

A Family Affair: The High Altar of San Giacomo di Rialto, or Alessandro Vittoria's Last Work

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Abstract San Giacomo at Rialto, a church under the patronage of the Doge, was restored by the State in the years around 1600. Three new altars were financed by three different guilds. The high altar was commissioned by the Casaroli guild and adorned with sculptures. In 1604, Giovanni Stringa listed the statue of St. James as a work by Alessandro Vittoria. However, at this date the artist was certainly too elderly to carve stone sculptures by himself. The investigation of the hitherto little-studied Casaroli Altar may shed new light both on the dynamics of the later Vittoria's workshop and on his closest relatives-assistants.

Keywords Alessandro Vittoria. Andrea dall'Aquila. Vigilio Rubini. Venetian Renaissance Sculpture. Venetian Trade Guilds. San Giacomo di Rialto.

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1 "Per maggior ornamento": Renovating San Giacomo at Rialto

In the Serenissima, reliance on public institutions and civic pride imbued religious sentiment. This is also reflected in the account of the Church of San Giacomo di Rialto written by the Canon Giovanni Stringa in 1604.¹ At the time this small but significant church had just been restored with state funds.² In addition to the parish priest Girolamo dall'Acqua, the inscriptions mention the names of the Provveditori al Sal, the magistrates who financed public buildings. The restoration was carried out following the request of the Senate with the approval of the Doge Marino Grimani. Annexed to the Basilica of St. Mark, the church was indeed under ducal patronage. A second inscription related to the renovation bears the date 25th March 1600. On that day, three anniversaries were celebrated: the feast of the Annun-

1 Sansovino, Stringa 1604, cc. 155v-156v.

2 Stanziati in 1598 and in 1599: ASVe, Cancelleria inferiore. Doge, 200, c. 15rv; Avery 1996, 2, 564-5 cat. 109.

ciation, the legendary birth of Venice and the anniversary of the presumed foundation of San Giacomo itself. According to the legend, the first stone of the temple was in fact laid on 25th March 421 by those same Christians who were fleeing from Attila and gave birth to the city.³

The time had come for some new altars. Three of them were sponsored by the same number of *scuole delle Arti* (Schools of the Arts). The increasing pomp and splendour reveal the competitive spirit of the guilds. On 7th June 1600, the Garbelladori and Ligadori begged the doge for permission to erect the altar on the right wall of the church; they positioned there the altarpiece depicting the Annunciation by Marco Vecellio. Then, that same year, on 10th September, the Casaroli and Ternieri guild asked for and obtained permission to renovate an altar previously held by the Scuola dei Compravendi, who had it 'del tutto abbandonato'. Marino Grimani approved, but on 1st December 1600, 'per maggiore ornamento', he transferred the concession to the high altar – after all, the patron saint of the Casaroli was St. James [fig. 1]. A total of eight marble sculptures were placed on the new polychrome altar, including the *San*

Giacomo [fig. 15], which Stringa promptly recalled as a work by Alessandro Vittoria. Finally, on 9th April 1601, the wealthiest Orefici and Gioiellieri guild, which was previously housed in San Silvestro, was granted permission to build the altar on the left wall of the church.⁴ Built according to a drawing by Vincenzo Scamozzi in 1602, the altar was equipped with bronze statues by Girolamo Campagna early on. When the work was completed in 1607, the Orefici had already spent over 1,800 ducats.

The well-documented altar of the Orefici has been studied extensively in recent times. The high altar, on the other hand, has received little attention. It is a challenging work, both due to the lacunae of documents and the impossibility of acknowledging Vittoria's complete authorship in the sculptures. The fact is that, at these dates, the artist was too elderly to carve anymore. If examined more carefully, and compared with better documented works, the Casaroli altar can therefore provide useful information on the later years of Vittoria's workshop and on its closest collaborators, who I shall try to identify. First of all, however, let us consider the scope of the commission.

