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Classical Heritage. Roman Sculpture in the Middle Ages: the Case of Two Twisted Columns in the Church of St. Charles Borromeo in Cave

The Medieval Continuity with Classical Tradition

In the European Middle Ages there are many heterogeneous ways of assimilating, receiving and recovering classical antiquity, which serves as an unlimited deposit of *spolia*, *topoi* and ornamental repertoires to draw from in several and diverse ways[1]. In those cases where traces of the past are strongly present, there is an absolute continuity within it, due to the lack of a perceived and perceivable distance. The consequent complex relation arouses plenty of different phenomena: from the material reuse of ancient pieces to the imitation of ancient artworks regarded as models, or the entire artistic production of certain periods (the so called "Revivals") completely inspired by classical antiquity[2].

Although medieval reality stands with regards to antiquity in a barely definable relation, some permanent features can be found in the many-sided medieval response to the *labor antiquorum*, such as the "appropriating" tendency [1, p. 87], or the inclination for transforming models of the past. As a matter of fact, throughout medieval culture two different attitudes toward antiquity can be recognized, i.e. continuity and rift. Continuity is certainly present, since classical heritage represents a wide range of iconographic patterns used by medieval artists; rift, as well, because those same models, so much loved, meaningfully change [27, p. 94].

The Two Twisted Columns in the Church of St. Charles Borromeo in Cave

There are two dismantled twisted columns in the Church of the Convent of St. Charles Borromeo in Cave (Rome)[3], which were preserved and recently displayed in the international

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exhibition *Compostela e l'Europa*[4] (Ill. 68). According to scholars, they can be ascribed to Roman artistic background of the late 11th–early 12th century[5]. In 1660 their presence was recorded in that church, but probably they had already arrived in approximately 1640s. In the report of an apostolic visit to the diocese of Palestrina, written around 1660, the visitor refers about the convent as follows:

"*Adsunt et prope dictum altare duae columnae marmoreae et traditur fuisse antiquitus in porticu celeberrimi templi Salomonis, quae, ut asseritur, fuerunt donatae Ex.mo ... M. Ant. Colonnae Duci et Cap. Classis Pontificiae contra Turcas tempore S. M. Pii PP. Quinti, et postmodum ab Ex.mo D. Philippo Colonna b. m. eius pietate huic ecclesiae fuerunt donatae et sunt pulcherrimae formae [...]* "[6].

As referred in this document, the columns were donated to Marcantonio Colonna (1535–1584) at the time of Pius V (1566–1572), likely during the celebrations of the victory at Lepanto. Afterwards, they were donated by Filippo I Colonna (1578–1639) to the Abbey of Cave — town set in the family feuds — maybe to honor the memory of his maternal uncle St. Charles Borromeo (1538–1584), the saint the convent was dedicated to[7]. This is confirmed by the testament of Filippo himself, dated March 26th, 1639, including numerous legacies in favor of the churches of his fiefs[8].

Chronology

Since there is no documentary evidence, the chronology of the artwork is still under discussion. The presumed attribution to the 11th-12th century is based on iconographic and comparative data, being supported by Enrico Parlato and Serena Romano, who claim that the two columns "[…] are a high quality example of the great skill of re-experiencing and using classical culture and motifs by those artists — the same Roman *marmorari* perhaps – who were used to live among classical monuments and artefacts" [35, p. 314][9]. Moreover, they maintain some features, which are in common with other sculptures, especially with the *haghiasma* preserved in St. Nilo Abbey in Grottaferrata[10]. Peter Cornelius Claussen agrees with the above

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[4]   See [14]. In the exhibition, attention was called to the Master *de las columnas entorchadas*, who worked at the Francigena Door Santiago's cathedral between 1101 and 1111: the size (m 2.40) and the decoration of the columns from Compostela look following late–11th-century–Roman–models, just like the two couples of twisted columns in the churches of Holy Trinity of the Mounts in Rome (see *infra*, note 16) and St. Charles' in Cave. The contact with such models was surely caused by the travels to Rome of bishop Diego Gelmírez (1100 and 1105), the construction of the cathedral–cross–vaulted–presbytery was due to.

