowledged and widely known sculptor, recognized not only in Rome where he had already finished his most celebrated opera, Pope Paul II's (Pietro Barbo) memorial death stone, and whose fame must have gotten all the way to Venice given the appreciation of Pope's nephews, cardinals Marco Barbo and Giovanni Battista Zen, the latter being the son of Isabella Barbo and Nicolò Zen? The connoisseurs of the great Venetian schools' commissions of the period, as well as the governing projects of the Doge's Palace can easily come to the most plausible conclusion, deducted without fear of making an error: pronounced protectionism enjoyed by the most acclaimed painters, sculptors and *protos*, in order to hinder the arrival to the lagoon of artists from other areas of Italy that might have taken away the work from the local masters. This well known practice was present even at the highest levels, e.g. the famous case from 1494 when an agreement for a *telero* depicting the battle of Spoleto made with none the less than Pietro Perugino for the hall of the *Maggior Consiglio* in the Doge's Palace had no application whatsoever, most

¹ J. Röhl, *Giovanni Dalmata*, Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, Worms am Rhein 1994, pp. 140-143, 168-170. Even if very damaged and almost unrecognizable, some fragments of Dalmata's sculptures for the *Scuola grande di San Marco* have been found by F. Caglioti, »Venezia sul lago di Garda. L'altare di Giovanni Dalmata per la Scuola Grande di San Marco«, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 55, 2013, 2, pp. 182-237.

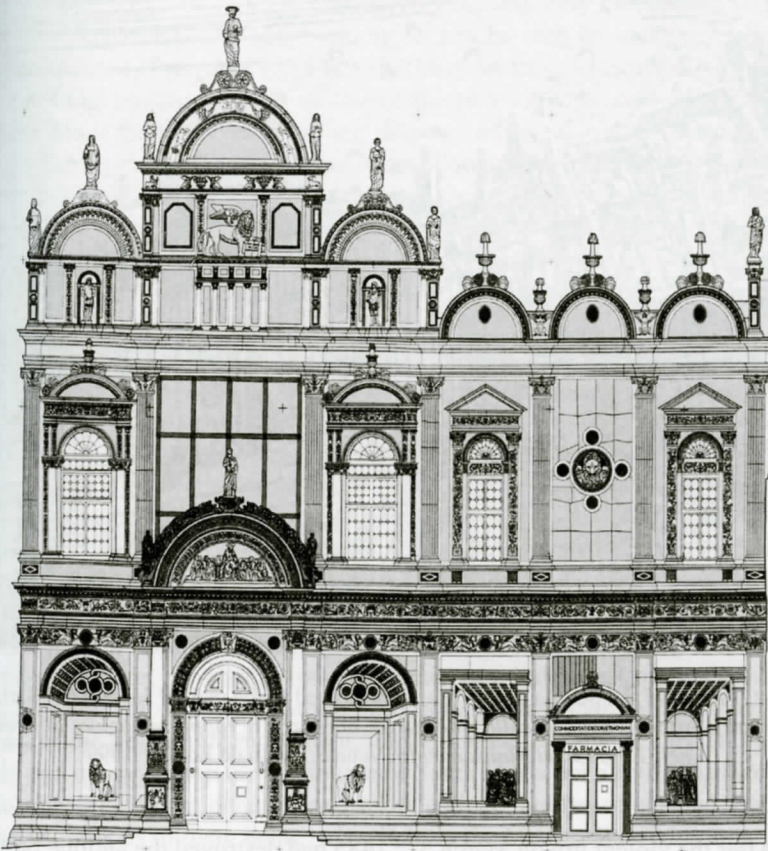


Fig. 1. Relief of the façade of the Scuola di San Marco, by G. Fumo,
Dei recenti interventi di restauro

probably due to obstructionism of the person who for years had been controlling the recruitment of active painters in the Palace, i.e. Giovanni Bellini². Even these short observations allow us to deduce that the dismissal of Dalmata must not have been caused by its lack of professional skills, which is highly unlikely, but by express will of the circle of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini and Pietro Lombardo and his sons Tullio and Antonio, all of them tightly connected for decades, in order to eliminate a dangerous competitor who could have started, in the meantime, to work not only on the relief assigned to him, but also on the matters of higher importance, e.g. the decoration of the Scuola's façade (Fig. 1) that has remained a mystery to this day as to its authorship and the period of its making.

