



## Carpaccio's Original Painting Installation in the Scuola Dalmata: Where and Why

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Volume 32, Number 1, Spring 2021

THE SCUOLA DALMATA DEI SANTI GIORGIO E TRIFONE IN VENICE

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1100107ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/confrat.v32i1.38915>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

1180-0682 (print)

2293-7579 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Piovan, V., Randazzo, S. & Conn, M. (2021). Carpaccio's Original Painting Installation in the Scuola Dalmata: Where and Why. *Confraternitas*, 32(1), 6–25. <https://doi.org/10.33137/confrat.v32i1.38915>

Article abstract

The original installation of Vittore Carpaccio's narrative paintings in the Scuola Dalmata has long been assumed to have been in the upper chapter hall, following the practice used in other Venetian confraternities (Scuole). Studies and observations during the recent conservation campaign of the canvases have led to a new hypothesis that Carpaccio may very well have instead placed his paintings on the ground floor, as we see them today, due to a heated dispute with the Priory of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem over the control of the upstairs premises.

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*Summary:* The original installation of Vittore Carpaccio's narrative paintings in the Scuola Dalmata has long been assumed to have been in the upper chapter hall, following the practice used in other Venetian confraternities (*Scuole*). Studies and observations during the recent conservation campaign of the canvases have led to a new hypothesis that Carpaccio may very well have instead placed his paintings on the ground floor, as we see them today, due to a heated dispute with the Priory of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem over the control of the upstairs premises.

In 2019, the American organization Save Venice launched a conservation campaign for the treatment of Carpaccio's narrative paintings in the Scuola Dalmata, dedicating the restoration to the Carpaccio scholar Patricia Fortini Brown.<sup>1</sup> Conservator Valentina Piovan, the main author of this article, completed the conservation of the *Vocation of Saint Matthew* and the *Vision of Saint Augustine* in 2020, while work on the *Agony in the Garden* and *Saint George and the Dragon* (fig. 1) is still ongoing at the time of this writing. The remaining six paintings in Carpaccio's cycle will undergo treatment in 2022 and 2023.

As conservation treatment and related scientific analyses progress, new information on these well-known paintings has emerged, and not only in regard to Carpaccio's working methods. Thanks to renewed archival research and studying the physical aspects of the canvases, updated theories have been formulated on the pictures' original location within the Scuola, compared to how they are displayed today (fig. 2).

In order to decipher where Carpaccio originally placed his paintings in the first decade of the sixteenth century,<sup>2</sup> it is essential to understand the complexities that the confraternity faced while sharing walls and rooms with the Scuola di San Giovanni Battista and the Priory of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, in a building once occupied by the hospice of Santa Caterina.

The Scuola Dalmata complex with its meeting house, (fig. 3) its paintings, and its relatively intact archives, allows for a unified reading of the confraternity and the artworks it contained. Considering the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.savevenice.org/project/carpaccio-cycle-in-the-scuola-dalmata>.

<sup>2</sup> On this topic see Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative*, 287–289.

exceptional importance of Carpaccio's pictorial cycle, it has been fundamental to re-read the documentary sources we have and to look for those yet unpublished so as to reconstruct the iconographic and conservation history of the paintings. From reading the oldest sources in the historic archives of the Scuola, important direct and indirect references have emerged that give valuable indications on the original installation of the cycle and the paintings' distribution. In this article, we will present information necessary for a better understanding of the planning and execution of Carpaccio's canvases.