[5]   See *Chronology*.

[6]   The document [3] is kept in the Archivio Diocesano di Palestrina (Rome). About the visit by the archbishop of Nazaret A. Severoli, a memory also survives in the local annals [36, p. 256].

[7]   Filippo was born from Fabrizio Colonna, Marco Antonio's son, and Anna Borromeo, Saint Charles' sister. As regards the relationship between the Colonna family and the Palestrina context, see [15], and [13].

[8]   The document [2], also reminded in [49, p. 219], is preserved in the Archivio Colonna in the Biblioteca del Monastero di S. Scolastica at Subiaco (Rome).

[9]   For a recap about medieval Roman sculpture, see [32].

[10]   [35 p. 314]: "The southern reference usually recalled to about this one will have to be better clarified in the future, that is, if — in the cases of Grottaferrata and Cave — it consists of northward episodes of a substantially southern culture, or, on the other hand, if it could be linked to a trend present and active in Rome, too, that looks at classical culture prototypes, at least as in Salerno and southern workshops". In relation to the *hagiasma* — a holy water container used in Byzantine monasteries — kept in Grottaferrata

mentioned chronology; he thinks those columns could be assigned to the late 11th century and attributes their making to the historical figure of the Cardinal of Palestrina, Hugo Candidus (1020–1099), who was a supporter of the antipope Clement III (1080/1084–1100), in the years of the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073–1085) and his successors [12][11].

Analysis

Claussen states that it is remarkable that in late–11th-century–Rome there were lapicides able to face the technical difficulties caused by making reliefs and flutes on twisted shafts [12, p. 65][12]: the two columns — let's call the one on the left hand side of the altar "A" and the one on the right hand side "B"— show an analogous quality and make, and they are in a good preservation state; column "B" used to have a deep split that has been filled in on the occasion of the recent exhibition[13].

They are characterized by marked bas-relief mouldings, which protrude in a way that can be similarly noticed in a similar pair of twisted columns preserved in the Church of Holy Trinity of the Mounts in Rome[14], and in the above mentioned urn kept in the Church St. Nilo in Grottaferrata[15.]

They are 2.55 m (A) and 2.53 m (B) high totally, each laying on a quadrangular base bearing the Renaissance inscription *SALOMONICI TEMPLI* (A) / *MARMORAE COLUMNAE* (B)[16].

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abbey-church, see [24, p. 73]. F. Gandolfo [19, p. 170], maintains that artwork can be reasonably dated to the late 11th or to the early 12th century, since the same sense of space present in the scene depicting the Miracle of the youth of Cherson, in the lower basilica of St. Clement, can be noticed in there.

[11]   See also [11]. Relative to the link of the columns to the figure of Hugo Candidus, see *Open problems*.

[12]   In the case of one of the columns in Holy Trinity of the Mounts, a strigil-like zone sculpted in a wrong way can be noticed, indeed (for that couple, see note 14). As regards the typology of the 'solomonic' column, see [31]; [44]; [45]; [33]. About the success of the typology of the twisted column and its link with the temple of Solomon, see [50].

[13]   See note 4.

[14]   The couple of Holy Trinity of the Mounts is characterized by the following features: columns are about m 2.40 high, they support composite capitals and present a shaft divided into five zones by mouldings, where spiral-like flutes alternate to scenes depicting putti and animals among shoots. Cupids have no wings and in most of the cases their genitals have been chipped away, certainly later. As for the Cave couple, no documentation about the origin of the medieval artwork exists: it is only possible to infer those two columns were moved to the church around 1494, likely at the moment of its foundation. In relation to that see [31, p. 381] and [52, pp. 31–32].

[15]   For this one see note 10.

