Benjamim Saviani

Language Mechanisms in Art Production During the Counter Reformation

Abstract

This paper investigates composition principles in the context of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, when strongly rhetoric principles are summed up and used systematically in different artistic genres. The intent is to find a particular *forma mentis*, in a society that operated much by "custom", making care to do not intend that certain concepts would exist with the same intensity and consistency throughout the entire period from the advent of the Council of Trent and the collapse of the old European monarchical regimes; but, that similar and "congenital" concepts circulated in some way, more or less consciously according to the case and its protagonists, throughout the period.

Keywords

MECANISMOS DE LENGUAGE EN ARTES DURANTE LA CONTRARREFORMA

MECANISMOS DE LINGUAGEM NAS ARTES DURANTE A CONTRARREFORMA

Resumen

Este trabajo busca investigar patrones y principios de composición en el contexto de la Contra-Reforma católica, cuando disposiciones de matriz fuertemente retórica son organizadas y usadas de forma sistemática en los distintos géneros artísticos. Buscase, sin embargo, encontrar una *forma mentis* específica, de una sociedad que funcionaba en mucho por la costumbre, aunque se cuide de no pretender que conceptos específicos existieron con la misma intensidad y coherencia a lo largo de todo el período comprendido entre el Concilio de Trento y el colapso de los antiguos regímenes monárquicos europeos; pero, que conceptos semejantes y "congénitos" estuviesen en tránsito de alguna forma, más o menos consciente de acuerdo con el caso y sus protagonistas, durante el período.

Palabras clave

Retórica. Bellas Artes. Contra-reforma. Principios compositivos.

Resumo

O presente texto procura investigar padrões e princípios de composição no contexto da Contrarreforma católica, quando disposições de matriz fortemente retórica são compendiadas e usadas de maneira sistemática nos diferentes gêneros artísticos. Procura-se, assim, constatar uma *forma mentis* específica, de uma sociedade que operava muito pelo costume, ainda que se tenha o cuidado de não pretender que determinados conceitos vigorassem com a mesma intensidade e coerência ao longo de todo o período compreendido entre o advento do Concílio de Trento e a derrocada dos antigos regimes monárquicos europeus; mas sim, que conceitos semelhantes e "congênitos" circulassem de alguma forma, mais ou menos consciente de acordo com o caso e seus protagonistas, durante todo o período.

Palavras-chave

Retórica. Belas Artes. Contrarreforma. Princípios compositivos.

In a sermon on the Passion, the orator, when he gets to the scene of Pilate, tells the tale of how they made Christ a king in jest. He says that they took a purple cloth and threw it over his shoulders, and the audience listens with rapt attention; he says that they wove a crown of thorns and fastened it on his head, and everyone remains spellbound; then he says that they tied his hands and gave him a reed as a scepter, and the hearers still listen in silence with bated breath. At this point, a curtain opens and the image of the Ecce Homo appears, and then you see everyone throwing themselves to the ground and beating his breast, weeping, crying out, howling, and striking himself.

What is that? What appeared once again in this church? Everything unveiled by that curtain had been already said by the orator. He had already said all about that purple cloth, about that crown and thorns, about that scepter and reed. Why would that upset everyone, if no one had been troubled before? – Because first the Ecce Homo was heard, and then seen; the sayings from the orator reached their ears and the representation of its figure reached their eyes.
(Antônio Vieira. "Sermão da Sexagésima", 1655)

Father Antônio Vieira was probably one of the most influential priests of the 17th century from all Counter-Reformation Europe. He had successfully passed through three different cultural domains, preaching from the Roman Curia and Europeans monarchies, to Portuguese America. The Sermon for Sexagesima Sunday ("Sermão da Sexagésima"), preached in the Royal Chapel, Lisbon, in 1655, was a product from his return from Maranhão Captaincy, where he watched his catechism initiatives sink under hostility of local Portuguese elite, due to conflicts around rights of local indigenous people. Frustrated by those incidents, Vieira examined the purposes and devices of a religious speech, trying to comprehend the possible relations between Word, preacher and audience, as well as the reason why the Word blossoms in some souls but not in others. Its result was an ingenious and sincere work, metadiscursive: a sermon about the art of preaching, or a speech on the art of speech.

Mainly because of theological and political polarization provided by the ascension of Protestantism during the 16th century, the Catholic Church found itself in need of analyzing its own doctrines and liturgies by Council of Trento's perspective. During the synod, doctrine as well as political relations within catholic domains were reassured; nevertheless, it was stated that its learning and maintenance should occur more 'efficiently'. Such statement would concur with a crucial field within Philosophy and Culture: the Rhetoric. Specifically in this context, catholic doctrine was understood as a set of discourses, which should be expressed efficiently as to persuade the audience; hence, different art genres were systematically included in catholic projects – consisting of an overlap of political, theological and cultural aspects.

First, affirming that the inclusion of arts in those projects increases in frequency also mean to recognize that relations between Arts and Rhetoric already operated in European society before this period. More than that, Catholicism in particular assumes this imbrication conscientiously and assertively, formulating theoretical as well as practical knowledge that ought to be applied in artistic works. Secondly, it implies that the recognition of the arts' rhetoric source is a common one to all forms of European

communication. This source would mainly reside in these societies' *forma mentis* from its beginning (considering that the study of Rhetoric is a consequence of practical necessities that holds back to Classical Greece), and would be present in the protestant perspective. Nonetheless, its rhetoric origins would function by other means than the Catholic's, given that the doctrine changes with regard to its liturgical and theological conceptions.

