

MITTEILUNGEN  
DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN  
INSTITUTES  
IN FLORENZ



LXI. BAND — 2019  
HEFT 2



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HEFT 2

# MITTEILUNGEN DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN INSTITUTES IN FLORENZ

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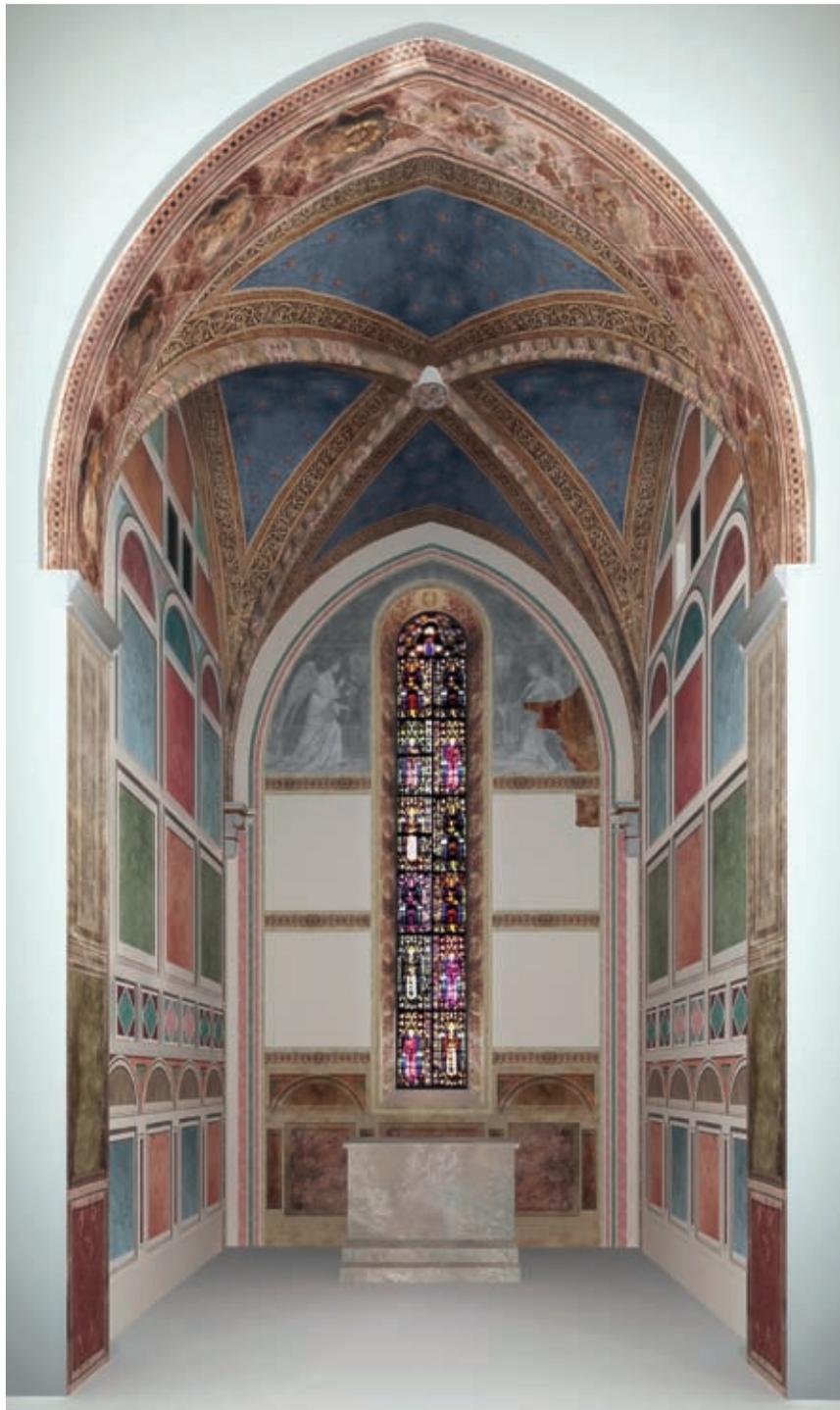
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1 Graphic reconstruction of Giotto's decoration  
of the chapel of Saint Catherine  
in Sant'Antonio, Padua, general view  
(graphic rendering by Enrico Bancone)

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# A NEW CYCLE BY GIOTTO FOR THE SCROVEGNI THE CHAPEL OF SAINT CATHERINE IN THE BASILICA OF SANT'ANTONIO IN PADUA

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Giacomo Guazzini

[...] molte volte nelle cose da lui [Giotto] fatte si truova  
che il visivo senso degli uomini vi prese errore, quello  
credendo esser vero che era dipinto.<sup>1</sup>

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, VI.5

Giotto's activity in Padua marks one of the turning-points in fourteenth-century Italian painting: he worked extensively not only in Enrico Scrovegni's celebrated oratory at the Arena, but also in the ba-

silica of Sant'Antonio, the most important civic and religious monument of the city, which developed around the tomb of the Franciscan thaumaturge.<sup>2</sup> In addition to several conventual areas (including the chapter house), Giotto decorated various important ecclesiastical spaces, as has been known for many years from the fresco fragments on the intrados of the chapel of Saint Catherine in the ambulatory.<sup>3</sup> His activity, however, was more extensive than has been

<sup>1</sup> “[...] we find that in the things done by him [Giotto] the visual sense of men did often err in regard thereof, believing for real that which was but painted” (translation by Mark Roberts).

<sup>2</sup> For the history of the basilica, see Vergilio Gamboso, “Sant’Antonio nella storia e nella devozione”, in: *La Basilica del Santo: storia e arte*, ed. by Claudio Bellinati *et al.*, Rome *et al.* 1994, pp. 9–36; Alberto Vecchi, “Le dimensioni della devozione antoniana”, *ibidem*, pp. 38–69; Antonio Rigon, *Dal libro alla folla: Antonio di Padova e il francescanesimo medioevale*, Rome 2002, pp. 133–166, 177–189; Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy*, Cambridge *et al.* 2004, pp. 88–147; as well as the recent volume *Antonio di Padova e le sue immagini*, conference proceedings Assisi 2016, ed. by Grado Giovanni Merlo, Spoleto 2017.

<sup>3</sup> For these fragments see in general Francesca Flores D’Arcais, *Giotto*, Milan 1995, pp. 132f., and furthermore Giovanni Previtali, *Giotto e la sua bottega*, Milan 1967, p. 377; Francesca Flores D’Arcais, “Affreschi giotteschi nella Basilica del Santo a Padova”, in: *Critica d’arte*, n.s., XV (1968), pp. 23–34; *eadem*, “La presenza di Giotto al Santo”, in: *Le pitture del Santo di Padova*, ed. by Camillo Semenzato, Vicenza 1984, pp. 3–13; Louise Bourdua, “Committenza francescana nel Veneto”, in: *La pittura nel Veneto: il Trecento*, ed. by Mauro Lucco, Milan 1992, II, pp. 463–479: 470; Anna Maria Spiazzi, “Padova”, *ibidem*, I, pp. 88–177: 89; Giovanni Previtali, *Giotto e la sua bottega*, ed. by Alessandro Conti, Milan 1993, p. 377; Daniele Benati, “Disegno del Trecento riminese”, in: *Il Trecento riminese: maestri e botteghe tra Romagna e Marche*, ed. by *idem*, Milan 1995, pp. 29–57: 39; Miklós



2 Giotto, *Glorification of the Virgin*, ca. 1300–1303, and Rinaldino di Francia, *Virgin and Child*, 1396. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of the Madonna Mora

previously considered, as is shown by the recently discovered fresco in the chapel of the Madonna Mora in the north transept of the basilica (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> Although its state of conservation is problematic and calls for urgent restoration, it shows, behind an imposing late Gothic sculpture of a Madonna and Child, an extensive and complex *Glorification of the Virgin*. The fresco reveals a vertiginous level of pictorial quality, perfectly compatible with the master himself, and was realised in the first years of the trecento, most likely earlier than the Arena Chapel: this decoration was in fact specifically devised to honour the original burial place of Saint Anthony, which had become the focus of the cult of the thaumaturge saint.

The fresco fragments on the intrados of the chapel of Saint Catherine (Fig. 3) remain relatively understudied, in spite of their great importance. In 1968, Francesca Flores D'Arcais drew attention to this dec-

Boskovits, "Giotto: un artista poco conosciuto?", in: *Giotto: bilancio critico di sessant'anni di studi e ricerche*, exh. cat., ed. by Angelo Tartuferi, Florence 2000, pp. 75–95: 83; Vittorio Sgarbi, "Nel convento di Sant'Antonio a Padova: dal Maestro del Capitolo a Giotto", in: *Giotto e il suo tempo*, exh. cat. Padua 2000/01, ed. by *idem*, Milan 2000, pp. 144–148: 144; Miklós Boskovits, s.v. Giotto di Bondone, in: *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, LV, Rome 2001, pp. 401–423: 408f.; Enrica Cozzi, "Giotto e bottega al Santo: gli affreschi della Sala Capitolare, dell'andito e delle cappelle radiali", in: *Il Santo*, XLII (2002), pp. 77–91: 80f.; Alessandro Volpe, *Giotto e i Riminesi: il gotico e l'antico nella pittura di primo Trecento*, Milan 2002, p. 56; Alessandro Simbeni, "Il *Lignum vitae sancti Francisci* in due dipinti di primo Trecento a Padova e Verona", in: *Il Santo*, XLVI (2006), pp. 185–213: 195; Enrica Cozzi, "L'influenza di Giotto nelle Venezie", in: *Il secolo di Giotto nel Veneto*, ed. by Giovanna Valenzano/Federica Toniolo, Venice 2007, pp. 81–105: 82; Angelo Tartuferi, *Giotto: vita d'artista*, Florence 2007, pp. 51f.; Serena Romano, *La O di Giotto*, Milan 2008, p. 155; Francesca Flores D'Arcais, "La cappella degli Scrovegni", in: *Giotto e il Trecento: "il più sovrano maestro stato in dipintura"*, exh. cat. Rome 2009, ed. by Alessandro Tomei, Milan 2009, II: *Saggi*, pp. 101–III: 104; Angelo Tartuferi, *Giotto*, Rome 2014, p. 132; Francesca Flores D'Arcais, "Giotto e Padova", in: *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova*, C (2018), pp. 21–34; Serena Romano, "Giotto, Francesco, i Francescani", in: *Francesco e la rivoluzione di Giotto*, Milan 2018, pp. 87–198: 134. These frescoes, however, are completely ignored by Michael Viktor Schwarz, *Giottus pictor*, II: *Giottos Werke*, Vienna 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Giacomo Guazzini, "Un nuovo Giotto al Santo di Padova: la cappella della Madonna Mora", in: *Nuovi Studi*, 21 (2015), pp. 5–40. This important fresco decoration was until now wrongly attributed to a late fourteenth-century local painter of the circle of Jacopo da Verona; see

oration, which shows busts of female saints, and attributed it to Giotto's workshop in years very close to the Arena cycle.<sup>5</sup> Since then most critics have added these fragments to Giotto's oeuvre without substantial objections. Although their high quality attests to the direct presence of the Florentine master (and his workshop), so far there has been no adequate scholarly analysis of the original decoration of the chapel. The aim of this study is to investigate the surviving fragments in depth and attempt to reconstruct this important and now almost lost cycle.

The chapel of Saint Catherine – today known as “la cappella delle benedizioni” – is located at the south extremity of the ambulatory as the first of the nine radial chapels.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the wall decoration has been largely lost due to a series of interventions that profoundly altered its former decorative aspect, the most recent and invasive of which took place only a few decades ago. Between 1981 and 1983, Pietro Annigoni was commissioned to decorate the side walls *ex novo* with *Saint Anthony preaching to the fishes* on the left, *Ezzelino da Romano rejecting Saint Anthony's request* on the right, and a large *Crucifixion* on the altar.



3 Padua, Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint Catherine

Francesca Flores D'Arcais, “Decorazioni tardotrecentesche nella Basilica e nel chiostro della Magnolia”, in: *Le pitture del Santo di Padova* (note 3), pp. 63–65; 64; Camillo Semenzato, “Le pitture del Trecento al Santo”, in: *La Cappella del Beato Luca e Giusto de' Menabuoi nella Basilica di Sant'Antonio*, ed. by *idem*, Padua 1988, pp. 103–125; 108.

<sup>5</sup> Flores D'Arcais 1968 (note 3), pp. 30f.; *eadem* 1984 (note 3), pp. 6f.; *eadem* 1995 (note 3), pp. 132f.

