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Crafting culture in the Adriatic: a case of woodcarvers and painters in Quattrocento Dubrovnik

A cultura artesanal no Adriático: um caso de entalhadores e pintores no Quattrocento, em Dubrovnik

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Abstract

The well-preserved archival documentation in Dubrovnik provides valuable insights into various subjects, including production of art. This study delves into the collaboration between woodcarvers and painters in late medieval Dubrovnik, focusing on the mid-15th century, when artistic production was greatly influenced by the exceptional stability of the commune. Contribution challenges conventional assumptions regarding artist specialization during this era. Contracts from this period often delineated the responsibilities of painters in supervising carpentry work during artwork fabrication, while some documents suggest woodcarvers executed basic painting tasks. Discoveries are consistent with the knowledge of Italian art production, affirmed through meticulous examination of exceptionally well-preserved archival sources.

KEYWORDS
Woodcarvers
Painters
Polychromed wooden sculpture
Polyptychs
Art production
Dubrovnik

Resumo

A documentação arquivística, bem conservada, de Dubrovnik fornece informações importantes sobre vários assuntos, incluindo a produção de arte. Este estudo investiga a colaboração entre entalhadores e pintores na Dubrovnik medieval tardia, centrando-se em meados do século XV, altura em que a produção artística foi grandemente influenciada pela estabilidade excecional da comuna. A contribuição desafia os pressupostos convencionais relativamente à especialização dos artistas durante esta época. Os contratos deste período definiam frequentemente as responsabilidades dos pintores na supervisão do trabalho de carpintaria durante a realização das obras de arte, enquanto alguns documentos sugerem que os entalhadores executavam tarefas básicas de pintura. As descobertas são consistentes com o conhecimento da produção artística italiana, corroborado através do exame meticuloso de fontes de arquivo excecionalmente bem preservadas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Entalhadores
Pintores
Esculturas em madeira policromada
Polípticos
Produção de arte
Dubrovnik

Introduction

Pictor* vs. *sculptor

One of the numerous Dubrovnik contracts between a patron and an artist, concluded in the summer of 1449, presents a particular challenge for researchers of the production of wooden and polychrome artworks. Ivan Pripčinović commissioned a painting (*unum quardum*) from the painter Ivan Ugrinović. Since the desired painting was not received within the agreed-upon deadline of two months, he placed an exact same order with the woodcarver Radosav Vukčić. In fact, the notary only replaced one name with another, while all other provisions of the contract remained identical [1, doc. 360]. We may never learn the circumstances related to the described case, but the contract can certainly prompt reflection on the relationships between painters and sculptors in medieval Dubrovnik and the broader Adriatic *milieu*.

When examining polychromed wood artworks, it is commonly believed that medieval painters were also skilled woodcarvers, and vice versa. The subject of collaboration between wood sculptors and painters has captivated researchers in the field of Italian late medieval and early Renaissance art for decades. However, it is still challenging to determine whether terms such as *carpentarius, magister lignaminis, faber lignaminis, intarsiatore, intaiador, intagliatore, incisor lignaminis, sculptor lignaminum, statuario,* and others implied diverse woodworking skills and to what extent they encompassed execution of polychromy and painting [2, pp.40-41]. While John White's focus on prioritizing the technical aspects of altarpieces in sixties was innovative, it also poses the risk of uncritical acceptance, as seen in his assumption, without substantial evidence, that during Duccio's time, the woodwork was executed in the painter's workshop [3-4]. Analysis of a prominent historian of medieval and Renaissance art emphasizes a key difference between medieval and modern art practices: in contrast to the contemporary practice of adding frames to finished paintings, medieval artists worked on panels that were inherently framed [4]. Furthermore, the form and execution of the panels and frame (which was not simply a rectangular *quadra*) were extremely important for the medieval artist and patron, making the connection between collaborators more inseparable.