The first reading of the Scuola's *Libro degli inventari*<sup>3</sup> was undertaken by Guido Perocco and Tullio Vallery,<sup>4</sup> followed by Terisio Pignatti and Patricia Fortini Brown; we owe much to their scholarship. The earliest known inventory in the Scuola archives dates to December 1557.<sup>5</sup> The confraternity's belongings are listed with annotations indicating their material, colour, and condition. Notes in cursive handwriting give the dates, with a few additional notes dated from 1567 and 1582 at the end of the inventory. The first items listed are those that were most 'precious' and that the Scuola kept with great care in the cabinets in the sacristy. This list includes the *Mariiegola*, the Scuola's statute book, which was "covered in silver-trimmed crimson velvet in a box with a small cushion." A list of fabrics follows, with descriptions noting different types and colours. The first mention of paintings of any sort refers to "Flemish paintings on canvas" ("tele depente fiamenghe") that were in the upper room, later sold.<sup>6</sup> The paintings, including those by Carpaccio, are listed without naming the artists, but for some entries the subject is indicated: "a painting downstairs of the adoration of Christ on the mount," which would be Carpaccio's *Agony in the Garden*; a painting of "Christ with apostles," referring to the *Calling of Saint Matthew*; "a painting of our Lady," presumably the *Madonna and*

<sup>3</sup> See Perocco "Appendice," 78–80 and 98 note 62; Vallery, "Libro degli Inventari."

<sup>4</sup> The *Libro degli Inventari* is of modest dimensions (21 cm x 29 cm) and consists of 94 pages. Its wooden cover is embellished with leather embossed with floral motifs and four closing braces. The first inventory is dated 1557 and consists of four sheets; on the fifth sheet there are additions from 1567 and 1582 and notes near the entries from a later time. The second inventory of 29 July 1608 was written on five sheets; its last page contains entries dated after 1616, 1623, and 1634. A few new notes are annotated and the entries repeat from the earlier inventory. In the third inventory of 18 November 1637 there is a distinction between the more precious and important objects given to the Guardian Grande. A fourth inventory is dated 25 August 1658 followed by one of 22 August 1667 and 10 August 1668 in which the same subdivisions and entries are listed. At the top of the inventories the annual dates continue until 1875.

<sup>5</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola Dalmata, *Libro degli inventari*, fols. 1<sup>r</sup>–3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The note "not found" at the side of the entry is interesting, indicating that the list has been copied from an earlier inventory, not transcribed in the *Libro degli inventari*.

*Child*; “a painting of Saint Jerome,” one of the two episodes with the saint in the Bethlehem monastery; and “a painting of Saint Augustine,” probably the *Vision of Saint Augustine*.<sup>7</sup>

The entry stating “four paintings of the history of Saint George” was interpreted by Perocco to refer to the three canvases of the story of Saint George and the one picture of Saint Tryphon. According to him, they were listed together as a simplification by the writer who evidently did not think the Tryphon painting (fig. 4) deserved much attention. The list of objects in the ground floor room includes an altar dedicated to Saint George, benches around the meeting hall (“Li banchi de zoso attorno l’albergo et il scagno”), and again “a painting of our Lady.” On the upper floor, there was an altar dedicated to the Annunciation decorated with three panels (two of which could possibly have depicted a Madonna and Child with the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate on either side, as Perocco suggests) and another painting of a Madonna in a frame carved in the form of a “little church” (*chiesuola*). The indication of a large painting with Saint George and the story of the martyrdom of Saint George<sup>8</sup> could allude to the presence of a *predella* with the stories of the martyr, displayed on one side of the room, and no longer in situ. The inventory again records the gilded ceiling on the ground floor, removed in 1551 during renovations when the height of the room was raised. Intended to be repositioned in 1557, according to the cursive note written beside the entry, the dismantled decorative ceiling was instead sold in 1565. The next note from the same year refers to the sale of the large wooden ceiling roundel of Saint George.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Traditionally called *Saint Jerome in his Study*, in 1959 the painting was recognized as Saint Augustine by Roberts, “St. Augustine in *St. Jerome’s Study*,” 283–297.

<sup>8</sup> Perocco supposes that the list refers to a canvas of Saint George and the dragon with the *predella* of four episodes of the martyrdom, a work by Carpaccio actually in the Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. Listed in the inventory registers of the Abbazia starting only in 1733 and for a long time thought to come from the Abbey of Santa Maria del Pero in Monastier (TV), it is now considered to have been commissioned for the Benedictine monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore. On this topic see Martino, Fortini Brown, *Carpaccio in Venice*, 142–145.