² See L. Finocchi Ghersi, *Il Rinascimento Veneziano di Giovanni Bellini*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2003, pp. 84-86.

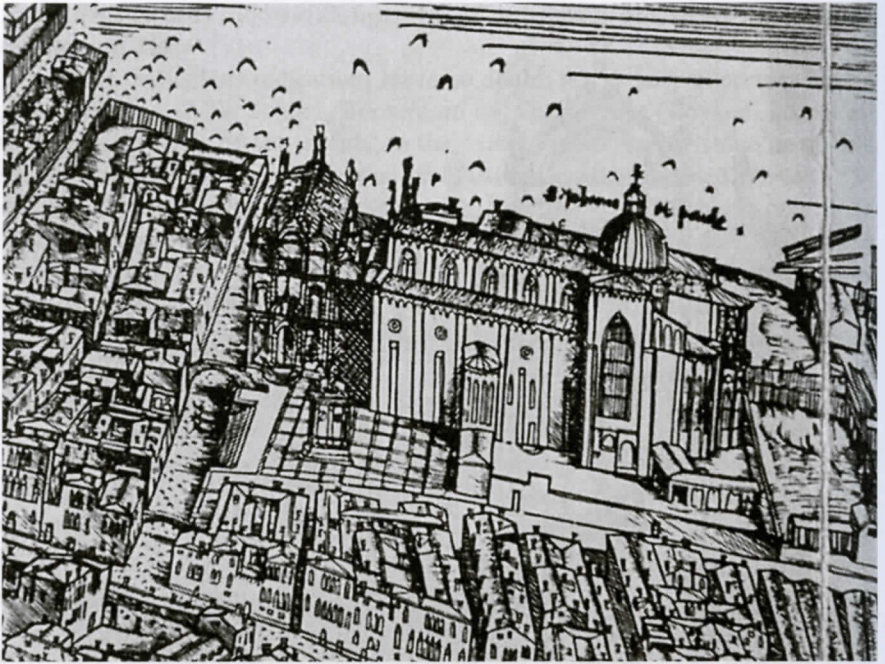


Fig. 2. Façade of the Scuola di San Marco portrayed in the map of Jacopo de' Barbari (1500). From *A volo d'uccello. Jacopo de' barbari e le rappresentazioni di città nell'Europa del Rinascimento*, Venice, Arsenale Editore 1999

After the violent fire on March 31st 1485 had destroyed the antique building of the Scuola, and out of which only several pieces of the stone decoration of the façade were saved, like the relief *San Marco e i confratelli* (Saint Mark and the members of his confraternity) situated in the lunette of the main entrance, the renovation works continued until 1489, most probably under the leadership of Pietro Lombardo and Giovanni Buora, who from 1490 to 1495 were succeeded by Antonio Rizzo and Mauro Codussi³. De' Barbari's map from 1500 (Fig. 2) shows only the left part of the façade, the one pertaining to the main portal and the two round false arcades in perspective with two lions, while two false portals in perspective with a group of sculptures depicting the life of Saint Mark on either sides of the secondary entrance appear to be missing.

³ For the story on the building see *Ibid* pp. 68-70 and a more recent work by R. Schofield, *La facciata della Scuola Grande di San Marco: osservazioni preliminari*, in *I Lombardo. Architettura e scultura a Venezia tra '400 e '500*, translation by A. Guerra, M. Morresi e R. Schofield, Venezia, Marsilio, 2006, pp. 161-164.