Contrary to the expected trend of specialization by the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, in the middle of the fifteenth century, we still encounter various examples displaying the versatility of these artists. We come across a range of examples, when woodcarvers or their bottegas often gilded and painted their own artworks, while painters were also capable of carving wooden statues [2, p. 41]. According to research by Michelle O'Malley, the majority of Italian painters in the fifteenth century never modeled sculptures for their altarpieces. However, it is known that some sculptors, such as the Venetian sculptor Jacopo Moranzone, engaged in painting [5]. Some researchers believe that the painter Giovanni d'Alemagna was also a skilled woodcarver and should be credited with the wooden structures of polyptychs on which he collaborated with the painter Antonio Vivarini [6, p.13]. Anne Markham Schulz provides several examples from fifteenth century Venetian woodcarving illustrating that an individual could simultaneously be an *incisor* or *intagliator* while also being recognized as a *deaurator* – a gilder. Additionally, Schulz demonstrates that painters could also engage in woodcarving. Joško Belamarič highlighted the case of Juraj Petrović from Split, who, in the mid-fifteenth century, served as a *primicerius* of the cathedral chapter of St Doimus while also working as both a woodcarver and a painter [2, p. 41].

In his groundbreaking analysis of Venetian Renaissance altarpieces, Peter Humfrey thoroughly investigated the commercial interactions between painters and woodcarvers in Venice during the second half of the fifteenth century. Research has confirmed the structural interdependence between the making of wooden structures and the painted part, suggesting intensive collaboration between painters and woodcarvers at every stage of execution, up to the final placement of the finished work in its designated location [7, pp. 141-146]. This is supported by the repeated complaints of painters against woodcarvers painting practice in Venice [8, 9, pp.68-69]. Unfortunately, we do not have preserved documents for Dubrovnik that shed light

directly on this area of activity organization [6, p. 16]. However, given the known facts, it is apparent that the regulations were probably less stringent. Only a handful of Dubrovnik artists seemed to dominate the small art market for painted crosses, paintings of Madonnas and polyptychs, subject to stricter (written or unwritten) rules.

Even Lovro Dobričević, perhaps the most characteristic representative of the early Renaissance in Dubrovnik and the Montenegrin Bay of Kotor, who art history has exclusively treated as a painter (which undoubtedly was also his identity), for example, appears in two documents as *magister Laurentius de Cathato, intagliator et Pictor* [1, docs. 430, 445]. With great certainty, we can thus assert that he personally executed at least these two commissions, one for two paintings with carvings (*duas anchonas pulchras, firmas, bene intagliatas, …*) and another one of similar nature, all by himself. At the same time, Antun Pribisalević Car from Split (*Antonio lignicida*), who is mentioned as a painter in a single document (*lignicida et pictor Spaleti*) [10, p.25], is often also considered as a painter [6, p. 14, 11, p. 225].