Vieira's concerns about speech and its efficacy would be the same that guided Catholic Reformation politics, and would completely synthesize this reformed cultural complex from the 16th century. In the excerpt above, when he compares his followers' reaction (audience) to the painted image of *Ecce Homo* with the reaction to the preacher's (orator) description of the same biblical passage, the Father meditates on paintings' efficacy as a visual discourse useful to sermon. A priori, the sermon itself would be more eloquent than the oral speech – once the first it makes direct use of images, while in the last the orator must create images to his audience, describing the material of the speech. To the Counter-Reformation, both phenomena are helpful for persuading followers and for worshipping; therefore they should be extensively explored and optimized.

This article aims to explore some of those mechanisms of artistic composition, focusing on a common rhetoric source in its multiple expressions (Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music, Poetry, Oratory, etc.). Exploring this subject in a macro level is useful for understanding plenty expressions of artistic, theological and political sources, especially in catholic domains – European and Colonial alike.

1. Ingeniousness and astuteness. The very idea of "genius", founded on the concept of a creator's spirit – which gives way to wild pulses from his own *persona* – could not operate clearly before the 19th century. On the contrary, as we look through our thematic focus, it is worth noting that, especially after the 17th century, important treaties on rhetoric arts were produced, such as Baltazar Gracián's (*Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, 1648) and Emanuele Tesauro's (*Il cannocchiale aristotélico, o sia, Idea dell'arguta et ingeniosa elocutione [...]*, 1654).

Reading these treaties provide us the notion of the artist as a romantic "genius" and creator of original works is replaced by an "ingenious" inventor, as a crafty spirit that, through his/her "astuteness", is capable of combining ideas and common-senses into new compositions. It is worth observing that the inventor makes use of concepts that already exist in his/her society. Besides that, according to a theological framework, God gives the ingeniousness to the inventor's soul.

That said, the work of an inventor is not "genial", but "ingenious"; its relevance and innovation is obtained by the way concepts already existent are craftily combined, and not by creation of concepts *ex novo*.

Keeping that in mind utterly changes our perception of "originality" and procedures of artistic creation, once it becomes a regulator of the idea of "newness". Thus, being new does not relate to the introduction of innovative products, but by the variation and combination of already existing ideas –

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which is not entirely recognized under the romantic use of the term "genial". It is worth noting that this arrangement poses infinite variations, with as many difficulty levels of reading (that would be an audience's ingeniousness feature). It is our task, then, to seek for those references and ideas that would be combined and reconfigured in an *opera d'arte*, so that it would be at least readable.

2. Commonplace and emulation. The difficulty of using "authorship" or even "plagiarism" (an anachronistic conception for that period) because the elements present in those discourses were not exactly "new", but articulations of pre-existing ones. This would be the starting point to any discourse (that is, the disposition of ideas) that followed the European perspective, at least until the rise of romanticism. It would simultaneously be cause and consequence of "authorship" and "astute creations" circumstances, as described above.

Moreover, it is important to stress the following subtlety: ideas are not only "pre-existent", but also "authorized", once they passed as correct by the Catholic perspective, at that time. This would be the conception of commonplace, or *ars inveniendi*. Besides its "authorization" by custom or by moral authorities themselves (in our case, the Catholic ones), its use would be regulated by notions of decorum, or righteousness[1].

European art was always curbed by corollaries admitted as "truths", which can pertain to different subjects, being legitimized as truths in many ways - as said by the precepts of Aristotelian rhetoric. In this view, logic syllogism is a significant foundation of the discourse, proving Truth deductively. Besides its Aristotelian origins, the Catholic universe is also theological and neo-scholastic, and reassures those "truths" by evoking *authority*, which reveals itself as "truth" through custom, or through the God's Word. Due to that, sayings of those philosophers accepted as Doctors of the Church (especially Plato and Aristotle) were taken for Truths, such as the Bible. Thus, some ideas – in spite of its level of diffusion – could be considered as commonplaces of logical and moral authority, and are used in discourse argumentation; by that supporting the point intended.

Questioning regarding the very notion of "authorship" arises when we analyze texts that refer to the citation's author; nonetheless, we find plenty of citations that would not nominally refer to its sources. Our surprise in respect of this lack of information is nothing but unfamiliarity of the contemporary reader with the relations of authorship. Rather, referring to authorship would serve to highlight commonplace authority, and its absence would stress an assumption of the reader's erudition – judged as capable of identifying the citation's source, the writer would exempt himself to present it.

It would not be absurd to follow this logic, especially considering that the discourse was shaped through metaphors (which would explain the need of astuteness to dispose them ingeniously), and those would lead to different levels of comprehension, according to the public aimed. There would be, then, a distinction between vulgar and sober audience, that is, between common people and educated public. The example of religious buildings is

[1] With regard to an overall definition of what was understood by *decorum*, we suggest a thorough and instructive work, especially to its first chapter: "Decorum" [O decoro], by BASTOS (2013).

quite elucidative: the use of theological metaphors is the core of artistic representations that ornate a temple; they oscillate between easy understanding – which aims to morally educate the common people – and intricate interpretation – hoping to underline the erudition of that particular Religious Order over the others.

