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## Reassembled Art and History: The San Michele in Africisco (Ravenna)Mosaics

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REASSEMBLED ART AND HISTORY:  
THE SAN MICHELE IN AFRICISCO (RAVENNA) MOSAICS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Art History

by  
Carla Linville White  
B.A., College of William and Mary, 1989  
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In memory of Dr. Mark Zucker. For his inexhaustible wisdom, persistent motivation, and unflagging confidence.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Mosaic art gives the appearance of immutability and endurance. The materials and designs often echo or emphasize the architectural forms upon which they are fixed. Mosaics have an aura of permanence that is lacking in drawings, paintings, and frescoes. However, these same materials that present an appearance of solid form are mere fragments of stone or glass set into a base of concrete. As an art dependent on architecture, they are subject to the vicissitudes of time and weather.

In the nineteenth century, human intervention in the form of invasive and unenlightened restoration practices arguably halted the deterioration of important mosaics. The result, however, was often irreversible changes to the iconography of the images and to the period style of the original. This paper discusses the church of San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, highlighting its cultural importance as a sixth-century Byzantine monument. The recounting of its history, followed by two case studies of mosaics workshops in Venice, explain common restorations practices for buildings and their mosaics in the nineteenth century. At that time, foreign interests involved with political and social movements in Germany and England, recognized the crucial need for conservation of Byzantine heritage represented by mosaics and pressed for the establishment of more strenuous regulation and preservation.



## INTRODUCTION

The captivating art of mosaics has a long tradition going back to antiquity. Comprised of bits of colored stone set into mortar, mosaics embellished the walls and floors of buildings in early cultures, and still today, the arrangement of individual tesserae into a grand design continues to impress. While they may appear simple to define, mosaics are in fact a sophisticated art form distinguished by variations of materials and their application. Mosaics range from miniature pendants and other ornaments, to massive and complex projects embedded in floors and walls. The varieties of mosaic designs range from simple, repetitive motifs, to intricate geometric patterns, to full pictorial images. Materials used in the designs vary as well, from a variety of simple stones, to colored marbles obtained from remote sources, to specialized colored glass and gold tesserae. It is these characteristics of mosaics that make them a valuable field of study for a variety of disciplines from both the arts and the sciences.

As with most art, the restoration of mosaics can be controversial; it may neither relate to the artist or patron's original intention nor necessarily correspond to the authentic image. Even though they have been highly regarded for application in architectural decoration because of their semblance of permanence and continuity, over time mosaics have been subjected to problematic restoration practices ranging from replacement of a few tesserae to a complete reproduction passed off as an original.

Even though mosaics may appear enduring, they are subject to the vicissitudes of time. Environmental conditions have caused glass tesserae to change

in color or even mold depending on their chemical composition. The mortar-based substructure can disintegrate and fail. The structure for which mosaics were created may also be unstable, jeopardizing the arts' survival, particularly in earthquake-prone regions. As the building cracks, the foundation of the mosaic is often damaged. Many old mosaics show layers of dirt and soot from candles and lamps that cover the brilliance of the images. Moreover, enthusiastic religious pilgrims and even the average tourist have contributed to the destruction of mosaics when they remove loose tesserae to keep as small souvenirs. The necessity for restoration caused by these misfortunes might seem to be a minimally invasive process. However, renovations are sometimes easy to distinguish and can leave lasting changes. In the case of several well-known mosaics that will be discussed in this paper, restoration practices in nineteenth-century Venice were often so intrusive and extensive that entire sections were taken down and replaced; the original design was altered and the fragments were subsequently lost or sold to a growing circle of collectors.

While the changes made to the images were controversial, new methods of creating mosaics generated their own problems in the renovation process. The reverse or indirect method was at the time seen as innovative and less time and labor intensive compared with the traditional method of hand-setting individual tesserae in situ. In this system of production, the mosaic reproduction was produced in the artisans' workshops. The stone or glass tesserae were glued face down to cartoons painted as a mirror image of the finished design and, when the mosaic was complete, taken to the site for attachment in the intended location. The

technique did substantially speed up the construction of the mosaics; however, the new method provided a smooth and flat effect that was noticeable when installed side-by-side with hand-set tesserae. Furthermore, there were technical problems that occurred when attempting to set perfectly the irregularly shaped sections into wet mortar exactly in the original position. Thus, artists found it more expedient and cheaper to replace entire sections of a work than to make smaller changes.

As controversial as the “renovations” made to the mosaics are, the activities of two of the best-known mosaic restorers in the nineteenth century are even more so. Giovanni Moro worked in the basilica of San Marco, Venice, starting in 1822, and was the lead mosaicist at the time of his dismissal in 1858.<sup>1</sup> In addition to renovations within the basilica, he also obtained contracts for work in Torcello, on the mosaics in Santa Maria Assunta. Moro’s notorious reputation, however, stemmed from his controversial restorations of the apse mosaics from San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna. Three years after Moro’s trial and subsequent dismissal from San Marco, Antonio Salviati, established a glass and mosaic company in Murano. Through his business and political connections he also received contracts to perform renovations to the mosaics in San Marco and Santa Maria Assunta. The two case studies presented here discuss the renovations, decades apart, executed in the workshops of these men. Special attention will be given to how they were perceived in their lifetimes and how that perception continues today.

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<sup>1</sup> Pietro Saccardo, “Modern Arrangements and Works” *The Basilica of Saint Mark in Venice: Illustrated from the Points of View of Art and History*, ed. By Camillo Boito (Venice, Ongania, 1880-1888): 708.

## CHAPTER 1: SAN MICHELE IN AFRICISCO AND THE CULTURAL IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH IN SIXTH-CENTURY RAVENNA

San Michele in Africisco deserves our attention as an important example of mosaic renovation and reconstruction because of its fifteen centuries of history. While very little of the original building survives, this church was constructed simultaneously with other notable churches during a particularly prosperous phase in Ravenna's history. This context creates an interesting opportunity to examine the contrasting approaches to mosaic preservation over the span of time.

San Michele was dedicated in 545 CE as a votive church in honor of the Archangel Michael, shortly after the plague of the Justinianic era swept through the Mediterranean, decimating the population.<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of "in Africisco" in the name of the church is intriguing, since it has triggered debates as to whether its name references the healing shrines of St. Michael in Phrygia, or merely to Africa itself, similar to *Caput Africae* near Rome.<sup>3</sup> In the mid-ninth century, the church historian of Ravenna, Agnellus, wrote that the basilica of St. Michael was built in the neighborhood of *Al Frigiselo*.<sup>4</sup> It seems likely that the appellation comes either from

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<sup>2</sup> The archangel Michael was revered not only as a warrior, but also as an intercessor for healing. Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton: University Press, 2007), 16-17. In 541, during the rule of the Emperor Justinian, there was an outbreak of the bubonic plague decimating the populations of cities and towns throughout the empire. People living in port towns, such as Ravenna and Classe were particularly susceptible to contracting the disease, which was transmitted by rats from ships.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 250; Massimiliano David, *Eternal Ravenna: From the Etruscans to the Venetians* (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book, SpA, 2013), 190.

<sup>4</sup> (Andreas) Agnellus of Ravenna, *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, trans. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 190-191.

a flawed interpretation of Agnellus's text or an error in pronunciation exacerbated over time by the diminishing importance of the city and its neighborhoods.

A drawing of the excavated site reveals a slightly distorted basilican plan (Figure 1). According to Peter Grossmann, the imperfect right angles in the exterior walls imply that this was a hastily built structure, in comparison to the complex geometrical precision of other churches dating to the same time period. These churches are, specifically, San Vitale (c. 526-547) and Sant'Apollinare in Classe (consecrated 549).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, instead of imported marble columns crowned by

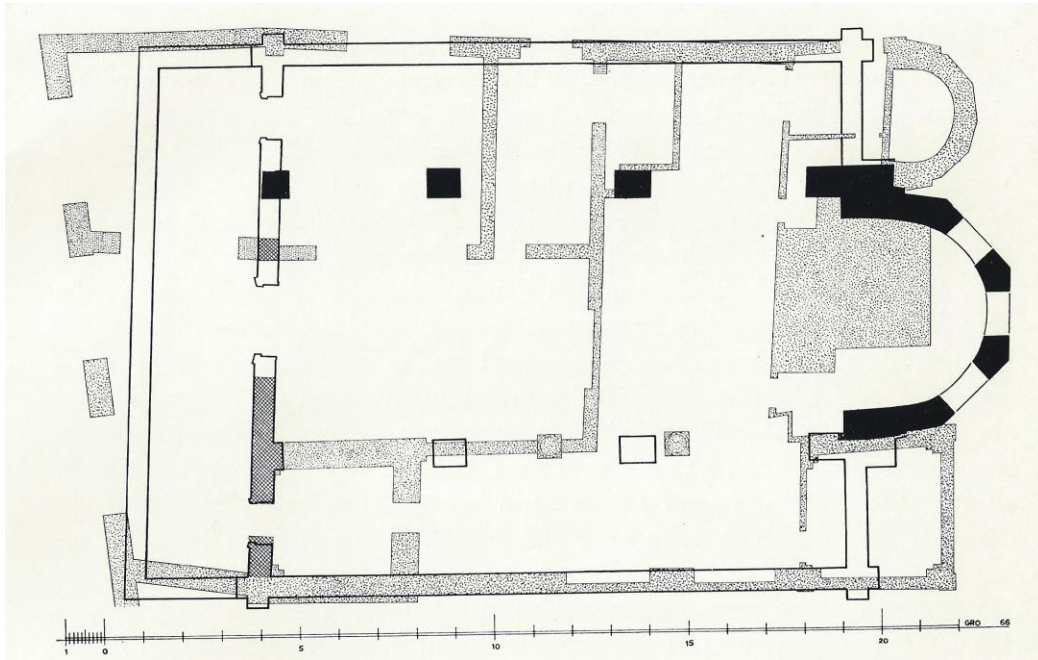


Figure 1: San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, Plan, Peter Grossmann. Black lines represent the existing apse and three masonry piers. The stippled areas are the excavated footings from 545 CE and the outline walls show the footprint of the mercantile building at the time of excavation. Peter Grossmann, *S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna. Baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen*. (Mainz: von Zabern, 1973), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Grossmann, *S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna* (Baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen: Mainz. von Zabern, 1973), 12. Grossmann does not provide a legend identifying the crosshatched lines on the plan from his excavation of San Michele.

