

**SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL (PhD) DISSERTATION**

**Sculpture contracts from the Italian Renaissance,  
in particular those from Florence and Tuscany (1400–1530)**

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2017

Eötvös Loránd University  
Faculty of Humanities

Doctoral Dissertation

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in particular those from Florence and Tuscany (1400–1530)**

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Budapest, 2017.

### **Thesis subject**

In my thesis I examine 96 contracts, all of which source documents have already been published.

In order to carry out as comprehensive an examination as possible, I selected and collated the documents according to a system of criteria, based on raw material (marble/stone, bronze, terracotta, wood), genre (sculpture in the round, altar work, tabernacle, funerary monument, door, etc.), type of commissioner (committee, guild or private individual), reputation of the creator (famous or “nameless”), and the official profile of the creator (e.g. painters who also worked as sculptors). The aim was not to deepen our knowledge about patrons from higher, richer or more qualified strata of society, but to examine a broader, more mixed cross-section with regard to commissioners, artists, and the commissioned works of sculpture.

### **Research objectives**

Whereas painting contracts in Florence and Tuscany during the period in question have been well researched, sculpture contracts – as with almost everything to do with Renaissance sculpture – remain in the shadow of painting, and form the subject of only sporadic research. A comparative, source-critical examination of a substantial number of sculpture contracts taken together has never been carried out before, neither in Hungary nor elsewhere.

In writing my thesis, my objective – owing to the under-researched nature of the topic – is first and foremost to examine the expectations, stipulations and instructions specified in the contracts, not only concerning the commissioned works themselves, but also other, closely related aspects of the commissions, such as the practices for procuring raw materials (channels of procurement, main characteristics), delivering the materials and the finished works, installing the completed commissions, the techniques used to produce the works, the division

of labour employed by the creators, and the fees paid for works made from different types of raw materials. I also strove to identify the practices and internal mechanisms of the producer/contractor/creator/artist that pertain closely to the period, to location, or to their cultural background, to discover new information or to expand and clarify existing knowledge.

It is not an objective of this thesis to present individual commissions one by one. The investigation rests on the assumption that by taking specific commissions, which would ordinarily be handled independently and in isolation, and placing them side by side in order to compare and contrast them, it becomes possible to glean additional information from them that provides insight into society's expectations in those days, allowing us to see what sort of criteria and priorities existed in the mindset of the given period. Through specific examples, by examining different types of stipulations, my objectives are to identify, where possible, the reasons underlying particular stipulations (keeping up with fashion, technical innovation, personal taste, etc.), to present the kinds of concessions and caveats contained in the contracts, as well as undertakings by the artists, and to provide a more critical analysis of certain stipulations, in order to confirm, clarify or refute the opinions found in the related literature.

### **Research methods**

Contracts entered into with artists are historical sources of a special kind: legal historical documents. As historical sources, although the information they contain is mostly of use to art history, they also form the subject of research by several other disciplines and auxiliary sciences (history, history of law, palaeography, cultural and economic history, art sociology, linguistics, philology), whose methods and results should also be borne in mind when examining the documents.

Tudományos-ismeretterjesztő:

Műalkotás szerződés szerint I. 2015.

[http://www.magyarmuzeumok.hu/muhely/2909\\_mualkotas\\_szerzodes\\_szerint](http://www.magyarmuzeumok.hu/muhely/2909_mualkotas_szerzodes_szerint)

Műalkotás szerződés szerint II. 2015.

[http://www.magyarmuzeumok.hu/muhely/2933\\_mualkotas\\_szerzodes\\_szerint\\_ii](http://www.magyarmuzeumok.hu/muhely/2933_mualkotas_szerzodes_szerint_ii)

Műalkotás szerződés szerint III.

[http://www.magyarmuzeumok.hu/muhely/2953\\_mualkotas\\_szerzodes\\_szerint\\_iii](http://www.magyarmuzeumok.hu/muhely/2953_mualkotas_szerzodes_szerint_iii)

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researching the contracts is impeded at times by a characteristic of the Italian archival system, whereby the contracts are not accessible according to the name of the commissioner or the sculptor, but according to the name of the aforementioned notary, who is generally completely unknown.

### **Author's List of publications in the subject**

Pattantyús Manga: „Marmoribus albis de Carraria bonis et pulcris” – Néhány érdekes kikötés firenzei szobrászok márványszobrok készítésére kötött szerződéseiből. *Orpheus Noster* vol. IX, no. 2 (2017). 164–180.

Bajnóczi Bernadett – Nagy Géza – May Zoltán – Boros Ildikó – Pattantyús Manga: Egy reneszánsz mázas terrakotta Madonna-szobor (Szépművészeti Múzeum Régi Szobor Gyűjtemény) anyaghasználata és készítéstechnikája az archeometriai kutatások tükrében. In: „*Szeresd a magad kis mesterségét...*” Archeometriai, régészeti és művészettörténeti tanulmányok Tóth Mária tiszteletére. Szerk. Bajnóczi Bernadett – Dági Mariann – Lövei Pál – Ridovics Anna. Budapest, 2016. 283-302.

Pattantyús Manga: A carrarai márvány. Egy szobrászati nyersanyagról a reneszánsz források tükrében. In: „*Szeresd a magad kis mesterségét...*” *Archeometriai, régészeti és művészettörténeti tanulmányok Tóth Mária tiszteletére*. Szerk. Bajnóczi Bernadett – Dági Mariann – Lövei Pál – Ridovics Anna. Budapest, 2016. 61–72.

