
Elizabeta Dimitrova

SPIRITUAL ARCHITECTS

The Construction of Architectural Backdrops in the Work of Some Painting Studios from the 14th Century

In the domain of Byzantine studies, it is well known that the revival of all the creative potentials following the restitution of the Empire under the Palaiologan dynasty in 1261. opened a new and very progressive age which brought fresh and resounding glory to the Byzantine artistic tradition. Within the admirable conglomerate of creative manifestations and artistic performances, the respectable treasury of fresco ensembles, decorating the interiors of the church edifices, reveals a great deal of the stylistic novelties that produced the new painterly aesthetics of the Palaiologan era. The penetration of a vivid and picturesque narration in the iconographic structure of the scenes, the inclusion of the deliberately conceived spatial and temporal aspects of the illustrated events and the breakthrough of optical coherence in the configuration of the depicted sights are by all means the fundamentals of the Palaiologan mode of painterly expression. However, the construction of architectural scenery, which in the history of Byzantine painting has mainly played an episodic part subordinated to the leading role of the figural ensemble in the conception of the compositional schemes, also became one of the structural elements of the innovative visual concept of the Palaiologan artistic practice.

The elaborated concept of the compositional arrangement in the painted decoration of the monuments created in the 14th century would certainly not be possible without the accentuated role of this “nonobligatory”, second plan of the pictures¹, as well as without the promotion of the more ambitious approach in the assemblage of the scenographic components. The new spatial logic in the arrangement of the compositional elements and the skillfully constructed interrelation of the figural ensemble and of the architectural backdrops is therefore one of the components that can signify the painterly concept of the artistic regeneration known as the Palaiologan Renaissance. In that regard, this article will briefly analyze the specific methods of configuration of architectural vistas

¹ T. Velmans, *Le role du décor architectural et la représentation de l'espace dans la peinture des Paléologues*, Cahiers archéologiques XIV, Paris MCMLXIV, 193-216; C. Радојчић, *Постанак сликарства ренесансе Палеолога*, Узори и дела старих српских уметника, Београд 1975, 137



Fig.1 Holy Mother of God Peribleptos, Ohrid (1295), The First Steps of the Virgin

Сл 1 Св. Богородица Перивлепта, Охрид (1295), Први кораци Богородице



Fig. 2 Holy Mother of God Peribleptos, Ohrid (1295), Virgin Blessed by the Priests

Сл 2 Св. Богородица Перивлепта, Охрид (1295), Благослов три јерарха



Fig. 3 Holy Mother of God Peribleptos, Ohrid (1295), Virgin Entrusted to Joseph

Сл 3 Св. Богородица Перивлепта, Охрид (1295), Захарија предаје Богородицу Јосифу

in the activity of the leading painting ateliers that worked in the territory of present - day Macedonia as creators of some of the most remarkable fresco ensembles of the Palaiologan era.

The earliest manifestation of the new spirit in the construction of a powerful architectural background of the composition can be detected in the painted decoration of the church of the Holy Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295)², the first work of art by the Thessalonican masters Michael and Eutychios, leaders of the most distinguished painting atelier of the mediaeval Balkan. In the fresco ensemble of this church, the pioneers of the artistic innovations characteristic of the 14th century, although hesitant in regard to the daring opportunities for creation of inventive spatial effects, offered a solid and suggestive concept for construction of the scenery, which plays the role of an architectural frame of the composition. Massive in the forms and heavy in the components³, the scenery elements close the space behind the depicted figures with their robust cubical shapes (Fig. 1) or shelter the figural groups with their bulk-sized semicircular contours (Fig. 2), configurating an impressive in size architectonic screen, appropriate for the corpulent dimensions of the depicted characters (Fig. 3). Although the construction of the scenographic arrangement is mainly based on the principle of solid shapes in the description of the represented edifices, the mighty silhouettes of which lack the tendency towards any decorative treatment, their role in the spatial definition of the compositional depth is nevertheless indisput-

² П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, Скопје 1967, 170-171, 175; B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Belgrade 1999, 228