intricately carved capitals, as was the more common practice, San Michele had aisles with triple arches supported by thick brick masonry piers, of which portions on the left aisle remain in situ. According to Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, San Michele is unique in that it is the only known basilica in Italy built with masonry piers instead of columns. Although some scholars have made a case that similar piers were used concurrently in Syrian basilicas, it has been generally agreed upon that this was merely a quick and easy solution in order to speed the construction of this church.<sup>6</sup>

While these examples point out significant contrasts between this church and the more costly and methodical building standards of the other churches mentioned, San Michele in Africisco did share other common aspects with these concurrently built churches. Bricks, such as the ones used to create the piers in the aisles of San Michele, were readily accessible due to the surge of activity created by these large-scale construction sites in the city. Even though some Roman-era bricks were repurposed in new construction, over time fewer were available and the local manufacture of bricks became a necessity. A Ravennate-style of bricks, referred to as “Julian bricks” has been identified in the churches built in this period.<sup>7</sup> These were distinctly flatter and broader than the old Roman bricks. Julian bricks are found in the original structure of San Michele and have been understood as further evidence of the date of the church’s construction and its important position in the history of the city (Figures 2-5).

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<sup>6</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 251.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 220.



Figure 2: San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, Exterior of apse with one of three windows. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014)



Figure 3: San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, Exterior of apse at ceiling. Note the placement of the bricks in a dogtooth pattern. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014)





Figure 4: San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, Exterior of apse. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014)



Figure 5: San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, Exterior east wall of church. Note Roman brick below level of the current building, and Julian brick above ground level. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014)



Scholars have argued that this was a deliberate departure in design signifying a contemporary aesthetic, as seen from outside the building, one that both broke away from ancient Roman traditions and contextualized the new Byzantine-inspired use of mosaics and sculpture inside the church.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the construction deficiencies, San Michele was an important site within the community as evidenced by its elaborate fittings. The National Museum in Ravenna houses a marble panel from the sanctuary barrier from San Michele that is intricately carved in an open interlaced fretwork design (Figure 6). The central cross is surrounded by floral and aviary motifs, some of which maintain their gold embellishment.<sup>9</sup> The contrast between the rough construction of the church and its finely crafted and expensive decoration makes this church unique amongst others in the region.

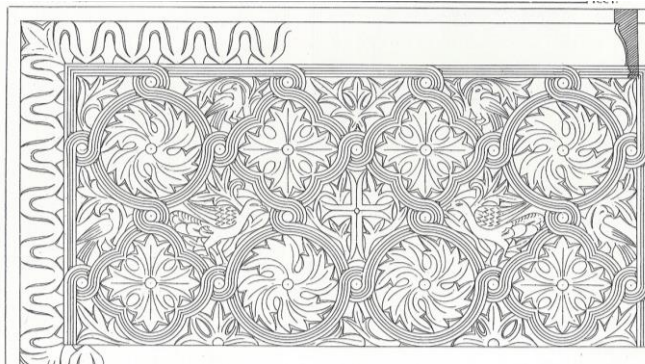


Figure 6: Sanctuary Barrier, San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna. Arne Dehli, *The Treasury of Byzantine Ornament: 225 Motifs from St. Marks and Ravenna* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), 92.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 220; Nora Lombardini, "Sul comportamento strutturale di murature in lazterizio in uso nel VI secolo. L'esempio di San Michele in Africisco." *San Michele in Africisco e l'età giustiniana a Ravenna: atti Convegno "La diaspora dell'archangelo, San Michele in Africisco e l'età giustiniana": Giornate di studio in memoria do Giuseppe Bovini, Ravenna, Sala dei mosaici, 21-22 aprile 2005*, ed. Claudio Spadoni (Milan: Silvana, 2007), 253-282.

<sup>9</sup> Massimiliano, *Eternal Ravenna*, 191.

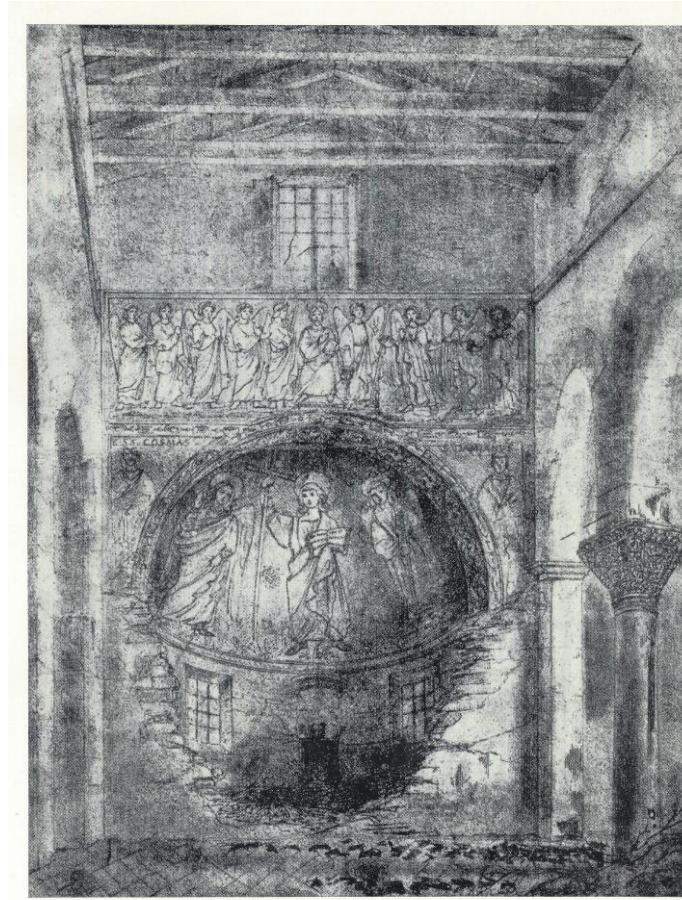
An excavation of the site in 1930 uncovered part of a large decorative floor mosaic in the left aisle near the apse. It is made of terra cotta, marble, and limestone set in a simple geometric pattern that is similar to others found in Ravenna and helps to establish a date in the sixth century for the construction of the church.<sup>10</sup>

More importantly for the discussion here, the apse and triumphal arch of San Michele were embellished with imagery in mosaic. These were expensive both in terms of the value of the materials and the requirement for specialized, highly skilled artisans and laborers. Both labor and material were of necessity imported to Ravenna from distant regions. The existence of these mosaics puts San Michele on the same level of importance as the other churches from the same period, such as San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe. Black and white drawings of the apse by Ciampini (Figure 7) and Minutoli (Figure 8), made when the mosaics remained in situ, give indications of the original design, now lost from the church building.



Figure 7: San Michele in Africisco, Giovanni Ciampini, Engraving, 1690. Peter Grossmann, S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna. Baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen. (Mainz: von Zabern, 1973), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 251.



3 Inneres der Kirche S. Michele in Africisco, 1842. Zeichnung von A. v. Minutoli

Figure 8: San Michele in Africisco, Alexander von Minutoli, Pen and ink, 1842. Peter Grossmann, S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna. Baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen. (Mainz: von Zabern, 1973), 13.

In the apse, the drawings depict a representation of a young, beardless Christ, with a cruciform halo. His right arm is outstretched and he brandishes a large gold cross, while he grasps firmly a jewel-encrusted cross. In his left hand, he holds an open book with the legible Latin inscription, “Qui vidit me vidit et patrum: ego et pater unum sumus.”<sup>11</sup> The fusion of these two verses from the Gospels (John 14:9 and 10:30) made an explicitly Orthodox and anti-Arian statement above the altar, the most visible and holy location in the church. Flanking Christ are winged Archangels, Michael, on Christ’s right, and Gabriel, on Christ’s left. In the Ciampini

<sup>11</sup> “Whoever has seen me has also seen the Father: I and the Father are one.”

drawing, the Archangels are identified by inscription above their heads. Each holds a staff in their left hand and makes a sign of acclimation with their right hand. The Archangels stand with Christ against a solid gold background in a narrow landscape of the flower-strewn fields of paradise. The early Christian medicinal saints also identified by inscription as SS. Cosmas and Damian were depicted in the spandrels of the arch framing the apse.<sup>12</sup>

On the wall above the apse, a bearded Christ is seated on a throne, again holding an open book in his left hand and giving a sign of acclamation or blessing with his right hand. This second representation, placed above the younger image of Christ in the apse, further signifies that this is an Orthodox church by illustrating the belief in the divinity of Christ and his association with God the Father. Here also, Christ is flanked by two archangels, with the addition of seven angels sounding trumpets, four angels on his right, and three on his left. The number of angels and the archangels surrounding the enthroned Christ is a significant reference to the Apocalypse described in the Book of Revelation.<sup>13</sup> The iconography of these angels

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<sup>12</sup> Jillian Harrold, *Saintly Doctors: The Early Iconography of SS. Cosmas and Damian in Italy* (MA thesis, Coventry, UK: University of Warwick, 2007), 32. Cosmas and Damian are legendary saints associated with medical healing. Importantly for the church of San Michele, the Byzantine emperor, Justinian, venerated these particular saints. Falling gravely ill, he went to the church of Kosmidon in Constantinople and “laying down at the far end of the bay, the saints appeared to him in a vision and healed him.”

<sup>13</sup> In Revelation 8:3-4, an angel with a gold censer is identified. In Revelation 9:13-15, “the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God...and the four angels...were released to kill a third of mankind.” (Bible, New International Version, NIV 2011 Biblica, Inc.) The seventh angel represented on the arch in San Michele depicts Revelation 11: 15-19 announcement of the Final Judgment. (“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and loud voices in heaven...And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and earthquake and a severe hailstorm.”

is particularly important given this location. San Michele was built as a votive church after the virulent plague that wiped out a large percentage of the local population. Certainly the death of a large number of people over the short two-year span of time would have motivated the patrons to build this sanctuary in gratitude for their survival and the reference to the Apocalypse makes clear the patrons' intent.