<sup>9</sup> The roundel, a work of high-quality carving, polychrome and gilding, is 150 cm in diameter. It depicts Saint George and the Dragon. Emanuela Zucchetta reported an expense note of 500 ducats for a carver and 250 ducats to a painter for “wood painted in gold and blue,” for the execution of a wooden ceiling similar to that seen in the *Vision of Saint Augustine*. The source from where the payments are listed is not noted, but a date of 1452–1455 is cited, perhaps an imprecise interpretation of the transcript in the *Appendice documentaria*. The 1557 inventory indicates that the roundel was being installed and a note from 1565 refers to its sale, but in fact between 1565 and 1586, the year of the conclusion of the renewal of the upper hall, the roundel had been adapted to an altarpiece and enlarged with four lateral wooden pieces that depict the *Annunciation* on the side and *Saint Jerome* and *Saint Tryphon* at the bottom. See

As Patricia Fortini Brown suggested, the only absolutely certain information in the 1557 inventory is that Carpaccio's *Agony in the Garden* was at that time in the lower room, and consequently seven of the nine Carpaccio canvases also followed in the list.<sup>10</sup> It is not clear as to why the Saint Tryphon painting is not mentioned, as he is one of the Scuola's patron saints and the confraternity had one of his relics.

In the inventory of 29 July 1608, the artworks are no longer divided by subjects or characteristics, but only general indications are given, such as "20 paintings of various subjects. Missing n. 3, broken and old."<sup>11</sup> This later list, often recopied, does not specifically mention any of Carpaccio's paintings. In the 1785 inventory compiled by Giovanni Barich, the note reads "Nine paintings by Vettor Carpaccio, a few of the life of Saint George, others of the life of St. Jerome, and one of the Agony in the Garden,"<sup>12</sup> and makes no reference to the *Calling of Saint Matthew*.

The majority of recent scholars hypothesize that the cycle was originally in the upper room of the Scuola, as was the practice in the Venetian Scuole Grandi, and that on the occasion of the 1551 building renovation the canvases were moved downstairs. Gustave Ludwig and Pompeo Molmenti argue that the paintings were "located on the upper hall of the Sala dell'Albergo, illuminated by two façade windows and another two over the canal."<sup>13</sup> Perocco, however, correctly points out that the two historians did not consider which rooms were occupied by the Scuola di San Giovanni Battista and took it for granted that the staircase would have been in the same location as it is today (fig. 5).<sup>14</sup> They also assumed that there were two windows on the canal wall, and were not precise about the spatial distribution that was already noted on the floorplan and in drawings from the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Ludwig's and Molmenti's detailed description of the two Christological works *Calling of Saint Matthew* and

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Zucchetta, "La pala d'altare lignea," 10–16 (the article was written on the occasion of the restoration of the altarpiece, carried out by Valentina and Valter Piovan in 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative*, 289.

<sup>11</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola Dalmata, *Libro degli inventari*, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola Dalmata, *Libro degli inventari*, fol. 67<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Ludwig/Molmenti, *Vittore Carpaccio*, 161–162.

<sup>14</sup> Perocco, "Appendice," 74–75.

<sup>15</sup> The plan of the building drawn in the *Catastico Cabreo* of 1766 and of 1794 shows a building similar to today's: part of the Scuola is reduced in respect to the antique Jacopo de' Barbari map and the arched windows along the canal are no longer there. The plan and the prospects from the *Catastico Cabreo* of 1794 (Archivio Storico del Venerato Gran Priorato di San Giovanni del Tempio, fol. 56<sup>v</sup>) were particularly useful in our effort to document the destruction and reorganization of the internal spaces of the two areas pertaining to the Scuola di San Giorgio and of the Scuola di San Giovanni Battista, compared to the drawings from 1826 conserved in the archives of the Scuola.

*Agony in the Garden*—described as placed on either side of an altar centred on a windowless wall—confused the hypothetical chronology of the paintings' execution.