[16]   The Renaissance inscription is relevant regarding the story of the artwork reception (about that see [50, p. 67]), considered a relic from Jerusalem as early as in the 17th century. In this case, like in many others, the columns are related to the dismantled Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and are defined solomonic. It is hard to say when the relation between the twisted-column-typology and the Temple of Solomon was born [50, pp. 58–61]: in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in the biographies of Sylvester and Gregory III, Jerusalem is not mentioned as regards the twisted columns used in the Vatican iconostasis (see *infra*, notes 19–20); in the 12th century, about the twelve spiral columns in the Vatican basilica, *Petrus Mallius* in the *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae* writes: "*[...] duodecim columnas vitineas quas de Grecia portari fecit quae fuerunt de templo Apollinis Troiae*". Maffeo Vegio, with *De Rebus Antiquis Memorabilibus Basilicae S. Petri Romanae*, represents the first source dealing with the origin of those columns in Jerusalem with a text that dates back to the middle 15th century; in a scripture published in Rome in 1575, *Le cose maravigliose dell'alma città di Roma*, the Jerusalem origin of Costantine iconostasis columns (still there) is underlined and likely that of a column — the Holy Column — coming from the dismantled iconostasis of pope Gregory III: "*[...] quelle colonne che sono nella*

Each one holds an ionic capital up (Ill. 69): the one on "B" (15 cm high) seems to be reused, whereas I think the one on "A" (17 cm high) — showing a *kymation* made of a central ovolo flanked by needles, with palmettes and scrolls (inside which four- and five-petal-flowers are sculpted) — is a reproduction of Roman models that are contemporary to the column that supports it. As a matter of fact, in the topmost section of the shaft vine-tendrils end with flowers so much similar to the ones in the scrolls, that it can be argued medieval sculptors, having an ancient ionic capital at their disposal, made a copy to get a *pendant*[17.]

Shafts are divided into four sections, where strigil-like patterns alternate with figurative scenes of winged putti harvesting grapes (Ill. 70) and animals among vine shoots (from the bottom, sections in A are so high: 45 cm, 45 cm, 44 cm, 47 cm; in B: 45 cm, 45 cm, 42 cm, 52 cm). Every zone is limited by a cornice (cm 2 high) of protruding beads with needles and by a wreath of leaves. The succession between figurative scenes and strigil-like patterns creates a remarkable light-and-shade-effect, recognizable both in the direct model[18] and in other ancient items, e.g. pagan and Christian sarcophagi.

At the bottom of the shaft each column displays two staggered wreaths of acanthus (19 cm in A, 17.5 cm in B), delimited on the upper part by a string-course (2 cm), molded in an essential manner with deep nervations: distancing holes are noticeable, being typical traces left by hand–drill–making at the moment of the rough-hewing, more evident in column B, where leaves just look boasted.

Each figurative section shows two winged naked putti, with recurring body details: almond-shaped eyes; half-opened mouths; very pronounced bellies and genitals; carved lines which stress calf muscles etc. Some specifics, such as essentially sculpted hair and down by chisel, prove some realistic intent in the anatomical effect.

Putties are holding a basket, facing the vine shoot they are harvesting grapes from and where leaves, vine leaves, bunches and flowers — these ones only in column "A", in the fourth section from the bottom — alternate. In this foliage there are diverse animals: birds, snakes, lizards, tortoises, insects, goats, hares and other wild beasts. The animal pelt is given in a very realistic way by chisel strokes.

The model and its transformation: between continuity and rift

The two columns — similar to the couple in the Church Holy Trinity of the Mounts — are certainly smaller size replicas of the twelve monumental twisted columns coming from the dismantled Constantinian *pergula* of the ancient Vatican basilica (high 4.75 m); they were originally produced in the Eastern section of the Empire in the 3rd century AD, and came to Rome in two different moments, being further reused as precious antiques. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Constantine — being Sylvester pope (314–335) — had Peter's sepulchre

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cappella di San Pietro, e quella che è dentro una cancellata di ferro, alla quale stava appoggiato il Salvatore nostro quando predicava, e vi si menano dentro gli indemoniati, e subito sono liberati, erano in Gerusalemme, nel tempio di Salomone".

[17]   Furthermore, the widespread practice of re-elaborating ionic capitals testifies the direct relationship with ancient models [51].