Undoubtedly, the relief sculpture was immediately considered to be the main characteristic of the new building, as can be seen from the reference in a document dated November 18th 1489 »to the great *storia* (i.e. narrative cycle) on the relief that has to go in the middle of the two windows, and the great statue of saint Mark that goes on top in the shape of a lion, as well as the two figures missing on top«⁴. The »*great storia*« in question has been believed to be the relief with Saint Mark and his brethren inserted in the lunette of the portal, but it would probably be more correct to think it was a new relief that had to be placed over the main portal in between two windows, given that even the relief of Saint Mark in the form of a lion appears on the second floor between the two windows on the right. The fact that commission was assigned to Giovanni Dalmata demonstrates the Scuola's will to characterize the new building with works of sculpture, inside and outside, in line with the typical Venetian architectural practice of the time, according to which, as Sergio Bettini⁵ remarkably noted, internal and external parts merged, and merge, in a single colored and evanescent space covering the courtyards and palace halls, up to the *campi, calli* and *rii*, as can be seen on the famous Carpaccio's *Miracolo al ponte di Rialto* (^{TN}*The Miracle of the Relic of the True Cross on the Rialto Bridge*), exposed at the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia, painted for the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista in the years close to the arrival to the lagoon by Dalmata.

Having in mind the assignment for the altar of the chapter house and its considerable size, the conclusion that comes to mind is that the inspiration for such an endeavor of sculpted stories was none the less than the great sculptural project of the Vendramin monument, finished in the late nineties by Tullio Lombardo and his workshop for the church of Santa Maria dei Servi⁶. The size of the tomb stone monument in height and width and the number of isolated sculptures (the most famous of them being *Adam* held in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and unfortunately badly damaged by a recent accidental fall) must have represented an inescapable example of what the brethren wanted to see in their chapter house. This is corroborated by the dimensions of the altar, which in its total width, probably designed in the shape of a quadrangular chapel open on the side facing the assembly, was supposed to be eleven meters long, made of three adjoining sides. This way of decorating the walls with sculpted historical scenes was used shortly after by Tullio and Antonio Lombardo in their famous reliefs

⁴ Ibid, p. 163.

⁵ S. Bettini, *Forma di Venezia*, Venezia 2005, especially pp. 49-51.

⁶ On the monument Vendramin and more in general on the sculpture in Venice between 15th and 16th century, cf. M. Ceriana, »Profilo della scultura a Venezia tra il 1450 e il 1500, e Id, *La scultura veneziana al tempo di Giorgione*«, in *Da Bellini a Veronese*, a cura di G. Toscano e F. Valcanover, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004, pp. 23-81, 253-278.

depicting the life of Saint Anthony in the chapel (^{TN}*cappella dell'Arca*) of Saint Anthony's basilica in Padua⁷.

Despite the very few sources we have at our disposal, we can be sure that the building site of the Scuola di San Marco was managed by Pietro Lombardo only until 1489, and that he could have returned to this role only after Antonio Rizzo had been forced to leave due to accusations of fraud linked to his activity of *proto* in the Doge's Palace⁸. It is very likely that, at the moment Dalmata was appointed to decorate the altar, the works for the decoration of the façade were still lagging behind, as backed by de' Barbari's map, and that in that very moment Pietro Lombardo re-entering the building site wanted to decide single handedly how to proceed with its conclusion. Therefore, I am led to believe that he must not have wanted Giovanni Dalmata close, all the more so because the experience he had gathered in Rome made him an authority in the intent of giving a renaissance formula to the classic sculpture of Venice, which had been from the seventies Pietro's domain. Together with his sons Tullio and Antonio, Pietro created the sculpture in which the purity of the classical lines was accompanied by sentimentalism bordering on melancholy, to the extent that the Lombardesque sculpture has always been seen as tightly bounded with the refined poetic lyricism of Giorgione's paintings, developed as an unprecedented novelty right around the time Dalmata arrived to the lagoon. The latter, to the contrary, had among his works a monument for the cultured and refined Venetian pope Paul II (Paolo II Barbo) in Saint Peter's cathedral⁹, in which the classicism displayed in the numerous reliefs that adorned it was very much alike the one in the antique Roman models, especially in the characteristics of physiognomy which, contrary to the Lombardesque sculptures who are almost always sublime, with graceful and gentle expressions, as to give life only to the best aspects of the human soul. Giovanni's strong attraction to an energetic and expressive classicism with the apparent influence of Donatello¹⁰, is obvious in his majestic *Madonna con Bambino* (^{TN}Madonna with Child) of the Civic Museum of Padua, (Fig. 3). Clearly evident is the revival of the throne of the *Vergine col Bambino* (^{TN}Virgin and the Child) by Donatello placed on the altar of Saint Anthony's basilica. Another Donatello's obvious influence can be noticed in the emphatic and nervous naturalness of Carlo Zen's bust (Fig. 4), kept in the Correr Museum of Venice. As Röhl points out, the relief with *Madonna* of Padua might be dated from the beginning of the 80's, and the fact it had been ordered by the high prelate originally from the town of Este, Nicolò Franco, who had had an important diplomatic role between Venice and the papal court throughout the entire

