

*Juhan Maiste*

SALVATION THROUGH RELIGION.  
THE REBIRTH OF THE CLASSICS  
IN ARENT PASSER'S OEUVRE

*The history of art would have to kill the image so that its object, art might try to escape the extreme dissemination imposed upon us by images – from the ones that haunt our dreams and float by in clouds to the ones ... To kill the image this was to want to extract from a subject that is always rent, contradictory, unconscious, in a sense “stupid”, the harmonious, intelligent, conscious, and immortal humanity of man.*

Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image. Questions posées aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*. Transl. John Goodman (Pennsylvania: University Park, 2005), 219.

The sepulchral monument of Pontus de la Gardie and his wife Sofia Johansdotter (Gyllenhielm), daughter of John III of Sweden, is an *opus magnum* of the Renaissance and the most important sepulchral monument that has ever been erected in Tallinn. It is the will of history that we know the circumstances of the monument's erection and the fact that its author is Arent Passer; which, thanks to the article on this topic published by Sten Karling in 1938<sup>1</sup>, has allowed the monument to remain in

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1 Sten Karling, “Arent Passer, Lisand Tallinna kunstiajaloole”, *Vana Tallinn*, Vol. III (Tallinn: Tallinna Ajaloo Selts, 1938), 28ff.



Fig. 1. The sepulchral monument of Pontus de la Gardie and Sophie Gyllenhielm in Tallinn's Cathedral of St. Mary. Arent Passer, 1589-1595. Photo: Peeter Säre.

our sphere of interest through the decades, and entice us to write about it time and again.<sup>2</sup> Passer was a stonemason, an entrepreneur, and a master builder of the city, to whom thirty artworks are attributed<sup>3</sup> and whose style and artistic credo represent the art geography of the Renaissance era – the metropolis of which was Bruges, and after its demise, Antwerp, thus confirming Thomas da Costa Kaufmann's comments that placed the Netherlandish workshops within the cultural space that extended from New Spain to Königsberg and from Lima to Narva.<sup>4</sup>

With the help of a course in rhetoric and the idiom of semantic meanings, which are revealed in graphic detail in Pontus's monument, the author asks the reader to join him on the beguilingly boundless high seas of the European art on which the artists and their patronage sailed, illuminated by stars and written words, seeking and finding validation for their ideas in two principal geographies determined by the spirit of their time – the art to the south of the Alps and art to the north of the Alps. In Erwin Panofsky's words, these two spaces gave birth to two parallel and in which "concurrent phenomena – the *ars nova* or *novelle pratique* of Jan van Eyck, the master of Flémalle, and Roger van der Weyden and the *buona maniera moderna* of Brunelleschi, Donatello and Masaccio – disengaged themselves from the antecedent tradition by way of cross-fertilisation, on the one hand, and by way of reversion, on the other."<sup>5</sup> Traditionally these two sources of energy have been considered independently, which is justified in a certain methodical framework, but which does not describe the numerous transitional forms that have been born of their mutual influence, thereby resulting in an extraordinarily interesting range of phenomena in figurative culture, in which it is difficult to differentiate the two aforementioned poles.

Traditionally this is associated with the divide between two worlds, with the worship of images and as its concurrent hedonistic joy of an image's mimetic realism on one hand and an iconoclastic reaction against

2 Helmi Üprus, *Raidkivikunst Eestis XIII – XVII sajandini* (Tallinn: Kunst, 1987), 152; Krista Kodres, „Memoriaalkunst”, *Eesti Kunsti Ajalugu 2 (1520–1770)* (Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 2005), 388–392.

3 Juhan Maiste, “Arent Passer (1560–1637) and his Time in Tallinn”, *Sten Karling and Baltic Art History*. Ed. by Krista Kodres, Juhan Maiste, Vappu Vabar (Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 1999), 51ff.

4 Thomas da Costa Kaufmann, “Die Kunstmetropole Antwerpen und ihr Einfluss auf Europa und die Welt”, *Hans Vredemann de Vries und die Renaissance im Norden*, Hrsg. Heiner Borggreffe, Vera Lupkes, Paul Huvenne, Ben van Beneden (München: Hirmer Verlag), 41.

5 Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renaissances in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1960), 161.

idolatry springing from Martin Luther on the other. The main outlines of the era are revealed in the context of a philosophical disagreement in which one side sees the image and its inherent qualities as the orienting and dominant force in organising the reality of art, and the other side sees the word. The theological credo of Northern Europe and the attendant theosophical arguments filter a verbal reminiscence from the whole that gives the written word primacy in the interpretation of scriptures as well as in the rhetoric presentation of the world based thereon. Instead of a dualistic dichotomy between image and word, the word reigns over the image and sets up a conflict where art is viewed first and foremost as an illustration that explains the image, and by unearthing its deep-seated strata, the cognitive experience inevitably leads to intellectual understanding: the image can be explained in one way or another with the help of iconology, semiotics, or other methodical approaches that have matured in 20<sup>th</sup>-century linguistic philosophy.

This position is prevalent in the field of art history. Without further analysing the reasons and philosophical background at this point, I would like to approach our central issue and thereby draw the reader's attention to Krista Kodres's role in researching post-Reformation art, including our subject – Pontus de la Gardie's sepulchral monument. Studying the verbal texts that are linked to the pictorial side, and also the printed graphics that serve as a possible model for the monument, the author's focus is directed at a discussion process "that connects the main idea of the monument to Martin Luther's class-based doctrine of virtue."<sup>6</sup>

Krista Kodres's topic is change and innovation, which fundamentally touched the spirit in Northern Europe at the deepest level and established the basis for the development of a new canon. However, many traditional values were left intact, which, based on the deep-seated sources of Western figurative visual culture, deserve attention independently, and in some sense separately, from the ideologies related to the Reformation. I would argue that in many respects Martin Luther's mandate to represent a radically different Church was detrimental to the artistic and emotional range of imagery. Thereby, the South remained the source of inspiration, and the naturalism based thereon, in a visual culture that

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6 Krista Kodres, "Lunastus usu läbi. Luterlik 'pilditeoloogia' ja selle eeskujud Eestis esimesel reformatsioonisaajandil." *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi*, 3-4 (12)/ 2003, 94.

lived on in the northern dimension in the form of Italian influences and Romanism. The North and the South – the traditions of expressive Realism and illusory Mannerism live side by side; the water from these two separate sources flows together into the same riverbed, where it is even difficult to distinguish the differences in the composition of the water. The *devotio moderna* typical of the period of transition from the Middle Ages to the modern period finds its psychological depth in *De Imitatione Christi*. Just like devotional observance can change an archetype, an archetype – and this is the central tenet of pictorial theology – can itself replace the depiction in the form of a visionary revelation.<sup>7</sup> An image has invisible depth and a visible surface, which may not always match. In order to understand an image, the observer does not necessarily need to use words. “Write up the name of God in one spot, and set up a His image opposite and you will see which will be most revered,” says Leonardo.<sup>8</sup>

An image is an outward reflection, but not on the eye, but inside the eye, which according to Aristotle makes the initial principle transparent and bodies real and visible.<sup>9</sup> The rules of art, which Vasari describes in the form of five principles (*principi di tutte queste difficulta*) – rule, order, proportion, drawing, and “manner” – are valid irrespective of geography or school, guiding us to living nature, which for every artist is manifested in correlation to his individual experience of art. To speak about art in the South and the North before and after the Reformation is the same as trying to filter the water in a swollen riverbed. Every single drop of water therein is fed by a longing for perfection and tenderness (*dolezza et aspezza*), beauty and most graceful grace (*graziosissima grazia*).<sup>10</sup> The common source of Renaissance art is the *caput mundi*, which was remembered for centuries, and which Petrarch in his writings restored to prominence. Like the poetry of Horace, the memory of Rome excited artists’ minds in Assisi, Avignon, Paris, the Netherlands, places where the pictorial traces of Antiquity remained an essential part of the

7 Jochen Sander, “Bilddialog und Bildgebrauch”, “Die Entdeckung der Kunst.” *Niederländische Kunst des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in Frankfurt: Ausstellung und Katalog* (Frankfurt: Städtisches Kunstinstitut und Stadelische Galerie, 1995), 32.

8 Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 – 1600* (Oxford: University Press, 1962), 27.

9 David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 4.

10 Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Vol 1, Transl. by Gaston du C. De Vere (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1996), 230 ff.

humanist aesthetics of representation.<sup>11</sup> The unearthing in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century of the Laocoön, Heracles, Belvedere Torso and other great works of Antiquity, which were already known through Pliny, introduce new possibilities in the arts for addressing cosmopolitan audiences and alluring the adventurers on the new era's oceans of culture with a distant Sirens' call.

This happened not only in the South but also in the North, where we perceive an Italian influence in the German devotional images of St. Mary (*Andachtsbild*), as well as in the disguised symbolism of the altar scenes from the Netherlands. "The adoption of Italian classicism mingled with other, equally pressing concerns – chivalry among them – and the Italian cultural exports with which we have to come to identify the Renaissance mixed with those from Germany and France, Byzantium and the Islamic world."<sup>12</sup> One cannot choose his place of birth. Thus as Vasari writes about Dürer, "If this man, so able, so diligent, and so very versatile, had had Tuscany instead of Flanders for his country, and had been able to study the treasures of Rome, as we ourselves have done, he would have been the best painter of our land."<sup>13</sup> Tallinn and Estonia are far away from the epicentre. The new era, which began in Old Livonia around 1500, did bring with it a high standard of international art, but regrettably, we are only able to admire its rare masterpieces as falling stars in a dark and wintry night. Due to the political reality, the new era reveals itself within the old, as single pieces of a mosaic, which we can admire in Terra Mariana as if they were pearls in the necklace of a merchant's wife. This does not mean that this land once governed by the Brothers of the Sword and the Hanseatic League on the shores of the green Baltic Sea – a kind of Nordic Mediterranean – did not share in the radiance of the blue Mediterranean, which, in its pictorial association, can be more eloquent than any institutional system, by offering art history the opportunity to bring forth the inspiring spiritual message that, just like in the rest of Europe, feeds the idea of the humanist era more profoundly than any other religious or political message used to illustrate it, from the shadows of the catechism to the decisions of the ecclesiastical councils.

11 Peter Burke, *Die Renaissance* (Frankfurt am Main: Fisher, 1996), 53.

12 Marina Belorzerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance. Burgundian Arts across Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

13 Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Vol 2, Transl. Gaston Du C. de Vere (New York: Knopf, 1996), 75.

“The image, conforming as it does to Luther’s perception of a reformed imagery, shows us that the habits of ‘inner seeing’ did not disappear with the taste for the ecstatic and affective. What is of particular interest in this period is considering how the habits that affected the adoption and reception of Italian art continued.”<sup>14</sup> People express their affection and love for line, colour and composition by using imagery. Imagery, just like sound and music, is more difficult to control than the written word. Whereas the transitions from one worldview and ideology to another are not always in harmony with the words and the political acts that are expressed therein. In spite of the Reformation, the Renaissance lived on in the new and old art metropolises, establishing both a uniform visual world and a market to consume it, in which the exchange of pictorial information occurred via the so-called Burgundian cultural corridor.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to assess which images and motifs belong to one or the other side of the Alps in the geographical sense, which to quote from Panofsky, “in contrast to the medieval renaissances, the Renaissance amounted to what biologists would call a mutational, as opposed to evolutionary, change: a change both sudden and permanent. And an analogous and simultaneous mutation – viz., the emergence of a new style of painting based on the apparently trivial yet, at the time, essentially novel conviction”, that is, to quote Leonardo, “the picture is the most praiseworthy which most closely resembles the thing to be imitated.”<sup>16</sup>

### THE IMAGE AND THE WORD

In his book, *Sprechende Bilder, sichtbare Worte*, Carsten-Peter Warncke writes, “the methods and rules of classification of the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era were not critically exclusive. On the contrary, as a means of world perception they were directed at bringing to light the similarities in parts of the work and not fixing the differences as borders. Due to the basically instrumental essence of allegorical meaning, it was possible that various mixed forms developed.”<sup>17</sup> The Lutheran

14 Andrew Morall, “The Beautiful in Early Renaissance Germany”, *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. Eds. Francis Ames-Lewis, Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 86.

15 Birgit Francke, Barbara Welzel, *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlande. Eine Einführung* (Berlin: Reimer, 1997), 23ff.

16 Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renaissances in Western Art*, 162.

17 Carsten-Peter Warncke, *Sprechende Bilder – sichtbare Worte. Das Bildverständnis in der frühen Neuzeit*. Wolfenbüttlerer Forschungen, Bd. 33 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1987), 147.

Reformation doubtlessly offers one of the most allegorical and paradoxical example: on one hand, Rome's St Peter's Basilica, which rises as an apotheosis of the Christian world, and on the other, the message from Wittenberg that one can also worship God on an open field. "For some radical reforms, faith's renovation required the destruction of images."<sup>18</sup> Religious imagery was condemned for its idolising and stirring content. The same was true of sepulchral monuments, which Erwin Panofsky says "went through a dramatic change around 1500."<sup>19</sup> Having started a crusade against images, the nature of the war initiated by Luther's denial of images may not have been recognised nor whether this battle against visual doctrines with their negative signal could even be won. In a situation where the representation of man and nature was subject to normative restrictions, a large number of artists (including Dürer and Cranach) turned inward and focused on more personal talents, individualist approaches and smaller formats, moving their creative focus from the churches to the drawing rooms and bedrooms, from the exterior to the interior, "where the paintings, sculptures and other crafted objects ceased to be valued primarily for the function they performed (devotional or instructive, commemorative or ornamental) [but] became appreciated as something more akin to our modern understanding of 'works of art'".<sup>20</sup> In the Middle Ages, having found their primary stage of performance in the altarpieces, images undergo several functional and structural changes in the early modern era, which change the visual composition and liturgical position of their central elements, but leave what's most important intact, and according to Leonardo "considers Works both human and divine, which are bounded by surfaces, that is to say the boundary lines and bodies."<sup>21</sup>

Against the background of change that took place in the churches during *quattro* and *cinequecento* period, the altar also found a new place and often also a new form – increasingly altars were placed in the side naves and near the choir screen, where, having been given the name "column

18 Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University Press, 2004), 27.

19 Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1964).

20 Peta Moture, Luke Syson, "Art in the 'casa', *At Home in Renaissance Italy*. Ed. by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, Flora Dennis (London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 2006), 268.

21 *Codex Urbinas, Vatican, 12 v. in Leonardo on Painting*. Ed M. Kemp, Transl. M. Kemp and M. Walker (New Haven and London, 1989), Nr. 89: Martin Kemp, "Introduction. The Altarpiece in the Renaissance: A taxonomic approach", *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance*. Ed. by Peter Humfrey, Martin Kemp (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

pictures", they competed with the consecration frescoes (*Votivfresken*) and gravestones.<sup>22</sup> The sepulchral monuments do not become altars, but there are essential similarities. The subject matter that was previously explored on altar paintings was now found in the design of sepulchral monuments – sarcophagi and epitaphs. When entering houses of worship (from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward), we are greeted by a kind of funeral procession placed in the niches along the wall, which have a different purpose than the earlier winged altars, yet visually, they serve the same purpose – preparing the observer for a spiritual encounter. In this connection, a pictorial world still reigns, which is as much dedicated to the absolute memory of the Holy Scriptures, as it refers to the memory centred upon a particular individual, a person fixed in time and space. Someone, who at the end of his earthly journey, is called up to represent this world to the beyond; someone whose role for himself and the observer is to merit the redemption that is equivalent in many ways to that of a prophet and who is not judged based on the narrative thread of his life, as was the custom earlier, but on the revelatory truth that can be found "not by the pursuit of logical conclusions, but rather, in the urgent communication of profound insights into the needs and values of the human heart."<sup>23</sup> At a time when the Autumn of the Middle Ages reveals itself through the repetitious use of pre-existing ideas; overthrowing among other things, the symbolic, meaningful imagination and leaving in its stead weathered tones and pale colours.<sup>24</sup> Instead of the rhetoric of infinite time and biblical events, we encounter a division between the divine and human positions, wherein the presentation of one side as more significant than the other gives formal symbols more significance than comprehensive ideas.<sup>25</sup> In an intellectual context, the period from 1400 to 1500 is a transitional time in Europe's cultural identity in which the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era is defined as a transition from universals independent of particulars (*ante res*) to universals after particulars (*post res*). The "conquest of reality" typical of the era is

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22 Victor M. Schmidt, "Feste und bewegliche Tafelbilder im Kirchenraum: Einige Überlegungen zur Kirchengestaltung des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit in Mittelitalien", *Zeremoniell und Raum in der frühen italienischen Malerei, Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*. Hrsg. von Stefan Weppelmann (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), 113.