³ B. Todić, op. cit., 228



Fig. 4 Holy Mother of God Peribleptos, Ohrid (1295),
Dormition

Сл 4 Св. Богородица Перивлепта, Охрид (1295),
Успење



Fig. 5 St. George, Staro Nagoričino (1316-1218), Christ
Judged by Caiaphas, Christ Judged by Annas

Сл. 5 Св. Ђорђе, Старо Нагоричино (1316-1318), Христ
пред Кајафом, Христ пред Аном

able. In the most elaborate examples, as displayed in the composition illustrating the Dormition (Fig. 4), the compact assemblage of architectural components creates a solid frame for the dynamical structure of the scene, condensing the dramatic aspects of the represented action and accentuating the plastic qualities of the spatial design. The skilful projection in the depiction of the column which exits the wall surface in the north half of the scene is therefore not but an instrument of the painters to achieve a more complex architectural unity of the composition or to stress the imaginary depth of the view; its spatial penetration towards the nucleus of the scene⁴, promotes this architectural element as an active participant in the dramatic atmosphere of the illustrated event, as well as in the dynamic constellation of the compositional arrangement.

Two decades later, in the fresco arrangement of the church of St. George in Staro Nagoričino (1316-18)⁵, at the pick of the career, the atelier of Michael and Eutychios promoted the concept of luxuriously shaped architectonic scenery, the visual dynamics of which is fully subordinated to the ceremonial motion of the figural components⁶. The well coordinated arrangement of the structural elements in the construction of the thoroughly elaborated architectural vistas, as well as the dexterous integration of the characters within the spatial design of the scenes en-

⁴ E. Dimitrova, *On the mise-en-scène and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, Macedonian Heritage 29, Skopje 2006, 7-8

⁵ П. Миљковиќ-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, 177-181; Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993, 133-135; idem, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Belgrade 1999, 238-239

⁶ Е. Димитрова, *За боите и ритмот. Стилските игри во македонското средновековно сликарство*, Културен живот 2, Скопје 2001, 51-52



Fig. 6 St. George, Staro Nagoričino (1316-1218), Last Supper

Сл. 6 Св. Ђорђе, Старо Нагоричино (1316-1318), Тајна вечера

closed by a great variety of fanciful forms (Fig. 5), contributed to the striking diversity in the conception of the second plan of the compositions. Relieved from the heavy scenery decoration in the construction of the architectonic profile of the scenes in Peribleptos, the Nagoričino architectural backdrops are conceived with a great deal of lightness of the dynamic components⁷, sublimed in a classically balanced geometric arrangement of symmetrical patterns (Fig 6). Moreover, the harmonious disposition of the scenery elements can be noticed even in the compositional structures in which the thematic content of the depicted motif implied inevitable misbalance in the arrangement of the characters (Fig. 7). The tendency for immediateness in the optical impression of the scene caused a substitution of the multiple plans of the composition from the Ohrid ensemble with a much simpler spatial design of the scene, in which the figures are located in the front prospect of the composition⁸ (Fig. 8). In that regard, the role of the architectural backdrops in the creation of the visual impression of the spatial depth is minimized⁹, thus their function, although reduced to the configuration of the second plan, participates in the well-calculated illustrativity of the scene with the plentitude of carefully treated decorative and ornamental details (Fig. 9). Arranged according to the principle of systematically organized

⁷ A. Стојаковић, *Архитектонски простор у сликарству средњовековне Србије*, Нови Сад 1970, 130

⁸ E. Dimitrova, *op. cit.*, 10

⁹ С. Радојчић, *Старо српско сликарство*, Београд 1966, 103



Fig. 7 St. George, Staro Nagoričino (1316-1218), Washing of the Feet
Сл. 7 Св. Ђорђе, Старо Нагоричино (1316-1318), Прање ногу



Fig. 8 St. George, Staro Nagoričino (1316-1218), Burial of St. George
Сл. 8 Св. Ђорђе, Старо Нагоричино (1316-1318), Сахрана Св. Ђорђа



Fig. 9 St. George, Staro Nagoričino (1316-1218), St. George Drinking Poison, Torture by Nails