⁷ For more details on this topic see S. Blake Mc Ham, *The Chapel of St. Anthony at the Santo and the development of Venetian Renaissance Sculpture*, Cambridge 1994.

⁸ R. Schofield, *La facciata della Scuola Grande di San Marco* cit., p. 164.

⁹ J. Röhl, *Giovanni Dalmata* op. cit., pp. 60-84.

¹⁰ See in regard to F. Negri Arnoldi, *La scultura del Quattrocento*, Torino, Utet, 1994, p. 107.



Fig. 3. Giovanni Dalmata, *Madonna with Child*, Padua, Civic Museum



Fig. 4. Giovanni Dalmata, *Carlo Zen's Bust*, Venice, Correr Museum

last quarter of the century, being nominated bishop of Poreč (^{TN} in Italian Parenzo) and later of Treviso¹¹, might have been an opportunity, in my opinion, for Dalmata to go to Venice even before 1498, as seems to be witnessed by the *Madonna with Child* of the Museum of Padua which is a direct derivation of Donatello's model at the Santo. Moreover, we cannot rule out that the same relationship of trust that probably tied the bishop Franco to Dalmata was the motive of his invitation to Venice in 1498 in the first place. It is also interesting to mention that Dalmata's dismissal by the brethren of the Scuola di San Marco occurred immediately after Franco's death in Treviso in 1498, as if the sculptor had lost every protection from the local and aggressive artistic protectionism lead by Bellini and Lombardo.

¹¹ J. Röhl, *Giovanni Dalmata* cit., pp. 118-121, 143-144.



Fig. 5. Venice, façade of the Scuola di San Marco, detail of two first order friezes overlapping

In her essay published several years ago¹² Catarina Schmidt suggested that Gentile and Giovanni Bellini might be credited with creating the general layout of the Scuola's façade, by comparing it to the famous albums of architectural drawings in perspective by Jacopo Bellini, kept at the Louvre and the National Gallery of London. As I have already tried to demonstrate in another essay regarding Bellini's altarpiece for San Giobbe¹³, I do not think that Giovanni Bellini's devotion to soft tones and colors, distilled with thousands of refined brush strokes, would have left him enough time to deal with perspective backgrounds of architecture, or architectural problems in general, by whom he could have been drawn only by the variety of decorative elements of classic origin.

The School's façade, however, undeniably reveals interventions on several occasions by two minds design-wisely different from each other, which is the only explanation for the dissonances found on it, and which have been recently documented very accurately by Schofield. It is important to mention that the main portal is missing the grand relief mentioned in the documents, and that would have covered the empty wall between the two windows on the first floor, where the grandiosity of the two aedicules would have been justified only by an impressive sculpture in the center, which, however, is not there. But an even greater anomaly is represented in the lower order, by two overlapping friezes, among which the lower frieze is in higher relief than the upper one (Fig. 5), a fact that goes against

¹² C. Schmidt Arcangeli »'Un tempio aperto': i Bellini il loro ruolo nel progetto della facciata della Scuola Grande di San Marco«, in *Studi di Storia dell'Arte* 7, 1996, pp. 73-80.