<sup>6</sup> On the building history of the Santo, see especially Herbert Dellwing, “Der Santo in Padua: Eine baugeschichtliche Untersuchung”, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XIX (1975), pp. 197–240; Giovanni Lorenzoni, “Cenni per una storia della fondazione della Basilica alla luce dei documenti (con ipotesi interpretative)”, in: *L'edificio del Santo di Padova*, ed. by *idem*, Vicenza 1981, pp. 17–30; Wolfgang Schenkluh, *Architektur der Bettelorden: Die Baukunst der Dominikaner und Franziskaner in Europa*, Darmstadt 2000, pp. 59, 75f.; Herbert Dellwing, “L'architettura gotica nel Veneto”, in: *Storia dell'architettura nel Veneto: il Gotico*, ed. by Jürgen Schulz, Venice 2010, pp. 50–187; 50–61. See also the recent observations by Giovanna Valenzano, “Il cantiere architettonico del Santo nel 1310”, in: *Il Santo*, LI (2011), pp. 365–379, as well as the ample synthesis by Bettina Heinemann, *Der Santo in Padua: Raum städtischer, privater und ordenspolitischer Inszenierung*, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 153–357.

These new works completely covered the side walls, causing a near complete loss of the earlier decoration.<sup>7</sup>

Although the chapel of Saint Catherine is located in one of the most important areas of the basilica, its earlier history is scarcely documented, in particular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>8</sup> The ambulatory was probably built between the 1260s and the early 1280s, when we have the first documentary evidence of the altars and chapels in the apse.<sup>9</sup> The remarkable historical and documentary work carried out by Antonio Sartori (1983) on the complex of Sant'Antonio has brought to light many important elements: he derived new information from the manuscript no. 693 (now I680) in the Biblioteca Oliveriana in Pesaro, composed by Francesco Antonio Benoffi (1706–1786), a learned Franciscan who had held the post of inquisitor at the Paduan convent.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Danilo Negri/Laura Sesler, "I principali interventi nella fabbrica dal secolo XIX ai giorni nostri", in: *L'edificio del Santo* (note 6), pp. 125–169; 168; Antonio Sartori, *Archivio Sartori: documenti di storia e arte francescana*, ed. by Giovanni Maria Luisetto, Padova 1983–1989, IV, p. 27; Claudio Bellinati, "La Basilica di Sant'Antonio nella storia della città di Padova", in: *La Basilica del Santo* (note 2), pp. 71–133; 128f.; Deodato Tapete, *Pietro Annigoni al Santo di Padova: ricerche sulla tecnica pittorica e ricordi tra arte e fede*, Saonara 2011, pp. 31–39; Salvatore Ruzza, *La Basilica di Sant'Antonio: itinerario artistico e religioso*, Padua 2016, pp. 147–153.

<sup>8</sup> This scarcity of information is due, among other things, to the fire at the Palazzo della Ragione in 1420, where the convent's oldest documents were preserved; see Sante Bortolami, "Spaciosum, immo speciosum palacium: alle origini del Palazzo della Ragione di Padova", in: *Il Palazzo della Ragione di Padova: la storia, l'architettura, il restauro*, ed. by Ettore Vio, Padua 2008, pp. 39–73; 67.

<sup>9</sup> The documents were published by Paolo Marangon/Claudio Bellinati, "La Basilica del Santo nei documenti d'archivio e storico-letterari dalle origini al 1405", in: *L'edificio del Santo* (note 6), pp. 187–228; but see also the important contribution by Louise Bourdua, "'Master Plans' of Devotion or Daily Pragmatism? The Dedication and Use of Chapels and Conventual Spaces by the Friars and Laity at the Santo 1263–1310", in: *Il Santo*, LI (2011), pp. 491–510, and the work of Heinemann (note 6), pp. 392–410.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Augusta Timpanaro Morelli, "Su Francesco Antonio Benoffi di Pesaro, minore conventuale ed inquisitore, e su Giovanni Battista Dei di Firenze, antiquario ed archivista granducale, due personaggi del secolo XVIII", in: *Studia oliveriana*, ser. 3., III/IV (2003/04), pp. 85–149; Renzo Rabboni, "Francesco Antonio Benoffi da Pesaro inquisitore ad Udine (1750–1766)", in: *Artisti in viaggio, 1600–1750*, ed. by Maria Paola Frattolin, Venice 2005, pp. 55–80.

Quoting from a now lost "Liber Sagristiae", for which he gives full archival details, Benoffi provides important evidence on the patronage of the chapel: on 20 June 1369 a priest named Andrea, "prevosto [parish priest] dell'Arena", was charged by Ugolino Scrovegni to "bring" an offering of 32 lire to the altar of Saint Catherine, and the same was done on 18 May the following year (1370) by Lucia, Ugolino's wife.<sup>11</sup> From Benoffi's investigation, we learn that shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century the chapel was under the control of the Scrovegni, a circumstance that, as will be discussed further below, might suggest a similar situation in the early fourteenth century, at the time the Giottesque decoration was realised.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the information provided by Benoffi, it is known that on 22 January 1387 Scavuccio de' Rossi di Parma, captain of Este, made a provision

<sup>11</sup> Benoffi's transcription reads as follows: "Adi XX giugno MCCCLXIX prete Andrea prevosto dell'Arena porta all'altare di Santa Catterina a nome di Ugolino Scrovigno lire XXXII. Liber Sagristiae f. 96. Sotto a di XVIII maggio MCCCLXX domina Lucia moglie del nobil milite Ugolino Scrovigni porta altra oferta all'altare di Santa Catterina Liber Sagristiae f. 125" (Pesaro, Biblioteca Oliveriana, ms. 693 [today no. I680], fol. 24r; "on XX June MCCCLXIX the priest Andrea, rector of the Arena, carries XXXII lire to the altar of Saint Catherine in the name of Ugolino Scrovigno. Book of sacristy, f. 96. On XVIII May MCCCLXX the lady Lucia, wife of the noble knight Ugolino Scrovigni, takes another offering to the altar of Saint Catherine, Book of sacristy, f. 125"). The page begins with a note by Benoffi not directly linked to the chapel of Saint Catherine, but rather to the altar of Saint Anastasia: "Del di XIV gennaio MCCXCIV v'è un'indulgenza di giorni quaranta del patriarca d'Aquileia a chi visita l'altare di Santa Anastasia" ("On 14 January MCCXCIV an indulgence of forty days is granted by the Patriarch of Aquileia for those who visit the altar of Saint Anastasia"), without indication of provenance (the document is partially quoted in Sartori [note 7], I, p. 562, doc. 1).

<sup>12</sup> Bernardo Gonzati, *La Basilica di S. Antonio descritta e illustrata*, Padua 1852/53, I, p. XVI, doc. 16, reports that in 1294 a certain Alchenda donated 100 lire "pro ornamentis unius altaris facti vel faciendi in honorem Sanctae Catherinae" ("for the decoration of an altar made or to be made in honour of Saint Catherine"). Bourdua (note 9), p. 495, first drew attention to an error in Gonzati's transcription, who arbitrarily added the words "in honorem Sanctae Catherinae": therefore, there is no evidence that this document is linked to the chapel in question. Although the documents were already correctly published by Marangon/Bellinati (note 9), p. 209, and in *Il "Liber contractuum" dei frati Minori di Padova e Vicenza (1263–1302)*, ed. by Elisabetta Bonato, Rome 2002, p. 585, Gonzati's

in his will that his heir should construct a funerary monument (perhaps only a tomb slab) in the chapel of Saint Catherine.<sup>13</sup> This work, however, was never carried out, since only a couple of months later, on 30 March, a certain Giovanni Saraceno made a bequest for this chapel to be assigned as the burial place for himself and his family.<sup>14</sup> Although, most likely, neither Scavuccio de' Rossi nor Giovanni Saraceno's wishes were ever carried out, these documents imply that the Scrovegni had lost the patronage of this space sometime between 1370 and 1387 (possibly closer to the latter year), since from that moment it could be conceded to other private individuals. The friars managed the chapel until 27 June 1398, when they assigned it as a burial place to the noble Zabarella family (represented by Francesco Zabarella, archpriest of the Paduan cathedral, Andrea, and his sons Giampietro and Giacomo), who maintained this privilege until the extinction of their lineage in the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

The literary sources concerning Giotto's activity at the Santo have been fully investigated by scholars, though no secure conclusions have been reached regarding the chapel of Saint Catherine.<sup>16</sup> Although

there is no explicit reference to this specific project, it is fundamental to recall the words of Giorgio Vasari, who in the first edition of his *Vite* (1550) states that Giotto decorated "alcune cappelle" in the basilica del Santo.<sup>17</sup> In the second edition (1568), possibly after direct inspection, he attributed only "una cappella bellissima" to the master,<sup>18</sup> generally identified by scholars with that of Saint Catherine. Although this solution is entirely plausible, we must be aware that Vasari's indication could also refer to another chapel decorated by Giotto in the basilica that has hitherto passed unobserved: the above-mentioned chapel of the Madonna Mora, which was indissolubly linked to the first, highly venerated tomb of Saint Anthony (Fig. 2).<sup>19</sup>

### The Restorations

The restorations carried out by Annigoni between 1981 and 1983 were the last in a long series of works that altered the space. The earliest documentation of refurbishment dates from the fifteenth century, when metal tie-rods were installed in the vault in 1442<sup>20</sup> and the furnishings renewed in 1489.<sup>21</sup> The

transcription was still used by Romano 2008 [note 3], p. 156, and Luca Baggio, "Il cantiere pittorico di primo Trecento al Santo: note di lettura e riflessioni", in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, L (2010), pp. 141–158: 145.

<sup>13</sup> Scavuccio de' Rossi requests in fact that the executor "fieri faciat et construere immediate post ipsius testatoris obitum unum monumentum cum lapide marmoreo desuper in ecclesia fratrum minorum [...] in capella Sanctae Catarinae" (quoted from Sartori [note 7], I, p. 554, doc. 1). See also the observations by Bourdua (note 9), p. 496.

<sup>14</sup> "Item ecclesie Beati Antonii predicti pro eius reparatione ducatos quinquaginta, et hoc pro assignatione capelle Beate Catarine site prope sacristiam conventus dicte ecclesie pro sepultura seu sepulturis ibidem construendis pro corporibus parentum suorum, ipsius et suorum descenduntium vel heredum, dandos et solvendo si dicta capella sibi assignabitur libera et expedita et absque alicuius contradictione" (quoted from Sartori [note 7], I, p. 52, doc. 637). See also the observations by Bourdua (note 9), p. 496.

<sup>15</sup> Benoffi (note 11), fol. 24r; Marangon/Bellinati (note 9), p. 228; Danilo Negri/Laura Sesler, "La cappella di Santa Caterina nella Basilica del Santo", in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, XXI (1981), pp. 651–668: 651; Sartori (note 7), I, pp. 554f., doc. 2; Heinemann (note 6), pp. 399f.

<sup>16</sup> For Giotto's activity in Padua, see especially the valuable contem-

porary testimony of Riccobaldus Ferrariensis, *Compilatio chronologica*, ed. by A. Teresa Hankey, Rome 2000, pp. 218f. ("[...] opera facta per eum [Giotto] in ecclesiis Minorum Assisii, Arimini, Padue ac per ea que pinxit palatio Comunis Padue et in ecclesia Arene Padue"). For a discussion of the sources (in particular Riccobaldo, Michele Savonarola, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Marcantonio Michiel, and Giorgio Vasari) see Cozzi 2002 (note 3), p. 77; Michael Viktor Schwarz/Pia M. Theis, *Giottus Pictor, I: Giottos Leben: Mit einer Sammlung der Urkunden und Texte bis Vasari*, Vienna 2004, pp. 21f., 291, 308, 320, 325f.; Cozzi 2007 (note 3), p. 91; Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 144f.; and especially the excellent summary provided by *eadem*, "La sala capitolare del Santo di Padova: gli eventi del 1310", in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, LI (2011), pp. 417–430: 418. A problematic source is Domenico Maria Manni, *Osservazioni storiche [...] sopra i sigilli antichi de' secoli bassi*, Florence 1739–1786, XIV, for which see below, note 53.

<sup>17</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1966–1997, II, p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107.

<sup>19</sup> Guazzini (note 4), pp. 13f.

