

BOUNDARIES OF LICENSE:  
THE MATERIALITY OF THE PAINTED FAÇADES IN CINQUECENTO VENICE

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

At least 67 domestic façades were painted in Venice by the end of the sixteenth century, often featuring illusionistic imagery depicting allegorical and mythological figures and narratives in fictive architectural spaces. Due to the iconographic flexibility and economic efficiency of the practice, scholarship has recognized its utility as a means for emerging and elite citizens to decorate their homes and “fashion” their public identities while ascribing to traditional republican values. Yet in his 1537 architectural treatise, Sebastiano Serlio accentuated the licentious potential of the painted façade, advising the painter to “not the destroy the order of the building” by “imitating reality while preserving the building’s decorum.” By linking the structural integrity of a building to its clarity of form, Serlio recognized the latent possibility of altering the meaning and reception of architecture enacted by painting on the charged support of the façade. Focusing on select remaining fragments and examining the materiality of the painted façade, particularly the relation between ornament and structure, this thesis emphasizes the pictorial simulation of architecture and materials on painted façades as challenging the visual and rhetorical function of the domestic residence in early to mid-sixteenth century Venice. Charting the emergence of this pictorial tendency within a period of architectural and political reform in the early decades of the sixteenth century, I suggest that the increased use of this transitory type of ornamentation nuanced a broader cultural moment of self-awareness during which the contradictory claims of the Venetian Republic were scrutinized through its built environment. In the first section, I examine the pictorial simulation of architecture on domestic painted façades against broader debates on architectural decorum and the lived experience of the city. In the second section, I consider the pictorial simulation of materials on domestic façades alongside the material history of Venetian architecture and challenges to it. I argue that viewers, prompted by pictorial illusionism, were encouraged to associate, question, and unravel the logic and relation of painted surfaces in a rapidly shifting urban environment.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 *Urbs Picta*

On August 16, 1532, the diarist Marin Sanudo recalled the conflagration that destroyed the Ca' Zorzi Corner, a *casa* he exalted as “the most beautiful house in Venice, and, one could even say, in all Italy: aristocratic, magnificent, and spacious.” He observed:

Yet it burned to the ground in – hours; one could say it was like the fire of Troy, but worse, since there was nothing left standing except for some columns on the canal side. All the rest is burnt and in ruins. In a few places the shells of the walls are still standing, but it is frightening to look at them. The fire continued until tierce, at which time the façade collapsed and those beautiful marbles of the balcony fell all at once into the Grand Canal, never to be recovered. The bank along the canal was full of people, but no one helped. The Grand Canal was full of boats, and the people [in them] were watching the fire.<sup>1</sup>

Sanudo’s lament on the ruined edifice stresses its arresting visuality: simultaneously startling and engrossing, the sight of the building in flames froze viewers in place. He highlights ornament as separated from façade – columns and marble separated from the shells of walls – as prompting this visual apprehension. Reduced to fragments in a matter of hours, the broken façade attests to the mutability of the building, whose dematerialization compromised the cultural values it had come to accrue in Venice. The freestanding columns and submerged marbles make patent the illusory associations linking architecture and luxury, as ornament, once signifying the building’s *magnificentia*, comes to function as a faltering reminder of the transience of beauty when disengaged from the structure.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marin Sanudo, *Venice città eccellentissima*, eds. Patricia H. Labalme and Laura Sanuineti White, trans. Linda L. Carroll (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 474.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of *magnificentia* expressed the personal and public status of a man in society in an appropriate manner vis-à-vis private patronage. As discussed by Georgia Clarke, *magnificentia* “was bound up with the glory of the city and the state, which were often synonymous.” The tenuous distinction between *magnificentia* as virtue and luxury as vice has characterized much literature on the architecture and urbanism of Venice. See Georgia Clarke, *Roman House and Renaissance Palace* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 57; Patricia Fortini Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); David Thomson, *Renaissance Architecture: Critics, Patrons, Luxury* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). Leon Battista Alberti defines beauty in architecture as “the reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse.” With this definition, he emphasizes the problem of ornament, underscored by Sanudo’s anecdote and Serlio’s architectural theory, as both enabling the ordering of architecture and simultaneously capable of undoing it. Leon Battista Alberti,

The architect and theorist Sebastiano Serlio described the practice of painting domestic façades in a similar manner in a section of his architectural treatise titled “On Decoration in the Form of Painting, Both Outside and Inside Buildings (1537),”<sup>3</sup> establishing a correspondence between the materiality of ornament, the dematerialization of the façade and the perceived integrity of the building’s form.<sup>4</sup> According to Serlio, simulated architecture, openings, and figures painted on the surface of a building could “transform a firm, corporeal edifice into something transparent and insubstantial, as if it were incomplete or a ruin.”<sup>5</sup> His statement accentuates the transgressive potential of the pictorial ornamentation of architecture, targeting its susceptibility to alter the material constitution of a building and thereby render the harmonious body of the edifice into a deficient, formless mass. Serlio highlights the painted façade’s capacity to function beyond mere applied ornament within a building’s rhetorical programme by situating its boundaries of license on the boundary of the façade. Like the marbles collapsing off of the shells of the Ca’ Zorzi Corner’s walls, a painted façade risks ruining the structural coherence of its respective building. In this regard, Serlio suggests that architectural decorum and beauty are defined by the material integrity of a building in addition to the rational ordering of the building’s constituent parts within the whole of its composition.

Today these painted exteriors have almost completely succumbed to Venice’s erosive humid and saline environment, an ecological loss that has limited art historical inquiries on the

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“Book Six: Ornament,” in *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavenor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 154-188.

<sup>3</sup> To my knowledge, Serlio is the only early modern architectural theorist to treat the practice of painting façades. Giovanni Battista Armenini, Lodovico Dolce and Paolo Lomazzo’s art treatises on the subject are thoroughly summarized in Monika Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks: The Fate of Painted Palace Façades in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” in *The Built Surface. Architecture and the Pictorial Arts from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, Volume 1, ed. Christy Anderson (London: Ashgate, 2002), 130-161.

<sup>4</sup> Serlio, a student of Baldassare Peruzzi’s, was known for integrating high-quality illustrations in his architectural treatise. He based his treatise on Vitruvian architectural theory, but emphasized the practical applicability of Vitruvian precepts to contemporary architectural practice. His books on architecture were the first to codify the five orders, and to emphasize the rhetorical potential of ornament. He moved to Venice in 1527 following the Sack of Rome and remained until the 1540s.

<sup>5</sup> Sebastiano Serlio, *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture: Books I-IV of ‘Tutte l’opere d’architettura et prospetiva’*, trans. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 375.



practice.<sup>6</sup> A search for traces of painted façades reveals only glimpses of peeling intonaco, existing sketches, prints, *vedute*, and recorded references in early histories and guidebooks to the city.<sup>7</sup> The exhaustive piecing together of these remains often prevails over critical analysis, contributing useful archaeological evidence but a generalizing body of literature. Until recently, painted façades have largely been excluded from surveys of Venetian painting and architecture. Three major studies by Lodovico Foscari, Francesco Valcanover, and Wolfgang Wolters have outlined the chronology and key social and economic aspects of the practice.<sup>8</sup> These scholars have situated the practice within major contemporary debates on the Venetian built environment and have provided important models for subsequent scholarship. Monika Schmitter's article on painted façades in Cinquecento Italy has elaborated on an early modern theoretical discourse concerned with painted ornamentation, and considers how the study of Venetian painted façades may problematise standard architectural histories.<sup>9</sup> Patricia Fortini Brown's discussion of painted exteriors in her book *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice* highlights their relation to shifting ideals of nobility and the public display of personal wealth in early sixteenth-century Venice.<sup>10</sup> Most often, however, individual painted façades are treated as focused case studies, as in articles

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<sup>6</sup> The frescoes of the Ca' Barbarigo alla Maddalena, painted by Camillo Ballini (1565-70) and restored in 2000 remain as some of the only extant examples of the practice. See "Affreschi della facciata di Palazzo Barbarigo alla Maddalena – Venezia," Esedra restauro e conservazione, accessed June 1, 2011, [http://www.esedraarc.it/affreschi\\_barbarigo.htm](http://www.esedraarc.it/affreschi_barbarigo.htm). On the restoration of Venetian façades, see Giovanna Rotondi Terminiello and Farida Simonetti, eds., *Facciate dipinte: conservazione e restauro: atti del convegno di studi (Genova, 15-17 aprile, 1982)* (Genoa: Sagep Editrice, 1984); E. Danzi, A. Ferrighi, M. Pana, P. Campostrini, S. De Zorzi and E. Rinaldi, "Research for the conservation of the lagoon building culture: catalogue of the external plasterwork of Venetian buildings," in *Flooding and Environmental Challenges for Venice and its Lagoon: State of Knowledge*, eds. Caroline Fletcher and Tom Spencer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 193-198.

<sup>7</sup> See Marco Boschini, *Le ricche minere della pittura Veneziana* (Venice, 1674); Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Meraviglie dell'arte: ovvero le vite degli illustri pittori veneti e dello stato* (Venice: 1648); Francesco Sansovino, *Venezia città nobilissima et singolare descritta (1663)*, (Farnborough: Gregg, 1968); Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Descrizione di tutte le pubbliche pitture della Città di Venezia e Isole circonvicine* (Venice: 1733).

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *Italian Renaissance Painting according to Genres*, trans. David Britt and Caroline Beamish (Los Angeles, CA : Getty Publications, 2005); Lodovico Foscari, *Affreschi esterni a Venezia* (Milan: U. Hoepli, 1936); Francesco Valcanover, *Pittura murale esetera nel Veneto. Venezia e provincia* (Venice: Giunta Regionale del Veneto, 1991); Wolfgang Wolters, "Facciate dipinte," in *Architettura e ornamento: La decorazione nel Rinascimento veneziano* (Verona: Cierre, 2007), 79-105.

<sup>9</sup> Schmitter, "Falling Through the Cracks."

<sup>10</sup> Brown, *Private Lives*. On the ornamentation of domestic residences of naturalized citizens in Venice, see Blake de Maria, *Becoming Venetian: Immigrants and the Arts in Early Modern Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 95-121.

by Blake de Maria on the Palazzo Talenti d'Anna, Diana Gisolfi on the Palazzo Soranzo dell'Angelo, and Serena Romano on the Ca' Trevisan in Murano.<sup>11</sup> Dominant methodologies privileging the iconography, style, and patronage of painted façades tend to parcel the practice into existing contextual histories rather than assessing how painted façades implicated historical processes and changes.<sup>12</sup> Such approaches further risk undervaluing the fact that the façade is not a neutral painting support, establishing a *paragone* between the painted and architectural elements of the painted exterior rather than evaluating their points of intersection.

As advanced in the writings of Sanudo and Serlio, façades were key rhetorical surfaces on which the claims of the city and its noble residents could be articulated, communicated, and questioned. The city's peculiar topography is characterized by two-dimensionality. Façades as they face onto canals and campi, rather than free-standing buildings, structure the impressions and experiences of its built environment, encouraging an embodied mode of apprehending architecture aligned with ways of looking at the pictorial rather than the plastic.<sup>13</sup> Thus the painted façade was marked by a negotiation between the competing vocabularies of various media, as artists were painting on an architectonic support that itself often depended on pictorial strategies of representation.

To this end, this thesis will examine the materiality of Venetian painted façades, particularly the relation between ornament and structure, in order to evaluate their role in mediating an intersecting politics of luxury, decorum, building and decoration. Charting the

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<sup>11</sup> Blake de Maria, "The Patron for Pordenone's Frescoes on the Palazzo Talenti d'Anna, Venice," *The Burlington Magazine* 146:1217 (Aug. 2004): 548-549; Diana Gisolfi, "Tintoretto e le facciate affrescate di Venezia," in *Jacopo Tintoretto nel quarto centenario della morte, atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Venezia, 24-26 novembre 1994)*, eds. Paola Rossi and Lionello Puppi (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 1996), 111-114; Serena Romano, "La facciata di Palazzo Trevisan a Murano," in *Urbs Picta: la città affrescata nel Veneto, omaggio a Luigi Coletti, atti del convegno di studi. Treviso 10-12 giugno, 1982* (Assisi: Grafiche Marini, 1986), 92-105.

<sup>12</sup> In the rare case of abundant evidence available on a specific façade, studies tend to read directly iconographical programs and the values of the patron-resident. See Monika Schmitter, "Odoni's Façade: The House as Portrait in Renaissance Venice," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 66 (Sept., 2007): 294-315. A diachronic study may further reveal shifting patterns of ownership and alternate modes of reception/interpretation, a likely reality in the case of Cinquecento Venice, a city teeming with visitors, tourists, foreigners.

<sup>13</sup> On the experience of beholding Venice from a waterbound perspective, see Daniel Savoy, *Venice From the Water: Architecture and Myth in an Early Modern City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

emergence of this pictorial tendency within a period of architectural and political reform in the early decades of the sixteenth century, I suggest that the increased use of this transitory type of ornamentation nuanced a broader cultural moment of self-awareness during which the contradictory claims of the Venetian Republic were scrutinized through its built environment. Against this historical impetus, the ornamentation of façades and the threat of their dematerialization – actual or simulated – assume critical roles within the construction and conception of architecture. An increased use of pictorial illusionism animated the surfaces of painted exteriors and potentially obstructed their readability as coherent edifices, as stated by Serlio. By mapping a number of domestic, civic, and public painted exteriors that differ in their treatment of architectural surfaces and their location in the cityscape, I propose that this potential risk of dematerialization was matched by a widespread call to attention. Like the viewers gathered in gondolas described in Sanudo’s diary entry, beholders of painted façades were also urged to reconceive the materials, environment, and values that structured the practices and discourses of building in a city whose urban character was a persistent point of contention. Before elaborating further, it is thus necessary to consider the context and methodology framing the development of my project.

## **1.2 Defining Architecture**

Painted exteriors were not a novelty in sixteenth-century Venice, but they were marked by a significant shift in iconography in the late fifteenth century. Medieval palace façades were often ornamented by painted polychrome geometric and vegetal motifs. These patterns frequently surrounded borders of windows, doors, cornices, and *stemme*, and sometimes enveloped entire surfaces.<sup>14</sup> Figurative mythological and allegorical imagery on painted façades began to proliferate around the turn of the sixteenth century, however, after Giorgione and Titian’s illusionistic and richly-coloured paintings on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi were well-

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<sup>14</sup> Valcanover, 28.

received by critics and the public.<sup>15</sup> Cinquecento painted façades were increasingly defined by a *horror vacui*,<sup>16</sup> as painted ornamentation moved from borders to treat the complete wall surface. The relative inexpensiveness, efficiency, and iconographic flexibility of the practice offered an alternative to more costly marble and stone revetments, while still contributing to the polychromy associated with Venice's urban topography. Painted façades seemed to benefit patrons and artists alike.<sup>17</sup> The expanded parameters of the genre were clearly desirable, as at least 67 painted exteriors are recorded, commissioned by elite *cittadini* and patricians.<sup>18</sup> In addition to providing economic opportunities for a broader clientele to ornament the exteriors of their private homes, the practice offered a public forum for artists to display their talents. Giorgione, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Salviati, among others, were recognized for their proficiency in painting exteriors.<sup>19</sup>

Illusionistic and classical imagery on painted exteriors flourished in the early Cinquecento, a pivotal moment of transition in Venice's architectural history and one that scholarship has narrated as an interminable struggle between tradition and *novitas*. Architectural surveys frequently trace the teleology of Venetian building following a summary established by Francesco Sansovino in his 1581 guidebook to the city.<sup>20</sup> Sansovino swiftly outlines an

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<sup>15</sup> Wolters observes figurative images sketched on some façades on Jacopo de Barbari's map of Venice (1500), but concedes that a notable increase in illusionistic imagery can only be traced after the painting of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Wolters, "Facciate dipinte."

<sup>16</sup> Charles Cohen and Giulio Lorenzetti both use the term *horror vacui* to describe the surfacing of entire façades. See Charles E. Cohen, *The Drawings of Giovanni Antonio Pordenone* (Venice: La Nuova Italia, 1980); Giulio Lorenzetti, "Gli affreschi della facciata di Palazzo Trevisan a Murano," in *Scritti storici in onore di Camillo Manfrin* (Padua, 1925), 440.

<sup>17</sup> Schmitter offers a concise summary on the economic and social benefits of commissioning a painted façade over other forms of façade ornamentation. See Schmitter, "Falling Between the Cracks."

<sup>18</sup> Schmitter, 139. This figure is recorded in Maria H. Loh, *Titian Remade: Repetition and the Transformation of Early Modern Italian Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2007), 73. For detailed catalogues of Venetian painted façades and locations, see Foscari; Valcanover.

<sup>19</sup> Writers including Boschini, Ridolfi, and Vasari often commented on the prolific activity of painters known for painting façades, and their various means and abilities to secure patronage through the practice.

<sup>20</sup> Key surveys on Venetian architectural history are Ennio Concina, *A History of Venetian Architecture*, trans. Judith Landry (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard Goy, *Venice: The City and its Architecture* (London: Phaidon, 1997); Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice* (London: Batsford, 1980); Norbert Huse and Wolfgang Wolters, *The Art of Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, 1460-1590* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

architectural history whose exemplars orbit two seemingly irreconcilable spheres – the modesty of tradition and the magnificence of the new. He begins by quoting the first law of the Venetian Republic, a governmental stipulation named the Daula Law following a Bill proposed by Zeno Daulo. The law called “for more equality and similitude [...] to forgo the palaces and magnificent houses in order to not outdo each other; mandating by law that all houses should be even, similar, of the same size and ornamentation.”<sup>21</sup> In emphasizing this legislation, Sansovino articulates the austerity and parsimony accorded to the foundational function of architecture in Venice.<sup>22</sup> He then describes a turn to the elaborate Gothic *casa-fondaci*, the long-standing architectural typology of the Venetian dwelling built in the “style of the Germans” and surfaced with Istrian stone and Verona marble.<sup>23</sup> He finally cites waning imperial ambitions, and the immigration of numerous central Italian humanists, artists, and architects to Venice following the 1527 Sack of Rome as leading to the building of “modern” classical palaces. I accentuate this simplified chronology to examine, in particular, the tensions between the historical mythology of Venetian architecture and subsequent transformations enabled by the mobility of forms, materials, and ideas into and outside of the city. Despite Sansovino’s seamless narrative of Venetian architectural history, the valence and values of the many traditions characterizing Venetian building – ancestral, gothic, and modern – were debated throughout the Cinquecento. Such discussions did not consider architecture to be an autonomous practice, but instead

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Throughout the history of the Venetian Republic, the foundational function of architecture was bound to republican polity; architecture functioned as a primary site through which ideas regarding the constitution of the Venetian community were examined.