Сл. 9 Св. Ђорђе, Старо Нагоричино (1316-1318), Св. Ђорђе испија отров, Мучење клинцима



Fig. 10 St. George, Staro Nagoričino (1316-1218), St. George's Torture on the Wheel, St. George Encouraged by an Angel, St. George Before Diocletian

Сл. 10 Св. Ђорђе, Старо Нагоричино (1316-1318), Мучење Св. Ђорђа на точку, Светитеља бодри анђео, Св. Ђорђе пред Диоклецијаном



Fig. 11 St. Nicetas, Banjani (after 1321), South wall of the naos

Сл. 11 Св. Никита, Бањани (после 1321), Јужни зид наоса



Fig. 12 St. Nicetas, Banjani (after 1321), Christ Visiting Martha and Mary

Сл. 12 Св. Никита, Бањани (после 1321), Христ код Марте и Марије



Fig. 13 St. Nicetas, Banjani (after 1321), Washing of the Feet

Сл. 13 Св. Никита, Бањани (после 1321), Прање ногу

Fig. 14 St. Nicetas,
Banjani (after 1321),
Marriage Feast at Cana

Сл. 14 Св. Никита,
Бањани (после 1321),
Свадба у Кани



structural unities, the scenery elements flow with a tactfully coordinated continuity behind the depicted characters, backing up the perfectly balanced rhythm of the illustrated action in the scenes (Fig. 10).

In the last artistic performance of this atelier, the painted decoration of the church of St. Nicetas at Banjani (after 1321)¹⁰, the enhanced dynamism of the spatial context in the depiction of the sights is due to the intention for infusion of an interventive charge of kinetic energy in conception of all the painterly elements in the composition¹¹. The skilful integration of the characters in the thoughtfully organized spatial concept of the scenes initiated enrichment of the architectural backdrops, which, with the variety of forms and perfectly balanced symmetry of their constitutive arrangement, equally participate in the illustration of the iconographic motifs. Depicted in the rear of the compositions, the architectural coulisses are shaped with incredible imagination in the conception of the plastic forms, executed as elaborate facades subjected to the dominant rhythm of the narration in the scene (Fig. 11). The intention to cre-

¹⁰ П. Миљковић-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Еутихиј*, 178-181; B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting. The Age of King Milutin*, Belgrade 1999, 256

¹¹ E. Dimitrova, *On the Dynamics of the Compositional Structures in the Paleologue Painting on the Territory of Macedonia*, *Macedonian Heritage* 32, Skopje 2008, 9-10



Fig. 15 St. Nicetas, Banjani (after 1321), Expulsion of the Merchants from the Temple
 Сл. 15 Св. Никита, Бањани (после 1321), Христос изгони трговце из храма

ate three-dimensional architectonic constructions, which accentuate the spatial atmosphere of the scenes by the plastic firmness of the shapes, is the main feature of the configuration of the compositional screen, whereat the playful arrangement of the scenery forms a perfectly balanced background for the distinctively dynamized action of the figural components (Fig. 12). The dynamically elaborated architectural vistas in the backdrop of the scenes are composed as a perfect counterpart to the vivid psychological expression of the depicted figures in the foreground of the pictures (Fig. 13), creating a visual impression of a realistically designed podium for the picturesque motion of the represented characters (Fig. 14). The enlarged role of the scenography and the invention in the conception of the plastic contours of architectural backdrops are reflected in the dynamically configured rhythm of the second plan of the composition, compatible with the vigorous motion of the figures in the front prospect of the picture¹² (Fig. 15). Constructed in direction of the energetic lines of the drama action, the balanced forms of the architectonic scenery in the illustration of the motif of the Expulsion of the merchants from the Temple consolidate the total dynamics of the composition, stressing the optimal perspective projection of the represented scene¹³.