<sup>20</sup> Sartori (note 7), I, p. 552, doc. 50 (15 February 1442).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 555, doc. 4 (25 November 1489).

most important interventions, however, took place in the eighteenth century: in 1734 a new baroque altar was made, the original lancet window was bricked up, two *oculi* were made at the sides of the altar, and the walls of the chapel, which until then probably still bore the fourteenth-century decoration, were completely whitewashed (“datto di bianco”).<sup>22</sup> Because of these interventions, the frescoes were forgotten for the next two centuries. In 1893 Camillo Boito was charged with the overall restoration of the apse area, including the removal of the baroque additions to the chapel of Saint Catherine, the demolition of the altar (with its frame) and the reopening of the old window.<sup>23</sup> Probably on this occasion, the window was reopened in the right wall (maybe in order to shed light on the adjacent staircase of the bell tower), partially destroying the ancient decoration. Ten years later, in 1903, Senator Vincenzo Breda decided to finance the restoration of several apsidal chapels in order to obtain their patronage: work on the chapel of Saint Catherine, which was to be rededicated to Saint Angela Merici (in homage to Breda’s mother Angela), did not begin until December 1923, when the painter Giuseppe Cherubini (1867–1960) from Ancona was commissioned to carry out the new decoration.<sup>24</sup> From the words of the Veneranda Arca del Santo, the authority that still administers the basilica today, we clearly understand that the principal scope of the restoration was not only to paint four scenes

from the life of Saint Angela, but also and especially “conservare [...] riprendere e rifare [...] la decorazione semplice preesistente, la quale risale all’epoca giottesca” (“to conserve [...], refresh and remake [...] the pre-existing simple decoration, dating from the time of Giotto”).<sup>25</sup>

It was at this very time that vast areas of the fourteenth-century decoration emerged from beneath the eighteenth-century whitewashing and were safeguarded as much as possible. From the rich documentation conserved in the archives of the Veneranda Arca it appears that in 1923, on the ceiling and on the walls, one could see ample traces of the Giottesque decoration, which continued to emerge day by day.<sup>26</sup> The intervention of Cherubini, although invasive by present-day standards, was in fact remarkable for its respect of the original fragments, given that Cherubini limited himself to retouching and polishing of the original parts on the walls and on the entrance arch.<sup>27</sup> The Arca attentively supervised the work and at its conclusion in December 1925 declared itself fully satisfied, given that Cherubini had remained “fedele alle antiche traccie esistenti” (“faithful to the old existing traces”).<sup>28</sup> Although the restoration was undoubtedly invasive, especially for the end wall, it also sought to conserve the old parts, extending the decoration where it no longer existed. This situation persisted until 1983, when Annigoni definitively covered up the side walls.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 555, doc. 8 (24 December 1734): the stonemason had “prima [...] levà [sc. levato] mensa parapetto e fianchi de l’altare di Santa Catterina [...], poi fatto la fundamenta per l’altare novo, otturà [sc. otturato] una fenesttra che era dietro l’altare vecchio, levà la ferada del volto [sc. volta] [...], fatto le due fenestre una di quele fintta, meso [sc. messo] li suoi marmi, posto in opera il novo altaro, restaurà [sc. restaurato] le malte del volto e muri di detta capela e datto di bianco, desfatto il teraso [sc. pavimento] di detta capela, levà il scalino [...] e sbasà [sc. abbassato] ancho la sepoltura [...]” (Negri/Sesler [note 15], pp. 651f).

<sup>23</sup> *Eidem* (note 7), pp. 136–145.

<sup>24</sup> For this painter, see *Giuseppe Cherubini (Ancona 1867–Venezia 1960)*, exh. cat., Venice 2000; for a similar work in Padua, the restoration of the oratory of San Giorgio, see Barbara Hein, “Decorazione esterna dell’oratorio

di S. Giorgio a Padova: la pittura murale trecentesca e il suo ripristino ad opera di Giuseppe Cherubini nel 1929–31”, in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, XL (2000), pp. 387–414.

<sup>25</sup> AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2, fol. 6 (8 December 1923).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the estimate supplied by Cherubini to the Veneranda Arca, AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2, fol. 8 (22 March 1924): “Ripristino delle parti mancanti fatte a buon fresco e ritocatura delle parti esistenti [...]; a) lucidare la parte che ancora si conserva dei dipinti e riprodurla fedelmente; b) completare le parti che sono senza intonaco [...]; c) restaurare con ogni cura l’intradosso dell’arco avendo l’avvertenza di accompagnare nel migliore del modo le parti mancanti [...]”.

<sup>28</sup> AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2, fol. 29 (30 December 1925).



4 Padua, Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint Catherine  
(photo from ca. 1923/24)

### The Historical Photographs

Considering that the Arca requested such a prudent and attentive restoration, it is worth asking what medieval decorations were visible at the time. For an understanding of the chapel's original appearance we are fortunately able to draw on a body of extraordinarily important early twentieth-century photo-

graphs, some of which have been published but still remain little known and have never been carefully analysed. The first one (Fig. 4), dating from circa 1923/24,<sup>29</sup> was published in 1981 by Danilo Negri and Laura Sesler, without generating much scholarly interest, except for a few short remarks by Serena Romano, who also republished it.<sup>30</sup> The photograph

<sup>29</sup> Conserved in AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2. The negative of this photo has been recently digitised by the Centro Studi Antoniani, no. VAALV 0265 (but also no. MESS2).

<sup>30</sup> Negri/Sesler (note 15), pp. 651–657, fig. 52; Romano 2008 (note 3), p. 156, who correctly observed that it shows “una solida griglia di finte

modanature architettoniche e di finte specchiature di marmo, vicine nel gusto – e tuttavia non identiche – a quelle che incardinano la decorazione della sala capitolare. Possono essere plausibili in quanto svolgimenti delle architetture dipinte nel ciclo assiate: che siano autografe del maestro, o prodotto della bottega, è impossibile oggi decidere”.

shows a large portion of the right wall along with part of the entrance arch and end wall of the chapel and constitutes the sole, extremely valuable testimony of the original decorative arrangement. In fact, it attests to the state of the chapel immediately after the removal of the eighteenth-century whitewashing and before Cherubini's restoration of the old decoration had begun. By digitally rectifying the image it is possible to recover the appearance of the entire right wall (Fig. 5). It shows a series of superimposed registers with fictive marble slabs, lunettes, loggias, and niches that compose a highly elaborate ensemble, arranged within a white or light-coloured frame that structures the entire surface.

A closer examination reveals a series of fictive marble slabs at the top framed by pale bands, which in the lower part present a number of finely shaped mouldings in delicate chiaroscuro, and two little openings in the base of the lunette (the one on the left was real, while that on the right was illusive). Below, three large arched lunettes contain fictive variegated marble panels framed by white pilaster-strips. The soffit of the arches are recessed and increase progressively in width towards the left, in conformity to the viewpoint of an observer at the entrance of the chapel. The level below shows a surface damaged by loss of colour and by the above-mentioned window; despite this damage, we can determine that this register was subdivided into three large rectangular panels bound by the white frame with an articulated system of mouldings linking the various levels. In sum, there was a triad of fictive marble panels – the central one a little wider –, recessed and crowned with lunettes, separated by illusionistically projecting white pilaster-strips.

In the next register further down, three more large panels were inserted into the frame, which were even more articulated than the previous register. The framing elements were more elaborate and all the panels (with their mouldings, borders, internal and external cornices) were conceived so as to create a se-

ries of fictive marble aediculae that illusionistically pierced the wall surface.

Beneath these three panels was a series of six fictive marble rectangles, elegantly disposed and recessed into the frame, which acted as a podium for the entire structure above; in the centre of each was a pale lozenge on a dark ground, probably with alternating colours. Lastly, in the lowest part of the photograph, we discern a register bearing four recessed aediculae, with marble lunettes and architraves that create a kind of continuous parapet, intervalled by pilasters. Unfortunately, the angle of the photograph does not permit a view of the surfaces below, but from the appropriate photogrammetric reliefs we can deduce that there could not have been another decorative register, since the lower lunettes were at a height of approximately 190 centimetres from the floor.

All these elements were designed with a finely calibrated use of light falling from the central window and appeared organically foreshortened (with their thicknesses progressively diminishing), creating the effect of a real architectural structure conceived as if seen from the entrance of the chapel. Altogether, the accurate asymmetries and the adjustments of perspective and illumination that we find in this complex apparatus appear as constitutive elements of a radically innovative and experimental conception, characterised by a highly sophisticated and extraordinary investigation of space.

Let us now briefly consider the end wall. Although it is barely visible in the photograph, we are able to observe a small portion near the right corner (Fig. 4). It reveals no decoration, and, on account of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century restorations, much of the surface is bare brickwork, except for a small plastered area at the top right, near the springing of the vault (Fig. 20). These are the only surviving areas of original plaster, and although whitewashed they might preserve traces of the old decoration, on which we shall have more to say below.



5 Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of  
Saint Catherine, western wall, ca. 1923/24,  
digital rectification of Fig. 4

6, 7 Padua,  
Sant'Antonio, chapel  
of Saint Catherine,  
intrados of the  
entrance arch (photos  
from August 1924)



In the archive of the Veneranda Arca there are four other important photographs, taken in August and October 1924 and printed in pairs on two contact sheets, showing the decoration of the intrados at a time when the scaffolding was up but the pictorial restoration had not yet begun (Figs. 6, 7).<sup>31</sup> These photographs, the two of which reproduced here were also published by Negri and Sesler,<sup>32</sup> testify to the

state of the frescoes during the final phase of removing the whitewash. Three more photographs, previously unknown, were taken at the conclusion of the work in December 1925, when the scaffolding was still up: they show the two sides of the intrados of the arch and part of the side walls (Fig. 8) and the upper half of the end wall.<sup>33</sup> Comparing the state of the intrados in the photos with its present state

<sup>31</sup> AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2; they also have been recently digitised by the Centro Studi Antoniani. The dates are indicated on the back in pen, i.e. "Agosto 1924" (CSA, no. MESS3, but also nos. VAALV 0267 and 0268) and "Ottobre 1924" (CSA, no. MESSI, but also no. VAALV

0266) respectively. I thank Chiara Giacon for the kind help with the digital images.

<sup>32</sup> Negri/Sesler (note 15), fig. 51.

<sup>33</sup> CSA, nos. VAALV 0263 (Fig. 8), 0262 (right wall), 0034 (end wall).



8 Padua, Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint Catherine,  
eastern wall (photo from  
ca. December 1925)

(Figs. 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19), we notice that today the vegetal decoration is still fairly legible, unlike the busts in the quadrilobes, which are now in very poor condition. Reserving a more detailed analysis for a separate study, we will here briefly examine the more legible parts of the photographs taken before the restoration. At present, the paintwork has a very worn appearance, because even Cherubini's restorations have significantly faded. In the photographs we note, however, that the restorer, while softening the chiaroscuro and the colours, in large part respected the old decoration, as he had been asked to do. He filled certain lacunae – two missing saints' faces –

but otherwise preserved the pre-existing decoration. With the exception of the two reconstructed faces, Cherubini distinguished his own intervention from the original parts, adopting a very different pictorial technique, characterised by rather summary brushstrokes that are easily identified on close inspection.

In the right part of the intrados, the second bust from the bottom today appears very worn, despite the repainting (Fig. 10); the photograph taken in 1924 shows a more marked chiaroscuro (Fig. 9), which allows for a better reading of the folds in the garment, now largely lost. Although the problematic state of conservation calls for caution, in the composition of



9 Giotto, *Female saint*, ca. 1300-1303. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, intrados of entrance arch (photo from August 1924)



10 Giotto (with restorations by Giuseppe Cherubini), *Female saint*, ca. 1300-1303. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, intrados of entrance arch



11 Giotto, *Female saint*, 1303-1305. Padua, Arena Chapel, southern wall

some of the more legible busts we can see strong affinities with the busts of saints in the Arena Chapel, such as the sainted queen and martyr in the upper part of the right wall (Fig. II).

In the left intrados, the third quadrilobe from the bottom contains a crowned female martyr with palm branch and yellow cloak, in fairly legible condition (Fig. I3); the older state shown in the 1924 photograph (Fig. I2) again reveals a denser chiaroscuro, both around the face and in the clothing. This allows us to better appreciate the similarity with the sainted queen in the middle register of the right wall in the Arena Chapel (Fig. I4): here we find a similar monumental construction of the garment, with a few very marked folds converging on the centre, and an analogous facial type with a regular oval shape, minute, fleshy mouth, small eyes, and sharp eyebrows. In the saint on the intrados we note a more accentuated chiaroscuro, with darker shadows compared to the Arena saint, who on the other hand has more delicate facial features of a lighter and softer palette.

The second bust from the bottom today appears almost totally effaced (Fig. I6): even its outlines are difficult to distinguish. The old photograph (Fig. I5) attests to a more defined contour of the figure and its garment, closely related to the sainted queen in the upper register of the left wall in the Arena Chapel (Fig. I7). Also in the fourth bust (Figs. I8, I9) the old photographs testify to a better state of preservation, displaying a much stronger and denser chiaroscuro than at present, both around the face and on the garment.

