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Roman Subject-Matter and Style in Venetian Façade Frescoes

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Frescoes on the façades of buildings must have been among the most conspicuous of the various pictorial arts favoured by Venetians during the Renaissance. And the almost total destruction of the same frescoes must be among the most drastic of the various changes wrought by man and the elements since then. Once, almost every house in certain *campi* boasted an example of this sort of pictorial art; now the same houses are devoid of ornament and are usually painted in a single, often neutral colour. During the 16th century, the Campo Santo Stefano alone displayed at least two façades by Giorgione, and one each by Jacopo Tintoretto, Giuseppe Salviati, Santo Zago and Aliense.¹ All of these frescoes have long since disappeared, and apparently no detailed record of their original appearance exists. It is scarcely surprising, then, that Venetian façade frescoes have attracted only sporadic interest.

Today the best known painted façade is undoubtedly the façade formerly on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, now the central post office of Venice. Constructed immediately after a disastrous fire of January 1505, the Fondaco was destined to be well known, in view of its impressive size, prominent location – overlooking the Grand Canal at the Rialto – and significant function as the centre of the German community in Venice. These features notwithstanding, the Fondaco was principally celebrated for the frescoes by Giorgione on the façade above the Grand Canal and those by Titian overlooking the Mercerie (now Calle del Fondaco) at the side. Executed in 1508, the frescoes by Giorgione and Titian were particularly noted for their brilliant colour. In the first edition of his *Lives*, Vasari refers to heads and parts of figures vivaciously coloured, while Anton Maria Zanetti in the 18th century remarks upon '*quella tinta sanguigna e fiammeggiante*' in Giorgione's frescoes.² Despite its ruined condition, the one surviving figure by Giorgione continues to give some idea of that lively red colour.³

Venetians of course had long delighted in the use of colour as embellishment for the exteriors of their buildings, both public and private. The façade of the

basilica of St. Mark was encrusted not only with brilliant mosaics, but also with a rich variety of variously coloured marbles. And the taste for marble inlays was continued in more recent façades such as those of Ca' Dario and the churches of San Zaccaria and Santa Maria dei Miracoli. However, as desirable as coloured marble for the decoration of house façades, painted polychromatic decoration was more common.⁴ Paint could even be used to heighten the chromatic effects of inlaid marble. Thus, in 1431, *Zuan de Franza pentor da santa ponal* agreed not only to gild but also to colour the already elaborate façade of the Ca' d'Oro, Mario Contarini's new house on the Grand Canal.⁵ By the middle of the 16th century, however, the taste for flamboyant use of coloured marble had lapsed considerably, whereas the fashion for painted façades still persisted, probably had even increased. In 1557 Lodovico Dolce opines that just as interiors of public and private buildings lose *assai di bellezza e di grazia* when they are without paintings, no matter what fine tapestries and furniture they may include, so the outside of buildings also give more pleasure when the façades are painted by good artists than when they are encrusted with white marble, porphyry and serpentine decorated with gold.⁶ Con-

1 I. Foscarini, *Affreschi Esterni a Venezia* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1936), 96.

2 G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Architetti, Pittori et Scultori Italiani* (Florence: Torrentino, 1550), 577; A.M. Zanetti, *Varie Pitture a Fresco de' Principali Maestri Veneziani* (Venice, 1760), iv.

3 The fragment which belongs to the Gallerie dell'Accademia (inv. n. 1133) is now exhibited in the Ca' d'Oro. For a recent discussion of the fresco, see G. Nepi Scire in *Giorgione a Venezia* (Venice: Gallerie dell'Accademia, Sept.-Nov. 1978), 117-129; colour detail on 121.

4 For a recent discussion, see J. McAndrew, *Venetian Architecture of the Early Renaissance* (Cambridge/London: MIT, 1980), 201.

5 B. Cecchetti, 'La facciata della Ca' d'Oro,' *Archivio Veneto*, xxxi (1886), 201.

6 '*Percioche e i publici edifici & i privati, benchè siano i muri di dentro vestiti di finissimi arazzi: e le casse, e le tavole coperte di bellissimo tapeti, senza l'ornamento di qualche pittura assai di bellezza e di grazia perdono. E di fuori molto più diletano a*

temporary architects like Michele Sanmichele and Jacopo Sansovino had in fact ceased to employ much coloured marble, at least in their palace façades. Instead, they preferred to use white Istrian stone, carved in forms which – it is significant for the present topic – were derived from ancient Roman architecture.⁷

It is true that façade frescoes lacking a broad range of colour were also produced in Venice. Dating both from the middle of the 16th century and from earlier periods, monochromatic frescoes – frescoes in *chiaroscuro* – were especially favoured when the subject matter was not principally figural, but was composed of ornamental motifs, such as the swags, masks, emperor-heads in roundels and even little landscapes which appeared on the walls of the courtyard of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.⁸ Colour, none the less, distinguished the façade frescoes of Venice. As Vasari remarked about the painted façade by Girolamo da Treviso on the house in Venice of Andrea Odoni, ‘everything [was] executed in colour, and not in *chiaroscuro*, because the Venetians like colour better than anything else.’⁹

Colour did not play such a rôle in the façade decorations produced in Rome during the Renaissance. Principally the work of Peruzzi, Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino, these façade frescoes date mostly from the decade before the Sack of Rome.¹⁰ Again, the elements and man have reduced the number of remaining frescoes to a mere handful; none the less much more is known about the Roman façades than about their Venetian counterparts. Several of the façades by Polidoro were engraved in detail, and a few were even photographed, or detached, before their images became almost totally indistinct. Modern restoration has revived others. Innumerable drawings were also made after Polidoro’s major façades, and Vasari describes some in detail. From these various sources of information it is abundantly

clear that Roman façades were monochromatic, and that none displayed a wide range of colour.