¹³ L. Finocchi Ghersi, *Il Rinascimento veneziano* cit., pp. 69-70.



Fig. 6. Venice, façade of the Scuola di San Marco

all known logic of construction of the Classicism. Schofield notes this strange solution, but does not offer an explanation, which seems to be very clear if you take a look at the forced perspective of the façade's inferior part (Fig. 6-7). There are two with barrel vaults on the sides of the main portal, and two with porticos with coffered ceiling on the sides of the secondary portal of the *sala delle arche*, (i.e. the place of burial of the brethren), that are not present in de' Barbari's map, which leads to conclusion they had been the last finished façade ornaments. This, too, is contrary to logic, since the latter suggests that the wall decorations should start from the bottom upwards, following the natural taper of the walls.

Back to the lower frieze (Fig. 8), which is in higher relief and with figurative motives which are of great interest for us. It is the consequence of the necessary solution of marrying architectural perspectives which, if they had not been lowered



Fig. 7. Venice, façade of the Scuola di San Marco, detail of the false portico in perspective

that way, would not have been convincing from the illusionist point of view for the person in front of the façade. This, in my opinion, is an important detail because it testifies a clear handover between whom had designed the entire façade, and whom was assigned to insert the frieze and the perspectives.



Fig. 8. Venice, façade of the Scuola di San Marco, detail of the first order lower frieze

Thanks to the documents in our possession, we know that until 1495 Pietro Lombardo and Giovanni Buora, and then Antonio Rizzo and Mauro Codussi alternated as leading sculptors at the architectural building site, but the documentary sources become silent right around the end of the century, coinciding with the resounding dismissal of Dalmata, who might have been the creator of such additions for the following reasons, and who, for the obvious reasons of competition, might have been dismissed under the false pretext of general dissatisfaction with his work as sculptor.

It has been noted on more than one occasion that the *Lions*, on the sides of the main portal, as well as the groups of sculptures like the *Christening* and the *Healing of Anianus* seem to be merely positioned in an improperly finished spatial and architectural context, thus creating an overall impression of incompleteness of work. The grand novelty of the Scuola's façade lies in the presence of forced architectural perspectives, which is a characteristic that brings to mind the pre-existing Bramante's work – Saint Mary's choir at San Satiro in Milan as its direct inspiration¹⁴, even though the two are very distant. The Milanese choir is a performance area, while the Venetian perspectives are a simple decoration of the façade with the idea of completing them by sculptures in the round, suggesting it had been designed by a sculptor. In this regard I would like to remind that in the contract signed with Dalmata for the altar's relief there was an explicit demand of »buildings in perspective« to testify the expertise of the sculptor to position a

¹⁴ C. Schmidt Arcangeli, »Un tempio aperto« cit, p. 73.



Fig. 9. Donatello, detail of the *Miracle of the Mule*, Padua, Saint Anthony's basilica

sculptural and architectural perspective box together with the scene's content¹⁵. The possibility of Giovanni intervening in the design of the four perspectives is also suggested by the absence of similar decorative solutions on the Santa Maria dei Miracoli, which was being finished precisely in that last decade by the Lombardos¹⁶, using a very elegant ornamental technique, but free of the creative flair comparable to the spatial compositions on the School's façade. Giovanni's admiration for Donatello, obvious in the *Madonna* of Padua and the Venetian bust, returns unchanged in the archivoltos on the sides of the main entrance (Fig. 6), which are a clear larger-scale-citation of the buildings in perspective of Donatello's bronze relief panels with the stories of life of Saint Anthony, inserted on the altar

¹⁵ F. Negri Arnoldi (*La scultura del Quattrocento* cit., p. 107), also states of being sure in Dalmata's remarkable skills in the field of architecture.

¹⁶ See *Santa Maria dei Miracoli a Venezia. La storia, la fabbrica, i restauri*, translation by M. Piana e W. Wolters, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2003.