Although the connections with the Arena cycle (Figs. II, I4, I7) are evident, the accentuated shadows and the sharper and more incisive physiognomies recall the earlier works of Giotto, such as the Saint Nicholas cycle in Assisi or the Badia polyptych. We can notice strong affinities with the upper (and early) decorative parts of the Arena rather than with the lower (and later) ones, and even less with the subsequent Saint Magdalene cycle in Assisi. Thus, the style of these fragments seems to suggest that the Santo

12 Giotto,  
*Female saint*,  
ca. 1300-1303.  
Padua,  
Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint  
Catherine,  
intrados of  
entrance arch  
(photo from  
August 1924)



15 Giotto,  
*Female saint*,  
ca. 1300-1303.  
Padua,  
Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint  
Catherine,  
intrados of  
entrance arch  
(photo from  
August 1924)



13 Giotto (with  
restorations  
by Giuseppe  
Cherubini),  
*Female saint*,  
ca. 1300-1303.  
Padua,  
Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint  
Catherine,  
intrados of  
entrance arch



16 Giotto (with  
restorations  
by Giuseppe  
Cherubini),  
*Female saint*,  
ca. 1300-1303.  
Padua,  
Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint  
Catherine,  
intrados of  
entrance arch



14 Giotto,  
*Female saint*,  
1303-1305.  
Padua, Arena  
Chapel,  
southern wall



17 Giotto,  
*Female saint*,  
1303-1305.  
Padua, Arena  
Chapel,  
northern wall





18 Giotto, *Female saint*, ca. 1300-1303. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, intrados of entrance arch (photo from August 1924)



19 Giotto (with restorations by Giuseppe Cherubini), *Female saint*, ca. 1300-1303. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, intrados of entrance arch

frescoes were painted earlier than the Arena cycle, where we also find a more delicate use of lighter and rosier hues, a softer modelling of features, and more lively compositions.<sup>34</sup>

Another important element revealed by the pre-restoration photographs is the stupendous rinceau decoration around the quadrilobes (Fig. 9). Although these medallions have a form similar to those in the chapel of Saint Nicholas in Assisi (in the embrasures of the windows),<sup>35</sup> they are enriched by an abundance of elegant and regular coiled tendrils, inspired by classical Roman art. There are lanceolate leaves, variously curled, with harmoniously interwoven volutes, as well as flowers unfurling bright petals, all much more de-

veloped than the stylised, rubbery leaves in acid tones in the chapel of Saint Nicholas. They are much closer to those of the Arena Chapel, although less developed: at the Arena the rinceau elements are set against brilliant backgrounds of red and blue, with flowers, buds, and small anthropomorphic busts (Fig. 24c).

Importantly, the photographs taken after Cherubini's restoration (Fig. 8) confirm our reconstruction of the upper parts of the side walls: the repainted parts of the walls that are visible faithfully reproduce the old configuration. The photograph shows the lunette, the white frame with fictive marble in different hues, and the complex moulding, allowing us to better understand the decorative composition of these areas.

<sup>34</sup> At first Flores D'Arcais 1968 (note 3), p. 30, considered these frescoes contemporary with the Arena, or slightly after; and then later, she dated them to "around 1303, if not even earlier" (*eadem* 1984 [note 3], p. 6).

<sup>35</sup> For this decoration, see particularly Giorgio Bonsanti, "Giotto nella cappella di San Nicola", in: *Roma anno 1300*, conference proceedings Rome 1980, ed. by Angiola Maria Romanini, Rome 1983, pp. 199–209; Irene Hueck, "Il cardinale Napoleone Orsini e la cappella di S. Nicola nella Basilica francescana di Assisi", *ibidem*, pp. 187–198; Luciano

Bellosi, "Giotto e la Basilica superiore di Assisi", in: *Giotto: bilancio critico* (note 3), pp. 33–54: 42; Boskovits 2000 (note 3), p. 82; Giorgio Bonsanti, "La pittura del Duecento e del Trecento", in: *La Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*, ed. by *idem*, Modena 2002, II.1, pp. 113–208: 164–171; Serena Romano, "Le botteghe di Giotto: qualche novità sulla cappella di San Nicola nella basilica inferiore di Assisi", in: *Medioevo: le officine*, conference proceedings Parma 2009, ed. by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, Milan 2010, pp. 584–596: 584–586.

### Surviving Parts

If we compare the extant *Annunciation* on the end wall (Fig. 3) with the image prior to the restoration (Fig. 4) we must conclude that the entire composition on the left was realised by Cherubini. The photograph shows part of the original plaster (Fig. 20), which might suggest that in this place the restorer found traces of the old decoration. This is confirmed by documents of the Veneranda Arca: on 30 December 1925, when work had just been finished, in order to justify an additional payment to the painter, it is recorded that “la decorazione a figura della parete frontale [...] fu stabilita solo allorquando, parecchi mesi dopo, in seguito ad assaggi dei pochi intonaci rimasti, risultò essere stata in antico tale parete affrescata con quadri e figure”.<sup>36</sup> During the work fragments of painting on the end wall unexpectedly emerged, and these were essentially left intact, albeit extensively repainted.

If we analyse the corresponding surface we realise that this portion of fourteenth-century plaster still exists: the difference to the newly plastered surface is clearly visible to the naked eye (Fig. 21). The original part is characterised by a more opaque, worn surface than its surroundings and corresponds perfectly to the shape seen in the old photograph (Fig. 20): its border begins just beneath the corbel and proceeds vertically, before turning towards the left. Below and to the left of the fracture is Cherubini’s new painting, while to the right, towards the springing of the vault, weak but unmistakable traces of the original decoration survive: the vertical lateral bands (red, white and green) and the beginning of the horizontal band, although partly reinforced, appear to be intact. Up close, one can readily distinguish the old parts from the restored ones, which have been



20 Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, detail of the end wall with plaster fragments (photo from ca. 1923/24)

<sup>36</sup> AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2, fol. 29 (“the figure decoration of the frontal wall [...] was decided only when, several months later, following investigation of the few remaining areas of plaster, it was discovered that originally that wall was frescoed with squares and figures”).



21 Giotto and Giuseppe Cherubini, *Annunciation of the Virgin*, with outline of the original plaster surface. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, end wall



22 Giotto and Giuseppe Cherubini, *Annunciation of the Virgin*, detail. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, end wall

Painted with the use of pouncing for the figures and summary brush-strokes (Fig. 22). Following the outline of the fragment, we realise that a notable part of the figure of the Virgin, up to about half its height, still conserves the original painting surface: part of the red and white garment is original, as too is much of the right hand and the book. This is an important figurative fragment of the original cycle that confirms not only the existence of the *Annunciation* in the lunette but also the use of a particular iconography, as we will see below.

The vault, too, reveals several unexpected features. Although at first sight the four segments seem

to be completely repainted, closer analysis, with the help of flash photography, testifies that on the groins and on the ribbing there are darker, opaque areas and lighter ones (Fig. 23): the darker areas have been repainted, while the very sparse lighter areas are original fragments, which Cherubini took as his model. In the very worn lateral bands of the groins there are original portions of fresco with elegant coiled tendrils in green and ochre-yellow on a red ground, very similar to those in the chapel of Saint Nicholas, but not as developed as the ones in the Arena Chapel, and even less than those in the chapel of Saint Magdalene (Figs. 24a-d). On the ribbing there is also a Cosma-



23 Giotto (with restorations by Giuseppe Cherubini), decoration of the vault. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine



24 Giotto and workshop, vegetal scroll decorations:  
a) Assisi, chapel of Saint Nicholas  
b) Padua, chapel of Saint Catherine  
c) Padua, Arena Chapel  
d) Assisi, chapel of Saint Magdalene



25 Giotto (with restorations by Giuseppe Cherubini), painted pilaster-strip. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine

tesque coiled ribbon, visible in the old photograph (Fig. 20).

More remarkable are the entrance piers, which in the internal splays present a decoration of fictive superimposed marble slabs. The uppermost ones on both sides consist of a slender pilaster with a central recess, decorated with spirals of acanthus imitating an antique bas-relief. The left pilaster is of very poor quality and was evidently done with pouncing, a technique regularly used by Cherubini. The documents, in fact, confirm that this part was painted by the restorer.<sup>37</sup> For the right pilaster (Fig. 25) the situation is very different: although ruined by the insertion of the Zabarella coat of arms and partially repainted (at upper left), it is still largely original and in a good state of conservation.<sup>38</sup> The decoration with spirals in the central recess (Fig. 26) is of extraordinary quality: it consists of a highly sophisticated rinceau pattern, perfectly calibrated in design, with its curled leaves, flowers, and petals all rendered in a skilfully highlighted, delicate greenish monochrome. This detail is very similar to the painted pilasters in the chapter house cycle, which, however, are less refined and regular. The closest resemblance is with the fabulous ornamentation on the pilasters of the Arena Chapel (Fig. 27).<sup>39</sup> All this would seem to confirm the effort expended on the chapel of Saint Catherine, from the busts in the clypei to the decorative vegetal details, suggesting that the cycle was personally devised by Giotto and executed by him and his workshop.

As we have seen, the decoration of the right wall (Fig. 5) was extremely articulated, characterised by a series of illusionistic architectural structures that were completely aniconic in nature; we may logically infer an analogous configuration for the left wall. Although the matter will be discussed more fully in another study, it is important to briefly analyse the

<sup>37</sup> AdA, cat. III, cl. I, no. 29, fasc. 2, fol. 29 (30 December 1925).

<sup>38</sup> Its authenticity is proved by the fact that it already appears on the 1923/24 photograph (Fig. 4).

<sup>39</sup> Rachel Meoli Toulmin, "L'ornamento nella pittura di Giotto con particolare riferimento alla Cappella degli Scrovegni", in: *Giotto e il suo tempo*, conference proceedings Assisi et al. 1967, Rome 1971, pp. 177–189.



26 Giotto, painted pilaster-strip  
(detail from Fig. 25)



27 Giotto, painted pilaster-strip, detail.  
Padua, Arena Chapel, western wall

decorative ‘lexicon’ and its constitutive elements, all of which point directly to Giotto’s authorship. For example, the decoration of the upper part of the wall with fictive marble slabs (Fig. 28) reappears on the side walls of the two famous *coretti* in the Arena Chapel (Fig. 29), which represent the essence of Giotto’s spatial invention.<sup>40</sup> In the level below, the three loggias

with lunettes recessed within their frames anticipate the series of arches enclosing saints in the chapter house of the Santo, where we find a further development of the system of the illusionistic loggia. Further down, there are the three simple recessed rectangles (Fig. 30): the idea of a fictive structure that appears to break through the surface of the wall and amplify

<sup>40</sup> The two openings in the right wall, visible in the historical photograph (Fig. 4), originally illuminated the spiral staircase in the buttress that gives access to the southern bell tower. Though these openings were definitely bricked up on the occasion of Annigoni’s restoration

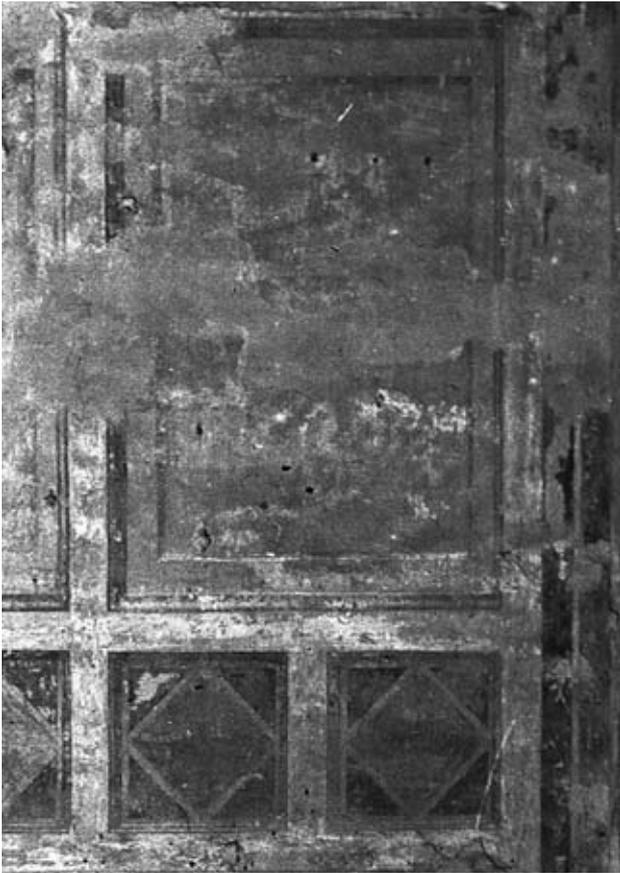
(1981–1983), they seem to have been built at the same time as the ancient wall of the buttress. Considering that these originally provided an external light source (as is still the case for the upper part of the buttress), it is logical to infer that they pre-existed the addi-