The point of citations' source is illustrative in Alberti's *De re ædificatoria*, where it is found that nearly every concept introduced is followed by its author. Alberti, as is well-known, is located at the center of debate about architect's erudition and he was indeed recognized as one of the most sophisticated inventors from Renaissance. Moreover, this proceeding by itself seems to become a commonplace to subsequent architecture treaties; its reference has been extensively observed in other texts, namely Mattheus do Couto's (1631). In this particular work, beyond accurately using concepts' authorships (Vitruvio, Serlio, Paladio, Alberti, etc.), Couto paid a specific compliment to Alberti[2]. Furthermore, by categorizing basic procedures in different *genres*, it would be possible to articulate this proceeding to a humble genre, actually a subgenre of the lower ones, primarily designed to instruct, instead of touching or delighting.

2"[...] & most valorous men, as Balthazar de Sciencia, Bramante, Sangalo, Urbino, Vinhola [Vignola], Serlio, Paladio, Philisbert & other famous who not only follow Vitro's [Vitruvio] texts, but also defend them, as was great Leo Bapta Alberto [Alberti], whom we can truly call the head of all of them [...]" (COUTO, 1631, p. 4.)

In respect of citations lacking authorship, it appears to happen more often in the musical genre, mainly because this discourse is not fundamentally verbal, but harmonic (even when the music is composed of lyrics). In this case, revealing the citation's authorship can be compromised, or at least occur distinctly. For instance, Bach's choirs harmonized and developed simple protestant choirs – either organized or composed by Luther – inserting them in broader works, as cantatas, oratorios, and Passions. It is the case of *Christ lag in todesbanden* cantata (BWV4), which is entirely based on Luther's homonymous choir, composed during the 16th century.

Plagiarism is an utterly inappropriate concept to label these proceedings. Instead, it would be useful to think of them as ways of honoring authors and consecrated works. This introduces us to the notion of *emulation*, a "enhanced imitation" or an "imitation with additions". The emulator does not intend to surpass the other, but to pay him homage, naming him in his own work. Under a theological perspective, "authorship" assumes a subsidiary importance, as the "ego" still was not viewed the way Freudian perspective does. The author's persona is surpassed by the idea that all these *inventors* are actually breeding and producing human craft *wonders*. A *wonder*, in its turn, is a precise conception from the 17th century that translates the divine enlightenment: it is the expression of God's presence, by human action and natural phenomena. As the understanding was that works were carried out by inventors, and not by "artists" (as we understand contemporarily), this would help to explain the difficulty of attributing authors to many artworks.

Emulation, thus, should not be understood as an inventor's attempt to surpass another, but as a glorification of God's works on Earth, enlightening men to continuously improve those things already created by others. Accordingly, if a paintbrush is the painter's instrument, the painter himself is God's instrument to unveil, by ingeniousness, many wonders in the world. Ironically, Bach, symbol of "musical geniality" to our time, might have not

acknowledge this labelling in his theological perspective, deeply influenced by Lutheran austerity.

3. Homology between discourses. Take into account and understand this principle means comprehend culture as being essentially rhetoric; by that, artistic genres are actually different genres of discourse (organization of ideas), emulations of oral discursive genre. Therefore, an oral sermon is a rhetoric discourse as much as a written text (prose of verse), a painting, an engraving, a sculpture, an architectonic building, a musical or a scenic play.

The homology between discourses derives from a Horatian principle, voiced in the maxim *ut pictura poesis*, from his *Ars poetica*; it translates to "as is painting so is poetry", it means to establish a relation between both artistic genres. By that time, Horace hoped to comprehend the poetic discourse also metaphorically and reflexively, such as painting was.

This proposition became a true artistic doctrine, particularly during the Counter-Reformation, when rhetoric became a political persuasive instrument. It was reaffirmed as a way to authorize homology between discourses of different artistic genres, that is, comparing each one by its similitudes in structure, use of concepts, figures of speech, etc.

The occidental rhetoric tradition, of Aristotelian and Platonic origins – as well as Horacian, Ciceronian and Quintilian – seeks the establishment of a discourse by organization of concepts for a specific moment and place to present. The rhetoric art has the main objective the *persuasion* of its spectator, using three means to its achievement: instruction, delight, and commotion (motion of affections). It is aiming an increase of commotion that the arts are converted to strategic tools to counter-reformist policies - from the 16th century onward -, giving birth to wonderful results. Nevertheless, this does not imply that arts as rhetoric genres flourished during the *Cinquecento*; they are systematically used from this period, and destined to interact with a vast public. In addition, they were often included in treaties and compendia that address its constitution.

By accepting that every artistic genre is actually a discourse that try to persuade its audience is the starting point to fully understand distinctions between the universes today named as "Renaissance" and "Baroque". Furthermore, following the proposition of homology between discourses from multiple genres, we understand that there is an extensive dialogue between the arts, which could offer new perspectives for different situations. These conditions could also be admitted as *ingenious* operations, that bring originality to the discourse by the reconfiguration of ideas, making the spectator wonder at these operations and then, persuade him.

Examples of these operations are countless. In music, transpositions are extremely variable, and present a homology quite similar to a principle of oral discourse, that is, its relations with *time*: an orator that speeches uses a determined amount of time to perform orderly each rhetoric operation

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established in the *dispositio*³. Music, in this respect, is an art that has a relation with time close to discourses', as some similar analogies. Because of that, among the many musical subgenres (such as sonata, cantata, concert), the very same discursive principles were disposed harmonically and/or melodically; besides, this disposition actually translates oral figures of speech to musical ones, in clearly ingenious operations. The result is creation of figures of speech particular to the musical genre, but also directly related to oral figures of speech.