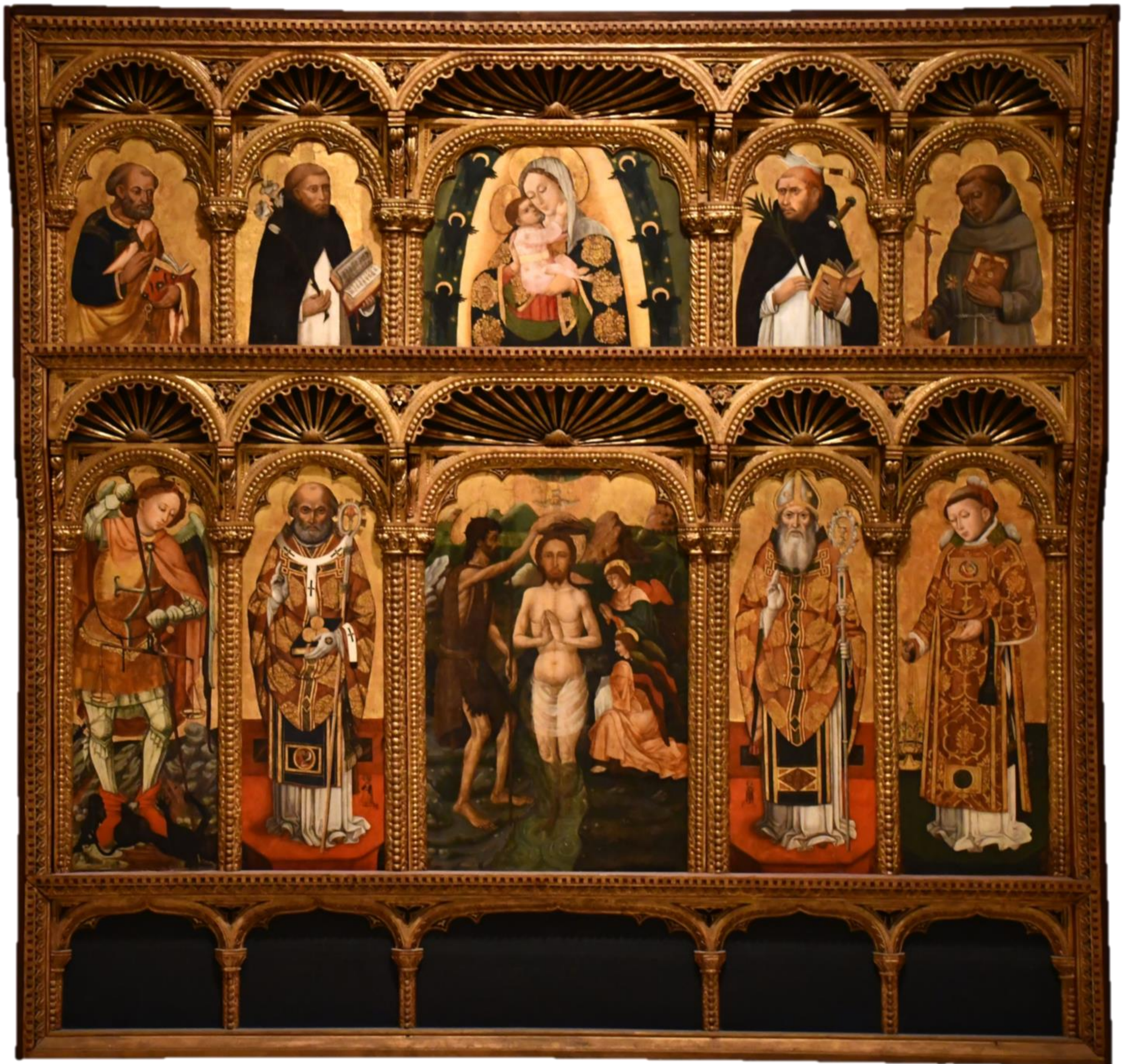

Figure 1. Lovro Dobričević, polyptych with the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, 1448, tempera and gilding on wood, 240 × 249 cm, Dubrovnik, collection of the Dominican Monastery.

The article will attempt to outline the process of creating polychrome wooden artworks (Figure 1), using the example of a smaller late medieval community with a thriving economy and culture, as well as close connections to other cities in the Adriatic and the Apennine Peninsula. The small coastal town is of exceptional importance for (art) historiography, as it boasts a very well preserved archive that provides us with a high-quality insight into the political, economic, and cultural life of the people of Dubrovnik, and in our case, the production of wooden polychrome artworks.

Dubrovnik in Quattrocento

Medieval Ragusa was a prominent maritime republic known for its strategic location along trade routes connecting the Mediterranean with the Balkans. In the fifteenth century, the political map of the Adriatic revealed a varied landscape: the Venetian Republic dominated the north, followed by small court states along the western coast and the expansive Papal States encompassing modern-day Marche, Emilia-Romagna, and the Kingdom of Naples in the south of the Adriatic basin [12-13].

Dubrovnik enjoyed full statehood by the fifteenth century. With Venetian Dalmatian on the north and Venetian Albania on the south, renowned for its fortified walls, bustling port, and cosmopolitan culture, Dubrovnik thrived as a center of commerce and intellectual exchange during the Middle Ages, leaving a lasting impact on art, architecture, and governance in the Adriatic region [14]. Economic and political prosperity and close links with the Apennine peninsula, especially Ancona and Kingdom of Naples, enabled Dubrovnik to develop its urban center in the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century by all the modern standards of the wider region of the time, which also allowed a rich production of art works to flourish [13].

The rich painting scene – widely accepted by researchers as the Dubrovnik School of Painting – and broader artistic production were greatly influenced by the exceptional stability of the commune and significant changes that occurred during this period in politics, international relations, economy, social life, and culture. Sorman's visitation [15] in the years 1573-1574 in Dubrovnik lists more than 150 altars and 150 paintings in churches, monasteries, and hospitals, indicating relatively high demand for painting and carving products. Unfortunately, not even a tenth of them have been preserved, but well-preserved and mostly already published archival sources [1, 16] provide a sufficiently detailed insight into the organization of painting activity, especially after 1275, when even minor credit transactions needed to be recorded by official city notaries [17].