Perocco agrees with the idea that the cycle was initially upstairs, assuming that the paintings were moved to the lower floor in 1551, when the Scuola undertook the largest and most complex remodeling campaign since its founding. He was not able to find valid elements to determine the original installations of the works, but his careful examination of the documents in the Scuola's archives has proven very useful. Based on the shape of the cut-out on the *Baptism of the Selenites* (now filled in with a piece of canvas measuring 33 cm x 103 cm), Perocco conjectured that the painting was located around the entrance door of the upstairs room, as the dimensions were compatible. He thought this was proof that the paintings were displayed "a metre lower than they are today."<sup>16</sup> Almost all historians agree with this idea,<sup>17</sup> although Fortini Brown did not exclude that the entire cycle could have been in the lower room without needing to be moved.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, according to Fortini Brown, the stories from the life of Christ are pertinent because of the presence of Christ in the indulgence granted to the Scuola in 1464 by Cardinal Bessarion that also honoured the feast of Corpus Domini along with Saints George, Jerome, and Tryphon.<sup>19</sup>

By re-reading the documents and comparing them to what Perocco already observed, we are able to reconstruct the configuration of the confraternity and determine which rooms belonged to the Scuola, or they could use, from the time of the confraternity's founding in 1451, until the building renovations in 1551. The ground floor room was described in the founding documents of 24 March 1451; this description was then transcribed in the *Mariegola* as well as in the *Catastico* and the *Libro degli inventari*. In this room, members could meet in assemblies and confirm their intentions for the Scuola. The measurements have not changed: 10.5 m x 7.7 m, "from the big door up to the corner wall where a door leads to the stairs to the upper floor of the *ospedale*."<sup>20</sup> Many entries carried over in the

<sup>16</sup> Perocco, *Carpaccio nella Scuola*, 91: "I quadri di Carpaccio alla Scuola di S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni, come risulta dai documenti, furono trasportati dopo il restauro dell'edificio nel 1551 dalla sala superiore alla sala inferiore, che è leggermente più piccola." It is not clear what documents he refers to, as the sources are not listed.

<sup>17</sup> Zampetti, *Vittore Carpaccio*, 129, indicates that since 1502 they are on the upper floor, when the argument with the Priory began. Stefania Mason, *La Scuola di San Giorgio*, 77 note 3, retains it more plausible that the canvases were originally installed on the upper floor like those of the Scuola Grande.

<sup>18</sup> Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative*, 288–289.

<sup>19</sup> Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative*, 69.

<sup>20</sup> The text of the *Mariegola* is carried over in: Archivio Storico della Scuola dalmata, *Catastico*, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>; Archivio storico della Scuola dalmata, *Libro degli inventari*, fol. 7<sup>v</sup>; Archivio Storico del

document from between 1451 and 1455—expenses for constructing walls, bricking up openings, and stonemasons' work for door frames and stairs for a new entrance staircase “on the other side, towards the old corner wall”—probably refer to the closing off of the stairwell door that originally led to the upper room.<sup>21</sup> As we shall discuss later in the article, the new stairwell door influenced how Carpaccio conceived the installation of his paintings. There is no mention of the upper floor in the Scuola's founding documents. It is thus logical to conclude that at the time the confraternity had only the ground floor “to embellish and decorate, where the Scuola officials convene and congregate, have their ceremonies, and keep things belonging to the Scuola without impediment from other people.”<sup>22</sup> To find documents with the first references to the upper room, one must read the long controversy between the Scuola and Sebastiano Michiel, the prior of the adjacent Priory of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem; the controversy started on 31 January 1502 and ended with the appeal of the sentence on 5 March 1518.<sup>23</sup> Among the controversies, the disagreement of 19 October 1502<sup>24</sup> revolved around works in stone and wood above a balcony that had been ordered by ser Bortolo Garbelador, *gastaldo* of the Scuola, in a space that the prior Michiel insisted was under the jurisdiction of the Order of Saint John.<sup>25</sup> In the statement of the Giudici del Proprio dated 10 July 1503, we find the first brief description of the contested upper room<sup>26</sup>.