That would be the case of an image related to the *lamento* (mourning), a lugubrious affection described as *passus duriusculus* by Christoph Bernhard's (1657) renowned treaty. This notion would correspond to the rhetorical-musical figure of *pathopoeia* (affection's motion); it involves playing the melodic line (downward) within an interval of a fourth, chromatically. This rhetoric figure would evoke a specific feeling related to weeping; it was extensively used in arias, cantatas, and even in instrumental concerts that enjoyed of great popularity in that period. The name *passus duriusculus* is by itself metaphoric, once it mean "hard steps" or "harsh passage". When J. S. Bach used it in Mass in B minor (BWV232) during the bass line of *Crucifixus etiam pro nobis'* choir, he performed a kind of musical metaphor of the very steps of Christ's Passion – who carried his cross painfully – in a dramatic and touching manner.

J. S. Bach was not the only one that made use of musical metaphors (either melodic or harmonic) when constructing persuasive discourses. Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1673) is one of the first composers to initiate it, obtaining vast and immediate impact in the population; he brought in mimetic elements that produced quite literal sound effects: for instance, when he represents the gallop of a horse during a battle – in the Madrigal *Gira il nemico insidioso amore* (SV 148) or in the representative madrigal *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (SV 153) –, or a sword duel – in the Madrigal *Altri canti d'amor* (SV 146). Those figures of speech would also be present in an original musical genre, created by Monteverdi himself, as a true operation of rhetoric ingeniousness: his VIII Book of Madrigals is divided in two parts, one for each predominant affection: of love and of war. The last was reinvented by the composer, as he argued in his prologue:

> Having I considered our passions and soul affections to be three main, that is, between Temperance, Humility and Supplication, as said by the best philosophers, and even the very nature of our voice to characterize high, low and medium pitched, & as the Music so notifies in these three concepts of concitato⁴, tender and tempered, present in every composition from previous musicians I could not find examples of the genre concitato, but of the tender and tempered, even though described by Plato in the third [book] of Rhetoric [...] hence I have put myself in his retrieval, not with little study & fatigue.

The excerpt above includes several succeeding metaphors and analogies. Monteverdi "invented" a disposition of affections already prescribed by others, but not yet transposed to music until then. What is noticeable is the same proceeding of invention described earlier: the commonplace

³ With Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, the deliberative discourse is theorized in five topics, based on custom: (i) *inventio*, in which one chooses his arguments and the claim of authority of those commonplaces; (ii) *dispositio*, which happens during the speech, and it has four phases - *exordium*, process of attracting the listener's attention; *narratio*, the presentation of ideas; *argumentatio*, discriminations of his judgements over the professed ideas; and *conclusio*; (iii) *elocutio*, in which the language is more decorous as to better persuade the audience; and (v) *actio*, the scenographic persuasion, for the moment of deliberating, in which appropriate gestures and intonation are expected.

⁴ The translation of the original term, concitato, lingers between "vivid", "encouraged" and "excited". This explains its association with the "warrior spirit", a Monteverdian deduction of the idea of Wrath, and it was chosen maintain the original.

becomes ingenious, as is recycled from a discursive genre secluded from music. The "originality" is not in *ex novo* creation of an artistic subgenre, but in the rearrangement of already existing concepts (the *Concitato* and the musical genres), and crowned by a specific feature: the affection of Rage is now translated in Warrior Spirit, due to Monteverdi's interpretation. This novelty is a human's ingeniousness wonder, and its craftiness makes use of the homology between discourses, from what had been prescribed by Philosophers to the musical discourse through structures and analogous metaphors. Oddly enough, the principle of homology between discourses plays a crucial role, as it promotes the understanding that music is not only *derived* from poetry, it *is* poetry.

As for Architecture, and especially for religious architecture, it would be worth saying that ornamentation profusion (both pictorial and sculptural) aims at illustrating ideas, concepts and discursive structures of moralizing content – when showing vices and virtues, or instructing the spectator over the models of Catholic Faith, such as saints, popes, evangelists, doctors of the Church, etc.

Hence, the homology between rhetoric discourses poses as a factor that allows dialogue between multiple artistic genres, which implies the consideration that architecture is not *only* about physical space organization, but also a *corpus* that exhibits and embraces other artistic genres – decorated by paintings and sculptures –, and a *corpus* that exhibits and encompasses ideas.