<sup>23</sup> Sansovino, 383. Variations on the surfacing of the *casa-fondaco* were generated by architectural forms and ornamentation encountered during imperial and mercantile travels in the Mediterranean basin and the Near East. The so-called Venetian Gothic style is actually a composite idiom drawing from Islamic, Byzantine and Eastern Mediterranean sources. See Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). On the association of Venetian identity and the Gothic style, see Edoardo Aslan, *Venezia gotica: l’architettura civile* (Milan: Electa, 1996); Juergen Schulz, *The New Palaces of Medieval Venice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

evaluated possible functions for building against broader claims made for and against republican politics and morals.

Sansovino cites the persistent turn from the city's foundational laws privileging parsimony in display and appearance to the wealth derived from Venice's illustrious trade network within the Mediterranean East in the Trecento and Quattrocento. He notes that "as a consequence of the growth of the merchant fortunes that have always been the backbone of this Republic, [the palaces] have risen and lowered in height according to the tastes of the builders."<sup>24</sup> Tastes in building and ornamentation were thus tempered by Venice's commercial exchanges and public relations.<sup>25</sup> These tastes were not generated solely by builders, but occupied the purview of an increasingly expanding network of procurators, patrons, and guild-members whose interests did not always neatly elide. The reality of building in a city whose reputation was developed and supported by commerce and trade established, according to Norbert Huse and Wolters, a "[p]ersistent tension between an ideology that idealized the social order of Venice, and the reality of building as a means of self-aggrandizement."<sup>26</sup> In this regard, domestic architecture was particularly volatile, as its exterior ornamentation rendered private claims to ownership emphatically public and social.

The long-standing myth of Venice as an inviolable state built on communal values of equality, prudence and sincerity witnessed a series of re-appraisals in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century, concurrent with the increased painting of domestic façades.<sup>27</sup> The stability of

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<sup>24</sup> Sansovino, 383.

<sup>25</sup> Many scholars consider Venice's self-conscious attention to and promotion of its unique beauty, particularly in the medieval and early modern periods, to have been a political strategy. They attribute this public display of magnificence to a desire to impress outsiders and to keep enemies at bay, a maneuver effected by and made possible because of the high traffic of foreign merchants to the city and its strong diplomatic relations in the Mediterranean. See, in particular, the first two chapters of Concina, *A History of Venetian Architecture*.

<sup>26</sup> Huse and Wolters, 16.

<sup>27</sup> On the Myth of Venice, see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); David Rosand, *The Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). On the myth of Venice as a New Rome, see Debra Pincus, "Venice and the Two Romes: Byzantium and Rome as a Double Heritage in Venetian Cultural Politics," *Artibus et Historiae* 513:26 (1992): 101-114.

this mythical construct was questioned periodically, as exemplified by the often-cited Battle of Agnadello in 1509 when the Republic's imperial expansion onto the mainland was checked by the League of Cambrai.<sup>28</sup> Venice's dominance as an exemplary *Stato da Màr* was shaken momentarily following this major defeat.<sup>29</sup> Imperial ambitions and territorial expansion were increasingly viewed as impinging on the foundational tenets of the historical centre, as a "policy of peace and neutrality" came to direct domestic strategies and state politics.<sup>30</sup> According to Jutta Gisela Sperling, "preserving the status quo became the maxim of [Venetian] foreign policy" hereafter.<sup>31</sup> As civic authorities questioned the limits of imperial pursuits, they redirected attention to traditional republican ideals. Myths of Venice were consolidated in subsequent historiography as strongholds against military weaknesses. They were invoked by defenders of the State both as a means to reaffirm publicly Venice's perfection as a Republic, emerging almost unscathed after Agnadello, and as means to temper the political consequences of its loss. Importantly, detractors simultaneously raised antimyths or countermyths, emphasizing a vision of Venice as an imperial and treacherous State. Post-Agnadello, these countermyths moved from "occasional diatribe to reasoned denigration."<sup>32</sup> As stated by James S. Grubb, "antimyths have remained within the terms of discourse staked out by mythmakers and so have actually reinforced the hegemony of the myth. Image and counterimage contend within a single arena."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Edward Muir, "Was There Republicanism in the Renaissance Republics?: Venice after Agnadello," in *Venice Reconsidered*, eds. John Jeffries Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000), 137-167. The League of Cambrai was an atypical alliance of European forces formed to thwart Venetian domination.

<sup>29</sup> Venice's dominance in maritime affairs and international trade was already under threat after the Fall of Constantinople and the beginnings of Portuguese explorations of India and the New World.

<sup>30</sup> Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politics in Late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 76.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> James S. Grubb, "When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography," *The Journal of Modern History* 58:1 (Mar., 1986): 45.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 44. See also Robert Finlay, "The Immortal Republic: The Myth of Venice during the Italian Wars (1494-1530)," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30:4 (Winter, 1999): 931-944. Finlay further states on the topic of myth and countermyth that "[d]espite their separate origins and audiences, however, the myth and countermyth were entwined in subtle, unexpected ways. Whether they admired the republic or not, all commentators agreed that its extraordinary duration and stability made it appear virtually immortal." Finlay, 932. On the continuity of the myth until Napoleon's Venetian invasion in 1797, he notes "The myth of Venice thus survived as a consequence of

What is crucial to note here is the extent to which myths and antimyths of the Venetian Republic were tied to its public image and communicated to a collective imaginary, often deployed as ambiguous exemplars increasingly detached from experience.

The privileging of material wealth was targeted as a primary source of Venice's military lassitude. Material wealth was publicly deemed to be a corruptive agent deflecting commitment to the ethos of common good in favour of the pursuit of private goals. The traditional Venetian value of *mediocritas*, standing for the common expression of modesty and conformity in social behaviour and appearance, was invoked as a counterpoint to the privileging of individual, material gains. Willing citizens, then, could refer to the concept of *mediocritas* to affirm publicly their support of republican values.<sup>34</sup> Crucially, civic authorities scrutinized public displays and activities to establish the parameters of these values. A series of sumptuary legislations addressing rituals, feasts, costumes, jewelry, public comportment, and domestic furnishings were enacted to mitigate public and private displays of wealth.<sup>35</sup> The breadth and detail of these sumptuary laws reveal a constant rewriting of the limits of luxury; the continual updating of sumptuary legislation demonstrates an active interchange between residents and authorities on which practices constituted proper public comportment.

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Venetian propaganda, as a rationalization of political defeat, and as an affirmation of republican resolution in a world of overmighty princes," emphasizing the propagandistic efforts of Doge Gritti in particular. Findlay, 943-44.

<sup>34</sup> Tafuri popularized a standard narrative dividing Venetian citizens into pro-papal and pro-republican factions. Within this division, the political interests of key Venetian figures are aligned with architectural interests and styles – the *papalisti* with the classical and central Italian, and the *giovani* with architecture privileging restraint and adhering to principles of *mediocritas*. Tradition and novelty are also cast in the service of politics according to this dichotomy. As Sperling argues, "the tension between oligarchic "innovation" and republican "re-form" characterized Venetian politics up to the end of the sixteenth century and beyond," 80. See Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*; Manfredo Tafuri, "Venetian Epilogue: Jacopo Sansovino from Invention to Consuetudo," in *Interpreting the Renaissance*, trans. Daniel Sherer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 219-258. In this paper, I argue that to reduce the complexity of debates on architecture at this time to fixed dualities would be simplistic, as such a narrative does not allow for exceptions, challenges, and contradictions to emerge in conditions of patronage, as is often the case with painted façades. See Schmitter for examples of historiographical contradictions introduced by the study of painted façades.

<sup>35</sup> The Magistrato alle Pompe was a judicial body specifically established in 1515 to regulate public and private appearance and behaviour in the city. For a list of sumptuary laws, see Giulio Bistort, *Il magistrato alle pompe nella Repubblica di Venezia* (Venice: Tipografia-Libreria Emiliana, 1912).



These sumptuary laws were matched by the foundation of a number of organizations concerning the management of urban spaces and affairs. These included the *magistrate alle Decime, alle Acque, ai Beni Inculti, and alle Fortezze*.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, a number of publications on proper urban planning and decorum by Gasparo Contarini, Domenico Morosini, and Nicola Zen were circulated among civic authorities and within humanistic circles.<sup>37</sup> Against a renewed public attention to the character of Venice's historical centre, the city's urbanism and architecture became the focus of a number of laws, opinions, and polemics.<sup>38</sup> As noted by Ennio Concina, the early Cinquecento was marked by a "new sense of self-awareness and self-knowledge" in architectural pursuits that eventually led to major programmes for cultural renewal in the second quarter of the sixteenth century on both the mainland and the terraferma.<sup>39</sup> Notably, despite treatises such as Zen's 1537 publication encouraging the "fixing by law, that all residences should be equal, alike, of similar size and ornamentation,"<sup>40</sup> there were no specific laws enacted against the exterior ornamentation of residences.<sup>41</sup> As intermediate structures

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<sup>36</sup> Concina notes that these institutions were "coming into being alongside other, older [institutions] (the giudici del Piovego and the provveditori del Comun, in particular), which had long been active in controlling building expansion, the public street system and so on," 175.

<sup>37</sup> Gasparo Contarini, *De magistratibus et republica venetorum* (Venice, 1543); Domenico Morosini, *De bene instituta republica* (1497-1509), ed. Claudio Finzi (Milan: 1969); Nicola Zen, *Dell'origine de' barbari che distrussero per tutto l' mondo l'imperio di Roma, onde hebbe principio la città di Venetia libri undici* (Venice, 1539). Morosini, among others, emphasized the civic potential of the display of wealth, drawing from Aristotelian ethics of *magnificentia*. He articulated a "strategy of deterrence" according to which public expressions of material splendour could testify to the might of the city. Following this line of thought, the function of architecture, while still predominantly civic, was rooted in materialist rather than foundational ethics. Against Morosini's suggestions, figures including Doge Loredan and the patrician senator Zen emphasized an originary ethics of Venetian architecture in their early Cinquecento publications. Their invocations enforced a characterization of Venetian architecture as, according to Manfredo Tafuri, "subject to the precepts of a collective ethic that aims – with a steady view to the moment of "birth" – at safeguarding and transmitting communal values." Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, 3. In doing so, they link the concept of *mediocritas* to the origins of the Venetian State. On the reception of these texts, see Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*.

<sup>38</sup> Crucially, the publication of architectural treatises in Venice in the early Cinquecento was rare. Much architectural theory was derived from other sources, such as agricultural manuals, and not from architectural writing until the mid-sixteenth century. See Manuela Morresi, "Treatises and the Architecture of Venice in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Paper Palaces: The Rise of the Renaissance Architectural Treatise*, eds. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 263-280.

<sup>39</sup> Concina, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Zen, quoted in Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Valcanover, 85. At the same time, the Provveditori increasingly regulated the details of building activity. According to Bronwen Wilson, they ordered that "estimates be provided for buildings, new or restored, in the interests of maintaining civic harmony." See Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early*

dividing the highly-regulated public and private spaces of the city, Venetian domestic façades were tendentious sites mediating claims of civic luxury, private wealth and architectural license. Painted façades, in particular, functioned as “public manifestoes [...] immediately reflecting the cultural climate of a revolutionary and rapidly changing period,”<sup>42</sup> in the words of Valcanover. Painted exteriors are thus a key to the manifold ways in which ethics, politics, and the cityscape were imbricated.

Despite stringent public attention to spending, the paucity of legislation on building and ornamentation enabled architecture to function as a practice accommodating formal experimentation, and as field to be debated. While Venice regained the majority of its territories by 1517, the economic realities of this postwar impasse endured throughout subsequent decades. According to Deborah Howard, “an atmosphere of security and public confidence was an essential precondition” in determining architectural commissions in the aftermath of the Peace of Bologna, with only the most indispensable projects undertaken until 1529.<sup>43</sup> Venetian building in the 1520s and ‘30s remained in a suspended state, circling, whether in adherence or contradistinction to, the precarious definition of tradition.<sup>44</sup> A return to a traditional Venetian gothic architectural style, typified by the typology of the *casa-fondaco*, could, on the one hand, reify commitments to principles of patrician equality.<sup>45</sup> However, the easy association between the gothic style and republican traditions was shifted following Andrea Gritti’s ardent support of

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*Modern Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 46. However, *Provveditori sopra l’ornamento delle strade della città* were only elected in 1554, after a previous attempt at organizing a legislative body on the decoration of the streets and spaces of the city had been rejected in 1535. There was no clear urgency to regulate such practices in the early fifteenth century. Huse and Wolters, 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice*. See also Howard Burns, “Architecture,” in *The Genius of Venice 1500-1600*, eds. Jane Martineau and Charles Hope (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1983), 25.

<sup>44</sup> Many architectural projects in this time were developed rapidly, thus official documents and plans are hard to come by. As many buildings, especially secular ones, were erected in a short time frame, the architects, designers, and patrons involved are no longer known. See Egle R. Trincanato, *Venezia minore* (Milan: 1948).

<sup>45</sup> Tafuri notes that both Zen and Loredan admonished the ‘Gothic’ exhibitionism and display on the façades of Ca’ Foscari and Ca’ Loredan. As argued by Tafuri in *Interpreting the Renaissance*, “[i]n this respect, typological fidelity implicitly signified adherence to a cardinal principle of republican liberty: the notion of cooperation between “equals,” 221. The association between typological fidelity in architecture and republican morals is also discussed in Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Venice Triumphant: The Horizons of a Myth*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

a Venetian *renovatio urbis* – the renewal and updating of Venice’s urban and architectural sites through an adapted classical vocabulary – in the mid 1530s.<sup>46</sup> Gritti’s patronage initiated a long period of architectural experimentation, with architects such as Sansovino, Scamozzi and Palladio attempting to integrate classical forms with the structural and aesthetic demands of the Venetian built environment.<sup>47</sup> According to Manfredo Tafuri, renewal “was a goal that could be realized through a “progression” that was also a “return:” the original could guarantee, legitimize, and confirm the “new.””<sup>48</sup> The renewal of architectural forms was considered to be an apt means to ensure a subsequent of the cultural meaning of architecture for Venetians. Scholars have repeatedly mapped the relations between *renovatio urbis*, Venetian architecture, and myths of Venice. What is crucial to note is that debates about architecture and politics circled around the purported universal and rational principles of the sober *all’antica* style and their potential integration into Venice’s understanding of its own unique history.<sup>49</sup>

Clearly, the definition of architecture in the early sixteenth century was adaptable, with a number of competing ethical models in play and in flux.<sup>50</sup> It was through the ornamentation of residential façades that citizens, both native and naturalized, could potentially publicize their

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<sup>46</sup> Tafuri elucidates the problematic relation between shifting civic values and classical architecture: “On the one hand, there was the enshrinement of the habitus, of mores, independently of the images that authenticated them; on the other, there was the cult of a new language – clothed in Roman garments – in which one could identify a truth that implicitly annulled the very value of the habitus.” Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Their practical architectural interventions were aided by a concurrent rise in the publication of architectural treatises, and the increased discussion of architectural ideas within Venetian humanist circles.

<sup>48</sup> Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* 10.

<sup>49</sup> Earlier experiments with classicism initiated by the Lombardi and Marco Codussi were picked up and affirmed with the building ‘up-and-out’ of marble and stone façades from the 1540s and ‘classicist’ interventions by Jacopo Sansovino in the Piazzetta and Loggetta (1537-mid 1540s). As described by Howard, Huse and Wolters, and Concina, Venetian architecture was adaptive, assimilating influences from its expansive trade network. The Venetian built environment represented a melee of cultural cues and Venice, according to Brown, thus seemed to resist naturally the import and hegemony of classical Vitruvian models. The integration of classicism in Venetian architecture thus reads as a series of interruptions rather than an isolated changing of the guard. See Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> In *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice*, Brown refers to the ethics of building in Cinquecento Italy. By drawing on Aristotelian ethics and concepts of magnificence, she emphasizes the complex relational structure between patrons, publics, and buildings in early modern Venice. Venetian buildings were conceptualized as reflecting the character of the patron, in addition to contributing to the public character of the community. In this respect, architecture occupied an ethical role in the public domain. Brown emphasizes architecture as an ethical practice that had both moral implications within society and defined autonomous relations to rules of good and bad with respect to building. It is from this definition that I conceptualize an ethics of architecture.

allegiance for or against the Republic. I suggest that the reverse also holds true: the multiplicity of debates on the ornamentation of the city does not divide a fractured architectural history along binaries of traditionalism and modernism, *mediocritas* and *renovatio*, *venezianità* and *romanità*, but reveals a negative dialectical search for a stable architecture. As noted by Desley Luscombe, the variety of Venetian architectural forms and discourses on building and ornamentation throughout the Cinquecento “defined architecture within a rhetoric that was contested and local.”<sup>51</sup> In this paper, I suggest that painted façades did not simply act as decorative surfaces illustrating the sociopolitical claims of their patrons. Their relation to and pervasiveness in the cityscape signals their function as modalities through which a shifting definition of Venetian architecture was constituted and debated.

### 1.3 Ornamenting Architecture

Painted façades, then, represented visual analogues to the elaborate legislative and written discourses on urban politics in Cinquecento Venice. Valcanover has proposed that a key purpose of painted frescoes was to “increase the stage-set illusion of the buildings facing onto the public space, turning them into protagonists not only of the urban setting but also of the very structure of the city, its vividly colored and theatrical grid of bricks, Istrian stone, and marble.”<sup>52</sup> In this case, the materiality of painted façades is woven into the broader topography of city. Painted façades are claimed to enhance, rather than simply to serve as backdrops to, the theatrics of daily life. The variety of iconographies, pictorial effects, and chromatic impressions of painted façades allowed them to generate unique relations to the social spaces of the city, and to the residents and visitors coming into contact with them at every turn of a street or canal.

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<sup>51</sup> Desley Luscombe, “Between Sky and Water,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16:1 (2011): 42.

<sup>52</sup> Francesco Valcanover, “Gli affreschi di Tiziano al Fondaco dei Tedeschi,” *Arte Veneta* 21 (1967): 266-8, quoted in Filippo Pedrocchi, Massimo Favilla and Ruggero Rugolo, eds, *Frescoes of the Veneto: Venetian Palaces and Villas* (New York: Vendome Press, 2009), 3.

