

Renaissance and Mannerist Stucco North of the Alps: Interdisciplinary Research

Zdeňka Míchalová Renata Tišlová Vladislava Říhová eds.

Renaissance and Mannerist Stucco North of the Alps: Interdisciplinary Research

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Introduction: Interdisciplinary research of Renaissance and Mannerist stucco

Zdeňka Míchalová – Renata Tišlová – Vladislava Říhová

Stucco as a specific material for works of art and art-and-craft decorations was often overlooked in art history as “minor art” of a kind or even likened to “*arte povera*” – art made of cheaper and more quickly workable material that does not bear comparison with much costlier and more exclusive sculptural works made of stone or bronze. This view is certainly not without justification – after all, in the recently completed overall mapping of Renaissance stucco works in the Czech territory, we could observe in many studied works surface adaptations of the stucco with which the authors endeavoured to imitate another material, above all marble. Yet, the importance of this material is indisputable. From the perspective of the basic formal and compositional possibilities, the stucco technique makes it possible to create figural works including fully plastic sculptures, high and low reliefs, as well as ornamental decorations ranging from rather simple structures to complex works. At the same time, stucco can bear various types of surface finish from monochrome paints to polychromy, gilding, incrustation or the addition of other materials. Moreover, as a highly variable technique, it was often used together with other types of art, typically in combination with mural painting. The works themselves were made using and varied scale of art-and-craft modelling techniques such as the layering of the stucco mass, modelling by hand and using tools, stamping from forms, the use of templates, shape cutting, etc. A considerable variability concerned also the formula and the used materials, which changed with the type of decoration and were also influenced by the availability of the materials and the habits of the particular craftsmen. In Italy, Giovanni da Udine discovered the formula for classical

ancient stucco where the filler of the upper layer consisted of marble dust; besides marble, however, we often encounter various kinds of sands or crushed quartz, for example.

The theme of stucco art requires interdisciplinarity in many respects, as only a combination of various methodological approaches from both the humanities and the natural sciences provides sets of data whose analysis and evaluation advance the existing knowledge in the context of, for example, art history, where the current trend is the examination of material aspects of works of art. The research of the original technological procedures, sources of raw materials, historical formulae and written sources reflecting the origin of the monuments as well as later reparative interventions, together with detailed material surveys, represent the basis for qualified restoration. Thus, interdisciplinarily conceived research contributes considerably to our knowledge and enables the application of the results in practice – in this case, in restoration and historic preservation.

The research project *Renaissance and Mannerist Stucco in Bohemia and Moravia* in 2018–2022 was devoted to interdisciplinary research.¹ It aimed to map, as widely as possible, the stucco art in the Czech territory until 1620, analyse selected works in detail and, based on the new knowledge, test restoration procedures in practice. A broadly set up team of experts dealt with numerous themes in several research areas. From the art history perspective, the research spheres included, for example, the import of the technique to central Europe and the artists migrating from northern Italy and a part of Switzerland (the Ticino region), the reception of stylistic elements of the Italian Renaissance and international Mannerism and their adaptation in local art practice or basic “topographic” research enabling to view the material, so far little known, in the full width of its stylistic, material and technological variability. New groups of works interconnected by authors or the ordering parties have been identified thanks to a thorough mapping of the localities. For selected monuments, art history research was accompanied by natural science analyses whose results brought distinctive discoveries concerning material and technology specifics of stucco monuments in the Czech territory. These analyses were selectively

¹ The project was financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the main recipient was the Faculty of Restoration, University of Pardubice; the partners of the project included the National Heritage Institute and the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc. Project ID: DG18P02OVV005.

complemented with restoration surveys focused on historical and modern restoration interventions in the stucco works, which made it possible to assess the authenticity of the studied monuments.

The present book follows a conference that took place in the final stage of the project in the autumn of 2022² and complements a collective monograph bearing the same name as the research project, *Renaissance and Mannerist Stucco in Bohemia and Moravia*.³ While the monograph completing five-year research contains overview chapters focused on the cultural-historical context of Renaissance stucco works in the Czech lands, their material and technology aspects and a selective catalogue in the form of independent studies, the present volume deals with topics that exceed the Czech Republic's boundaries or those that could not have been sufficiently reflected in the published monograph because of their specific character. The case studies contained in it approach the theme of Renaissance stucco art in the broader region north of the Alps from various perspectives of interdisciplinary research. Based on the thematic focus of the individual chapters, the present publication is divided into five circles – the art history, materiality, the 20th-century perspective, restoration and the catalogue. Each of the contributions is the result of interdisciplinary research, while the book as a whole presents the theme of Renaissance stucco from the perspectives of traditional art history, technology and restoration history research. This can be illustrated by the three chapters devoted to the Star Summer Palace – all of which begin with basic data, but from which three different lines of research are derived.