After all, what is the exact moment that a mural painting ceases to be architecture and becomes a painting? Similarly, when does architecture itself ceases to be painting, sculpture, or any other kind of *discourse*? Its homology is such that permits the transposition of themes, commonplaces and discourses among them. It is the case of church frontispieces, which rhetorically work as *emblem's* structures; reciprocally, books frontispieces, constituted by engravings, work as proper architectures *and* emblems, as they display the *image* of architectonic structures. Zuvillaga accurately points in the excerpt below:

> Makes sense to study perspective treaties from its frontispieces; besides being the door that invites the reader to enter the book, they are also its facade; also, they show what are the contents of the book, and that they have a representative feature. These frontispieces, which are the first drawings and in some cases the most interesting, usually have a pronounced architectonic character and are often illustrated with allegoric figures, geometric bodies, drawing instruments, etc. Sometimes, they carry sayings or mottos which make them true emblems, once the emblematic visual language developed from the Renaissance on, reaching its full potential during the Barroque; thus, its evolution concurs with perspective's. (ZUVILLAGA, 1996, p. 23. Author's translation)

This excerpt analyzes more specifically perspective treaties' frontispieces; nonetheless, its idea remains valid for most of book frontispieces, due to its usually emblematic content (See Figure 1). What is worth noting is that the notion of an artistic genre affects more what is being represented, conceptually, than its materiality. Naturally, every genre possesses singularities that characterize it, but it is important to remember that an architectonic element is not limited to something built; it also includes the representation of an *architecture's idea.* This idea materializes itself through concepts and building's solidity, and also by images (which would satisfactorily explain Da Vinci's "imaginary" drawing, as well as the representations of Filarete's ideal cities and many others, during the transition to the 15th century). Images don't materialize by its own account, this only happens when they are an *illustrated definition* of a concept: a single volute image is not architecture, although it is when this same volute is figured as to represent an idea of an architectonic element. For example, a chapter articulated in its own architectonic Order becomes an illustrated definition of architecture's idea; by extension, this very chapter becomes architecture, even though it's a figure.

Perhaps that could be possible in a world where every architect is also a constructor. An "architecture critic" or an "architect that does not build" is yet to come. And, if he does not exist (or if architecture "critics" aren't professional architects, but noble curious over the subject), maybe there is no such difference between the concept of architecture – expressed by drawings – and the already materialized architecture.

From that comes our difficulty with categorize *perspective* into one between so many visual genres. Our will to compartmentalize it might be an analytical error, proper of a scientificist ethic, that has as its methodological premise the classification. However, categorizing does not solve all problems: it can lead to never-ending subcategories, especially when these elements may be considered hybrid. Whenever we talk about *visual perspective*, it must be taken into account all *perspective custom* in which "illusionary" architecture is also considered architecture – despite them

Figure 1: Frontispiece of Vignola's *Prospettiva prattica*, edition of 1611. The book's frontispiece is an emblem to the book: the title may be understood as the Motto, and the image the representation of the work's totality. From this point on, metaphors follow one after another: the representation of perspective, through the *colunata*, is prior to the work's main theme, and invites further reading; the title words are incorporated to architectonic composition; other "minor" allegories blend in, as the column plinth (to the left there is an allegory of Peace, according to Alciato's 178th Emblem). The result seems to be homologous to the architectonic frontispieces, especially with religious building, where the Saint Patron assumes the role of Motto. Source: ZUVILLAGA, 1996, p. 34.
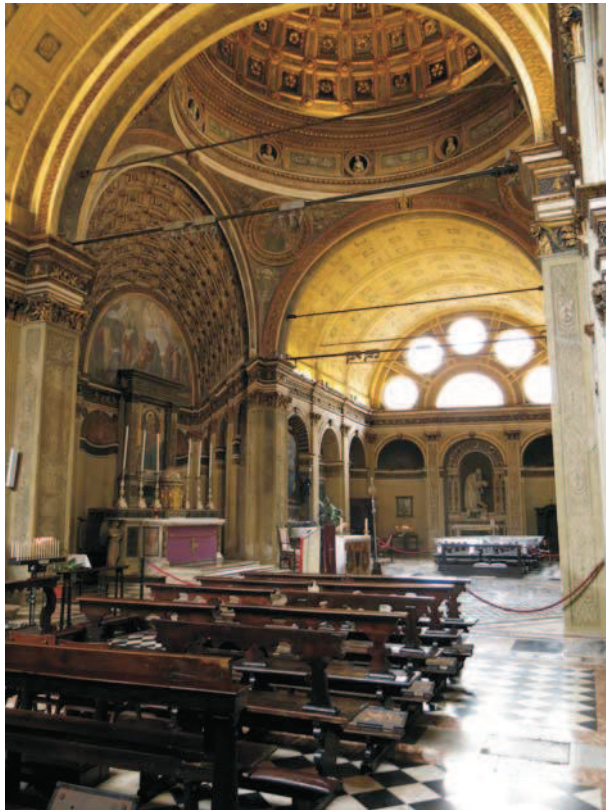
Figure 2: Bramante – *Santa Maria presso San Satiro* (Milan). The photograph was taken from the transept, projecting the anamorphosis, to the left. Because of the subtle physical lowering in the place of the optic effect – following the fresco and enriching in with embossments – it is difficult to notice the craftwork by who stands in the nave. Source: Author's archive.

being anamorphic and distorting spatial perception. After all, our spatial comprehension is equally physic *and* visual, and both are interrelated. The best example of it could be Bramante's work, in *Santa Maria presso San Satiro* (See Figure 2), in which he creates a greek cross' temple by painting an *anamorphosis* in perspective, by the altar's apse. Would that be a mural painting or architecture? It would be both, one completing the other.

4. Symbol and allegory. Allegory, as João Adolfo Hansen notices (Cf. HANSEN, 2006), is a kind of metaphor, that is, of a language resource which includes an equivalence between two distinct semantic values, as to be indirectly swapped. Their significance is cultural, it is structured through discourse and strengthens over time.