2 The Altar of the Scuola dei Casaroli e Ternieri

In Venice, the Scuole delle Arti were brotherhoods for the owners and the labourers of the more than one hundred specific professional sectors disciplined by the Giustizia Vecchia. The handicraft origin of these consortiums was the first difference from the wealthier Scuole Grandi, born from the Scuola dei Battuti, and the innu-

merable other *scuole minori*, which in their turn could be distinguished between those of a lay or purely devotional nature. Only the Scuole grandi and a few minor *scuole* could afford to build their own seat. The scuole delle Arti, on the other hand, generally convened next to an altar, where religious services were also held.⁵

³ This information is drawn from epigraphs walled in the church and also transcribed by Sansovino, Stringa 1604, c. 156rv. For the *giuspatronato*, Gardani 1966, 15-16, 73-6. Furthermore see Collins and Guidarelli in this volume.

⁴ For the documents, ASVe, Cancelleria inferiore. Doge, 78, cc. 42r, 45rv, 50r; Gardani 1966, 30-1, 42 fn. 27; Jones 2016, 3, 208-10 docs 9.2-4. For the attribution of the *San Giacomo*, Sansovino, Stringa 1604, c. 155v.

⁵ On the altars of the *scuole delle Arti*: Humfrey, MacKenney 1986; Martin 1998, 64-72; Jones 2016, 1: 34-5.

Sellers of edible oil, honey, cheese and meat from fresh or salted pork belonged to the Scuola dei Casaroli e Ternieri. In the aforementioned supplication of 10th September 1600, the brethren declared that they had had an altar in St. James' since '... already 200 years and more'. We do not know what that primitive altar looked like, but the Casaroli asked for and obtained permission to renovate an altar previously held by the Compravendi. However, on 1 December, 'per convenienti rispetti a noi esposti', the Doge turned the concession around: the Casaroli were given the more prestigious (and more expensive) task of erecting the high altar.⁶

We would like to know more about the choices they made, the means of financing, the timing and the costs of this undertaking. But the documentation that has survived is lacking. At the State Archives in Venice, there are no accounting ledgers of the Scuola dating prior to 1683.⁷ The first *Libri delle parti* are also too recent, starting respectively in 1626 and 1686. There we can read that the oldest documents had already been lost and stolen in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁸ Finally, in the two *Mariegole* in the Correr Museum Library, there is at most a copy of the supplication and two subsequent ducal concessions, dating from 1600.⁹

However, there is no lack of encouraging information. In an inscription walled in the presbytery we can read 'DIVO IACOBO MAIORI | CASEARII III NO (nas) APRILIS | MDCII'.¹⁰ The date 3rd April 1602 seems to refer to the completion of the altar construction, which in fact, in 1604, was described by Stringa as 'fabricato [...] in forma rara e singolare'. However, his comments on the 'bella statua di San Giacomo [...] di mano del Vittoria' that 'va posta' in the 'nicchio' are more ambiguous.¹¹ If considered in a literal sense, the verbal form 'va posta' would suggest that in 1604 the sculpture was not yet on the altar. Similarly, Stringa referred to a 'tabernacolo, in cui starà il corpo santissimo del Signore'. In this case, we are certain that the work was not accomplished. It was not the Casaroli who commissioned the custody of the Sacrament, but the Senate, with a resolution dated 28th February 1605. The 17th-century tabernacle is lost and the current one, made of marble, was ordered in 1747 to replace one made of wood.¹² At the time of the visit of the *primicerius* on 28th March 1609, the mensa had not yet been consecrated, but the entire altar was commanded 'dai Casaroli', except for the tabernacle 'fatto dai Signori del Sal'.¹³

⁶ For the document, cf. *supra*, fn. 4. The expression "200 anni e più" should not be taken as literal. In 1436, the Casaroli would have gathered in Sant'Aponal according to Manno 1995, 40-1, to whom I also refer for a description of the Arte and for the archival sources, together with Vio 2004, 711-13 no. 670.

⁷ ASVe, Arti, 84.

⁸ Both in ASVe, Arti, 82 (on the loss of the earliest material, c. 1r of both the *Libri*). Sporadic copies of resolutions for the years 1486 to 1674 in ASVe, Arti, 68/2, not relevant to this research.