As a mode of architectural ornamentation intersecting with painting, the painted façade confuses distinctions between surface and structure. According to Leon Battista Alberti's definition, architectural ornament functioned as "a form of auxiliary light and complement to beauty."<sup>53</sup> Ornament was considered to augment rather than constitute the perceived beauty of a building. Indeed, while Alberti conceived of ornament as a necessary attribute to beauty, he distinguished the beauty of a building as "some inherent property, to be found suffused all through the body of that which may be called beautiful; whereas ornament, rather than being inherent, has the character of something attached or additional."<sup>54</sup> Crucially, Alberti's distinction between an edifice's body and surface ornament has been divided in subsequent architectural theory. Ornament is often described as an excess, animating a building's aesthetic and rhetorical processes rather than being implicated in its intrinsic structural meaning. Anne-Marie Sankovitch raises a historiographical issue in conceiving of structure and ornament according to this rigid *ergon/parergon* binary, stating that "before the nineteenth century ornament was not paired with a tangible physical thing called structure; structure was not understood to be an entity with a self-sufficient ontological, representational, or aesthetic presence; and ornament was not reductively and exclusively conceived as a discrete, detachable object opposed to structure and subject to its own internal logic."<sup>55</sup> Sankovitch emphasizes fluidity in thinking about the body of the building; surfaces and structures are conceived as working reciprocally to establish a coherent architectural meaning.

Pictorial illusionism, simulating both architectural elements and materials, enabled Cinquecento façade painters to confirm, deny, materialize, and dematerialize the underlying structure of the building through representation. Yet painted decoration was also considered to

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<sup>53</sup> According to Alberti, it can be assumed that ornament which does not function "as a form of auxiliary light and complement to beauty," superseding rather than supplementing the 'inherent' beauty of an architectural body, would be conceived as indecorous. Alberti, "Book Six: Ornament"

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

<sup>55</sup> Anne-Marie Sankovitch, "Structure/Ornament and the Modern Figuration of Architecture," *The Art Bulletin*, 80:4 (Dec. 1998): 710.

be a form of architectural ornament, as theorized by Vitruvius, Alberti, and Serlio.<sup>56</sup> As pigment applied to a wall, painted decoration is marked by an ambiguity, being a type of ornament that is neither purely painting nor architecture. In the sections that follow, I will treat the intersections between painting and architecture on painted façades by building on Sankovitch's proposition to think about surface ornament as working in tandem with architectural structures to establish frames of meaning and reception.<sup>57</sup> Rather than 'rebuild' individual façades through remaining archival traces to redress their image and resolve their determinate interpretations, I map commonalities between fragments, from contemporary sketches to eighteenth-century prints and descriptive anecdotes, to reinsert the painted façade within Venice's complex built environment. In the first section, I examine the pictorial simulation of architecture on the domestic painted façade, drawing on a study for the frescoed façades of the Palazzo Talenti d'Anna and Anton Maria Zanetti's sketches of the formerly frescoed Palazzo Soranzo dell'Angelo. Following an analysis of Serlio's rules for painting exteriors in order to respect architectural decorum, I argue that the pictorial doubling of architectonic forms on the painting support of the façade calls attention to the ethics of building in Cinquecento Venice. I then consider the implications of integrating painted decorative programmes as part of broader urban renewal projects in the cases of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Drapperia. A second section focuses on the pictorial simulation of materials on the domestic façade alongside the material history of Venetian architecture. Through a close analysis of the descriptions of Venice's buildings in travel accounts and guidebooks and the Ca' Trevisan in Murano, I consider the limits of simulating building materials within a Venetian environment that historically privileged polychromy and ephemeral surface effects. In moving from the Grand Canal, to the Rialto, to Murano, and from domestic

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<sup>56</sup> Vitruvius outlined a general theory for painting walls in his treatise on architecture. While his text focuses on the ornamentation of Roman interiors, his suggestions are picked up by Serlio and implemented in the latter's rules for painting façades. Vitruvius emphasizes the rule of architectural decorum, and encourages painters not to paint the monstrous, the fantastical, the unbelievable – in short, the false – on walls. Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hickey Morgan (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1960), 210.

<sup>57</sup> Sankovitch, 711.

façades to commercial buildings and structures, I suggest that viewers, prompted by pictorial illusionism, were encouraged to unravel the logic and relation of painted surfaces in a rapidly shifting urban environment.

I invoke Serlio's rules for painting façades as a guide framing and linking the surfaces and spaces described in this paper. As Serlio's is the only known architectural treatise to detail rules for painting façades, it provides a crucial model according to which contemporary readers, practitioners and viewers may have engaged with painted exteriors. Serlio's architectural treatise was intended to function both as a practical manual for architects and as a text to be read by humanists and potential patrons, and its widespread popularity in Venice and Europe attests to the success of these aims.<sup>58</sup> His rules for building emphasize the practical applicability of theoretical ideas. To Serlio, viewing architecture was an integral mode of engaging with it. Viewers were encouraged to conceive of the façade as a rhetorical surface, to weigh its "mixtures" of forms, materials and ornament against their impressions. Painted façades endowed architecture with iconographies, but it was ultimately up to viewers, visitors, and commentators to make the buildings speak.

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<sup>58</sup> On Serlian architectural theory, see Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks, "On Sebastiano Serlio: Decorum and the Art of Architectural Invention," in *Paper Palaces: The Rise of the Renaissance Architectural Treatise*, eds. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 140-157; Alina A. Payne, "Serlio and the Theorization of Ornament," in *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament and Literary Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 111-43.

## 2. Simulating Architecture

### 2.1 Painting Domestic Façades

In 1541, Jacopo Tintoretto painted a curious frieze depicting a running band of hands and feet across the centre of the Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo,<sup>59</sup> a fresco reproduced in an etching by the eighteenth-century artist Antonio Maria Zanetti (Fig. 1).<sup>60</sup> Two shadowed right feet are represented emerging upright from behind a stringcourse, their illuminated toes edging outside an upper border and revealing their burnished colouring. Between these, the fingers of an off-centre, disembodied hand curl around the same border, the shadow of a thumb seemingly touching its other side. Occupying an ambiguous shallow space, the hands and feet at once appear as obdurate bronze statues and living flesh. Their obscure forms point to an equally enigmatic function – are they propping up the two limits of the frame, or actively working to push, pull, and keep the borders from closing together? Ribbon, tied around the calves of legs and palms of the hand, binds limbs, floats in the background and rests on the edge of the frame, engaging a steady flip between solid and mobile, structural and representational, constrictive and loose. Yet when the image is examined in its dual function as both picture and ornament, these ambiguous dynamics convey a critical importance. Architecturally, the image is primarily additive, an element of visual interest functioning to ornament and to enhance the beauty of the building's exterior. Pictorially, the image depicts a gap dividing the architectural surface. The body of the building is fragmented by represented body parts, its virtual form upheld by the suspended hands and feet, which appear to keep the edifice from collapsing.

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<sup>59</sup> The Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo was owned by the Tocco d'Oro branch of the Soranzo family. As noted by Tom Nichols, it is likely that they did not actively commission Tintoretto or even wish to have their façade painted, but did so after the artist offered his services for free. See Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 263. On Tintoretto's painted façades, see Gisolfi.

<sup>60</sup> Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Varie pitture a fresco de' principali maestri veneziani* (Venice, 1760). Zanetti copied a number of fading exterior frescoes to document the extant remains of the deteriorating genre. David Alan Brown briefly discusses the literary genre to which Zanetti's publication belonged, noting their highly nostalgic character and aim to promote the cultural and political legacy of Venice's past. Description is employed as a means to offset the decline of the present era and preserve the past from further decay. See David Alan Brown, "A Drawing by Zanetti after a Fresco on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi," *Master Drawings* 15:1 (Spring, 1977): 32.



Tintoretto's fresco raises tensions between figuration, structure, and content, tensions that were emphasized on many Cinquecento painted exteriors. In this section, I will consider the pictorial simulation of architecture on the Venetian painted exterior as challenging the visual and rhetorical legibility of the domestic façade. Through an analysis of the Ca' Talenti d'Anna's painted façade and Serlio's critique of painted exteriors, I argue that the pictorial illusionism of architectonic structures calls attention to the possibilities and risks of architecture as a medium in the early Cinquecento. I then extend my treatment of domestic painted façades to assess the urban renewal of the Rialto market and the decoration of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Drapperia. I propose that in evaluating these civic commissions of public painted architecture alongside their residential counterparts, the plural function of the painted exterior may be elaborated as one encouraging an engaged mode of viewing, appraising, and associating architecture within the diverse spaces of the city.

Inasmuch as painted façades ornamented specific residences, so too did they decorate a city that prided and marketed itself on its ubiquitous beauty.<sup>61</sup> Luscombe notes that while domestic residences were mostly privately owned,<sup>62</sup> the Republic "retained the right of eminent domain over ownership" and thus impressive palazzi "also belonged conceptually to the public domain."<sup>63</sup> This unity between palace and city, part and whole, is most clearly evidenced in the popular Venetian terminology of palazzo as *casa* or *ca'*. Sansovino refers to the use of *ca'* to

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<sup>61</sup> As noted by Clarke, "praise of lavish buildings frequently made reference to the honour that such a building brought to the city." Clarke, 59.

<sup>62</sup> See Brown, *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice*. Private ownership did not necessarily require residence. Recent scholarship has observed that a large number of buildings throughout the Cinquecento were bought and then rented or turned into apartment complexes, such as the Palazzi Michiel, the Contarini houses on the Rio Marin, and residential buildings at San Basegio. This process aligned with more widespread attention to spending and public works, as in the projects of the Scuole. Huse and Wolters note that a number of these communal residences, erected both by private patrons and civic institutions, were also frescoed, as in the case of Castelforte at San Rocco. They suggest that the painted façade thus "obscured the differences between more modest and grander palaces, at least as regards formal opulence," drawing attention to the complexity and range of the patronage of painted exteriors. Huse and Wolters, 18. I contend that further studies emphasizing the functions of domestic residences ornamented with painted exteriors would be useful in interrogating the public and social ends of urban decoration.

<sup>63</sup> Luscombe, 43.

denote the communal modesty of domestic residences and to collectively distinguish them from the Palazzo Ducale, the only building in Venice to adopt officially the title *palazzo*.<sup>64</sup> The character of the private home was made a civic priority through its subordinate association to the Palazzo Ducale, the symbolic seat of republican values. Viewers were thus urged to conceptualize the building and decoration of a private residence as a contribution to the cultural patrimony of the city.<sup>65</sup>

The Ca' Volpi Misurata, located on the Grand Canal, the central thoroughfare of the city, and formerly known as the Ca' Talenti d'Anna, was recognized as one such building project. Commissioned by Lodovico Talenti in 1526 and purchased by the Flemish merchant Martino d'Anna in 1538, it is best known for its once-exalted exterior painted by Giovanni Antonio Pordenone in 1530-1534.<sup>66</sup> This architectural and painting commission was a primary means by which the Talentis, a family of Florentine immigrants working in the thriving textile industry, could derive social recognition for their economic investments. A bequest to the Venetian built environment was a particularly apt way for a naturalized citizen to establish an “enduring material legacy”<sup>67</sup> within and assert a physical and symbolic commitment to the city. Yet beyond this patron-palace association, Pordenone's façade was effusively praised and received as an urban treasure. In his guide to Venice, Anton Francesco Doni highlighted “the façade of the house painted by Pordenone” as one of the city's prime sights worth seeing. Carlo Ridolfi similarly encouraged his readers to seek the façade to “alleviate their boredom,” while Zanetti noted that it “pleased all of the city of Venice.”<sup>68</sup> It was through travel writing that the Ca'

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<sup>64</sup> Sansovino, 382.

<sup>65</sup> On private palaces as an expression of the Republic, see Manfredo Tafuri, “*Memoria et Prudentia*. Patrician Mentalities and *res aedificatoria*,” in *Venice and the Renaissance*, 1-14.

<sup>66</sup> On the patronage of the Ca' Talenti d'Anna, see de Maria, “Creating a Façade: The Patronage of Domestic Architecture,” in *Becoming Venetian*, 95-121. On the misattribution of patronage to Martino d'Anna, see de Maria, “The Patron for Pordenone's Frescoes on the Palazzo Talenti d'Anna, Venice.”

<sup>67</sup> De Maria, *Becoming Venetian*, 98.

<sup>68</sup> [translation mine] Ridolfi, 102; Anton Francesco Doni, *Disegno (1549)*, ed. Mario Pepe (Milan: Electa 1970), quoted in Foscari, 30; [translation mine] Zanetti, 175.

Talenti d'Anna was both revealed as and made a focal site in Venice's urban morphology. Its artistic and civic merits were to be evaluated by viewers and readers coming into contact with the building and its ekphrastic descriptions in writing. While I will elaborate on the relation between travel writing and painted façades in the next section, I emphasize it here to refer to an active contemporary discussion on painted exteriors convened by a number of interlocutors.

Today, the Ca' Talenti d'Anna is marked by stark, smooth surfaces that formerly served as ideal supports for elaborate fresco programmes. Venetian façades were especially accommodating to painting, as they often featured significant blank spaces between windows. Façades were usually built with a superstructure of brick, which was sometimes painted over with *marmorino*, or stucco. In the case of more elaborate ornamentation, marble and stone revetment were overlaid on the stucco layer, or the surface was covered with plaster and then frescoed.<sup>69</sup> The premise of painting façades begins, then, with an effort to conceal the architectural framework of a building. The practice depended on dissimulation. It was in the denial of the foundational layer of building and of the stability of masonry that pictorial claims for architecture could be simulated and effected.

A scheme of the former painted façade of the Ca'Talenti d'Anna can be pieced together from a surviving drawing currently held at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 2).<sup>70</sup> The building is marked by a rational symmetrical composition. Two bays flank a central portal, consisting of a standard closed *androne* topped by an arcaded loggia. Curved windows and shallow balconies articulate the central storey, balanced by two series of rectangular windows on

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<sup>69</sup> Illustrations depicting the process of applying stucco to and painting the exteriors of buildings in Venice are found in Giovanni Antonio Rusconi's architectural treatise, after Vitruvius. Giovanni Antonio Rusconi, *Della architettura di Gio. Antonio Rusconi: con centosessanta figure dissegnate dal medesimo, secondo i precetti di Vitruvio, e con chiarezza, e brevità dichiarate libri dieci (1590)* (Vicenza: Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura "Andrea Palladio", 1996).

<sup>70</sup> On detail sketches of the Ca'Talenti d'Anna façade, see Cohen, *The Drawings of Giovanni Antonio Pordenone*. On Pordenone's frescos, see Massimo Bonelli, "Gli affreschi: Itinerario attraverso la tecnica pittorica," in *Il Pordenone*, ed. Caterina Furlan (Milan: Electa, 1984), 249-267; Charles E. Cohen, "Pordenone's Painted Façade on the Palazzo Tinghi in Udine," *Burlington Magazine* 116:857 (Aug. 1974): 455-457.

the bottom level and a series of square windows at the attic level. Two marble *stemme*, denoting familial ownership of the residence, are placed on the central storey between the flanking windows. Despite its current austerity, the entire surface of the building was once enlivened by painted *istorie* and allegorical figures. While the composition was determined in part by the architectonic articulation of the traditional Venetian façade, focalizing on a central open portal surrounded by a symmetrical series of side windows, the use of pictorial illusionism challenged the planarity of the surface. An illusionistically-recessed frieze depicting four painted statuettes mounted in fictive aedicules runs around the central entrance, framing the *androne* and *piano nobile*. The Rape of Persephone is represented in a fixed frame under the central balcony; a row of figures scatter atop the portal. Four allegories of the Arts are depicted in insets above the second-storey windows, motioning upward to allegories of Time and Fame reclining in the attic level, while four fictive niches punctuate the spaces between the flanking windows. On the bottom left, a band of Romans charge forth in pursuit of the Sabines who seem to hurtle anxiously outside of the delimited edge of the embrasure. Directly above, a winged Mercury, dramatically foreshortened and depicted from below, sweeps into the frame to deliver a message to Aeneas. To the top right is a mythological scene potentially depicting Cybil and Attis. And at the bottom right, the great equestrian Marcus Curtius and his horse are represented in mid-jump, about to leap out of the frame and launch forth directly into the Grand Canal.<sup>71</sup>

The busy painted exterior belies the sobriety and stability of the architectural framework, a decision that de Maria attributes to Talenti's choice not to "tempt the sumptuary fates through either the construction of an imposing architectural superstructure or the commission of a decorative program that could be deemed excessively self-referential."<sup>72</sup> While the iconographic flexibility of the painted façade expanded the vocabulary of ornament to the benefit of such

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<sup>71</sup> De Maria links the iconography, representing mythical scenes of abduction, relaying of information, and mobility, to the immigration of naturalized citizens like the Talenti family. De Maria, *Becoming Venetian*, 102-3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

rhetorical aims, de Maria perceives the ephemerality of the painted façades as countering a stability sought for in architecture. Scholars have reconciled this apparent inconsistency precisely by recourse to the “ethos of *mediocritas*.” Schmitter notes that the practice recalled its Gothic antecedent, thus representing “a renewal and updating of tradition since it employed an old medium to new effect with classical subjects and styles.”<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the economically efficient nature of painted façades contrasted with the luxurious use of imported marbles and stone, allowing for “the tangible display of parsimony,” as also noted by de Maria.<sup>74</sup> Brown further emphasizes that the narrative opportunities of the painted façade proved compelling for a patron’s demonstration of “classical erudition” through selection and display of mythological imagery on the front of his palace.<sup>75</sup> The painted façade, in these terms, is stably fit into safe categories, at once alluding to tradition and modern, sobriety and magnificence, without resisting any of these claims.

## 2.1 Illusionism and the Ethics of Building

Yet by so strongly binding the painted façade’s association to its patron, these interpretations do not emphasize the persuasive appeal of illusionism within Venice’s greater built environment. Illusionistic painting on Venetian exteriors often took the representation of architecture as its subject, doubling the architectural superstructure and architectonic elements in pictorial form.<sup>76</sup> As Louis Marin theorizes, “the very existence of trompe-l’oeil, which perverts the rules governing the play of perspective, cannot help but be intriguing; it opens up the field to a different line of questioning about that pleasure and its power.”<sup>77</sup> Illusionism depends on the

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<sup>73</sup> Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 145.