The long verdict dated 5 March 1518, records Pope Leo X's ratification of 11 February. Prior Michiel had, in fact, gone directly to the pope because of the mounting expenses and the length of the court case, and because the dispute was over ecclesiastic property and religious space. The argument helped to define the Scuola's property. The Prior ceded to the procurators of the Scuola the upstairs room, including the attic and a part

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Venerato Gran Priorato di San Giovanni del Tempio, *Catastico Cabreo* (year 1794), fol. 56<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> That room remained under the jurisdiction of the Priorate of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, whose property extended behind the Scuola and into the upstairs rooms of the former Ospizio Santa Caterina.

<sup>22</sup> *Mariogola*, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>: “polire, et ornare, dove et in la quale se possino convegnire j officiali che dèa scuola, e congregarse in Domino, e fare le lor cerimonie, e solemnità et allogare le cosse de ditta Scuola senza impedimento e condition de alguna persona.”

<sup>23</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Catastico* fols. 29<sup>v</sup>–33<sup>r</sup>, carried over in Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Libro degli inventari*, fols. 9<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>v</sup>. On this topic see Gentili, *Le storie*, 89, 168–169 note 68, 173 note 112; Fortini Brown, *Carpaccio's St. Augustine*, 516–517.

<sup>24</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Catastico*, fol. 13<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Catastico* fol. 13<sup>r</sup> (19 October 1502).

<sup>26</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Catastico*, fol 18<sup>v</sup>: “Viso che tanto quanto de sala, quantum comprehendit ditta scholla, a coquina de Rectio ipsam schollam, et de tanto quanto est superius jpsius coquinae. Cum jntroitu, et exitu Anditus.”

that had not been previously discussed. The Scuola, in turn, condoned the expenses of the court case in Palazzo Ducale for the sum of 100 ducats.

The Scuola committed to increase the annual sum they paid to the Prior on the feast of Saint George from 4 to 7 ducats, and to pay 160 ducats “for the same place granted to them.”<sup>27</sup> Gaspare Tellarolo promised to give 60 gold ducats of his own, while the remaining 100 were given by Guardian Grande Damiano to cover expense. The translation of the documents in the *Catastico* and in the *Libri degli Inventari*<sup>28</sup> indicate that the upstairs room now belonged completely to the Scuola in its entire length and height, including the walls. The confraternity could modify the walls, raise or lower the upper or lower room, open doors and windows, build stairs, and do whatever they desired. The Priory received the “albergo” or upper room that looked toward the *Camposanto* (cemetery) path on which the building bordered, and the back hallway passage.<sup>29</sup> At their expense they had to wall up the doors that led from the Scuola to the rear of the building and also the door into the Scuola from the Priory’s portico toward the canal. The wall had to remain without doors or windows.<sup>30</sup> The Scuola Dalmata’s ground floor room was to remain unaltered, in the same state as it had been since the Scuola was founded decades earlier. The Scuola di San Giovanni continued to occupy an adjacent room on the ground floor, but with its own entrance (fig. 6).

The measurement of the “newly ceded” upper room—with a length of 3 *passi* and 2 Venetian feet<sup>31</sup> (almost 6 metres) without counting the width of the walls and 6 *passi* and 2 Venetian feet counting the thickness of the wall (ca. 10.43 metres)<sup>32</sup>—corresponds in length to the size of the Scuola’s lower room. This measurement is nearly 2 metres narrower than what the room is today, possibly because of an adjacent upstairs room mentioned in documents that remained in the Priory’s possession above the Scuola di San Giovanni Battista. By reading the documents, one understands that the Priory had permission to remove and relocate the Saint Catherine altar that belonged to them. This altar was probably in the same position as the one dedicated to Saint George that we see upstairs today.

<sup>27</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola *Catastico* fol. 30<sup>r</sup>–30<sup>v</sup> (11 February 1518).

<sup>28</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Catastico* fols. 32<sup>r</sup>–32<sup>v</sup>; Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Libro degli inventari* fol. 12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Libro degli inventari*, fol. 12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Libro degli inventari*, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> A Venetian foot in the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries corresponded to ca. 34 cm. A Venetian *passo* is five Venetian feet.