⁹ BMCV, IV, 9, c. 104rv; BMCV, IV, 127.

¹⁰ A second epigraph mentions the concession by Doge Grimani. Both of these are transcribed in Sansovino, Stringa 1604, c. 155v.

¹¹ Sansovino, Stringa 1604, c. 155v.

¹² For the resolution of 1605, ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Terra, Registri, 75, c. 210rv; Gardani 1966, 31, 39 footnotes 17-18 (even for the 1747 resolution concerning the new tabernacle).

¹³ On the document, Gardani 1966, 85-8.



Figure 1
*High Altar. 1600-1602. Church of San Giacomo
di Rialto, Venice. Photo © Böhm*



Figure 2
Tommaso Contin, *Altar of the Nicopeia*. 1617. Basilica
of St Mark, Venice. Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice



Figure 3
Alessandro Vittoria and workshop, *Monument to Alessandro Vittoria*. 1602-1603. Church of San Zaccaria, Venice.
Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

Not a single source names the architect. Suzanne Martin does not exclude that the project may be the work of Vittoria himself.¹⁴ Indeed, the pairs of columns on two different depth levels, the pulvinated frieze and the interrupted entablature recall the more ancient altar of the Crocifisso, now in San Zanipolo, formerly in the Scuola della Giustizia in San Fantin and possibly designed by Vittoria around 1580.¹⁵ In 1600, the year of the concession to the Casaroli, the elderly artist was still designing altars, such as the one in the Scuola del Rosario in San Domenico, executed by Melchiesedec Longhena, now unfortunately lost.¹⁶ However, it seems to me that this altarpiece better reflects the later altars of the *Nicopeia* and the Sacrament in the Basilica of St. Mark, designed in 1617 by Tommaso Contin [fig. 2].¹⁷ The design of the *cy-masa* is quite similar, featuring a triangular pediment framed by curvilinear pediment elements at the back.

In addition to the name of the architect, the lost documents of the Scuola could have disclosed the scale of the expenditure, which must have been significant. I do not know if the State commission for the tabernacle indicates that the Casaroli was at a certain point no longer able to finance the undertaking. If this is so, the inclusion of a deliberation of 21st January 1604 in their *mariegola* might not be a coincidence. The magistrates at the Giustizia Vecchia and the Savi alla Mercanzia warned those *gastaldi* who overspent on 'litte, fabbriche et altre cose stravacanti' without first consulting their brethren. It was then up to the *Arti* to settle debts through extraordinary payments, 'con grave danno di esse Scole et di tutto il populo'.¹⁸ Such payments, on the other hand, also covered the considerable costs of the Altar of the Orefici.¹⁹

¹⁴ Martin 1998, 224-6 cat. 13. It should be stressed that the Casaroli altar is adorned with a golden mosaic in the background. This element is also present in the Monument of Jacopo Soranzo in the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Murano (1599 circa), in the background of the portrait bust by Vittoria (see Annibali 2020). Nonetheless, the use of golden mosaic was not a prerogative of Vittoria's workshop; for instance, it is used in the Tomb of Marino Grimani and Morosina Morosini in San Giuseppe di Castello (1598-1604), designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, with sculptures by Girolamo Campagna and bronzes by Cesare Gropo (see Jones 2016, 3, 81-196 cat. 8).

¹⁵ On this altar, Martin 1998, 236-41 cat. 18; Finocchi Ghersi 2013.

¹⁶ Avery 1999b, 175-6 doc. 145. On the relationship between Vittoria and Melchiesedec, Hopkins 2006, 246-52.

¹⁷ On these altars, Kryza-Gersch 2008.

¹⁸ For the document, BMCV, IV, 9, cc. 107v-108r.

¹⁹ Cf. *supra*, fn. 5.