Sources and methods

The archival documentation in Dubrovnik is enabling a high-quality analytical approach to researching various issues. The Dubrovnik notary, that, unlike in the Venetian system, was part of the state structure, documented private transactions, including promissory notes, sales contracts, leases, slave sales, dowry receipts, and debt repayments. Meanwhile, the chancellor served the Rector and judges by drafting public-law documents. The *Diversa cancellariae* and *Diversa notariae* series are essential for studying Dubrovnik's art production, featuring similar contracts but differing recording methods [18]. The archival documentation makes it easier and more comprehensive to understand the orders for paintings and other objects in Dubrovnik's homes and churches compared to similar towns in the Adriatic. The analysis of archival records reveals that in the fifteenth century, the number of documents related to paintings exponentially increased. Many published documents originate from notarial series, offices, and council decrees. Within the documented archival material, painters and others who significantly contributed to the creation of paintings are identified. They appear as testators, witnesses, or masters commissioned for work. Contracts often also refer to education and work in painting workshops. Given the relatively poor preservation of the pictorial material itself on

one hand and, the relatively numerous archival sources on the other hand, the use of classical historiographical methods will be crucial, primarily involving meticulous reading and analysis of already published archival sources.

Previous scholarship on woodcarving and painting in Quattrocento Dubrovnik (and Dalmatia)

Today we can ascertain that artistic phenomena on both shores of the Adriatic are fairly well researched, but in the literature, we still notice a significant difference in their evaluation: while art on the western coast has always been treated as an integral part of the "great Italian Renaissance," most Italian art experts still perceive something distant and unknown on the eastern Adriatic coast. They briefly dismiss it as *hic sunt leones* [19, p. 57]. In 1938 study, in what is arguably the earliest (and only comprehensive) scholarly work addressing wooden sculpture in Dalmatia, Arnolfo Bacotich articulated "(Q)uest arte, per i pochi contatti delle popolazioni dell`interno con le popolazioni di altri paesi, é, del vero senso della parola, in Dalmazia, arte locale," [20, p. 302] thereby reflecting the perspective of the relatively scarce Italian investigations of Dalmatia.

The most significant contribution to the study of late Medieval and early Renaissance fine art comes from Ljubo Karaman in the first half of twentieth century. He also devoted discussions to Dubrovnik painters [21-23] and – together with another prominent scholar at the time Kruno Prijatelj – to local groups of the Dalmatian Painting School in the fifteenth century [24]. Numerous important details about the matter were also unveiled by Cvito Fisković in his synthetic works or his studies on churches or sculptural production from the Romanesque to the Renaissance along the Dalmatian coast. In studies on Gothic wooden sculpture in Split [25] and Trogir [26], he published valuable documents on the work and achievements of many unknown local masters. The archival data found in these works will have far-reaching importance.

For research on the relationships within workshops and the dynamics between patrons and creators, Jorjo Tadić's archival study on documents connected to painting is extremely important. His archival research in the mid-twentieeth century (1952) provided the basis for a synthetic review of the old "Dubrovnik painting school" [1]. Vojislav J. Đurić's overview of Dubrovnik painting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also contribute to the field of wooden sculpture. It touches upon their collaborative efforts and explores the impact of their working relationship on their respective artistic practices [27]. However, woodcarving of the time in Dubrovnik has not yet been the subject of thorough scholarly attention, so we can only rely on basic reviews; besides already mentioned studies for Split and Trogir, also a more systematic and thorough study for Zadar [28] by Ivo Petricioli.

These contributions reveal and catalogue numerous carved products on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, but very few delve into the operation of workshops – the creation of artworks like altarpieces and their polychromy. Wooden polychrome sculpture in Dubrovnik is generally treated very sporadically. In surveys of sculpture, such as in catalogs like "Zlatno doba Dubrovnika," there is little space dedicated to the poorly preserved segment of predominantly sacred wooden sculpture [29, catalogue numbers K/28-K/30]. Among the most recent works on what is generally understood as the Dubrovnik painting school, Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić's book "U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom" [6] is significant as it raises intriguing questions about woodcarving and the collaboration between both profiles, painters and woodcarvers, at several points [6]. However, intriguing study unfortunately could provide answers to only a few of these questions.