<sup>32</sup> This agreement was established and published in the canon house of Santi Apostoli on 5 May 1518; Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Catastico*, fol. 34<sup>v</sup>; Archivio Storico della Scuola, *Libro degli inventari*, fol. 14<sup>r</sup>.



The long controversy between the Scuola and the Prior Sebastiano Michiel regarding the use of the upper hall began in early 1502, the same year as the confirmed date of two of Carpaccio's paintings. It does not seem plausible, amidst such clamor,<sup>33</sup> that Carpaccio could even think about making his painting cycle for the contested space upstairs.

In Carpaccio's time, the ground floor room had a gilded ceiling that was three metres high, which is about 190 cm lower than what it is today. The centre of the ceiling was adorned with a carved wooden roundel of Saint George and the dragon. On the back wall, there was a gilded and carved wooden altar dedicated to Saint George, with a triptych described by Giannantonio Moschini consisting of two small panels of Saint Jerome and Saint Tryphon measuring 145.5 cm x 26.5 cm, with Saint George in the centre.<sup>34</sup>

An unpublished document lists the expenses from 1457 to 1481.<sup>35</sup> What seems clear from reading the expenses, without meaning to give too much weight or indulge in guesswork, is that in the second half of the fifteenth century the confraternity was engaged in an embellishment project and had commissioned works in wood and stone, as well as paintings. In addition to work paid to a carpenter for wood, to a bricklayer for supplies, and to a transport boat to take away the debris, there are expensive payments for a stone carver, in particular in 1458 and 1459, along with payments to a woodcarver in 1459, and sums for new stonework for the top of the altar and for a painter (*pictor*) in 1461. Records of payments in 1480 mention "a painter" receiving lire 68:4, and in 1481 the Scuola paid 5:15 lire "to fix the Scuola's *albergo*" ("per cozar l'albergo della Scuola"). An added note states "paid for canvases lire 49:12" and a painter received 3 lire. In light of this new information, the expenses listed in the 1480

<sup>33</sup> Sanudo, *Diarii*, col. 355, described Sebastiano Michiel as being present in Palazzo Ducale on 31 January 1503: "Vene il prior di San Zuane dil Tempio, da chà Michiel, in controversia con alcuni Schiavoni, per la scuola di San Trifon e san Zorzi etc. Or fo comesso andasse dal patriarca o al Zudexe di proprio."

<sup>34</sup> Moschini, *Guida per la città*, 91: "Sull'altare v'è una tavola antica in campo d'oro con i santi Girolamo, Giorgio e Trifone, ma molto annerita;" Moschini, *Itinéraire de la ville*, "Non fu Carpaccio, però, a dipingere l'altare: è più antico, e presenta tre santi." The panels remained on the 1658 marble altar until 1840: there are no traces of the central panel, while the two side panels are now inserted in a wooden structure attached to the backs of the benches at the sides of the altar in the upper room. Perocco, "Appendice," 83, guessed that the dimension of the central panel was cm 147x49, to fit in the space of the marble frame of the new seventeenth-century altar; he notes that the triptych was originally found on the altar of the church of San Giovanni of the Templars dedicated to the saint. He does not indicate his source document, but it may coincide with the commission of Matteo Ponzone for the execution of the altarpiece of Saint George and the Dragon with Saints Jerome and Tryphon, a work dated between 1612 and 1633, listed in *Libro della Fraglia dei Pittori*.

<sup>35</sup> Archivio Storico della Scuola Dalmata, *Raccoglitore n. 7* (bound folder, without numbers).

document may refer to the panel paintings in the style of Antonio Vivarini that are today located upstairs in the Scuola and to other works on canvas recorded in 1481.

It is easy to imagine that the most important wall on the Scuola's ground floor was the back wall where the altar of Saint George was positioned. When Carpaccio designed his cycle, he had to take into consideration the presence of the other artworks with which his paintings had to relate and unite. The altar triptych, if you also consider the gilded cornice, was the same height as Carpaccio's soon-to-be created canvases.