23 Robin Kirkpatrick, "The European Renaissance 1400 – 1600", *Arts, Culture and Society in the Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 85.

24 Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University Press, 1996), 228.

25 Heike Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi. Sakramentaler Realismus von Jan van Eyck bis Hieronymus Bosch* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1999), 234.

part of a wider change in values, which with its deep strata extends to both the present and the future, life and death, the timely and the eternal absolute. The world can be understood in two ways, starting with an idea or starting with a document; in the latter case, the *docere* is more of a shell in which and through which invisible ideas and principles are glowing. The perception of beauty during the Renaissance recognises both – the image and the word – which in the form of paragons entice art in Italy to new heights and which is revealed “in the multiple models or patterns” that make metaphor communicative and through which “their linguistic usages create their own laws of transformation autonomously, independent of the speaker.”<sup>26</sup> The connective quality of this becomes the spiritual and physical beauty of the Renaissance, which constructs a whole from a number of independent parts, and enables a bridge to be built between various eras, persons and their confessions. When addressing the Pontus de la Gardie sepulchral monument, which is the most important of our Renaissance era, we choose the Italian language in addition to the German, the Renaissance along with the Reformation and the classic tradition that is their common basis – that distinctive *lingua franca* that reveals a alluringly diverse and starry sky above the adventurer on the open seas.

#### FROM A DANSE MACABRE TO A MONUMENT OF DEATH

Along with birth, death and the burial rituals that symbolise it are the most profound symbols of existence. Preference is given to the latter – to death – by dividing “the body and the soul, thereby creating two spheres of representation – that which was known and manifest, and that which was unknown, and which by its nature, was beyond ordinary experience.”<sup>27</sup> *Vado mori* and *memento mori* are two sides of the same coin. The first alludes to death as a divider and the second as a unifier of two paradigms – the timely and the eternal. The first leads us to the concept of the mystical power hidden in a decomposing body, or the so-called “*transigraves*”; and the second *cursus vitae* to an embodiment of memory and the hope of being reborn in paradise. The recollection of the horrors that stuck Europe during the Black Death, the great plague

26 For further reference see Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance, Princes, Cities, Architects*, Transl. by Daniel Sherer (New Haven and London [etc]: Yale University Press, 2006), 5.

27 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death, Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 70.



Fig. 2. Memorial plaque of the Carthusian abbot, Willem van Bibant. Diptych, Flemish master, 1523. The radiant Five Wounds of Christ are represented together with a Communion chalice and Adam's skull. Republished from: Paul Binski, *Medieval Death, Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996).



Fig. 3. Death from Bernt Notke's *Dance of Death* in Tallinn. With Renaissance-style church steeples and a grove of trees in the background. Photo: Stanislav Stepaško.

pandemic, introduced fundamental changes to the value system; in its literal and philosophical meaning death is the catalyst of the Renaissance, understood by its "ambivalent nature as an existentialist protest over the disappearance of earlier values and the lack of new ones to replace them."<sup>28</sup>

Hence death played an important but ambivalent role in the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern period in which one speaks about earthly life and the other about the afterlife. Between these two is the Dance of Death, a ritual dance of the dead that starts in Castile, and somewhat later, transforms into a dance with the living (*dialogus mortis cum homine*), the ecstatic representation of which on Bernt Notke's *Dance of Death* in St. Nicholas' Church in Tallinn captivates the viewer.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*. Transl. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 83ff.

The *Dance of Death* is a pictorial counterpart to a legend that was popular in the medieval oral tradition of three living people and three dead whose message was first recorded in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux (1153): “what I am, they were, and what they are, I will be”. These are words that transcend centuries and create a bridge of traditions between two philosophies, the early-medieval longing for death and a late-medieval contempt for death, together with its allegory – *la danse macabre* – as a representation of the ever-present and universal power of death.

Notke speaks about life and the departure from it, of death and the promise of a Garden of Eden – the visionary utopia of which is revealed by the greenery that forms the background of the composition – green meadows where lively deer romp.

The skill of dying (the art of dying) is an ability to be ready to start a new life. A painting of the *danse macabre* is filled with the despair of an autumnal Middle Ages but also with an affirmation of a life typical of the Renaissance, which allude to a profound truth in Augustine’s *Confessions*: “... anni tui omnes simul stant, quoniam stant, nec euntes a venientibus excluduntur, quia non transeunt: isti autem nostri omnes erunt, cum omnes non erunt. Anni tui dies unus, et dies tuus non cotidie, sed hodie, quia hodiernus tuus non cedit crastino; neque enim succedit hesterno. Hodiernus tuus aeternitas: ideo coaeternum genuisti, cui dixisti: ego hodie genui te. Omnia tempora tu fecisti et ante omnia tempora tu es, nec aliquo tempore non erat tempus.”<sup>29</sup>

The transformation and the acquisition of a new form demonstrate death’s immanent presence while life is still in full bloom. The Dance of Death marks the watershed between two different treatments of time – both of Augustinian origin: the internal and the everlasting, the temporary and therefore the insecure. Or as Hartmund Freytag has put it: “The Dance of Death assumes a briefly dominant, dogmatic presentation of Particular Judgement, which dates back to the late medieval period, in addition to the doctrine of General Judgement on Judgement Day that had prevailed up to 14<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>30</sup>

29 “Thy years are one day; and thy day is not every day, but today: seeing, thy today gives not place unto tomorrow, for neither comes it in place of yesterday. Thy today is eternity: therefore didst thou beget him co-eternal to thyself, unto whom thou saidst: this day have I begotten thee. Thou hast made all times; and before all times thou art: nor in any time was time not.” See: *St. Augustine’s Confessions; with an English translation by William Watts* (Cambridge, Mass.,: Harvard University Press, 1912), 236.

30 Translated from German, Hartmut Freytag, “Literatur- und Kulturhistorische Anmerkungen und Untersuchungen zum Lübecker und Revaler Totentanz”, *Der Totentanz der Marienkirche in Lübeck und der Nikolaiikirche in Reval (Tallinn)*, hrsg. von Hartmut Freytag (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 1993), 14.

The Renaissance is many-sided and more varied than its godfather Giorgio Vasari describes it. On the one hand, rebirth signifies the rehabilitation of memory, an increasingly new and more profound interpretation the Classics, and on the other, a new search for the artistic truth. The creation of *imago* is based on two different principles; the first gives preference to the idea of the Neo-Platonist framework and its spiritual representation and the second to the inner fire of the soul, when “the genii and daemons lead all the existing souls to the common judge; but after the verdict had been pronounced, their earlier daemons depart, and a violent and evil daemon drags off the wicked souls, while God Himself in tranquillity leads away the good souls.”<sup>31</sup> The truth relying on *mimesis* gives us only a cursory understanding of the deeper nature of our surrounding world, the aim of an artist is to represent not only the superficial appearance of an object as visible in the nature but instead its essential truth, or image. The relationship with natural and supernatural forms, which is the essence of the period, gives the dualistic world of the soul and body the meaning that Hegel has described as the need for the inner spirituality of the Reformation, when religious ideas were drawn away from being wrapped in the element of sense and brought back to the inwardness of the heart and thinking. Thus the “after” of art consisted in the fact that a need dwells in the spirit to satisfy itself solely its own inner self as the true form for truth to take.”<sup>32</sup>

The arts remain subordinated to the doctrine of naturalistic imitation until the early 1480s when, all of a sudden, the situation changes completely.<sup>33</sup> The understanding of the hierarchical structure of the universe, the spiral nature of truth, and life as Jacob’s Ladder create a second Renaissance gate alongside the classical tradition, in which the higher calling of the soul smouldered under the ashes, recalling that the humane nature that forms the second level of the animal soul is only a preparation for the third or most important truth – spiritual understanding. This

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31 Marsilio Ficino. *Platonic Theology*. Volume 6, Book XVIII. Chapter VII, English Translation by Michel J. B. Allen, Latin text edited by James Hankins with Willima Bowell, The I Tatti Renaissance Library, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 119.

32 *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Vol I, transl. by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 103.

33 David Hemsoll, “Beauty as an Aesthetic and Artistic Ideal in Late Fifteenth-Century Florence”, *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*. Ed. Francis Ames-Lewis and Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 67.

tension, notes Leonardo, inclines the *Quattrocento* artists, led by Botticelli to seek a new, higher essence of truth, a thing that is asleep at the bottom of the high seas, waiting for someone to find it – a creator turning darkness into light, the invisible into the visible, featuring the metaphysical space in addition to the physical world, highlighting a higher mental faculty (*ethos*) over and above replicable knowledge (*scientia*) and giving composition (*designo*) a true purpose. Figuratively, the conditional nature of realism directs us to the essence of artistic matters not by being skewed and slippery, but by being spread straight over the vertical axis, bringing out the semantic meanings of things, not through a semiotic code, but by being embodied therein. Similarly to the medieval times a few centuries ago, the search for *vera religione* – the meaning of the sacred act of art – is once again prominent, fixing the eyes not on what is below us but what rests above. In many regards the question of the natural and the supernatural is one of the central issues of the Renaissance. The placement of divine matters on the cultural scale gives the idealism of the era a deeper, sophisticated meaning, tying it to the identity of the time and place and giving it a particularly pungent shade. Just as life does not signify peace and compliance, but eternal conflict and contradiction to a degree similar to what any of us may have experienced, it eases our worries with an extended collective imagology. On the wall of St. Mary's Chapel in St. Olaf's Church in Tallinn, the painting of the Dance of Death is flanked by Hans Pawels' Cenotaph (1513–1516), which depicts the Passion of Christ and the Transfiguration at the point where human nature meets God; with Jesus himself as the connecting point, it reveals itself as a depressing drama of the late-medieval period. On the lower edge the monument, we find the symbols of nothingness – a skeleton alluding to the death of Adam with a toad and snake on his chest. Death marks the deconstruction of the body in the way described by Abbot Suger, "... where the bones of martyrs are buried, devils flee as from unbearable torture."<sup>34</sup>

The harbinger of death is a reflection of the horrors depicted in The Book of Revelation by John the Apostle, modified with the ancient theme of Transfiguration, the replacement of the image of Corpus Christi and the Passion scene by the Drama of Man in its absurdity and solitude.

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34 Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures. Transl. and ed. by Erwin Panofsky and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 112.

The solemn words of wisdom found on the column of the cenotaph state that “Man’s days are consumed like smoke” (*roek vorgheyet des myn seen leuen*). These almost Sartre-like words of wisdom make themselves known in the form of “ghosts and magic that had to be integrated into a Christian cosmos and be taken seriously. But how seriously did people take their religion?”<sup>35</sup> Compositional parallels with the cenotaph can be found in numerous sepulchral monuments, and its archetype can be found in the *tumba* - one of the basic forms of Greek tombs – loaded with iconological significance that is concerned less with the eternal than the temporal world. Almost a century earlier, Masaccio depicts death, and the skeleton as its symbol, in his *Holy Trinity* fresco in the Santa Maria Novella Church in Florence. Above the skeleton we find an already familiar line, but this time in Latin: “What you are, I was; what I am, you will be.” The two eras and worldviews are not only consecutive but parallel, bestowing on art the role of unifying traditions and pictorial programmes.

#### THE ART OF DYING WELL

On the sepulchral monument of Pontus and his wife Sophie Gyllenhielm, the arrival of death is depicted in a different manner. The struggle has ended, the drama brought to an end, and the noble couple is suspended in eternal peace. Symbolically, the sepulchral monument recalls a custom that dates back to Antiquity; of paying Charon three copper coins for passage over the River Styx without any chance of return.

The focus of the monument is on the past and on memories, the chosen forms recall Paul Fleming’s ode to fame, Rome, columns, arches, paintings, and the epitaph composed after the death of Gustav II in the Battle of Lützen in 1632.<sup>36</sup> All that is left is a memory; the fame that one has collected throughout one’s life in the name of Cleio, the muse of history, is the trace of life left in memory. To erect a monument on one’s grave that, by no accident, resembles the sarcophagi of pharaohs or their imitations in Rome, but appears from the ashes of Rome and is

35 Robert Norman Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–1515* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 330.

36 Nicola Kaminaski, „Ars moriendi“. Paul Flemings „Leichen-gedicht“. Auf Jhrer Königl. Majest. in Schweden Christseeligster Gedächtnüß Todes-Fall“, *Zum Sterben schön. Alter, Totentanz und Sterbekunst von 1500 bis heute*. Hrsg. von Hiltrud Westermann-Angerhausen, Andrea von Hülsen-Esch (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2006). 250.



Fig. 4. Giuliano da Sangallo, Façade project for San Lorenzo in Florence. 1516. Republished from: Manfred Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance* (Harvard University Press, 2008).

given a new rhetorical form by the effigial tombs arranged as sixteen sacrophagi in Saint-Denis, where the kings and queens lie frozen in their bodily grandeur on the lids, is to glorify eternity and the continuity of the dynasty and to revere death and martyrdom. The centuries of European cultural identity are not united or divided as much by words or images as by the worldviews breathing in their shadows; by a philosophy that allows the language of the Classics to become a rhetorical mirror of past glory. Like the kings' funeral processions that recall the triumphs of the Caesars, the sarcophagus selected as the grave marker of the departed has the representational function of transforming the



Fig. 5. Tomb of Cardinal Guillaume de Bray in San Domenico, Orvieto. Arnolfo di Cambio, 1282.



Fig. 6. Tomb of a Portuguese cardinal in the San Miniato al Monte Church in Florence. Antonio Rosselino, 1461–1466.

present into the eternal; of giving the leaders of this world a position in the afterlife, freezing the moment and presenting the deceased in his or her eternal peace.

The monument for Cardinal Guillaume de Bray created by Arnolfo di Cambio in the San Domenico Church in Orvieto is basically comprised of the same elements as the Pontus sepulchral monument – a *tumba*-shaped sarcophagus with a figure on top with its hands crossed and a cenotaph divided by columns in the shape of a temple above the deceased. The continuity with Antiquity is also demonstrated by the Roman sepulchral niches, a famous example of which is the sepulchral monument of the Renaissance era humanist Leonardo Bruni in St. Croce Church in Florence (1448–1450). Its harmonious integration of figures in an architectural frame was adopted by later generations as a model for the sepulchral monuments for the remainder of the century. The same themes appear in the monument for a Portuguese cardinal in San Miniato al Monte Church in Florence (1461–1466), which was erected by Antonio Rossellino, and in Pietro Lombardo's sarcophagus for Doge Pietro Mocenigo (1476–1481) in the San Giovanni et Paolo Church in Venice. The best-known of these is probably the sepulchral monument of Cardinal Asconio Sforca in the Santa Maria del Popolo Church in Rome (1505–1507), which was created by Adrea Sansovino. In principle, the tomb is less reminiscent of salvation than of triumph and everlasting fame. Choosing the language of the Classics, along with the eternal message of the Bible, the Middle Ages chose the continuous presence of history – as found in Augustine's writings and demonstrated by the numerous noblemen's graves in French and British cathedrals. The examples include Queen Eleanor's (d. 1290) sarcophagus in Westminster Abbey or, the best of its class, the sepulchral monument of Philip the Bold by Claus Sluter in the Chartreuse de Champmol (1404–1414). Sluter was a genius, a virtuoso, as were his contemporaries, the Master of Flemalle or Jan van Eyck, all of whom were capable of creating an admirable illusion of reality. With Sluter, the Burgundian and Flemish schools of sculpture attained a characteristic accuracy and delicate form of design.<sup>37</sup> Sluter was an inspiration for the entire 15<sup>th</sup> century. The patterns worked out in Dijon had a decisive influence in the production of sepulchral monuments in the Netherlands, the gallery of which includes the sarcophagi of the Duke and Cardinal de Croy in Mechelen

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37 Joseph Calmette, *The Golden Age of Burgundy. The Magnificent Dukes and their Courts*. Transl. By Doreen Weightman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), 213.