Polidoro and Maturino evidently began their careers by imitating Peruzzi’s monochromatic frescoes.¹¹ And although Polidoro and Maturino attempted a few frescoes in colour, they were never able, Vasari claims, to achieve with colour ‘*quella bellezza che di continuo diedero alle cose di chiaro e scuro o in bronzo o in terretta.*’¹² Thus, while Peruzzi may have been Polidoro’s and Maturino’s initial inspiration, the sculpted reliefs of classical antiquity were ultimately their most enduring model. After they had gained confidence from their earliest façades, Polidoro and Maturino began ‘*a studiare le cose dell’ antichità di Roma, ch’eglino contraffacendo le cose di marmo antiche ne’ chiari e scuri loro, nel restò vaso, statue, pilì, storie, nè cosa intera o rotta, ch’eglino non disegnarono, e di quella non si servissero. E tanto con frequentazione e voglia a tal cosa posero il pensiero, che unitamente presero la maniera antica...*’¹³ It is clear that *la maniera antica* was used to express ancient subjects, particularly the stories of the founding and early history of Rome.

On the façade of the Casa Boniauguri in Piazza S. Chiara, Polidoro and Maturino thus painted Romulus marking out the site of Rome with his plough, while overhead the auspicious vultures are flying – an image entirely appropriate to the name of the house’s proprietor.¹⁴ On the façade of the Palazzo Ricci, they painted such stories from the early history of Rome as the rape of the Sabines, Mucius Scaevola, Horatius Cocles, and the flight of Porsenna. King of Tuscany.¹⁵ In the same vein, on the façade of a house on Montecavallo, near S. Agata dei Goti, they included scenes of the Vestal Tuccia bringing water from the Tiber to the temple in a sieve, Claudia pulling the ship with her girdle, and the rout of Camillus while Brennus is weighing gold. Around the corner, on another wall, were shown Romulus and Remus suckled by the wolf, Horatius Cocles defending the bridge, and Mucius Scaevola.¹⁶

gliocchi altrà le facciate delle case e de’ palagi dipinte per mano di buon Maestro, che con la incrostatura di bianchi marmi, di porfidi, e di serpentini di oro: L. Dolce, Dialogo della Pittura... intitolato l’Aretino (Venice: Giolito, 1557), 16. In the immediately preceding speeches, Dolce asserts that the illusionistic skills of the painter are always preferable to the display of costly materials.

- 7 For a recent survey of this fashion, see the chapter appropriately entitled ‘Roman Renaissance’ in D. Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice* (London: Batsford, 1980), 136-73.
- 8 The courtyard appears in a 17th-century engraving by Rafael Custos (repr. in Nepi Scirà, fig. 104) and was described in 1715 by G.B. Milesio; G.M. Thomas, *G.B. Milesio’s Beschreibung des Deutschen Hauses in Venedig* (Munich, 1881).
- 9 G. Vasari, *Le Vite de’ Più Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori* [1568], ed. G. Milanesi (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-85), v, 136. Hereafter cited as Vasari-Milanesi.
- 10 C. Pericoli Ridolfini, *Le Case romane con facciate graffite e dipinte* (Rome: Palazzo Braschi, 1960); C.L. Frommel, *Baldassare Peruzzi als Maler und Zeichner*, Beiheft zum Römischen

Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, 11 (1967/68); Alessandro Marabottini, *Polidoro da Caravaggio* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Elefante, 1969); Lanfranco Ravelli, *Polidoro Caldara da Caravaggio*, Monumenta Bergomensia, XLVIII (Bergamo, 1978). For a recent attempt to distinguish Maturino from Polidoro da Caravaggio, see Nicole Dacos, ‘Ni Polidoro ni Peruzzi: Maturino,’ *Revue de l’Art*, 57 (1982) 9-28.

- 11 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 142.
- 12 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 147.
- 13 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 143.
- 14 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 145. Although the frescoes are destroyed, an engraving by Michele Crecchi (repr. Marabottini, cxxix, 1) records their appearance. Marabottini, 113, discusses the appropriateness of the subject for the name of the owners of the house.
- 15 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 145. The frescoes were repainted in the 19th century by Luigi Fontana (Marabottini, 362-365).
- 16 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 146. For an engraving by Michele Crecchi after the fresco of Horatius Cocles, and one by I. Sacredam after Camillus and Brennus, see Marabottini, cxxviii.

In all of these frescoes, Polidoro's and Maturino's study of the antique must have been fully evident. In particular, the two artists lavished great attention on the depiction of accessories and details of dress. Of the celebrated façade of the Palazzo Gaddi on via della Maschera d'Oro, Vasari asserts that *'è cosa di meraviglia e di stupore, nel considerarvi dentro i belli e tanti e vari abiti, l'infinità delle celate antiche, de' soccinti, de' calzari, et delle barche ornate con tanta leggiadria e copia d'ogni cosa.'*¹⁷

Whereas Roman façade frescoes most often showed antique events, painted in monochrome as if they were relief sculptures, earlier Venetian façades seem only rarely to have included narratives of any sort. Instead, the Venetians preferred allegorical subjects with personifications or classical deities standing for abstract ideas. Sometimes the allegorical figures were conventional and their meaning straightforward, as with the use of the Cardinal Virtues, while at other times the significance was more complex. According to a well-known account, Vasari succeeded in finding no one who could construe for him the meaning of the frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi.¹⁸

Whatever the actual subjects of the Venetian façades, historical narratives were very seldom undertaken until at least the 1530s. Of capital importance for this development was the presence in Venice of Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone. Though previously active for the most part on the mainland of northern Italy, Pordenone had visited Rome on more than one occasion and is documented there in