In the compositional drawing in the Uffizi for the *Triumph of Saint George*, on the lower border of the drawing there is a note in Carpaccio's hand that gives the dimensions of the canvas "just short of ten and a half feet" ("pje djeze emezo scharzo") corresponding to ca. 357 cm, which is what we see of the painting today.<sup>36</sup> The canvas is actually 360 cm, but it also has a part of the border that has been turned over and nailed to the stretcher and covered by the frame. Even if limited thus far to only one painting, this is an important finding that could make us think that Carpaccio took measurements on site based on the subjects and the number of episodes for each saint that the confraternity commissioned. *Saint George and the Dragon* and the *Triumph of Saint George* have the same measurements of 136 cm x 354 cm (excluding the colourless border of the canvas). The three scenes of the life of Saint Jerome have the same measurements of ca. 138.3 cm x 208 cm. *The Baptism of the Selenites* and the *Saint Tryphon Exorcises the Daughter of Emperor Gordian*, measure respectively ca. 140 cm x 83.5 cm and 140 x 297.5, limited to the painted portion.<sup>37</sup> The borders of the paintings adjacent to the altar were unfortunately shaped to fit, and when it is their turn for conservation treatment and the canvases can be closely examined, we will be able to better understand if they were reduced in size or not.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the stories of Christ, the canvas of the *Calling of Saint Matthew* is slightly larger than the *Agony in the Garden*: the painted areas are 145.5 cm x 115 cm and 145 cm x 106.5 cm. During the conservation treatment of *Saint Matthew*, we found a strip (4 cm wide at the top and 1.5 cm wide on the right side) of better-conserved paint along the border of the upper section that had been covered by the frame. This may have been

<sup>36</sup> Brooke, "Vittore Carpaccio's Method," 313 note 27.

<sup>37</sup> One considers that the part of the painting in view, as in all of the works, has a border left by Carpaccio without a preparation layer or a painted surface, to allow for the attaching the canvas to the wall, with or without a perimeter stretcher.

<sup>38</sup> Perocco, *I teleri del Carpaccio*, 82, presumed from a theoretical point of view that both canvases were originally 360 cm long, like the first two stories of Saint George, to be coherent in the format, based, according to him, on the incongruent prospective composition: thus it is needed to add 75 cm on the right of the *Baptism* and 60 cm to the left of the *Miracle of Saint Tryphon*.

done so the artist could correct any error in the distribution of the space on the wall. What does seem plausible is that Carpaccio intended to create two works of equal size. The *Madonna and Child* is slightly smaller, being 136 cm x 71.5 cm, but congruent for its location within the narration and was probably inserted in a more elaborate frame.

In light of the data from the study of archival material compared to the physical aspects of Carpaccio's paintings confirmed during conservation treatment, a reconstruction of the room in scale has been made that includes the artworks, frames and pilasters as they may have appeared. Although today the paintings are in a different order, Carpaccio's original ground floor installation corresponds more or less to today's configuration of the cycle.

By considering the dates on the inscriptions, as well as carefully measuring the paintings and studying the architecture of the ground floor room, we have been able to come up with a possible original configuration. Carpaccio probably designed the entire cycle on site at a time when the back wall opposite the entrance was occupied by older artworks.

We believe that Carpaccio started the installation of the narrative from the counter façade entrance wall by inserting the *Calling of Saint Matthew* in the space to the left of the door. In the Bible, this episode proceeds the *Agony in the Garden*; today the paintings are displayed out of order on the side wall. The *Madonna and Child* (today on the Scuola's ground floor altar) and the *Agony in the Garden* were placed between the door and the window (fig. 7). These are the Christological themes that expressed the Scuola's mission of sacrifice, charity, and love for others. The *Calling of Saint Matthew* and *Agony in the Garden* both include what is thought to be Paolo Valaresso's coat of arms, depicting the Saint George reliquary that Valaresso donated to the confraternity in 1502.<sup>39</sup>

The narratives about the Scuola's patron saints began on the left wall with *Saint George and the Dragon* and the *Triumph of Saint George*, much as we see them today (fig. 8). In the remaining space of the left wall Carpaccio inserted the canvas of the *Baptism of the Selenites*. In that picture, he painted the platform where musicians play with the same dimensions (33 cm x 103 cm) of that of the door to the stairway. This door is the previously noted "door in the corner" that was moved "to the other side, toward the old wall" according to the agreement made with the Prior in 1451. This door dimension is also the same size as the entrance door of the upper room and the archive room, as Perocco hypothesized.