Using the drawings of San Michele in Africisco by Ciampini and Minutoli, comparisons can be drawn to intact apse mosaics in Ravenna.<sup>14</sup> At San Vitale, a similarly youthful Christ is found in the center of the apse, holding a scroll closed with the seven seals of the Apocalypse in his left hand, and extending his right arm in a gesture comparable to the one in San Michele (Figure 9).<sup>15</sup> However, in this imperial church, he grasps a jeweled crown instead of the cross. The figures are set against a gold background with red and blue clouds above their heads. Christ is flanked by two unidentified archangels with staffs held in the crooks of their arms as seen in the Ciampini engraving (Figure 7), but unlike at San Michele, they appear to interact with Christ as intercessors for the two figures included within the apse,

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<sup>14</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 237. Similar to San Michele, the building of San Vitale was not always well maintained and underwent periods of neglect. The mosaics have been restored numerous times and scholars assume that the medieval and Renaissance restorations were replacements of damaged sections.

<sup>15</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 237. Two different sixth-century styles have been identified in San Vitale. While it has been discussed that the more naturalistic backgrounds and figures were used for Old Testament subjects, and the formal poses with gold backgrounds were used for Christian imagery, it is more likely that they were completed at two different times. The first dated to 545 CE, the same year San Michele was consecrated, included the apse. Therefore the symbolism of the Apocalypse would have been relevant in both churches.





Figure 9: San Vitale, Ravenna, Apse Mosaic. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014)

identified as the patron saint of the church, San Vitale and the builder of the church, Bishop Ecclesius. Christ is enthroned atop a blue orb and beneath the orb the Four Rivers of Paradise flow out over the rocks. While this arrangement of Christ flanked by Archangels is similar in both churches, the smaller width of the apse at San Michele has the effect of relegating the saints Cosmas and Damian to the haunches of the apse, while in San Vitale, whether because of the larger size or importance of the patron saint and the bishop of the church, they are contained within the apsidal recess next to Christ as part of a heavenly court. This echoes the mosaics of the imperial courts of Justinian and Theodora to the right and left of the apse in San Vitale.

At Sant'Apollinare in Classe, the apsidal imagery diverges from these mosaic programs but comparisons made be seen. The imagery is strikingly original and

promotes more complex liturgical themes. As in San Michele and San Vitale, the lush garden of paradise is portrayed, including abundant flowering white lilies, red roses, and fanciful trees. However, here paradise is also populated by sheep, birds, and the patron saint of the church, Saint Apollinaris (Figure 10). Instead, of the central image of the young Christ, seen in the previous two churches, in Sant'Apollinare in



Figure 10: Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Apse Mosaic. Photo by Author. (June 2013)

Classe, a medallion with a large jeweled cross and a small image of a bearded Christ in the center dominates the middle of the apse. The medallion is set in a scene that is half landscape and half gold sky. Above the cross, the hand of God points down from the sky, which is filled with clouds similar in style to those seen in San Vitale. Instead of Archangels, there are two half figures. On the left there is a young and beardless Moses, who is labeled MOYSES, and, on the right, an older bearded Elijah,

who is identified as HbELYAS.<sup>16</sup> They gesture toward the cross in a similar manner as the Archangels in the apse at San Michele. The Archangels Michael and Gabriel are also found in Sant'Apollinare in Classe but they are not located in the apse next to Christ.

Similarities among these three churches may not be readily apparent in their diverse original designs and current states, but there are common attributes associated with these three churches that can be identified. The fact that their construction was within years of each other would have meant that they shared a common supply of materials, artisans, and labor. More importantly, these churches also benefited from a common patron, Julian *argentarius* (the banker).<sup>17</sup> The recorded information available about his life comes primarily from remarks in Angellus's *Liber Pontificalis*, Julian was certainly a person of substantial importance in sixth-century Ravenna.<sup>18</sup> In recent literature, scholars have seen him as a savvy but not entirely honorable individual who profited as a political agent to the Emperor Justinian prior to the Gothic Wars.<sup>19</sup> Julian assisted the Eastern emperor against the pro-Arian government in Ravenna by financing the Orthodox churches of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe.<sup>20</sup> It is likely that he had influence beyond merely providing funding. Some scholars speculate his efforts extended even to the

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<sup>16</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 267.

<sup>17</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 199-200.

<sup>18</sup> Angellus, *The Book of Pontiffs*, 54, 171-172, 177, 190-191, 231.

<sup>19</sup> S. J. B. Barnish, "The Wealth of Iulius Argentarius: Late Antique Banking and the Mediterranean Economy," *Byzantion* 55 (1983): 26-28.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas S. Brown. "La Chiesa di Ravenna durante il Regno di Giustiniano". *Corso di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantine*, 30 (1983): 39-46.



point of acting as an architect for the construction of these churches.<sup>21</sup> His importance in Ravenna's history is so pervasive that it has long been believed that the figure seen between Emperor Justinian and Bishop Maximianus is a portrait of Julian *argentarius* in the Justinian panel in San Vitale (Figure 11).<sup>22</sup> Further evidence of his role in the construction of San Vitale is the inclusion of his monogram on two impost blocks there (Figures 12-13).<sup>23</sup>



Figure 11: Julian *argentarius* with Emperor Justinian and Bishop Maximianus, San Vitale, Ravenna, Mosaic. Photo by Author (Jan. 2014)

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<sup>21</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 200.

<sup>22</sup> Otto von Simson, *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 5-6. More recently, scholars have argued that the persons in the Justinian and Theodora panels are members of the royal court or Byzantine generals. Irina Andreescu-Treadgold and Warren Treadgold, "Procopius and the Imperial Panels of S. Vitale" *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997), 721. Unfortunately, because only Maximianus is identified by name in the mosaic panel, other members of Justinian's retinue remain anonymous.

<sup>23</sup> Otto von Simson, *Sacred Fortress*, 6.



Figure 12: San Vitale, Ravenna, Capital and Base of Upper Order of Chancel with Monogram. Photo by author.



Figure 13: Monogram of Julian *argentarius*. Peter Grossman, *S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna*, 11.

The mid-sixth century was a period when money flowed abundantly through the economy of Ravenna, but whether Julian *argentarius* used his position as a banker for political ambitions is unknown. Trade through this important port created wealth for many individuals as raw materials and luxury goods poured in from the East. Also imported were innovative ideas in architecture and decoration,

as evidenced by the design of San Vitale and the embellishment of the interior spaces of churches with mosaics. Certainly, while Julian *argentarius* profited from this flow of money and ideas, some recognize the mysterious banker as a generous private citizen.<sup>24</sup> Agnellus speaks of Julian “sanctae recordationis memoriae” or “of blessed memory” as the patron of San Vitale.<sup>25</sup> Julian was politically well connected with the Orthodox bishops and left a lasting mark on the map of the city through his patronage of their churches, so much so that archaeologists have assigned his name to the unique style of bricks manufactured in Ravenna and used in the construction of these churches, i.e. “Julian” bricks (Figures 14-15).<sup>26</sup>



Figure 14: San Vitale, Ravenna, Exterior of apsidal wall with dogtooth pattern. Note similar dogtooth pattern as seen on the exterior of San Michele apse. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014)

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<sup>24</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 200.

<sup>25</sup> Agnellus, *The Book of the Pontiffs*, 172.

<sup>26</sup> Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 220.





Figure 15: San Vitale, Ravenna, Exterior of apsidal wall, “Julian” bricks. Photo by author. (Jan 2014)

As stated earlier, Julian *argentarius* was responsible for the patronage of several churches in Ravenna, including the small church of San Michele in Africisco. However, this church appears to have been built for the general population and was not commissioned by an imperial or ecclesiastical entity. Agnellus, writing of a dedicatory inscription in the vault of the apse states:

Having obtained the beneficences of Archangel Michael, Bacauda and Julian have made from the foundations and dedicated (this church) on May 7, the fourth year after the consulship of Basilius the younger *vir clarissimus* consul, in the eighth indiction (the year 545).<sup>27</sup>

Less is known about the second patron of San Michele known as Bacauda. The only specific information we have about him comes from Agnellus, who states

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<sup>27</sup> Agnellus, *The Book of the Pontiffs*, 191.

that Bacauda was married to Julian's daughter and that he is buried in a stone sarcophagus not far from the church of San Michele in the Tower of Bacauda.<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of the sparse records that relate its early history, the church of San Michele in Africisco was a valuable part of the sixth-century community of Ravenna. The financing of its construction by an important member of society and the inclusion of lavish interior mosaics in an otherwise modest basilica place San Michele in Africisco in a position of significance relative to the momental churches of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe. San Michele in Africisco was a preeminent building constructed at the pinnacle of Ravenna's political and cultural significance.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 191.

## CHAPTER 2: CASE STUDY ONE: GIOVANNI MORO (C. 1850-1874) THE MOSAICIST'S ROLE IN RENOVATION VERSUS REPRODUCTION OF MOSAICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The convoluted history of the mosaics from the church of San Michele in Africisco has led to extensive scholarly investigation and ensuing controversy for nearly two centuries. The church's location in the vicinity of eight buildings in Ravenna and Classe designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites has allowed the rare understanding of this church by comparison with nearby intact sixth-century structures. However, the fate of San Michele and its original mosaics, even lacking the similarly imposing physical presence of the other sites, is both intriguing and important. It is ironic that the church dedicated by its patrons to commemorate the survivors of a virulent plague has been lost. In addition to poor oversight of historic preservation for the building, the mosaics taken from the site have further focused the debate on nineteenth-century conservation practices.