(1496–1505), the sarcophagus of Mary of Burgundy (1502) by Pierre de Beckere of Brussels, and the sarcophagus of Charles the Bold (1562) next to it in the Church of our Lady in Bruges. The oeuvre of Cornelis Floris is part of this series. Having drunk from the bottomless well of the Classics, both Floris and his contemporary Jacob Colyn aspire to both Italy's strict and the Netherlands' realistically persuasive artistic truth in their work, through which the "*maniera libera*" finds its place within the bizarre and arbitrary ornamental excess of the era of decorativism (*Zeitalter der Dekorativen*).<sup>38</sup> Cartouches, grotesques and masks, along with scrollwork and strapwork, cover the surfaces within the symmetric and architectonically clean compositions. The classically strict and pure approach that was characteristic of the sepulchral monuments of the first part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is replaced by a chequered picture in which coats of arms, winged genii of death, festoons, crater vases, and caryatids find a place. The sepulchral monument of Pontus in Tallinn should be studied precisely in this context, inspired by the ideas that a few decades earlier were included in Floris's masterpieces – the sepulchral monument of Jan III van Merode and his wife in St. Dymphna Church in Geel, the sepulchral monument of Christian III in the Roskilde Cathedral, the monument of Friedrich I in Schleswig, Albert of Prussia's sarcophagus and the epitaphs of his two wives Dorothea and Anna Maria in the Königsberg Cathedral (destroyed). In regard to both composition and details, the connection between the work of Passer, Floris and his students is so obvious that it allows us to see a direct connection between one of the greatest representatives of Tallinn's Renaissance and the great workshop in Antwerp. It should be mentioned that Sten Karling refers to Germain Pilon and Jean Goujoun, or more broadly to the artistic credo that sprung from French Mannerism, yet as such, the relationship is based more on the level of stylistics and the ideological background than a direct link – personal contacts between the artists. The author believes that Karling's claim does not hold: "The concurrences between Passer and Floris are of a general nature and contingent on the time period; Passer's style points to a large area of contact with the French decorative sculpture that was named after

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38 Robert Hedicke, \*Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration: Studien zur niederländischen und deutschen Kunst im XVI. Jahrhundert\* (Berlin: Bard, 1913), 13ff..

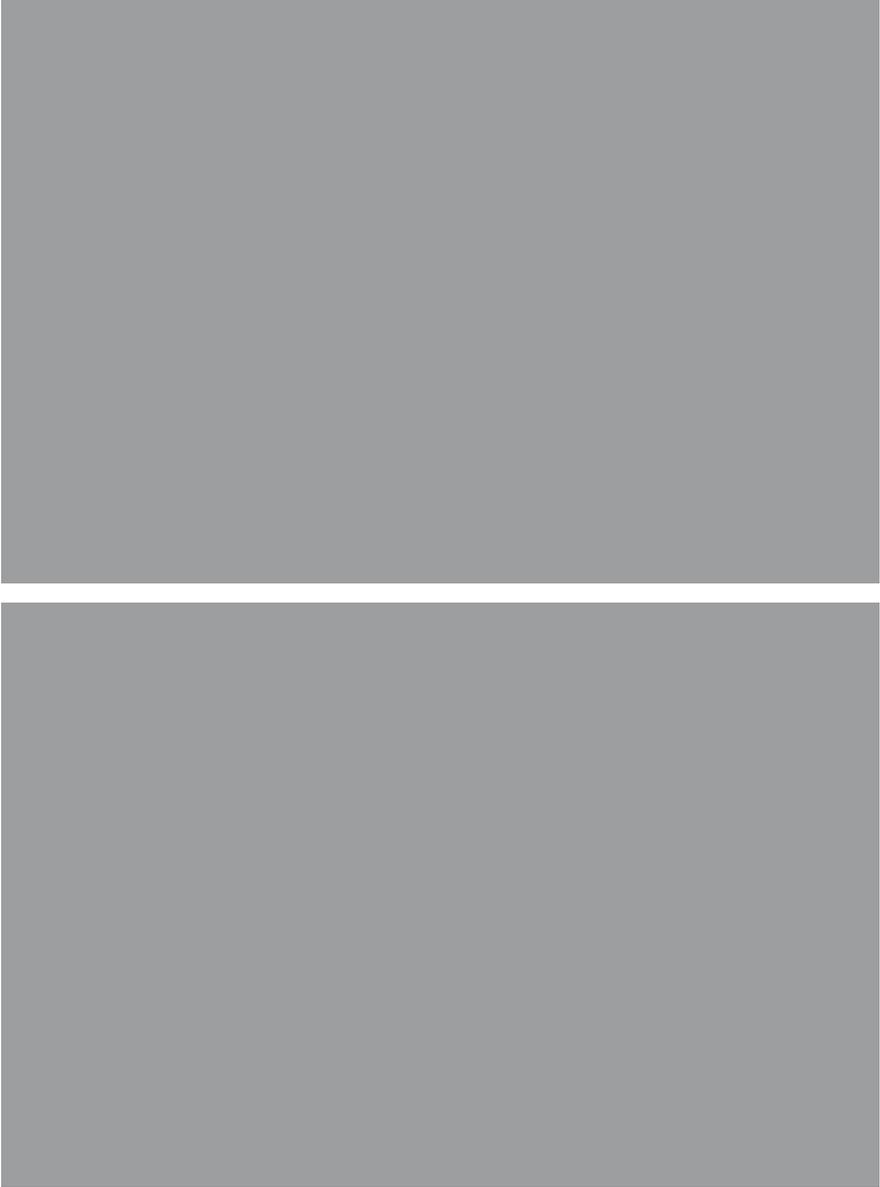


Fig. 7–8. The sepulchral monument of King Friedrich I of Denmark in Schleswig. Cornelis Floris's circle. 1550 – 1554. Photo: Krista Andreson.

the Primaticcio and Rosso workshop in Fontainebleau.”<sup>39</sup> Passer’s art has two equally important sources. The first is connected to the Netherlands and his presumable membership in Floris’s circle and the second to the Baltic Sea and the post-Hanseatic cultural sphere in Tallinn. Passer’s understanding of beauty encompasses the broader cultural tradition of Northern European Romanism. It connects the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the realms of image and word, and voices its presence through the liturgical representation of death that is seen through the intellectual prism of its time, inevitably influenced by the spiritual, social, artistic and political aspects, and expressed in a form of a *lingua franca* – opening up a universal art world where distinctions of tradition and innovation are provisional and related to many cults and the overlapping and intersecting articulation of the iconology that communicate them. Michel Sittow, in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Arent Passer, at the end of the same century, are both examples of a new type of artist who does not imitate the forms that have already developed and does not copy the visual language of depiction found in sample books, but pursues painting in a manner described by Leonardo in his notes: “painting cannot be copied as can writing can, in which the copy has as much worth as the original ... It cannot produce infinite offspring, like printed books.”<sup>40</sup> Passer is an artist whose chosen images speak about life and its fundamental values through his own genius and artist’s will.

## CENOTAPH

It would be a simplification to examine monuments as the ultimate form of this theme. Part of the monument – the cenotaph – refers to the popular 15<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of the great winged altars in which the central panel of the altarpiece is flanked by wings, topped by a tympanum and is finished by a predella as a broad horizontal band. Notwithstanding the optimism of the central composition in the form of the resurrected Christ, it resonates with the melancholy sound of decay and death, suggesting a new interpretation for the familiar motifs on the altarpieces

<sup>39</sup> Karling, „Arent Passer”, 35, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Leonardo on Painting, ed. M. Kemp, M. Walker, New Haven and London, 1989, cited from – st.: Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), 142.



Fig. 9. The epitaph of Pontus de la Gardie Tallinn's Cathedral of St. Mary. Photo: Peeter Säre.



Fig. 10. Upper part of the epitaph with a medallion in the Floris style and text in the centre, including the word “Jehovah” in Hebrew and below it, “*Fortitudo Nostra* – our strength” in Latin. Photo: Peeter Säre.

Fig. 11. A scene of Christ’s Resurrection on the central panel of the cenotaph. A cloud cluster with the heads of angels above the Saviour. A skeleton and serpent that has coiled itself around an orb under Christ’s feet. Photo: Peeter Säre.

and frescoes of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and early 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> This idea was also used in subsequent sepulchral monuments arousing a longing for rebirth and the everlasting continuation of life. Pontus de la Gardie’s cenotaph was also at least partially gilded<sup>42</sup>.

Besides the human and tragic dimensions of the event, the Resurrection scene refers to an even greater significance of the New Testament – the

41 To take the figure of the blessing Christ back in time to the 14<sup>th</sup> century; its earliest examples are the *Resurrection* on the Trebon altarpiece (1385–1390, now in the Prague National Gallery). The motif was also popular in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and one of its most mature examples is located in Sint-Salvator Cathedral in Bruges (1585). See: *Bruges and the Renaissance: Memling to Pourbus*. Ed. By Maximiliaan P. J. Martens (Ludion: Stichting Kunstboek, 1998), 228.

42 In 2014, an examination of the cenotaph was carried out in the course of which it was ascertained that the gilding has survived on the framing of the medallion, on the cornices above the *aedicula*, on the right wing and left column capital. And fragments of black paint have survived on the bases of the *aedicula*’s nameplates and the letters on the reliefs of the Evangelists. In addition, remnants of red ground paint and distemper were discovered. Sirje Sonon, Anneli Miil, Ruth Tuvike, *Pontus de la Gardie hauamonumendi epitaafi konserveerimistööde aruanne*. October 2014. Manuscript in the Cathedral of St. Mary archives in Tallinn.

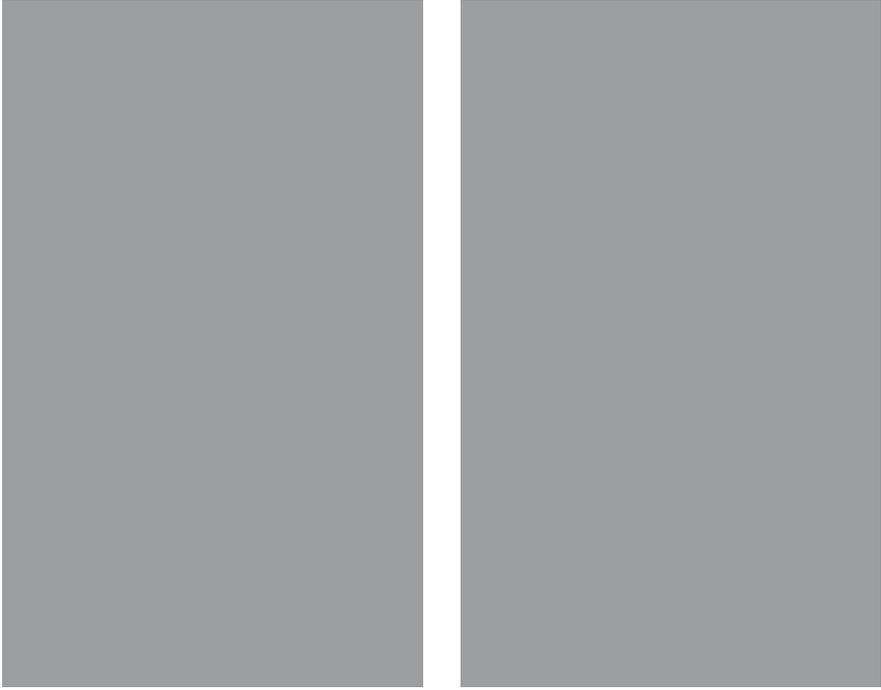


Fig. 12–13. Spes and Fides (Faith and Hope) – two allegorical female figures on a Virtuvian marble column. Photo: Peeter Säre.

divine nature of Christ, his power and rule – all of which is represented as the ultimate truth in Rogier van der Weyden’s and Hans Memling’s scenes of the Last Judgement. Beginning in the 1570s, we can find Mannerist figures of Christ in semi-profile on countless North German, Scandinavian and Baltic chancel walls and grave reliefs.<sup>43</sup> In the history of style, they all share the character of so-called Antwerp Mannerism that starts with 15<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish Primitivism (especially in the work of Rogier and Memling) and is amplified in the work of Jan de Beer and Jan Gossaert. Numerous examples are also found in the graphic prints that date from the time of Sebald Beham and Karel von Mandern to Henrick Goltzius. The composition of one of Aegedius Sadeler’s copper engravings is

43 For example the pulpits in Schleswig Cathedral (1560), Lübeck Cathedral (1568), Church of the Holy Ghost in Tallinn (1597), Georg Sigmund Zoller’s gravestone in Maria im Weingarten (1592); altarpiece in Gröde Church (1592); Brüggemann family epitaph in St Michael’s Church in Eutin (1600), Epitaph from the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century in Kuressaare Castle, used as illustrations for Kalvi Aluve’s article, see K. Aluve, “Kuressaare linnuse garnisoni kirik”, *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur: Eesti Ehitusministeeriumi bulletin* 1/ 1974, 69.



Fig. 14–16. Justitia and Pax (Justice and Peace). Two allegorical female figures on the façade of the House of the Black Heads in Tallinn. A figure of Salvator Mundi in the centre, which is positioned slightly higher than the allegories on the building's façade.  
Photo: Peeter Säre.

closest to that of the De la Gardies' epitaph, the silhouette, pose and expression of the Christ figure closely resembling the Pontus epitaph, but also the canon of the day – the *commune bonum* – the genetic code and past-bound mentality of the time.

Many of these symbols may have been inherited from the murky silence of the catacombs where the beginning of a new life depicted as the resurrected Christ meets an already familiar dragon – the messenger of mortality from the Pawels cenotaph (for Pawels, it is a toad). A skull and a skeleton are below the gravestone of Christ, which we recognise as Adam's skull that is an early Christian eschatological emblem on the scenes of Calvary. In both the Old and New Testaments, figures of the Apostles appear as another essential part of the iconological grammar during the Late Middle Ages. The Pontus sepulchral monument is situated within a cultural context that has not lost its connection to the poetry of the Psalms and the mood and signs that are known as the Autumn of the Middle Ages. The Low German text written in lower case

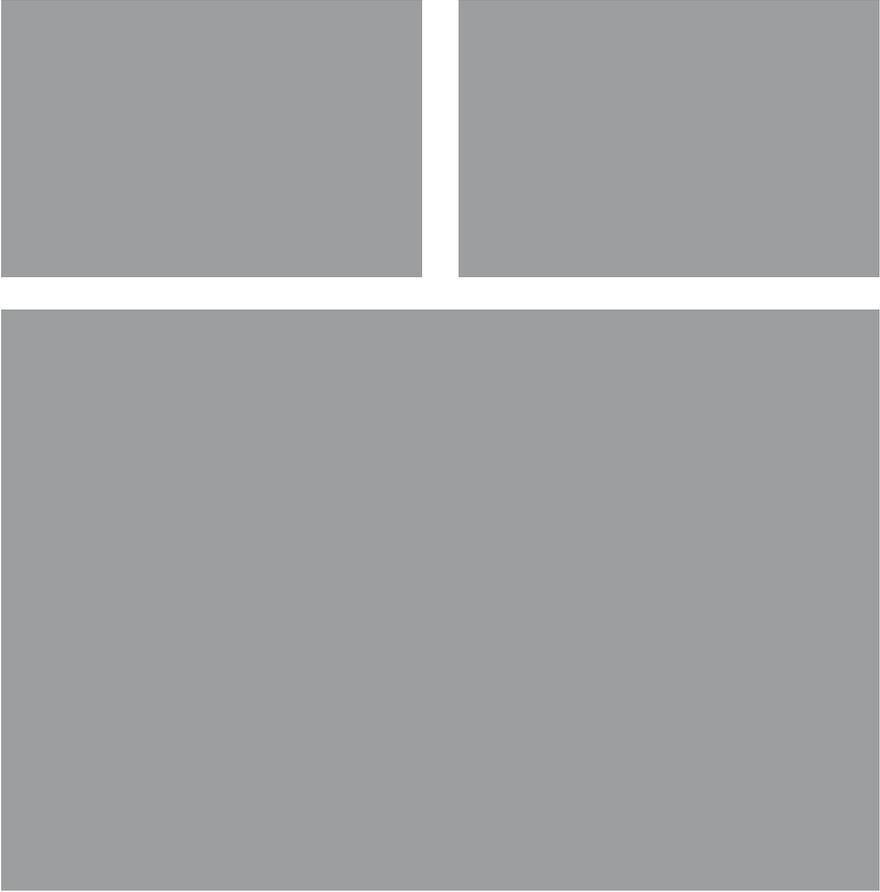


Fig. 17–19. Relief plaques on the predella of Pontus de la Gardie's epitaph. A plaque with a biblical text in Low German between the figures of the four Evangelists. Photo: Peeter Säre.

Gothic letters: *“ich bin eine auferstehung und das leben wer an mich gleubet wird von leben op er allein sterbe und wer da lebet und alenarta n mich der wirt nimmer mehr sterben,”*<sup>44</sup> comes from the Biblical storehouse of poetry, its allegorically significant treasures shaping the medieval cult of death. Drawing a line between the two worlds, the transcendental Catholic idea and the immanent modernity represented by the Reformation would be artificial and borne by the spirit of our times, which allowing us to see the world in its cyclical and eternal continuity, would try to divide the endless narrative into individual segments. A remarkable aspect of

<sup>44</sup> “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that beliveth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11, 25-26).