Among societies that adopted rhetoric arts as means of expression, allegories appear as a formal proposition of "art's rhetorics", as they were considered an ornament of oral discursive genres – since roman rhetors –, and also for producing indirect forms of speech. In turn, these forms of speech had different objectives: (i) to promote "ingenious" associations between distinct topics; (ii) to touch the audience, through eloquent use of "efficient" allegories; (iii) to conceal messages, by using sophisticated allegories, only understood by few social groups.

In this universe, as seen above, allegories were classified by levels of interpretation difficulty, which range between *mild* and *total allegories*. This implies attention and prudence from who studies them, besides a close proximity of its production context; its contemporaries could have easily understood many allegories that are today difficult to apprehend, due to its particular atmosphere. For that matter, every context of art production substantially changes.

Although present during all European Art History, circumstances of visual allegories' production were subjected to deep changes at the end of 15th century, mainly related to the establishment of courtesan cultures, great enthusiast of occultist and "orientalist" doctrines. Those beliefs were spreading through Europe by that time, via documents partly unknown to those social circles – like books of Egyptian hieroglyphics, then unintelligible. For that, it was a richly plural period, in which people look to

Egyptian hieroglyphics, astrology, Platonic philosophy, the Kabbalah, and many other sources, and constructed world interpretations that were mystic and prophetic – such as neo-platonic doctrines of Marsilio Ficiano, Pico della Mirandola, and Angelo Poliziano. In little time, this obsession with "symbologies" attracted the attention of newly constituted Italian courts, allowing the construction of laudatory rhetoric discourses over their military achievements, values, or nobility.

The courtesan understanding of this cultural scheme is an erudite and even challenging apprehension of the symbology system: among new Italian courts, mercenaries and capable warlords – despots born common people according to medieval stratification – that were taking over important territories in Italian Peninsula. Neo-platonic discourses draw their attention by permitting the construction of a new "mystical" order, which would enable the existence of their nobility, rejected in the Christian and hereditary order established since the Middle Ages.

This entire conjuncture would lead to the writing of treaties aimed at "standardizing" visual discourses by the use of figures, inside representative systems of allegories. These compendia would become *artis inveniendi*, *formally* regulating allegory production, therefore allowing a more accurate intelligibility. In its turn, metaphors were organized within representative *genres* as an *emblem*, an insignia or "formatted" allegories in *Iconology*.

What happens then is a kind of an "institutionalization" of symbols in allegoric systems – which wakes us up to differ *symbol* from *allegory*: while symbol has a close and direct metaphoric meaning, allegory would be an articulation of different symbols that arise multiple meanings – it intends to construct a "compounded metaphor", that broadens the range of interpretation. Given the interpretation difficulty of the proposed allegories (that is, due to the possible array of interpretations of the metaphors displayed), allegoric components began to be simultaneously split in genres/representative systems – which allows or not some interpretative commonplaces, usually through custom. Nevertheless, the symbolic element may eventually change its meaning depending on the representative system it lands; Hansen provided us an example when reporting the instructions made by one of the authors on the theme:

> *[...]. Rengifo says that, during the composition of emblems, figures are extracted from the very effects that one hopes to illustrate: the image of the flaming Torch, that brightens when leaned, means "humility", suggesting that virtue strengthens the more one humiliates himself. When inverted, the torch has its fire extinguished by the wax, meaning "levity". Likewise, the image of a "fly" in emblems and in Seicento's painting means only "fly" when landed in [sic] a bodegón's fruit or in a "still life"; when inserted as an element of a composition of the genre vanitas, means "rotten" and "death"; finally, when used by itself - for instance, in an insignia, an emblem or an ironic inscription that is sent to someone - it means "shamelessness".*
> (HANSEN, 2013, p. 50)

One easily notices that elements such as "torch" and "fly" show distinct meaning according to it position/context; this illustrates ingenious articulations between symbols, which produces compounded and distinct significations.

Seems worth stressing that the context of the rise and spread of this 16th century custom is that of courtesan cultures, intimately related to Machiavellian political doctrines. These theories had been previously rejected by the principles of Catholic's *raison d'État*, adopted by most of European monarchies. However, Italian's courtesan culture would be admitted in the biggest European courts as social standards and nobility representation, especially during the *Seicento*. Privileged by this tendency, new systems of artistic representation were also included in those great monarchies, as in Vatican's counter-reformists projects – once most of these compendia aimed at illustrating vices and virtues efficiently and conveniently[5]. The subtlety consisted in: what had been once destined to edify the perfect *gentiluomo* was also introduced to edify the catholic believer and virtues of religious dogmas.

Another aspect is that this analysis refers only to allegories *formal* development within *representation systems*. Minding the context, its emergence and spread is more related to those new Italian courts that to catholic politics and powerful monarchies. Nonetheless, the use of metaphors in rhetoric discourses has been an European common practice. Moreover, one could say that metaphor is also one of the foundations of Semitic religions and, above all, of Christianity, as shown by allegoric interpretations of Bible themes, and by how Christ's teaching has been diffused through Gospel. In its essence, the very fundamental rite of Christian liturgy, the Eucharist, has its reasons to rely on a metaphor.