Fig. 10. Melozzo da Forlì, *Sisto IV con i nipoti e Bartolomeo Platina*, Rome, Vatican Museums

of the basilica bearing his name (Fig. 9). The scenes on the sides of the secondary entrance prove uniqueness of structure (Fig. 7) when compared to the customary Lombardesque practice, even more evidently than in the previous ones. The most obvious inspiration for them, in my opinion, is not kept in Venice, nor its region, but in Rome, and it is perceivable in the magical perspective of the fresco by Melozzo of Forlì (Fig. 10), kept in the Vatican library, where the forced perspective



Fig. 11. Venice, façade of the Scuola di San Marco, detail of the first order higher frieze

on arched pillars is held up not by a vaulted roof, but by a coffered ceiling, two details that seemed to have been remembered and used during the creation of the Scuola's façade, following the revival of Melozzo's model. Here the strong sculptural character of the figures of Sixtus IV and his nephews is obvious (they are placed as complements to the architectural flight), the same way the statues of the *Lions* and the two groups of characters look in the Venetian perspectives - somewhat clumsily, given the obvious general incompleteness of art work. It is safe to assume that the lions and groups are Tullio Lombardo's work, originally meant to decorate the central and the right part of the grand altar planned to be placed in the chapterhouse and the sculpting of which was started by Giovanni Dalmata upon his arrival to Venice¹⁷.

Still, there is one more very important detail to corroborate the hypothesis of Giovanni creating the lower part of the façade. The frieze above the sides of the main portal appears to be decorated with couples of winged lions placed symmetrically in relation to the centrally positioned vase (Fig. 11). This motive recalls the decoration of an external frieze of the *Santa Maria dei Miracoli*, deriving from the external frieze of Esculapio's temple in the Diocletian's Palace in Split (Fig. 12), thus it is possible to conclude it was a choice made by Pietro Lombardo and his workshop. On the contrary, the unusual presence of a second lower frieze on the Scuola's façade (Fig. 8), leads us back to Split, but this time to the first floor interior of the Imperial Palace's mausoleum, where we can find two overlapping

¹⁷ M. Ceriana, *Profilo della scultura* op. cit, p. 58.



Fig. 12. Split, relief from the external frieze of Esculapio's temple, by R. Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (1764), translated by M. Navarra, Cannitello, Biblioteca del Cenide, 2001.



Fig. 13. Split, internal section of the Mausoleum, by R. Adam, *Ruins of the Palace*, op. cit.



Fig. 14. Venice, façade of the Scuola di San Marco, detail of the capital of the first order

friezes as the only decoration motives among the capitals (Fig. 13). The lower frieze of the School's façade (Fig. 8), is decorated by reliefs with griffon vultures the quality of which is not only much higher than the one found in the lions on the upper frieze (Fig. 11), but is evident in the clawed lion paws, and even more so in the frightening bird's head with an aggressive expression due to its open beak ready to strike. This is where we can notice a direct derivation of the original model (found on the external frieze of the Esculapio's temple in Split, Fig. 12), as if the griffons of the lower frieze have been created by whom had already been familiar with the model enough to make such a version, natural and innovative in movements and expressions. It is important to notice how the heads at the center of capitals of the first order pilasters are directly inspired by the same frieze (Fig. 14). Moreover, in the altar of the Madonna della Palla in the church of San Giovanni in Norcia which Dalmata finished in 1469 decorative motives reappear, they are of obvious Split origin, and can be found in the entablature of the Scuola di San Marco, as well as the pomegranate reliefs and the different bands of the architrave with strings of alternating spindle whorls and pearls following an analogue rhythmic scansion (Fig. 15): a fact testifying how Dalmata, if need be, regularly chose the most famous decorative examples of architecture of the Diocletian's Palace. I also consider worth crediting Dalmata as the creator of the *Warrior* on the right, inside the niche on top of the façade, and which (as one can make out from the



Fig. 15. Norcia, Church of San Giovanni, Giovanni Dalmata, detail of the altar of the *Madonna della Palla*

photo after the recent renovation, Fig. 16), demonstrates obvious similarities to *Saint John the Evangelist* of San Giovanni church in Norcia (Fig. 6, p. 106 in this book), as the three-dimensionality of the hair, fleshy half-open mouth, shape of the eyes and carved pupils – all of which make the elements that lend the figure a fascinating realism completely unknown to the sentimentalism of the Venetian sculpture from the end of the century¹⁸.