Figure 4 Andrea dall'Aquila, *Madonna and Child* (detail). 1601 ca.
Church of Santa Maria Assunta dei Gesuiti, Venice.
Photo © Didier Descouens CC BY-SA 4.0

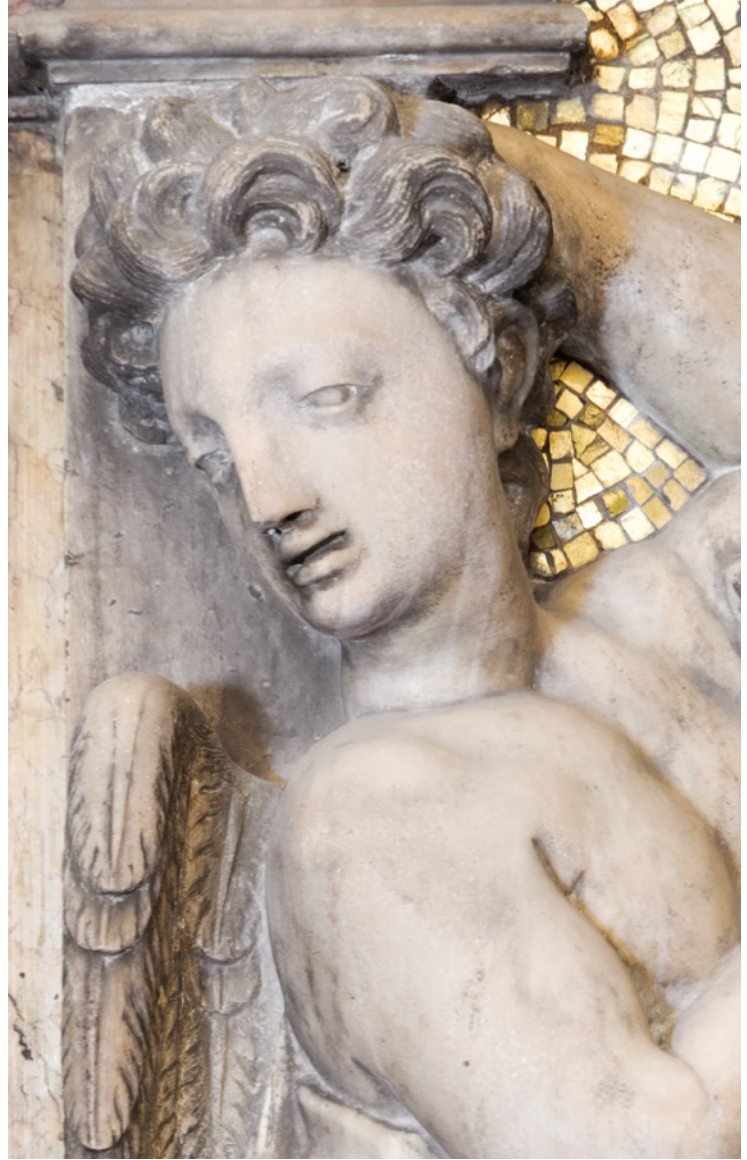


Figure 5 Workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (Andrea dall'Aquila),
Angel (detail). 1600-1602. Church of San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice
Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

3 Confirmation and Theory for the Late Years of Vittoria's Workshop

Evidently, the *Scuola's* papers do not resolve our doubts as to the autography of the sculptures. Setting aside the excitement of the sources, all recent literature traces the execution back to the workshop of Vittoria.²⁰ The remarks of Manfred Leithe-Jasper and Victoria Avery seem to me particularly relevant. According to Leithe-Jasper, a large part of the work was carried out by a collaborator of Vittoria, who he hypothetically identified as Giulio dal Moro – I will return to this theory later.²¹ As for Avery, she points out the derivative nature of this 'workshop product': the caryatids are descended from the "Monumento de Franza" in the Doge's Palace, dated 1575; the St. James from the statue of identical subject for the Scuola Grande della Misericordia, circa 1581; lastly, the little angels from those in the Tiepolo Chapel of St. Saba in St. Antonin, dated 1592.²²

We know that around 1600 the more than 75-year-old Vittoria was no longer carving stone. He had even abandoned the Scuola dei Tagliapietra in 1597.²³ In this sense, the words of Abbot Giulio Brunetti, agent of Francesco Maria II della Rovere, are significant. Brunetti was supposed to find a sculptor in Venice to carve the statue of Federico da Montefeltro in marble and then send it to