Considering the size of this article, only two representative genres will be examined. First, the emblem, whose first appearances were in 1531, in the *Emblemata* - an anthology organized by Andrea Alciato. Initially, it consisted of short poems about vices and virtues, but its later editions followed the editor's suggestion by adding engravings (See Figure 3). The later then was consecrated as a structure for the *emblem*, which starts to be identified as composed of Motto, Body, and Soul, or: title, figure and text/epigram. This system aims to profess moralizing sentences and didactic, as text and image are interdependent and

Figure 3. Alciato, Frankfurt Edition, 1567. XLVII Emblem ("*Mutuum auxilium*"). There is an evident structure: Motto (title); Body (engraving); Soul (epigram). The text has an instructive and edifying lesson, as a fable. In this case, the mutual assistance is the imp being carried over the blind's shoulders; so, one borrows his feet, and the other his eyes. In other words, what one lacks is provided by the other, through mutual concord. Source: (Public Domain) <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/ BMTOMQKBYZ4BHORPGP3GSRDQY2JKH6HY> Last Access: Oct. 15th 2015.

[5] Also because many popes, during the 16th and the 17th centuries were descendant from those new important families, as the Medici (Florence) and the Pamphili (Rome).

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equally valid: as figure is an illustrated definition of text's message, and motto is what names both, it would be possible to create an intelligible emblem by combining one or two of these elements. However, the message's reading still relies on a comprehensive practice, using more than one element at a time.

We are dealing here with a structure analogously applicable in other artistic genres, like painting: the inscription of a proverb in a painting might be read as the Motto of the emblem, such as Hieronymus Bosch's triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. When closed, God's figure points to Earth, followed by the inscription *ipse dixit et facta s(ou)nt / ipse mandauit et creata s(ou)nt*[6]. Isolated, these images may have innumerous hypothesis, though the Motto's inclusion leads this *painted emblem* to world's creation, introducing discourses over vices and virtues, which would appear in the open triptych. Another good example of an emblem is Dürer's *Melencolia I*, an allegory of its very inventors, by saturnine spirits that bow to ingeniousness and to artistic production. Architecture would have an analogous (or "transposed) behavior, once the patron's indication for a chapel, in the building's frontispiece, also functions as Motto for the rhetoric discourse contained inside the chapel.

The second genre would be the *insignia*, which today is usually – and poorly – associated with "coat of arms", or "crest", once it was part of a system that originally had been a shield. The genre emerges during the 16th century, and its portuguese term, *divisa*, comes from the verb "*divisar*" (to divide), which refer to elements' disposition dividing the representation area (flag or shield) in heraldic art. The genre also comprehends allegoric definitions of "body" and "soul", through the relation between image and sentence (proverb), although in a more precise fashion than emblem's: the reader must perform a mental operation that comprises all allegories' elements, once they are almost all metaphoric. Again, as observes Hansen:

> Hence, one observes that the image is thought as discourse and vice-versa. The reader/spectator of insignias, then, finds himself dealing with two metaphors - one visual, other verbal - whose relation, that has to happen as to interpret what is read/seen, is allegoric: the visual has discursive translation, and the verbal, visual translation.(HANSEN, 2006, p. 195)

When it is said that *insignia* takes shape by the 16th century, the reference is to its structure, which is better defined from then. However, allegoric operations and its formal results are ancient, as noted in heraldic art. For instance, it is applicable to this context the *coat of arms* of the Carmelite Order, especially because it offers a "milder" allegory of what is represented. Even if there are variations in the composition of its representative elements, its body is split in two by an ascending element, which has a cross on its peak; on either side of the cross lingers two stars, and, in the inferior body, another star. Relating these elements with the Order's doctrine, one can recognize them as celebrations of Mount Carmel, place in which Carmelites gather to worship Our Lady (the ascending element and the cross are visually associated to that geographic formation). The star below represents the Virgin herself, while the upper ones, a "celestial" domain – the prophets

[6] For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm (Psalm 33:9).

Elijah and Elisha had previously indicated the Carmel as a sacred place, according to the Bible, and prophesied Mary's come in. It means a mild allegory, of easy comprehension and quick identification with the Order; this is one of the reasons it was extensively used in Carmelites' frontispieces of Colonial Brazil (See Figure 4).

Besides these specific comments, there are some other precepts that regulate insignias worth noting. Paolo Giovio, in his *Dialogo delle imprese militari et amorose […]* (1557), pointed out five conditions to obtain a fine insignia: (1) having a fair proportion between Body and Soul; (2) balancing between obscurity and intelligibility; (3) having a pleasant and joyful figure, recurring to "stars, Suns, Moons, fire, water, verdant trees, mechanic instruments, bizarre animals and fantastic birds"; (4) that does not require human form; (5) that the Motto be the Soul's Body, and its conceptualizer a native speaker of a different language of the Body's composer – so the obscurity level is assured; finally, that the Motto shall be brief, and its junction with the Body shall be constant and essential for the genre (GIOVIO, 1559, p. 9).

Figure 4: Carmelite portico in Minas Gerais Square – Mariana (state of Minas Gerais, Brazil). The composition is detailed with customary elements from the end of the 18th century, like the *rocailles*. Even so, it denotes the Carmelite *insignia*. Source: Author's archive.

Figure 5: Franciscan portico in Minas Gerais Square – Mariana (state of Minas Gerais, Brazil). The prominent *chartula*, in Latin, might show some of confraternity's erudition, whereas the symbolic elements above are allegorically organized, promoting a visual reading quite direct to the period repertoire, despite its ingeniousness. Source: Author's archive.