"The art of craft" or the "craft of art"? A short *excursus* on artist's position

With the great artists of the Italian Renaissance, who mark the art historical canon, talent begins to rise above ordinary people, and the artist can compete with the educated aristocratic elite, often the patrons of elitist, fine art. Before this, during (late) Middle Ages, the production of artifacts that we now unequivocally label as artworks was mostly the domain of craftsmen, although the artistic historiography of painting often detached it from other stages of the final product's creation, focusing on style and iconography. Considering the socio-historical circumstances of late medieval Dubrovnik, it is important to note that painting during this period was closely associated with the development of local craftsmanship [30, p. 8]. We do not know the exact annual earnings of Dalmatian painters, as information available about artists' incomes during that time is not consistent. This information would probably most vividly and simply illustrate their social status. However, we do have some records.

During the fifteenth century in Dubrovnik, architects emerged as the top earners among artists. Despite not being the most proficient sculptor or architect, Pietro da Milano attained notable success thanks to the outstanding quality of his work, surpassing local standards. His collaborators always held subordinate roles, as partnering with other masters would have been impractical given his superior craftsmanship [31, p. 107]. If we sum up the payments for all known contracts he concluded from 1440 until his departure from Dubrovnik in 1452, we get over 6000 perpers, which amounts to more than 500 perpers annually. Of course, this figure needed to cover expenses, so it was not pure profit, but still a significant sum.

Onofrio di Giordano della Cava, was generously paid by the government for the construction of the aqueduct, both main fountains, the Rector's Palace, and parts of the walls. In 1455, Dubrovnik extended an annual salary of more than 300 ducats to the hydraulic engineer and architect, equating to almost a ducat per day. When the Council of the Entreaties paid Michelozzo a monthly salary of 20 ducats in June 1461, it was considered a particularly high income for that time [6, p. 22]. Obviously, Onofrio was highly esteemed, as his departure from Dubrovnik in 1443 caused panic in the city about where and how to find a new engineer as the Ottomans approached.

Painters, on the other hand, were not as fortunate in terms of social status. Some painters are also found among the state employees. Among them, two Tuscans are documented in this period. Lorenzo di Michele from Florence adorned the hall of the Small Council between 1433 and 1435 and remained in Dubrovnik at least until the mid-century. He received an annual salary together with rent from the state on July 18, 1436, amounting to 100 perpers. On September 18, 1449, his salary was reduced to 30 perpers. From 1421 to 1427, Blaž Jurjev (*Biaggio di Georgio da Traú*), one of the most prominent and well researched Dalmatian late gothic painters worked in Dubrovnik (Figure 2). He, too, was employed by the state with an initial salary of 30 perpers, which increased to 60 over the years. He also brought his permanent collaborators to Dubrovnik and established connections with wealthy merchants and craftsmen, such as Jacob de Goze and Pietro Pantello, whom he mentioned in his will [32, pp. 74-75]. In 1426, the painter requested an increase to 80 perpers, but on November 21, 1426, the Council decided to grant him sixty perpers. After this decision, he left the city [6, p. 22]. This might indicate the value placed on the origin of painters – while the native of Trogir, Blaž Jurjev, had to prove his skill, there was less doubt about Lorenzo's mastery, yet he was apparently less favored by the locals.

Figure 2. Blaž Jurjev, polyptych with St. James, 1436, tempera and gilding on wood, 92 × 144 cm, Trogir, Museum of Sacred Art.

Tadić observed that Dubrovnik painters belonged to the lower social classes, being ordinary craftsmen, sons of peasants, craftsmen, carriers, painters themselves and city poor [1]. Lučić also highlights that painters came from lower and middle urban peasant classes and did not have a special social status as they were, as he notes, "ordinary painters, colorists, decorators" [33, p. 257]. Certainly, only some of them can be included in the canon of artists who rose above ordinary craftsmen and undertook commissions for the most prestigious painting tasks of the time in the Adriatic region, altarpieces. Documented in the fifteenth century, these primarily included already mentioned painters Blaž Jurjev and Lovro Dobričević along with Ivan Ugrinović, Matko Junčič and woodcarver and sculpturer Radosav Vukčić. But majority of craftsmen involved with paint also identified with other occupations: Radoje Dragosalić was a cabinetmaker, woodworker, and painter (*cofanarius, marangonus vel pictor*), Ivan Ognjenović made shields, gunpowder, worked with wood, and painted, Radišin Junčić and Radić were shield makers and painters (*magistri a scutis et pictores*), Paskoje Radičević was a painter and was making chests, Frano Marinov identified himself as a painter and textile painter (*pictor, pictor a cultris*), Jacobum Roselli from Florence was a carver and painter (*inteleator et pictor*), and Luca de Fiori was a saddler and painter (*sedlaro et pentore*) [30, p. 9].