Pattantyús Manga: A műalkotások értékbecslése a toszkán reneszánsz művészetben. Stimák és lodók. *Orpheus Noster* vol. VIII, no. 2 (2016). 107–116.

Pattantyús, Manga: Few remarks on a Renaissance sculptural model. Jacopo Sansovino: Madonna and Child. *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 119 (2014). 187–195.

Pattantyús, Manga: Baccio da Montelupo: Virgin and Child. Attribution proposal and some observations on problems faced by researchers of the glazed terracotta Madonnas in Budapest and Sèvres. / Baccio da Montelupo Madonna and gyermekkel. Attribúciós javaslat és néhány megjegyzés a budapesti és a sèvres-i mázas terrakotta Madonnák kutatásának problematikájához. *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 110–111 (2009). 91–108., 277–288.

The primary method of research consists of source analysis and source criticism. In order to extract the most complete range of information from the sculpture contracts, I took a multidirectional approach. On the one hand, grouping the sources in accordance with their raw materials facilitates a better overview of the different aspects (stipulations, raw material procurements, deliveries and pricings) that are closely connected with each raw material and its production techniques; on the other hand, taking a thematic approach towards individual topics may point out connections with sculpture-related artefacts from the period (contract drawings and sculptural models) which are not associated with any known, extant contract.

In addition to the sciences and auxiliary sciences listed above, which are commonly called upon to assist art historical source criticism, I also deemed it important to include the results from two other disciplines. One is archaeometric research, which assists source research by providing scientific results about the places of origin (e. g. quarries) where the raw materials for the commissioned sculptures were obtained, about the properties that ensue from the composition of the raw materials, and – closely connected with this latter – about the workability of the raw materials; the other discipline – which goes hand in hand with the preceding one – is restoration, which yields information about the techniques employed to produce the works referred to in the contracts, as well as the works' later history, how they were subsequently altered or restored, and about their components, which may be original or later supplements.

### **Thesis structure**

Following the introduction (chapter I) and a brief history of research into the subject (chapter II), the thesis begins with a presentation of the forms and contents of the “contract” as a type of source document (chapter III). The following chapter (chapter IV) is broken down into groups of sculpture contracts, categorised according to the different raw materials (marble/stone,

bronze, terracotta, wood), and examines the contents and various stipulations of the contracts from procuring raw materials to installing the completed work and paying the fee.

The thesis continues with an investigation of the role played by the various parties to the contracts and a discussion of the different forms of partnerships or joint commissions (chapter V). I then deal with the drawings and sculptural models produced to present to the commissioners (chapter VI). The subject of chapter VII concerns those parts of the contracts that refer to iconography, to the model to be followed and to “creative freedom”, while chapter VIII discusses the appraisal procedure of the commissioned works and the contemporary practice of determining appropriate fees. The thesis is accompanied by pictorial illustrations and an appendix comprising 24 documents, consisting of the texts of the most cited or most interesting documents, each preceded by a brief summary of its contents.

### **Main findings and conclusions**

It can be stated that sculpture contracts (in the period and location in question) never included fully comprehensive provisions about the commissioned work or about all of the tasks closely involved in producing the work. In addition to the usual compulsory details (names of the parties, date of issue, description of the commissioned work, raw material, dimensions, deadline, and the fee or valuation for completing the work), the set of additional stipulations or instructions included in any given contract from the time may vary on a case-by-case basis, depending on the particular commission. In the case of works commissioned by committees, further expectations may be set forth in additional rulings, but the absence of fundamental details concerning the visual appearance of the work, missing from the text of the contract, confirms the idea that spoken agreements would have had a similar legal bearing to those drawn up in writing.

The thesis offers insight into procurement practices and the locations and sometimes transportation routes of the various raw materials used for works of sculpture. It reveals that the task of obtaining the raw material was assigned either to the commissioner or to the sculptor, depending on the raw material itself, and that the high degree of organisation was due in part to the fact that in Florence, as a trading nation, it was natural to involve the leading merchants of the day and to utilise their commercial channels.

The thesis includes an array of examples to illustrate the different kinds of contract stipulations, which could pertain to raw materials (procurement, transportation route, colour, consistency, etc.), visual/aesthetic appearance, the execution of the work (number of people involved, sequence of execution), the determination of the fee (how many experts would be called in to estimate the value of the completed work), and even techniques and methods of production that presupposed a high level of expertise. The thesis presents examples to illustrate the fact that the option to use subcontractors – that is, to assign certain partial tasks to other masters – was not necessarily stipulated in sculpture contracts.

Before signing a contract, instead of the sculptor presenting a drawing or sculptural model of the work to the commissioner, the commissioner occasionally specified an existing work as a model that the sculptor was expected to follow, although the nature and extent of how the model was to be followed was often not elucidated upon in the text of the contract.

Certain stipulations did not necessarily originate only from the commissioner, and the same stipulation might have been included in one contract at the commissioner’s insistence, and in another contract at the sculptor’s request. Similarly, the same stipulation might have been included in one contract for technical reasons, and in another contract due to aesthetic intent.

The thesis demonstrates that – thanks to the well regulated industriousness of the notaries of the day – this period is rich in documentary sources; however,