<sup>74</sup> De Maria, *Becoming Venetian*, 99.

<sup>75</sup> Brown, *Private Lives*, 41.

<sup>76</sup> Illusionism is also prevalent on Pordenone’s frescoes for cloister of the church of Santo Stefano, some of which have been detached and are currently held at the Museo Giorgio Franchetti at Ca’ d’Oro. See Michelangelo Muraro, *Restauri nel veneto 1965: gli affreschi del Pordenone e del Campagnola staccati dal Chiostro di S. Stefano a Venezia* (Venice: Soprintendenza alle Gallerie e alle Opere d’Arte, 1965). Zanetti’s sketches of the painted façades of the Palazzo Capelli and Palazzo Gussoni also suggest the use of illusionism. See Zanetti.

<sup>77</sup> Louis Marin, “Representation and Simulacrum,” in *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, CA: Stanford California Press, 2001), 311.

participation of a viewer in a perceptual game of deception, suspending disbelief in the effects of trompe-l'oeil while simultaneously aware of its processes. While embellishing the façade, illusionism, as a challenge to the opacity of the architectural surface, also risks overpowering architecture by reducing it into a mere visual trick. It is up to the engaged beholder, rather than the demands of the patron, to unravel the tensions between simulated and actual architecture, and the visual and cultural appeals each purports to encode. In front of the illusionistically painted exterior, the viewer is urged to consider the façade as a fluid structure, and thus to potentially consider the cultural meaning of domestic architecture according to a similar unfixedity. To examine the associations between pictorial ornament and architectural tectonics is thus to call attention to the form and meaning of the residential façade as both a (self)representational surface and as a structural barrier dividing public and private spaces.<sup>78</sup>

Sebastiano Serlio outlined the rules for painting façades in Book II of his architectural treatise *Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva*.<sup>79</sup> Tolerant of their popularity, he was nevertheless apprehensive of illusionism's tacit transgressive potential. He notes:

Therefore, if you have to decorate the façade of a building with painting, what is certain is that any opening which simulates sky or landscapes will not be suitable. These things break up the building – a solid and corporeal form – and transform it into a transparent one, without solidity, like a building that is unfinished or ruined. Similarly, neither human figures nor animals in colour are suitable unless one is simulating a window with people at it – and even these in calm postures rather than in bold movements. [...] Because in doing so [the artist] will not disturb the order of architecture and will simulate reality, preserving decorum. [...] [M]aking objects in this way will keep the work solid and worthy of praise by those who can tell real from false.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Charles Burroughs applies Peircean semiotics to forward a theory of the façade as both a surface and a site, at once symbolic and indexical. Charles Burroughs, *The Italian Renaissance Palace Façade* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-3.

<sup>79</sup> It is likely that Serlio would have seen the Ca' Talenti d'Anna frescoes during his time in Venice. Many scholars have noted the popularity of Serlio's treatise throughout the sixteenth century, reprinted numerous times in Venice and circulated around Europe. As a tract directed at an audience of practitioners rather than theorists, Serlio's rules for painting exteriors and interiors were marked by their intended application. It is possible that, in writing his rules for painting exteriors, Serlio was not only drawing on Vitruvius' suggestions for painting walls, but was also responding to differences he observed between Central Italian and Venetian painted façades.

<sup>80</sup> Serlio, 378.

Serlio's censure of painted façades pointedly highlights the potentially licentious implications of the practice.<sup>81</sup> He prescribes an adherence to realism in the representation of spaces and figures, their positions and motions, as the fundamental means to respect architectural decorum and the structural authority of the façade, thus binding license to moderation.

Serlian architectural license was not conceived as an implicitly negative concept, instead understood as an integral contribution to formulations of architectural rhetoric. Alina Payne defines *licentia* as the anxiety about right and wrong within practices of architectural convention and invention. She states that “license is a condition of deploying ornament; indeed, the two are so inextricably tied as to presuppose each other. Designating good, bad, and borderline cases, *licenzia* does not simply define a blind adherence to Vitruvius by condemning any departure from his canons, but circumscribes a field and marks its boundary.”<sup>82</sup> Such boundaries generated and were generated by processes of architectural invention, but resulting licentious forms were acceptable only insofar as an edifice's coherence was maintained.<sup>83</sup> By assuming values of good and bad, architecture is given an ethical role in the built environment. According to Payne, Serlian license “defines both invention and unacceptable transgressions” within the broader paradigm of architectural decorum.<sup>84</sup> Decorum, following Vitruvian logic, joins form to function, so that “the character, social/economic position, and professional activities of the patron or dedicatee find appropriate visual representation.”<sup>85</sup> Following Serlio, structure and ornament are measured against the barometers of decorum and license, ideally functioning as symbiotic referents establishing the semantic meaning of architecture. Within this system of representation,

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<sup>81</sup> On the “fictitious destruction of buildings effected by façade painting,” see James Elkins, *Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 170-73.

<sup>82</sup> Alina A. Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament and Literary Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

the painted façade mediates the definitions of architecture as both utilitarian and rhetorical, edifice and image.

Deviations from a prescribed Vitruvian framework of norms were permitted in Cinquecento Italy, particularly in the design and ornamentation of secular architecture.<sup>86</sup> As noted by Serlio, “functional requirements are turned into ornaments, and ornament sometimes goes beyond the bounds of what is strictly necessary in order to show both art and the affluence of the patron.”<sup>87</sup> Within his treatise, Serlio highlights certain formal features of Venetian architecture that naturally demanded compromises with classical rules for building. Building in Venice was inherently driven by a predilection toward architectural license: screen-like façades were pierced by numerous windows to allow for the passage of light, balconies fronted windows to allow for air circulation and viewing passerby, and the ubiquity of the lagoonal environment restricted structural engineering common to mainland Italy. In the much-referenced façade design for the fictitious Villa for a Venetian Gentleman, Serlio even includes space between windows to accommodate painted exteriors, despite his prior warnings on the dangers of pictorial ornamentation.<sup>88</sup> Serlio concedes to the provisions of painted façades, noting their unyielding contribution to his perceived characterization of Venetian building. Theory, in this case, gives way to the popularity of practice. It was the aim of an architect, then, possessing an acute sense of *giudicio*, to weigh the limits of license against the external demands of patronage, siting, and anticipated reception.

Crucially, Serlio also links painted ornamentation to an ethical practice of viewing. He emphasizes the role of a third party – a beholder – in determining the degree of license manipulated by pictorial simulation. Despite the risks of pictorial simulation to the legibility of

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<sup>86</sup> On Serlio’s unpublished book on domestic architecture, see Myra Nan Rosenfeld, *Serlio on Domestic Architecture* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997), 52. On Venetian vernacular architecture, see Richard Goy, *Venetian Vernacular Architecture: Traditional Housing in the Venetian Lagoon* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Serlio, 134.

<sup>88</sup> Rosenfeld, 34.



the architectural structure, it is ultimately up to the viewer, according to Serlio, to properly distinguish “real from false,” as on the façade of the Ca’ Talenti d’Anna. The viewer is called upon to assess the ethics of building against the appeal of illusionism, and thereby “keep the work solid and worthy of praise.” Architectural order remains in the eye of the beholder, as the perceived solidity of the building is claimed not by painting, architecture, or their intersection, but rather by the reasoned assessment of the viewer.

The intended presence of a critical viewer further implies an increasing cultural conception of the early modern façade as an image as much as a structure, a tendency enhanced by the practice of painting exteriors. Charles Burroughs states that the shift to “the emphasis on the view from the outside implicitly reconceptualized residential façades as belonging to public space and to the public cognitive domain, rather than simply forming the physical envelope of the house.”<sup>89</sup> This comprehension of the façade as integral to urban experience depended on its “visibility and legibility” as a site indexing relations, and thus implying movement, between interior and exterior spaces, and “passage between contrasted functional and symbolic realms.”<sup>90</sup> Venetian façades, in particular, were conceptually understood as intermediate, porous sites. Paul Hills notes that a “flow between inside and outside is characteristic of Venetian living,”<sup>91</sup> as the traditional *casa-fondaco* functioned as both residence and warehouse. Goods were unloaded in the *androne*, the ground-floor entrance of certain palazzi, whose *portego* was sometimes frescoed. The second-storey loggia provided an optimum vantage point, “where the women, normally confined to the house, could emerge to enjoy the sun, the air, and the spectacle of the canal.”<sup>92</sup> Venetian domestic façades expertly interfaced the circulation of goods and people between public and private spaces. These dynamics between private interiors and public

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<sup>89</sup> Burroughs, *Italian Renaissance Façade*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass, 1250-1550* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

exteriors draws attention to the social functions of the Venetian residence, and the mode by which the domestic constantly came in contact with the commercial. As private matters were checked and maintained through sumptuary laws, the liminality of the façade became a crucial point of reference in conversations on acceptable public displays of wealth. A discussion on architectural decorum necessarily impacts a discussion on the politics of quotidian life. To allow for events of passage to be put on display, and to view such displays, were means to confirm the common rituals of daily life. That these “daily events of passage” nurtured a unique scenography that was to be manipulated to a great degree by façade painters like Pordenone is not surprising.

The simulated architecture on the Ca' Talenti-d'Anna reinforces the architectonic decorum of the Venetian domestic exterior, highlighting the façade as the privileged view of the building. The elaborate illusionistic frieze separates the intermediate areas between public and private – the *piano nobile* balcony and entrance – framing their status as focal points in the logic of the Venetian façade. Simulated niches double these areas of transition, and the movement of figures within and without these fictive spaces refer to the façade as accommodating mobility and visibility.<sup>93</sup> Through the repetition of architectural openings and enclosures – niches, points of entry and exit – the pictorial reinforces the architectural definition of the façade as a threshold between interior and exterior.

If it is on the façade that the meaning of architecture within the space of the city is registered and communicated, it is also through its subsequent dematerialization that the artificiality of this meaning may be exposed. The image of Marcus Curtius, triumphantly dashing into the space of the viewer, was frequently painted on early modern façades because of its

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<sup>93</sup> As noted by Huse and Wolters, Serlio praised Venetian balconies for their utility and abhorred them because “they jutted from the façades in a way the ancients [...] would never have tolerated,” well aware that “most Venetian patrons would never relinquish the opportunity balconies gave of observing the goings-on in front of their houses, taking the air, and being seen.” Quoted in Huse and Wolters, 37.

dramatic appeal.<sup>94</sup> Pordenone's variation on the theme, reproduced in a woodcut by Niccolò Vicentino from the British Museum, extends the conventional parameters of illusionism associated with the type (Fig. 3).<sup>95</sup> Marcus Curtius and his horse are suspended in motion, their manes breezing with the movement of their forthright lunge. The horse leaps high, front hooves in the air and hind hooves on the edge of the frame, while Marcus echoes his form, thrusting back with lance in hand. An imposing, sober building and the sliver of a cloudy sky are depicted behind the figures in the shallow space of the niche. The pictorial representation of architecture is thus doubled on the architectural surface of the façade, inverting the standard figure-ground relation between ornament and structure. This superimposition of the building-on-building confounds links between perceptual and spatial relations to architecture, revealing what Tafuri calls a moment of "concealed transgression"<sup>96</sup> through which the pictorial simulation of architecture comes to "demonstrate the potential instability of the rules themselves."<sup>97</sup> The attendant risks of the represented structure coming undone match a risk in exposing the rhetorical construct of the façade, soliciting a viewer who is willing and able to discern what is real and what is artifice at both levels.

The same simulated structures that buttress the legibility of the façade as a site between public and private domains also reverse upon closer viewing. Unlike the enclosed balconies,

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<sup>94</sup> The myth of Marcus Curtius lent itself to fantastical visual representations. It recounts that Marcus Curtius, a Roman soldier, sacrificed himself to Hades. After a deep chasm opened in the Roman Forum and Romans tried to fill it in with earth in vain, they consulted the oracle who said that they would have to sacrifice their most valuable possession in order for the chasm to close. Marcus Curtius promptly jumped in with his horse, claiming that arms and courage were the most valuable possessions of the Roman people. The imagery of Marcus Curtius jumping into the Grand Canal thus renders the lagoon dynamic, highlighting its depth and perils. On variations of the Marcus Curtius and horse type in Renaissance representations, see Maria Berbara, "Civic Self-Offering: Some Renaissance Representations of Marcus Curtius," in *Recreating Ancient History: Episodes from the Greek and Roman Past in the Arts and Literature of the Early Modern Period*, eds. Karl A. Enekel, Jan L. De Jong, Jeanine Landtsheer (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), 147-166; Elkins. A particularly compelling version can still be seen on the exterior of the Palazzo Geremia in Trent; see Enrico Castelnuovo and Marco Bellabarba, *Luochi della Luna: le facciate affrescate a Trento* (Trent: Temi, 1988).

<sup>95</sup> On copies of Pordenone's Marcus Curtius, see Michelangelo Muraro and David Rosand, *Titian and the Woodcut* (Washington, DC: International Exhibitions Foundation, 1976), 246-248.

<sup>96</sup> Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, 3.

<sup>97</sup> Daniel Sherer, "Translator's Preface," in Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects*, trans. Daniel Sherer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), xviii.

there are no barriers in the simulated surface. Figures course in and out of fictive niches in dramatic ways, through flight, battle, and on horse, penetrating the exterior as if it was no more than a thin screen. The architectural structure relinquishes its primacy in the built environment to a theatrics of illusionism, which, according to Serlio, disturb the order of architecture. The painted façade thus denies the structural integrity of the building by denying its structural clarity. Serlio's advice to the artist to respect the architectural support and heed the character of the façade rather than repudiate or supplant it confronts the tenuous distinction between architecture and picture. Ornamentation deviating from this implicit respect of the architectural superstructure risks rendering it transparent, delegating it to a secondary structure by refuting its logical form. This transparency reveals the ontological insubstantiality of the edifice, effected by a simulated ruination that disrupts its visibility and legibility *as* architecture. The structure is flattened to its surface as the building becomes its façade; the legibility of the façade as a comprehensible relation between interior and exterior is extended, challenged and denied.

I suggest that simulated architecture would have directed attention to the legibility of the façades, encouraging the contemporary viewer to acknowledge its capacity both to reinforce and complicate the rhetoric of the domestic exterior within the charged built environment of early Cinquecento Venice. The tensions emerging from the pictorial simulation of architecture on the painted façade highlight an architecture in progress, as caught in an illusory game between structuring the built environment and representing the shifting and often contradictory demands of building in a continuum of family and communal interests and values.<sup>98</sup> By denying the easy comprehension of the architectural function of the façade, painted exteriors allowed for the purpose, rules, and limits of building to become valid points of conversation. The ethics of

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<sup>98</sup> The civic ethics of luxury thus intersected with and were reflected by similar parameters of architectural license.

architectural decorum intersect with the morals of daily life in Venice.<sup>99</sup> In Pordenone's painted exterior, the specular reflection of a city in the background of the Marcus Curtius frame redirects attention from the singular façade of the Ca' Talenti d'Anna to the shimmering expanse of surfaces composing the Grand Canal. Indeed, the practice of painting architecture extended beyond the façade; a number of painted vaults, courtyards, *sottoporteghi*, and chimneys are also documented as having been painted in the Cinquecento.<sup>100</sup> In this sense, the diverse places of painted architecture are connected within Venice's urban morphology, whose spatial formulation is defined, according to Donatella Calabi, as an "ensemble of built and non-built spaces" that are part "of the same visual and functional system."<sup>101</sup> Viewers were thus urged to consider domestic exteriors and painted surfaces as engaging with the broader social dynamics of the city.

### **2.3 Urban Renewal and Urban Decorum**

Having examined the once painted exterior of the Ca' Talenti d'Anna in relation to issues of architectural decorum and the ethics of building in Cinquecento Venice, and having positioned the individual painted façade in connection to the broader built environment, I will now consider the painted decoration programmes commissioned as part of the rebuilding of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and Rialto market in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Two major fires, that of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in 1505 and the market in 1514, prompted the significant redevelopment and the regulation of exchange practices within surrounding areas. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe fully these urban and economic renewal efforts, I wish to highlight how these opportunities to reorder the economic hearth of the city integrated frescoes as part of civic and commercial decoration and restoration schemes. As argued through the analysis of the Ca' Talenti d'Anna's painted exterior, the pictorial ornamentation of

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>100</sup> See Valcanover for images.

<sup>101</sup> Donatella Calabi, *The Market and the City: Square, Street and Architecture in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Ashgate, 2004), 59.

architectonic surfaces calls attention to the veracity of their structural claims. The cases of the decoration of the Rialto market, then, bring the claim that painted exteriors prompt thinking about the ethics of building to the level of actual legislation.

The Fondaco dei Tedeschi and Drapperia decoration projects prove particularly captivating, as they potentially encouraged viewers to work in reverse by considering their renewed ornamentation against their prior forms and subsequent destruction. As established by Serlio, the legibility of a structure is threatened by its potential dematerialization. Serlio's passage on painted decoration cues encouraged readers and viewers to value the architectonic solidity of the edifice in relation to the veracity of its rhetorical claims. In a city whose domestic architecture was so closely rooted to civic concerns, residential, civic, and commercial values overlapped frequently. The Rialto was one such spatial node, then as now as thriving centre of commerce. It was also the place of residence for numerous foreign populations, and a site at which governmental legislation were read, enacted, and confirmed under the authority of the San Giacomo di Rialto parish. Unlike domestic residences, which formed parts in relation to the whole of the city, the Rialto was the physical and metaphorical urban heart of Venice. Its status as an economic, civic, and religious centre symbolically maintained quotidian life. I suggest that the public painted exteriors, included in renewal programmes as elements of urban decorum, functioned as visual strategies to rearticulate and redefine the Rialto as a communal space of exchange.

The Fondaco dei Tedeschi served as the trading post of the loosely-defined German community in Venice, comprised of merchants from Nuremberg, Ratisbon and Augsburg, Savoy, Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, from at least 1228 until its conversion to a customs house following the Napoleonic invasion of Venice.<sup>102</sup> At once a warehouse, centre of trade,

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<sup>102</sup> David Chambers and Brian Pullan, eds., *Venice: A Documentary History 1450-1630* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 325.

community centre and compulsory living quarters, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi was an important economic and cultural nucleus in the Rialto. Despite the potential threat of a powerful foreign population in the city, Venice's trade relations with the Germans were enormously lucrative.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, the maintenance of Venetian political, fiscal and cultural relations with the Germans depended on a carefully implemented system of liberties and restrictions.<sup>104</sup> Special privileges regarding tariffs on the import and export of goods were counterbalanced by restricted social opportunities and the delimitation of trade to the space of the Fondaco.<sup>105</sup> Far too defensive of its power and commercial affairs, the Venetian government both policed and protected the Fondaco.<sup>106</sup> Crucially, it was the Senate that assumed responsibility for the rebuilding of the Fondaco following the devastating fire of January 27, 1505.