In contrast to the evolution in the approach towards construction of the architectural vistas in the work of Michael and Eutychios, the painting studio of master John Theorianos is characterized by the consistency in conception

¹² А. Стојаковић, *op. cit.*, 115

¹³ E. Dimitrova, *On the mise-en-scène and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, 14-16

of the rear prospect of the compositions. The functional equilibrium in the arrangement of the structural elements of the scenes is based upon the principle of well-coordinated inter-relation of the front prospect and the architectonic backdrop, thus the integration of the figural ensemble and of the coulisses is executed with immaculate consequence regarding the spatial organization of the compositional scheme¹⁴. The fluent atmosphere of courtly elegance in the depiction of the illustrated events implied configuration of architectural setting with a great variety of light forms and graceful silhouettes, that constitute the elastically elaborated screen of the compositions. The striking application of the scenery as an instrument of the spatial definition in the depiction of the successive episodes of the illustrated event, as well as the insertion of certain elements of the scenography be-



Fig. 16. St. Nicholas, Ljuboten (1344-1345), Christ and the Samaritan Woman

Сл. 16 Св. Никола, Љуботен (1344-1345), Христос и Самарјанка

tween the depicted characters in order to separate the interior and the exterior of the location where the action takes place, that appeared in the fresco painting of the church of St. Nicholas in Ljuboten (1344/45)¹⁵, testify to the imaginative patterns of the painters in constitution of the architectural design of the compositions. Participating actively in the achievement of the spatial balance of compositional matrixes, the inventively designed architectural coulisses lost their episodic role of scenographic décor in favour of their significant function in the visual description of the illustrated event. In that regard, the impressive employment of the architectural elements in the spatial definition of the two successive episodes in the illustration of the motif of Christ and the Samaritan women (Fig. 16), as well as the specific elaboration of the spatial qualities of the

¹⁴ Е. Димитрова, *Dimensio Sacra. За просторните вредности на композицијата во сликаните ансамбли на Теоријановото ателје*, Patrimonium.MK 3-4, Скопје 2008, 72

¹⁵ Е. Dimitrova, *The Ministry Cycle in the Fresco Painting of the Ljuboten Church*, Културно наследство 28-29, 2002-2003, Скопје 2004, 53-54



Fig. 17. St. Nicholas, Ljuboten (1344-1345), Christ Among the Doctors

Сл. 17 Св. Никола, Љуботен (1344-1345), Дванаестогодишњи Христос проповеда у храму



Fig. 18. Holy Mother of God, Matejče (1348-1352), Sts Peter and Paul Preaching in Rome

Сл. 18 Св. Богородица, Матеич (1348-1352), Проповед апостола Петра и Павла у Риму



Fig. 19. Holy Mother of God, Matejče (1348-1352), Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, VI oikos

Сл. 19 Св. Богородица, Матеич (1348-1352), VI икос Богородичиног Акатиста

Fig. 20. Holy Mother of God, Matejče (1348-1352), Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, V kontakion

Сл. 20 Св. Богородица, Матеич (1348-1352), V кондак Богородичиног Акатиста



Fig. 21 Holy Mother of God, Matejče (1348-1352), Dormition cycle

Сл. 21 Св. Богородица, Матеич (1348-1352), Успенски циклус



effectively designed scenographic elements in the picture representing Christ among the Doctors (Fig. 17), testify to the authentic approach in configuration of the visually coherent compositional structure of the scenes.

Similar approach in the definition of the spatial qualities of the scenes has been employed in the fresco ensemble of the church of the Holy Virgin at Matejče (1348-52)¹⁶, where the colossal dimensions of the painted panorama and the encyclopedic character of the iconographic repertoire demanded creation of a large assortment of various concepts for the design of the second prospect of the compositions. The extensiveness of the painted programme, as well as the diversity of the thematic content gave the painters veritable opportunities to invent a large scale of heterogeneous models to construct the architectural backdrops, the spatial organization of which is based on the principle of well-balanced arrangement of the elegant silhouettes of the scenery. The elastic contours of the lavishly elaborated scenography together with the gracefully shaped proportions of all the components comprised by the architectural setting, are the fundamentals of the characteristic approach of Theorianos' painting studio towards configuration of a representative and glamorous compositional screen for the aristocratic atmosphere of the illustrated events¹⁷. However, the experiments related to the spatial effects in the painterly explication of the motifs are