The first section, “Art History”, includes, from the methodology perspective, contributions based on traditional methods – archival research and formal analysis set in a broader interdisciplinary context – and studies focused on the interpretation of the importance of stucco decorations. It presents the issues of stucco art on the Rudolphine court in Prague, the European context of Polish Renaissance stucco works, a chapter focused on the importance of illusive views shown on the example of the decorations at Bučovice Castle and, finally, the iconography of the Star Summer Palace in Prague.

2 *Renaissance and Mannerist Stucco North of the Alps: internal and external ties, contexts, and correlations: book of abstracts / Renesanční a manýristické štukatérství v záalpských zemích: vnitřní a vnější vazby, kontexty a vztahy: sborník abstraktů.* Pardubice 2022.

3 WAISSER 2022.

The “Materiality” part incorporates two studies presenting the complex surveys of particular stucco works with an emphasis on technology and material analyses and processing, as an example, the stucco works of the Star Summer Palace in Prague and the decoration of the dome of the Boim Chapel in Lviv. Two more contributions view the issues of materiality more generally, concisely presenting specific groups of monuments – in the first case, the stucco parts of Renaissance epitaphs in the Czech lands; in the second, marble imitations around 1600 in the wider region north of the Alps.

The third part, “20th-Century Perspective”, views the historical material through the prism of its “second life” in the spheres of the history of research and the history of historic preservation. A historiographical contribution on the so-called Lublin Renaissance shows how the post-war ideology was reflected in the research of early modern art, a chapter focused predominantly on vanished monuments in northwest Bohemia testifies to the inconsiderate treatment of a certain part of the cultural heritage in socialist Czechoslovakia, whereas a contribution on the modern restoration of the Star Summer Palace in Prague illustrates cases when post-war monuments received quality care.

The “Restoration” section contains two contributions. The first one presents, on the example of Kratochvíle Castle, the issues related to the restoration of Renaissance stucco in a long-term horizon from historical interventions to the present; the second one describes the circumstances of the particular restoration of an exclusive work – the Green Vault (*Grünes Gewölbe*) in Dresden.

The final part, “Catalogue”, offers a listing of Renaissance stucco monuments in the Czech territory, along with a methodological introduction. It contains a list of localities with short annotations, made based on the overall survey, and links to an online database where more detailed information is provided about the individual monuments. The brief catalogue was included in the book to show the scope of the studied material and to “fixate” the state of knowledge of Czech Renaissance stucco works at a certain point where it may be smoothly followed by further research.

ART HISTORY

Hans Mont, Adriaen de Vries, Giovanni Battista Quadri and the stucco decoration of the Prague Castle

Eliška Fučíková

The death of Emperor Maximilian II in 1576 thwarted the sovereign's magnanimous plan to build a structure outside the gates of Vienna that would provide an adequate and self-contained space for his personal activities and avocations. The sculptor Giambologna, whom the ruler would have liked to have at his service, sent two young artists instead to accomplish the emperor's scheduled project. They had successfully participated in similar projects in Italy and their artistic styles were closely related. The sculptor Hans Mont and the painter Bartholomeus Spranger were – each in their own discipline – exceptionally talented representatives of the style of the period and their works were in perfect harmony. However, when the emperor died, the works on Neugebäude Palace ceased, primarily because of a lack of money.¹ The new emperor Rudolf II kept at his court only some artists who had worked for his father. Spranger and Mont, who had only recently arrived, were not granted permanent positions; however, they obtained an opportunity to present their mastery to the new ruler in 1577 when they were commissioned for the decoration of the Triumphal Arch erected on the Old Farmers' Market to celebrate the first entry of Rudolf II into Vienna after his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor. Karel van Mander, whom the two artists asked for assistance back then, recorded the advancing works. Mont designed the arch's architecture and sculptural decoration: *“He made for this also some large figures eight to nine feet tall, made first with skeleton of woven hay and then covered with clay. At the front on either side were to be seen Emperor Maximilian and Rudolph, both from life, and among other figures an upright, nude Neptun, which was an excellent figure, in a beautiful, grand imposing stance.*

¹ LIETZMANN 1987.