On the right side of the room (fig. 9), the narrative continued with the miracle of Saint Tryphon (today adjacent to the altar), designed to take

<sup>39</sup> The identification of the coat of arms has been the subject of heated debate, see Gentili, *Le storie*, 173 note 112.

up the remaining space on the right wall along with the three canvases of the stories of Saint Jerome, which were in the exact same order as we see them today. Because in the *Vision of Saint Augustine* (fig. 10) the theme of light is extremely important,<sup>40</sup> this installation used a real source of light to suggest celestial light—the window opening above the door that is still there today. If we keep in mind that before the renovation of 1551 the ceiling was lower by at least 190–180 cm., the source of actual light must have been even more aligned with what comes from Carpaccio's painted window.

Other indications of the original aspect of the room can also be derived from the details of the painted ceiling in Saint Augustine's study. Similarities have been noted between the room description in the first Scuola inventory of 1557 and what is painted in the *Vision*: a coffered ceiling in gilded wood. In the wake of this suggestion, a clue is found in a detail of Carpaccio's drawing *Philosopher in his Study*,<sup>41</sup> in which the doorframe is very similar to the two doors in the rear of Saint Augustine's room. This could actually be the same architrave of the door on the left side of the Scuola, in a mirrored image with a staircase leading to the landing, that today corresponds to the steps leading to a storage area, before the staircase turns and steeply rises to the upper floor.

The last element that gives weight to the suggested original installation of the cycle is the poor state of conservation, compared to the other paintings, of the two episodes in the life of Christ and the *Madonna and Child*. This could be due to their original position on the Scuola's front wall that included a door and windows, which would in turn expose the paintings to light, humidity, and air currents.

In conclusion, seeing that there is no known documentary evidence that Carpaccio created his cycle of paintings to be displayed on the second floor of the Scuola, and taking into consideration the fact that the artist would have been well-aware of the long-standing disagreement that the confraternity had with the Priory of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem over the use of the rooms upstairs, an original downstairs installation is highly plausible. Although today the paintings are installed higher on the wall than Carpaccio intended, we can still imagine Carpaccio's paintings forming a horseshoe-shaped frieze on the counter-facade and side walls, with the altar and triptych dedicated to Saint George as the focal point of the confraternity's meeting room.

<sup>40</sup> Gentili, *Le storie*, 65–67; Fortini Brown, *Carpaccio's St. Augustine*, 512–514.

<sup>41</sup> Drawing depicting *Mathematician in his Study*, recto and *Philosopher in his Study*, ca. 1500–1510, Moscow, Pushkin Museum, pen and brown ink with traces of red pencil, mm 169 x 216; see Menato, *Vittore Carpaccio*, 231–232.

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1. Art handlers remove Carpaccio's *Saint George and the Dragon* in preparation for conservation treatment. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)





2. Interior of the ground floor of the Scuola Dalmata, as seen today. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)





3. Exterior of the Scuola Dalmata. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)



4. Vittore Carpaccio, *Saint Tryphon Exorcises the Daughter of Emperor Gordian*, before conservation. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)



5. View of the interior of the Scuola Dalmata, showing the staircase. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)



6. Inscription of the Scuola di San Giovanni Battista on the Scuola Dalmata facade. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)



7. Graphic rendering of the possible original installation of the counter-façade wall. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)





8. Graphic rendering of the possible original installation of the left (canal) wall. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)



9. Graphic rendering of the possible original installation of the right wall. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)



10. Vittore Carpaccio, *Vision of Saint Augustine*, after conservation. (Photo: Save Venice, Inc.)