Urbino. In July 1603, the agent informed the duke that Vittoria 'è tanto vecchio che non attende più a niente'.²⁴ The statue of Federico da Montefeltro was then commissioned to Campagna, who was about a quarter of a century younger and estimated to be the best at that moment (in the meantime he was working on the altar of the Orefici, as well as on the tomb of Doge Grimani).²⁵

It is therefore possible that, after half a century's successful career, the Casaroli altar was Vittoria's last commission. Some years earlier, between 1579 and 1584, he had set a new standard in the patronage of the *scuole delle Arti* with the Marzeri altar in San Zulian, completed with Francesco Smeraldi and his friend Palma il Giovane.²⁶ Also of significance, later in the 1580s, was the Luganegheri altar in San Salvador, that suffered the same fate as the Casaroli altar regarding a lack of documents, both from the brotherhood and from the artist's personal records.²⁷

But the documents of the 'Commissaria' are nevertheless precious in our case. They shed light on the assistants still at Alessandro's side around 1600. Two of his 'nepoti' stand out: Andrea dall'Aquila and Vigilio Rubini. The workshop was, after all, frequently a family affair. These two relatives-collaborators are also mentioned in the mas-

²⁰ On sources, Sansovino, Stringa 1604, c. 155v; Temanza 1778, 493; Selvatico 1847, 390. On recent bibliography, Serra 1921, 84; Venturi 1935-37, 3: 142 fn. 1; Cessi 1961-62, 2: 25. The altar appears on the list of removed works in Finocchi Gherzi 2020, 140.

²¹ Leithe-Jasper 1963, 213-14.

²² Avery 1996, 2, 564-5 cat. 109. For the "Monumento de Franza", Wolters 2010, 54; for the *San Giacomo* today at the Embassy of Portugal in Rome, Finocchi Gherzi 2020, 99 cat. 40; for the sculptures at Sant'Antonin, Avery 1999b, 164-7 docs 133(i)-(viii).

²³ Avery 2015a, 104 fn. 8.

²⁴ For the letter, Betti 1821, 111.

²⁵ Vittoria still benefited from considerable influence. In 1606, the Duke of Urbino asked him to visit Campagna to ascertain the quality of the *Federico da Montefeltro*: Siracusano 2022, 135, 148-9 (with further bibliography).

²⁶ On this altar, Huffman Lanzoni 2008.

²⁷ Avery 1996, 2, 512-14 cat. 81; Annibali 2020. Proposals of different dating in Martin 1998, 302-4 cat. 36 (1595-96) and Finocchi Gherzi 2020, 135 cat. 17b (1600 circa).



Figure 6
Andrea dall'Aquila, *St Michael*. 1595. Caorle (Venice),
Santuario della Madonna dell'Angelo.
Photo © Ufficio Beni Culturali – Curia Patriarcale di Venezia



Figure 7
Andrea dall'Aquila, *Madonna and Child* (detail). 1601 ca.
Church of Santa Maria Assunta dei Gesuiti, Venice.
Photo © Didier Descouens CC BY-SA 4.0



Figure 8

Workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (Andrea dall'Aquila),
Angel in Adoration. 1600-1602. Church of San Giacomo
di Rialto, Venice.
Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice



Figure 9 Workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (Andrea dall'Aquila), *Angel with a book*. 1600-1602. Church of San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice. Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice



Figure 10 Andrea dall'Aquila, *Madonna and Child* (detail). 1601 ca. Church of Santa Maria Assunta dei Gesuiti, Venice. Photo © Didier Descouens CC BY-SA 4.0

ter's three last testaments. In the seventh one, in 1597, Vittoria named them legatees of his highly valuable repertoire of models (including Matteo dall'Aquila, a cousin

of Andrea, in the bequest).²⁸ According to the eighth testament of 1601, the workshop collection was to be passed on to Andrea and Vigilio alone. In the ninth and last testa-