Fig. 20–21. Relief plaque with the Evangelists Matthew and Mark. Arent Passer's workshop. Initially located in the school building established in St. Michael's Convent in Tallinn in the 1630s. Currently stored in the Maritime Museum in Tallinn. Republished from: Helmi Üprus, *Raidkivi kunst Eestis XIII – XVII sajandini* (Tallinn: Kunst, 1987).



Fig. 22. Antwerp Town Hall. Cornelis Floris 1561 – 1565, according to Robert Hedicke: Robert Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration: Studien zur niederländischen und deutschen Kunst im XVI. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Bard, 1913)

Fig. 23–24. Two epitaphs with inscriptions by Cornelis Floris, according to Robert Hedicke (Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration*).

the written texts is the equally strong co-existence of two different languages – Latin and Low German.

The writing in lower case Gothic letters, "*et mors haec vitae nil nisi causa novae est*" ("and death is nothing to life but a cause for a new start", trans.) greets us with timeless Augustinian wisdom, linking Pontus's personal death to the evangelical theme of Redemption. Facing the cenotaph of the general, we feel transported to a school of rhetoric, which does not directly retell the Bible's eternal story or the new panegyric story of de la Gardies's splendour. Instead, one set of symbols transforms into another that equate life and its demise with a sarcastically pessimistic prediction typical of the late medieval period: "*hodie mihi, cras tibi*" (trans. "today it is me, tomorrow it will be you"). Depicted at the feet of the genius of death on the side panel of the sarcophagus' frontispiece, it demonstrates the all-inclusive power of death.

The coats of arms on the frontispiece of the aedicule in the Floris style relate the glory of its depicted hero and a cult of personality. The cenotaph is crowned by a medallion in the Floris style that the Renaissance borrowed from Roman coins. Above the head of the resurrected Christ is a cloud twisted into the shape of a mandrake with the heads of angels peeking out. In their early form the angels are typical of Paolo Veronese's work and of a large number of 16<sup>th</sup> century works of art executed in stone or as paintings. Christ is supported on two sides by the allegorical figures of virtue – Spes and Fides – who in their hermaphrodite grace are truly similar to Goujon's works, as Sten Karling has noted<sup>45</sup>, thereby announcing their even more immediate connection to the pictorial programme and characteristic Mannerist approach of Floris's Antwerp Town Hall (1764); in Passer's case, we can recognise the same shapes in his interpretation of Justitia and Pax on a sketch from 1597, and on the façade of the House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads constructed in 1600, where the modelling is slightly less skilled and the reliefs flatter, indicating that Passer's work obligations as the town architect and workshop director had increased.

An apparent affiliation to the classical tradition is visible on the columns with Corinthian capitals hewn from red-veined marble that divide the cenotaph. The liberal use of marble shows the high social standing of the couple and it is the only time that we find this level of quality in

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45 Karling, "Arent Passer", 36.

Passer's work. Another aspect calls attention to itself – the utilisation of a Vitruvian order of columns as a dominant compositional element of the monument. It is the earliest example of architectural order found in the Baltic countries that, in its clear and pure proportion, affirms Jacob Burchardt's claim that "together with the 16th century, a golden era of the Augustine Vitruvian school began, taking up the place that had previously been occupied by Cicero and the Latin language, shaping around itself a glorious circle that included, in addition to Alberti's multi-faceted knowledge, specific knowledge regarding the use of orders of columns."<sup>46</sup> Thus, the Catholic worship of images was not succeeded by the Protestant domination of the word, but rather by an internal transformation of rhetoric, the re-reading of canonical texts and a shift, less in the semantic nature of the language, than in its syntax. This dealt mostly with the alteration of *compositio* – changes in grammar that do not involve the introduction of the usage of new words but only the rearrangement of existing words in sentences. This expresses the profound difference between the Reformation and the Renaissance, which being the main possible visual source and standard, shaped a system of visual signs that was valid both before and after 1517. Changes in *leiturgia* are connected more to the spatial hierarchy, and based thereon, to the general composition of works of art as the content, form and meaning of the figures (*eikones*). The artistic culture was influenced more by the Renaissance than the intellectual revolution we call the Reformation; on one hand, by the purification of "*vulgata*" by Dante and Petrarca, and on the other, by a rebirth of a new art idiom – *all' antica* – based on Giotto, Piero della Francesca and Alberti.

#### SARCOPHAGUS<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, Notke's Dance of Death brings us the Renaissance-era interpretation of life and death in which *caro* – the disdained flesh of the Middle Ages – not only signifies an idea borrowed from the sceptics – "*non fui, fui, non sum, non curo*" (I was not, I was, I am not, I do not care),

46 Jacob Burchardt, *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien* (Stuttgart: Paul Neff Verlag, 1904), 42.

47 Dimensions of the sarcophagus: height (from the corner) 104 cm, with figures c 122 cm; length c 260 cm; width c 181 cm; the height of the vases on the corner c 66-68 cm; the height of footboard fronton c 63 cm, depth c 14 cm; the height of the headboard fronton c 66 cm, depth c 13 cm; (data from the register of the National Heritage Board: [www.register.muinas.ee](http://www.register.muinas.ee) (viewed 01.12.2014)).



Fig. 25. The figures of Pontus de la Gardie and Sophie Gyllenhielm lying on the lid of the sarcophagus. Photo: Peeter Säre.



Fig. 26. Pontus de la Gardie's sarcophagus. Relief on the side with the Battle of Narva, angels of death and family coats of arms. Photo: Peeter Säre.

but is related to the existentialist elucidation of the Old Testament's idea of eternal time and responsibility, while the New Testament's concept of salvation and Purgatory is a sign of the emphasis on the personal and the internal. Paul Binski has noted that "conventionally speaking, there have been two routes to explaining this new allegorical understanding of death as a means of organising belief. We can describe these as "exogeneous" routes, the first laying stress upon causes external to the culture of late-medieval society, the second stressing causes internal to that culture."<sup>48</sup>

Death in the context of the Renaissance mainstream is established by numerous sepulchral monuments from Florence to Dijon, from Bruges and Antwerp, which do not lead the wanderer over an invisible threshold, do not speak about the Last Judgement or the Resurrection but call upon us to accept the world in all its beauty and ugliness. Three copper coins given to the boatman guarantee oblivion; bodies do not cast shadows in Hades, on the other side of River Styx.

Death in Notke's imagination raises an issue without providing even the slightest promise of an answer. His two worlds always remain

<sup>48</sup> Binski, *Medieval Death*, 126.



Fig. 27. Cartouche-shaped scene of the Battle of Narva. Framed with scrollwork and military trophies. Photo: Peeter Säre.

separate. Forever. Leaving the first, there is no assurance of the next. “The saints are around the throne of Heaven while the bodies are on earth, the bodies being important because they were already touched by the Glory of Paradise.”<sup>49</sup> On Botticelli’s illustrative miniatures called “Comedy”, the souls are rising to Heaven as flames.<sup>50</sup> Besides the horrors of death, beauty plays a role, which the new Renaissance reality of art has elevated into the embodiment of truth and salvation.

If, in the case of the cenotaph we had reason to examine the intellectual world of the medieval times and its paradigmatic shift alongside and within the classical canon, then the sarcophagus demonstrates the total victory of the Classics in every single detail. Its collateral is the book of memories borrowed from Rome, together with its characteristic idiom of form. Beyond the religious message, the narrative of the person’s esteemed life and tragic end tells the story of a gifted and determined young man named Pontus who made his way from a village called Escouperier in Languedoc near Carcassonne to the great world arena;

49 Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia (1307–21)*, (Purgatorio XVIII, 40-60). Dante’s Purgatory, Transl. with notes and commentary by Mark Musa, Richard M. Powers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 346.

50 Lutz S. Malke, “Das Fortwirken von Botticellis Miniatur-Unterzeichnungen in illustrierten Commedia-Drucken “figuro lo Inferno e lo mise in stampa”, *Dantes Göttliche Komödie: Drucke und Illustrationen aus Sechs Jahrhunderten*. Ed Lutz S. Malke (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2000), 39.





Fig. 28–31. The end gables of Pontus de la Gardie's sepulchral monument with volute frontispieces. Photos: Peeter Säre.

it tells the story of the Renaissance hero's military raids in Italy, battles led by Marshal Brissac in Piedmont, and by Henry II against Marie de Guise in Scotland; his fight as an ally of Frederick II and a prisoner of the Swedes during the Seven Years War in 1565, and of his swift turn into a protégé of Erik XIV and his conquest of John III's heart.<sup>51</sup> Pontus married Sophia Hansdotter from Turku, an illegitimate daughter of King John III of Sweden, securing not only John's secret life, but also his own future. Not long after his death, historians traced his ancestral line back to the forebears of the Roman Emperor Augustus. It should be added that, in a manner common to Stockholm at the time, Pontus never changed his confession and remained a Catholic until his death. Questions of religion were not important in Sweden since they had no influence over the dynastic relations between Sweden and Poland. After the death in 1583 of Katarina Jagellonica, the second wife of John III, her burial place was arranged as a space of rituals – there is an altar for Catholic services to be held and prayers read. The chosen room is a chapel situated to the east of the transept with an arched room below the floor designed for the coffin. A key concept in Pontus's sepulchral monument is fame, the memory left by a hero, with its classical idiom of form that places it within the context of the Greco-Latin cult of death. The threshold of death is not only a guide to the hereafter but also a guide to earthly victories – *mnemes* stored for the world theatre. This form of monument is related to a principle developed in Greek rhetoric asserting that *energeia* (vividness) and its Latin equivalents *evidentia* or *illustratio* and *energeia* (actuality) are among the most important, if not the main, instruments of persuasion.<sup>52</sup> The aim of the monument was to commemorate, and to ensure an eternal place for “the famous memory of my name” (*insignem memoriam mei nominis*),<sup>53</sup> already found as an epitaph on the grave of Roger II. The backdrops made use of the things of war and battle, theatre masks, symbols conveying a sense of decay and melancholy reverberates among the living. The depiction of

51 Philippe-Georges Richard, *Pontus de la Gardie: Un languedocien à la conquête de la Baltique* (Association des Amis des Archives de l'Aude, 1982).

52 Caroline van Eck, “Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts”, *Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.

53 Epitaph on Roger II sepulchral monument in Cefalù, Sicily, one of the earliest examples showing the emergence of a new tradition of weighing the relationship between life and death, and also signalling the revival of the architectural tomb in Western cultural frame. See: Howard Colvin, *Architecture and the After-Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991) 191.

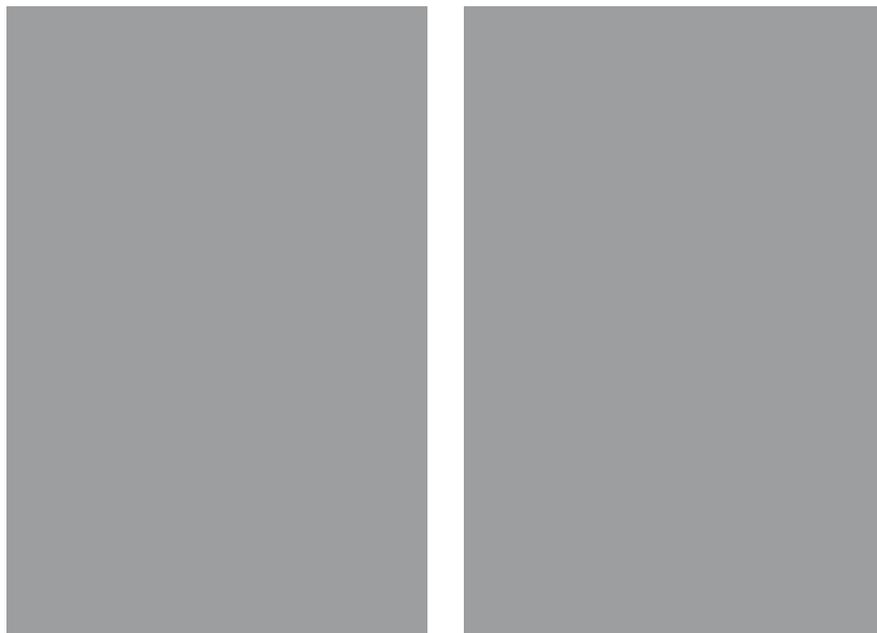


Fig. 32–33. Pontus and Sophie in a prayer on the lid of the sarcophagus. Photo: Peeter Säre.

the Battle of Narva on the side of the sarcophagus tells of Pontus's success in 1581, depicting the Swedish Army in a battle order close to the Macedonian Alexander and his phalanx.

The death of Pontus was as tragic as his life was distinguished; he was on a boat on his way back from peace talks with the Russians in 1586, the boat suddenly capsized and his body clad in iron fell to the bottom of the rapids in spite of the effort by his confreres. His body was buried with solemn ceremony in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Tallinn next to his wife Sophie Gyllenhielm who had died of the plague two years earlier. The sarcophagus tells of a man who lost grandeur and state power and power generally. The monument is an apotheosis of the Swedish overseas mission – this is confirmed by the Latin texts in Antique Serif typeface:

On the headboard:

HIC ꝛ PONTVS ꝛ IACET ꝛ AEQVOREIS ꝛ SVBMERSVS ꝛ IN ꝛ VNDIS  
 O ꝛ FATVM ꝛ MAGNIS ꝛ NVMINA ꝛ INIQVA ꝛ VIRIS  
 MAVORS ꝛ ALTER ꝛ ERAT ꝛ PLANEQ ꝛ VIR ꝛ ARDVVS ꝛ ERGO  
 EST ꝛ TALEM ꝛ AC ꝛ TANTVM ꝛ MORS ꝛ RAPERE ꝛ AVSA ꝛ VIRVM  
 EST ꝛ ITA ꝛ SED ꝛ RAPVIT ꝛ NON ꝛ OMNEM

Pontus rests here, he who has drowned in the waves of the sea –  
 O fate, brought by the wrath of gods to great men!  
 This noble man was clearly the another Mars – how then,  
 did Death dare to kidnap such a great and powerful man?  
 True, kidnapped, but not entirely, for he left his fame  
 to his daughter and son-in-law, and to God he left his soul.<sup>54</sup>

On the footboard:

HIC Ṛ MAGNVṢ Ṛ VIRTṢTE Ṛ VIRṢ Ṛ PARVA Ṛ INTEGIT Ṛ VRNA  
 QVI Ṛ BELLĪ Ṛ ARTE Ṛ FVIT Ṛ CLARṢ Ṛ ET Ṛ ARTE Ṛ TOGAE  
 PONTṢ Ṛ ERAT Ṛ PONTO Ṛ DEDṢXIT Ṛ NOMINIS Ṛ ṢṢM  
 MERGITUR Ṛ HEṢ Ṛ PARṢIS Ṛ CORPORA Ṛ PONTṢ Ṛ AQṢIS  
 SED Ṛ BREVE Ṛ CVRRICṢLV Ṛ VITAE Ṛ BONA Ṛ FAMA Ṛ REPEDIT  
 ET Ṛ MORS Ṛ HAEC Ṛ VITAE Ṛ NIL Ṛ NISI Ṛ CAVSSA Ṛ NOVAE Ṛ EST

Here a small urn conceals a man of great virtue,  
 famous for his skills at war and peace (statesmanship),  
 Pontus he was, he got his name from the sea  
 O misery! Pontus' body drowned in small waves!  
 Yet a good name outweighs a life cut short  
 and death is nothing but the start of new life.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, we find a Latin proverb on the eastern frontispiece of the sarcophagus:

HODIE MICHĪ CRAS TIBĪ<sup>56</sup>

On the front below the eastern coat of arms:

PONTṢ DE LA GARDIE.