Above the entrance, over the open, circular field he made the horse Pegasus because the music was arranged there for when the Emperor passed by. This horse was twice life-size and at great height. All figures were made of clay and painted white with oil paint so they shone like white marble”.² A description of Spranger’s contribution followed – the painted decoration of the arch. Van Mander further recorded that Mont then travelled to the imperial court in Prague, while Spranger stayed in Vienna. By coincidence, the life stories of the illustrious sculptor and the future maestro painter of the imperial court began to part. Van Mander noted that Mont suffered from a dearth of interest in his work, which led to his leaving the court without saying goodbye, and he reputedly disappeared somewhere in Turkey. At the time, apparently, there were no suitable spaces for a stucco decorator at Prague Castle where the sculptor could have applied his skills; instead, he probably produced some freestanding sculptures. Fortunately, the Ulm-based merchant Hans Ulrich Krafft plausibly recorded the sculptor’s life story and shared it with Spranger during his visit to Prague in 1584. An injury to his left eye from a game at the Ball Game Hall at Prague Castle deprived Hans Mont of three-dimensional vision; therefore, he left for Ulm in 1582 where he was hired as the builder of one of the town’s bastions – architecture seems to have been his other profession. He then departed for Italy and after his return to Ulm, he met with Krafft once again, on their common holiday in 1584. Mont’s journey to Italy appears to have prefigured his finding a new job there. Although Spranger and Mont were faithful friends, the painter was astonished at not having received any information about the sculptor’s difficulties, and he was convinced that the emperor had no idea either.³ Although a number of the various sculptures by Adriaen de Vries and Giovanni Battista Quadri are included in the *Kunstammer’s* inventory from 1607–1611, Mont’s name is not even mentioned once.⁴ Only the signed drawings⁵ as well as Bartholomeus Spranger’s *Allegory* on

2 Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–1604)*. With an Introduction and Translation, 6 vols, edited by Hessel Miedema, Doornspijk 1998, for Spranger and Mont see: Vol. 1, fol. 241/p. 345 – fol. 274v/p. 354; Vol. 5, pp. 99–108.

3 *Reisen und Gefangenschaft Hans Ulrich Kraffts*, edited by Konrad Dieterich Haszler, *Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart* 61, 1861, pp. 388–390.

4 BAUER – HAUPT 1976.

5 GERSZI 1987; Hans Mont, Five marching figures, brown brush drawing, brown wash, highlighted with white, chalk underdrawing, blue paper, 165 × 156 mm, formerly in Van Regteren Altena Collection, sold in 2004; idem, Military procession, brown pen and ink drawing, highlighted with white, 182 × 260 mm, New York, Metropolitan Museum, inv. no. 2003.370; and more e.g. in Budapest and Florence.

the *Triumph of Fidelity over Destiny – Allegory on the Fate of Hans Mont* painted in 1607 provide one with an idea about Mont's art production.⁶ As indicated by the inscription, Spranger used his friend's composition for the painting. Why did he do so? And why in that specific year? A new indication seems to have emerged recently that could help to elucidate it. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has lately acquired Spranger's previously unknown painting *The Body of Christ Supported by Angels* that was engraved and printed by Hendrik Goltzius (Fig. 1.1).⁷ On the print, the date 1587 was unobtrusively added, using tiny numerals, to the edge of the stone tomb. Its composition is also known from a small-sized relief that E. K. J. Reznicek once attributed to Spranger – a fact that was universally accepted.⁸ The relief, previously owned by Lord Seilern, did not pass to the collection of the Courtauld Institute after his death, but most likely remained in the possession of one of his heirs, and later went missing. The surviving photograph indicates that the relief composition should have continued on the two vertical sides, and similarly, the surface of the terracotta relief was supposed to receive some treatment, perhaps polychrome (Fig. 1.2). The engraving is a reproduction of the original and it presents the observer with a mirror-image composition; however, the sides on the painting fully correspond to the sides on the relief, meaning the painter must have seen the original relief. Apart from minor exceptions, he faithfully followed the template, adjusted the format, and for composition reasons he left out the third angel on the right. Spranger masterfully transferred the three-dimensional original onto canvas, yet some details reveal his figural style, e.g., the angel figures. He must have had a compelling reason for choosing a composition for his painting that was made by his faithful friend. Spranger could have chosen the theme of death and resurrection because he had learned about Mont's death. The faintly visible date 1587 on the stone tomb edge is not included in the legend with the sheet dedication and the painter's name. Exactly ten years earlier, in 1577, the two artists met for the

6 For an extensive text on the painting see REITZ 2015, pp. 552–556.

7 FUČÍKOVÁ 2020, pp. 71–80. Bartholomeus Spranger, *The Body of Christ Supported by Angels*, oil on copperplate, 33.7 × 26.6 cm, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. SK-A-5073.