San Michele in Africisco was in continuous use as a church for more than twelve hundred years. It was deconsecrated in 1805, as a result of Napoleon's acquisition of the region from the Papal States, brought about by the Treaty of Tolentino. In 1812, the building was sold to a merchant, Andrea Cicognani, for a mere 80 scudi, and the left side aisle was turned into stands for a fish market.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, in 1820, another merchant, Giuseppe Buffa, purchased the building. In addition to maintaining the aisles as a fish market, he made alterations to the area

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<sup>29</sup> Although it is difficult to determine the exact value of 80 scudi today, it can be accepted that the building was sold for such little value due to the condition of the structure and the economics of the city at that period. Agnellus reported that Julian *argentarius* gave the immense sum of 26,000 gold *solidi* for the construction of San Vitale in the mid-sixth century. The cost of construction of San Michele is not known. Agnellus, *The Book of the Pontiffs*, 172.

in front of the apse for storage. These changes had the unintentional, but beneficial, effect of protecting the mosaics that were still attached to the domed wall of the old apse. Because of its location close to the mercantile city center, later incarnations of the building included use as a bakery and a grocery.<sup>30</sup> Today, the only remnants of the San Michele in Africisco building are the apse and portions of the three left-aisle piers. Today these architectural elements serve as backdrops for clothing and mannequins inside an upscale boutique (Figures 16-17).



Figure 16: Site of San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna, Today as a women's apparel store. Note: Fifteenth-century tower. Photo by author (Jan. 2014).

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Grossmann, *S. Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna*. 48.



Figure 17: San Michele in Africisco, Interior of women's apparel store with apse in background. Photo by author (Jan. 2014).

Even after the building was initially adapted for commercial use, the apse mosaics remained in situ as the drawings by Giovanni Battista Cipriani from 1699 (Figure 7) and Alexander von Minutoli of 1842 (Figure 8) demonstrate. Minutoli's image moreover gives proof of the poor state of the building in the nineteenth century. It was during his visit in 1842 to Ravenna, that Minutoli, a Prussian scholar of Byzantine art, discovered that the owner was willing to sell the mosaics of this once-venerable church. Minutoli contacted representatives of Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia and was able to negotiate the purchase of the mosaics.<sup>31</sup>

The contract for the mosaics of San Michele was not the first instance in which Wilhelm obtained entire cycles from antiquated churches. In 1835, while still

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<sup>31</sup> Oskar Wulff, Das Ravennatische Mosaik von S. Michele in Africisco im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum. *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1904), 377.



crown prince, Wilhelm purchased the apse mosaics from the church of San Cipriano, located on the Venetian island of Murano, and had them removed to Germany. The San Cipriano mosaics eventually became the centerpiece of the decoration for the new Protestant imperial church, the Friedenskirche, built in Potsdam (Figures 18-19).<sup>32</sup> In addition to appealing to the Kaiser's taste for Italian and Byzantine art, the connection to Italian and thereby Roman art and history also made a statement about his desire to reform the German Protestant church by emphasizing earlier liturgy and architecture. According to Gerd H. Zuchold, "The king's church was supposed to symbolize the state's very essence. While the Murano (San Cipriano) mosaic itself evoked Friedrich Wilhelm's notion of his own ordination through the grace of God."<sup>33</sup>



Figure 18: Friedenskirche, Potsdam, Apse Mosaics from San Cipriano, Murano.  
Commons.wikimedi.org.

<sup>32</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered: The Byzantine Revival in Europe and America*, (London: Phaidon Press, 2006): 25.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in: J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 24.

Although they are an important illustration of Kaiser Wilhelm's artistic and political interest in Byzantine art, the San Cipriano mosaics had only the appearance of Byzantine-period mosaics. They date to the twelfth century, when Italy was no longer in Byzantine hands. The verifiable sixth-century mosaics from San Michele in Africisco were better suited for Wilhelm's purposes. These came from a site in Ravenna, thus providing a more authentic connection of Prussia to the Roman and Byzantine Empires.



Figure 19: Friedenskirche, Potsdam, Apse Mosaics from San Cipriano, Murano.  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/hen-magonza/4203758210/>

The contract for the purchase of the San Michele mosaics was brokered between 1842 and 1843 for the amount of 200 scudi, the same price Buffo had paid

for the entire building years before.<sup>34</sup> At the time, the consent to remove the mosaics, like all ecclesiastic art in Italy, had to be authorized by the Vatican. After receiving permission from Pope Gregory XVI, the mosaics were removed. However, the sale was not without dissension. Alessandro Cappi, the secretary of the Accademia di Belle Arti di Ravenna, opposed the purchase, citing the loss of these significant cultural artifacts even in their decrepit state.<sup>35</sup> In December 1844, the mosaics were detached and the fragments were sent to the Venetian art dealer Francesco Pajaro, who then gave the commission to restore the mosaics to a local artist, Liborio Salandri. The fragments of the mosaic never made it to Salandri's workshop, but remained at Pajaro's Venetian residence in the Campo Sanudo, which was heavily damaged during a bombing raid in the Austrian siege of 1849. This resulted in further degradation to the fragile and unstable mosaics. After the untimely death of Salandri, the restoration work was entrusted to Giovanni Moro. At the time, Moro was the head mosaicist working in the Basilica of San Marco and was given the contract for the restoration and subsequent preparation of the San Michele mosaics for transportation of the San Michele mosaics to a new location in Berlin.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, "I Mosaici Antichi e Quelli Ottocenteschi di San Michele in Africisco: lo Studio Filologico," in *San Michele in Africisco e l'età giustiniana a Ravenna: atti del convegno "La diaspora dell'archangelo: San Michele in Africisco e l'età giustiniana"*; *giornate di studio in memoria di Giuseppe Bovini; Ravenna, Sala dei Mosaici, 21-22 aprile 2005*, ed. Claudio Spadoni and Linda Kniffitz, (Milan: Cinisello Balsamo, 2007), 124.

<sup>35</sup> Oskar Wulff, "Das Ravennatische Mosaik von S. Michele in Africisco", 378.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 383; Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, "I Mosaici Antichi e Quelli Ottocenteschi di San Michele in Africisco," 113-177; Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art," 277-281.

The terms of the contract, dated 30 September 1850, through which Moro received this commission, were for the substantial amount of five thousand Austrian lire, specified in the text as payment for “restoration” of the apse mosaics. The time allotted for fulfilling the contract and the delivery of the mosaics to Berlin was short. Only six months were given for the work to be completed, and fines of five hundred Austrian lire for each delay stipulated, even though there were no plans for the mosaic’s installation.<sup>37</sup> Moro was able to complete the work on time and delivered five cases of the finished materials to the Prussian Consulate. According to an unpublished letter, dated March 1851, which Moro included with the shipment, the mosaic cycle was in four cases, divided by numbered sections that were to be fitted into the new location. A drawing of the finished design, laying out the manner of its arrangement, was included. A fifth case held extra pieces of tesserae for use in mounting the mosaics. Such uses would include fitting the parts into their new location and seaming in the sections. According to his letter, Moro also included two mosaic fragments of faces originally from the sixth-century San Michele mosaics for comparison with the “restoration” he had made. Recent scholarship by Andreescu-Treadgold argues that this is an explicit statement by Moro about the mosaics he sent to Berlin. In essence, he was saying the mosaics he sent were, in fact, copies of the originals, and it seemed that he derived a certain amount of gratification in making a comparison between the two works.<sup>38</sup> Due in part to this letter and confirmed by modern technical and scientific testing of the tesserae and the

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<sup>37</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “I Mosaici Antichi e Quelli Ottocenteschi di San Michele in Africisco: lo Studio Filologico,” 115.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.



foundation for the mosaics, Andreescu-Treadgold has come to the conclusion that the mosaics in the Bode Museum are in their entirety reproductions by Giovanni Moro and that they do not represent restorations of the original apse mosaics from San Michele in Africisco (Figure 20).<sup>39</sup>



Figure 20: San Michele in Africisco, Apse Mosaics, Bode Museum, Berlin.  
Wikimedia.org.

Whatever the quality of Moro's craftsmanship, there were no plans in place for this large and complex exhibition. The crates holding the mosaics subsequently were placed in storage. On 2 January 1861, almost ten years after the arrival of the crates in Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm died, thus effectively ending any intention

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<sup>39</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Wall Mosaics in San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna Rediscovered," *Corsi di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina XXXVII* (1990): 39.

of installing the mosaics in a permanent display. The mosaics remained in crates and forgotten until 1875, when the Royal National Gallery in Berlin underwent reorganization. Even though the mosaics were intact, with detailed drawings for their placement, there was still no space for, or interest in, Byzantine art or the large mosaic apse.<sup>40</sup>

It was not until 1904, more than a century and a half after the mosaics were removed from Ravenna, reproduced in Venice, and shipped to Berlin, that they were brought to light and finally assembled. It is at this point that the controversy over the authenticity of the mosaics as sixth-century originals began between the director of the Berlin museum, Oskar Wulff and the Italian director-general of fine arts and antiquities, Corrado Ricci. In order to settle the debate, Renalto Bartoccini, an Italian archaeologist, went to inspect the mosaics and wrote back to Ricci that, “of the original mosaic, there is none that exists.”<sup>41</sup> During this visit to Berlin, Bartoccini met also with an Italian mosaic artist who had been present when the crates were opened. The artist said about the mosaics, “all of the trouble was combined in Venice...and the mosaic in Berlin arrived completely redone.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, Berlin, and Other Fake Mosaics.” *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*. Ed. by Charles Entwistle and Liz James, 271-290 (London: The British Museum, 2013): 280.

<sup>41</sup> “Del mosaico originale non esiste piu niente.” Andreescu-Treadgold, “I Mosaici Antichi e Quelli Ottocenteschi di San Michele in Africisco,” 117. Renalto Bartoccini (1893-1963) Over four years, he was the director of the office of excavation, monuments, and works of art in Ravenna. He was later superintendent of antiquities in various regions of Italy.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 117. “Tutto il guaio e stato combinato a Venezia...a Berlino e giunto un mosaico gia completamente rifatto.”