²⁸ Vittoria himself called them 'nepoti' (nephews), but Vigilio alone was effectively so. See here below, *infra*. For the document, Avery 1999b, 171-3 doc. 141. For Matteo, Rossi 2003, 390. Andrea had already been legatee of one third of the models in the fifth will of 1584; the remaining

ment of 1608, all the models went to Vigilio, reserving for Andrea those 'd'architettura, palle d'altari, porte, fenestre et nappe' (other models were to be shared with Giuseppe Batteri, who was also a relative of Vittoria's).²⁹

Those documents punctually document the expenses incurred by the elderly Vittoria for the monument he had erected for himself in 1603 in San Zaccaria [fig. 3] when he was still alive. The aedicula included sculptures that had been completed some time ago, such as the two caryatids, from before 1566, and the bust, prior to 1595. But the figures to be executed *ex novo* were all entrusted to Andrea and Vigilio. The two nephews together were paid for the base with two cherubs in November 1602, while Andrea alone was paid for the 'putini' of the crowning. Finally, in February 1603, Vigilio was paid for the personification of the Sculpture [fig. 13].³⁰ This is precisely the time of the Rialto sculptures – just after, if we trust the date of 3rd April 1602 of the Casaroli's inscription; just before, if we consider that in 1604 the St. James had not yet reached the church. In short, we should conclude that the two workshop veterans also worked on our altar. Indeed, Andrea's involvement appears well discerni-

ble in the two adoring angels, the two caryatids, the two little angels and the apical cherub.

A nephew of a cousin of Vittoria, dall'Aquila was born in Trento between 1562 and 1566. When he was a boy, in 1578, he was sent to Venice to be educated as an artist by his illustrious relative.³¹ He eventually became the most assiduous assistant. He collaborated on seven projects, from the Redentore in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, in 1581, to the monument in San Zaccaria, twenty-one years later.³²

Nonetheless, Andrea also worked as an independent master. His earliest known works could not have been identified: the stuccoes in the Procuratie Nuove and the Libreria Marciana, dated to 1590 and 1591.³³ The four figures he had carved by August 1599 for the façade of the same Procuratie are also hard to identify.³⁴ Instead, the St. Michael in the Sanctuary of the Archangel in Caorle, 1595 [fig. 6] is signed,³⁵ as is the Madonna with Child in Santa Maria Assunta of the Gesuiti in Venice [fig. 7]. This last group stood in the former church of the Crociferi, in the chapel of the lawyer Ludovico Usper, who died in 1601. There were six other statues, which are

two thirds were to be given to Agostino Rubini, Vigilio's brother. Avery 1999, 142-3 doc. 121. Agostino is missing from later bequests because he died before 1592: De Lotto 2008, 94 fn. 131.

²⁹ For these two wills, Avery 1999b, 176-8 doc. 147, 184-6 doc. 155. In May 1609, a year after Vittoria's death, Andrea claimed and obtained a further 100 ducats on the estate, 'per la servitù fatta per il corso de anni 31', Avery 1999b, 193-4 doc. 159. Avery 1999a, 132 reads the claim as compensation for the poor daily wages that the master paid to Andrea.

³⁰ For the general accounting, Avery 1999b, 347-8(ii). For the monument, Rossi 1999, 171-3; Finocchi Ghersi 2020, 83-4 cat. 29. Venturi 1935-37, 3: 145 assumed, but without providing comparisons, that Vigilio Rubini was involved in carving the portrait.

³¹ Vittoria himself mentioned that he welcomed him on 15th June 1578, at the request of Sigismondo dall'Aquila, Andrea's uncle and cousin of the renowned artist. Avery 1999b, 118 doc. 105(i). The date of birth is deduced from other documents. According to the wedding certificate, celebrated in Sant'Angelo on 12th August 1598, Andrea 'venne in Venetia de anni 12' (Vio 2001). If 1578 is the year of his transfer, Andrea may have been born in 1566. According to the *Libro dei morti* of the same parish, the sculptor died on 20th November 1626 'de anni 64'. The date of birth should then be anticipated to 1562 (Rossi 2003, 389-90; but obituaries did not always accurately state the age of the deceased).