8 REZNICEK 1968, pp. 370–375, fig. CLXXIII. Terracotta, 22, 1x16,7/18, 5 cm. 1962 bought by Lord Seilern from art market, after his death the whereabouts not known.



▲▲
1.1 Bartholomeus Spranger,
 The Body of Christ Supported
 by Angels, oil on copperplate,
 33.7 × 26.6 cm, Rijksmuseum
 Amsterdam

▶
1.2 Hans Mont, The Body of
 Christ Supported by Angels,
 terracotta,
 22.1 × 16.7/18.5 cm

▲▶
1.3 Prague Castle, Spanish Hall,
 temporarily opened original
 space of the niche, 1604–1611,
 from mid 19th century covered
 by mirror, Prague Castle
 collection, restoration report
 1990

last time, when they worked on the decoration of the Triumphal Arch in Vienna.⁹ Twenty years later, in 1607, the painter returned to his colleague's composition to commemorate, as stated in the accompanying text, that extraordinary artist who could not prove his talent due to his unfortunate fate.¹⁰ The small-sized relief *The Body of Christ Supported by Angels* reveals the presumable direction of sculpture at Rudolf II's court had Mont not suffered an injury and had he remained working for the emperor.

It was not until 1589 that Adriaen de Vries appeared at the imperial court as a new sculptor only temporarily "lent" by the House of Este court in Turin.¹¹ Despite the protests of Duke Carlo Emanuele, the original one-year "loan" was protracted to five years. In Prague, the sculptor produced models for his two statues of *History of Psyche*, *Hercules Fighting a Dragon*, and probably also for further sculptures to be cast from bronze. In August 1594, de Vries had to leave for The Hague because his father had died. He then returned to Italy, among other things, to study classical sculpture in Cortile Belvedere in Vatican, in Palazzo Farnese, and in other Roman collections. He may have kept the appearances of famous classical statues via small wax or clay models both for himself and to present them to potential buyers; therefore, the references to classical works are also found in his own works. Even then he stayed in touch with the imperial court through Rudolf Coraduz, the emperor's envoy and agent in Rome.¹² In the spring of 1596, he relocated to Augsburg where he received a tremendously prestigious commission to create models for two monumental fountains in the town. It was not until 1601 that he could accept an offer to return to Prague and become the court sculptor of Emperor Rudolf II.¹³ Shortly

9 Because of their close collaboration on Viennese projects, Spranger was believed to have contributed sculptures as well. However, historical archival documents about the two artists' joint projects in Vienna revealed that Spranger was paid exclusively for the painting decoration and Mont for sculptures. This was further evidenced by Karel van Mander who in his description of the triumphal arch erected in Vienna for Rudolf II's first ceremonial entry after his imperial coronation described Mont's work on it – from the arch's design to its sculptural decoration. Only then did he add Spranger's share: "Spranger did the painting: that is, in copper-coloured grisaille, histories corresponding to various virtues, figures and suchlike; everything which stood in between such as Justice, Wisdom and suchlike; they were histories ancient and modern, everything very art-full and made in an extremely lively way; and some children too, larger than life-sized, in colour, who displayed very beautiful poses." Mander (note 2).

10 REITZ 2015.

11 SCHOLTEN 1998, pp. 17–19.

12 Ibidem, p. 19.

13 Ibidem, p. 22–23.

afterwards, the emperor assigned him the task of creating larger than life-size stucco statues for the south wall niches of the recently initiated construction of the New Hall, the emperor's glyptothèque. Regrettably, this monumental decoration made of material that was rather unusual for de Vries has not survived; the statues were removed during Pacassi's renovation of Prague Castle in the 1760s-1770s (Fig. 1.3). They then disappeared without a trace. The building office (Hofbauamt) fonds in the Prague Castle Archives include the *Baupatikularia* from 1611 that contain information about what and when Adriaen de Vries and Giovanni Battista Quadri completed for the decoration of a new building erected above the Prague Castle stables and for the *Kunstkammer*.¹⁴ The list associated with de Vries states that the sculptor produced ten statues for the New Hall (called also New Spanish Hall). Based on the remaining plans, there were nine niches in the southern wall of the hall. The last, tenth, statue on the list could have been placed in the hall as a freestanding object. The *Allegory of Victory* would best correspond with a significant placement. As described, it held a statuette in its hand, the attribute of sculpture, which was apposite for the hall holding the emperor's sculpture collection. Based on the description, its composition could have been analogous to De Vries's bronze statue *Allegory of Imperium Triumphant over Avaritia* surviving from 1610¹⁵ or *Flora* from around 1612.¹⁶ It is not recorded in the 1621 inventory which suggests that it was placed somewhere else in the *Kunstkammer*.