The sixth-century mosaic fragments sent by Moro in the crates with his renovated mosaics have unfortunately disappeared. However, other fragments originally from San Michele in Africisco have been identified. These have been examined with mosaic compositions of known dates that remain installed in their original sites or have been removed to museums. These comparisons are the foundation for the protracted debate of restoration and renovation practices in the nineteenth century.

In his book published in 1888, Pietro Saccardo gives insight into Moro's competence as an artist and his technical proficiency as a mosaicist. He wrote, "one (of the students apprenticed) was precisely Moro, who afterwards in 1832 entered the service of the Basilica (of San Marco, Venice) and continued to ill-treat its mosaics until 1858."<sup>43</sup> The author continues with an extensive list of mosaic renovations made by Giovanni Moro in San Marco and concludes with the statement: "We have pointed them out in order that if unworthy things are seen in San Marco, it may be known to whom they are to be imputed."<sup>44</sup>

One of the San Marco restorations he attributes to Moro was for the mosaics of the Apocalypse. At that time, it was common for restorers to contract local artists to make detailed tracings and create colored sketches while the mosaic was still in

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<sup>43</sup> Pietro Saccardo, "Modern Arrangements and Works" *The Basilica of Saint Mark in Venice: Illustrated from the Points of View of Art and History*, ed. By Camillo Boito (Venice, Ongania, 1880-1888): 707-708. Pietro Saccardo is a reliable source to comment on the mosaics of San Marco and Giovanni Moro's renovations. Saccardo was the "pronto" or head of San Marco from 1887-1902 and in addition to promoting a less drastic approach to restoration work of the mosaics in San Marco; he originated the idea of creating a museum in the church for the artifacts and relics in the treasury.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 708.

situ. The original mosaics were taken down as necessary but, depending on their condition, this quite often led to their complete destruction. Reproductions were produced based on the cartoons made from the artists' tracings and sketches. However, the work of the artists preparing the cartoons was seen as insignificant when compared to the skill of the mosaicists. Therefore, artists were commonly poorly paid and unskilled and not necessarily accurate in their rendition of the original mosaic. The resulting images were often poor substitutes and substantially altered the appearance of the finished restored mosaic. For example, the Apocalypse mosaics in San Marco had been created by the famous and celebrated mosaic artists Francesco and Valerio Zuccato based upon a drawing by Titan, a friend and colleague of the two brothers. In 1846, government authorities entrusted the preservation of the records, the creation of the cartoons, and the reassembly of these incomparable mosaics to Giovanni Moro. This decision proved to be an unfortunate one after Moro destroyed the Zuccato mosaics and apparently lost the original records, installing an inferior substitute in their place.<sup>45</sup>

Moro's competence was questioned in his own time and modern restoration practices have created even more doubts about his methods. Moro claimed to have invented the *a rovescio sua carta* method in which the tesserae were mounted face down onto a mirror image of the artist's cartoon.<sup>46</sup> This portion of the process could

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 708. Moro was required to remake the remake the mosaic of the Apocalypse twice, with the final result substantially departing from the Titian/Zuccato original.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 709. Giovanni Moro was not the only nineteenth-century mosaicist to make this claim. Antonio Salviati, who succeeded Moro at San Marco, called the process "prefabrication." Barr states that in fact that this technique was used in the Eastern Mediterranean and in North Africa to decorate mosques and palaces with tile decoration long before its "invention" by either Moro or Salviati. Sheldon Barr,



be executed in the mosaicist's workshop and the completed composition was then taken to the site and embedded in the prepared concrete surface. After the base was set, the paper cartoon was peeled off, revealing the finished mosaic. This method was seen as an innovation, allowing an accelerated means of mosaic production in the nineteenth century. However, the final result was smooth and lacked the stunning play of light achieved with the traditional method of hand setting individual tesserae into wet cement, a more time consuming and expensive process.<sup>47</sup> Analyses of restoration projects associated with Giovanni Moro have enabled experts to identify not only a style associated with his workshop, but a range of quality dependent upon the amount of time and care allotted for the restoration.<sup>48</sup>

Not only did the *a roviscio* technique substantially reduce the amount of time required to complete a commission, but this method also left Giovanni Moro with numerous mosaic fragments and tesserae removed from original sites. It was in part due to Moro's incompetent workmanship that he did not incorporate these original fragments into his finished product. Moro has been accused of lacking a general understanding of Byzantine design, which, combined with his incorporation of new materials, distorted the finished image, making the original fragments useless.<sup>49</sup> Tesserae in his renovations were not only new materials not used at the

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*Venetian Glass Mosaics: 1860-1917* (Woodbridge Suffolk: The Antique Collectors' Club, LTD., 2008): 12-13.

<sup>47</sup> Pietro Saccardo, "Modern Arrangements and Works," 209; Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics: 1860-1917*, 12-13.

<sup>48</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, Berlin, and Other Fake Mosaics," 278.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 280. Pietro Saccardo, "Modern Arrangements and Works," 708.

time of the original mosaic, but also they were cut larger, more regular, and not set with the same precision. Mosaic specialists claim that Moro had an identifiable style that enables recognition of his renovation work even without documentation.<sup>50</sup> Due to the profusion of inexpert renovations made in his workshop, made possible with the *a roviscio* technique, Andreescu-Treadgold calls Moro, “one of the most prolific restorers/fakers of his time-the 1840s and 50s.”<sup>51</sup> This interpretation of Giovanni Moro’s more nefarious business activities is augmented by the sordid history of the sixth-century fragments left in Moro’s workshop from the church of San Michele in Africisco.

One such fragment was purchased by the founder of London’s Victoria and Albert Museum’s Italian collection, John Charles Robinson, during a trip to Venice in 1856. It was a small mosaic, which was shown in the museum and labeled as a “fragment of an ancient wall mosaic, Roman” (Figure 21). Later investigation proved that the mosaic was actually a depiction of a young, beardless Christ from the apse in San Michele in Africisco.<sup>52</sup> The mosaic is made of gold and glass tesserae set in lime plaster and remains on display in the incongruous wood frame in which it was placed at the time of its extensive restoration. The cruciform halo behind Christ’s head was removed and replaced with inconsistent larger nineteenth-century gold glass tesserae. The nose and right eye have been “clumsily remade”

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<sup>50</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, Berlin, and Other Fake Mosaics,” 278.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>52</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “I Mosaici Antichi e Quelli Ottocenteschi di San Michele in Africisco: lo Studio Filologico,” 152. Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, Berlin, and Other Fake Mosaics,” 277.

and an inexpertly fashioned blue tunic and red mantle have replaced the royal purple of the original. However, Christ's flesh, hair and left eye were determined to be original sixth-century material.<sup>53</sup> A comparison of the images showing the sixth-century fragment from the Victoria and Albert Museum and Moro's reproduction in the Bode Museum highlights the differences between the two mosaics (Figures 21-22). While no records have been uncovered that document the transfer of this mosaic fragment, a connection between Robinson and Giovanni Moro has been postulated.<sup>54</sup>

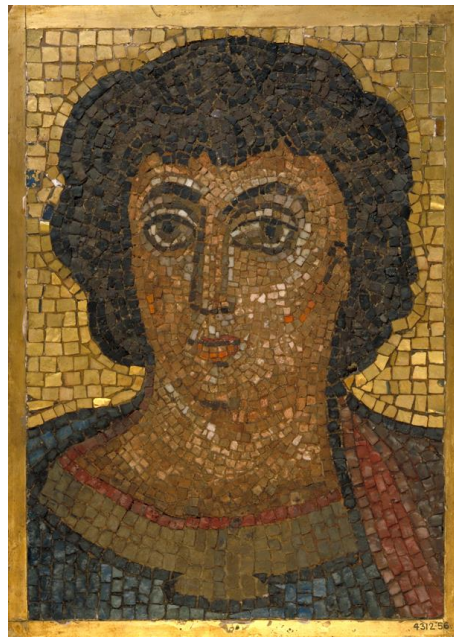


Figure 21: Bust of Christ, Mosaic Fragment, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.  
[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

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<sup>53</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, Berlin, and Other Fake Mosaics," 280.

<sup>54</sup> There was a prohibition for selling historically important works of art and removing them from Italy. Permission for the sale would have to have been granted through the Vatican for these fragments, as was required for the transfer of the mosaics from the merchant, Buffo, to Kaiser Wilhelm. While it may have appeared that these pieces had little value lying around the workshop, the fact that he made significant changes to the head of Christ would indicate that he received some compensation for his labors.

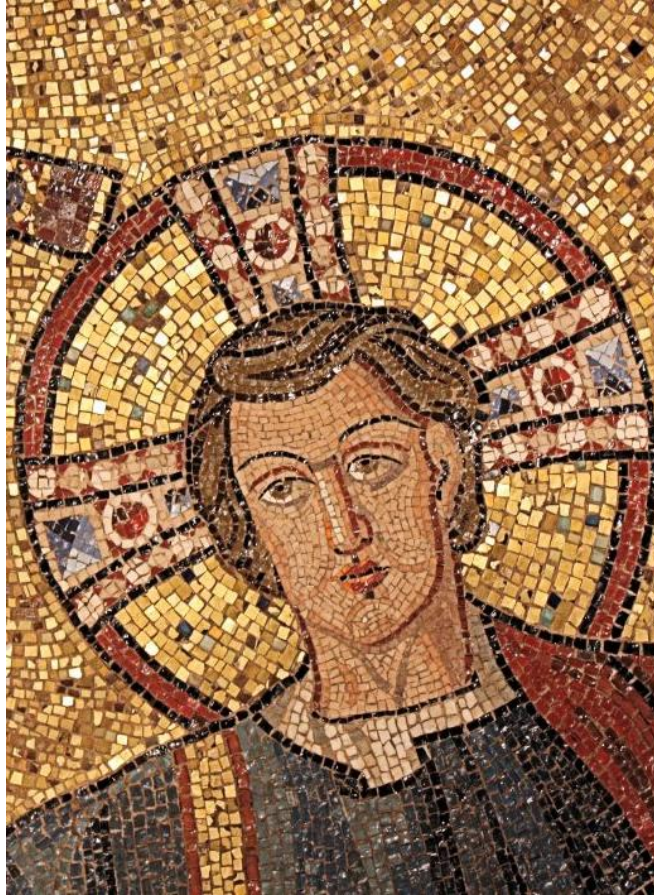


Figure 22: Bust of Christ Enlargement, Bode Museum, Berlin. Wikimedia.org

In 1858, following a lengthy trial over the practices of his mosaic workshop, Giovanni Moro was fired from his position as head mosaicist in the basilica of San Marco, Venice.<sup>55</sup> Information concerning Moro's trial, incarceration, and subsequent dismissal from his position at San Marco consists of hearsay and gossip that has been embellished over the centuries. The actual details had remained unknown until the recent discovery of the full file from the proceedings located in the Archivio di Stato in Venice.<sup>56</sup> Although the testimony of the entire proceedings has not been

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 280, 289, fn.34. Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics: 1860-1917*, 12. Pietro Saccardo, "Modern Arrangements and Works," 708.