1531.¹⁹ Pordenone could thus have been expected to be fully conversant with recent Roman façade painting; and indeed his celebrated decorations from the mid-1530s on the façade of the Palazzo d'Anna included not only numerous personifications and stories from classical mythology, but also two scenes from Roman history. Long since destroyed, the frescoes can be mentally reconstructed from the brief remarks of the usual early writers and, in a seemingly unique instance, from the much more telling evidence of a surviving drawing, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 1).²⁰ The drawing indicates that there were five major narrative scenes, of which Vasari singles out *'in particolare un Curzio a cavallo, in iscorto, che pare tutto tondo e di rilievo'* and also *'un Mercurio che vola in aria per ogni lato.'*²¹ Opposite the *Curzio* on the ground floor of the façade was a Roman battle, for which Erica Tietze-Conrat published a more detailed drawing in the Louvre (Fig. 2).²² The exact subject of this scene has not been conclusively identified, but von Hadeln's tentative suggestion that it represents the rape of the Sabines has found some favour.²³ Perhaps significantly, Dolce writing about twenty years after the completion of the frescoes precisely identifies *'Mercurio, che scorta bene'* and *'Proserpina in braccia di Plutone,'* but refers to the two scenes from Roman history simply as *'una battaglia, & un cavallo.'*²⁴

If the Palazzo d'Anna attests to the presence of antique Roman subjects on Venetian façades during the 1530s, the same frescoes also prove to be fundamentally different from their Roman equivalents. It is evident that no consistent historical programme dominated the façade of the Palazzo d'Anna, since

17 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 148-49. An anonymous drawing in the Albertina, Vienna (inv. 15462) preserves the appearance of the entire façade (repr. Marabottini, CXLIV, 1).

18 Vasari-Milanesi, iv, 96: *'nel vero non si ritrova storie che abbiano ordine o che rappresentino i fatti di nessuna persona segnalata o antica o moderna; ed io per me non l'ho mai inteso, né anche, per dimanda che si sia fatta, ho trovato chi l'intenda; perchè dove è una donna, dove è un uomo in varie altitudini; chi ha una testa di leone appresso, altra con un angelo a guisa di Cupido; nè si giudica quel che si sia.'* Recently, one of the frescoes on the side wall has been variously interpreted in political terms: M. Muraro, 'The Political Interpretation of Giorgione's Frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, LXXXVI (1975), 177-83; and C. Hope, *Titian* (London: Jupiter, 1980), 12-14.

19 V. Joppi (with the help of G. Bampo), 'Contributo terzo alla storia dell'arte nel Friuli ed alla vita dei pittori e intagliatori friulani,' *Miscellanea della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per la Venezia*, ser. 4, XII (1892), 34. It should be noted that Pordenone had also worked (ca. 1533-34) in Genoa: C. Cohen, 'Two Studies for Pordenone's Destroyed Jason Scene on the Palazzo Doria, Genoa,' *Master Drawings*, x (1972), 126-33. Perino del Vaga's presence there for some years from 1528 provided a direct link with recent Roman developments in façade decorations. While Luca Cambiaso's *Horatius Cocles* and *Mucius Scaevola* (ca. 1543?) on the façade of the Palazzo Saluzzo in via Lomellini (n° 6) are in chiaroscuro, two other figures (now lost) were in colour: B. Suida Manning and W. Suida, *Luca Cambiaso, la vita e le opere* (Milan: Ceschina, 1958), 97; *Genua Picta: Proposte per la scoperta et il recupero delle facciate dipinte* (Genoa: SAGEP, 15

April-15 June 1982), 36-38, fig. 26. Some forty years later, Giovanni Battista Armenini observed *'che fra le molte città d'Italia, Venezia, Genova e Pesaro, tutte quasi sono ripiene di facciate colorite': De' veri precetti della pittura libri III [1587]* (Pisa, 1820), 229.

20 N° 2306; pen and brown ink; 419 × 559 mm. P. Ward-Jackson, *Italian Drawings, Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogues, Volume One, 14th-16th century* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1979), n° 250, 124-25; C. Cohen, *The Drawings of Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone*, *Corpus Graphicum* 3 (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1980), 84-5. For a recent discussion of the date of the Palazzo d'Anna, see C. Furlan, 'Due nuovi disegni al Pordenone,' *Arte Veneta*, xxxvii (1983), 181-82 and n. 15.

21 Vasari-Milanesi, v, 115. Vasari goes on to say that *'la quale opera piacque sopra modo a tutta la città di Venezia, e fu per ciò Pordenone più lodato che altro uomo che mai in quella città avesse insino allora lavorato.'*

22 Inv. 5429; pen and brown ink and wash, heightened with white on grey-green paper. E. Tietze-Conrat, 'Decorative Paintings of the Venetian Renaissance Reconstructed from Drawings,' *Art Quarterly*, III (1940), 31, fig. 8; Cohen, 112.

23 D. von Hadeln, 'A Drawing after an Important Late Work by Pordenone,' *Burlington Magazine*, XLIV (1924), 149. R. Rubenstein (in Ward-Jackson, 124-25) has interpreted both antique scenes as representing Mettius Curtius, the early Sabine leader.

24 Dolce, 50. In the same vein, F. Sansovino, *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia libri due* (Venice, 1561), 172, refers to *'il cavallo ch'è dipinto su la facciata della casa de Talenti [d'Anna], ove parimente si vede una Proserpina...'*