It's important to highlight that the total cost of a painting during the fifteenth century was impacted by several factors, including the materials utilized, the quality and variety of wood and paint, the type of gold employed, but maybe the biggest factor were expenses associated with labor (Figure 3). The cost of the woodcarving in Apenine peninsula varied from around 15 % to, according to O`Malley, 30 % at best [5, pp. 41-44]. Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić highlights a case of polyptych by Michele Giambono from 1447 (which cost a total of 130 lire), where cost of woocarving was 33 lire, 25 % of the total price. We know that in this specific example, the painter Giambono paid the woodcarver. The cost of woodcarving on a painting by Alvise Vivarini for Noale in 1502 (the total price of the painting was 134 lire) was 34 lire. However, the buyer paid

the woodcarver at that time [6, p. 23]. Fisković asserted that Dubrovnik saw the creation of monumental and highly representative altarpieces, where both the painterly and sculptural contributions were equally valued [34, p. 135]. A systematic review of all documented commissions for polyptychs in the second quarter of fifteenth century in Dubrovnik, compiled by Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić, shows that the carving component usually amounted to less than 30 % of the price. However, in one instance, it accounted for as much as 48 %, yet still insufficient to claim that both contributions were equally valued [6, pp. 23-25].

Figure 3. Lovro Dobričević, polyptych with the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, 1448, Dubrovnik, collection of the Dominican Monastery: detail of the central scene, showing the significant contribution of the woodcarver.

A woodcarver and a painter: a *compagnia*?

Collaborative endeavors among numerous masters are evident from historical records, but on the contrary to what Igor Fisković claimed in 1990, we cannot state that it was common for painters and woodcarvers in Dubrovnik to share a workshop or production space [34, p. 135], at least not for most of the fifteenth century. It is far more likely that each master owned or rented their own bottega and hired an assistant or apprentice, that specialized an area that was less favored by the master. For example, Radosav Vukčić, by far the most sought-after and well-profiled sculptor in wood in the first half and mid-fifteenth century, acquired his education from a painter, Blaž Jurjev. They entered a typical apprenticeship contract, where Radosav's father, a trumpeter from Dubrovnik, is listed as the responsible party. Radosav undertook to live and work with master Blaž Jurjev, while the master, in return, promised to take care of the young apprentice in health and sickness (the entitlements of apprentices were also defined by guild rules) and to teach him the art of painting to the best of his abilities (*et ipsum Radoslauum docere artem suam pictorie juxta posse suum*) [1, doc. 164]. That means that Blaž`s bottega at that time consisted of at least two apprentices, Martin Petković from Jajce [1, doc. 152], that later turned out to be a painter, and Radosav Vukčić, that later went on to be woodcarver. Creighton Gilbert in 1977 – commenting on Martin Wackernagel's writing on quattrocento Florence – claimed that we shall never find a woodworker employed in the artist's studio [4]. But it looks like Blaž's bottega was self-sufficient and that may be the reason that we do not have any known commissions where Blaž would accept work with another master, as it was often the case with other artists.

Fisković also claimed that moreover, sons of painters and woodcarvers, raised in family workshops following typical medieval customs, often gravitated more towards the branch where the father, as the head of the activity, was less skilled, thus being groomed as assistants [34, p. 135]. Although do we find one such example in Dubrovnik, we cannot claim that it is the rule, rather an exception. Radosav`s son, Matko Alegretović, trained to be a painter and after his father's death, he collaborated for some time even with Ivan Ugrinović, one of the most successful painters in Dubrovnik around mid-fifteenth century (perhaps even as a woodcarver). Later, he closely collaborated with Božidar Vlatković and Stjepan Ugrinović, with whom they even accepted an order for the main altar of the church of St. Severin in San Severo, Apulia [1, doc. 606].