<sup>56</sup> Andreescu-Treadgold, "The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, Berlin, and Other Fake Mosaics," 280, 289, fn

published, an important detail for the subject here was released about the events surrounding the trial. During the week Moro was imprisoned, a search was made of his home and workshop with the subsequent discovery of several fragments from original wall mosaics. One of these findings was an image of a face identified as having been removed from the church of San Michele in Africisco. Francesco Pajaro, who had given the commission of restoring these mosaics to Moro, was brought to testify. In written records, Pajaro was unable to say with certainty whether he believed that the substitution of the sixth-century mosaic with a new copy was because of Moro's incompetence in creating cartoons or a more sinister case of malfeasance.<sup>57</sup>

Mounting evidence against Moro comes from the discovery of another mosaic fragment in the Victoria and Albert Museum, referred to as the "colossal head," that has been identified as the head of Saint Catherine of Alexandria from San Marco (Figure 23).<sup>58</sup> John Charles Robinson also acquired this partial mosaic in Venice during the time when Giovanni Moro was the lead restorer for the mosaics in the basilica. The irregular surface of this fragment is an indication that it was not executed in the *a rovescio* style employed by Moro in the nineteenth century, but instead by the traditional hand-set method. This is partial proof for dating the fragment to the fourteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

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34. The contents of the full file of more than one thousand pages has not been published.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>58</sup> Marie-Therese Weech, "A Saint Unveiled," *Conservation Journal*, 11 (2006): 12.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 13.





Figure 23: Image of Saint Catherine of Alexandria from San Marco, Mosaic Fragment, Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Commons.wikimedia.org.

With Giovanni Moro's death in 1874, his heirs sold several mosaic fragments that remained in his workshop. Two of these came into the possession of Cesare Augusto Levi, an Italian archeologist and author, who was appointed as the first director of the Museo Provinciale di Torcella in 1887. In addition to purchasing the building that houses the museum, Levi expanded the collection with items from his own collection, including these mosaics. One is the fragment dating to the twelfth century of angel's face from the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (Figure

24).<sup>60</sup> This fragment, recovered from Moro's workshop, is not a recent discovery but has long been identified as an angel from the large and complex *Last Judgment* mosaic on the west wall of the church. Moro had been hired to perform restoration work on the mosaic in the basilica, as is confirmed by the discovery of a contract dated October 1848, which Moro fulfilled in 1853.<sup>61</sup> It is believed this fragment was taken from the left side of the top register because its size and style conforms to the appearance of the current mosaic. Moreover, this section is considered to be the



Figure 24: Image of Angel from Santa Maria Assunta, Mosaic Fragment, Torcello Museum. Photo by author. (Jan. 2014).

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<sup>60</sup> Otto Demus, "Studies among the Torcello Mosaics-II," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol 84, No. 491 (Feb., 1944): 42-43.

<sup>61</sup> Irena Andreescu-Tredgold, "Torcello. I. Le Christ Inconnu. II. Anastasis et Jugement Denier: Têtes Vraies, Têtes Fausses," *Dunbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol 26 (1972): 203,216-217.



face of an angel because the pose portrayed by the inclination of the head was one particularly used by Byzantine artists to denote an attitude of adoration or veneration.<sup>62</sup>

More importantly, the second fragment purchased from Moro's workshop for the Torcello museum has been identified as another sixth-century fragment from the Church of San Michele in Africisco, Ravenna (Figure 25).<sup>63</sup> According to the museum, this portion is part of the archangel who appeared to the left of Christ in the triumphal arch in San Michele.<sup>64</sup> Here was now an identifiable fragment from the mosaic Moro had been hired to restore for Kaiser Wilhelm that was not sent in

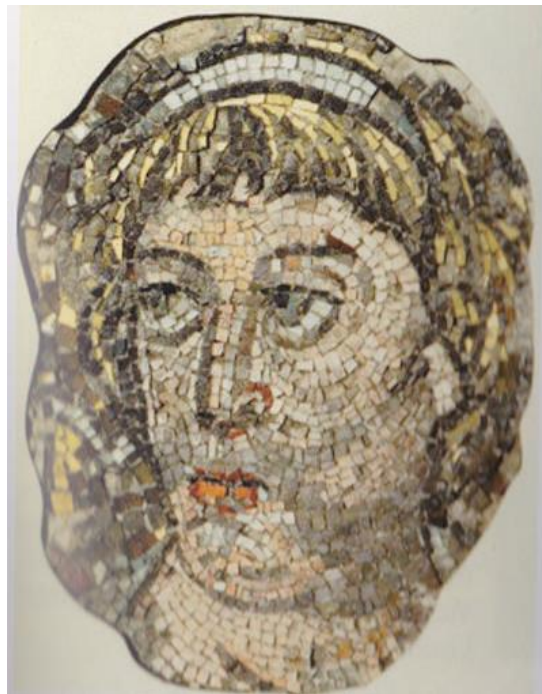


Figure 25: Image of Archangel from San Michele in Africisco, Mosaic Fragment, Torcello Museum, Sixth Century. Photo by author.

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<sup>62</sup> Otto Demus, "Studies among the Torcello Mosaics-II," 42.

<sup>63</sup> Funari, Nicola. *Provinzmuseum von Torcello: Abteilung für Archäologie, Abteilung für Mittelalter und Moderne*. (Venice: Provincia di Venezia, Assessorato alla Cultura e al Patrimonio Culturale Museale, 2009): 22.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

the crates to Berlin, but that had remained in the artist's workshop for twenty-four years. Moro must have placed some value on this partial mosaic because he stored it for so many years. He never restored or set it into a frame, as he did with the face of Christ from San Michele, displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Giovanni Moro's involvement in the restoration of the San Michele in Africisco mosaics illustrates the sordid history of nineteenth-century restoration practices. The interest in Byzantine history, enhanced by the exotic beauty and permanence of mosaics, created a market of collectors interested in owning these fragments. Whether original or reproductions, mosaics became popular trophies for display in churches, museums, and private collections distant from their site of origin.

### **CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY TWO: ANTONIO SALVIATI (1860-1890) THE ENTREPRENEUR'S AFFILIATION WITH MOSAIC PRODUCTION AND RENOVATION**

During the nineteenth century, driven by nationalistic feelings for the newly unified Italian kingdom, an interest in mosaic preservation created a surge in contracts for restoration projects in the Veneto region. Foreign investment and a growing interest in the area generated the necessary funds for restoration projects. Among the European elite there was a newfound enthusiasm for collecting mosaic artifacts. This development coincided with contracts for new mosaics, particularly from Germany and England. The European fascination with the Byzantine period aesthetics was romanticized and these beliefs were made visual in the monumental art of mosaics. Furthermore, this fascination accommodated the reactionary tendencies of the Arts and Crafts movement, which frowned upon contemporary taste in English church architecture that was Gothic in origin.<sup>65</sup>

While Giovanni Moro's trial and subsequent incarceration in 1858 ended his career at San Marco and forever ruined his reputation within the larger community of mosaic experts, a fortuitous combination of factors unlocked opportunities for other artists. John Ruskin, the wealthy English author and artist, had visited Venice in 1845, during a politically tumultuous period in the city's history. At that point Venice had been released from Napoleon's control and had been returned to Austria, thus becoming part of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. Ruskin was disheartened at finding that the city's architectural treasures, including San Marco, had not fared well during the occupation. Historic monuments were in disrepair or had been

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<sup>65</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 8-9.

transformed by attempts at “modernization,” such as the garish exterior appearance of the Doge’s Palace, which had been painted in Austria’s national colors of yellow and black.<sup>66</sup> Ruskin’s well-known first volume of *The Stones of Venice* in 1851 brought to the attention of his primarily English audiences, the need for proper restoration to protect the buildings of the city.