[18]   See *The model and its transformation: between continuity and rift*.

embellished with some twisted columns (six perhaps) coming from Greece[19]; afterwards exarch Eutichius sent six similar columns more to pope Gregory III (731–741), which were symmetrically placed in front of the *confessio*[20]: being visible next to the tomb of the Apostle, they must have been so famous and admired model all over the centuries to become one of the ancient artworks which exercised more long-lasting influence on following art [52, p. 33][21].

However, when analyzing the function an ancient model could have had for a medieval artwork, it is not always possible to distinguish assimilation from a copy, or also "pastiche" [17, p. 726]. In this case it is pretty easy to maintain the model, still surviving and recognizable. It is not copied but proposed again and substantially transformed in its significance throughout some modifications. The artistic workshop that produced the two columns in Cave swings between continuity and rift, reproduction and transformation, in connection with the theory of Panofsky, who claimed that when a medieval artwork takes its shape from a classical figurative model, that shape will be surely filled up with a non-classical meaning[22]. The most striking operation — that is the reduction of the monumental format into one easy-fitting smaller spaces than the Vatican basilica — is carried out keeping unvaried some elements of the model, mainly formal, and introducing some substantial new ones.

The continuity of the medieval copy with respect to the model is shown both through the reproduction of some formal features — such as the pattern alternating aniconic and figurative zones on shafts, the strigil-like carving and other partitioning decorative elements (needles, pearls, string-courses) — and by means of the use of experimented iconographic typologies forming part of the Bacchic and Dyonisiac repertoire, however, deeply transformed in the medieval version. The bucolic scene depicting putti harvesting grapes and animals in the

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[19]   A first group of six (?) columns came from Greece for want of Constantine [18, p. 176]: "*Augustus Constantinus [...] sic inclusit corpus beati Petri apostoli et recondit. Et exornavit supra columnis purphyreticis et alias columnas vitineas quas de Grecias perduxit*".

[20]   [18, p. 417]: "*Hic concessas sibi columnas VI onichinas volutiles ab Eutychio exarcho, duxit eas in ecclesiam beati Petri apostoli, quas statuit erga presbiterium, ante confessionem, tres a dextris et tres a sinistris, iuxta alias antiquas sex filopares. Super quas posuit trabes [...]*". The new columns were added to the scenographic *confessio*, whose modifications had already been begun at the time of Gregory the Great (590–604), who had set an altar with a canopy on Saint's tomb to celebrate a mass there (about this, see [16, p. 719]). Relative to the dismantled Vatican *pergula*, see: [52], and also [26]. The *confessio* was progressively demolished during the refurbishment of the Vatican basilica: in 1507 Bramante took away the outer row of columns (the ones of Eutichius). Those twelve columns were later recovered: eight of them were used by Bernini in the new octagonal choir, set in the piers; two were placed at the altar sides in the chapel of the Holy Sacrament; one, referred to as the 'Holy Column', has been kept in the sacristy of the Beneficiati, now the Treasury Museum; one, on the other hand, seems to be lost.

[21]   The scholar, who classifies the twelve columns in distinct groups for their typology, assumes that the series of ancient columns arrived at the time of Gregory III served as a model for the columns in Cave and in Holy Trinity of the Mounts. The following ones should be a part of that group: the couple now in the chapel of the Holy Sacrament; the above mentioned Holy Column; the couple reused by Bernini in the aedicule of Longinus pier; one missing column. Some details make think so, i.g.: the topmost area of the couple in Trinity of the Mounts; the single wreath of leaves, occurring in both the couples beneath each zone; the detail with the small leaf at the top of the spiral flutes [52, p. 32].

[22]   [34, p. 105]: "Every time in the mature and late Middle Ages an artwork lends a scheme from a classical model, a not-classical significance is attributed to that scheme, usually Christian; every time in the mature and late Middle Ages an artwork lends a theme from classical poetry, legends, history or mythology, that theme is always depicted following a not-classical formal scheme, usually contemporary".

background of lush racemes does not remind the idyllic state of beatitude of those pastoral sceneries typical of pagan and early Christian tradition. As a matter of fact, the introduction of some meaningful variations of the ancient model reveals the medieval origin of that couple of columns, where realistic items stand as symbols aimed to recall the invisible — "*Symbolum est collatio formarum visibilium ad invisibilium demonstrationem*" [21][23] — material things in charge of unveiling an invisible truth to beholders. The symbolic highlighting of single reality features is certainly the strongest sign of the discontinuity of the medieval copy from the late ancient model, leading to the unequivocally metaphoric interpretation of reality aspects (the vineyard and its fruits, labor, animals).