Collaboration between the most popular painter in Dubrovnik, already mentioned Ivan Ugrinović, whose rise began immediately after Blaž's departure, with Radosav Vukčić was a very usual practice. At times he collaborated with others as well, for example Ivan Ognjanović, Matko Junčić and Lorenzo from Florence. It seems that at a certain point, particularly after 1438, the collaboration between Ivan Ugrinović and Radosav Vukčić was almost exclusive; Ivan very rarely collaborated with other sculptors, Radosav with other painters, while they both functioned as individuals. Whether the collaboration between Ugrinović and Vukčić was temporary, limited to a specific project, or organized in a more formal manner is not known. They concluded numerous joint contracts, in none of which they were named as *compagni*, yet they very regularly worked together. It's important to note that compared to some urban centers on the western Adriatic, Dubrovnik is a very small community where exclusivity may ultimately arise because there are very few masters working in their respective fields at the same time.

Apart from informal collaboration among masters, we also know of the professional relationship between Ivan Ugrinović and his son Stjepan, that most likely was based on the principle of *paternae compagniae*.

Contract agreements for joint workshops (*feno pato e conpagnia*) are indeed found among the documents of Dubrovnik; first in 1456, when Petar Ognjanović and Stjepan Ugrinović (both were painters, but the latter was evidently more successful) entered into an agreement defining the workspace, tasks, and finances [1, doc. 451]. They worked in premises owned by Petar, who

provided materials (chalk and pigments), while Stjepan was responsible for painting and carving. Stjepan did not have to pay for materials or accommodation in the room above the workshop [6, p. 33]. The same year painters Franko Miljević and Franjo Marinović agreed to work together, diligently and share the earnings equally in a joint company (*pro facto presentis societatis et colligantie*) [1, doc. 411].

Unfortunately, we were not able to find this type of an agreement between painter and a sculptor, woodcarver. An interesting business agreement was made in 1442 between Ivan Ognjanović and Ivan Ugrinović (the latter, unlike the former, accepted many commissions for polyptychs). Ivan Ugrinović promised Ivan Ognjanović that as long as he lived in Dubrovnik, he would only paint chests for him and only with his consent. To fulfil this commitment, Ognjanović paid him four ducats (about 12 perpers), and for each chest he painted, he would receive two perpers [1, doc. 272].

Woodcarving, polychromy and gilding

During negotiations, the painter could bring with him drawings (*disegno*) that served as templates and assisted in aligning the concept. It has been established that "disegni" of the architectural structure of altarpiece paintings in Italy became an integral part of the contract-making procedure around 1450. A similar conclusion can be drawn by examining contemporary painting contracts in the Dubrovnik area [6, p. 12]. Unlike previous researchers claim [6, p. 12], the oldest known Dubrovnik contract mentioning a design is dated in 1431, when Ivan Ugrinović agreed to make a painting of St. Agatha by the design patron gave him (*figure sancta Agate ad designum et formam ...*) [1, doc. 201]. In 1442, Ivan Ugrinović and Radoslav Vukčić agreed to create an altarpiece painting according to a design (*cum figuris nominantis in disegno depicto ipsius anchone, contento et depicto in folio papiri hic affixo*) [1, doc. 259]. For example, in the case of Ivan Ugrinović, during his forty active years of activity (between around 1420 and 1460), we could only find two documents where a sketch served as the basis for ordering an altarpiece, which was provided by the patrons. In the case of Lovro Dobričević, who belonged to a younger generation and was active in the second half of the fifteenth century, we find six examples where the form of the altarpiece was agreed upon based on a sketch [6, p. 12].

Martin Wackernagel, an expert on studio working conditions noted that it was not uncommon for clients in fifteenth century Florence to commission panels from woodcarvers before painters took possession of them, but the lack of substantial evidence for this specific practice suggests that it cannot be accepted as a widespread norm [35]. Creighton Gilbert in 1977 claimed that Wackernagel's assertion is well founded, but is perhaps too tentative [4]. Gilbert claimed that his hesitation is understandable, however this practice of the woodwork being commissioned beforehand does not fit in with previous theories and we shall see another custom, in which the painter subcontracts the panel to a woodworker [4].