28 Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, ca. 1923/24 (detail from Fig. 4)



29 Giotto, detail of the *coretto*. Padua, Arena Chapel



30 Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, western wall, ca. 1923/24 (detail from Fig. 5)



31 Giotto, *Hope*. Padua, Arena Chapel



32 Giotto (with restorations), fictive marble decoration. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapter house

optically the space is precisely the sort of scheme that Giotto would later elaborate in the gallery of virtues and vices in the Arena Chapel (Fig. 31). There, the aediculae enclose elegant personifications in grisaille, but the constitutive principle is the same: niches set back into depth through the rational arrangement of pilasters, fillets and cornices, in which the individual volumes and elements are conceived in relation to a single and decentralised viewpoint.

tion of the ambulatory (ca. 1265–1280), thus, they offer important evidence that the original plan for the apse did not include the ambulatory. The upper opening was incorporated into Giotto's decoration, who took advantage of it creating, on the right side, an illusive and deep breakthrough of the wall (which was reproduced on the left wall by Cherubini, see Fig. 33). Although it still remains problematic, the lower window was probably bricked up on the occasion of the addition of the ambulatory, or at the latest, on the occasion of Giotto's decoration, and was likely reopened during Camillo Boito's restoration (1893). On the *coretti* of the Arena Chapel see Roberto Longhi, "Giotto spazioso", in: *Paragone*, III (1952), pp. 18–24; James H. Stubblebine, *Giotto: The Arena Chapel Frescoes [...]*, London 1969, pp. 96f.; Michael Kohnen, "Die 'coretti' der Arena-Kapelle zu Padua und die ornamentale Wanddekoration um 1300", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XLVIII (2004), pp. 417–423; Laura Jacobus, *Giotto and the Arena Chapel: Art, Architecture and Experience*, London et al. 2008, pp. 124–128. For Giotto's spatial experiments, see in general John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, London 1967 ('1957), pp. 57–71; Jacobus, pp. 319–325; Gaetano Curzi, "Giotto 'finxit': figura-

In the lower part of the wall we find a base with rectangles containing lozenges, the same system later developed in the grandiose dado of fictive marbles in the Arena Chapel.<sup>41</sup> But it is above all in the painted rectangles of the chapter house that we find the closest affinities, especially in the upper parts of the west wall, where many fragments remain of elegant slabs of fictive marble, similar in form to those in the chapel of Saint Catherine (Fig. 32). These elements have in large part

zione, rappresentazione degli edifici e illusionismo", in: *Rivista d'arte*, ser. V, I (2011), pp. 3–38; Francesco Benelli, *The Architecture in Giotto's Paintings*, Cambridge et al. 2012; Péter Bokody, *Images-within-Images in Italian Painting (1250–1350): Reality and Reflexivity*, Farnham et al. 2015, pp. 37–58.

<sup>41</sup> For the dado of the Arena Chapel, see Alessandro Prodocimi, "Osservazioni sulla partitura delle scene affrescate da Giotto nella cappella degli Scrovegni", in: *Giotto e il suo tempo* (note 39), pp. 135–142; Antonio Guglielmi/Francesca Capanna, "L'intonaco giottesco per la realizzazione dei finti marmi: riflessioni e comparazioni sui procedimenti esecutivi", in: *Giotto nella Cappella Scrovegni: materiali per la tecnica pittorica [...]*, ed. by Giuseppe Basile, Rome 2005, pp. 73–81; Lorenzo Lazzarini, "I finti marmi di Giotto agli Scrovegni (Padova, Italia)", in: *Marmora*, IV (2008), pp. 131–140; Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 213–218; Chiara Frugoni, *L'affare migliore di Enrico: Giotto e la cappella Scrovegni*, Turin 2008, pp. 51f.; Riccardo Luisi, "Le ragioni di una perfetta illusione: il significato delle decorazioni e dei finti marmi negli affreschi della cappella Scrovegni", *ibidem*, pp. 377–398; Philippe Cordez, "Les marbres de Giotto: astrologie et naturalisme à la Chapelle Scrovegni", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LV (2013), pp. 9–25.

been restored, but testify reliably to the original decoration, contrary to what has hitherto been supposed.<sup>42</sup> The dado of the chapel of Saint Catherine probably featured marbles of alternating colours, similar in shape to the slabs in the chapter house. The pilasters of the parapet in the lowest register of the chapel, with the shafts adorned with inserts of dark marble (probably porphyry), also match exactly the piers that alternate with the niches in the chapter house.

A significant suggestion for the overall chromatic arrangement of this chapel is offered by some unpublished colour photographs taken in September 1980, before Annigoni's restorations (Fig. 33).<sup>43</sup> They show the side walls decoration painted by Cherubini, revealing an incredibly rich and luxurious palette, with fictive marbles in green, ochre, blue, light and dark red colours, most likely realised by Cherubini in conformity with the original colouring he saw on the right wall.<sup>44</sup>

Much more problematic is the overall configuration of the end wall. The surviving fragments of old painting certify to the existence of a horizontal divid-

ing band in the upper register (Fig. 21) and to a representation of the Annunciation of the Virgin with a particular iconography also adopted in the Arena Chapel shortly afterward. In the chapel of Saint Catherine, the scene was divided between the two parts of the front wall, with the Virgin kneeling with a book in her hand, in a state of emotional composure, unlike the traditional iconography that showed a standing Virgin.<sup>45</sup> The Archangel and the left side of the wall were entirely invented by Cherubini. The original height of the lunette is clarified by the lower band, which is partly original, and by the vertical strips. It is difficult to say what was beneath the *Annunciation*: probably the surface on either side of the window was divided into two rectangles, one above the other, with a parapet beneath featuring slabs like the ones on the side walls. It is not even possible to establish whether the four panels were aniconic, as was the case for the other walls, or whether they were decorated with scenes or rather pairs of standing figures, which seems the most plausible solution, especially considering the narrow and elongated size of the panels.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> This aniconic part of the chapter house decoration has passed almost unobserved. For the chapter house decoration see also Heidrun Stein-Kecks, *Der Kapitelsaal in der mittelalterlichen Klosterbaukunst: Studien zu den Bildprogrammen*, Munich 2004, pp. 279–283; Romano (note 16), pp. 417–430; Luca Baggio, “Le immagini di Antonio nella tradizione iconografica padovana”, in: *Antonio di Padova e le sue immagini* (note 2), pp. 307–349; *idem*, “Giotto e il rinnovamento dell’iconografia antoniana”, in: *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova*, C (2018), pp. 41–58.

<sup>43</sup> CSA, ARCAN, nos. 0170–0172. The date and a short note are indicated in pen on the back of each photo, i.e. “I Sett. 1980. Cappella S. Angela Merici o delle Benedizioni prima di Annigoni”. I thank Fr. Luciano Bertazzo for bringing these photos to my attention. The photo no. 0171 (Fig. 33) shows a general view of the left wall entirely painted by Cherubini. In the upper part of the wall, we can clearly distinguish two fictive openings realised by him probably in order to symmetrically reproduce the real ones on the right wall (the latter realised most probably after Giotto's decoration).

<sup>44</sup> Flores D'Arcais 1968 (note 3), pp. 23f., noted a decoration with a series of “riquadri a finto marmo di colore verde, rosa e rosso cupo”, and considered the possibility that old decorative fragments survive, but without investigating the matter in depth. In a later essay, published soon after Annigoni's restoration (Flores D'Arcais 1984 [note 3], p. 5), she recalls once more that “le pareti, fino a tre anni fa, presentavano una decorazio-

ne a finto marmorino disposto a lastre colorate, con interessanti giochi prospettici nelle cornici: anche questo elemento linguistico certamente trecentesco, non solo, ma tipico della bottega giottesca, anche se evidentemente ripassato o rifatto”, i.e. by Cherubini.

<sup>45</sup> For Annunciation iconography, see Hélène Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XI<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: l'Annonciation*, Venice 2007, pp. 58–60, 66f.; Alessandro Tomei, “Giotto's *Annunciation to the Virgin* in the Arena Chapel in Padua between East and West”, in: *Ikon*, X (2017), pp. 73–82; Donal Cooper, “Windows, Light and Wordly Space in Italian Annunciation Imagery around 1300”, in: *Manuscript in the Making: Art and Science*, ed. by Stella Panayotova/Paola Ricciardi, London 2017/18, II, pp. 15–22; for the later development of Giotto's Annunciation iconography in the frescoes at the Badia, see Serena Romano, “La Badia Fiorentina: il ciclo ad affresco”, in: *Giotto, l'Italia*, exh. cat. Milan 2015/16, ed. by *eadem*/Pietro Petrarola, Milan 2015, pp. 64–75; Guido Tigler, “Finestre metafore di grazia divina: il caso della Sacrestia della Cappella Scrovegni”, in: *Trasparenze ed epifanie: quando la luce diventa letteratura, arte, storia, scienza*, ed. by Michela Graziani, Florence 2016, pp. 111–151.

<sup>46</sup> If the decoration on the end wall was figurative, it would be fascinating – although entirely hypothetical – to consider its relation to the dedication of the chapel: the titular saint could have been celebrated here in the four rectangles along with pairs of other saints, or, in the unlikely case of a narrative decoration, through scenes from her life. Moreover, we

Although the old photographs are in black and white, we gather that the frames were white, while the recessed panels were of a darker shade, with a continuous variation of half-tones to calibrate the different levels of the planes, as we find also in the chapter house decoration. This elaborate ensemble of colours, spaces, registers, and fictive structures on the side walls was probably entirely devoid of figuration: in this way, the observer's attention was directed to the complex system of illusionistic architecture.

We have seen that the decorative repertory of the chapel of Saint Catherine presents a deep and almost genetic link with the other, more famous cycles by Giotto in Padua: the chapter house and the Arena Chapel, but also the so-called *andito* (or locutory) in the convent of the Santo, which had a very similar continuous decoration of fictive marble.<sup>47</sup> The busts in the intrados of the chapel, like the rinceau on the vault, in my opinion, suggest a very early dating within Giotto's Paduan phase. The architectural inventions are more developed than those in the chapel of Saint Nicholas in Assisi, but less so than in the Arena Chapel and the subsequent chapel of Saint Magdalene in Assisi: an indication of continual experimentation carried out by Giotto in the first decade of the fourteenth century. All these elements seem to suggest a dating for the chapel of Saint Catherine to the first few years of the trecento, probably shortly before the work in the Arena Chapel (1303–1305), in close conjunction with the fresco of the *Glorification of the Virgin* in the chapel of the Madonna Mora (Fig. 2), both probably dating to around 1300–1303.

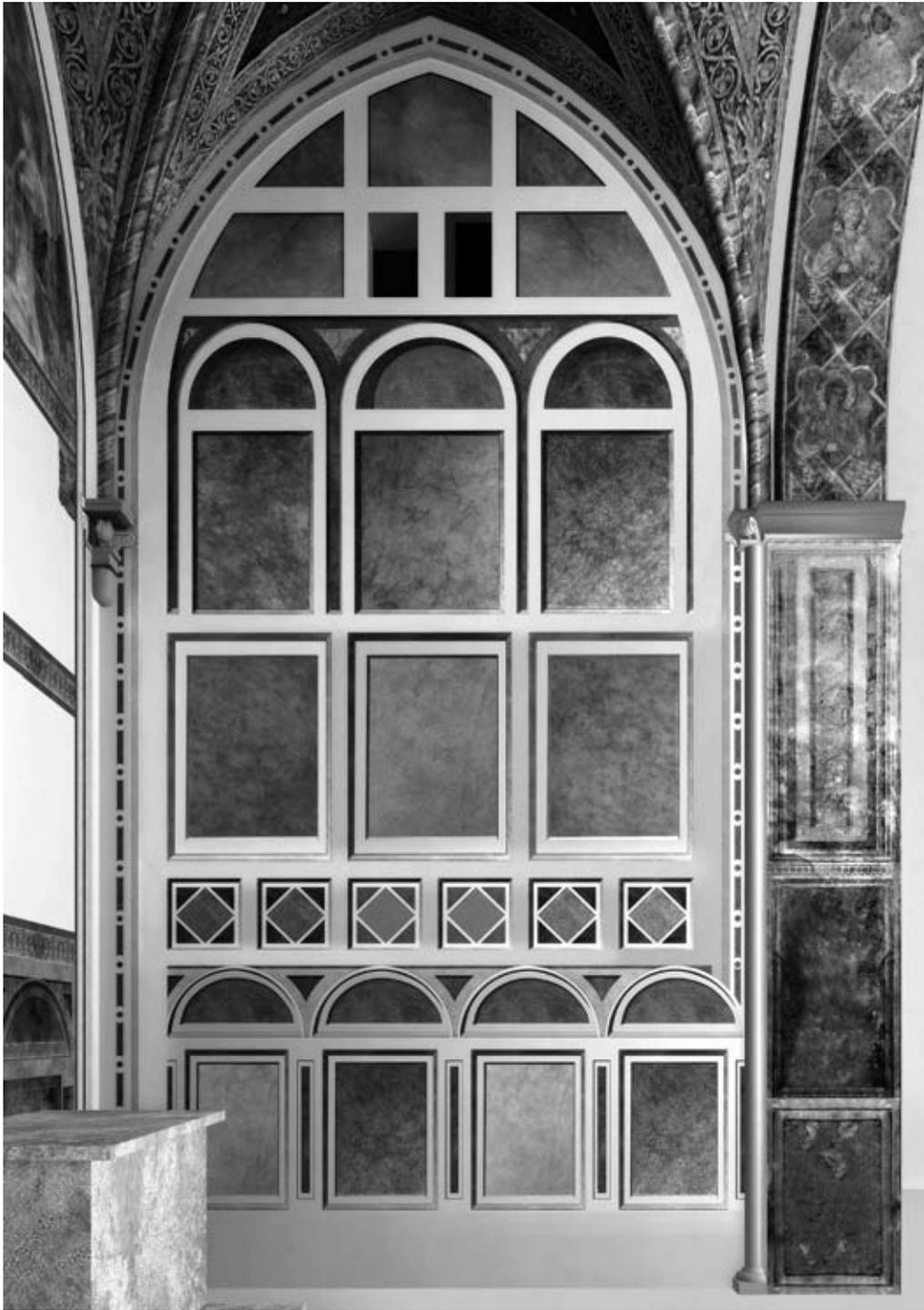
Finally, it is possible that the chapel was completed by a stained glass window designed by Giotto's workshop, which in purely hypothetical terms we