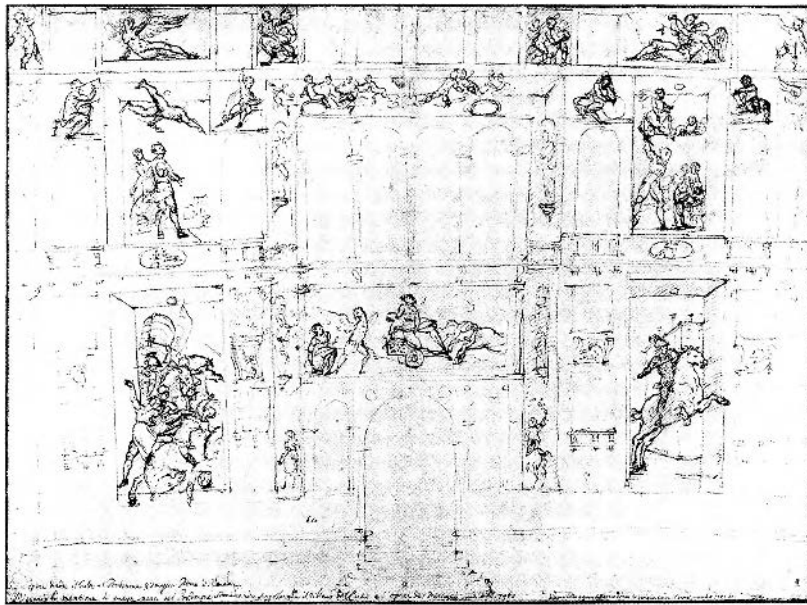


FIGURE 1. Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone, *Study for the Palazzo d'Anna*. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Photo: Museum).



FIGURE 2. Giovanni Antonio da Pordenone, *Rape of the Sabines*. Paris, Louvre (Photo: Musées Nationaux).

mythological subjects and personifications were, as we have seen, interspersed with the Roman histories. Further, Ridolfi makes it clear that, true to Venetian form, *'vaghissimo colorito'* distinguished the frescoes²⁵; the scenes must thus have seemed as if they were real events, not simulated relief sculpture. Lastly, all the evidence indicates that the wall surface was not respected as in the majority of Roman façade decorations, but that instead it was radically violated by dramatic perspectival recessions, framing equally audacious, foreshortened figures.

The façade frescoes of the Palazzo d'Anna constituted Pordenone's most famous contribution to the genre, but they were not his sole example in Venice. The early sources also make reference to frescoes by Pordenone on the Palazzo Morosini della Tressa at San Geremia and in the courtyard of the Palazzo Mocenigo-Gambara near the Carità, both of which are now lost.²⁶ Of the various figures on the Palazzo Mocenigo-Gambara, Boschini specifically mentions *'un Uomo vestito all'antica di gran colorito'* and Time and Amore on a sphere with a bow and arrow.²⁷ From this it is clear that Pordenone, like Polidoro and Maturino, endeavoured to represent certain figures in antique costume, but, in contrast to the Roman façade painters, Pordenone painted such figures in colour and also mixed them with figures from other traditions.

In the years after Pordenone's death in 1539, Roman subjects were featured on an increasing number of Venetian façades, painted by a new group of artists. Among these façade painters, Jacopo Tintoretto seems not, however, to have concerned himself with Roman history, either in his façade decora-

tions or in his canvases.²⁸ The mysterious Santo Zago, on the other hand, is said to have painted monochromatic Roman histories on a façade overlooking the Grand Canal at San Barnaba.²⁹ Santo Zago's work is lost without a trace, but in the context of such frescoes it is worth noting that Pino claims Santo Zago *'maneggia tutte l'antichità di Roma,'* Dolce calls him a *'studioso dell'anticaglie,'* and Ridolfi says that he studied at length the bas-reliefs of Trajan's column.³⁰ Santo Zago's façade frescoes were also said to have revealed the direct influence of Raphael.³¹

25 C. Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell'Arte* [1648], ed. D. von Hadeln, (Berlin, 1914-24), 1, 120. Hereafter cited as Ridolfi-Hadeln. However, on the Palazzo Tinghi, Udine, Pordenone painted some chiaroscuro scenes (e.g. an antique sacrifice) which come closer to feigned reliefs; C. Cohen, 'Pordenone's Painted Façade on the Palazzo Tinghi in Udine,' *Burlington Magazine*, cxvi (1974), 450, 454.

26 Foscari, 58.

27 M. Boschini, *Le ricche Minere della Pittura veneziana* (Venice, 1674), Sestiere Dorsoduro, 37.

28 Exceptions include his *Mucius Scaevola* (Vienna), *Tuccia* (Glasgow) – with the Castel Sant'Angelo in the background – and *Tarquin and Lucretia* (Chicago and Cologne). The first two have been dated ca. 1545, the latter to late in Tintoretto's career, by R. Pallucchini and P. Rossi, *Tintoretto, le opere sacre e profane* (Venice: Alfieri, 1982), n^{os} 124-25, 450-51. Canvases of Lucretia were also painted by Titian and Veronese.

29 Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 228; Foscari, 92. Santo Zago is listed in the *fraglia pittorica* for 1530 and probably died between 1566 and 1568 (Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 227, n. 1).

30 P. Pino, *Dialogo di Pittura* [1548] in *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1960), 115; Dolce 48; Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 227.

31 M. Boschini, Sestiere Cannaregio, 65.



FIGURE 3. Giuseppe Salviati, *Abduction of Helen*. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection (Photo: Museum).

Giuseppe (Porta) Salviati was another artist who executed frescoes in a style bearing analogies with 16th-century Roman decorations. Thus in 1548 Pietro Aretino could favourably compare Salviati's chiaroscuro frescoes along the Grand Canal to those by Polidoro and Peruzzi in Rome.³² The Venetian frescoes cited by Aretino are not known, but some idea of their appearance may perhaps be gained from a drawing in the Robert Lehman Collection of the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 3).³³ It is perhaps appropriate that the sheet has hitherto been ascribed to Polidoro, but an attribution to Giuseppe Salviati is preferable, and a date of about 1550 likely. In its depiction of semi-nude men straining against long-handled oars, in an elaborately carved boat seen parallel to the picture plane, the drawing is reminiscent of such works by Polidoro as the frieze of a nautical migration from Egypt to Rome, above the piano nobile of the Palazzo Gaddi (Fig. 4). The subject of the drawing, the *Abduction of Helen*, is not of course from Roman history, but is from the mythical chain of events leading to the Trojan War and then to Aeneas' founding of Rome. It is worth noting, however, that according to one early chronicler,

Venice was founded by *liberi Troiani*, even before Rome was founded by Aeneas, or Padua by Antenor, yet other Trojans.³⁴ Although the purpose of the Lehman drawing is not known, its subject is thus not wholly inappropriate for scenes designed to extol, or even to define, the early history of a state.