Below the western coat of arms:

SOPHIA GṢLDENHELM

54 “Siin lebab Pontus, kes on uppunud veteväljade laineteis -  
 oo saatust, mille toovad vaenulikud jumalad suurtele meestele!  
 See üllas mees oli selgesti teine Mars – kuidas küll,  
 kas surm sõandas röövida niisuguse suure ja võimsa mehe?  
 On nii, ent ta ei röövinud tervenisti: nimelt ta jättis  
 tütrele ja väimehele kuulsuse, jumalale aga hinge.”(Transl. from Latin Janika Päll)

55 “Siin peidab väike urn vooreselt suurt meest,  
 kes oli kuulus oma sõjakunsti ja riigimehelikkuse (rahuaja kunsti) poolest.  
 Pontus oli, ta sai merelt omal kasutada nime,  
 oh häda! Pontuse keha uppus väikestesse lainetesse!  
 Ent hea kuulsus kaalub üles lühikese kuluga elu  
 ja see surm pole muud, kui uue elu algus (Transl. from Latin Jaanika Pärn)

56 “Today it is me, tomorrow it will be you” is a reference to the ancient texts in the tradition of *macabre* and cult of death. The letters are written onto a black panel and the text is probably from a later period of restorations after the fire in 1682 (see below)

In principle, the burial and the person buried were defined in terms of a hierarchical view of the body. The burials of Pontus were royal burials (*sepulchris regalibus*) – what else could be expected from the burial of a king's daughter. The bodily composition of the king “came to be understood as a corporation of two separate bodies – the natural mortal body of the particular king and the eternal, and the official body politic that survived the mortal body and was incorporated in the successor upon his coronation.”<sup>57</sup> As the visual setting for the monument, let us imagine Pontus's cortege: the noblest of the noble walking in sorrowful silence, clad in their best clothes as if it were a triumphal procession instead of a funeral. There could be weeks of delay between the death and the burial. This provided enough time to have a wax model of the deceased made as the last commemoration; the wax statue was placed on the coffin lid in the hearse. A stonemason created a sculptural copy based this wax model, taking the person and his traits into consideration on the one hand, and his position in the worldly and eternal hierarchy on the other. After Pontus was buried gloriously and nobly (*herrlich und statlich*<sup>58</sup>) in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Tallinn in 1586, almost four years passed before John III gave the orders to find a suitable artist to create the monument's images and figures (*Biltnussen und Figuren*) in the likeness of the patron and his figure (*nach gezeigter Patron*).<sup>59</sup> It is very likely that the wax models made after the deaths of Pontus's and his wife were used as references. As retrospective of the ancient world as it appeared in the *compositio* and *disegno*, the signs of *superbia* had to be understood and “read” through the eternal vocabulary of poses and gestures. In their timeless peace, the figures of Pontus and his wife figures on the lid of the sarcophagus express a longing for beauty and classical purity, giving the changeable an unchanging and eternal meaning: the heads of the figures rest on brocade pillows that are covered in finely chiselled ornamentation. The eyes of the princely couple look into eternity. Their long-fingered hands are clasped in prayer on their chests as had been the custom for many centuries. The criteria of truth are not found in the existent, tangible, or even actual representational similarity, but rather, the monument's greater message is the presence of light and the

57 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 61.

58 Johan Lossius, *Die Urkunden der Grafen De la Gardie in der Universitätsbibliothek zu Dorpat* (Dorpat: K. F. Köhler, 1882), 80.

59 Karling, „Arent Passer”, 30.



Fig. 34. Military emblems with the uniform of a Roman legionnaire, a dramatic mask and cannon. Photo: Peeter Säre.

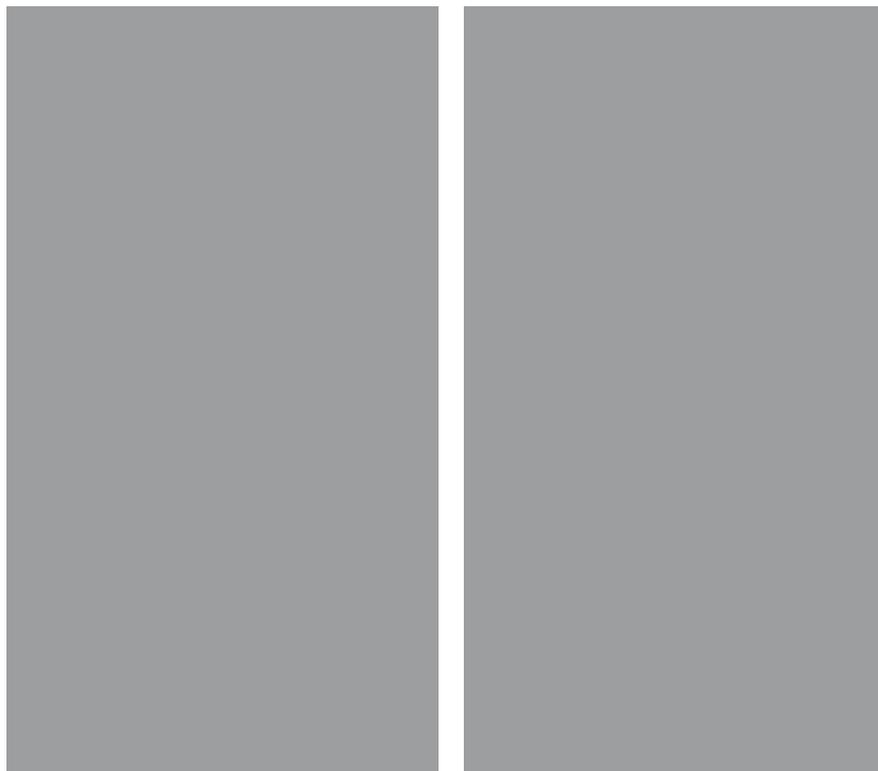


Fig. 35–36. Military emblems with the uniform of a Roman legionnaire, a dramatic mask and cannon. Photo: Peeter Säre. Trophy bundle on the western corner of the sarcophagus. Photo: Peeter Säre

invariability of God. Pontus and his wife lie stretched out on the lid of the sarcophagus. The general is clothed in a coat of mail. His wife wears a tall Spanish headdress embellished with feathers that was both a sign of fashion and luxury at court in the Burgundian Netherlands at the time. The clothing of both of the deceased is tastefully elegant, in a manner that once again signals the dominant sense of style, joining the imperial and knightly countries – the Netherlands and the Baltics. Passer is at once archaic and old-fashioned – predicated upon the customs of funeral and sarcophagus construction – and yet, also consciously fashionable, imitating Antiquity in the style of the day. His model is the Renaissance tradition in its entirety; the focus is on the individual and on the past founded upon the Roman heritage and its adoption in the Italian as well as French-Burgundian area. It gets its start during the Gothic period,

emerging in 1540s in the form of the Antique – the style of Classicism<sup>60</sup> and lives on in Jean Goujon’s and Cornelis Floris’s works that are influenced by the Fontainebleau school; in both cases, we can see the effect of the exposure to Italy. The continuous development of graphic printing also plays an important role – via the lessons from Fontainebleau (from Jean Mignon to Antonio Fantuzzini) – whereby the human body and its Mannerist style of representation united a broad geographical area into a uniform whole, which Jan Bialastocki defined as the *Grand Space* (*Grossraum*) or in case of 16<sup>th</sup>-century art in the Baltic Sea region, as the *Open Space* (*offene Region*).<sup>61</sup> However, Passer is not a copyist who borrowed his models from the prints of his glorious predecessors, but an artist who has drunk from the true well of the classical style. His style is refined, developed beyond the standard reproductions of graphic prints; as a creator he is equal to the greatest talents and most famous workshops of his era. The spellbindingly gracious genii of death are on a par with Floris’s and his students’ works. When looking for works of art that could be compared to Passer’s monument, Floris’s Friedrich I monument in Roskilde (1552) as well as his Jean II de Mérode at the Saint Dymphna Church in Geel come to mind.

Although the sepulchral monument for Duke Ulrich in Güstrow Cathedral created by Philipp Brandin was completed thirty years later, its design of the genii of death, ornamented strapwork panels and title figure are not merely stylistically similar but also more intimately related to Passer’s works in Tallinn. Similarities can also be found with Guillaume Boyen’s (Willem Boy) Gustav Vasa sepulchral monument in the Uppsala Cathedral (1562–1583). Nevertheless, the artistic excellence of both examples exceeds Passer’s works in Tallinn but still allows us to make the connection between the monument in Tallinn and the artistic circles of Bruges, Kent and Antwerp that no longer perceived the arts as “*artes mechanicae*”, but increasingly as a part of the “*artes liberale*”, giving them a higher status than craftsmanship.<sup>62</sup> The ornamental

60 Heinz Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France. The Invention of Classicism* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), 99ff.

61 Jan van Bonsdorff, “Zur Methodik der Kunsthistorischen Grossraumforschung. Die mittelalterliche Hoslzskulpturen in Schleswig-Holstein”, *Figur und Raum. Mittelalterliche Holzbildwerke im historischen und Kunstgeographischen Kontext*. Eds. Uwe Albrecht, Jan van Bonsdorff in Zusammenarbeit mit Anette Henning (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1994), 9.

62 Barbara Weltzel, “Anmerkungen zu Kunstproduktion und Kunsthandel”, *Die Kunst der Burgundischen Niederlande. Eine Einführung*. Hrsg. Birgit Francke, Barbara Weltzel (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1997), 151.

parts of the monument also match the spirit of the time, in the choice of the scrollwork surrounding the pictorial panels that are designed as cartouches, as well as in the preference for the classical motifs of trophy bundles. Robert Hedicke has defined this approach as the Decorative Era (*Zeitalter der Dekorativen*) and Erik Forssmann as the narrow circle of stylistic trends of Northern Mannerism.<sup>63</sup> Lutheran ideology encapsulates the religiousness and *Zeitgeist* of the period. Post-Reformation art has learned rather from the Dutch quality of art, supplying its catechism with metaphors cooked in the generally approved 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century “hot kettle of arts” comprised of Bruges, Hague and also Lübeck. “The man who wants to become an artist must visit Rome ... He must also have produced many paintings in the style of this school ..., before he may be honestly regarded as an artist,” Carl van Mandern stated in his life of Jan van Scorel..<sup>64</sup>

#### THE MONUMENT IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL SPACE

The greater the patron is the more imposing the monument. A married couple of high nobility required something extraordinary – in addition to the artistic aspect the work also required a dignified place in the ecclesiastical space. The sepulchral monument had to be seen from a distance. For this reason, a devotional space was established around the monument. Firstly, the elevation of the monument served as a proof of Pontus’s triumphs. Secondly, the placement of the monument was dependent upon the liturgy of the church, integrating both the specifics of the sacral interiors and the generic liturgical layout. Pontus’s monument is situated in the choir area of the Cathedral of St. Mary; its placement is dictated by the main altar and the choir pews of the cathedral; both are part of its spatial arrangement. Pontus’s monument alters the interior – the sarcophagus with an epitaph above is emblematic of a newborn liturgical space that turned the former church of prayer into a church of memorial; and in addition to the redesign that occurred during the Reformation transformed it into a temple of memory in the style of St.

63 Erik Forssmann, *Säule und Ornament. Studien zum Problem des Manerismus in den nordischen Säulenbüchern und Vorlageblättern des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stockholm: Almqvist und Wiksell, 1956), 68.

64 James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art. painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 – 1575* (New York: Abrams, 1985), 467.



Fig. 37. Southern window of the choir in the Cathedral of St. Mary. The rough stone block helps to support Pontus's cenotaph. Apparently installed during the restoration of the church after the great fire on Toompea Hill in 1684. Photo: Peeter Säre.

Denis. We do not know how the interior of the church looked after Pontus's monument was installed or thereafter when many other monuments for high nobility were installed in the Cathedral's choir area. Was there a common programme or were the new objects related to the cult of death added on an ad-hoc basis? Olaf Ryning's cenotaph on the wall opposite Pontus's epitaph, the sarcophagi of Caspar von Tiesenhausen and his wife Märta Oxenstierna and Carl Henrikson Horn and his wife Agnes von Delwig are more or less related to the turn of 17<sup>th</sup> century and in great part to Passer's name and his workshop in Tallinn (if we exclude only Olaf Ryning). Pontus's sepulchral monument is the first of the series. Where was it situated? Important changes in the architecture and the interior plan of the Cathedral of St. Mary were caused by the great fire of 1684 on Toompea Hill. Several sarcophagi were disassembled and placed as panels on the church walls. During the period of restoration, the location of Pontus's monument could have changed and this is indicated by several facts uncovered by close examination.

The cenotaph of the monument cuts into the choir window. To support the backside of the cenotaph, a crude block of slate and bricks has been placed at the rear of the lower choir window; and as such is not appropriate to the initial sanctified mood. The sarcophagus also raises some questions – only three of the four sides are covered in relief. The side facing the wall, which is integrated into a whole by the ornamental moulding on the lid of the sarcophagus and the base, shows clear signs of crude hacking. One explanation could be fire damage, which we can also see in several other places, and which has resulted in the volute frontispieces being repaired with plates of black tone that conflict with the artistic concept and general composition of the tympanum. It is highly probable that the monument was not installed as it stands today, with its longer side against the southern wall of the choir room, but, rather placed at a right angle to the wall, as we can see in case of Catherine Jagiellon's monument in Stockholm. Another, even more ceremonial, option is possible. It could have been positioned similarly to the markers on a number of graves of kings from the Netherlands to Spain and the Baltic countries in a central place, and thereby visible from all sides and associated with the idea of memorial churches, stressing the king's characteristically ceremonial significance and his place as the ruler of both earthly and divine hierarchy. As parallel example, one could mention Willem Boy's (Guillaume Boyen's) Gustav Vasa sarcophagus in the

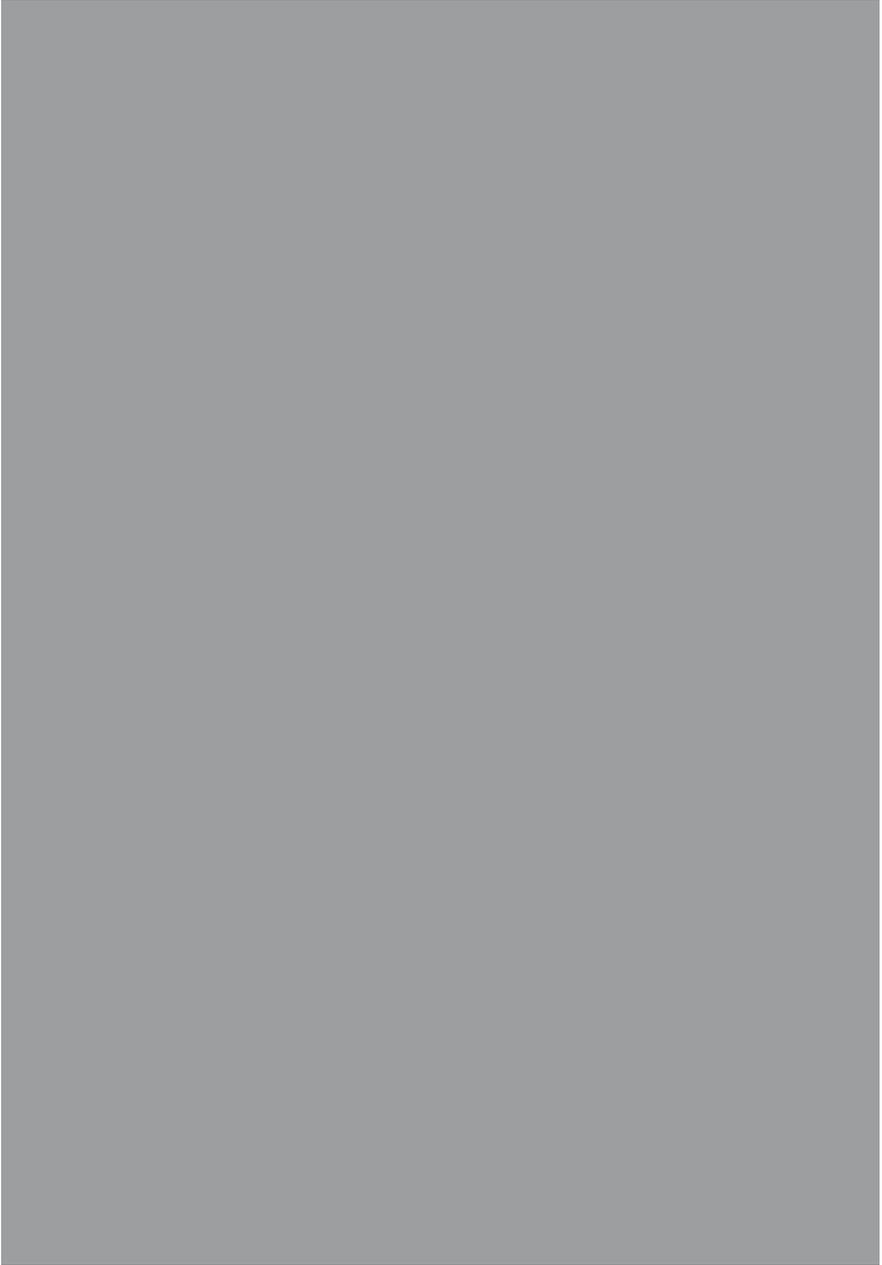


Fig. 38. The sepulchral monument of Gustav Vasa in Uppsala Cathedral. Willem Boy. 1562 – 1583. Republished from: Torbjörn Fulton, "Skulpturen", *Renässansens konst*. Signums Svenska KonstHistoria (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1996)



Fig. 39. Death genii on the sepulchral monument of Gustav Vasa.