¹⁶ Е. Димитрова, *Манастир Матејче*, Скопје 2002, 235-238

¹⁷ Е. Dimitrova, *On the mise-en-scène and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, 21-22

numerous and manifold, particularly in the compositions depicting the magnificent dimension of the luxuriously configured exteriors. In that regard, the inter-relation of the neighboring scenes with the help of the scenographic design enabled the interaction of the consecutive episodes and the repetitive location in the visual exposition of the occurrences¹⁸ (Fig. 18). Moreover, the situation of the main actors in front of the lavishly constructed scenery, while the episodic characters are located behind or within the elements of the architectonic backdrop (Fig. 19), is one of the most distinguished features of this atelier in regard to the spatial definition of the different prospects in the configuration of the compositional scheme¹⁹. The location of the elegant figures of the participants in the action in front of the fluent contours of the compositional screen, as well as the picturesque conception of the splendidly conceived urban structures in the rear prospect of the picture, are the trademarks of the painted decoration of the Matejče church (Fig. 20). The ambitious approach in conception of the harmonious design of the coulisses, which, with the scope of various forms and the concordance of their spatial structure effectively enclose the represented action in the picture (Fig. 21), is one of the main instruments of the Theorianos' atelier in creation of the composition as a unique spatial organism with extraordinary visual qualities.

The same pattern can be recognized in the painting of the exonarthex of the St. Sophia Cathedral in Ohrid (ca. 1350)²⁰, where the tiny format of the scenes and the luxuriously exposed narrative context of the illustrated events implied magnificent elaboration of the architectural components in the construction of the compositional background. The domed structures, the monumental porticos, the cubical towers, the luxuriously configured palaces and the spacious courtyards are the basic elements of the rich vocabulary of visual phrases in creation of the impressive esthetic dimensions of the architectural backdrops in the scenes (Fig. 22). The three-dimensional design of the depicted fortifications, the spatial arrangement of the balustrades in the construction of the two-storey terraces, the luxuriantly decorated columns that carry the monumental barrel vaults and the richly ornamented facades of the royal halls in the illustration of the cycle of Old Testament Joseph, are but a consequence of the specific approach of master Theorianos' studio in creation of a picturesque palette of the scenery for the noble atmosphere of the represented sights²¹. The optical effects of a spatial perspective achieved by the well-calculated arrangement of the figures, as well as by the appropriate assemblage of the diverse pieces of furniture, reveal the development of the final phase in the work of this painting atelier, the artistic performance of which is marked by immaculate cohesion of the painterly elements regarding the scenographic design of the compositional schemes.

¹⁸ Е. Димитрова, *Dimensio Sacra. За просторните вредности на композицијата во сликаните ансамбли на Теоријановото ателје*, 80

¹⁹ Е. Димитрова, *Циклусот на Богородичиниот Акатист во црквата Света Богородица - Матејче*, Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет 49, Скопје 1996, 288 - 289

²⁰ Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското ѕидно сликарство од XIV век*, Охрид 1980, 79-101

²¹ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L' arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, Milano 2006, 185



Fig. 22 St. Sophia, Ohrid (ca. 1350), Pharaoh's Dream, Old Testament Joseph Interpreting Pharaoh's Dream

Сл 22 Св. Софија, Охрид (око 1350), Фараонов сан, Старозаветни Јосиф тумачи фараонов сан

Entirely different methodological approach in configuration of the architectural setting of the scenes is employed by the anonymous painting studio that developed a passionate and deeply emotional artistic expression, based upon the principles of explosive energy of the forms and intensive rhythm of the movements, detected in several fresco ensembles executed in Ohrid and its vicinity in the 7th and 8th decade of the 14th century²². In the main work of art of this group of painters, the fresco decoration of the church of St. Demetrius in Marko's monastery in Sušica (1376/1377), the desire for creation of intensive emotional effects in the illustration of the events resulted in conception of relatively simple compositional matrixes with a firm cohesion of the visual elements and accentuated restraint of the scenographic components²³ (Fig. 23). The strong whirl of movements of the actors participating in the expressively dynamized scenes affected the simplicity in the conception of the architectural coulisses, the relatively unified forms of which enclose the rear prospect of the compositions, expressing the reduction of the disposable diapason of decorative scenery (fig. 24). Thence, the basilica type configuration of the depicted edifices²⁴ is the basic typological feature of the modest vocabulary of architectural coulisses in the definition of the backdrop of the compositions (Fig. 25). The simplified, cubical shapes of the represented edifices, the plain surfaces of the massive walls of the buildings and the small window perforations depicted in the upper part of the

²² Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското сидно сликарство од XIV век*, 121-150

²³ E. Dimitrova, *On the mise-en-scène and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, 23

²⁴ A. Стојаковић, *op. cit.*, 146



Fig. 23 St. Demetrius, Sušica (1376/77), Last Supper

Сл. 23 Св. Димитрија, Сушица (1376/77), Тајна вечера



Fig. 24. St. Demetrius, Sušica (1376/77), Judas at the Chief Priests

Сл. 24 Св. Димитрија, Сушица (1376/77), Јуда код јеврејских свештеника

Fig. 25 St.
Demetrius,
Sušica
(1376/77),
Akathistos
Hymn of the
Virgin, V oikos

Сл. 25 Св.
Димитрија,
Сушица
(1376/77),
V икос
Богородичиног
Акатиста



Fig. 26 St.
Demetrius,
Sušica
(1376/77),
Akathistos
Hymn of the
Virgin, XI kon-
takion

Сл. 26 Св.
Димитрија,
Сушица
(1376/77),
XI кондак
Богородичиног
Акатиста





Fig. 27 St. Demetrius, Sušica (1376/77), Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, III oikos and III kontakion

Сл. 27 Св. Димитрија, Сушица (1376/77), III икос и III кондак Богородичиног Акатиста



Fig. 28 St. Demetrius, Sušica (1376/77), Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, I oikos

Сл. 28 Св. Димитрија, Сушица (1376/77), I икос Богородичиног Акатиста



Fig. 29 St. Demetrius, Sušica (1376/77), Akathistos Hymn of the Virgin, I kontakion

Сл. 29 Св. Димитрија, Сушица (1376/77), I кондак Богородичиног Акатиста

robust architectural structures are the main elements of the restricted scenographic repertoire in the painted decoration of the church. Even in the pictures in which the scenery is more elaborated in terms of the scope and variety of its constitutive elements, the neglect of its formal aspects had a significant impact upon the deficiency of the spatial qualities in the construction of the second plan of the compositions (Fig. 26). Although the decorative treatment of architectonic elements is far from being entirely excluded, the repetitive templates of ornamental embellishment do not contribute significantly in surpassing of the monotonous pattern of the constructed scenery (Fig. 27). In the most elaborated examples, the spatial anatomy, as well as the decorative aspects of the depicted coulisses, are animated by a wider range of constructive elements and a greater invention in the spatial arrangement of the selected components (Fig. 28). The inclusion of a larger assortment of decorative elements and ornamental details in the configuration of the scenery (Fig. 29), contribute to the enlarged decorativeness in the spatial projection of the architectonic backdrops in the compositions.



Fig. 30 St. Demetrius, Prilep (ca. 1380), Dormition (detail)

Сл. 30 Св. Димитрија, Прилеп (око 1380), Успење (детал)

The most recognizable manner in the configuration of thoroughly constructed and carefully elaborated architectural setting marks the work of the painting studio of Metropolitan John²⁵, the last remarkable character belonging to the treasury of Macedonian artistic heritage from the 14th century. Featured by immaculate exposition of the visual reality and founded upon the principles of academic consistency in the conception of the compositional arrangement, the painting of Metropolitan John, resurrects the creative potential of the Palaiologan classicism in the painterly practice from the very end of the Mediaeval epoch. The vivid sensuality of the depicted sights, the perfectly balanced disposition of the figural elements, the epic character of the festal dynamics of the movements, as well as the skillfully coordinated assemblage of scenographic components, as trademarks of the artistic work of this talented church

²⁵ С. Радојчић, *Старо српско сликарство*, 166-168



Fig. 31 St. Andreas, Matka (1388/89), Last Supper
Сл. 31 Св. Андреја, Матка (1388/89), Тајна вечера

dignitary appeared for the first time in the devastated fresco ensemble executed in the church of St. Demetrius in Prilep²⁶ (ca. 1380), where the glamorously constructed coulisses participate in the festal dimensions of the depicted atmosphere with the monumental character of the forms, as well as with the refined features of their decorative conception (Fig. 30).