As an important building as much belonging to Venice's architectural heritage as to the Germans, so too was the rebuilding of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi directed both by privileges and restrictions. While the primary architect remains unconfirmed, it is likely that the German architect Gerolamo Todesco and the Venetian architects Giorgio Spavento and Antonio Abbondi, called Scarpagnino, had varying degrees of input in the engineering of the finished edifice, with Fra Giocondo probably overseeing its architectural design.<sup>107</sup> An emphatic simplicity and functionality drives the character of the imposing building (Fig. 4). Five arcaded storeys border an open courtyard, emphasizing the rational and repetitive plan. The first two were used for commercial activities, while the remaining were rented as living quarters. On the exterior, an entrance portego opening behind five rounded arches was utilized for the delivery and storage of goods. The central storey is punctuated by a rhythmic series of rounded mullion

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<sup>103</sup> For an overview of the German community in Venice, see Vincenzo Casali, *Il Fontego dei Tedeschi* (Venice: Studio LT2, 2009); Crouzet-Pavan, *Venice Triumphant*, 138-182.

<sup>104</sup> Chambers and Pullan, 325.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Joseph Arthur Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, *Titian: His Life and Times*, Volume 1 (London: John Murray Publishers, 1877),

<sup>107</sup> For a detailed study of the architects' involvement, see Goy, *Building Renaissance Venice*, 45-47.

windows, while square windows articulate the remaining levels. A parapet of merlons and two *torreselle*, once positioned at either end of the structure, ornamented the roof. A classically arched doorway entrance on Calle del Fontego is topped by a relief of the lion of Saint Mark, underscoring the primary Venetian ownership of the building (Fig. 5).

The visual presence of the edifice was nonetheless a civic matter, publicizing an integral economic institution that occupied a respected site at the foot of the Rialto along the heart of the Grand Canal.<sup>108</sup> To compensate for the otherwise plain architectural detailing, the Senate commissioned Giorgione and Titian to decorate the exterior with frescoes, although they forbade the use of marble or tracery as exterior ornament.<sup>109</sup> Painted architecture, in this case, functioned as a regulated concession to the German community, mediating conflicting demands for magnificence and marginalization at the level of both material and patronage. This was a concession that further revealed a hierarchy of ornament, with the most luxurious materials used to ornament official civic buildings like the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi (1488-1528), the treasury clad in marble that faced the Fondaco across the Grand Canal.<sup>110</sup>

In his record of the frescoes, Giorgio Vasari famously emphasized the illegibility of the total programme, qualifying its commission as no more than a lucky opportunity for innovation and boundless creativity at the hands of Giorgione, who “thought only of demonstrating his technique as a painter by representing various figures according to his own fancy.”<sup>111</sup> However, a comprehensive and developed iconographical programme approved by Venetian political authorities, however complex it may have been, would have almost certainly guided such a

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<sup>108</sup> Burns, 25

<sup>109</sup> Decree MS. Of June 19. 1505 in the College of Pregadi, at Venice “Tuta volta che no se possi ussir piu fuori in Canal grando cum li Scalini de le rive di quello e al presente la fondamenatta...ne si possi in esso Fontego far cosa alcuna de marmoro, ne etiam lavoriero alcuno intagliato de Straforo over altro per alcun modo.” As cited in Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 84.

<sup>110</sup> On the architecture and interior decoration of the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi, see Philip Cottrell, “Corporate Colors: Bonifacio and Tintoretto at the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi in Venice,” *The Art Bulletin* 82:4 (Dec. 2000): 658-678.

<sup>111</sup> Giorgio Vasari. *Artists of the Renaissance: a selection from Lives of the Artists*, trans. George Bull (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 197.



large-scale public commission. While an overt political reading of the frescoes may be overdetermined, the frescoes would have likely been utilized, in part, to express allegorically the imperial fortitude of the Venetian state.<sup>112</sup> On the side façade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi facing the Grand Canal, Giorgione painted a number of figurative allegories including a *Seated Nude Male Figure*, a *Seated Nude Female Figure*, and a *Standing Female Nude*, illusionistic columns, a figure of Geometry measuring the globe, and men on horseback and other fantasies.<sup>113</sup> Titian painted four female nudes, a *Compagno della Calza*, a *Swissman*, a *Levantine*, a chiaroscuro frieze and trophies in grisaille, on the façade facing the landbound entrance to the Merceria.<sup>114</sup>

Above the lion-guarded entrance on the Calle del Fontego,<sup>1</sup> Titian frescoed an allegorical figure. Interpreted as either Justice or Judith (Fig. 5), the figure is depicted reclining in the corner of a shadowed space, her left arm resting against a platform and right arm gripping a sword. She glances down at a decapitated head, held down by the weight of her left leg, which emerges from the heavy folds of her robes. A soldier/servant in armor, depicted from behind at the left of the composition, beholds the moment of gainful retribution. The indistinct architectural backdrop, Judith's foot depicted jutting out of a receding niche, and the halted movement of the man at the edge of the frame point to an early tendency to employ illusionism as a means to activate the picture plane of the façade. Judith/Justice, both traditional allegorical representations of the city of Venice,<sup>115</sup> appears to move off the surface and into the space of exchange defining the Rialto. In challenging a viewer's relation to the architectural structure, the image of Judith/Justice would have drawn attention to its spatial and symbolic association to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and

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<sup>112</sup> Giovanna Nepi Scirè reads the iconographical programme of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi as referencing cultural motifs and allegories whose meaning was well understood by both merchants and Venetians, politically welcome "because they conveyed the idea of Venice as a perfect state of harmony and prosperity, able to achieve virtue through the exercise of liberal arts." See Sylvia Ferino Pagden and Giovanna Nepi Scirè, *Giorgione: Myth and Enigma* (Milan: Skira, 2004), 215; Michelangelo Muraro, "The Political Interpretation of Giorgione's Frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, series 6, 86:1285 (December 1975): 177:84; Carl Nordenfalk, "Titian's Allegories on the Fondaco de' Tedeschi," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 40 (Sept. 1952): 101-08.

<sup>113</sup> Zanetti, iv. Due to their prominent visibility on the Grand Canal, Giorgione's frescoes were recognized as the more prestigious commission, and later became the greater victims to harsh environmental attrition.

<sup>114</sup> Ridolfi, 138.

<sup>115</sup> On allegorical representations of Venice, see Rosand.

within the surrounding market. Indeed, Judith/Justice seems to move beyond the surface to oversee the mercantile exchange, sales of silk wares, taxations, readings of laws and humanistic texts, meeting of Venetians and foreigners, and constant hustle and bustle over the Rialto bridge and its surrounding streets. The Venetian presence affirmed by the fresco commission is thus alluded to not only by allegorical representations but furthermore by the blurring of representational and lived spaces of exchange.

This entire space of the Rialto market was rebuilt after the devastating fire of 1514. The necessary rebuilding of the Fondaco prompted the Venetian government to purchase additional land, restructuring and expanding the *calli* around the adjacent Campo San Bartolomeo.<sup>116</sup> Following a public competition, Scarpagnino was hired to lead the rebuilding of Venice's commercial hub and expanded on these earlier changes to the Rialto fabric. His "market rehabilitation project," in Donatella Calabi's words, prioritized an openness in and standardization of urban and architectural spaces.<sup>117</sup> The piazza was reduced in size and the surrounding buildings were constructed at the same height. These alterations contributed to an overall intent for visual clarity driving the re-organization of the Rialto centre. This structural redevelopment was driven by a corresponding concern for economic efficiency achieved by standardizing trading in an open and accessible area.

A two-storey arcaded building to the south of the Rialto bridge, named the Drapperia "after the fact that fabrics were processed and sold there,"<sup>118</sup> also gained from this redesign, as the varied buildings and *calli* surrounding the silk and goldsmith shops were systematized

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<sup>116</sup> The rearticulation of 'German' spaces within the city highlighted the importance of the community within the Republic, as their expanded architectural and urban visibility was sure to emphasize their strong cultural presence.

<sup>117</sup> Calabi, 130. On the urban redevelopment and rebuilding of the Rialto bridge and market, see Donatella Calabi and Paolo Morachiello, *Rialto: le fabbriche e il ponte, 1514-1591* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1987).

<sup>118</sup> John Millerchip and Amalia D. Basso, *The Drapperia* explanatory panel, Venice, Italy.

following the reconstruction of the arcade.<sup>119</sup> The building was doubled in size, consolidating the previously dispersed fabric, goldsmith, tax offices and warehouse into a single edifice. Deborah Howard notes the purposeful aesthetic simplicity of the edifice – the ground floor arcade was faced with Istrian stone, topped by two stark storeys punctuated by a series of square windows. Yet, as in the case of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, a visually striking decoration programme within the newly restructured campo was imperative. Efforts at urban and economic renewal within the Rialto core depended on its ability not only to accommodate but also to impress further the constant stream of merchants, buyers, and visitors passing through its spaces.

A series of decorative frescoes was painted on the vaults and lunettes of the market arcade, likely commissioned immediately after structural work was completed in 1519-20. Some emphasize the architectural framework of the vault by highlighting its ribbing and keystone with contrasting colours and patterns (Fig. 6). Others are populated with figurative, allegorical, profane and religious imagery, always in a relatively uniform palette of blue, red, green, and yellow (Fig. 7). Wolters suggests that although the arcade was explicitly conceived as a unified design, the decoration was probably left to the discretion, and perhaps economic means, of each shop owner.<sup>120</sup> The patronage of the decoration thus reflects the parallel conditions of trade within the Rialto market, founded on the relation between competition and community.

One particular example introduces an engagement with pictorial illusionism that challenges relations between the viewers of the heterogeneous frescoes and the sellers and consumers sharing its space. While other vault decorations feature figures inserted against solid backgrounds, with no differentiation between figure and ground, a painted lunette at the far end of the Drapperia disrupts the uniformity of the surface (Fig. 8). In this rust-coloured lunette, two

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<sup>119</sup> The silk trade was particularly lucrative, benefiting from close proximity to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and central location within the Rialto market. See Luca Molà, *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 99.

<sup>120</sup> Wolters, 98. Stylistic evidence suggests that several artists, perhaps working separately and at different times, painted the frescoes, as there is no apparent iconographical programme linking the vaults.

semi-nude figures are represented on either side of a store window, enclosed in illusionistic frames. To the left, a young man's bent right arm holds a branch that extends beyond the opening. To the right, a young woman glances up at the stalks clutched in her right hand, which reach above the fictive window. They are positioned as inhabiting the shop, as their open windows contrast with the actual window piercing the lunette.

Like the Judith-Justice figure emerging from the picture plane of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi façades, these figures function as interlocutors to the activities within the arcades, as if presiding over the commercial exchange possibly occurring below. Calabi further describes the area of Rialto as “composed of various kinds of space that, while often individually small and narrow, interlinked and communicated with one another. At times something very specific – not necessarily a building, or a formally achieved open square, but a sign, a recollection or a reference to use – came to represent an important activity.”<sup>121</sup> Following its rebuilding and decoration, the Rialto market was reconceived as a space that was not to be passed through quickly, but rather one to spend time in. As the painted decorations in the vaults and lunettes are differentiated by their iconography and pictorial mode, viewers are encouraged to idle under the market arcade. In looking up, the viewer is urged to decipher each particular decoration, comparing one to the other. Such an engagement with painted exteriors alters the behaviours of passerby within the area, as correlations between looking at decorations and looking at commercial goods are established. Each vault was meant to capture the attention of passerby, drawing a viewer in a transaction similar to the commercial ones occurring in each stall below. The slower pace enabled by the particularity and appeal of the Drapperia frescoes would have allowed sellers to target viewers as potential consumers of the silks sold in the stalls below. Thus strategies for enhancing urban decorum through the commission of painted decoration moved

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<sup>121</sup> Calabi, 58.

beyond simple schemes for the beautification of important civic spaces. In this case, fresco programmes further enhanced the commercial goals of the renewed Drapperia.

Through contiguous visual associations, both the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and Drapperia fresco programs symbolically link the commercial spaces and practices of the Rialto. The Drapperia frescoes, especially in the case of the illusionistically painted lunette, are spatially associated with the materiality of the painted Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Both functioned as visual points of interest within an expansive backdrop accommodating a variety of quotidian activities. Viewers passing under the arcade, observing and buying colourful silks and wares, participated in commercial exchanges similar to the mercantile ones occurring in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. This reciprocal visual relation maps what Edward Muir and Ronald Weissman term a “symbolic geography” of the city, whose cartography is not determined by longitudes and latitudes but by “places to delineate, comment on, and transform the social order of the city,” within the broader “networks of space-based sociability.”<sup>122</sup> The appeal of the fresco programmes urged viewers to linger in the space of the market, and to establish connections between the imagery that newly animated the Rialto and the range of commercial and social exchanges between Venetians and foreigners that the reordered space accommodated.

It was Venice’s dependence on the social and economic exchanges at the Rialto that prompted the quick rebuilding, decoration, and subsequent transformation of both the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Drapperia. The fires of the early Cinquecento, destroying and dematerializing the fabric of the old market, provided marked opportunities to alter its architecture and planning. These opportunities, I argue, were furthered by the choices to commission painting as exterior decoration. The area’s ruination prompted a reconsideration of the forms and materials used to structure its architecture and enhance its public image as a

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<sup>122</sup> Edward Muir and Ronald F.E. Weissman, “Social and Symbolic Places in Renaissance Venice and Florence,” in *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, eds. John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 82.

primary centre for trade. While a transitory medium, and thus enabling a quick, economic completion, painted ornamentation implicated itself in debates regarding the restructuring of the market space. The frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and the Drapperia demonstrate attentiveness to illusionistic modes of representation, and thus complemented the impression of visual clarity and order forwarded by the urban redesign. By activating the surfaces of the Rialto's spaces through chromatic representations doubling architectonic openings, edges, and outlines, the Rialto frescoes activated the shared images, values, and exchanges between built and non-built spaces.

In this section, I have assessed the practice of painting exteriors on the private Ca' Talenti d'Anna and in the public Rialto market in order to examine the relation between the visuality and experiences of Venetian urban spaces. I contend that these non-built aspects of the painted city link domestic façades to large-scale urban architectural projects, and to activities and movement through the city's spaces. Indeed, a dynamic urban function of the painted façade as ornament can be posited by mapping the diverse and often public ends of exterior fresco programs. On the side façade of the Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo,<sup>123</sup> Tintoretto painted four figures in fictive niches. Like Pordenone's mythological narratives, Titian's Judith/Justice, and the anonymous figures peeking out of a lunette in the Drapperia arcade, Tintoretto's figures are not circumscribed by the limits of the architectural space, but instead stand precariously at its boundaries. One looks down as he hesitantly steps forward (Fig 10). Another leans back, raising his arm above his head as his leg reaches far beyond the ledge (Fig. 11). A third absentmindedly rests her head in her hand, her ankle resting on the frame (Fig. 12). A final figure is enveloped in a whorl of swirling drapery (Fig. 13). Their tentative movements suggest a harrowing potentiality – if the frieze of hands and feet at the centre of the façade does fall, so too will they launch forward or backward, inside the recesses of the façade or outside into the waters of

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<sup>123</sup> See image appendix in Valcanover.

Venice. I propose that heeding the illusionism of painted façades, as translated by its remaining fragments, and responding to its insistence on the participation of a viewer will allow for subsequent scholarship to resist seeing the practice as solely symptomatic of the familiar narrative of the *paragone* and Venetian republican values. For the paintings enact forms of discourse – between artists and patrons – across campi and canals, within the ventriloquy of shopkeepers soliciting customers, and between Venetians and visitors importuned to sort out and decipher the often unexpected play of form, content, and material on the surfaces of buildings.

### 3. SIMULATING MATERIALS

#### 3.1 Polychromi-city

Early modern guidebooks on Venice detailing its “public pictures,” such as Marcantonio Michiel’s *Notizie d’opere del disegno* (1521-1543), Carlo Ridolfi’s *Le meraviglie dell’arte* (1648), and Marco Boschini’s *Le ricche minere della pittura veneziana* (1664) often deploy a listing format, reporting art and architecture of interest within specific *sestiere* to facilitate touring, either physically or imaginatively.<sup>124</sup> In addition to circumscribing and thus organizing the sights with respect to geographical specificity, their descriptions frequently isolate the notable features or materials of encountered buildings. Within these texts, domestic residences featuring painted façades are not simply described in terms of their iconographic programme or artist, in many cases unknown. Rather, the fact that a façade was painted at all is often upheld as worthy commentary on the edifice.<sup>125</sup> Thus within broader descriptions of domestic architecture, painted façades are aligned with marble, stone, brick, stucco, and relief sculpture, the materials mentioned as ornamenting other residences within the Venetian cityscape. The listing mode peculiar to Venetian guidebooks reinforces the perpetual affinity between the material used to structure buildings and the applied ornament decorating surfaces within the city. This approach, I suggest, encouraged the early modern visitor to remain attentive to the layered textures of Venice’s topography. I emphasize these late Cinquecento and Seicento travel accounts as valuable sources on painted façades. Disseminated in Venice and abroad, they reveal specific contemporary conversations about painted façades. Painted façades, in these texts, are integrated in a discussion on the social value of building materials. The reader of these guidebooks and potential viewer of the painted façades was not only guided to see the sites, but was also guided

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<sup>124</sup> Marcantonio Michiel, *Notizia d’opere di disegno nella prima metà’ del secolo XVI* (Bassano: Morelli, 1800); Ridolfi; Marco Boschini, *Descrizione di tutte le pubbliche pitture della Città di Venezia e Isole circonvicine* (Venice, 1733); Boschini, *Le ricche minere*.

<sup>125</sup> Key well-known painted façades, like those of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi and those by Giorgione, receive effusive and detailed descriptions by Boschini and Ridolfi. Otherwise, the iconography of most façades are cursorily summarized, if at all.



to see and to consider the painted façades following modes established by Michiel, Boschini, and Ridolfi, among others.