The subsequent decades may be considered the heyday of the fashion for Roman subject matter on the façades of Venetian palaces. By the 1550s Giuseppe Salviati had assumed the Venetian practice of executing façade frescoes in colour, but in doing so he did not abandon his Roman training. The most celebrated example of his façade frescoes, those formerly on the Palazzo Loredan in Campo Santo Stefano (Fig. 5), are a revealing case in point. Probably dating from the second half of the 1550s, the frescoes showed such Roman subjects as Lucretia at work with her handmaidens, Cloelia escaping from King Porsenna, and Mucius Scaevola burning his right hand in front of Porsenna.³⁵ No information about the arrangement or exact appearance of the paintings has ever been discovered, though individual drawings by Giuseppe Salviati of Lucretia and Cloelia have been connected with the commission.³⁶

32 Pietro Aretino, *Lettere sull'Arte*, ed. F. Pertile and E. Camè-sasca (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1957-60) II, 23.

33 Pen and brown ink and wash over black chalk, heightened with white, on greenish paper (faded); 303 × 384 mm. Bearing the stamp of W. Mayor (Lugt 2799), the drawing was sold at auction (Parke-Bernet, 12 May 1960, lot 73), and published by G. Szabo, *XVI Century Italian Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), n° 16 (as Polidoro da Caravaggio). A copy is in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm: D. McTavish, *Giuseppe Porta called Giuseppe Salviati* (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1981), 194-95, 366-67, fig. 153. The *Abduction of Helen* is not mentioned by the early sources as among Giuseppe Salviati's subjects.

34 A. Carile, 'Le Origini di Venezia nella Tradizione Storio-

grafica,' *Storia della Cultura Veneta, Dalle Origini al Trecento* (Vicenza, 1976), 150-51; B. Marx, 'Venezia-Altera Roma? Ipotesi sull' Umanesimo Veneziano,' Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziano, *Quaderno 10* (Venice, 1978). Aeneas and Antenor were, however, equally to be associated with Helen, as they owed in part their deliverance from Troy to their opinion of her: *duobus Aeneae Antenorique, et vetusti iure hospiti et quia pacis reddendaque Helenae semper auctores fuerunt, omne ius belli Achivos abstinuisse* (Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, Bk.1.1.1). Antenor's followers were called the Veneti (Livy, Bk.1.1.3), a connection evidently alluded to by Ridolfi-Hadeln, I, 311: '*Trojani, (da quali hebbero origine i popoli Veneti)*'.

35 Ridolfi-Hadeln, I, 241.

36 D. McTavish, 211-12.

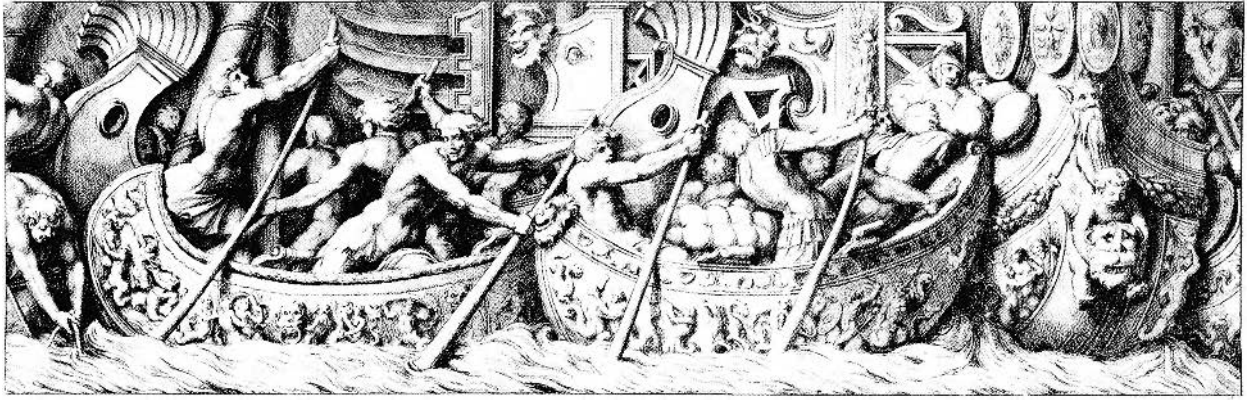


FIGURE 4. Pier Santi Bartoli after Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Detail of Frieze on the Façade of the Palazzo Gaddi, Rome*, engraving. London, British Museum (Photo: Museum).

To these drawings may now be added an unpublished sheet in Weimar representing Mucius Scaevola (Fig. 6).³⁷ All of these drawings include refined, relatively sculptural figures, situated close to the picture plane and influenced by Roman Mannerism. In the absence of other evidence, there is no conclusive proof that the drawings were undertaken for this façade; none the less, these drawings go a long way towards providing some idea of what is now entirely lost. They do not, however, give much idea of what the early sources agree was one of the façade's most notable features – its brilliant colour.³⁸ On the façade of the Palazzo Loredan the programme of scenes from ancient Roman history was not represented as feigned sculpture in marble or bronze, but as lively recreations of the events themselves. The two traditions were thus united: the Roman subject matter and the Roman approach to figure-drawing modified by Venetian pictorialism, with colour playing a major rôle.