In the figurative zones of the couple of columns, besides unifying the background for the action of children and animals, grapevine — growing from tufts and germinating into pretty symmetric tangles of vine leaves and bunches — symbolizes cosmos, a man, Jesus Christ, the Cross, and Heaven[24]. The concept of rebirth and immortality was inherited from pagan collective imagination and enhanced by new significances, mainly Christological, from the New Testament: Jesus Christ is called "vitis vera", in fact[25], and head of the "vinea"[26]. In the Last Supper, the transformation of wine into the blood of Jesus Christ is the symbol of the renewed Covenant with God and of the sacrifice that releases mankind, whereas harvesting grapes refers to the final analysis of life actions in front of God at the end of time[27].

In the vineyard, like in the Vatican columns, there are images of winged children busy picking juicy grapes (Ill. 70). Notwithstanding this, an important variation is introduced: the graceful naked putti of the model are not depicted like asexual angels, but transformed into full-bodied grape-pickers, decisively well-endowed. As regards to the admission of masculine nakedness — maybe an artist emphasized to bring man's work out, or just to indulge in the workshop peculiar taste for anatomical-scientific elements shown in the depiction of animals and plants. Also, Claussen holds to be remarkable that in late–11th-century–Rome there are a patronage and a public able to accept figures whose nudity is particularly marked [12, pp. 65–66], confirming the free use of classical forms in the Christian environment, frequently testified in the Middle Ages.

One more discontinuity, which is specific to the copy, is the increased number of animals. The tendrils of the columns in Cave are inhabited by a wide variety of beasts, which are mainly related to the Bacchic and Dyonisiac repertoire and come straight from the used model, as well. Anyway, richer and more diversified samples can be observed with respect to the original: in the vineyard there are only wild animals that determine an unmistakable symbolic interpretation of the natural space and grape harvest. Birds, hares, lynxes and other felines, wild goats, lizards, insects, snails, tortoises and especially snakes, which hide by wrapping

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[23]   The theologian and philosopher Hugo de S. Victore (1096–1141) uses the term 'symbol' to refer to a set of visible forms intended to show invisible realities.
[24]   The tree of life — that often takes the aspect of a vine-plant like in this case (or of a palm tree) in the Middle Ages — can be linked to the themes of renewal and eternal life: it symbolizes the cosmos, the man, Jesus Christ, the cross, Heaven. For that one, see: [28]; [22].
[25]   In Gv 15, 1.
[26]   In the parables taking place in vineyards, in Mt 20, 1–6; Mc 12, 1–12; Lc 20, 9–19.
[27]   Ap 14, 18-19.

to the shoots, representing a threat for the vineyard itself and for the work of the putti busy picking grapes: in the 'vineyard of the Lord', good actions are cultivated and collected, but the danger of the sin looms over everything; the vineyard devastation caused by animals contrasts with the industriousness of grape-pickers, following a well-known sin/redemption dualism[28].

Open problems

The original location and function of the couple of columns in Cave are still unknown. Their propensity for figurative scenes and the relief style can be related to other contemporary artworks. Some features allow to identify their production area and chronology.

The original location

In Claussen opinion, the columns come from the medieval church of St. Lawrence, a small building in the built-up area of Cave, mainly made of reused materials since the 10th century [12, pp. 64–65][29]. In fact, the scholar claims that, for its patronage, the couple of columns is somehow related to the peculiar context of Palestrina/Cave — in contrast with the Reformation party supporting antipope Clement III, — because of an epigraph from the ancient altar of St. Lawrence's, now walled up in the church floor[30]. The inscription refers to the altar consecration in 1093, the names of Hugo Candidus, the Bishop of Palestrina, and of antipope Clement III, referred to as the reigning pope, and finally the name of someone called Paulus, who could be the author of the altar and of the twisted columns, maybe:

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[28]   See [43]. A bunch of legends, born in Antiquity and focusing on animals behaviour, was soon absorbed by Christian symbology with instructive and catechetical intents: the *oppositae qualitates* recognizable in animals showed positive or negative exegetic ways to the Christians. Those legends came to the *Physiologus* in the 2nd–3rd century and then to medieval bestiaries. The *Physiologus* — a treatise about moralized natural history, written in Greek probably at the end of the 2nd century — had a large circulation. On the other hand, the *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville — whose book XII, *De animantibus*, is dedicated to the animal world as well — date back to the 6th-7th century [23]. In the 9th century the *De Universo* by Rabanus Maurus [42] clearly testifies how much the medieval literature about that subject was influenced by the *Physiologus*. Furthermore, in artistic depictions the biblic partition in pure and impure animals — presented in *Lv* 11 and *Dt* [14, 3–20] — had a great importance from a moralistic point of view: among impure beasts there were, for instance, some ruminants (such as camels, rabbits and hares), pigs, reptiles, birds of prey, ostriches and bats. In the New Testament, the distinction between pure and impure animals is abolished (*At* 10, 10–16), anyway keeping a negative value, with a demoniac significance, for some animals, as snakes, since a snake led the forefathers to the sin.

[29]   The historian G. Marocco [30, p. 162] was the first to claim the columns could come from the church of St. Lawrence, relating them with a marble fragment on an altar, now missing, with leaf motifs similar to those on the columns: "Anzi io son di parere che invece di esser pervenute da Gerusalemme siano state tolte dalla chiesa monastica di S. Lorenzo di Cave medesima, ove io ho ravvisato su di un altare un marmoreo pezzo su cui vi sono uguali fogliami [...]". With this opinion G. Presutti agreed [38, p. 175]: «Formavano intanto il più bell'ornamento di S. Lorenzo un paio di candelabri marmorei di primitivo stile cosmatesco, dai rilievi di scene figurate del Paradiso terrestre, tra superbi ornati; e che domandano di ritornare al posto loro». For an artistic-historic overview of the church of St. Lawrence, see: [5, pp. 4–27].

[30]   Guibertus (Wibertus), archbishop of Ravenna, was elected in the Synod of Bressanone in 1080, and in Rome he was just recognized solemnly at the Lateran Palace in 1084.

«Hoc altare santorum reliquiis liquore Laurentii Nerei [Achil]
lei martiru(m) Quadraginta mrtiru Herasmi martiris anno domi
nice incarnationis MXCIII INDICTION I III nn a p...
romano pontifice III Clemte ab Ugone penestrino e
piscopo dedicatum Paulus cu(m) suis o(mn)ib(us) me > mo[ra]re Deus»[31].

Claussen assumes that kind of figurative sculpture — where human, animal and vegetal images are prevalent, — produced by the unknown workshop of the columns (clearly copying early Christian models), could be an example of "Guibertine" art, i.e. an artistic expression matured in the entourage of antipope Clement III [12, p. 63][32].

According to the same academic, the artistic Roman scene of the late 11th century is not so obvious, considering a historical datum that often eludes: the faction of the clergy and Reformation bishops were not so strong in the city up to 1099, whereas the pope had almost the whole built-up area and the province supporting him [12, pp. 63–64][33]. The artistic context must have responded to this dualistic situation through workshops able to interpret both wills. For a very short period those Guibertine workshops must have been predominant: nevertheless, the figurative trend, followed by local laboratories — diversified and "with several levels of different needs" [12, p. 63] — stopped in a little while, since 1100, or rather soon after the death of Clement III and the shift of the Roman clergy and of the city itself to Paschal II (1099–1118); that current was undermined by the aniconic and reliefless production in marble and mosaic of the so called "Cosmati" [12, p. 64]. Cosmatesque art looks like a real counter-program by the reformed party, if the hypothetical existence of a Guibertine art is accepted.