can notice a subtle and skilful decorative *variatio* between the side walls and the end wall: the horizontal band beneath the Virgin bears a Cosmatesque motif, not present on the side walls (only on the ribs of the vault) and which does not seem to accord precisely with the structures painted on the side walls, a phenomenon that can be observed also in the (lost) aniconic decoration in the so-called *andito* (or locutory).

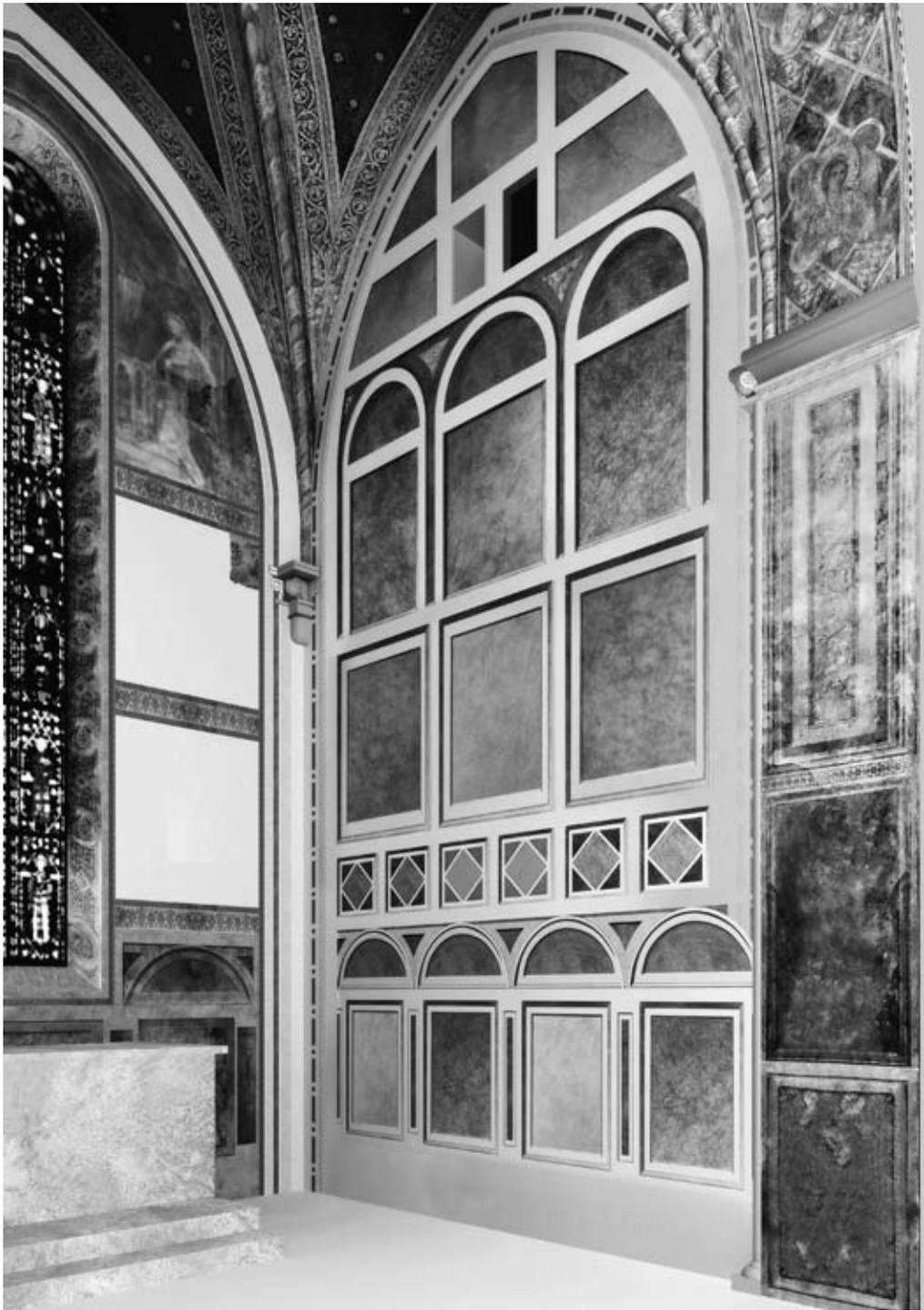


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33 Padua, Sant'Antonio,  
chapel of Saint Catherine,  
decoration of the eastern wall  
(photo from September 1980)

<sup>47</sup> For an in-depth study of the *andito* decoration and the iconography of the *Lignum vitae*, see Alessandro Simbeni, "Le pitture del 'parlatorio' nel convento di Sant'Antonio e l'intervento di Giotto", in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, LI (2011), pp. 431–452, and, more recently, Raphaële Preisinger, *Lignum vitae: Zum Verhältnis materieller Bilder und mentaler Bildpraxis im Mittelalter*, Paderborn 2014, pp. 209–216.



34 Graphic reconstruction of Giotto's decoration of the chapel of Saint Catherine in Sant'Antonio, Padua, western wall (graphic rendering by Enrico Bancone)



35 Graphic reconstruction of Giotto's decoration of the chapel of Saint Catherine in Sant'Antonio, Padua, western wall and end wall (graphic rendering by Enrico Bancone)

may imagine as simply figured and not historiated, akin to the window in the chapel of Saint Nicholas in Assisi.<sup>48</sup> From the early years of the fourteenth century we have in fact significant testimony from the Paduan judge Giovanni da Nono,<sup>49</sup> who records that the apsidal chapels of the basilica were adorned “cum pulcherrimis finestrīs vitri diversis laborati coloribus” (“with most beautiful glass windows adorned with diverse colours”),<sup>50</sup> as prescribed by the Constitutions of Narbonne (1260).<sup>51</sup>

In light of these observations, we can now attempt to recover – at least virtually – the original appearance of this lost cycle.<sup>52</sup> Through a careful campaign of metric reliefs, photogrammetric reconstructions and mural analysis, it has been possible to produce a detailed graphic reconstruction of Giotto’s cycle (Figs. 1, 34, 35). The chromatic proposal advanced here is based primarily on the photographs taken in 1980 (Fig. 33), before Annigoni’s restorations. For this reason, the colour arrangement remains hypothetical and is intended only to offer a general

visual impact of such a complex decoration, now totally lost.

### The Patronage of the Scrovegni

Now that the overall appearance of the chapel has been reconstructed, we need to investigate the possible patrons of the cycle.<sup>53</sup> As mentioned above, in the eighteenth century Benoffi transcribed the two documents of 1369 and 1370, and speculated that the Scrovegni were the chapel’s patrons: this proposal has been extensively debated, but no consensus has been reached so far among scholars, who are still divided over the question whether or not the learned Franciscan can be trusted, without providing further evidence for a conclusive solution.<sup>54</sup> The old photographs offer a surprising discovery in this regard, which yields new evidence for Scrovegni patronage: on the intrados prior to the restoration, on the left side between the third and fourth medallion from the bottom (Fig. 7), a clypeus containing a stylised quadruped on dark ground (Fig. 36) with cloven feet, a massive body, and a squat

<sup>48</sup> *La Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi*, ed. by Giorgio Bonsanti, Modena 2002, I.I, pp. 610–621.

<sup>49</sup> For Giovanni da Nono see Marino Zabbia, *sv.*, in: *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, LVI, Rome 2001, pp. 114–117.

<sup>50</sup> Marangon/Bellinati (note 9), p. 222.

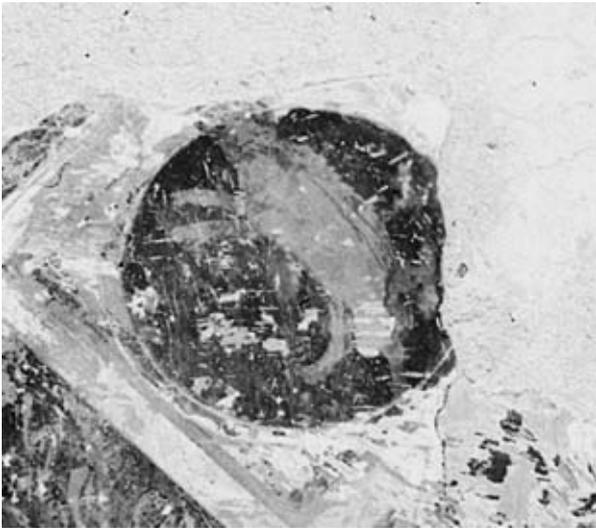
<sup>51</sup> Michael Bihl, “Statuta generalia Ordinis: edita in Capitulis generalibus celebratis Narbonae an. 1260, Assisii an. 1279 atque Parisiis an. 1292 (editio critica et synoptica)”, in: *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, XXXIV (1941), pp. 37–94: 48.

<sup>52</sup> I thank my friend Enrico Bancone for the informatic reconstructions and 3D rendering.

<sup>53</sup> Flores D’Arcais 1984 (note 3), p. 3, and, more recently, *eadem* 2018 (note 3), pp. 22f., takes the Scrovegni patronage for granted. Her opinion, however, is mainly based on the unreliable information given by the eighteenth-century author Domenico Maria Manni (note 16), XIV, p. 115, who writes as follows: “Filippo Baldinucci, e prima di lui Giorgio Vasari parlando del nostro famoso Giotto dipintore, vennero a dire che egli dipinse in Padova (poco dopo all’edificazione della Chiesa del Santo) in essa chiesa una bellissima cappella. Or noi apprendiamo dal chiarissimo Sig. Lodovico Antonio Muratori nel Tom. XXIV. *Rerum Italicarum*, che questa cappella si fu degli Scrovigni.” Merging the information taken from Michele Savonarola, written ca. 1440 but published by Muratori, and Giorgio Vasari, Manni misunderstands it partly. Regarding

the Paduan activity of Giotto, Savonarola refers in fact to a “magnificam amplamque nobilium de Scrovineis cappellam [...] ubi Novi et Veteris Testamenti imagines [...] apparent”, without specifying the place, though it is obviously the Arena; this is immediately followed by the description of the decoration in the chapter house of the Santo (“Capitolumque Antonii nostri etiam sic ornavit”; see Michele Savonarola, “Commentariolus de laudibus Patavii”, in: *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, ed. by Lodovico Antonio Muratori, Milan 1723–1751, XXIV, coll. 1133–1186: 1169f.). As we have seen, in the following century Vasari (note 17), II, p. 116, speaks in general terms of “una cappella bellissima” made by the Florentine master at the Santo, without specifying its dedication or patronage. Due to the textual contiguity of the two passages in Savonarola, Manni was evidently mistaken in identifying the “magnifica e ampia cappella degli Scrovegni” with the “cappella” mentioned by Vasari in the basilica, transferring the Scrovegni patronage of the former to the latter.