However, the painterly innovations characteristic of the fresco arrangement of the Prilep monument are masterly united in the rationally organized format of the compositional schemes in the painted decoration of the church of St. Andreas near Skopje (1388/9)²⁷. The illusionistic accents in the conception of the architectural décor, the picturesque informality in the treatment of interior design, the thoughtfully structured inter-relation of the figural components

²⁶ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 206

²⁷ J. Prolović, *Die Kirche des Heiligen Andreas an der Treska*, Wien 1997, 211

Fig. 32 St. Andreas, Matka
(1388/89), Washing of the Feet

Сл. 32 Св. Андреја, Матка
(1388/89), Прање ногу



Fig. 33 St. Andreas, Matka
(1388/89), Washing of the Feet
(detail)

Сл. 33 Св. Андреја, Матка
(1388/89), Прање ногу
(деталј)

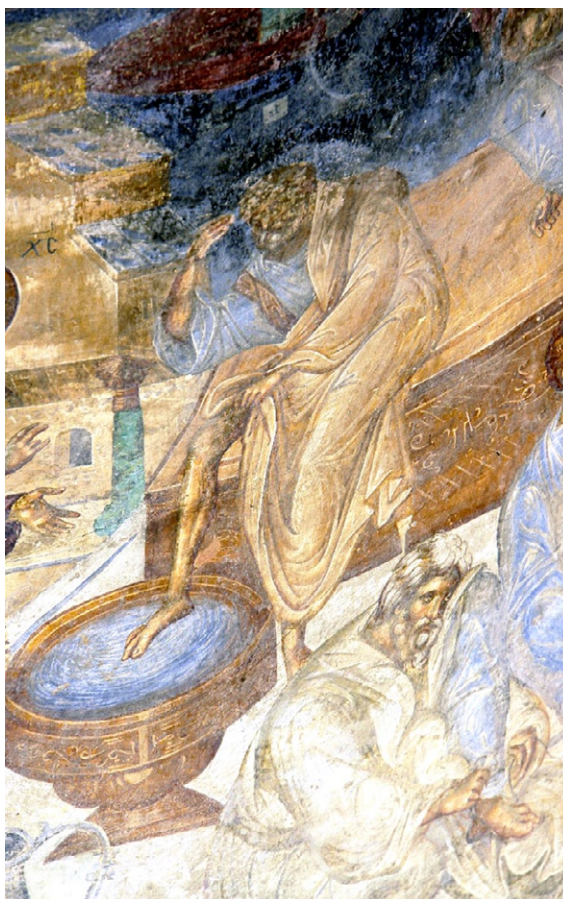




Fig. 34 St. Andreas,
Matka (1388/89),
Washing of the Feet
(detail)

Сл. 34 Св. Андреја,
Матка (1388/89),
Прање ногу (детал)



Fig. 35 St. Andreas,
Matka (1388/89),
Presentation of Christ
in the Temple

Сл. 35 Св. Андреја,
Матка (1388/89),
Сретење

and the represented scenery, as well as the lavishly elaborated edifices depicted in the rear prospect of the picture (Fig. 31), testify to the sophisticated sense for perspective harmony of all the compositional elements²⁸. The proportional disposition of the figural ensemble within the three-dimensional projection of the spatial characteristic of the scene (Fig. 32) is based upon the principle of geometrical precision in the construction of the architectural coulisses. The inventive inclusion of furniture pieces between the front prospect and the architectural backdrop of the picture is one of the recognizable means of optical extension of the compositional depth (Fig. 33). The thoughtful arrangement of the characters among the scenery elements contribute to the vividness in the depiction of the architectonic decor (Fig. 34), while the effectively conceived spatial qualities and almost pretentious consistency in the treatment of the architectural elements and the represented mobilier of the illustrated events (Fig. 35) is the most remarkable contribution of Metropolitan John to the overcoming of the pending issues of Byzantine inversed perspective.