Uppsala Cathedral, or Hans Fleming's sepulchral monument for Herzog Magnus in the Vadstena Abbey a half a century later. The environment surrounding the monument is as important as the artistic message: the space that contextualised the text within the ritual and philosophical world allowed the *ad sanctos* burials of the privileged nobility to find a resting place closest to the altar – within or below which the relics of saints were stored during the Catholic era. “The burial must be carried out so that the head of the deceased faces the sunset and the feet point toward the sunrise, as if in a position of prayer and signifying the readiness of the deceased to pass from sunset to sunrise, from the material world to eternity. In this way, privileged persons sought to receive patronage from the nearby saint and also to be included in the prayers of the worshippers who stepped over their graves.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the modern

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65 Mari Loit, *Keskaegsest „surmakultuurist“ ja hauatähistest reformatsiooneelse Tallinna kirikutes ja kloostrites*. Master's thesis (Tallinna Ülikool, Kultuuriteaduskond, 2002), 28.

paradigm made a contribution, it coupled the ancient rituals of burial with the school of beauty and perspective developed by Alberti, passed on by Sebastiano Serlio, and included in Cornelius Floris's, Hieronymos Cock's, and Hans Vredemann de Vries's books on architecture. The "daily bread" of the artists working in Protestant Northern Europe was provided by Carl van Mandern's and Jacques Androuet de Cercerau's publications, which also popularised the "*bella maniera*" north of the Alps. And in this way, combined the magic of the past, the rules of liturgy related to death, and the Vitruvian teaching into a new mixed "pictorial world", a result that does not allow the formal lines of separation to be imposed between the physical and psychological (*Physis and Psyche*) aspects of the depiction of the human body and space. In addition to cognition, a non-cognitive side plays a part, offering a way for the soul to "emerge better than through a similarity with the depiction of man" (*Dionysius Aeropagias*)<sup>66</sup> The new artistic freedom meant rules of symmetry and perspective but also, in turn, disassociation from them and deformation (*Verfremdung und Deformation*).<sup>67</sup>

The beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> century introduces a new era, and a new direction in Italy and in the recently formed art field of the French and German Renaissance, which 20<sup>th</sup>-century art history defines as Mannerism. Instead of a peaceful simplicity and transparent idea we encounter complex developments, in which the psyche must fulfil a metaphysical responsibility to impress and excite, to find new openness and impactful developments for finished compositions, which, along with the entire body and its depiction speak of something superhuman; of the reality of the greater harmony of beauty and perfection"<sup>68</sup> By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the need of the Renaissance and its early representatives – from Jan Van Eyck and Roger van der Weyden to Dürer – to "correctly" observe perspective had lost its fascinating charm for expressing the ideal and replaced naturalistic norms with the more expressive approaches that are manifested in both Raphael's later works and Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. These Mannerist features have already been adopted by Dürer and their

66 Cited in: Magdalena Buschart, "Sehen und Erkennen, Albrecht Altdorfers religiöse Bilder", *Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien*, Bd 117 (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004), 23.

67 Stavros Vlachos, *Deformation und Verfremdung. Eine Stiltenenz in der deutschen Kunst um 1500* (Kiel: Ludwig Verlag, 2012), 16.

68 Fritz Baumgart, *Renaissance und Kunst des Manierismus*. Du Mont Dokumente, Reihe 1: Kunstgeschichte. Deutung. Dokumente (Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1963), 37.



Fig. 40–41. The Royal Exchange in London and Kronborg Castle, built by Henri de Paschen. Republished from: Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration*.

influence extended to the artists of the Danube school.<sup>69</sup> Fontainebleau and the Netherlands belong to the same “world”, a place where fantasy and arbitrary thematic development signified innovative and surprising solutions in the course of which, Mannerism became the dominant artistic approach in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

WHO WAS ARENT PASSER?  
ABOUT TWO STYLES AND TWO STONEMASONS,  
ONE OF THEM AN ARTIST AND THE OTHER  
AN EXCEPTIONALLY SKILLED ARTISAN

Sten Karling relates Arent Passer’s heritage to Danzig, in particular to a carpenter named Peter Passer, who emigrated from the Netherlands (*Peter Passer von Hagen aus Hollen ein Schnitzker*). Peter was probably Tallinn’s Arent Passer’s father.<sup>70</sup> Danzig was a haven of the arts that amassed a colony of expatriate artists due to the war that broke out in the Netherlands in the 1560s. From there, a wave of painters, glass painters and stonemasons move on to Northern Europe. “The diaspora of Netherlandish artists in the northern realms at the time of Ludovico Guiccardini was already driven by business interests, opportunities, or religious pressures, with merchants and farmers settling around the Baltic, particularly in the Prussian (both royal and ducal) cities,

<sup>69</sup> Jochen Sander, “Einleitung”, *Fantastische Welten. Albrecht Altdorfer und das Expressive in der Kunst um 1500*. Ed. von Stefan Roller und Jochen Sander (Frankfurt am Main: Hirmer, 2014), 15.

<sup>70</sup> Karling, „Arent Passer”, 30.



Fig. 42. Angels of death on the sepulchral monument of Friedrich I in Schleswig. According to Robert Hedicke (Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration*).

and in the towns of Livonia and Courland.<sup>71</sup> An important facilitator of the emigration was the Floris workshop, which dispatched Philipp Brandin, Wilhem van der Blocke and Hans Vredemann de Vries, who arrived in Danzig with his son Paul in 1592. The inclusion of Passer in this group would be very natural. In many ways, Danzig's situation was quite similar to the situation in the Baltics. Economic and intellectual growth followed the dramatic changes of the Post-Reformation, culminating in the adoption of humanist ideas together with the distinctive religious-social and political attitudes of Erasmus that combined the traditionalism of the post-Hanseatic culture with local motifs and Biblical historicism, Antiquity and the Classics.<sup>72</sup> In art, Italianesque features were introduced in 1530s and 1540s, forming a language of complex symbols and allegories on which the "golden century" that followed

71 Heinrich Borggrefe, "Gdańsk and the Netherlands around 1600 – a Brief Introduction to a European Topic", *Netherlandish Artists in Gdańsk in the Time of Hans Vredeman de Vries* (Gdańsk: Museum of the History of the City of Gdańsk, 2006), 15.

72 Adam Milobedzki, "Danzigs architektonische Bühne: 1450 – 1800", *Danziger Kunst vom 15. bis 18. Jahrhundert* (Gdańsk: Museum Narodowe w Gdańsku, 1997), 25ff.



Fig. 43. An angel of death with a lion mask in Schleswig. Photo: Krista Andreson.

Fig. 44. An angel of death on the sepulchral monument of Gustaf Nanér in the Uppsala Cathedral. Aris Clason 1629.

Fig. 45. An angel of death on the sepulchral monument of Duke Ulrich in the Güstrow Cathedral. Philipp Brandin 1586 – 1587. Photo: Juhan Maiste.

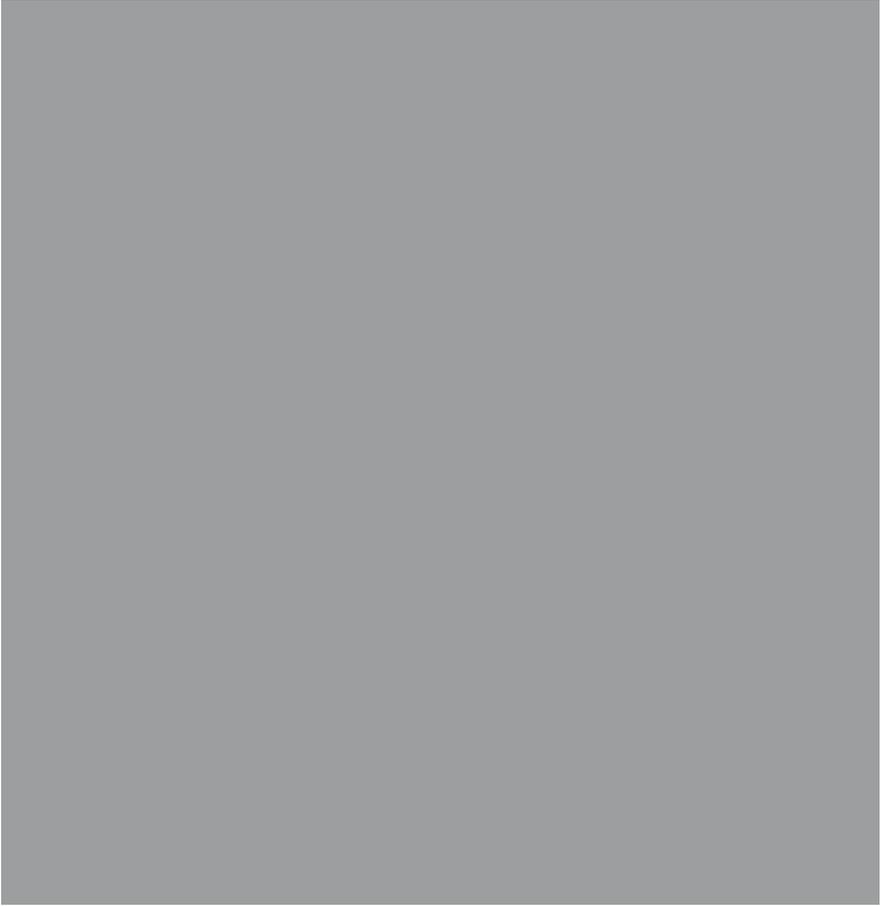


Fig. 46–47. A relief plaque with Renaissance ornamentation on the sepulchral monument of Christian III and his wife Dorothea in Roskilde. Cornelis Floris 1568 – 1575.

could establish its blossoming in architecture, town planning as well as its “display window” with an overabundance of images and figures. The area between Antwerp and Danzig was crowded with ambitious and talented artists, a fact that did not escape attention in Sweden “where international *barokes* (agents) supplemented their daily work by providing clients with news of a cultural nature. As intermediaries, the double agents were engaged in a diversity of both political and art-related undertakings.”<sup>73</sup> In addition to Polish-Scandinavian relations, one cannot

73 Badeloch Noldus, “Dealing in Politics and Art. Agents between Amsterdam, Stockholm and Copenhagen”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*. Nr. 28 (3)/ 2003, ed. by Stephen T. Christensen and Badeloch Noldus (Routledge: Taylor and Francis, 2003), 215.

ignore the English-Danish links, which were pointed out by Lodovico Guiccardini in 1567; when writing a survey compiled in Antwerp, he points out that “the Netherlandish masters have projected through England, through all of Germany and especially through Denmark, through Sweden, through Norway, through Poland and through other northern lands as far as Muscovy.”<sup>74</sup>

Passer’s name was far from unknown in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Antwerp. The Passers were probably a large generation of artists and architects with many branches that started out in the local guild of St. Luke and later moved abroad. One of them, Henri de Paschen (Passe), was the man who built the Royal Exchange in London. (1566–1569).<sup>75</sup> The traces of the same family can be found in Denmark, where, at the request of Frederick II in 1574, they drew up the plans for Kronborg Castle (1573). The construction work was headed by Antoon van Obbergen from Maline, a man that we encounter some time later in Danzig building the Arsenal.<sup>76</sup> Because of the above, tracing the Passer name on the vast map of artists becomes somewhat difficult and calls for additional archival research. In Estonia, the first written records of Arent Passer date from 24 August 1589. At that time, he was a young man. Passer died in 1637 and was buried with grand ceremony at St. Olaf’s Church in Tallinn,<sup>77</sup> (after the church fire of 1820, the burial place remains unknown), making him an artist with one of the longest biographies in the old Hanseatic town.

John III of Sweden gave the order to create a sepulchral monument for Pontus and Sophia already in the spring of 1588, hence three years after the tragic death of Pontus. The coffin and the headstone were to be made of stone (*en Graf och en Graf Steen af huggen Steen*) and thereafter installed<sup>78</sup> The De la Gardie family was to undertake the entire financing of the monument. Johan de la Blanque, Pontus’s friend and “brother-in-arms”, took charge of having the commission fulfilled. For some reason it was delayed and the monument was not completed until 1595 at a total cost of 1,470 thalers, almost three times the initial estimate

74 Ludovico Guiccardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi*, Antwerpen 1567, 101. Cited in: Thomas da Costa Kaufmann, “Ways of Transfer Netherlandish Art?”, *Netherlandish Artists in Gdańsk in the Time of Hans Vredeman de Vries*, 15.

75 John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530 – 1830*, (The Pelican History of Art), (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 171.

76 Ignace Vandervivere, Catheline Perier d’Iteren, *Renaissance Art in Belgium. Architecture, monumental Art Brussels* (Brussels: M. Vokaer, 1973), 10.

77 Lossius, *Die Urkunden der Grafen De la Gardie*, 82.

78 Karling, “Arent Passer”, 32.

of 650 thalers.<sup>79</sup> During the intervening seven years, there are no traces of Arent in Tallinn. This raises the question of why the fulfilment of the order was delayed. Moreover where was the sepulchral monument hewn? It is possible that the work was not carried out in Tallinn but somewhere else, more specifically, at a larger workshop, where more favourable conditions existed, which was quite customary at the time. In spite of the fire damage and marks of restoration, several individual approaches can be detected in the artistic style and the technical execution of the monument. Differences appear in the lid of the sarcophagus and the coffin, and even greater differences in the artistic implementation of the sarcophagus and the cenotaph. The differences in standard and quality are obvious. On the one hand, we see a grandiose, high-minded and finely refined masterful approach to the structure of the stone, and on the other, a high-quality product that is confined to traditional skills and competence.

In all likelihood the master mason (the artist) designed the whole, drew the details (including the Battle of Narva scene and putti angels) and thereafter carved the “strategic areas”, which in addition to style skills also required talent and dedication. When examining the majestic couple and angel figurines we find similarities with the best masters and workshops of the day from Philipp Brand to Guillaume Boyen. Boyen had received an order for a triumphal carriage that was used to bear the coffins of monarchs to the traditional burial church dedicated to St. Eric in Uppsala. A comparison with the latter brings up a number of important details. First, we see that the lid is decorated with full-size resting figures modelled from wax and four crowned columns in the corners hold the baldachin that covers the equipage. There are also heads of angels among the decorations. Even if the carriage was only meant for funeral processions, it was located at the Vasa choir for many years before it found its final place at the church. It is also curious that Guillaume Boyen was instructed to travel to the Netherlands and source material for the grand sepulchral monument, corroborating the suggestion that the monument was not cut in Stockholm, but in Menchen, Boyen’s hometown. The monument arrived in Sweden only after Gustaf’s second son ascended the throne in 1583.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the same person, King Johann III,

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79 Ibid., 32.