Ruskin’s books enhanced the awareness and appreciation of Byzantine architecture in Britain, where little information on the subject was available previously. In 1854, the Crystal Palace Exhibition changed the situation with the presentation of a Byzantine Court Pavilion. The result was more whimsical than accurate, as the Crimean War (1853-1856) prevented designers from actually journeying to Constantinople to create the display from first-hand investigation. The resulting design was more heavily influenced by German-Byzantine architecture. Added to the mix of styles used in the pavilion were impressions from San Marco in Venice and the mosaics of the churches in Ravenna.<sup>67</sup>

Other international exhibitions followed, many of which continued to include Byzantine inspired art, particularly mosaics which were valued for their exotic nature and perceived permanence. Mosaic art adorning English architectural settings became a type of fashionable decorative art under Queen Victoria. Her royal consort, Prince Albert, was a descendent of the duchy of Saxe-Coburg, in modern-day Bavaria, and at his death the Queen commissioned a mausoleum in his honor in the Royal Gardens at Frogmore. As a nod to Albert’s German heritage, the

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<sup>66</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 131-133.

building took a more Byzantine form, and the decision was made to adorn it with mosaics.<sup>68</sup>

The person best equipped to take advantage of the resurgent taste for mosaics was the head of the newly renamed Salviati Company, the Venetian entrepreneur Antonio Salviati. Originally trained and employed as a lawyer, Salviati rebuilt glass and mosaic workshops in Venice in order to strengthen the economy of the struggling city at the end of the Austrian occupation. A visit to the Vatican, where he observed mosaic production firsthand, convinced him to return to Venice to revive the artform historically associated with the city. Fortuitously, Salviati collaborated with the glassmaker Lorenzo Radi, who made groundbreaking innovations in the creation of colored glass and in specialized gold tesserae, laying the groundwork for the inventive and creative success of the company.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, Salviati's business and personal connections in Italy and abroad brought attention to the fledgling endeavor.<sup>70</sup>

Gradually, thanks to his company's participation in popular competitive exhibitions throughout Europe, Salviati gained an international reputation. The mosaic decoration of the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore became Salviati's first large installation.<sup>71</sup> The designs showed Byzantine influences, and invite a comparison with the mosaics in the mausoleum and the churches in Ravenna. The ceiling of the mausoleum has a blue field with circular designs reminiscent of the ceiling in Galla Placidia. The designs on the walls of the mausoleum were populated by angels, each

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>69</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics: 1860-1917*, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 10-15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

holding a palm frond in one hand and a wreath of flowers in the other. The angels, along with stylized palm trees in the mosaic plan, have prompted a comparison with the mosaics located in the dome of the Arian Baptistery (Figures 26-27).<sup>72</sup> Salviati and his collaborators would have been familiar with the mosaics in Ravenna and could have derived inspiration from the sixth-century images to create designs that for his nineteenth-century patrons appeared “Byzantine.”



Figure 26: Ceiling mosaics in the Arian Baptistery, Ravenna, Fifth Century. Photo by author

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 16-18; J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 142-143.





Figure 27: Angel and Palm Tree, Mosaic from the Portico of the Royal Mausoleum, Frogmore, 1862. Workshop of Antonio Salviati. [Salviatimosaics.blogspot.com](http://Salviatimosaics.blogspot.com)

Satisfying the demands for recreated Byzantine-style mosaics across Europe and especially in Britain, Salviati played no role in the controversial restoration practices mentioned above. Nonetheless, the Salviati Glass Company was indeed contracted to continue restoration of the mosaics of San Marco, Venice. Pietro Saccardo wrote in 1888 that this endeavor was financed by foreign interest with “the support of certain English capitalists...of name and no slight influence.”<sup>73</sup> The contract was for work on the vaulting and pavement within the basilica and paid 12,000 lire in fifteen annual installments. However it required his company to work

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<sup>73</sup> Pietro Saccardo, 712.

with the disgraced mosaicist, Giovanni Moro, and to obtain from him the tracings and materials from the original mosaics of the *Apocalypse* of San Marco.<sup>74</sup> There is no record whether this last task was accomplished, but according to Saccardo, when Moro was fired from his position at San Marco, he “carried all of his material away and refused to give it up unless he were reinstated.”<sup>75</sup> The Salviati Company contract was cancelled before the term ended, after thirteen years of work in San Marco. Saccardo stated that the execution of the restoration by Salviati on the by now much maligned mosaic of the *Apocalypse* created a finished product that was “inferior and covered in corrections.”<sup>76</sup>

One reason for the mediocre reconstruction of the *Apocalypse* mosaic in San Marco may have been the loss of the cartoons, drawings, and materials by Moro.<sup>77</sup> Another contributing factor, resulting in the second-rate translation of the cartoons, was Salviati’s alterations with his technique of mosaic production. While Moro claimed to have invented the *a rovescio sua carta* method, discussed previously in this paper, Antonio Salviati likewise maintained that he invented this same technique, which he termed “prefabrication,” to produce mosaics.<sup>78</sup> For Salviati, this method made it possible to create large-scale mosaic designs in a short period of time, while being able to work from the location of his factory on the Venetian island of Murano. There he benefited from its proximity to a constant flow of materials and

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 712.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 710.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 713.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 708.

<sup>78</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics: 1860-1917*, 12-13. According to Barr, this innovation by Salviati was corroborated by Salviati’s son, Carlos, and by the renowned English archaeologist, Sir Austin Henry Layard. The last was influential in securing sizable commissions for Salviati in Egypt and England.

the accessibility of his own glass artisans who could provide the consistent quality and variation of colors needed to create the complex images his clients desired. His method was praised as a modern-day innovation over the traditional means of working on-site setting tesserae individually. According to the London Journal *Athenaeum*, dated July 1866, only the design of the cartoons for the mosaic need be prepared by a “competent draughtsman” and the “act of placing the tesserae entrusted to females, for whom little training suffices.”<sup>79</sup> The result, similar to that created by Moro’s method, was a perfectly flat surface, but in both cases it differed from traditional hand-set mosaic tesserae intentionally positioned at angles to reflect light. This appreciation for the light effects on the uneven surfaces produced by older mosaics was not recognized or appreciated by nineteenth century mosaicists.<sup>80</sup> While they were regarded as an art form, the production of mosaics had been reduced to a process that would now conform to manufacturing ideals in the wake of the industrial revolution. This process, praised for being modern and efficient, had the added benefit for Salviati of being a means of providing fragments for an evolving collectors’ market in Europe, particularly in Britain.

In addition to replacing Giovanni Moro as lead restorer of the mosaics in the Basilica of San Marco, Salviati also received a contract, dated 1871-72, to restore of the Last Judgment mosaic in Santa Maria Assunta on the nearby island of Torcello (Figure 28). According to Andreescu-Treadgold, the restoration by the Salviati

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<sup>79</sup> “Art Gossip” *The Athenaeum: The Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts*, 2020 (London: W. Leaver, July 14, 1866): 89.

<sup>80</sup> This accounts for the horizontal and vertical lines within the overall design and the regular outline of the angels and the palm trees See Figure 23.



Figure 28: *Last Judgment*, Mosaic, Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello. Wikimedia.com.

group significantly and permanently altered the mosaic of the Last Judgment on the west wall of the basilica.<sup>81</sup> In her recent article about these and other “fake mosaics,” Andreescu-Treadgold wrote,

Twenty years after the Moro episode, a final havoc was wrecked upon the most ‘inhabited’ register of the Last Judgment, the third, which displayed 19 main figures-the central Deesis group and 12 apostles- and 28 angels behind them, *ready to be mined for their heads*. During the massacre carried out over these few years, the order of the heads of the apostles was changed forever on the wall, so that later many a scholar has been put to shame in the process of explaining some very unorthodox iconography for the 12 apostles at Torcello.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *The Last Judgment* mosaics in Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello are regrettably the same ones that in 1848, Giovanni Moro had been hired to renovate resulting in the detachment of original fragments discovered later in Moro’s workshop.

<sup>82</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Apse in the Bode Museum, and Other Fake Mosaics,” 281. (Italics are mine)

It appears from later investigations of the mosaics in Torcello that the actions by Salviati largely surpassed the problems created in the restoration work begun by Giovanni Moro in the 1850s. Only a small percentage of these fragments have been recovered, possibly because, as evidenced by the Giovanni Moro trial, the sale of these fragments was necessarily clandestine. There are only rare reports of these exchanges, and most mention the fragments as, either having been given to collectors in the hope of securing a new commission or sold for very little money.<sup>83</sup> For example, in 1869, Salviati donated a mosaic fragment he had removed during restoration work from the Pentecost Dome in San Marco, depicting the face of the Virgin, to the South Kensington Museum, London.<sup>84</sup> An even more unsettling story involves the mosaic fragment depicting an angel's head, currently held in the Musée du Louvre (Figure 29). It has been identified having been removed from its location within the larger Torcello mosaic that was restored during the period associated with the Salviati team. With a lack of written records, this fragment, known as the Cluny or Louvre head, is believed to have been taken from Venice in the 1870s, apparently under suspicious circumstances. It ended up in the hands of French author Édouard Gerspach, who later donated the fragment to the Louvre.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 282. Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 12. The South Kensington Museum is now the Victoria and Albert Museum and also houses two mosaic fragments associated with Giovanni Moro, the faces of St. Catherine from San Marco and Christ from San Michele in Africisco.

<sup>85</sup> Otto Demus, "Studies among the Torcello Mosaics," 43. When Demus wrote this article in 1944, the Cluny Angel had a notation "Art byzantine, Venise. XIIème siècle. Provt. De l'église Sta. Maria de Torcello. Don Gerspach 1892."



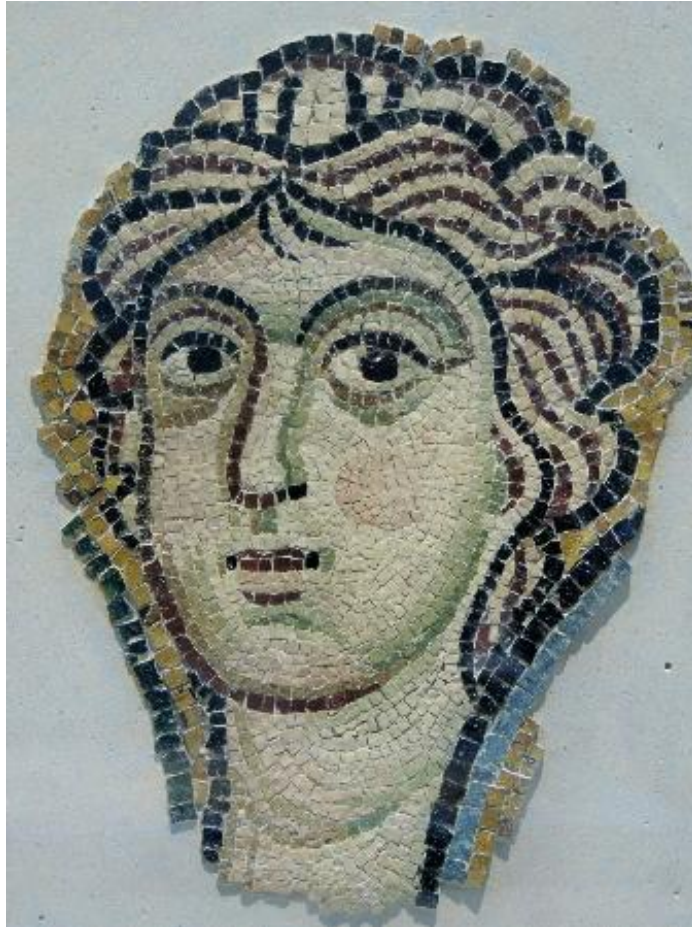


Figure 29: Fragment of Angel from Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello, Musée du Louvre. [Tripadvisor.co.uk](https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk).