It was probably only somewhat later, in about 1560, that what appears to be the first polychromatic façade frescoes were undertaken in Rome: Federico Zuccaro's scenes from the life of St. Eustace on the two sides of a house in the Piazza Sant'Eustachio.³⁹ As if to emphasize the polychrome of the finished paintings, Federico Zuccaro even executed a preliminary

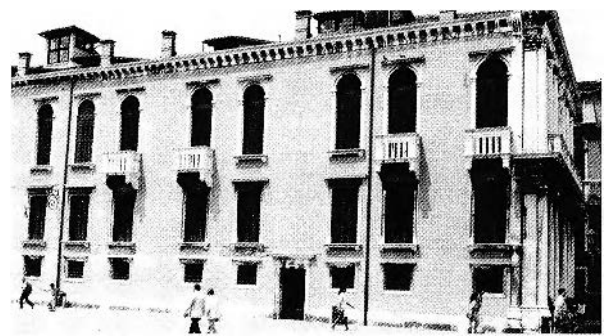


FIGURE 5. *Palazzo Loredan, Venice, Campo Santo Stefano* (Photo: Author).

drawing of the *Vision of St. Eustace* in colour.⁴⁰ It should be borne in mind, however, that while these polychromatic *quadri riportati* may constitute a break with traditional Roman practice, the frescoes do not depict scenes from classical Roman history, the subject of most of the previous simulated sculptural decoration of the city.⁴¹

In Venice, the frescoes of Giuseppe Salviati were then significantly augmented by those of the brothers Paolo and Benedetto Caliari from Verona, where Roman subjects on painted façades had been

37 Schlossmuseum, Inv. Nr. KK8825; pen and brown ink and wash, heightened with white, over black chalk, squared in red chalk, on bluish paper (now faded); 204 × 301 mm. Classified as by Girolamo Muziano, but with an attribution by Konrad Oberhuber to Giuseppe Porta on the mount. Other interpretations of Mucius Scaevola by Venetian artists include drawings by Battista Franco in the Louvre (n° 4948) and formerly in the Gathorne-Hardy collection (Sotheby's, 24 November 1976, repr.). F. Saxl's identification of the relief on the parapet in Giovanni Bellini's *Blood of the Redeemer* (London) as Mucius Scaevola ('Pagan Sacrifice in the Italian Renaissance.' *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II [1938-39], 351) has been refuted by G. Robertson, *Giovanni Bellini* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 35.

38 E.g. Ridolfi-Hadcln, I, 241: 'belli e vivaci colori, come se fossero à oglio.'

39 Vasari-Milanesi, VII, 89; W. Körte, 'Verlorene Frühwerke des Federico Zuccari,' *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, III (1919-32), 519ff. The frescoes include the arms of Pius IV, elected pope in December 1559. The fresco decorations still survive, but in a ruinous condition.

40 Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (n° 62.76): J. Bean, *15th and 16th century Italian Drawings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982), 269, n° 273. A colour reproduction appears in J. Gere, *Il Manierismo a Roma: I Disegni dei Maestri* (Milan: Fratelli Fabbri, 1971), pl. XVIII.

41 That elaborate framing devices around individual scenes had already become the fashion in Rome is, however, suggested by a drawing of a decorated façade with the arms of Paul III by Perino del Vaga (who died in 1547): *Autour de Raphaël, Dessins et peintures du Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 24 November 1983 – 13 February 1984), 89-90, n° 102.

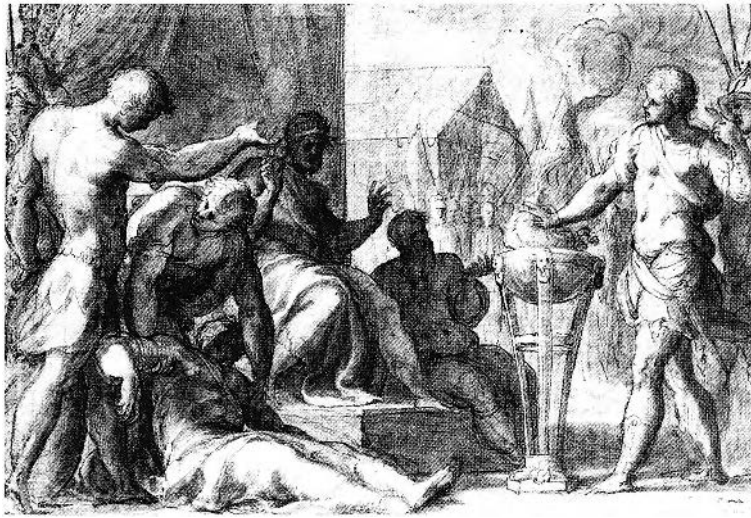


FIGURE 6. Giuseppe Salviati, *Mucius Scaevola Burning his Right Hand before King Porsenna*. Weimar, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Schlossmuseum (Photo: Eberhard Renno).

appearing for some time.⁴² On the façade of the Palazzo Bellavite in Campo San Maurizio (adjacent to the Campo Santo Stefano and Salviati's Palazzo Loredan), Paolo Veronese painted four stories in colour and two in monochrome 'de' fatti dei Romani,' with Coriolanus as protagonist.⁴³ Coriolanus appeared again on what must have been one of the most ambitious façade decorations ever undertaken in Venice, Benedetto Caliari's frescoes on both the façade overlooking the Grand Canal and in the courtyard of the Palazzo Mocenigo at San Samuele. Roman subjects were featured throughout. Apart from Coriolanus the subjects on the main façades included the Sabine women interposed between their fathers and husbands, the vestal virgin Tuccia, and Popilius Laenas, the Roman statesman compelling Antiochus V, King of Syria, to make peace with the Romans. In the

courtyard there appeared such Roman subjects as Hostius Hostilius, slain in battle by the Sabines, surrounded by his soldiers; Horatius, victor of the Curiatii, killing his grieving sister at his own triumph; Mucius Scaevola fearlessly burning his right hand before Porsenna; Porsenna under an awning held by four horsemen receiving the hostages sent by the Romans; and Lucius Verginius taking the life of his daughter Verginia before Appius.⁴⁴ Ridolfi adds that in these figures Benedetto Caliari imitated stone which, being exposed for a long time to the rain, takes on a yellowish-green tinge.⁴⁵ Some idea of the appearance of the lost frescoes may be suggested by two drawings attributed to Benedetto Caliari in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Representing the *Continence of Scipio* and *Mucius Scaevola* (Fig. 7),⁴⁶ the drawings show figures dressed in antique costume and