Several commissions align with the thesis laid out by Wackernagel, from gilding smaller carved pictures [1, doc. 274] to coloring big altarpieces. In 1439, for example, Lorenzo from Florence undertook to paint in colors and with figures and to gild the carved altarpiece for Rijeka Dubrovačka made by Radosav Vukčić, for 40 ducats [1, doc. 239]. The same day patron Florio Radosav Turcini commissioned that carved wooden "base" like the one in the church of St. Dominic for 17 ducats [1, doc. 238]. Three years later, in 1442, Marino de Bizia ordered Radosav Vukčić to make a similar altarpiece as the one he had made for Florio de Turzina. This time, Radosav charged one more ducat for the execution, totalling 18 ducats [1, doc. 275]. The replication and reference to existing paintings when commissioning new ones was indeed a common provision in contracts of that time.

Elena Favaro in 1975 highlighted a discussion among members of the painters' and woodcarvers' guild in Venice in 1457 regarding the boundaries of their respective roles. Painters raised concerns about unauthorized woodcarvers producing painted elements of altarpieces,

while woodcarvers objected to painters creating reliefs [9, pp. 68-69]. Giustizia Vecchia at that time stated that neither party should be allowed to take over each other's work. However, just two years later, they realized that such practice could not be prevented. This is evidenced by a record in the register of the Venetian painters' guild on May 19, 1458 [9, pp. 68-69]. Igor Fisković even claimed that neither could survive without the other, as they earned the most from artistic works where their knowledge and skills complemented each other [34, p. 135]. Their work did in fact intertwined, and the most renowned artists were commissioned for projects encompassing both aspects.

Clauses in contracts where the painter takes responsibility for making the wooden base or carvings on the painting or negotiates for the payment of wooden materials and carpentry work, were common in the contracts of this time in Dubrovnik. Many documents mention painters who are required to *facere et construere unam tabulam ligneam;* or construct some wooden barrier and corresponding relief ornaments. With these provisions, the contract encompassed all aspects included in the price, detailing what the artist-executor must furnish to the patron of the altarpiece for the agreed-upon price. Additionally, it was customary for the painter to oversee carpentry tasks during the fabrication of the altarpiece [6, pp. 14-15].

Of course, we can also find different examples of commissions. In one case in 1442 Ugrinović promised to take care of everything needed to make an icon of Madonna, but the wood, for four and a half ducats. The client, Ivan Palmotić, explicitly committed to providing the wood (*excepto lignamine*) [1, doc. 274]. It seems that Ivan Ugrinović did not fulfill the commission for a long time. About four years later, he finally reaches an agreement with the patron, and Ugrinović completes the image of Madonna with the Child on a wooden base, which, as we can learn from this document, was made by Radosav Vukčić [1, doc. 332].

In fact, most of the orders accepted by Radosav Vukčić himself were for the execution of the carved part of the product, essentially for a semi-finished product that the client would take to the painter and order painting, which would actually cost him more than carving. But in some cases, we must even allow for the possibility that Radosav undertook the entire order himself. For example, in 1447, the prioress of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Angels commissioned a polyptych with 14 panels with painted figures (*cum quatordecim campis in quibus pinguntur figure*) from Radosav. Whether Radosav executed (or at least arranged for) the painting of these figures, we cannot know. However, it is a fact that Radosav had to take care of the silvering of the altarpiece, as the contract stipulated that he would do so at his own expense [1, doc. 333].

Conclusion

The basic characteristics polychromed wooden sculpture required collaboration of sculptors – woodcarvers and painters, or at least the integration of sculptural and painterly skills. In Dubrovnik, we have exceptionally well preserved archival sources that are also notable in a broader context. As there were very few masters capable of creating altarpieces, the relationship between the patron and the master (either a woodcarver or a painter) is transparent and can be well monitored. In some cases, we can predict the number and names of assistants and apprentices in the workshop as well. However, relationships within the workshop remain unclear in most cases. Therefore, it is often impossible to determine whether the painter personally executed the carving work or if they had an employed assistant carver for that task. The relationship between Ivan Ugrinović and Radosav Vukčić appears somewhat clearer, as they evidently operated as equal masters. Unfortunately, very few works have been preserved, making it difficult to assess the quality and extent of carving in these extant pieces. Consequently, attribution of the carved elements through stylistic analysis is not feasible. In future research, it would also be necessary to examine the activities of woodcarvers operating independently from their joint activities with painters.

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