80 Torbjörn Fulton, “Skulpturen”, *Renässansens konst*. Signums Svenska KonstHistoria (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1996), 303ff.

initiated the monuments in both Uppsala and Tallinn. Guillaume Boyen and Passer are bound by more than a similarity of style. Points of similarity can also be found in the artistic intentions and individual style of the details of the monuments and in the iconology and choice of motifs. The plastically modelled winged genii of death on Gustav Vasa's sepulchral monument are also found on the sarcophagus in Tallinn, as a bas-relief, characterised by the limber and slightly Mannerist deformed bodies, which were essential elements of the Floris school. The designs of the Italianesque volute frontispieces are almost identical. In both cases, the facial expressions are melancholic, which is a general sign of the era and conveys a poetry and longing for classical ideals that is essential to the Floris school. The folds in the cloth are created using a similar technique: they drop in long and heavy folds recalling the orders of the columns and their characteristic fluting. The folds are pulled together in the middle by an ornamental band that resembles chiselling, which is equally characteristic of both masters. And finally, several details are similar not only in regard to the stonemasonry, but are nearly identical in regard to the iconology and allegorical programme; an example is the genii of death on Boyen's Gustaf Banér sepulchral monument, in the background of which we see a skull and hourglass similarly to the putti scenes on the monument in Tallinn. Unmistakably, the inspiration for both artists comes from the same source – Floris and his workshop in Antwerp. Without pausing further on the topic of the Floris workshop and its distinct usage of ornament, which has been covered by an excellent work on the subject by Robert Hedicke<sup>81</sup>, we can make note of the commonality in Floris's, Boyen's, Brandini's, and Passer's cartouche reliefs and the surrounding grotesque scrollwork and strapwork that correspond to the main trends of the period, and which connect the order of columns (*ornamenta columnarum*) to beauty (*pulchritudo*) to its characteristic festivity (*festivitas*) and dignity (*dignitas*). The abundance of ornamentation at the Domus Aurea (Golden House) in Rome, which inspired Raphael and Agostino Veneziano in the 1530s, found its way, a decade later, onto Cornelis Bos's pattern sheets, and somewhat later onto those of Jacques Androuet de Cerceau. By the time Cornelis Floris steps onto the stage, the principles of the Flemish Grotesque Style were

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81 Robert Hedicke, *Cornelis Floris und die Florisdekoration: Studien zur niederländischen und deutschen Kunst im XVI. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Bard, 1913), 24ff.

already fixed. Planning Pontus's monument, Passer's ornamentation is Mannerist to a lesser degree and inspired by the Classics to a greater degree. Besides the influence of Floris, a role was also played by Hans Vredman de Vries, whose perspectives and ornaments inspired by Raphael and Giulio Romano found their way into his sample books *Scenographie* and *Kleinen Architekturperspektiven*, published in 1550s and 1560s.<sup>82</sup> In his first works Passer still bases his work on the style of Floris and his workshop, imitating their characteristic iconology and the general spirit of the period. Many of the details that characterise Passer's later work – for example, the coats of arms of families – can be found in the sepulchral monuments and interiors (Caspar von Tiesenhausen and his wife Martha Oxenstierna sarcophagus in the Cathedral of St. Mary, 1599; and on the window casings of the Tiesenhausen family house at Rütli 14 in Tallinn, 1600). I would like to suggest the following proposition: Passer's "home garden" was not a far from the Floris workshop. Floris's students were his teachers, making firsthand contributions (maybe even at the workshop) and crafting the lid of the sarcophagus together with the figures of the deceased. The lid, rabbits and a cornice of the cenotaph are made of an expensive light-red marble-like material and suitable for much finer work than the rest of the monument, which is made of slate.<sup>83</sup> I also dare to claim that the marble details were carved by a more qualified master (i.e. the "First Passer") while the rest of the work was left to the "Second Passer". Hence Passer exemplifies quite typically a mixture of an entrepreneur and stonemason who, soon after arriving to Tallinn, assumed the responsibilities of a master builder, thereby rising ever higher in the social hierarchy of the city.

### THIRD PASSER: AN ENTREPRENEUR, A STONEMASON, AN ARCHITECT

In addition to the universal source, every period and geography that is examined in the Mannerist context is different, and according to

82 Heiner Borggreve, "Hans Vredemann de Vries (1526 – 1609)", Heiner Borggreve, *Hans Vredeman de Vries und die Renaissance im Norden* (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2002), 16.

83 The material of the monument is identified as Orgita dolomite from Harju county around 100 kilometres from Tallinn. Orgita dolomite was used in Passer's other works including the façade details of the House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads. Helle Perens, Elmar Kala, "Paekivi kasutamisest Tallinnas", *Vana Tallinn*, XII (XVI) (Tallinn: Estopol, 2002), 21.

Nikolaus Pevsner, focused on national schools.<sup>84</sup> Arriving in Tallinn, Passer acquires a coat and colour that befits the old Hanseatic town, thereafter losing his finely crafted touch but, at the same time, gaining the archaic power of the stonecutting traditions that had existed in the town for centuries. Passer's work in Tallinn is characterised by a certain masculine aplomb that makes the successive works less dependent on high style and prestige of form and more welcoming to an individual approach that prioritises the local situations and demands. His years in Tallinn make the young Passer's style clumsier and detach him from his peers who remained closer to the metropolises but draw him closer to his clients; Passer saw himself as the person who had hewn the figures of the Apostles for Pontus's epitaph, and who in 1631, had commissioned four large figures of the Apostles for the Cistercian St Michael's monastery in Tallinn. In the case of the Passer, who settled in Tallinn, we are dealing with the local version of a style that Jan Białostocki had already described as the "vernacular".<sup>85</sup> A more substantial change can be perceived in the demise of the initial aspiration for a three-dimensional and plastic approach to figuration and a regression to the bas-reliefs and flat-surfaces typical of the Hanseatic town. Besides Pontus's sepulchral monument, Passer's most important work in Tallinn includes the plans for the House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads and the construction of its gable (*Arent dem Stenhower Ehm gegenen dat he ein Scampellun machede, darmen den gewell Na buwede*<sup>86</sup>) In the plans for the building, Passer adapts a number of elements of Renaissance architecture starting with concepts from Alberti's Santa Maria Novella in Florence, and employs them in a way that was common from the German to the Polish and the Netherlandish to the Scandinavian Renaissance.

Passer and the broader current of the Renaissance are linked by tradition and the inherent common good (*commune bonum*) in both worldview and style. The prototype for the House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads is the Antwerp Town Hall designed by Floris (1561 – 1565); the architectural partition and the iconographic programme are similar in both. The Town Hall is embellished with the allegorical female figures of Justice and Prudence (*Justitia et Prudencia*) that are replicated in

84 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Architecture of Mannerism* (London: Ruledge. 1946), 116.

85 Jan Białostocki, *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 65.

86 Tallinn City Archives (TLA), f. 87, n. 1, s. ü. 88, 1.

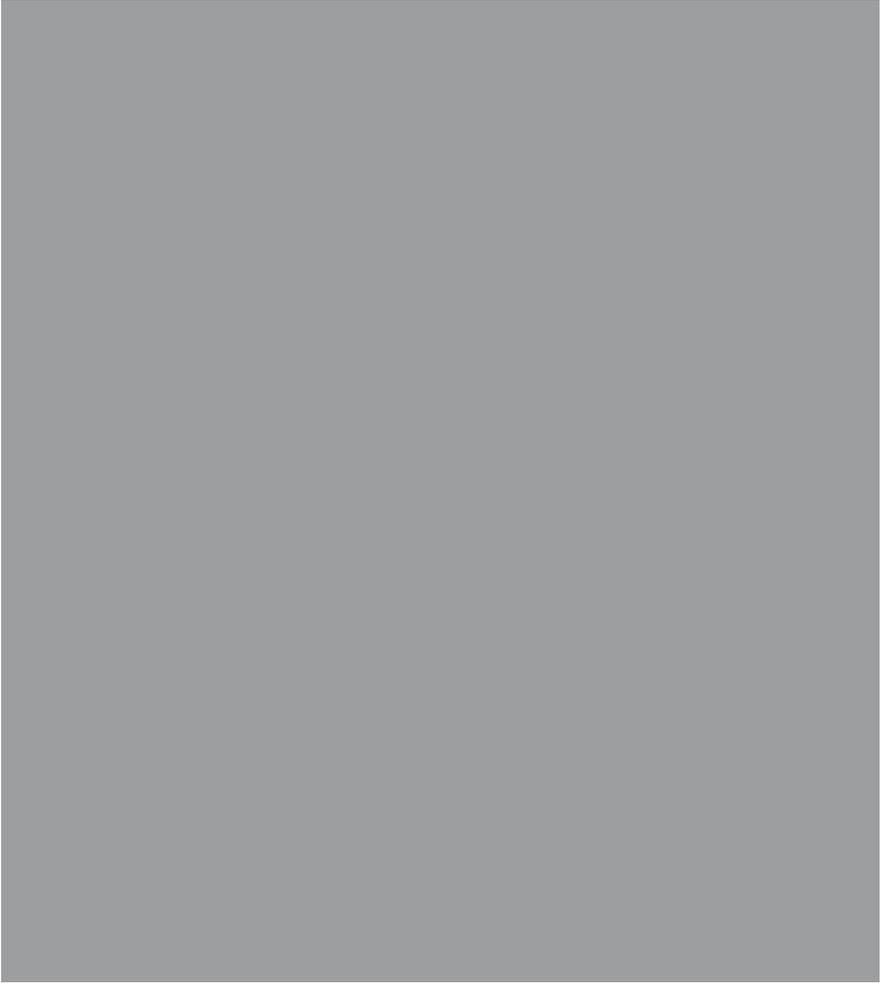


Fig. 48. Duke Ulrich of Güstrow. Philipp Brandin, 1586 – 1587. Photo: Juhan Maiste.

Tallinn, hinting at a similarity in the hermaphroditically graceful style in addition to the iconological resemblance. Female figures with similar expressions also adorn the cenotaph of Pontus's monument. Instead of Saint Mary who we see in Antwerp, the gable in Tallinn is crowned by a figure of *Salvator Mundi* – a solution more suitable for the mindset of a downtown dweller trying to differentiate himself from the knightly order.

Originally, two angel heads (*engel kop*) were ordered for the decoration of the House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads from the master



Fig. 49. The head of King Sigismund of Poland and Sweden on the façade of the House of Blackheads in Tallinn. Arent Passer. 1600. Photo: Peeter Säre.

already in 1597, but just before the construction work was completed, they were replaced with effigy portraits of Swedish-Polish King Sigismund III Vasa and his wife Anna.<sup>87</sup> Both are characterised by a physiognomic approach typical of the era and, instead of an exact portraiture, we find nostalgia and a longing for eternity that is more common in sepulchral monuments (for an example, compare Passer's Sigismund III to Philip Brandini's portrait of Duke Ulrich on his sepulchral monument in the Güstow Cathedral). His career as a master builder continued. Already in 1598, Passer and Hans van Aken, another master of Netherlandish origins, receive a commission to cover the roof and spire of St. Olaf's Church.<sup>88</sup> In 1599, Passer becomes the elder of the Olaf's stonemasons'

87 Juhan Maiste, *Tallinna Mustpeade maja* (Tallinn: Kunst, 1995), 68.

88 TLA, Bl. 1, 7, p. 79.



Fig. 50. The sarcophagus of Caspar von Tiesenhausen and his wife Märta Oxenstierna in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Tallinn. 1599. Photo: Peeter Säre.

guild. Thereafter, he became active as the master builder of the city (*Stadt Baumeister*) and received an annual income of 800 marks, enough to secure his career and his personal wellbeing. In 1603, when the Swedish-Polish war comes alarmingly close to the city walls of Tallinn, Passer is paid for a model (*Schampellun*) of the ramparts and bastions. When the walls of the House of the Black Heads were still under construction, he already

employed three journeymen (*knechte*) from the Kalamaja suburb – we know two of their names – Matz Tomesen and Matthias Daus. A few years after Passer's death they leave for Narva to work together with a former colleague of the great master Zacharias Hoffmann.<sup>89</sup> Passer's work in the city was continued by his son Dionysos Passer.

For a half a century, very little happened in the city without Passer's participation and guiding example. The evidence can be found in numerous surviving church epitaphs, bas reliefs on the houses of the citizens, individual detached details that are now collected in museums. Passer imposes a style on Tallinn that traces its origins back to the blossoming of the Netherlands and its most outstanding men, but the successive wave brings a craftsman-like routine, which results in the appearance of the following throughout the town: so-called "Passer-style" angel heads, allegorical female figures (for example, Justitia on the wall of the Town Hall), portrait medallions adorning building façades (Raekoja Plats 18) and memorial plates in churches (Antonius van der Busch and his family cenotaph at St. Nicholas' Church in Tallinn). Passer's fame reached even further afield. In 1629, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden requested that Passer join his service, but he turned the offer down. We can find the products of Passer's workshop in areas around the Baltic Sea, including Finland where, after the Reformation, the nobility began to patronise the parish churches and also ordered the Glory of God memorials for their own families. The greatest of them, the tomb and epitaph of Evert Horn and Margareta Fincke in the Cathedral of Abo, copies the sepulchral monument of Gustav I of Sweden and was therefore probably made in Tallinn. Like Pontus, Evert Karlsson Horn was also a high-level commander of the Swedish Army, a field marshal and governor in charge of the castles in Narva and Ivangorod. The father of General Carl Henriksson Horn died in 1601 and was buried in the Tallinn Cathedral, where his gravestone is still installed on the wall today.<sup>90</sup> The halo of fame that surrounds Passer even today is clearly a bond that secures the continuous study of his person and his style. It is important to supplement artistic valuation by placing every artwork within a field of genealogical ties. And to notice the texts in addition

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<sup>89</sup> Sten Karling, *Narva, Eine baugeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets, historie och antikvitetsakademien, 1936), 183.

<sup>90</sup> Marja Terttu Knapas, "Sepulchral monuments in Finland attributed to the workshop of Arent Passer", *Sten Karling and Baltic Art History*, 83 ff.

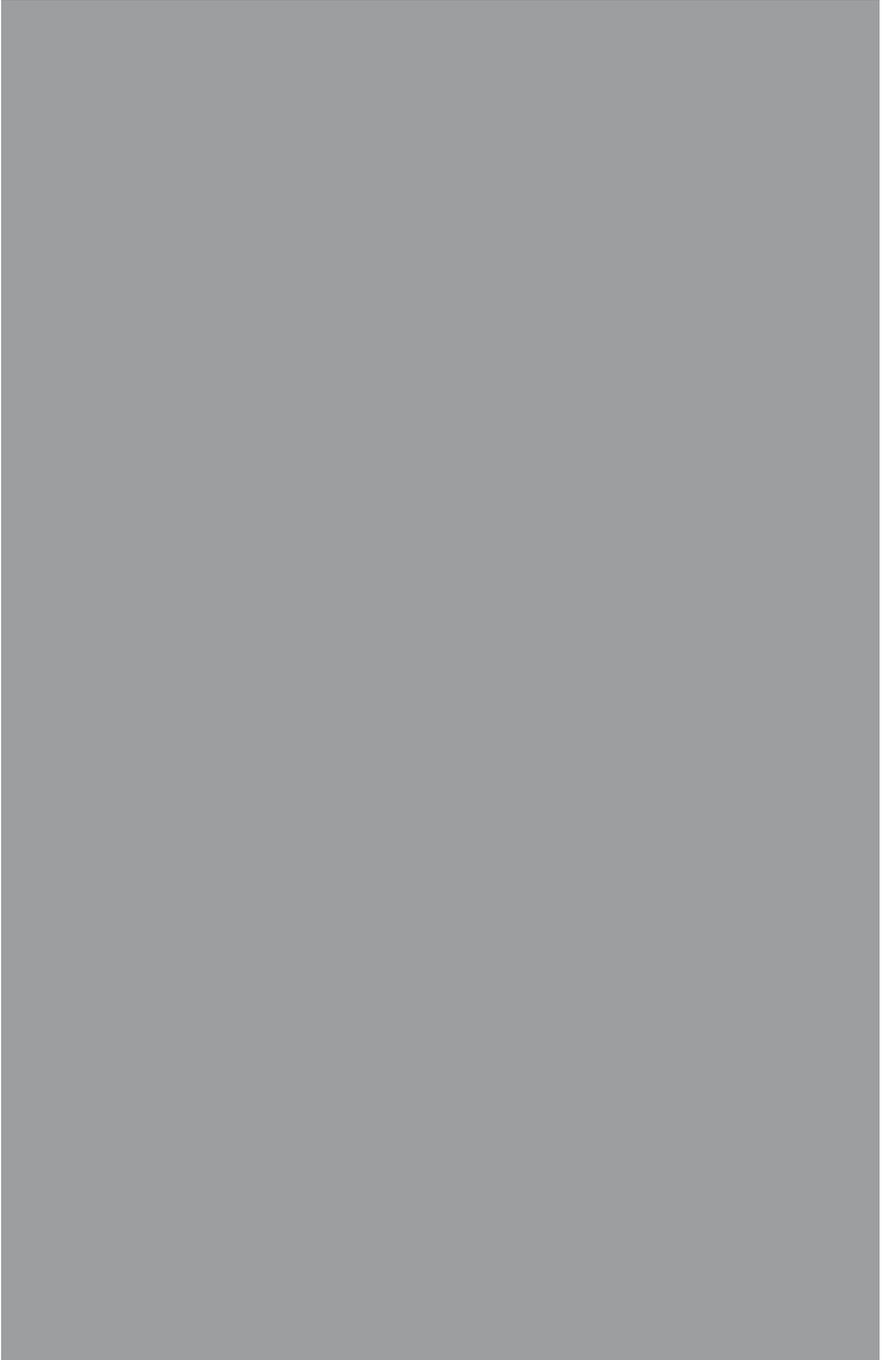


Fig. 51. The cover plate on the sarcophagus of Carl Henrikson Horn and Agnes von Delwig in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Tallinn. After the fire of 1684, installed on the western wall of the choir. Photo: Peeter Säre.