While in the previous section I examined the pictorial simulation of architecture of domestic façades, in this section I will treat the pictorial simulation of materials on painted façades in relation to the concept of the polychrome city. Crucially, while Serlio censured the simulation of architecture on painted façades, he encouraged the simulation of building materials. Simulated materials, in his opinion, did not risk ruining the structure of the edifice as they doubled and thus reaffirmed its surface. Serlio's encouragement to simulate materials rather than to simulate architecture reinscribes the alterity of the painted exterior against the strictly architectural. As referents to an established material lexicon, simulated materials revealed their limits as nominal, temporary alternatives to solid surface revetments.<sup>126</sup> Yet by emphasizing the character of painted ornamentation as something applied to or represented on a surface, Serlio's theory disregards the material constitution of the painted façade.

Like traditional building materials of brick, stone, and marble, the painted façade as a type of ornament signifies the dual character of architectural ornament as both matter and form. As evoked by Sanudo's anecdote in the Introduction, the expansive ability of ornament to transform from building material to decorative material, from solid matter to symbolic representation, is simultaneously threatened by its potential reversion through actual and simulated modes of dematerialization. This mutability is enabled by the illusionism of the painted façade, whose figurative breadth allows it to at once refer to both the structure and rhetoric of an architectural surface. In this section, I propose to consider the materiality of the painted façades against contradictory claims made by simulated materials on the Ca' Trevisan in

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<sup>126</sup> The merit of the painted façade allowed for those not of exceptional means to contribute to the magnificence of the city, and allowed for display of (or reference to) luxury through economical means. Luscombe suggests that patrons willingly chose the option of a painted façade because of its temporary nature, appreciating its entropic character and conceiving of it as a contribution to the ephemerality characteristic of the Venetian environment.

Murano. I begin by locating painted façades within Venice's particular material history. Through an examination of Lazzaro Bastiani's *Relic of the Holy Cross is offered to the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, I claim that viewers were encouraged to conceive of the built environment in terms of overlapping materials and textures, as described in the aforementioned travel accounts. The qualities of building materials, I argue, were compared and discussed in relation to their perceived effects within the Venetian lagoon. I conclude with an analysis of Serlio's prescriptions for simulating materials and the painted façade programme of the Ca' Trevisan in Murano. I suggest that its painted façade confronted an established definition of architectural luxury bound to the persistent dematerialization of the exterior. The painted decoration of the Ca' Trevisan in Murano risked denying Venice's material history, one partitioning the façade as a screen whose material composition registers and reflects ephemeral surface effects as formal elements. While the painted façade is itself transitory, simulated materials fix the surface of the façade to a single impression. In this regard, they bind the cultural referents of building materials, formerly generated through fleeting effects within the lagoonal environment, to a singular, stable interpretation.

Many visitors to Venice marveled at the sumptuous materials decorating the palaces winding down the Grand Canal. Describing his passage down the Grand Canal in 1484, the diplomat Philippe de Commines observed that "the most beautiful street in the whole world" was also "the one with the most beautiful buildings." It is of note that de Commines positions the character of the "old" houses, which "are made of fine stone and are all painted" against "those of about a hundred years standing [...] faced with white marble from Istria [...] and inlaid with porphyry and serpentine stone."<sup>127</sup> When de Commines beheld Venice, he considered the façades and materials on the Grand Canal in chronological terms. The medieval painted exteriors

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<sup>127</sup> Philippe de Commines, *The Memoirs*, ed. Samuel Kinser, trans. Isabelle Cazeau (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), 490.

constituted an *urbs picta*, complemented by the quattrocento use of warm, red Verona marble in civic architecture and gilding surfacing palazzi like the Ca' d'Oro.<sup>128</sup> In comparison, the 'modern' façades, ornamented in white Istrian stone and multicoloured marble,<sup>129</sup> reveal the elegant geometry and restraint characteristic of a mid-Cinquecento aesthetic exemplified in the exteriors of the Ca'Dario and the Ca' Contarini dal Zaffo Polignac, and associated with the architectural projects of Marco Codussi and the Lombardi.<sup>130</sup> Scholars such as Huse, Wolters, and Schmitter have referred to de Commynes' statement as highlighting the once emphatic prevalence of gothic painted façades in Venice. However, I wish to emphasize its particularity as a rare first-hand insight from a foreign traveler to the city. De Commynes' quote reveals a potential way that travelers apprehended the entirety of Venice's sprawling topography, comprehending its heterogeneous surfaces in terms of the shifting histories signified by building materials.<sup>131</sup>

Numerous scholars, including Foscari, Valcanover and Wolters, have noted the contribution of colourful painted façades to the overall impressions of Venice's urban spaces. Foscari observes that the colours of the façades reflected and promoted Venice's unique geography and environmental conditions. He states that "the taste to render the various façades, and thus the entire city, polychrome, may also be a symptom or sign of the innate *colorismo* [privileged by] Venetian, absorbed by the sky, the water that surround and binds and caresses

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<sup>128</sup> Concina, "Venice and the Gothic," in *A History of Venetian Architecture*, 69-113.

<sup>129</sup> Huse and Concina note a contiguous relation between the visual appeal of the so-called "modern" façades and the various materials used to surface them. They state: "Apart from these brick-built houses faced with ashlar and marble, there were some that had their masonry covered with dazzling white *marmorino* which, if it did not abolish the difference between them and the stone façades, at least reduced it for the eye." Huse & Wolters, 35.

<sup>130</sup> On Codussi's and the Lombardi's architectural projects, see Concina; John McAndrew, *Venetian Architecture of the Early Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980); Loredana Olivato Puppi and Lionello Puppi, *Mauro Codussi* (Milan: Electa, 1994). According to Peter Lauritzen and Alexander Zeilcke, marble was imported by Lombard masons who prioritized "colour and finely carved decoration in low relief." They note a continuity, rather than a rupture, between Gothic and early Renaissance Venetian ornament, observing that "[r]oundels and plaques of precious marble became decorative units in themselves and were larger than those found in Gothic façades." Peter Lauritzen and Alexander Zielcke, *Palaces of Venice* (London: Phaidon, 1978), 47.

<sup>131</sup> On the history of Venetian building materials, see Wolters, "I materiali della costruzione" in *Architettura e ornamento*, 21-49.

their city and circumscribes it in a mutual agreement to render [the city] more unique.”<sup>132</sup> By linking painted façades to the “simplicity of communal housing, to the alternating masses, complementary and contrasting, of the purple, red, pink, yellow, orange façades that stretch along the calli and along the canals,”<sup>133</sup> Foscari locates their materiality within a system of contrasting geometries, surfaces and effects that together constitute wefts and warps of the urban fabric. Sergio Bettini comments on this particularity of Venice’s topography, aptly stating “everything in Venice becomes surface and colour.”<sup>134</sup> However, attention to the polychrome impressions of the city as elicited by its materials does not only reflect a Venetian preference for *colorito*. Changing values regarding urban decorum at different intervals may also be charted by referring to shifting material histories.

Cinquecento painted façades intervened in an image of Venice characterized by three primary materials: brick, Istrian stone, and marble.<sup>135</sup> The varied façades forming the edges of calli and campi constitute a city whose architecture is layered rather than stylistically isolated. In paintings by Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Vittore Carpaccio, and Lazzaro Bastiani, the early sixteenth-century city is documented as made up of a dynamic accretion of materials and modes of surfacing buildings. Brown coined the term “eyewitness style” to describe the meticulous documentary mode of representation common to these paintings.<sup>136</sup> This pictorial mode of representation functions as a visual counterpart to the listing format particular to travel guides. In emphasizing qualities of first-hand observation, refined details, and meticulous description, these paintings encourage a viewer to see the city accordingly. The spaces of Venice are defined by a multiplicity of buildings circumscribing various stages for religious and civic rituals, and the rich detail of their ornamentation. In the background of Lazzaro Bastiani’s *Relic of the Holy Cross is*

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<sup>132</sup> [translation mine] Foscari, 13.

<sup>133</sup> [translation mine] *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> [translation mine] Sergio Bettini, *Venezia: nascita di una città* (Milan: Neri Pozza, 1978), 46.

<sup>135</sup> Valcanover, 27.

<sup>136</sup> Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

offered to the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, the forecourt entrance to the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, attributed to Pietro Lombardo and completed in 1481, is hidden behind a central altar. The doorway portal is ornamented with large slabs of striated yellow marble, contoured by the grey marble *bardiglio*, and contained within a framework of Istrian stone.<sup>137</sup> Abutting the church is a residence ornamented in pink-and-white diaper patterning, a popular surface pattern in the mid-Quattrocento due to its visual association with the decoration of the Palazzo Ducale.<sup>138</sup> The composition is framed on the left by a stuccoed wall, whose smooth surfaces are pierced by ogival windows. The rough brick ornamenting the rightmost edifice, into which a relief sculpture is inserted, counterbalances the flatness of the leftmost wall.<sup>139</sup> In the far background of the composition, behind a woman standing on a balcony against a richly brocaded crimson carpet, is a building decorated by painted imagery of sketchy nudes against blue surfaces. Within this image, then, Campo San Giovanni Evangelista accommodates a range of tonalities defined by overlapping architectural, pictorial, and sculptural forms. Venice's material history reveals itself precisely in the variety of surface textures folded in the composition. These juxtaposed materials cue the viewer to the temporalities and geographies that constitute the Venetian built environment.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> On the chromatic effects of the juxtaposed marbles and colours on the forecourt entrance to the *Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista*, see Hills, 163.

<sup>138</sup> While the ornamentation of the Palazzo Ducale is patterned with marble slabs, many stuccoed surfaces across the city were painted with similar diaper patterning, thus connecting the domestic to the ducal and establishing a hierarchy of relations through the use of a more economic material. On the Palazzo Ducale, see Umberto Franzoi, Terisio Pignatti, and Wolfgang Wolters, eds, *Il Palazzo ducale di Venezia* (Treviso: Canova, 1990). On the Palazzo Ducale's symbolic function within the city, see Lionello Puppi, *Architettura e utopia nella Venezia del Cinquecento* (Milan: Electa, 1980).

<sup>139</sup> In early modern architecture, brick was often considered to be a less noble material for building. However, it retained symbolic meaning in Venetian building, as it was claimed that the first settlers of the lagoon built their huts in clay and brick. On the theory of brick, see Alberti, 50-52.

<sup>140</sup> Paintings such as Bastiani's often featured an interlocutor figure between the composition and viewer, soliciting a viewer to observe the scene. While this figure is common to early modern Italian painting and was systematized as a technique to compose a proper narrative following the publication of Alberti's art treatise, *Della pittura*, in Venetian paintings the interlocutor figure occupies a particular role. He functions as a witness to the scene, attesting to its veracity as a historical document. These eyewitness-style paintings overlapped with a charged period of discovery, during which travelers to and from Venice were commenting on discoveries in the Mediterranean and Middle East, returning with detailed descriptions of both Venice and foreign lands, and of the materials and practices common in each place. Thus eyewitness paintings function as a visual form of

As a city whose isolated lagoonal environment inhibited the cultivation of local materials, Venetians had to leave the city to return with materials for building. Hills notes the consequence of this process, as materials “brought from a distance” were “detached from their origins.”<sup>141</sup> Materials necessarily came to relate to geographical referents as they could not be related to their natural surroundings.<sup>142</sup> Any material used in the construction and ornamentation of the city’s buildings and spaces, then, represented a purchase or acquisition, implicitly accentuating the material and territorial wealth of the Republic. As Peter Lauritzen and Alexander Zielcke state, “earlier than written record can document, brick and wood-piling were essential elements of Venetian building.”<sup>143</sup> When the founding Romans settled and “sought permanent asylum” on the lagoon, they brought with them spoliated stone fragments from the mainland.<sup>144</sup> According to Lauritzen and Zielcke, the variety of these stones “testify to the very slow and gradual nature of a migration” and reflect “the riches of the cities they left behind: Altinum, Patavium (modern Padua), Erclea, Aquileia, and Concordia,”<sup>145</sup> and of course, Histria, from which the gleaming, hard white Istrian stone was quarried.<sup>146</sup> A Venetian repertoire of materials was completed with the acquisition of Verona marble from the terraferma. Additionally, spolia from diplomatic and mercantile travels across Eastern Mediterranean territories, like Byzantine paterae and porphyry columns, was gradually incorporated as ornament used to detail façades. These insertions into Venetian surfaces functioned, according to

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documentation, and the interlocutor figure as emphasizing a position of ‘having been there’. See Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*.

<sup>141</sup> Hills, 1.

<sup>142</sup> Architects were encouraged, following Vitruvian precepts, to select material by its relation to its geological origin. A building, then, was understood as naturally relating to the non-built environment, rather than artificially intervening in its surrounding landscape. As Venice’s surrounding environment was lagoonal rather than land-based, the application of such a theory was limited. Venice had to reconceive of the effects, rather than the prime matter, of its natural surroundings to secure a relation between materials for building and siting. See “Book Two: Materials” in Alberti.

<sup>143</sup> Lauritzen and Zielcke, 10.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> As stated by Lauritzen and Zielcke. “inscribed stones that once adorned pagan temples on the mainland are still to be seen in the foundations of the oldest Venetian churches.” They thus emphasize the readaptation and continuity between Venetian architecture and materials, and thus the uninterrupted continuity of the Venetian Republic common to myths of Venice. Lauritzen and Zieckle, 11.

Luscombe, to “visible link Venetian urbanity to its distant victories in war and to their locations’ antique pasts.”<sup>147</sup> Attention to the variety of building materials that structure the Venetian cityscape does not only reveal a timeless preference for colour and surface effects. As mentioned in the previous section, Serlio encouraged viewers of painted façades to assess their rhetorical merit in relation to a building’s architectural decorum. I suggest that a similar critical viewership was involved in the apprehension of building materials. Materials were linked to numerous geographies and translations, traveling due to immigrations, military victories, and diplomatic travel. They connote an extensive social history engaged with aspects of historical foundation and imperial expansion, two primary concerns at the helm of discussions about architecture and display at the turn of the Cinquecento.

An important distinction between the selection of materials and the display of wealth was wrought in the mythology of Venice’s material history.<sup>148</sup> Beyond the foundational narrative of Cassiodorus, in which the earliest settlers were said to build modestly and share tenement huts, early Venetian buildings were marked by the simplicity of their building materials.<sup>149</sup> Hills notes that “only few refugee families could afford to build houses of these solid, expensive, and rare imported materials; most continued to build in wood.”<sup>150</sup> This established material hierarchy, signifying luxury through what Schmitter terms “the innate preciousness of materials,”<sup>151</sup> was confused by the early Cinquecento integration of painted ornamentation into the cityscape. With territorial losses, increased sumptuary legislation curtailing extravagance in appearance and public behaviour, and weakening dominance in matters of maritime trade and international

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<sup>147</sup> Luscombe, 43. See Sansovino for an extensive discussion of Venetian building materials for building and their respective geographical origins.

<sup>148</sup> According to Schmitter, patrons “signified wealth and social standing not only through the innate preciousness of their materials, but also through the difficulty and expense required to bring the stone to an island city.” Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 141.

<sup>149</sup> In his *Variae*, the Roman statesman Cassiodorus outlined the mythic history of Venice and the building of primitive tenement huts on the Rivoalto, connecting this early architecture to foundational republican tenets. On this history and its reception by later figures such as Zen, see Tafuri, “*Memoria et Prudentia*.”

<sup>150</sup> Luscombe, 43

<sup>151</sup> Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 141

relations, luxurious materials could not sufficiently bolster public magnificence.<sup>152</sup> The increased prevalence of figurative and illusionistic imagery on painted exteriors earmarks a turn from the claims of the material to the claims of representation, from the primacy of matter to the primacy of form, in articulating Venice's urban decorum.

### 3.2 Painting, Carving, and Substituting Ornament

While both Giovanni Battista Armenini and Paolo Lomazzo commented on the value of painted façades over other building materials, it is Serlio, again, who voices the most weighted argument aligning the simulation of materials with the maintenance of architectural order.<sup>153</sup> In his same chapter on the ornamentation of exteriors, he considers the treatment of materials as the primary purview of the architect, who “must not only assume responsibility for the ornaments as far as the stones and marbles are concerned, but also for the painting as decoration for the walls.”<sup>154</sup> Specifically, he prescribes architectural rules for pictorial ornamentation as a means to temper the tendency of painters to overindulge in colour. He claims that painters of façades, despite their masterful technique, “had such poor judgement [...] that, in order to display the charm of the colours and having no regard for anything else, they spoiled and sometimes ruined

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<sup>152</sup> After the reputation of Venice as *Stato da Màr* was weakened, attention turned to the development of the terraferma. See Reinhard Bentmann and Michael Muller, *The Villa as Hegemonic Architecture* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992).

<sup>153</sup> In a similar vein to Serlio, and possibly as a consequence of reading Serlio, Armenini allowed for painted ornamentation in domestic interiors and on domestic exteriors as long as they imitated actual ornament. As noted by Schmitter, “[i]f painting remained only a poor “substitute” for “real” ornament, then it did not threaten established architectural and social order.” Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 153. Armenini also noted the pleasure of paintings done by a master painter, reproaching those who chose to commission painted decoration for the sake of it. Lodovico Dolce further commented on painted façades, stating, as Aretino, that “[t]he façades of houses and palaces give far greater pleasure to the eyes of other men when painted by the hand of a master of quality than they do with incrustations of white marble and porphyry or serpentine embellished with gold.” He highlights the appeal of Pordenone's painted façade for the Ca' Talenti d'Anna. Lomazzo also wrote a chapter on painted façades in his art treatise. See Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the true precepts of the art of painting*, trans. Edward J. Olszewski (New York: Burt Franklin Publishing, 1977); Lodovico Dolce, “Dialogo della pittura,” in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Rome: Laterza, 1962); Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura* (Milan: 1585). As I have chosen to consider the painted façade as it intersects with architectural debates and practices, I cannot focus on these art treatises in this paper. Nonetheless, they highlight an important critical reception of the practice from the perspectives of artists and art critics. Their ideas and reception are contextualized and discussed in-depth in Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks.”