³² For the interpretation of the role of Andrea as a collaborator of Vittoria, Avery 1999a, 131-3.

³³ De Lotto 2008, 23, 96 fn. 169, 169 cat. 2, 184 doc. 2.

³⁴ Timofiewitsch 1964. On this episode see here below, *infra*.

³⁵ Bacchi 2000a. The date is deduced from an inscription placed in the presbytery.



Figure 11 Andrea dall'Aquila, *Cherub* (detail). 1602. Church of San Zaccaria, Venice. Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

missing as well as the lost stuccoes.³⁶ We can omit here the later works of Andrea, who worked rather unsuccessfully for almost two decades after Vittoria's death, dying in the parish of Sant'Angelo in 1626.³⁷

By about 1600, the style of dall'Aquila is evident from his signed works. The *Uspèr Madonna*, in particular, is very similar to the Casaroli sculptures. The face of the

Virgin is almost overlapping with that of our caryatids, due to the profile of the slightly open mouth, the delicate curve of the eyebrow arch and the design of the eyes, which are somewhat distant from each other, without pupils and with a rather swollen upper eyelid [figs 4-5]. The physiognomy, the extended proportions, the polished surfaces and the simplified drapery of the *Madonna* show An-

³⁶ The work is mentioned by Sansovino, *Stringa* 1604, c. 148r, when the chapel is described as 'nuovamente [...] fabricata'. See Sherman 2020, 246-52, also for a profile of *Uspèr*.

³⁷ See Mariacher 1953; Goi 2001, 143-4; Rossi 2003, 389. For the year of death see *supra*, fn. 33.



Figure 12 Workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (Andrea dall'Aquila), *Cherub*. 1600-1602. Church of San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice. Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

drea's curious resemblance to certain works by Giulio dal Moro. This explains the theory of Leithe-Jasper, who had cautiously suggested the name of this artist for the Casaroli altar.³⁸ These physiognomic features and the modest drapery recur in the two angels standing on either side of the Rialto tabernacle. For the latter, the comparison with St. Michael in Caorle, bearing similar extend-

ed wings [figs 6-8], may also apply. As for the little angels, the mannerist pose and the tenderness of their flesh, with dimples in knees and elbows, are reminiscent of the Child of the Usper Madonna [figs 9-10]. Finally, with its typical facial type, the cherub of the Casaroli altar recalls the cherub on the right in Vittoria's funerary monument, also as regards plumage [figs 11-12].³⁹

³⁸ Let's consider, for instance, Giulio's sculptures in San Felice, for which see Bacchi 2000b, 730, figs. 75-7.

³⁹ I assume that the right-hand cherub is the one by Andrea, whereas the left-hand one, by exclusion, would be by Vigilio. On general accounting see *supra*, fn. 32.

I would be more hesitant about the statue of St. James [fig. 15]. The drapery is undoubtedly consistent with that of the caryatids, but the roughness of his face does not coincide with the impression we have of Andrea, a sculptor who was not very inclined to enhance surfaces. May Vigilio Rubini's involvement be plausible? Indeed, Vittoria commanded both grandsons the sculptures for his monument, and in his last will and testament divided the workshop fund between them.

Regrettably, the figure of Rubini is more obscure. Born possibly by 1558, and therefore somewhat older than his mate, Vigilio was the son of the sculptor Lorenzo Rubini and of Vittoria's sister Margherita. It seems that Alessandro had great expectations for him. In 1576 he named Vigilio his universal heir and urged him to study "scultura et architettura, per poter servir gli miei signori et patroni con più eccellentia che non ho potuto far mi".⁴⁰ However, Vigilio would only appear among Vittoria's assistants from 1587 onwards, on the large worksite of the Cappella del Rosario in San Zanipolo.⁴¹

In his native Vicenza as in Venice, Vigilio seems to have lived in the shadow of his older brother, Agostino for a long time. The latter, who was artistically more gifted, soon became his uncle's favourite, holding this position until his death in 1592.⁴² Agostino signed the two Doleni of the altar of the Sacramento in San Zulian, around 1580, and the four Evangelists today on the façade of the