The second version of the list, the settlement of accounts for the completed works, reveals valuable information that Adriaen de Vries submitted to the office himself.¹⁷ The sculptor informed that he delivered five statues for the newly built hall – *Mars and Wolf*, *Faun Carrying Bacchus*, *Venus and Cupid*, *Hercules with a Club and Lion's Skin*, and *Allegory of the Morning with Drapery, Jug, and Flowers*. He stated that these five sculptures had been standing in the hall for one and a half years, i.e. since 1609. He listed five more items – and *Meleager with a Dog and Boar's Head*, *Apollo with a Bow and Drapery*, *Bacchante with a Jug*, *Allegory of the River with a Water Jug and Fruit*, *Allegory of Victory with an Eagle, Statuette*,

¹⁴ FUČÍKOVÁ 2006, pp. 26–35.

¹⁵ Adriaen de Vries, *Allegory of Imperium triumphant over Avaritia*, bronze, Prague 1610, h. 77, 3 cm, Washington, National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, inv. no. 1942.9.148.

¹⁶ Adriaen de Vries, *Flora*, Prague, c. 1612, h. 47 cm, Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste, inv. no. 267.

¹⁷ FUČÍKOVÁ 2006, p. 33, Anhang 2.

and Wreath in Her Right Hand. These five items were completed and prepared for installation. Thus, Rudolf II could have seen the hall decorated with statues at the end of his life.

The next paragraph of Adriaen de Vries's list further stated that for the altarpiece, elaborated by Giovanni Battista Quadri, he modelled the central scene with the *Birth of Christ* (The Madonna and Child), two angels on the sides, two more small angels, and an eagle. He charged another 300 thalers for these six pieces (Fig. 1.4). The total sum for all of his work amounted to 2,300 thalers; however, after a discussion with the sculptor, the authorised committee comprising of the representatives of Hofbauamt and the architect Filippi, reduced the amount to the resulting sum of 2,000 threescores of Meissen groschen that was paid on 21 October 1611.¹⁸ It is questionable whether the relief displayed at Brandýs Castle is identical with the one stated in the accounts because, based on the description, at least two big angels and the imperial eagle from the description are missing. Yet, it is possible that the missing parts could have been added separately. There is evidence of such a case: the epitaph Spranger painted for his father-in-law Nicolas Müller originally included two De Vries's statues of angels that are long missing.¹⁹ It is beyond all doubt that Adriaen de Vries made the Madonna and Child in the relief. As attested to the list of works of the two sculptors, it was intended for the *New Hall* and the *Kunstkammer* which means that the relief – most likely at the emperor's request – could be rare evidence of a perfect collaboration of the two sculptors on a single work. The emperor could have chosen the template as well, which was Albrecht Dürer's woodcut from his Marian cycle. After all, the painters Spranger, Von Aachen, Heintz, and Hans Vredeman de Vries teamed up in a similar collaboration for an altarpiece painting for a cathedral.²⁰