<sup>154</sup> Serlio, 378.



some orders by not taking into consideration the placing of the pictures in their correct locations.”<sup>155</sup> As insinuated by Serlio, the proper composition of *istorie* within the frame of the architectural surface, respecting the narrative decorum of both the image and building’s designs, may have been frequently subverted by the *vaghezza* of colours on the painted façades.<sup>156</sup> Serlio suggests, instead:

If, nevertheless, the patron of the work or the painter wants to take pleasure in the charm of the colours, in order not to break up or ruin the work [...] he could simulate pieces of material attached to the wall, as if they were furnishings, and anything desired could be painted on them. Because in doing so he will not disturb the order and will simulate reality, preserving decorum. [...] If, however, you are to decorate a façade with painting and do it with sound judgement, you could simulate marble or some other stone, ‘carving’ whatever you wanted into it. You could also simulate niches containing bronze figures in high relief and even some *istoriette*, also simulating bronze, because making objects in this way will keep the work solid and worthy of praise by those who can tell real from false. These features not only keep the buildings solid and decorate them, but also confer on them great presence.<sup>157</sup>

Serlio advises the painter of façades to focus on the simulation of sculptural components on exteriors rather than taking architecture as a primary subject of representation. Beyond emphasizing the inherent tendency of painting to deceive through imitation, Serlio’s counsel introduces the sculptural as a means to mitigate the structural dematerialization of surfaces.<sup>158</sup> It is in the rearticulation of a paragone between painting and sculpture on the surface of the façade, and not between painting and architecture, that the structural coherence of the building could be maintained. Serlio suggests that the simulation of materials – stones, marbles, bronzes – could affirm the virtual materialization of the façade by visually referring to the volume, material density, and plasticity of its surface. Ironically, it is in its guise as matter applied to the surface of a building rather than as material constituting its form that painted architecture could sustain an illusion of architectural solidity.

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* Such a critique perhaps accents an indirect dig at the Venetian penchant for *colorito*.

<sup>156</sup> *Vaghezza* was a term used frequently to describe the impression of strong colours on painted façades.

<sup>157</sup> Serlio, 378.

<sup>158</sup> See Armenini’s comments on painted decoration in Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks.”

For Serlio, the painter of façades is required to adopt a multidisciplinary range of techniques in order to respect the architectural decorum of the façade and the superiority of the architect. The painter is asked to maintain distinctions between real and false, to utilize pictorial illusionism to “substitute” ornament rather than undermine the structure of the wall. The painter is impelled to “carve” rather than build, to assume the task of the mason or craftsman rather than that of the architect. Serlio’s rules for painting façades implicitly accentuate the labour of the many practitioners involved in the ornamentation of the exterior. As stated by Wolters, “it is evident that Serlio intended to challenge the Venetian tendency to assign fundamental elements of building not to the architect, but to specialists: stonecutters, sculptors, painters, carpenters or carvers.”<sup>159</sup> In order to function as ornament under Serlio’s prescriptions, painting is required to adopt the vocabularies of these trades. Pictorial illusionism transforms them into representation, structurally linking them as a series of interconnected techniques and practices. Yet in order to yield to the primacy of the architectural structure and its actual material constitution, the painted façade is required to dissimulate its status as a material for building.

The Cinquecento painted façade operated within a material history in which the selection of materials was highly coded. Schmitter notes that “if painting on façades became an end unto itself, then distinctions based on wealth and the ability to produce and buy the stone or marble could be less clearly projected and reified.”<sup>160</sup> That the simulation of materials has largely been linked to the economics of ornamentation is not a surprise. Economics certainly played a large part in the patronage of painted façades throughout the Cinquecento, as previously mentioned in the commissioning of painted ornamentation over marble and tracery on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. The pre-Cinquecento popularity of *regalzier*, simulated bricks painted over stuccoed brick walls, underscores this practical function of simulated materials. Such surfaces relied on

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<sup>159</sup> [translation mine] Wolters, 13.

<sup>160</sup> Schmitter, “Falling Through the Cracks,” 153.

pictorial illusionism to cover defects and make surfaces more uniform and visually appealing.<sup>161</sup> Gilding and paint sometimes applied over marble “camouflaged and transformed materials, converting the base into the noble.”<sup>162</sup> Simulating materials was a means to insinuate luxury while spending thriftily, as luxury was maintained in the splendour of illusion rather than signified by the opulence and effects of the surface material.

The simulation of materials could, on the one hand, keep public debates on the urban decorum of domestic façades in check by moderating the display of luxury with the economics of spending. On the other hand, the simulation of materials as a primary subject of representation on painted façades could make broader claims for the definition of architecture as referenced through the selection of materials. Both functions were revealed in the decoration of the Ca’ Trevisan in Murano, a villa suburbana likely commissioned by Daniele Barbaro and possibly built by Palladio.<sup>163</sup> While situated on the nearby island of Murano, and thus at a distance from Venice, the painted façade of the Ca’ Trevisan in Murano was engaged with the broader practice of painting entire exteriors in the city. The case of its location on Murano is interesting, as Murano, like the Giudecca, was known as an off-island escape for wealthy nobles. At a physical remove from the city, Murano was also at a slight remove from debates and restrictions on the display of wealth. Residents built stylish villas, often frequented by eminent visitors to Venice who commented on the opulence of their interior and exterior ornamentation in numerous

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<sup>161</sup> On the history and restoration of *regalzier* on Venetian exteriors, see Mario Piana and Eduardo Dani, “The Catalogue of Venetian External Plasters: Medieval Plasters,” in *Corila: Scientific Research and Safeguarding of Venice: Research Programme 2001-2003*, Volume II (Venice: IUAV, 2002), 65-79; Alessandra Ferrighi, “The Cataloguing of Venetian External Plasters: The Progress of Research,” in *Corila: Scientific Research and Safeguarding of Venice: Research Programme 2001-2003*, Volume II (Venice: IUAV, 2002), 79-85.

<sup>162</sup> Hills, 49.

<sup>163</sup> The design of the Ca’ Trevisan in Murano was likely commissioned under the advisement of Paolo Veronese, and many scholars believe Daniele Barbaro and Andrea Palladio to have been involved. Veronese also decorated the interior with frescoes. Camillo Trevisan was a well-known humanist, and aware of contemporary trends and debates regarding architecture and ornament. On the patronage and attribution of architectural and decoration programmes of the Ca’ Trevisan in Murano, see Lorenzetti; Romano.

letters.<sup>164</sup> In considering the flexibility of rules on building and display in Murano, I suggest that the painted façade of the Ca' Trevisan in Murano represented a possibility to articulate an alternate image of the Venetian façade limited by the material standards and histories of the mainland.

An eighteenth-century sketch depicting the façade painted for the house of Camillo Trevisan in Murano, completed by Prospero Bresciano in 1557 and filling the whole of the exterior, demonstrates a focused engagement with Serlio's recommendation for simulating materials on the surfaces of buildings. While the upper levels, above the classically arched central portico and balcony, are decorated with mythological *istoriette* in framed compartments, the ground floor is ornamented with an elaborate surfacing of fictive stone rustication. The rough masonry is punctuated by grotesques in keystones above the lowest flanking windows and the two large niches painted between them. Within the left niche, a monumental fictive bronze free-standing sculpture of Hercules, wrapped in lion pelts and bludgeoning a gnarled club, torques forward in a strong *contrapposto* against his left stabilizing leg. On the right niche, a fictive bronze sculpture of Neptune mirrors his positioning, instead carrying his trident. Under the balcony, simulated niches contain anonymous mythological figures. According to Ridolfi's observations on the Palazzo Trevisan in 1657, the entire façade was rendered in a muted palette of ochre chiaroscuro, most saturated when emphasizing the bronze of the focal sculptures.<sup>165</sup>

Unlike the Palazzo d'Anna façade, the painted exterior of the Palazzo Trevisan respects Serlio's call to architectural decorum by simulating ornament rather than simulating architecture. Indeed, Bresciano's only play with illusionistic license is attempted at the uppermost level. Between a series of allegorical putti referring to the muses of Poetry, the Arts and Astronomy, two women are depicted kneeling against fictive ledges within imagined open windows that

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<sup>164</sup> See Patrick Monahan, "Sanudo and the Villa Suburbana," *Annali di architettura: rivista del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura "Andrea Palladio"* 21 (2009): 45-64.

<sup>165</sup> Ridolfi, 308-310.

match the actual ledges of the upper-level windows. These fictive windows keep the rhythm of the real windows consistent, and thus maintain the rational order and symmetry of the architectural composition. Yet by depicting women within these openings, as those on the Palazzo Soranzo dell'Angelo and the lunette of the Drapperia, the potential for access is intimated as the boundary between the interior and exterior is breached. The leftward woman playing music looks directly forward, while the painted woman to the right, caught disrobing, looks down. While restrained within their fictive framing, they are nonetheless simulated residents who balance precariously on the limit of the architectural frame. Their positioning calls attention to the residence as a lived space, as one whose windows may capture passing movements within the interior. Unlike the framed and static mythological scenes covering the remainder of the façade, the women in the windowsill activate the surface, soliciting viewers to interpret its ornamentation as one that is dynamic rather than stilled.

Notably, the painted façade of the Palazzo Trevisan simulates a number of material components. From the simulated relief sculpture on the middle floor depicting the Rape of Europe, to heavy stone and shiny bronze sculptures, its painted exterior ceases to concern itself primarily with tectonics. Instead, this accumulation of materials refers to the multiple textures registered on the building's surface, affirming its structural base only by accentuating the ornament encrusting it. In this case, the visual effects of the surface assume greater hermeneutic import than the tension between tectonics and representation. By focalizing on the material surfacing of the façade and of its rhetorical appeal through the selection and application of materials, the painted exterior of the Palazzo Trevisan configures the aforementioned paragone between painting, sculpture and architecture.

The values of these specific media, and the capacity of the painted façade to accommodate aspects of all three, are raised in the ubiquitous representation of rustication on the first-floor story. While Venetian palazzi were characteristically faced with hearty stone at the

socle level, in order to inhibit seepage and visually elevate the façade above the water level, rustication was not common to Venetian building.<sup>166</sup> The lack of rusticated surfaces in Cinquecento domestic architecture was primarily an issue of engineering, as the fragility of the wooden piles and mudbanks on which Venetian edifices were raised could not yet support the weight of heavy stone at their lower levels, and were thus mostly balanced by thin, uniform ornamentation.<sup>167</sup> The simulated rustication on the first level of the Palazzo Trevisan refers more to traditions in central Italian building, and within the Venetian context, to the incomplete project of the Ca' del Duca.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, the partial facing of the first level of the Ca' del Duca in Istrian stone, commenced in 1460 by the Duke of Milan Francesco Sforza, attests to a Venetian indifference in plastic surface articulation.<sup>169</sup> The project passed through the hands of numerous architects, including Bartolomeo Bon, ultimately abandoned with a remaining rusticated corner jarringly forsaken against an otherwise smooth façade.<sup>170</sup> Through this visual connection, the completed rustication project of the Palazzo Trevisan, enabled through pictorial means, can be understood as continuing a classicist intervention into the Venetian urban fabric that was not feasible in the mid-Quattrocento.

### 3.3 Surfaces and Structures

The simulated rustication of the Palazzo Trevisan linked its painted façade to earlier moments of classicist invention and to contemporary attempts at integrating central Italian

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<sup>166</sup> The Zecca and the rio façade of the Palazzo Ducale were recognized for their ground-floor rustication, but this was without a doubt a trend more common in civic, rather than domestic, architecture until the 1530s.

<sup>167</sup> Concina, 165-166.

<sup>168</sup> John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 240. As noted by Hills, "Florence is the city of stone, Venice of the encrustation. Florentine blocks of stone convey weight, Venetian coloured veneers suggest lightness; and where Florence proclaims strength, Venice parades wealth. In Venice imported marbles are cut into fine slabs and attached to the brick core of these, or colour is spread over brick in the form of plaster finishes: neither can be cut into deeply, so surfaces appear planar yet fretted with shadow." Hills, 12.

<sup>169</sup> The Ca' del Duca had been acquired from the Contarini family, and revealed a concerted attempt by the Duke of Milan to import northern Italian architectural trends to the Venetian cityscape. On the Ca' del Duca, see Luca Beltrami, *La Ca' del Duca sul Canal Grande* (Milan, 1900); J.R. Spencer, "The Ca' del Duca in Venice and Benedetto Ferrini," *Journal of Architectural Historians* 39:1 (1970): 3-8.

<sup>170</sup> According to Huse and Wolters, after this project "this tradition became obligatory for prestigious buildings," although it still remained a rarity in practice. Huse and Wolters, 12.

*all'antica* forms in Venice. In this case, the simulation of materials articulates a broader history of building in Venice, visualizing, in pictorial form, a potential alteration to the architecture of the Venetian façade. Rustication, according to John Onians, confers the “weight of traditional military authority” onto the space of a public square, or in this case, a broad canal.<sup>171</sup> He notes with reference to the Palazzo Medici in Florence that “the massive size and rough rustification dwarfs and oppresses the passer-by. Size, roughness, and regularity of coursing are intended as vivid expressions of the power, remorselessness, and discipline of the law.”<sup>172</sup> The inherently sculptural qualities of rustication thus serve to distinguish the sovereignty of individual façades against neighbouring buildings and within the larger cityscape, while registering a tremendous visual impact. Yet, as I will elaborate, the sovereignty of the domestic façade was a concept at odds with the façade’s civic function in Venice. As a single part of a larger whole, façades were meant to contribute to, rather than supersede, the impressions of their neighbours. Thus the introduction of ground-level rustication to the Venetian domestic façade signaled a further shift at the level of the Venetian façade’s perceived cultural meaning. As a solid, volumetric, and rough-hewn mode of ornamentation, lower-level rustication, as simulated in the Palazzo Trevisan, grounds the building both visually and rhetorically, emphasizing the force of the architectural structure in a manner following Serlio’s prescriptions for building.

In emphasizing the sculptural and plastic over the architectonic and pictorial, such a visual statement counters an established aesthetics of Venetian surfaces, defined in relation to their intermediate location between the sea and air. Daniele Barbaro commented on the natural ephemerality of the lagoon, whose turning tides led others to claim that “our [dwellings] are built

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<sup>171</sup> Onians, 240. Rustication was considered to impress strength, due to its relation to traditions of military fortifications, and world spaces, due to its relation to the architecture of banks and civic centres. See Lola Kantor-Jazovsky, “La Zecca Vecchia”: Myth, Archeology and Architectural Design in the High Renaissance Concept of Rustification,” *Renaissance Studies* 25:2 (Apr. 2011): 248-275.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

in the air.”<sup>173</sup> As noted by Hills, in Venice, “the idea that water took the place of a wall was a common coin.”<sup>174</sup> This concept was acclaimed by the Magistrato delle Acque in 1553, linking the myth of Venice’s divine foundation at sea and famed impenetrability with its built environment: “Venice, founded at God’s command among the waves, surrounded by water, protected by walls of water. Whoever dares to despoil this asset of the community shall be no less severely punished than he who damages the walls of this native city. This edict shall stand for all time.”<sup>175</sup> Venetian architecture, erected in a city whose built surfaces were tied to the fluidity of the sea, reflected the natural fortification of its maritime border. The mutability of its border stood in contrast to the man-made stone walls commonly found at the periphery of numerous Italian towns. In Venice, the integration of the sculptural into matters of building was subtle. The solidity of building materials such as stone and marble was secondary to their interaction with light, “enhanced in its depth of colour and reflectivity by water,”<sup>176</sup> according to Luscombe. As previously discussed, standard Venetian building materials were partially symbolic, implicitly affirming the history of the city by referring to the numerous geographies tied to Venice. The visual impressions registered by imported materials within Venice further reaffirm their presence in a shared civic imaginary.

The material values of traditional Venetian façades were fundamentally registered by their perceived dematerialization and capacity to dissimulate. As addressed by Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, the ornamentation of Venetian surfaces materialized a structure that was

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<sup>173</sup> Quoted in Luscombe, 43.

<sup>174</sup> Hills, 4

<sup>175</sup> Quoted in Hills, 4. On the history of debates on the myths and realities of the Venetian lagoon, see Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, “Toward an Ecological Understanding of the Myth of Venice,” in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, eds. Dennis Romano and John Jeffries Martin (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 39-66; Manfredo Tafuri, “A Theater, “a Fountain of Sil,” and “a Shapeless Little Island with a Hill”: A Project by Alvise Cornaro for the Restructuring of the Bacino of San Marco,” in *Venice and the Renaissance*, 139-160.

<sup>176</sup> Luscombe. 43. According to Hills, the result of this juxtaposition between white and grey marble on the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista renders light and shadow “permanent and marmoreal, counterpointing the passage of time indicated by the changefulness of actual light and shadow.” Hills, 164.



inherently volatile. She argues that for Venetians, the concept of *la terra* was:

“primarily the unstable soil that human labor had solidified through enormous effort. It was the bricks hoisted and laid in the many work sites; it was the marble, porphyry, and serpentine facings and ornamentation made possible by wealth from commerce. In its deepest sense, *la terra* was a refuge that everyone – the rich and powerful and the rest – knew was precarious.”<sup>177</sup>

In the revetment of a building like the Ca d’Oro, whose Verona marble was polished with oils and ornamental detailing was gilded, it was not the solidity of matter but the modulation of its surface that was upheld as a valuable contribution to urban decorum.<sup>178</sup> Tones of colour, chiaroscuro, movement and stability were disclosed across its façade as it interacted with the external environment.<sup>179</sup> Its perceived forms were enacted by material effects and dependent on stimuli received from the city, establishing a reciprocal relationship between the city and its architecture. Marco Frascari terms this relation the “*lume materiale* of the city,” remarking that “[i]n the Venetian palace, this marble *cosmesis* of bare brick walls is the principle of a cosmos – the stating of a Venetian Measure [...] When identified in the formal qualities of a material, it becomes the matrix of architecture itself.”<sup>180</sup> Early modern Italian architecture was intended to represent a microcosm of the cosmos, whose perfection was equated to a harmonious relation between the part and the whole. In Venice, according to Frascari, this relation was not initially determined by the geometry of forms, but rather by the composition of building materials.

The painted façades intervened in this organic process of dematerialization and rematerialization. While Brown notes that “the chromatic richness and natural forms of the figured façades tended to provide a transition between the architectural character of the built

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<sup>177</sup> Crouzet-Pavan, *Venice Triumphant*, 36.

<sup>178</sup> On the façade of the Ca’ d’Oro, see Hills, 68-71; Francesco Valcanover, *Ca’ d’Oro: The Giorgio Franchetti Gallery* (Milan: Electa, 1986).