Duomo in Mestre.⁴³ Vigilio, on the other hand, was only allowed to sculpt a divinity of his own in the crowning of the Libreria Marciana after assisting his brother in two other statues. However, his Latona, dated 1590-91, dubiously identified as the second figure from the right in the façade on the Piazzetta, is a rather mediocre work.⁴⁴

Further on, like dall'Aquila, Vigilio also worked on the façade of the Procuratie Nuove. This was another joint project, with the participation of the renowned Tiziano Aspetti and Girolamo Campagna, in addition to the latter's pupil Girolamo Paliari. Five sculptors were therefore responsible for four figures each. In August 1599 we learn that the elder Vittoria appraised their work.⁴⁵ Identifying the works of the two nephews is certainly not simple in this case. Merely in theory, I shall trace the figures in the fifth and sixth windows from the left to Vigilio [fig. 14]. Indeed, the pose of the two old men who pass their hands through their beards is taken from the Rivers completed almost half a century earlier by the younger Vittoria for the Libreria Marciana and the *Sala degli Dei* in Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza. In the Vicenza area, the same motif appears in a fireplace in Villa Caldogno, which – remarkably – was carved by Lorenzo Rubini, father of Vigilio.⁴⁶

The ignudi of the Procuratie recall the St. James of Rialto because of the strong cheekbones and pupil-less eyes, the deeply incised beards and hair. That way of

⁴⁰ Avery 1999b, 112-13 doc. 96.

⁴¹ Avery 1999b, 321 doc. 128(v). For this undertaking, Avery 2013 (with further bibliography). For more of Vigilio's collaborations, Avery 1999b, *ad indicem*.

⁴² See *supra*, fn. 30.

⁴³ On Agostino, Benuzzi 2014 (with further bibliography).

⁴⁴ The statue of Vigilio is incorrectly referred to as an *Opi* of 1588-89 (for instance, Binotto 1999, 190 fn. 51). Instead, Vigilio was paid a Latona: Ivanoff 1964, 107-9; De Lotto 2008, pp. 32, 37 (to whom I refer for the identification of the statue also).

⁴⁵ On the document, Timofiewitsch 1964; Avery 1999b, 173-4 doc. 142.

⁴⁶ For comparison works, Binotto 1999, 164-5.



Figure 13
Vigilio Rubini, *Personification of Sculpture*. 1602-1603.
Church of San Zaccaria, Venice. Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice



Figure 14 Vigilio Rubini (?), *Ignudo*. 1599.
Procuratie Nuove, Venice



Figure 15 Workshop of Alessandro Vittoria (Vigilio Rubini?), *St James the Elder*. 1600-1604 ca. Church of San Giacomo di Rialto, Venice.
Photo © Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice

carving the stone also evokes the hair of the Sculpture in San Zaccaria, the only known work by Rubini [figs 13-15]. But it would be rash to go further, as Vigilio's too meager catalogue offers very few clues. In any case, in light of the data on the later years of Vittoria's workshop (and affections), it is evocative to envisage the two nephews paired in this ultimate endeavour as well.

It is worth recalling that Rudolf Wittkower classified Gian Lorenzo Bernini's work into four different categories of authorship: sculptures that were designed by the master himself and carried out by him; those that were only partly carried out by the master; those for which the master provided a design, but participated minimally or not at all in the execution; and, finally, those for which

the master provided only minor preliminary sketches.⁴⁷ This heuristic principle may also work for Vittoria. The San Girolamo of the Zane Altar at the Frari would fall into the first category, entirely autographed, in spite of its protracted genesis.⁴⁸ As for the projects where Vittoria provided guidance but did not handle the chisel,

we should include part of the aedicule of St. Zacharias and the coeval altar of St. James: not because of his lack of interest in such undertakings – we know that he did care about his monument – but because of the constraints of his old age.

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⁴⁷ Wittkower 1958 ed. 1965, 112.

⁴⁸ Avery 2015a, 93, 95, 99; Avery 2015b (with further bibliography).

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