In the present state, confirming or refuting the theory of the original location of the couple of columns in St. Lawrence's is not possible. In my opinion, any positioning inside, or outside the church seems rather unlikely for the small size of the building, also because the columns look to be made not for a position similar to the current one (i.e. leaning on a wall) but to be visible from every point of view. Moreover, if the above mentioned report by the apostolic visitor to the convent of St. Charles in 1660 is reliable, also confirmed by the previous testament of Filippo Colonna in 1639, it must be acknowledged that the couple of columns came to Cave

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[31] The identification of that *Paulus* mentioned in the inscription with Paul, progenitor of the lapicides family that worked in Ferentino and at the lost ciborium of St. Peter's in the first quarter of the 12th century, is very unlikely, especially as regards the chronology of the altar (1093). About the artworks of *Paulus* and his family, and in particular about the dubious work of *Paulus* in St. Lawrence's, see [10, pp. 7–36: 12].

[32] The adjective "Guibertin" was coined by Claussen after the name of Guibertus of Ravenna, indeed, *alias* Clement III. In the sculptural field, the following elements should form part of that figurative tendency: the cornices with plant volutes and medallions of St. Apollinare's and the ones in St. Pudentiana's; the portal fragments reused in St. John's at Porta Latina; the portal in St. Mary's in Cosmedin signed by *Iohannes de Venetia*; the baptismal font of Grottaferrata and, of course, the two couples of columns in Holy Trinity of the Mounts and St. Charles'.

[33] Most of the built-up area of Rome, except for the domains of the Frangipane family, stood up for antipope Clement III. Guibertine cardinals were in: St. Hadrian's; St. Anastasia's; St. Apostles'; St. Balbina's; St. Blaise's; St. Celsus and Julian's; St. Ciriacus' at the Baths; St. Clement's (before 1079); St. Cosimatus'; St. Chrysogonus'; St. Eustachius'; St. Lawrence's in Damasus; St. Lawrence's in Lucina; St. Mark's; St. Marcellus's; St. Mary's in Campus Martius; St. Mary's in Trastevere; St. Mary's in Via Lata; St. Martin and Sylvester's; St. Prassede's; St. Prisca's; St. Sabina's; St. Sylvester's in Capite; St. Susanna's. Only Trastevere was mainly in favor of the Reformation pontiffs. Along the route *Pantheon* / Diocletian's Baths, the antipope had no rivals.

only in the 17th century as a donation by the family, that had considered them in its goods since the times of Marcantonio Colonna, at least.

Relation with contemporary artworks and function

The common sculptural type of the relief and the inclination for figurative scenes show the relation between the columns of Cave and contemporary artworks, such as the above mentioned hagiasma in Grottaferrata[34] and the columns of Holy Trinity of the Mounts[35]. In this last case, there is one more perfect typological coincidence, which can lead to state it was the same hand that sculpted them, or at least, both couples came out from the same workshop[36].

The height of the two couples of columns is similar, therefore it looks as if they formed a part of the same furniture, a ciborium or an iconostasis; however, some significant differences — such as the shaft division into five zones and the use of composite capitals on the Roman examples[37] — make us think of other hypotheses, that is the two couples were part of different ciboria, or of distinct choir screens; more probably they were two couples of candelabra to be placed near altars in two separate buildings[38].

The artistic context of production: Rome between the 11th and the 12th century

I assume the artistic context of production can be a workshop of Roman marmorari in late 11th-early 12th century.

The Roman artists attitude towards the past was conservative and imitative [37, p. 106], which is perfectly matching with the modalities recognizable in the couple of columns.

As regards to their chronology, the identification of the model allows us to ascribe them to an environment particularly favorable to the replica of early Christian artworks, such as Rome at the time of Gregory VII (1073–1085) and of his successors: as known, the will of reestablishing the *ecclesiae primitivae forma* arouses a strong impulse for the reproduction of early Christian art; in the churches of Rome and its environs, the decorations of ancient St. Peter's basilica in the Vatican start being imitated[39]. Hence, I suppose that the twisted columns

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[34]   See note 10. H. Kessler [24, p. 74] relates the *hagiasma* of Grottaferrata to the couple of columns in Cave, similar for their carving style, by stating they show a "feudal classicism", that can be referred to as the patronage of the Earls of Tuscolo.