As a conclusion to my hypothesis I would like to bring to mind that Catarina Schmidt, in her correct attempt to identify more than one creator in the ideation of the school's façade, and by nominating even the illustrious brothers Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, distanced herself from Sohm and Steadman Shears' opinion¹⁹, who believed

¹⁸ See G. Fumo, «Dei recenti interventi di restauro della facciata della Scuola Grande di San Marco a Venezia», in Tullio Lombardo. *Scultore e architetto nella Venezia del Rinascimento*. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini 4-6 aprile 2006, a cura di M. Ceriana, pp. 501-518.

¹⁹ Ph. Sohm, *The Scuola Grande di San Marco 1437-1550. The architecture of a Venetian lay Confraternity*, New York-London, 1982, pp. 131-144; W. Steadman Sheard, «The Birth of Monumental Classicizing Relief in Venice on the Façade of the Scuola di

of Bellini and Lombardo, who undisputedly dominated the world of the artists active in Venice. Dalmata was dismissed abruptly, maybe because of death of the person who was supposed to be his local guardian, the bishop Nicolò Franco. Furthermore, this hypothesis results to be even more persuasive bearing in mind that thirty years after, a Florentine Jacopo Sansovino was arrested because deemed responsible for a collapse in the Marciana Library, and owed his reintegration as chief of design to Titian who represented an important local authority. Unfortunately, Giovanni Dalmata was not as lucky in his Venetian adventure, as can be easily noted recalling a revealing detail of the competition among various artists, no holds barred, that took place in Venice at the end of 15th century. In 1491, the Superintendents of the municipality (It. *Provveditori de Comun*) had to resolve disputes between the Venetian *taiapiera* and the stone cutters that came to Venice from other places, mostly the valley of Ticino²⁰. This is why Giovanni's failure in Venice should not be seen merely as such, on the grounds of the documents of which we are in possession, but rather, a more logical way of thinking reveals a successful way of getting rid of a dangerous competitor by a circle of Venetian artists anxious to maintain control over the most important city commissions.

Translation from Italian into English by Karla Katalinić

O VENECIJANSKOM NEUSPJEHU IVANA DUKOVIĆA: HIPOTEZA O UKRAŠAVANJU FASADE SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN MARCO

S a ž e t a k

Autor analizira kratki boravak Ivana Duknovića u Veneciji (1498. – 1500.) i njegov angažman na Scuola Grande di San Marco gdje izrađuje kipove u naravnoj veličini za veliki oltar kapitularne dvorane. Usredotočuje se na motive koji su mogli uzrokovati otuđenje Dalmate iz Venecije, gdje je proveo dvije godine (1498. – 1500.). Niz dokumenata i stilskih osobina dopustili su pretpostavku da je određene dijelove dekoracije fasade, na primjer lažne portike u perspektivi i donji friz prvog reda, mogao stvoriti Duknović, čije je sudjelovanje na arhitektonskom gradilištu čini se bilo pravi razlog njegovog otuđenja od venecijanskog kruga kipara kojeg je vodio Pietro Lombardo s podrškom Giovannija Bellinija.

Eruditskim pristupom i razmatranjem relevantnih povijesnih, kulturoloških i stilskih pojava autor donosi zaključak o suparničkim motivima koji su istaknute umjetničke krugove Venecije potakle na izbacivanje trogirskog kipara iz svoje sredine. Također iznosi hipotezu da je i oblikovanje pročelja Scuole zamislio Duknović na iskustvima donatelovske prostorne perspektive i dekorativnih frizova carske palače u Splitu.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 70.