The dynamic principles in the construction of the scenography employed by Michael and Eutychios, the confluent silhouettes of the scenery in the poetic sights executed by John Theorianos, the ravaging simplicity of the architectonic components created by the Ohrid painting studio and the noble academic illusionism in the painting of Metropolitan John, are the most remarkable examples of the imaginative manners of construction of the sacred space in the representative fresco ensembles created on Macedonian territory in the course of the 14th century. Developing its own methods in configuration of the architectural backdrops, each of the mentioned painting ateliers enriched the Palaiologan painterly practice with valuable pieces in creation of the complex entity of compositional arrangement.

Елизабета Димитрова

ДУХОВНИ АРХИТЕКТИ

Конструкција архитектонских кулиса у делима неких сликарских атељеа из XIV века

Иако је у византијском сликарству представа архитектонског амбијента углавном имала споредан карактер подређен доминантној улози фигуралног ансамбла у концепцији композицијских схема, уметност Палеологовског доба дала је овом елементу слике веће и трајније значење. Развијени концепт композицијског аранжмана у сликаној декорацији споменика из XIV века, свакако, не би био могућ без наглашене улоге ове “необавезне” компоненте у обликовању задњег плана сцене, као и без промоције амбициознијег приступа у асамблажу сценографских елемената. Нова просторна логика у конфигурацији ликовне представе и значајки конструисана интер-релација фигуралног ансамбла и архитектонског фона слике је један од препознатљивих елемената који обележавају уметнички препород Палеологовске

²⁸ E. Dimitrova, *On the mise-en-scène and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, 27-28

ренесансе. У том контексту, битна је анализа специфичних метода у обликовању архитектонских панорама у делатности водећих сликарских атељеа који су радили на данашњој македонској територији, да би се одредио њихов допринос општем развоју византијске уметности Палеологовске епохе. Од најраније манифестације новог духа у конструкцији моћне архитектонске позадине масивних облика и тешких компонената који сачињавају чврст оквир за пластичну конфигурацију сцена у Богородици Перивлепти (1295), преко добро прорачунате илустративности лаке сценографије са мноштвом декоративних и орнаменталних детаља у Старом Нагоричину (1316-18), до појачаног динамизма елаборираних архитектонских панорама у Светом Никити (после 1321), еволуција у стваралаштву Михајла Астрапе и Еутихија открива путеве ликовних експеримената у обликовању задњег плана композиције на почетку Палеологовске епохе. Лепршава атмосфера дворске елеганције у илустрацији представљених догађаја праћена ваздушастом сценографијом еластичних контура и грациозних силуета у Љуботену (1344-45), Матечу (1348-1352), на другом спрату нартекса Светософијске катедрале (око 1346), и у Григоријевој галерији (око 1350), је резултат лирске инспирације аристократског манира ликовног студија мајстора Јована Теоријаноса средином XIV stoleћа. У страсном и дубоко емоционалном уметничком изразу сликара Охридског атељеа из друге половине XIV века, редукција облика и декоративне обраде архитектонских кулиса у Марковом манастиру (1376/77) подређена је моћном вртлогу покрета и експресивно динамизираном духу драматичних призора, док су илузионистичке панораме сликане архитектуре у делима атељеа Митрополита Јована зографа, нарочито у сликарству Андреаша (1388/89) допринеле савладавању проблема византијске инверзне перспективе у самом крају XIV stoleћа. Динамички принципи у конструкцији сценографије примењени у делима Михајла Астрапе и Еутихија, конфлуентне силуете сценског фона у поетичним призорима Јована Теоријаноса, брутална једноставност архитектонских компоненти насликаних у споменицима Охридског ликовног атељеа из друге половине XIV века и племенити академски илузионизам у сликарству Митрополита Јована зографа, говоре у прилог имажинативних начина и манира у конфигурацији светог простора у неким од најрепрезентативнијих фреско ансамбла касновизантијске уметничке продукције.