Giovio's prescription offered an overview of what could be visually understood as insignia during the 16th century. It is remarkable the suggestion of constructing a *moderate* allegory, that is, not too mild nor too hermetic (item 2), what inscribes the public to which that discourse is directed. Besides, it reaffirms the necessity of figuratively represent symbols (item 3).

Item 4, in turn, is captiously put: "that does not require human form". Giovio does not prohibit human representation, but – as is verifiable in many insignias – authorizes human representation via *synecdoche*, representing the whole by a part. In *insignias* we shall never find a complete representation of human figure, although we can find some parts of it: a leg, an arm, an eye, etc. Oddly enough, *insignias* of Saint Francis of Assisi's Order strictly abide those instructions, also becoming remarkable "visual identities". In Mariana (state of Minas Gerais, Brazil), this *insignia* appears in the *Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi's Chapel*, as well as in the *Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis' Chapel*. The *insignia* relates Christ's Wounds to St. Francis stigmata in many ways, even by using a bare arm as symbol of Christ, along with a dressed arm as a symbol of the saint (both carrying wounds in their palms). The elements' disposition is not always identical, though they all appear (cross, bare and dressed arms); in Archconfraternity's Chapel, both arms figured side by side, obliquely, with a cross behind. In the chapel next to Carmo (See Figure 5), these elements are sophistically organized: above, a cross; right below, both arms; under them a shield split in two and circled by a cord: at its left, the five Wounds, which are both Christ's and St. Francis'; at its right, Portugal weapons[7].

The association between this Order and the Kingdom is extremely ingenious and eloquent: while the left side represents Christ's Wounds that resurge in St. Francis as five stigmata, the right side shows Portugal's weapons, and its core is precisely five blue escutcheons sparkled with five silver spots. Those elements, *per se*, allegorize Ourique's Battle, when Christ would have appeared to Don Afonso Henriques promising him victory if he adopted its Wounds as coat of arms.

The arrangement of those symbolic elements is open to some interpretations (as well as to the hypothesis that they could belong to some representative or visual genre, like the *insignia*). Lastly, some notice an evident correspondence between the Franciscan stigmata and the Portugal *insignia* (blue escutcheons). This connection is not indispensable, but convenient, once it attaches symbologies that are autonomously related to the five Christ's Wounds. In other words, what is figured in one side morally mirrors the other side; the originality is that both are enlaced by the cord, as to pass an idea of harmony between Third Franciscans and Metropolitan state, a victorious message of Christ to the confraternity and to the Portuguese crown, entwined in perfect communion. This allegory is the Motto for reading the rest of the chapel.

This composition ends with a *chartula* written in Latin, registering the beginning of the building (1763), the patron saint and earthly hierarchies: Pope Clement XIV, king Don José I, and bishop Don Manuel da Cruz. One

[7] It is worth noting that this universe was really broadcast. In a 'dictionary' edited in Portugal in early Setecento, there is a vast entry for *divisa*, which cites every connotations pointed by the treaty, enriching them with examples of famous ones, made in Portugal and Europe; it also includes Emanuele Tesauro's ("Manoel Thesauro") treaty, about the astuteness and the same five topics used by Giovio, as well as evoking authorities of the likes of Plato and Cicero. Cf. BLUTEAU, 1712-13, v. 3, pp. 264-266.

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can wonder whether there is an identification between these Franciscans with higher social classes, in comparison with the Carmelites, once the first use Latin and have a more intricate *insignia*, against Carmelite's "plain" one.

This text intended to demonstrate how multiple are the construction and representation forms of artistic ideas, within the culture framework in which our research object belongs. In addition, it aspired to show that the recognition of some linguistic structures (in this case, visual language) can assist the reading of these products.

Amidst so many mistaken formalisms, anachronist concepts, and the oblivion of this representative tradition, it becomes difficult to understand the genesis of these arts and makes its reading almost impossible. It is certain that the reconstitution of these precepts only touches a fraction of a vast universe, consolidated over hundreds of years, and what has been elaborated here is much less than that. More than instructing the reader, the aim of this article is to draw attention of art and architecture historians to the necessity of a comprehensive and integrated reading of our historic remains, and to be capable of encompassing multiple artistic genres, seeing them as forms of discourse and, in some periods in History, much alike to discursive languages. After all, it might be that not always there was a distance between the context of a musical play, an architectonic building, and a sermon from Father Vieira.

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Benjamim Saviani
Architect and Urbanist by Architecture and Urbanism College of University of São Paulo (FAUUSP). The author had academic exchanges in architectonic restoration, in *Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura*, Madrid, and *Università degli Studi*, Florence. Currently, works as Project manager focused in architectonic survey and restoration, in Instituto Pedra (2014). Its first research in Art History was through a FAPESP project under the supervision of Prof. Luciano Migliaccio (FAUUSP), named "Mafai e Scipione: a *Scuola Romana di Pittura* no MAC-USP" (2011); this had an homonym article published by the Journal Ars (CAP/ECA-USP, 2012, v. 10(19)) and made possible the collaboration with Prof. Ana Gonçalves Magalhães curadory, "Classicismo, Realismo e Vanguarda: Pintura Italiana no Entreguerras", at MAC-USP.
Rua Dona Veridiana, 107, ap. 82, Santa Cecília
01238-010 - São Paulo, SP, Brasil
(11) 976-989-752
b.saviani@gmail.com