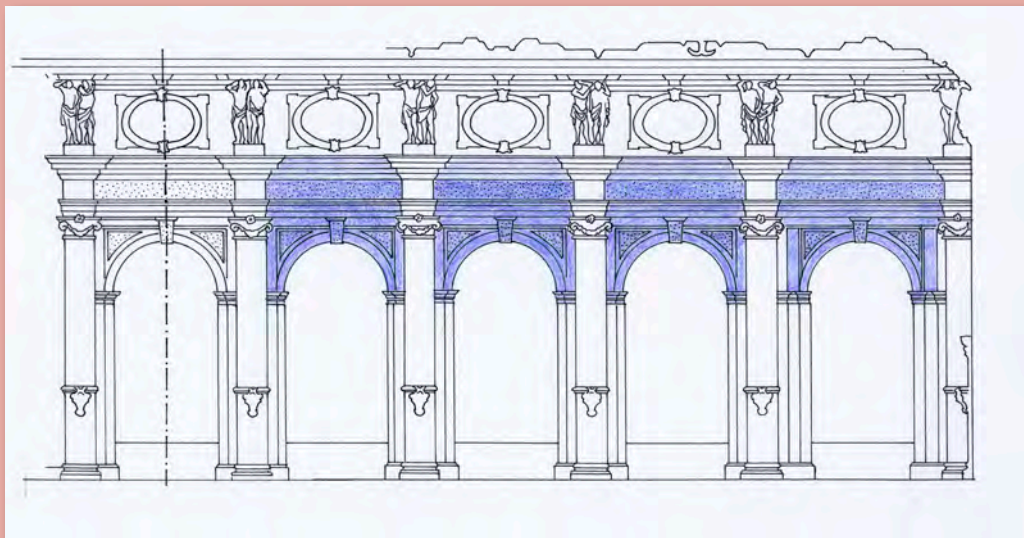
The sculptor Giovanni Battista Quadri also submitted his accounts for submitted work to the same building office fonds.²¹ The bills included works he created

18 Ibidem, p. 33, Anhang 2: "Mehr hab zu dem altar, welchen herr Joan Patista Quadri aussgemacht, erstlich die mittlere figur, von der Geburth Christi possiert, dessgleichen auf jeder seiten zween engel, item zween kleinere engel und ein adler, von welchen sechs stucken ich auch treulich verdient, dreihundert thaler."

19 METZLER 2014, pp. 121–122, nro. 52.

20 Ibidem, pp. 146–148, nro. 72.

21 FUČÍKOVÁ 2006, pp. 33–34.



► **1.4** Brandýs Castle, Adriaen de Vries, Madonna with the Child, part of the relief modeled by him in the Adoration of the Magi by Giovanni Battista Quadri, stucco, Prague Castle collection, report after restoration, 1966

▲ **1.5** Prague Castle, Scheme of the original stucco decoration of the southern wall of the Spanish hall from 1605 to 1607, drawing by Petr Chotěbor

for the imperial collection between 1607 and the end of September 1611. Yet the listed statues were not the first of Quadri's accomplishments at Prague Castle.²² As early as 1604, the emperor sought a sculptor who would be able to produce stucco and fired clay artworks. As documented by the correspondence between Archduke Maximilian and Philip Lang, the initially addressed Hubert Gerhard rejected the offer pointing out that there was an excellent and experienced stucco sculptor – his friend Adriaen de Vries – at Prague Castle.

The construction of the New Hall for the emperor's glyptothèque began in 1602 and progressed rapidly; therefore, its interior decoration was discussed only two years later. As mentioned above, Adriaen de Vries was commissioned to decorate nine huge niches in the hall's southern wall with larger-than-life statues. The need arose to seek more competent stucco modellers for the exceptionally extensive and demanding decoration of the flat parts of the walls.

Since 1601, the sculptor Giovanni Battista Quadri had assisted Hans Reichle in decorating the courtyard of the Bishop's Palace in Brixen, in particular with terracotta figures of the House of Habsburg members. Prior to 26 April 1605, he completed his independent work on the Tomb of Saint Hartwig and Hartmann in the Brixen Cathedral, and then all traces of him disappeared. Apparently, he was summoned to the imperial residence – perhaps at de Vries's recommendation – to contribute to the New Hall wall decoration (Fig. 1.5). The records from 1606 in the Hofbauamt of Bohemian Chamber office mentioned him in accounts along with his colleagues.²³ As is evident from the surviving parts of the original decoration, some are masterpieces (Fig. 1.6 to Fig. 1.9) while others show average quality (Fig. 1.10). An overall idea about the contribution of Quadri and other masters would be possible after the cleaning of the northern wall of the hall. The photos from the northern wall show a thick layer of successive coats of white paint that devalue the original stucco decoration.

Nevertheless, the New Hall's stucco decoration was not the single task Quadri was appointed to at Prague Castle. A list of his sculptures appears in the only surviving section of the 1607–1611 inventory, perhaps of the largest room of the

22 FUČÍKOVÁ 1991, pp. 28–34.

23 Archiv Pražského hradu, Hofbauamt, inv. nro. 420 (1601–1620). Southern wall was restored 1990 by Jan Bradna, Zdeněk Fučík, Jiří Novotný, Jiří Kačer, Marcela Kačerová.