42 G. Schweikhart, *Fassadenmalerei in Verona* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1973), especially catalogue n° 32, 64, 65 and 69, as well as cat. 114-20 (for façades in Verona attributed to Paolo Veronese). See also Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 298. The Brescian, Lattanzio Gambarà (ca. 1530-1573/74), much influenced by Pordenone, also undertook at least one major façade fresco in Venice with Roman subject matter. Located in the courtyard of the Casa Foscari at San Simeone Piccolo, the frescoes included three large scenes of the conflict between the Romans and Sabines (the rape of the Sabines with Romulus at one side 'in atto imperante,' the battle between Romans and Sabines, and the Sabine women between their husbands and fathers), the rape of Lucretia, Vulcan, 'in iscorcio' and Amore, Mars, Diana and a woman going up stairs with a basket of flowers: Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 278, and G. Vezzoli and P.V. Begni Redona, *Lattanzio Gambarà, pittore* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1978), 241. A drawing in the Albertina (n° 2201) has been tentatively associated with the battle of Sabines and Romans by G. Bora. *I Disegni Lombardi e Genovesi del Cinquecento* (Treviso: Canova, 1980), 63, n° 71.

43 Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 303. Among the other subjects included were 'la Prudenza e Minerva con ramo d'olivo e gambi di spiche in mano, per dinotare, che degli avvanzi fatti, d'oglio e di grano il Padovano haveva murata la casa.' The frescoes have been dated to the mid-1550s by E. Bassi, *Palazzi di Venezia* (Venice: Stamperia di Venezia, 1976), 250, and to 1564 by P. Caliari, *Paolo Veronese, sua vita e sue opere* (Rome, 1888),

60. Among the very few canvases showing Roman history by Paolo Veronese is a circular ceiling painting of Marcus Curtius (Vicenna), which may well have been inspired by Pordenone's similar subject on the façade of the Palazzo d'Anna. The canvas has been dated to the early 1550s by T. Pignatti, *Veronese* (Venice: Alfieri, 1976), 104, n° 7.

44 Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 359. Below the five Roman subjects were five stories from Ovid in smaller areas. With regard to the date of the frescoes it is worth noting that, according to the will of Giovanni Mocenigo, construction of the two Mocenigo palazzetti at San Samuele was not finished in 1579: Bassi, 133. The painted façade is shown, but with insufficient detail to identify the frescoes, in an engraving by Luca Carlevarij (repr. Bassi, fig. 137). Benedetto Caliari also did chiaroscuro frescoes of Roman subjects in the courtyard of the Palazzo Barbaro (then Nani) on the Giudecca. They included Hostilius slain, the Sabine women between their fathers and husbands, Darius' wife and daughters before Alexander, and Veturia before Coriolanus; Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 359-60.

45 Ridolfi-Hadeln, 1, 359.

46 Inv. 1953: 323; pen and brown ink and wash, heightened with white, over black chalk, on blue paper; 342 × 259 mm. For this and the *Continence of Scipio*, see L.C.J. Frerichs, *Italiaanse Tekeningen, II, de 15^{de} en 16^{de} Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 26 September – 13 December 1981), 26-7, n° 45.



FIGURE 7. Benedetto Caliari, *Mucius Scaevola Burning his Right Hand*, recto, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (Photo: Museum).



FIGURE 8. Benedetto Caliari, *Mucius Scaevola Burning his Right Hand*, verso, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (Photo: Museum).

placed in a shallow space at the picture plane. *Mucius Scaevola* is specifically mentioned among the courtyard frescoes of the Palazzo Mocenigo, and it is not difficult to imagine the drawing in Amsterdam translated into the simulated sculpture of a monochromatic fresco. It is unlikely, however, that the drawing was to have been undertaken with this commission in mind, as Alessandro Ballarín has already noted.⁴⁷ Apart from the fact that the *Continence of Scipio* is not listed among the subjects represented on the Palazzo Mocenigo, on the *versos* of both drawings the outlines of the compositions on the *rectos* have been traced through and are everywhere provided with colour notes (Fig. 8). At least at some moment, then, Benedetto Caliari would seem to have considered such Roman histories in colour.

During the second half of the 16th century, scenes from Roman history were perhaps the most common subject of the frescoed façades of Venetian palaces, even though such subjects were only rarely found on Venetian canvases. While some general comments may be readily made about this fashion, specific circumstances no doubt affected the individual choice of subject matter in numerous instances.

In the case of the Loredan the situation appears to have been relatively straightforward. The Loredan family believed their name derived from *Laureati*, the

victorious descendants of Mucius Scaevola, and hence they had the image of their illustrious ancestor depicted on the façade of their house.⁴⁸ But the Loredan did not stop at that: they also included other scenes of virtue and valour from the history of early Rome, as told by Livy. And Livy, after all, was born in Padua and was conspicuously hailed as such on the title pages of 16th-century Venetian editions of his work.

There was nothing new in displaying the images of one's illustrious forebears, especially in order to inspire virtuous action. According to Sallust, Quintus

47 'Considerazioni su una mostra di disegni Veronesi del Cinquecento.' *Arte Veneta*, xxv (1971), 112.