Fig. 52. The cover plate on the sarcophagus of Otto von Yxküll in the Cathedral of St. Mary in Tallinn. After the fire in the cathedral, installed on the southern wall of the choir. Photo: Peeter Säre.

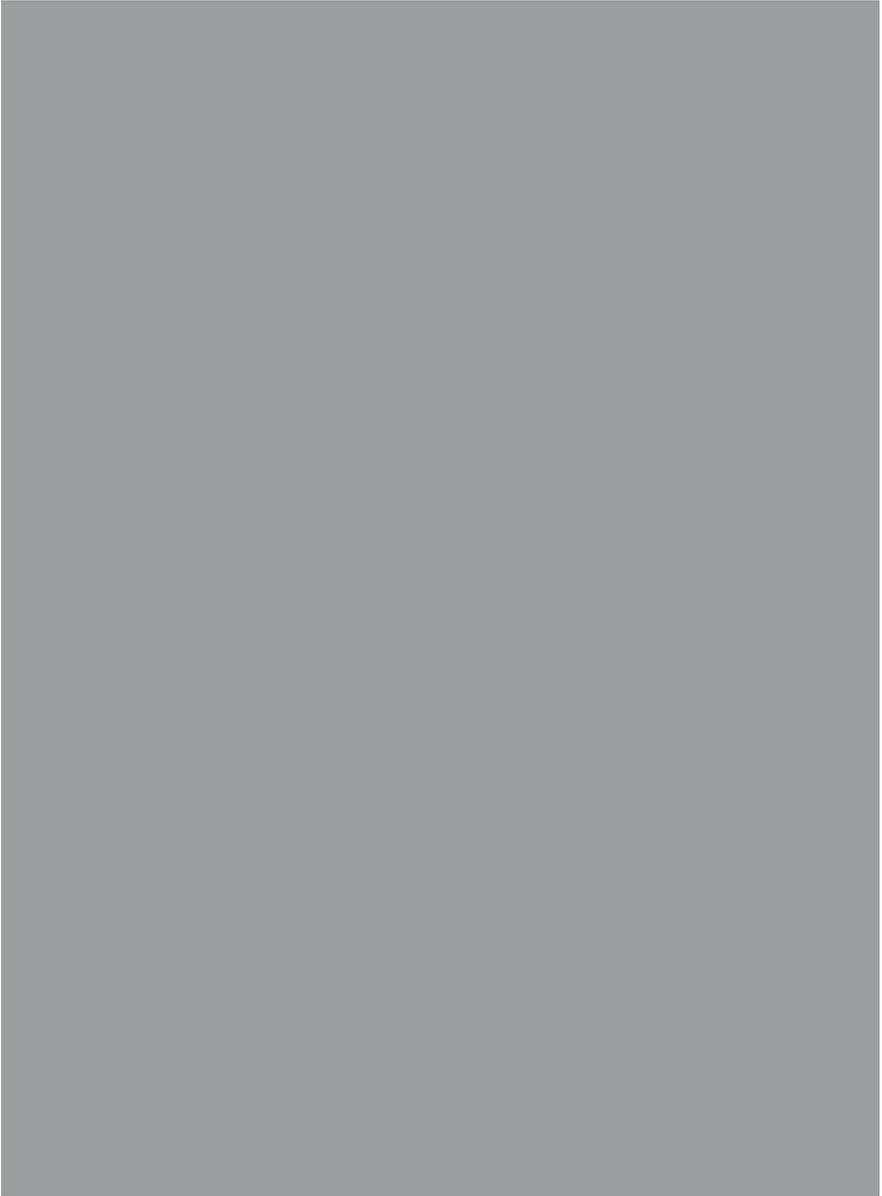


Fig. 53. The epitaph of Antonius van der Busch and his family in St. Nicholas' Church in Tallinn. Completed in 1608. (destroyed). Republished from: Helmi Üprus, *Raidkivikunst Eestis XIII-XVII sajandini* (Tallinn: Kunst, 1987).



Fig. 54. The sculptural reliefs *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection* with the coats of arms of the Burchards, the Town Council pharmacists. 1630s. In the Dominican Monastery in Tallinn. Photo: Peeter Säre.

to the images, which are unfortunately sometimes so general that they do not allow for any far-reaching conclusions to be drawn about the hero's congregation or his conviction. HOMO MEMENTO MORI and HODIE MIHI CRAS TIBI are written on the slab of Colonel Axel Jönsson Kurck in Ufby, Finland. Just like verbal metaphors, visual metaphors also roam far from home, once again confirming a simple truth that we need to remember – unlike politics and often religion, with their doctrinal convictions that divide the world into isolated parts art – their creators know no limits. More than the word, the spread of which can be restricted by language barriers, the image is linked to a universal cultural phenomenon, with the only boundary being the laws of the visual culture itself, while its source is seemingly the magical ability of a third party to repeatedly generate fantasies, characters and models from the depth of history.

As far as Passer the man from Tallinn is concerned, I would prefer to be reserved. Instead of one Passer, I have discussed at least three different individuals despite the fact that art historians have often labelled them with a single name ARENT PASSER. Only one of them “has drunk from the well of great art.” Apparently it was a young man, the arch of his dreams coinciding with the arch of the skies, who saw as his mission the hanging of a gilded, blessing figure of Christ on the wall and the depiction of a panorama of grand battle in the manner of *arte et mar-te* on the side of a sarcophagus.

As we know, life must be lived. Instead of an uplifting but often thorny life of an artist, Passer chose the profession of an entrepreneur, achieving success, position and wealth. With few exceptions, each successive work by Passer was of lower artistic quality than the previous. Only one of the works made in Tallinn in Passer's time – the home altar of pharmacist Johann Burchard, the owner of Tallinn's Town Hall Pharmacy (in the 1630s) – is worthy of a place in Parnassus for its scenes of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. But still, it is not the same master we are accustomed to calling Passer. Its stylistic and aesthetical qualities bear only little resemblance to the approach of the artist that we have studied and who was influenced by Floris. Time has moved on, and if not only in the sense of iconography and composition, then in the artistic approach, and the monument bears a stamp of the new century and its attitudes that can be characterised as baroque.

## THE RENAISSANCE VERSUS THE REFORMATION

Finally, let me return to the beginning, and ask what the Renaissance is and what is its relationship with the other great intellectual change of the period, which, under the name of the Reformation – as a reaction to the counter-reaction – in the North and the South, included the visual conception of time, space and man along with the verbal one and undoubtedly left its mark on the pictorial world. How deep the marks were and where the marks were left are two issues that different authors answer in different ways – true to their own outlooks and viewpoints, their valuations of events and facts. Which then is finally more important – the image or the word? How much do the two artistic systems of depiction overlap, how much are they set apart? What is the position of an art historian in either case: “does Renaissance theory mean something more than just ‘theories about the Renaissance’ on the one hand, ‘or art theory in the Renaissance’ on the other?”<sup>91</sup> To what degree were the artists and writers of the time conscious of these two positions? In Burchardt’s view, the Italian Renaissance created the modern distinctions between the subject and the object, supporting the idea that prioritised the external and its characteristic symbols above internal recognition and the human-built world. The Renaissance is discussed as a turning point between two philosophical approaches: the Platonist abstract and Aristotelian cognitive, the former is expressed through the cosmos and the latter through the microcosm. And these are revealed in the aspiration of the “apologists” of the Renaissance (from Alberti to Cusanus) to consider the world as a whole “where knowledge of finite reality is determined between things, thinking one’s way back to divine origin entails a consideration of how God unfolded (*explicatio*) his infinite unity into finite multiplicities.”<sup>92</sup> The extent to which we can differentiate between divine and human origins and the symbols that express them does not depend as much on the worldview of the time as on our own contemporary views. In this article, I have tried to underline the issue of continuity. Whatever changes a person goes through in the religious or profane sphere, whatever the political or social background of his era,

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91 Rebecca Zorach, “Renaissance Theory: A Selective Introduction”, *Renaissance Theor.* Ed. by James Elkins and Robert Willimas (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 3.

92 Charles H. Carman, *Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas Cusanus: Towards an Epistemology of Vision for Italian Renaissance Art and Culture* (Dorchester: Ashgate, 2014), 84.

Cusanus's philosophical truth that "the world is the work of art of God"<sup>93</sup> still holds true. In its pictorial form, *Imitatio Christi* signifies the relationship between man and God in which the greater one has a share in the smaller, and both are, in turn, shareholders in the creation of a systematically harmonious and holistically beautiful world. Even during the most radical periods of image denial, when the Reformation carries with it the seed of deformation and a return to the symbolic approach to art characteristic of the Middle Ages, the pictorial world survives, the value of its identity being the eternal human wish to see the surrounding world as sacred and beautiful. Together with an idea, a method of not only seeing but also depicting things in an analogous way is imparted from one artist to another, from one generation to another.

The tradition of mimetic naturalism – a legacy of Antiquity – produces masterfully alluring lines and plastically rounded figures. The ideological rules and context surrounding art change, yet the image and the word retain their place as cognitive and communicative media, passing on the language of the Renaissance, the source of the greatest change in worldview in Western civilization. Whereas the cult of death is one of the most conservative phenomena; through the deceased we remember the past, which connects the poetry of the Bible to the Migration Period, and the latter, in turn, with the rebirth of Antiquity, to the burial customs of the Charlemagne era.<sup>94</sup> Through medieval historiographies, the Roman past extends to Giotto and his contemporaries, making *energia* (vividness) and its Latin equivalents of *evidentia* or *illustratio* among the most important, if not the main, instruments of human persuasion.<sup>95</sup> As Herder has said, "every sense interprets the world according to its capacities and is able to reveal the code on its own accord."<sup>96</sup> In this manner, different realities are born in line with our external and internal sensitivity to information. These realities give shape to a class of complex media so that the surrounding world (*Umwelt*) announces itself through different realities. Whereby, along with personal and collective

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93 Ibid., 4.

94 Veronika Wiegartz, "Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlichen Zeitgenossen", *Marburger Studien zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte*. Hrsg. Ingo Herklotz und Ulrich Schütte, Bd. 7 (Weimar: WDG, 2004), 16.

95 Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7.

96 Gottfried Herder, „Abhandlungen über den Ursprung der Sprache“, *Sturm und Drang. Weltanschauliche und ästhetische Schriften*, Band 1. (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1978), 144.

contemplation, “ the hierarchical communal model and its intrinsically collective way of defining things was singled out at the beginning of the modern era and the re-reading of which today requires us to give new meanings to the old coded texts.<sup>97</sup> A torso without hands and feet brings to mind a past that Henri Bergson has described as *élan vital* or man’s creative ability to design his own worlds.<sup>98</sup>

The world discussed in this article is related, on the one hand, to the sentiments and situations of an old Hanseatic city during the early modern era, and on the other, it is linked to a more extensive and affluent world, where our hero – Arent Passer from the Netherlands– originated; hereby merging the forms that identify the concept of the Renaissance within a broader artistic style, by blending the new with the old and providing a basis for the statement: “the meaning of artworks is revealed through a transformative process where the pictorial programme and its syntax can capture new forms of expression.”<sup>99</sup> This is how it has always been – at both the idea and artistic expression level; the new can only be born supported by the old, by sweeping along the sentence fragments and phrases that have been, which have merged with the language, be it a word, sentence or image. Whereas, in this case, the periphery is no exception – even more than in a metropolis, where the line of fire between tradition and innovation is defined by the work of the genius that has given birth to the art, in the areas that are far from the intensive source of life, the artist has a heavier burden to bear – to be chosen by God but also liked by the collective body, and to have chosen the thankless task of pushing a rock up a hill, which time and again rolls down again, as his life’s mission. Passer was both greater than his age and smaller. Everything depends on the angle we view his work from.

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97 Michael Giseke, “Der Verlust der Zentralen Perspektive und die Renaissance der Multimedialität”, *Vorträge aus dem Warburg Haus*, Bd. 2, herausgegeben von W. Kemp, G. Mattenklott, M. Wagner, M. Warnke (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, GmbH, 1998), 92.

98 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution (L’Evolution créatrice 1907)*. (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2003).

99 Werner Busch, *Das sentimentale Bild, Die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt Moderne* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1993), 10.

JUHAN MAISTE: SALVATION THROUGH RELIGION. THE REBIRTH OF THE CLASSICS IN ARENT PASSER'S OEUVRE.

**KEYWORDS:** ARENT PASSER, TOMB SCULPTURE, NORDIC MANNERISM, VISUAL BEAUTY VERSUS VERBAL TEXT.

SUMMARY:

Arent Passer is an artist who was discovered for art history by Sten Karling in 1938, and who since that time has merited ever greater attention. Both Helmi Üprus and Krista Kodres have written about Passer. The author has also touched on the subject of Passer in his previous writings, this primarily in connection with the House of the Black Heads in Tallinn, Passer's position as a stonemason and town architect, and his workshop located in Tallinn's Kalamaja suburb. In this article, a closer examination is made of Tallinn's *opus magnum* of the Renaissance era – the sepulchral monument of Pontus de la Gardie – several aspects of which still provoke questions, despite the repeated attention it has already received. First of all, the article focuses on the topic of death and its various interpretations during the spiritual and cultural period of transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era, in the course of which various religious and cultural impulses did not succeed each other, but existed simultaneously. This provides an opportunity to read the monument by using the death cult and its Augustinian tradition as a point of departure along with the reform-minded changes of the modern era, thereby linking the verbal and pictorial programmes with two different representations of death – in the eternal and temporal field of vision. The primary carrier of the monument's ideological message is the spirit of the Renaissance, which invests in the role of the individual and his genius, with the focus of attention in this case being one of the greatest heroes of the era – Pontus de la Gardie and his famous victories on the battlefield. Along with an emphasis on the denial of the body, deformation and decomposition typical of the Late Middle Ages, as well as the freeing and salvation of the soul, the visual rhetoric of the monument addresses the humanist era man and his humane nature, which is displayed on the monument by a dominant imagery based on the classics of Antiquity. A sign of the latter is the composition based on architectural order and the allegories Spes and Fides, which is utilised in the cenotaph designed to be an altar-like triptych. Similarly the dominant emblems of victory on the sarcophagus originate from a widespread and updated

field of art, the geography of which stretches from Italy to Burgundy, Flanders, Antwerp and finally Tallinn. Arent Passer was the first emissary in the Baltics of the Mannerism that developed as a late phase of the Renaissance, and the origins, and most probably also early years, of which are associated with the style and workshop of Cornelis Floris and the masters that grew out of it – from Willem Boy to Philip Brandin, who fulfilled large-scale commissions in various royal courts. The patron of both the Gustav Vasa and Pontus de la Gardie monuments was Johann III, King of Sweden, which provides an opportunity to seek and discover connections in the developed circle related to the artist's style, choice of motifs and approach to ornamentation. At his most outstanding, Passer attains the level of his distinguished compatriots. Whereas the Passer name alludes most probably to the Passchen family that set out from Antwerp, the most distinguished member of which was Henri de Paschen, the builder of the Royal Exchange in London. After arriving in Tallinn, Arent Passer spent more than forty industrious years there. During his time in the former Hanseatic town imbued with the traditions of the past, his work loses its initial brilliance, the three-dimensional plastic approach in sculpture is taken over by bas-reliefs and flat surfaces, and one can increasingly speak of Passer as being tied to the town through his responsibilities as the builder of the town's fortifications and the head of his workshop. While living in Tallinn, Passer was indisputably not only an authority figure, but also the sole executor of the most important commissions. Conserving his Netherlandish roots, Passer's workshop repeats the same models through the years, which, in the case of the numerous architectural details that decorate the town (for example, the biforate windows at Rütli 14), allow us to speak more about a so-called "Passer style" than of the style of an individual artist. His comfortable position as an entrepreneur and elder of the Canute Guild was the reason that Passer rejected an attractive offer to move to Stockholm and return to the paths of his youth, where the design and execution of sepulchral monuments had become one of the main themes of religious devotion in the new age. Where, as we know, there was no lack of highly qualified masters. It is not impossible that, like the Gustav Vasa monument in Uppsala, the Pontus de la Gardie monument in Tallinn was also completed in the Netherlands. The precondition for the next study of Passer is a comparison of the monument's style and technique with that of an artistically ambitious

circle of stonemasons, whose workshops were located somewhere between Antwerp, Maline, Hague and Danzig, where talent and experience abounded. Rising above the slavish imitation of architectural graphics that was widespread at the time, Passer is an artist whose genius deserves not only to be recorded, but to be studied further.

CV:

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