<sup>54</sup> In recent times the theory of the Scrovegni patronage of this chapel, based on Benoffi’s account, has been accepted by Cozzi 2002 (note 3), p. 80; Simbeni (note 3), p. 195; Cozzi 2007 (note 3), p. 81; Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 157f.; Flores D’Arcais 2009 (note 3), p. 104; *eadem* 2018 (note 3), pp. 22f.; Romano 2018 (note 3), p. 134. Moreover, Flores D’Arcais 2009 (note 3), p. 104, (and later *eadem* 2018 [note 3], pp. 22f.) takes the Scrovegni patronage for granted, but does so based on the chaotic and unreliable account of Manni (note 16), p. 115 (as discussed in note 53



36 Giotto, *Scrovegni coat of arms*. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, intrados of entrance arch (photo from August 1924)



37 Giotto (with restorations by Giuseppe Cherubini), *Scrovegni coat of arms*. Padua, Sant'Antonio, chapel of Saint Catherine, intrados of entrance arch

head is visible on close examination. Recognisable by the characteristic bristles on its back, this is clearly a sow, the “scrofa azzurra e grossa” (“big blue sow”) mentioned by Dante,<sup>55</sup> i.e. the heraldic animal of the Scrovegni family. On this same part of the entrance arch, the blue shape of the animal on an ochre ground is still visible today (Fig. 37), along with a similar fragment on the right side, painted in the same phase as the Giottesque decoration and therefore providing conclusive proof of Scrovegni patronage.

The historical evidence does not, however, attest that any member of the Scrovegni family was buried in the chapel of Saint Catherine. It probably remained in the family’s possession until the last quarter of the century, when in 1387, first Scavuuccio de’ Ros-

si and then Giovanni Saraceno attempted to acquire its patronage. Only one Scrovegni is known to have been buried at the Santo: Bartolomea († 1333), niece of Enrico and first wife of Marsilio da Carrara, but her stone sepulchre is conserved in the chapel of the Lupi di Soragna.<sup>56</sup> The chapel of Saint Catherine was probably never used for family burials; most likely it was used only for private liturgical functions. It would have been a prestigious status symbol for one of the most powerful Paduan families and tangible proof of their direct contribution to the building and adornment of the basilica.

In the early years of the fourteenth century we do not find any onomastic link between names in the family and the titular saint of the chapel, Caterina.

above). On the other hand, Baggio (note 12), pp. 144–146, is sceptical towards Benoffi, as is Bourdua (note 9), p. 495, who declares that the question of the Scrovegni patronage of the chapel is “not free of problems”; Heinemann (note 6), pp. 399f., contemplates the possibility but does not draw conclusions.

<sup>55</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, XVII, 64f.

<sup>56</sup> Louise Bourdua, “Death and the Patron: Andriolo de’ Santi, Bonifacio Lupi and the Chapel of San Giacomo in Padua”, in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, XXXIX (1999), pp. 687–697: 695, theorises that the tomb of Bartolomea was originally in the chapel of Saint Catherine before it was moved to its present location in the Lupi di Soragna chapel in 1398, at the time the patronage passed to the Zabarella.

Rinaldo, who died around 1290, had many children from his wife Cappellina Malacapella, all of them possible patrons of the chapel: the firstborn Belloto, followed by Costanza, Alice, Adelete, Alessandrina, Leonora, Beatrice, Manfredo, and the famous Enrico. It is known, however, that after the death of Rinaldo only the three brothers remained to carry on the challenging but profitable usury business: Belloto, Enrico, and Manfredo, who were assisted by Belloto's son Pietro. It is likely that one of them commissioned the work. Among them, we can probably rule out Manfredo, who died prematurely in 1297, too early for the Saint Catherine commission.

Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence that would allow us to determine the patron with certainty, but various considerations point to the most famous of the three, Enrico. He was in some ways already linked to the construction of the Santo, because some time before the turn of the century (probably in 1298 or 1299) he lent money to the commune of Padua “pro constructione et refectione ecclesie Sancti Antonii”, i.e. “for the construction and rebuilding of the church of Sant’Antonio”.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Enrico is the only brother known to have been a lavish patron, beginning as early as 1294, when he financed the foundation of the Cistercian church and convent of Sant’Orsola, just outside Padua.<sup>58</sup> Following this came the famous commission of the Arena Chapel, whose construction was begun between 1302 and 1303 and was finished by 1304. Other proofs of Enrico’s munificence emerge from his will of 12 March 1336, in which, together

with numerous bequests to religious communities, he records his patronage of the church of Sant’Alberto in Vancioforte, later exchanged for the patronage of the church of San Tommaso in Padua.<sup>59</sup> A final important clue is the above-mentioned notice by Benoffi, concerning the bequests made by Ugolino and his wife Lucia in 1369 and 1370 for the altar of Saint Catherine at the Santo. Ugolino was in fact the son of Enrico and his legitimate successor together with his brother Bertolamao, as appears from the will of 1336.<sup>60</sup> If in 1369 the patronage of the chapel of Saint Catherine was held by Ugolino, it would appear likely that he had inherited it directly from his father, who therefore would have been the first patron. Curiously, Enrico’s will makes no reference to the basilica of the Santo, apart from a generic bequest of “libras decem parvorum”.<sup>61</sup> However, a few hypotheses may be advanced to explain why the otherwise extremely detailed document does not mention the chapel. First, it may have been confiscated by Marsilio da Carrara, together with many of Enrico’s other possessions, on the occasion of the banishment of 1328: Enrico speaks of “possessiones [...], iura, et bona quas et que habeo et ad me rationabiliter spectant in Padue et paduano districtu” (“properties [...], rights and goods that I have and that rightly belong to me in Padua and the Paduan district”).<sup>62</sup> It is possible that among these rights was the patronage of the chapel of Saint Catherine, which then returned to the family after Enrico’s death, as occurred in the case of the palazzo. Second, it is very probable that the rights to the chapel’s use were

<sup>57</sup> Maria Chiara Ganguzza Billanovich, “Due statuti comunali dell’anno 1300: aspetti del rapporto tra potere civile ed ecclesiastico in Padova agli inizi del XIV secolo”, in: *Atti e memorie dell’Accademia Patavina di Scienze, Lettere e Arti (parte 3)*, LXXXVII (1975), pp. 131–140: 139f.; Marangon/Bellinati (note 9), p. 213; Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 157f.

<sup>58</sup> Silvana Collodo, “Origini e fortuna della famiglia Scrovegni”, in: *Il secolo di Giotto* (note 3), pp. 47–80; Frugoni (note 41), pp. 29f.; Jacobus (note 40), pp. 8f.

<sup>59</sup> Attilio Bartoli Langelì, “Il testamento di Enrico Scrovegni (12 marzo 1336)”, in: Frugoni (note 41), pp. 397–540: 510f.

<sup>60</sup> Gabriella Giovagnoli, *Il palazzo dell’Arena e la cappella di Giotto (secc. XIV–XIX): proprietari, prepositi, beni*, Padua 2008, pp. 35–37, 80, 102, 106, 115, 118. According to Angelo Portenari, *Della felicità di Padova*, Padua 1623, p. 208, Ugolino Scrovegni was twice podestà of Cividale di Belluno, in 1360 and again in 1367; he is also recorded in the service of Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara in *Il Trecentonovelle* by Franco Sacchetti (novella CXVII).

<sup>61</sup> Bartoli Langelì (note 59), pp. 506f.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 486. See also Benjamin G. Kohl, “The Scrovegni in Carrara Padua and Enrico’s Will”, in: *Apollo*, CXLII (1995), pp. 43–47.

tacitly included in the will, in which many unspecified goods, defined as “bonis [...] immobilibus [...] ac iuribus” (“goods [...] properties [...] and rights”), are bequeathed to the two sons Bertolamao and Ugolino.

If my early dating of this cycle is correct, prior to the Arena Chapel, it follows that the Scrovegni obtained patronage of the chapel in the first few years of the fourteenth century at the latest and entrusted the decoration to Giotto. The chapel of Saint Catherine is thus a significant artistic precedent for the Arena Chapel: here, the patron and the artist could have tested out and perfected ideas that would be developed further in the grandiose cycle in the private oratory of the Arena, a project that began in precisely the same years with the acquisition of the site from Manfredo Dalesmanini (1300), and the commencement of building (1302).<sup>63</sup> We may therefore conclude that Enrico Scrovegni, while he was building the oratory at the Arena, might have commissioned the decoration of the family chapel in the basilica of the Santo to Giotto as a sort of prelude to the more ambitious endeavour that followed.

### The Chapel in the Artistic Patronage of Enrico

A final reflection is needed to contextualise Enrico's acquisition of the rights to this chapel, in order to briefly suggest some of the possible circumstances and meanings of this undertaking. Recently, Chiara Frugoni and Silvana Collodo have rightly emphasised the heavy influence exerted by the negative judgement of Dante and Giovanni da Nono on the Scrovegni

family: these two, because of personal hostility, have effectively precluded a correct and impartial evaluation of the family's activity.<sup>64</sup> Giovanni da Nono was the first to insinuate that Enrico's building of the oratory at the Arena was for penitential purposes (“pro remedio animae”), as reparation for the illicit profits made by him and his father Rinaldo.<sup>65</sup> But as Collodo has demonstrated, this interpretation seems unlikely, because in Enrico's will (1336) the restitution of his father's “male ablata” (ill-gotten gains) does not yet appear to have been carried out, whereas the oratory of the Carità had by then been completed for a long time. The underlying dynamics of his artistic patronage were undoubtedly more subtle and complex than a simple desire to make reparations for his own and his family's sins of usury.<sup>66</sup> Without getting caught up in particulars, if we follow Enrico's *cursus honorum*, it emerges that the founding of the monastery of Sant'Orsola in 1294 was strictly a matter of the family's self-affirmation, unlike the later project for the Arena Chapel, in which we also detect new strategies of consensus-building aimed at obtaining greater influence in the city government.<sup>67</sup> In this perspective, how should we interpret the acquisition of the rights over the chapel at the Santo and its decoration?

The early dating proposed for the chapel of Saint Catherine (ca. 1300–1303) would imply that it was conceived in a cultural and political context very similar to that of the Arena Chapel, and that the two projects could have shared several aims and expectations: the space in the Santo could have served Enrico

<sup>63</sup> For the building history of the Arena, see Vittorio Dal Praz, “La storia e l'architettura della Cappella”, in: *La Cappella degli Scrovegni a Padova*, ed. by Davide Banzato/Francesca Flores D'Arcais/Anna Maria Spiazzi, I, Modena 2005, pp. 19–44; Giovagnoli (note 60); Jacobus (note 40), pp. 13–35; Anne Derbes/Mark Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel*, University Park, Pa., 2008, pp. If; Frugoni (note 41), pp. 29–39; Antonio Rigon, “Enrico Scrovegni, Giotto e la cappella di Santa Maria dell'Arena in Padova”, in: *Arte veneta*, LXVII (2010), pp. 230–234.

<sup>64</sup> Collodo (note 58); Frugoni (note 41), pp. 29–110.

<sup>65</sup> As was maintained by Derbes/Sandona (note 63), pp. 40–43.

<sup>66</sup> See also Ettore Napione/Donato Gallo, “Benedetto XI e la cappella degli Scrovegni”, in: *Benedetto XI, frate predicatore e papa*, ed. by Marina Benedetti, Milan 2007, pp. 95–121. About the Paduan historical context see also John K. Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante*, Manchester 1966, pp. 181–190; Kohl (note 62); *idem*, *Padua under the Carrara, 1318–1405*, Baltimore et al. 1998, pp. 3–38. For a useful synthesis Sante Bortolami, “Giotto e Padova: le occasioni per un incontro”, in: *Giotto e il suo tempo* (note 3), pp. 22–35.

<sup>67</sup> As was rightly pointed out by Collodo (note 58), pp. 79f. See also the observations of Rigon (note 63).

as another strategic locus for the self-promotion and ennobling of his family. Since the chapel was located in a basilica that had an important civic and religious significance, it would have been a very different context from that of the private oratory of the Carità (though it was soon to become public). The latter was a private display of the patron's munificence: it was an ideal gift from the benefactor to the city, representing an enormous investment of money and luxury which remained strictly linked to the financier. The chapel of Saint Catherine, on the other hand, seems to have been a kind of public stage for Enrico and his family inside the civic sanctuary: here for the first time he appeared the equal of the most noble and prestigious Paduan families of ancient lineage who were already present in the ambulatory (such as the Carraresi), as though he wanted to proclaim *coram populo* the social and political success that he had finally achieved.