48 G. Tassini, *Curiosità veneziana ovvero origini delle denominazioni stradali di Venezia*, ed. L. Moretti (Venice, 1970), 348; A. Loredan, *Venezia e i suoi Eroi* (Venice: Biblion, 1970) 50. In an analogous manner, the Corner (Cornaro) family believed themselves descended from the *gens Cornelia*; and fifty years before the Loredan commissioned Salviati to paint their façade, Francesco Corner had commissioned Andrea Mantegna to paint scenes from the life of Scipio Africanus, the most celebrated member of the Cornelia family. The paintings were intended for the decoration of a room, but for the present context, it is to be noted that the antique subjects were depicted in a frieze-like manner, as if they were a sculpted relief with the figures in white marble. See G. Knox, 'The Camerino of Francesco Corner,' *Arte Veneta*, xxxii (1978), 79-84.

Fabius and Publius Scipio used to say that when they looked at images of their ancestors they felt themselves burning to be on their mettle, and by their own deeds to equal the glory of their forefathers.⁴⁹ Dolce, who cites this remark of Sallust in his *Dialogo della Pittura* of 1557, concludes that '*Le imagini adunque de' buoni e de' virtuosi infiammano gli huomini ... alla virtù & alle opere buone.*'⁵⁰ In 1584, Gian Paolo Lomazzo repeats the account of the Romans who kept in their houses images and portraits of their ancestors '*per memoria de le virtù loro e pur imitazione de' posterì,*' and adds that the depictions of the glorious actions of illustrious men (such as Horatius Cocles and Marcus Curtius) were by command of the Roman people to be placed in public places, in order that the Romans be moved to emulate such honourable deeds.⁵¹ This Roman tradition continued in the Renaissance. Alberti recommends that 'the memorable Actions of great Men ... be applied to publick Works, and the Buildings of Princes,' and that 'the Portico ... is the fittest Place for the Representation of great Actions in Pictures.'⁵² Filarete goes further and actually identifies the stories of Porsenna encamped before Rome, Horatius breaking the bridge and Mucius Scaevola burning his hand as subjects appropriate for the entrance façade of a palace.⁵³ In Venice, such proposals would have found a sympathetic response in those who, like the historian Pietro Giustiniani, believed that '*si può ben dire che Venetia sia stata erede della singular virtù che fioriva nella Republica Romana*' – that indeed Venice was the 'New Rome.'⁵⁴

Congruent with the depiction of antique Roman subjects was the use of fresco, the medium of the palace façades. Renaissance writers seem to have thought that antique painting was principally wall painting in fresco, a conviction which in turn was used to extol the medium.⁵⁵ Even Paolo Pino, a Venetian champion of oil paint, advocated fresco for mu-

ral painting in public places.⁵⁶ When the murals showed antique subjects, the content was thus conjoined to its appropriate medium. This association may help to explain why so few historical subjects from antiquity were executed on canvas in Venice. In addition, fresco was recommended for its durability,⁵⁷ but in this respect Venice belied façade frescoes and eventually dealt them the *coup de grâce*.

At a time when both the sculptural values of Roman 16th-century Roman art and the historical subjects of Roman antiquity were combined with the pictorial values of Venetian art, it might be thought that the future of façade painting in Venice was auspicious, and that it held great promise for further ambitious undertakings. Instead, the façades of the second half of the 16th century with Roman subject matter represent one of the culminations of the tradition. By the 17th century, the practice of frescoing external façades was in widespread decline. Whatever accounted for this change in fashion in a broader context, in Venice there can be no doubt but that the meteorological conditions of the city played a decisive part. By the time Ridolfi wrote in 1648 and Boschini wrote a few years later, many frescoes were almost illegible or were ruined altogether. With regard to Pordenone's frescoes on the Palazzo d'Anna, Boschini exclaimed that one could see nothing but that Proserpine was raped by Pluto, '*poichè il resto fu rapito dal Tempo.*'⁵⁸ Already a century earlier, Vasari had declared that he had never encountered anything as destructive as '*gli scrocchi,*' which so cruelly devoured the frescoes on the outsides of Venetian buildings.⁵⁹ Ironically, what was considered to be one of fresco's chief merits – its permanence – thus proved in Venice to be one of its chief disadvantages. With the destruction of the façade frescoes, Venice indeed lost much of what in the 16th century she had presented as her public face.

49 *Bellum Jugurthinum*, iv, 5-6

50 Dolce, 15.

51 G.P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scoltura et Architettura* [1584] in Gian Paolo Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle Arti*, ed. R.P. Ciardi (Florence: Centro Di, 1974), II, 13-14: '*i fatti gloriosi de gl'huomini illustri si dipingevano per commandamento del popolo Romano ne i lochi pubblici per eccitar gl'huomini ad emulare imprese così gloriose.*'

52 L.B. Alberti, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. James Lee, ed. J. Rykwert (London: Tiranti, 1965), 149, 192. It should be noted, however, that the second comment is expressed in terms of sacred buildings. The first Italian translation of Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* was published in Venice in 1546.

53 *Treatise on Architecture*, trans. J.R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale, 1965), 117-18. A painted series of famous men from all the ages – 'like a hall in Rome' – was also proposed, and indeed was accepted by the lord. For such a series, but solely of Roman heroes, painted in fresco inside a palace in

the 14th century, see T. Mommsen, 'Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua,' *Art Bulletin*, xxxiv (1952), 95-116. In general, in the 16th century the portrait-like images of the *uirs illustre* had given way to narrative depictions of their noble deeds.

54 *Le Historie Venetiane del clariss. Sig. Pietro Giustiniano nobile Venetiano di nuovo rivedute et ampliate ecc.* (Venice, 1576), quoted in W. Wolters, *Der Bilderschmuck des Dogenpalastes* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), 265. For Venice as the 'New Rome' see also D. Chambers, *The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), 12ff, with further literature.

55 E.g., Vasari-Milanesi, I, 182; Pino, 121.

56 Pino, 121.

57 See references in note 55.

58 Boschini, *Sestiere San Marco*, 95.

59 Vasari-Milanesi, iv, 95.