[35]   See note 14.

[36]   A different context of production — probably set in southern Italy under the Swabian influence — but a clearly analogous model are at the base of two other twisted columns once in St. Claire's church in Naples, whose cast, made in the 19th century, has been on display in the adjacent museum since the fire of 1943: see [31, p. 382], and [52, pp. 26–27]. On the other hand, A. Cadei claims those two columns once in St. Claire's were surely late ancient pieces, transported from Castel del Monte to Naples for want of Robert d'Anjou in 1317: see [7, p. 379].

[37]   See *supra*, note 14.

[38]   About this, see [4, p. 122]: among the oldest and most significant examples of candelabra, supposed to be placed next to altars, is the couple in Magdalenkirche in Hildesheim, characterized by slim lines and essential structures inspired to Byzantine or late ancient models, where the strength of formal and thematic contrasts (fight between men and animals; harvesting grapes scenes) makes think to the unknown exponent of the sculptural school promoted by bishop Bernoardus (993–1022), in an initial phase of his patronage.

[39]   The first standing example of that use is the church of St. Felix in Ceri, dating around 1100. See [25, p. 269].

were produced in Rome between the 11th and the 12th century in order to give dignity to an unknown holy space and to evoke the idea of the mother-basilica; the artists conceived them as souvenirs to be shown off or as marble *reliquiae ex contactu*: an "artificial contact" with the master copy happened throughout a reproduction process in laboratory.

Conclusion

The group of sculptural artworks with a figurative inclination, among which the couple of columns also stands, allows us to redefine the diversified artistic Roman scenery between the 11th and the 12th century, where except for the most well-known "aniconic current" — systematically practiced by the lapicides named since the beginning of the 12th century "Cosmati", — the existence of a "figurative current", characterized by the preponderance of human, animal and vegetal images, can be noticed. In both trends antiquity acts a unifying background — antiquity, — which looks once more an instrument of creativity for artists of all times: throughout the centuries, classical art has been an impulse to artistic transformations [27, p. 95]; copying models does not frustrate originality, but conveys creativity [25, p. 276].

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Abstract. In the church of the convent of St. Charles Borromeo in Cave (Rome), two twisted columns, dating back to the late 11th or early 12th century (on a comparative basis), are kept. The two columns, similar to another couple in the Church of Trinità dei Monti in Rome, represent a particularly fortunate case, since the model is recognizable and still surviving: in fact, they look reduced size replicas of the monumental *columnae vitineae*, likely produced in the Eastern part of the Empire no later than the 3rd century AD and reused in the now dismembered Constantinian *pergola* in the ancient Vatican basilica. The origin and function of the columns in Cave are unknown. Anyway, both their propensity for figurative art and the relief style can be useful elements to relate with other contemporary artworks. This group of artifacts allows us to redefine a varied scenery of Roman art between the 11th and the 12th century, where, besides the most famous "non-iconic" tendency — systematically practiced since the early 12th century by the *marmorarii* conventionally defined as "Cosmati" — the presence of a "figurative" current should be noticed.

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Аннотация. В монастырской церкви Св. Карло Борромео в Каве близ Рима, сохранились две витые колонны, относящиеся приблизительно к концу XI – началу XII в. Особенную ценность представляет тот факт, что эти колонны аналогичны паре колонн в церкви Тринита-деи-Монти в Риме, то есть по сей день сохранился узнаваемый образец, взятый за основу их создания. На самом деле эти колонны выглядят уменьшенной копией *columnae vitineae* (колонны в виде лозы), изготовленной в восточной части Империи не позднее III в. н. э. и затем вторично использованной в ныне разобранной Константиновской беседке (*pergola*) в старой ватиканской базилике. Происхождение и предназначение этих колонн в Каве неизвестно. В любом случае их художественное исполнение — важный фактор для сопоставления с другими произведениями искусства той эпохи. Эта группа памятников позволяет переосмыслить разнообразную палитру римского искусства между XI и XII вв., в которой кроме широко известной «нефигуративной» тенденции, присущей стилю космалеско с начала XII в., существовало и «фигуративное» направление.

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