If this is the *trait d'union* that links the chapel at the Santo to the oratory at the Arena, the immense disparity in their appearance could seem somewhat disorienting: on one hand, in the Arena, an astonishingly rich display of massive investment, worthy of a royal palatine chapel; on the other, in the Santo, a much more modest, restrained decorative apparatus. It is significant that in the very years when Enrico was planning his fabulous private oratory (1300–1302) he promoted a much less lavish undertaking at the Santo. Economic constraints would not seem to be a serious factor in this, given the family's immense riches and its desire for self-affirmation, and

given the huge investment he was about to make at the Arena. Rather, the chapel seems to indicate a need to perform a wise curtailment of excessive ostentation, limiting richness and more decorative effects as much as possible. As a matter of fact, this concern might have been shared in part by the local religious community, who in the same years had been the target of ferocious internal criticisms from the Spirituals, who opposed the extravagant opulence of ecclesiastical structures and decorations.<sup>68</sup> We should not underestimate the significant influence that the Franciscans themselves could have exercised in their capacity as administrators of the basilica; but on the other hand it is not possible to establish with certainty the degree to which the one might have influenced the other, given how inextricably interwoven these issues are.<sup>69</sup>

In my opinion, we should not exclude the possibility that the conception of the chapel of Saint Catherine might have entailed an interplay between Enrico's ambition towards self-affirmation, subtly elaborated by a novel type of painting that evoked an air of ancient and ennobling *gravitas*, and the religious community's need to limit ornamental excess in the decoration of the basilica. The spectacular network of fictive marble structures, articulated with maximum rationality and crystalline lucidity, supplies us with a new way of understanding Giotto's spatial reflections and experiments in the crucial years around 1300, characterised by a renewed study of ancient and contemporary models.<sup>70</sup> It is not possible here to explore

<sup>68</sup> For the disputes inside the Franciscan order, see Grado Giovanni Merlo, "Il cristianesimo latino bassomedievale", in: *Storia del cristianesimo: il Medioevo*, ed. by *idem*/Mario Gallina/Giovanni Tabacco, Rome 1997, pp. 219–314: 256–262; David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis*, University Park, Pa., 2001, pp. 111–136; Grado Giovanni Merlo, *Nel nome di san Francesco: storia dei frati Minori e del francescanesimo sino agli inizi del XVI secolo*, Padua 2003, pp. 201–271. For their repercussions in Padua, see Serena Romano, "La salle capitulaire de la basilique Saint-Antoine à Padoue: les événements de 1310", in: *Mémoires de cours: études offertes à Agostino Paravicini Bagliani par ses collègues et élèves de*

*l'Université de Lausanne* (= *Cahiers lausannois d'histoire médiévale*, XLVIII [2008]), pp. 85–108; *eadem* (note 16). See also Julian Gardner, *Giotto and His Publics: Three Paradigms of Patronage*, Cambridge, Mass., et al. 2011, pp. 49–52; Donal Cooper, "Giotto et les Franciscains", in: *Giotto e compagni*, exh. cat. Paris 2013, ed. by Dominique Thiébaud, Paris/Milan 2013, pp. 29–47: 38–39; Baggio 2017 (note 42), pp. 338–340; *idem* 2018 (note 42), pp. 48f.

<sup>69</sup> For these questions see Louise Bourdua, "I frati Minori al Santo nel Trecento: consulenti, committenti o artisti?", in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, XLII (2002), pp. 17–28; *eadem* (note 2), pp. 144–147.

<sup>70</sup> For an analysis of this phenomenon, in particular in relation to the

in depth the meaning of these complex dynamics, which involve a renewed dialogue with Roman classical antiquity, a fascination with contemporary culture (e.g. the inhabited aediculae of Giovanni Pisano, architectural structures such as Arnolfo's façade for Florence cathedral, or the 'neo-Romanesque' pattern on the façade of Santa Maria Novella), and also a special engagement with the 'recent' medieval past in its most variegated forms, including the Florentine Romanesque (in particular the outer encrustations of the baptistery – believed at the time to be a Roman temple – or the basilica of San Miniato al Monte), the beautiful marbles of the basilica of San Marco in Venice (especially on the external side of the Cappella del Tesoro), or the works of the Cosmati in Rome.

As we have seen, the distinguishing feature of Giotto's work in Padua is its renewed classical approach (though not yet philological), which in this phase attains an innovative force.<sup>71</sup> In his decorations in the basilica and especially in the chapel of Saint Catherine we can identify a truly pivotal moment, a genuine crucible of experimentation, in which he succeeded in developing a new system that would subsequently be perfected in the Arena cycle.

This broader context clarifies the challenges that Giotto faced in Padua, leading him to reflect upon and renew the means, significance, limits, and functions of painting, in both theoretical and practical terms. For this purpose he conceived a radically new decorative system, in which pride of place was given to optical illusionism, a kind of trompe-l'œil, where the primary challenge becomes the pursuit of illusionistic

solutions for structures and surfaces, modelled so as to establish an innovative and dynamic relation with the observer.<sup>72</sup>

In this regard, the cycle, with its continual modulations of space – ruptures, extensions, and contractions – manifests an aim that is overwhelmingly conceptual: a 'mental' and obviously also 'spiritual' space that is liminal in nature, serving to mediate between different planes of reality. This whole project is crucially important for our understanding not only of the dynamics that underlie the Arena cycle, but also of the broader processes of development that mark out the artist's complex career. In fact, the recovery of the cycle serves as a hinge between the early, 'heroic' but more archaic language of Giotto at Assisi and the more solemn and 'all'antica' one that followed. These architectural (and 'mental') experiments, which culminated between Padua and the chapel of Saint Magdalene at Assisi, were later disciplined and paired down by the master as he subordinated them more to the narrative function of painting, thus opening up a development carried out in his fresco cycles of the following decades.

Moreover, we should not underestimate the pivotal role that this cycle played not only in the cultural context of Padua – which was a site of advanced speculation on science, optics and perspective<sup>73</sup> –, but also in the development of ever more structured and articulated aniconic decorative apparatuses between the fourteenth and fifteenth century.<sup>74</sup> The fact that this work is located inside the most important pilgrimage basilica in northern Italy could have brought about

antique, see Julian Gardner, "Giotto: First of the Moderns or Last of the Ancients?", in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, XLIV (1991), pp. 63–78; Alessandro Tomei, "Giotto e l'antico", in: *Medioevo: il tempo degli antichi*, conference proceedings Parma 2003, ed. by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, Milan 2006, pp. 557–564; and especially Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 84–89, 194–212.

<sup>71</sup> Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 196–212.

<sup>72</sup> See the careful investigation by Romano 2008 (note 3), pp. 213–249, and the valuable observations by White (note 40), Bokody (note 40), and

Alessandro Volpe, "La condizione estetica e storiografica delle cornici architettoniche giottesche", in: *Come un involucro prezioso: forme e funzioni della decorazione ad affresco in età gotica*, conference proceedings Bologna 2014, ed. by Daniele Benati (= *Intrecci d'arte*, Dossier I [2016]), pp. 121–133.

<sup>73</sup> For the 'scientific' context of Padua in relation to fourteenth-century painting, see Luca Baggio, "Sperimentazioni prospettiche e ricerche scientifiche a Padova nel secondo Trecento", in: *Il Santo*, ser. 2, XXXIV (1994), pp. 173–232.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Andrea De Marchi, "Vasari e i 'partimenti'", in: *Giorgio Vasari e il*

a complex dynamic of resonance and re-elaboration, which was much more far-reaching than we might suspect. Besides its echo within the walls of the city, especially in the ‘architectural’ systems of Guariento,<sup>75</sup> it may have contributed to the diffusion of aniconic decorations. These can be found not only in religious contexts, such as the magnificent and extensive fictive marble decoration in the abbey of Santa Maria in Sylvis at Sesto al Reghena or those in the abbey of Pomposa,<sup>76</sup> but also in private and secular buildings – in particular the decoration of lordly palazzi and castles, such as the Sala dello Zodiaco in Palazzo Ferri in Casalserugo (Padua), the Castello Carrarese in Padua, or the fabulous Sala delle Prospettive with its series of illusionistic arcades in the Castello Visconteo of Pandino.<sup>77</sup> This process, which remains a matter of future investigation, took its origin from the revolutionary “strukture Illusionismus” of the majestic *balconate* framing the scenes of Saint Francis in Assisi.<sup>78</sup> In Padua, however, between the chapel of Saint Catherine and the Arena, Giotto laid the ground for an even more

sensitive and flexible approach to modelling space. For the first time, he established a dynamic relationship between painting, real architecture, and the beholder: an essential precondition for the development of perspective culture in the early Renaissance.

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*cantiere delle Vite del 1550*, ed. by Barbara Agosti/Silvia Ginzburg/Alessandro Nova, Venice 2013, pp. 359–370.

<sup>75</sup> For Guariento, see Zuleika Murat, *Guariento: pittore di corte, maestro del naturale*, Milan 2016, pp. 51–57, in particular the complex framing systems and illusionistic marble decoration at the Reggia Carrarese (dado) and in the aediculae containing saints at the Eremitani in Padua.

<sup>76</sup> See Enrica Cozzi, “L’arte medievale”, in: *L’abbazia di Santa Maria di Sesto, II: L’arte medievale e moderna*, ed. by eadem/Gian Carlo Menis, Fiume Veneto 2001, pp. 39–155; Alessandro Volpe, “Pittura a Pomposa”, in: *Pomposa: storia, arte, architettura*, ed. by Antonio Samaritani/Carla di Francesco, Ferrara 1999, pp. 95–149. We also recall at least three fictive marble decorations in Franciscan contexts: the apse of the basilica of San Fermo in Verona; the transept and perhaps the first decorative *facies* of the apse of Santa Croce in Florence, prior to the decoration by Agnolo Gaddi (see especially Andrea De Marchi, “Il progetto di Giotto tra sperimentazione e definizione del canone: partimenti a finti marmi nelle cappelle del transetto di Santa Croce”, in: *Ricerche di storia dell’arte*, CII [2010], pp. 13–24; Alice Parri, “Decorazioni aniconiche trecentesche in Santa Croce: riflessioni sui

motivi a finti marmi delle cappelle del transetto”, *ibidem*, pp. 37–48), and the sacristy in the lower basilica of San Francesco in Assisi (see Andrea De Marchi, “Partimenti assisiati: il Maestro di Figline e la sua bottega”, in: *Medioevo: le officine* [note 35], pp. 623–634).

<sup>77</sup> See Tiziana Franco, “Il Trecento e il primo Quattrocento”, in: *Gli affreschi nelle ville venete: il Cinquecento*, ed. by Giuseppe Pavanello/Vincenzo Mancini, Venice 2008, pp. 2–19; Francesca Flores D’Arcais, “Un ‘nuovo’ pittore per Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara: qualche nota sugli affreschi della stanza di Luigi il Grande d’Ungheria nel castello di Padova”, in: *Arte veneta*, LXXII (2015), pp. 166–172; Serena Romano, “Palazzi e castelli dipinti: nuovi dati sulla pittura lombarda attorno alla metà del Trecento”, in: *Arte di corte in Italia del Nord: programmi, modelli, artisti (1330–1402 ca.)*, conference proceedings Lausanne 2012, ed. by eadem/Denise Zaru, Rome 2013, pp. 251–274. See also Andrea De Marchi, “La percezione panottica delle *camerae pictae* profane di età gotica in Italia superiore”, *ibidem*, pp. 437–464.

<sup>78</sup> Hans Belting, *Die Oberkirche von San Francesco in Assisi: Ihre Dekoration als Aufgabe und die Genese einer neuen Wandmalerei*, Berlin 1977, p. 167.

### Abbreviations

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AdA Padua, Archivio della Veneranda Arca del Santo  
CSA Padua, Centro Studi Antoniani

### Abstract

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This contribution investigates the fresco decoration carried out by Giotto in the chapel of Saint Catherine in the basilica of Sant'Antonio in Padua, today almost entirely lost as a result of the restoration of the chapel in the 1920s and its redecoration by Pietro Annigoni in the 1980s. Through the analysis of archival photographs and of the present-day mural surfaces, the author has been able to identify numerous surviving original areas that have hitherto been overlooked. As the result of this investigation, the article proposes a graphic reconstruction of the original, mostly aniconic decoration. Its most striking feature is the complex illusionistic architecture painted on the side walls. Lastly, thanks to the discovery of a coat of arms on the entrance arch to the chapel, it is possible to securely relate this cycle to the patronage of the famous Scrovegni family, almost certainly of Enrico himself at a time immediately prior to the Arena cycle.

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Giorgio Vasari, *Der hl. Lukas malt die Madonna* | *San Luca dipinge la Vergine*  
Firenze | Firenze, Santissima Annunziata, Cappella di San Luca  
(Detail aus Abb. I, S. 234 | dettaglio di fig. I, p. 234)

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