<sup>179</sup> Hills derives a link between the patterns of marble and impressions of figure-ground relations, stating that “[w]hether spread flat on revetments or curving on shafts, the patterns in marble mitigate the advances and recessions of architectural form.” Hills, 25. On colour as related to architectural form, see Stephen Kite, “Venice and the Architecture of Colour-Form,” in *Adrian Stokes: An Architectonic Eye: Critical Writings on Architecture* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2008), 179-98,

<sup>180</sup> Marco Frascari, “The Lume Materiale in the Architecture of Venice,” *Perspecta* 24 (1988): 141.

environment and a physical setting of sky and water in constant movement,”<sup>181</sup> the painted façade could only simulate materials or suggest surface effects. By calling attention to its materiality through illusionism, the painted façade essentially freezes this process. The painted façade of the Ca’ Trevisan, then, marks a decisive shift in how Venetians perceived the cultural values of building materials and their formal impressions. By urging viewers to consider not only the materials of building but their imposition within urban spaces, the Ca’ Trevisan dislocates the continuity between the materiality of the Venetian façade and the built environment. The heavy rustication of the bottom level, the imposing bronze bodies of Neptune and Hercules, and the order of its composition stabilize the image of the façade and thus insinuate a materiality that is tangible and permanent.

In doing so, the Ca’ Trevisan’s painted façade provides an alternate image of the typical Venetian façade, one whose emphatic impression sets it apart from neighbouring buildings. Bettini characterizes Venice’s dominant urbanism as one privileging heterogeneous uniformity over the proclamations of singular edifices. He argues that:

“in Venice, the *primum* is not the single edifice, but the one which binds to others in a figurative continuity, whether the canal, the *calle*, in short, the entire city. Such a continuity naturally reconsecrates the fundamental nature of the image of Venice as coloured surfaces [...] since there cannot be continuity between plastic forms, closed, anchored in the third dimension, but only between forms that develop on surfaces; not plastic then, but of colour.”<sup>182</sup>

Bettini isolates plasticity on façades as countering Venetian communal values, as it did not define a surface within a series but rather as a structure independent from its environment. Simulated materials on painted façades, like those on the Ca’ Trevisan, potentially contributed to this jarring effect.

While the painted façade of the Ca’ Trevisan a Murano was at a remove from similar imagery on the mainland, its particular iconographic programme, featuring extensive simulated

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<sup>181</sup> Brown, *Private Lives*, 46

<sup>182</sup> [translation mine] Bettini, 47-48.

materials, was cued to architectural interventions occurring in Venice. The virtual plasticity of its form signaled a forthcoming mode of building. In 1581, only three decades after its completion, Francesco Sansovino famously proclaimed the “modern” palaces of the Ca’Loredan at San Marcuola (today known as the Ca’Vendramin Calergi) (1481-1509), the Ca’Grimani a San Luca (mid-16<sup>th</sup> c), the Ca’Dolfin (after 1536) and the Ca’Cornaro (after 1532) the most magnificent on the Grand Canal.<sup>183</sup> These façades are notable for their sculptural façades, appearing to jut into the space of the canal through a surface articulation of thick arcaded windows, pediments supported by columns, and wide balconies. Their designs indicate an architectural manner in which the Venetian façade ceased to function as a flat screen reflecting the conditions of the environment, and instead became a sculptural presence asserting its singularity within the environment. Crucially, they signaled a period of architectural experimentation, in which issues of luxury and the display of wealth were no longer as problematic as they had been in the early Cinquecento.<sup>184</sup> These classicist interventions within Venice’s urban forms secured the façade’s impression of visual solidity by reference to the sculptural qualities of material. Marble, in this case, was carved and formed, functioning as structure rather than mere ornamentation. Andrea Palladio remarked on the cultural shift regarding architectural values in the mid-Cinquecento, stating “buildings are valued more for their form than for their material.”<sup>185</sup> The visual impact of these exteriors registered a stable architectural decorum based on qualities of order and strength.

In this section, I began by situating the materiality of the painted façade within descriptions of the city and the histories of its building materials. Readers of travel guides were encouraged to view painted façades in conjunction with Venice’s broader material history, one referred to in great detail by a number of first-hand accounts and paintings. Yet, as revealed in

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<sup>183</sup> Sansovino claimed that these were the most remarkable palaces on the Grand Canal, and thus in Venice, due to their architecture, the quality of their stones, their majesty and imposing grandeur, and because of their price. Many scholars have noted Sansovino’s classical and filial bias, but his conditions of quality nevertheless reveal a broader shift in what aspects of building were valued to deem architecture ‘good.’ Sansovino, 387.

<sup>184</sup> See Concina, 173-236.

<sup>185</sup> Quoted in Wolters, 23.

the analysis of the simulation of materials on the Ca' Trevisan in Murano, painted façades activated a conversation about the structural, symbolic, and cultural values of Venetian materials. Crucially, the majority of the aforementioned “modern” palaces were commissioned, designed and built during the peak of the painted façade’s popularity. Painted façades, again, function as intermediaries servicing architectural debates through their mutable qualities; their transitory character, capacity for illusionism, and chromatism mediated shifts in Venice’s material and architectural history. Yet in a fateful twist, arguments on materials of building as on the Ca' Trevisan, or those on architectonic elements, as on the Palazzo Talenti d’Anna, were ones depicted through the fresco, an ephemeral medium when exposed to a malignant climate. At the level of their materiality, painted façades could only refer to values of architecture without embodying them. Their ability to accommodate and manage vocabularies of many media, and to translate them via pictorial means, was belied by their insistent formlessness. They could only serve in the interim and suggest forms, while their own form remained inconsistent and always shifting.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Boschini listed the frescoes that once decorated the façades facing onto the Campo Santo Stefano in one of the most sustained contemporary descriptions on painted façades in public spaces. His description leads the reader on a tour of both the space and the paintings, highlighting the dynamic way by which the Campo could be traversed and experienced by a viewer. Exiting from the church of San Vitale, the viewer would find to his or her left a house painted by Giorgione; by the time Boschini was writing, this had already almost completely disappeared. Continuing on this path, the viewer would then see the Casa Loredana, “completely painted” by Giuseppe Salviati, with various Roman histories, chiaroscuro details and coloured festoons. The next house, the Casa Moresina, whose paintings once “bejeweled” the palazzo, had been painted by Antonio Aliense in order to “reform” the façade. Giorgione painted two more façades in the campo, and a door to the side of the church of Santo Stefano was painted by Domenico Bruni Bresciano with “beautiful architecture.” Finally, Boschini mentions a house painted by Tintoretto, featuring various nudes and an armed San Vitale riding a horse. The Campo Santo Stefano, then, was a site bearing witness to the efflorescence of the practice of painting exteriors. A viewer following Boschini’s guidelines was not only encouraged to observe the imagery of each painted façade, but also to note the manner in which they were put in dialogue with each other and with the public square as a whole.<sup>186</sup>

Boschini’s description raises a number of traits characteristic of the practice of painting façades. First, the frescoes could be commissioned to “modernize” both buildings and public spaces, as in the case of the Casa Moresina.<sup>187</sup> As an economic and efficient mode of ornamentation, the painted façade lent itself to the quick redefinition of surfaces and of architectural traditions in interim moments. Second, Boschini emphasizes the artists who painted

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<sup>186</sup> Boschini, *Le Ricche minere*, 86-87.

<sup>187</sup> On the commissioning of painted exteriors to “modernize” architecture, see Wolters, “Facciate dipinte.”

the façades, attributing equal merit to practitioners as to the figurative imagery that ornamented surfaces. In this case, the experience of the campo is further activated by professional, and likely competitive, exchanges between artists, each staking their own claims for a practice that had yet to be discursively delimited. Painters gained commissions through their relationships with architects, *proti*, and masons.<sup>188</sup> They were known to use the surface of the façade for self-promotional purposes and artistic experimentation. Finally, Boschini highlights the range of imagery, rendered both in chiaroscuro and rich colours, that was painted on façades. The space of the campo, defined by a number of churches, a small canal, and imposing domestic façades, was virtually animated by classical narratives, figures on horseback, nudes, and decorative borders. The viewer is thus prompted to consider the structural and moral aspects of architecture emphasized, legitimated, or denied through imagery on painted façades. But the viewer is also challenged to imagine how such imagery activates relations between architectural surfaces and structures, and how it animates the spaces of the city.

The itinerary of the early modern visitor, passing through the labyrinthine spaces of Venice, was thus challenged by the ubiquity of painted surfaces. A viewer was required to remain attentive within his or her passage through spaces, as at any turn or corner, he or she was bound to find a painted façade. This potentiality, I suggest, would have profoundly altered the experience of the early modern city. The Cinquecento painted façade, as analysed in the previous sections, depended on a relation to transparency. Whether it denied or enhanced the primacy of the architectural superstructure, it always called attention to the claims and operations of the façade. Yet Venetian painted façades were marked by their inability to conform to expectations – each raised unique iconographies and concerns to be apprehended and discussing by discerning viewers. Viewers, coming into contact with painted façades, painted vaults, painted

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<sup>188</sup> Andrea da Schiavone's close relationship with *muratori* in order to gain commissions to paint exteriores is the most famous of these professional cases. See Boschini, *Le Ricche minere*.

sottoporteghi, among other surfaces, were encouraged to view the heterogeneity of painted spaces in similar terms. They were encouraged to observe, rather than merely pass through, to decipher rather than simply behold, and to acquaint themselves with the number of architectural structures – both major and minor and serving different purposes – and number of discourses – architectural, artistic, and political – that defined Venice’s urban morphology. The painted city, then, was one whose character was defined by metamorphosis, shifting as visitors considered the reciprocal practices that structured the built environment and the behaviours of its residents.

Painted exteriors furthered an emerging concept of the Venetian city as a scenographic stage. Immersive painted environments, like that of the Campo Santo Stefano, would have served as elaborate backdrops both to quotidian activities and to public rituals and regular theatrical events. Attempts to integrate artistic perspectivism into the Venetian urban fabric began as early as the 1470s, with Pietro Lombardo’s project for the façade of the Scuola Grande di San Marco.<sup>189</sup> Abutting either side of the main entrance is a relief of a lion framed within a coffered barrel vault. The perspectival recession on these relief sculptures forces tensions between interior and exterior spaces that were later amplified by façade painters such as Pordenone. The import of illusionism within urban spaces resulted in what Tom Nichols terms an attempt to “[imbue] ‘real’ space itself with a new representational quality.”<sup>190</sup> With projects such as Sansovino’s Piazzetta and Palladio’s church of San Giorgio Maggiore, the application of linear perspective to architecture and urbanism became a norm. Real spaces, according to Nichols, were thus made symbolic, serving as ideal representations of a renewed and reformed city. The order of linear perspective also functioned to manage bodies in such spaces, a process forwarded by the city’s elaborate legislative apparatus. Yet, if painted façades are considered to activate discourses and conversations about the spaces they face, the import of illusionism

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<sup>189</sup> Philip L. Sohm, *The Scuola Grande di San Marco, 1427-1550: The Architecture of a Venetian Lay Confraternity* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1982).

<sup>190</sup> Tom Nichols, “Representational Space in Venetian Renaissance Painting,” in *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400-1700*, ed. Alexander Cowan (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2000), 180.

withing the urban fabric is not one that solely functions to implement political and ideological aims. Rather, by confusing relations between interiors and exteriors, entrances and exits, surfaces and structures, and public and private, illusionism opens relations between architectural traditions and values. Whether on a painted domestic façade, a marble Scuola façade, or the planning of a central square, perspectival illusionism asks viewers to consider similarities and overlapping concerns between the domestic residence facing the Grand Canal and the civic Scuola Grande facing a Basilica. An elaborate visual discourse on the ordering and functioning of the city is thus raised on its interlocking and interweaving surfaces.

Having considered the number of painted exteriors in Venice and their function in establishing relations between places in this paper, I emphasize the means by which their imagery both animated the various spaces of the city and was activated by viewers. While I began by considering the tensions between figuration and content on painted façades, I conclude by underscoring the persistent visibility of the practice within the urban fabric of the city. Indeed, the popularity of the practice throughout the Cinquecento revealed multiple attempts to engage viewers in conversations on building, on the role of architecture, and on the beauty of the city. Illusionism, colour, and materials painted on surfaces converged to provide a multilevel platform for debate that was ultimately appreciated and informed by the experiences and remarks of visitors to the city, many of which remain as valuable extant evidence on the appeal and range of painted exteriors. Despite the number of public and political opinions circulating in Venice on the social and cultural role of architecture, and the number of architects and procurators attempting to reform the buildings, spaces, and ultimately, the image of Venice, painted façades continued to be commissioned regularly. It is the number of patrons, artists, and commentators involved in the development of the practice that articulate the momentary, but nevertheless profound, appeal of painted exteriors. And it is the fragments that remain, in printed, detached,



and written forms, that further studies on the liveliness of the discourse on painted exteriors must weave together.

## FIGURES

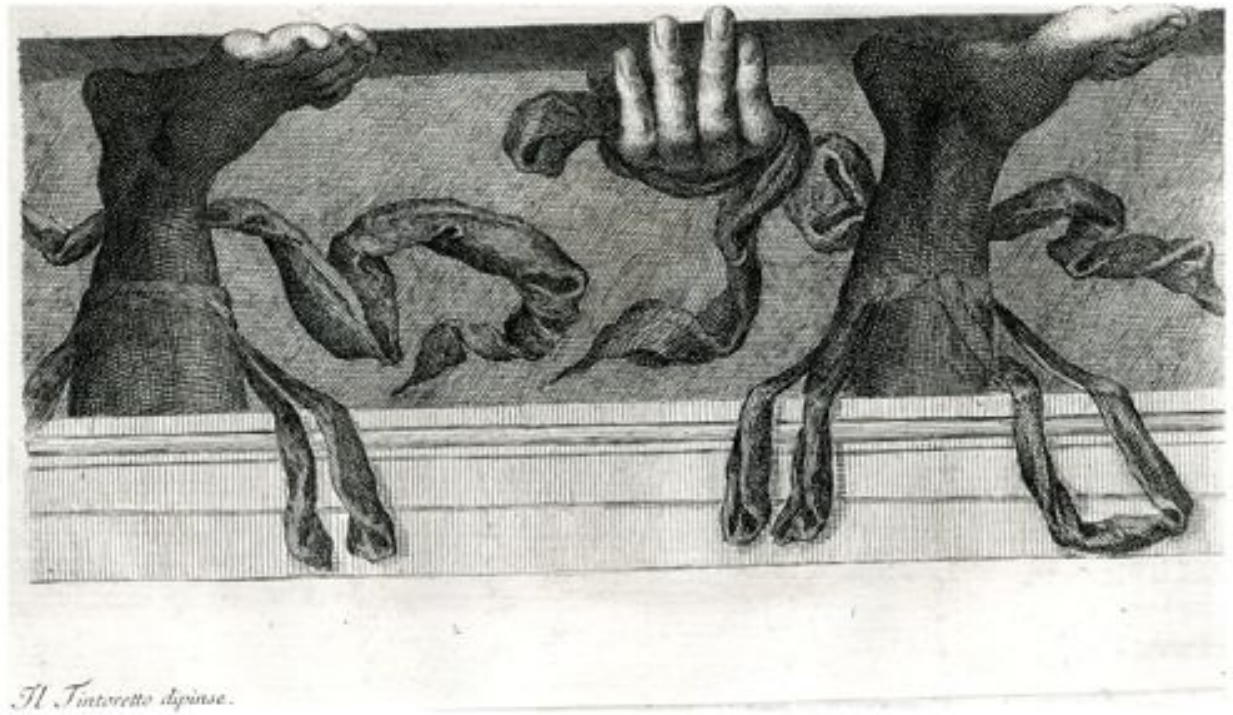


Fig. 1 Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Studies of Two Feet and One Hand* (1541); copy after fresco by Jacopo Tintoretto on Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo, 1760. Etching, 12.7 x 21.7 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It was a study by Giovanni Antonio Pordenone for the painted façade of the Ca' Talenti d'Anna. Original citation: Giovanni Antonio Pordenone, *Study for the façade of Ca' Talenti d'Anna*, 1530-45. Pen and brown ink on paper, 41.9 x 55.9 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum.



Fig. 3 Niccolò Vicentino, *Marcus Curtius on horseback wielding a lance in his right hand*, copy after Giovanni Antonio Pordenone fresco on Ca' Talenti d'Anna, 1530. Woodcut, 41.1 x 27.2 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 4 Fondaco dei Tedeschi (1505-8), Calle del Fontego entrance doorway. Photo by author.



Fig. 5 Fondaco dei Tedeschi (1505-8), Canal Facade. Photo by author.



Fig. 6 Giacomo Piccini, *Justice or Judith*; female figure seated brandishing a sword and trampling on a man's head; with a soldier to left, half-length and looking up towards right with sword in hand (1508-09); copy after fresco by Titian on the Fondaco de' Tedeschi, 1658. Etching, 23.1 x 28.3 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 7 Drapperia frescoes, after 1519; detail of vault with bordered vaulting. Fresco. Ruga degli Orefici, Venice. Photo by author.



Fig. 8 Drapperia frescoes, after 1519; detail of vault with mythological figures: Vulcan, Apollo, Neptune, Venus with a lover (?). Fresco. Ruga degli Orefici, Venice. Photo by author.



Fig. 9 Drapperia frescoes, after 1519; detail of lunette with a young boy and a young girl in fictive windows. Fresco. Ruga degli Orefici, Venice. Photo by author.



Fig. 10 Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Boy kneeling on a parapet* (1541); copy after fresco by Tintoretto on Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo, 1760. Etching, 16.8 x 11.8 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 11 Antonio Maria Zanetti, *A young boy falling backwards over a parapet* (1541), copy after fresco by Tintoretto on Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo, 1760. Etching, 17 x 11.5 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 12 Antonio Maria Zanetti, *Woman resting her head on her right hand* (1541), copy after fresco by Tintoretto on Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo, 1760. Etching, 17 x 11.5 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.



Fig. 13 Antonio Maria Zanetti, *A seated woman* (1541), copy after fresco by Tintoretto on Ca' Soranzo dell'Angelo, 1760. Etching, 16 x 10.4 cm. British Museum. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 14 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. It was a sketch of the painted facade of the Ca' Trevisan in Murano. Original citation: *Prospetto dell'ingresso che riguarda il canale dalla parte di occidente*; sketch after fresco by Prospero Bresciano on Ca' Trevisan in Murano, 1557. Drawing, 46.2 x 33 cm. Museo Correr.



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