One of the most interesting discoveries from the *Last Judgment* mosaic in Santa Maria Assunta is the fragment of an apostle's face from an original eleventh-century mosaic (Figure 30). It attracted the notice of the art community after the Byzantine specialist Robin Cormack identified this partial mosaic before the piece was put up for auction in July 1987.<sup>86</sup> The owner of the mosaic was the church of St. Anne of Talygarn, Wales. The patron of the church, archaeologist and engineer George Thomas Clark, had placed this fragment in the church he had rebuilt in 1889 near his home in Wales as a memorial to his wife, Ann. Records show that Clark

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<sup>86</sup> Rita Reif, "Auctions," *The New York Times*, July 24, 1987.



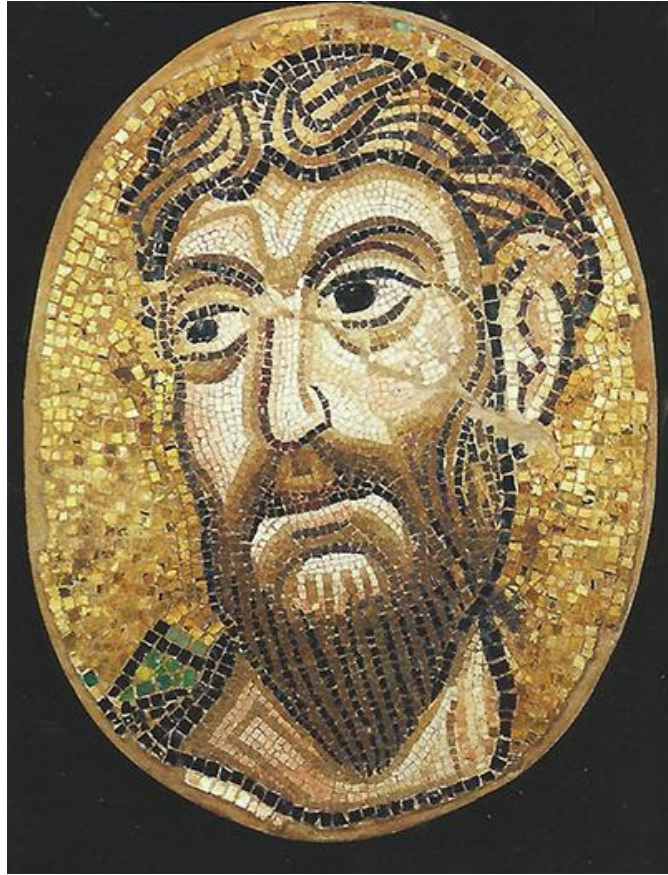


Figure 30: Image of Apostle from Santa Maria Assunta, Mosaic Fragment, Private Collection, New York. Wikimedia.com.

went to Venice shortly after his wife's death in 1885 and had already at the time plans to renovate the Talygarn church in her memory. This project included the purchase of several pieces of art that were to be placed in the church. While Cormack believed the mosaic from Torcello was one of these purchases, research of Clark's records, conducted at the time of the mosaic's sale has proved inconclusive on these results.<sup>87</sup> Also inconclusive is the identification of the saint represented in the mosaic, with opinion being that it is either St. Bartholomew or St. James the

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<sup>87</sup> Robin Cormack, "Viewing the Mosaics of the Monasteries of Hosios Loukas, Daphni and the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello," *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*. Ed. by Charles Entwistle and Liz James,. (London: The British Museum, 2013) 250-251.

Greater, given the iconography of the mosaics in situ.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, it can be definitively established by both visual comparison with other mosaic fragments and scientific analysis of the tesserae and base materials that this mosaic from Talygarn was an eleventh-century original fragment obtained from the *Last Judgment* mosaic from Santa Maria Assunta.<sup>89</sup>

When the Talygarn mosaic was discovered, Cormack suggested that the removal of the piece was the work of “the unscrupulous” and “notoriously corrupt restorer, Giovanni Moro.”<sup>90</sup> Further investigation and discussion has led to the identification of the later date from the 1870s for its removal.<sup>91</sup> Cormack’s confusion is justified. Both Moro and Salviati had worked on restoration projects for the mosaics in Santa Maria Assunta. The method of restoration, Moro’s *a rovescio* and Salviati’s “prefabrication,” displayed a similar result with a flat surface treatment and only a vague understanding of eleventh-century visual representation for both phases. Further, the name of Giovanni Moro was still by the later part of the nineteenth century equated with unethical practice in mosaic restoration.<sup>92</sup> However, the section of the mosaics that included the apostles was in the larger portion of the Santa Maria Assunta mosaics subjected to “restoration” under the supervision of Antonio Salviati and not in the section that was restored by Giovanni Moro.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 251, fn 38.

<sup>90</sup> Robin Cormack, “Viewing the Mosaics,” fn 39.

<sup>91</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan,” 281.

<sup>92</sup> Pietro Saccardo, “Modern Arrangements and Works,” 708.

<sup>93</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan,” 281.

It has been suggested that while contracts for the restoration of mosaics in the nineteenth century allowed for the artists to remove damaged portions of mosaics and replace them with new duplications, Moro used his “position beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior.”<sup>94</sup> Yet somehow, while Moro was tried and imprisoned for possession of “extraneous” mosaic fragments left over from his renovation efforts, Salviati was never implicated in mosaic theft. This is interesting in light of recent discoveries that expose the fact that Salviati had also removed fragments during renovations of older mosaics, had replaced them with inferior copies, and had either sold or donated the originals to collectors and museums. Only a small number of the fragments that are believed to be missing from original sites have been discovered, such as those removed by Salviati from the “most ‘inhabited’ register in Santa Maria Assunta” with nineteen main figures and twenty-eight angels.<sup>95</sup>

In examining documents reporting Salviati’s many achievements, his reputation as a highly regarded entrepreneur was sustained and enhanced by contemporary authors. One such author was Vincinzo Zanetti, the founder and editor of the bi-monthly Venice journal, *La Voce di Murano*, which chronicled the lives and accomplishments of local glassmakers and designers. Although few copies exist today, the journal was considered influential in regard to early years of Venetian glass production in the nineteenth century, even if the editor was considered to be highly biased.<sup>96</sup> This partiality of opinion towards Salviati held

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., fn. 40. Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 9.

<sup>95</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “The Christ Head at the Metropolitan,” 281.

<sup>96</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 10, 29.

true not only in his home region but also outside of Italy. In the 1863 edition of *The Art Journal*, the author reporting on the International Exhibition in London said that Salviati alone had “restored the old process [of mosaic production] to the full vigor and has also engrafted upon them a series of most important inventions of his own.”<sup>97</sup> In addition to unqualified praise, this statement was also a contemporary acknowledgement of the technical and decorative advantages of “prefabrication” that were supposedly “invented” by the artist. The article goes on to stress that there was a timeline of great mosaic artists extending from Egypt, to the Byzantium epoch, which culminated with the work of Salviati.<sup>98</sup> While many authors and publications extolled Salviati and his art, praising his accomplishments in the grandiose and flowery language of the period, others in private were not so complimentary saying that Salviati was “self-aggrandizing and unscrupulous.”<sup>99</sup> Whatever was said then, history now shows us Salviati was much the same as Moro in using his “restorations” to pirate fragments, which he then sold for his own gain.

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<sup>97</sup> James S. Virtue, “Salviati’s Venetian Mosaics,” *The Art Journal* Vol 1 (London: James S. Virtue, 1863): 8.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>99</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 10.

#### **CHAPTER 4: GERMAN AND ENGLISH INTEREST IN BYZANTINE ARTIFACTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE MOTIVATION FOR MODERN MOSAIC RESTORATION PRACTICES**

A number of factors motivated the renewed interest in Byzantine art in the nineteenth century. Moved by the sentiment of Romanticism, artists turned to the Middle Ages for inspiration. Architects were searching for new ideas beyond the interest in the Gothic style of pointed arches and stained glass windows. What they found came from local history; in Germany, churches built by Charlemagne and his successors, and in England, Saxon and Norman architecture. In both areas, historic buildings from these periods that were neither Roman nor Gothic were sometimes termed as “Byzantine” by early nineteenth-century architects.<sup>100</sup> The Crimean War (1853-56) made travel to Constantinople and other eastern Byzantine cities difficult. Sites in Italy, such as San Marco and the churches in Ravenna became the standard for Byzantine architecture in the minds of Western European artists and architects.<sup>101</sup> This led to great confusion over what was characteristically Byzantine.

Political and cultural leaders assimilated this style in order to make a statement of national unity or religious reform. The sovereign rulers in Prussia looked to Byzantium, because it was considered the earliest and most “pure” form of Christianity dating to Constantine.<sup>102</sup> Imperial churches built in the nineteenth century, such as the Friedenskirche were embellished with archaic Byzantine style mosaics that made this connection. New mosaic installations were commissioned

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<sup>100</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

in Germany that combined this expression of early Christianity with dynastic and national history. The nave of the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin contains mosaics that depict scenes from the life of Wilhelm I and the history of the Hohenzollern dynasty with neo-Byzantine images of Christ, angels, as well as peacocks and vegetation representing paradise (Figures 31-32).<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the style of art and architecture chosen in Germany provided a way of defining the present in terms of the past. The mosaics in the Gedächtniskirche, were not the only example of monumental mosaic installations by Prussian sovereigns in the nineteenth



Figure 31: Emperor Wilhelm I with Queen Luise of Prussia and her entourage, Mosaic, Gedächtniskirche, Berlin. Wikicommons.org.

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<sup>103</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 113.



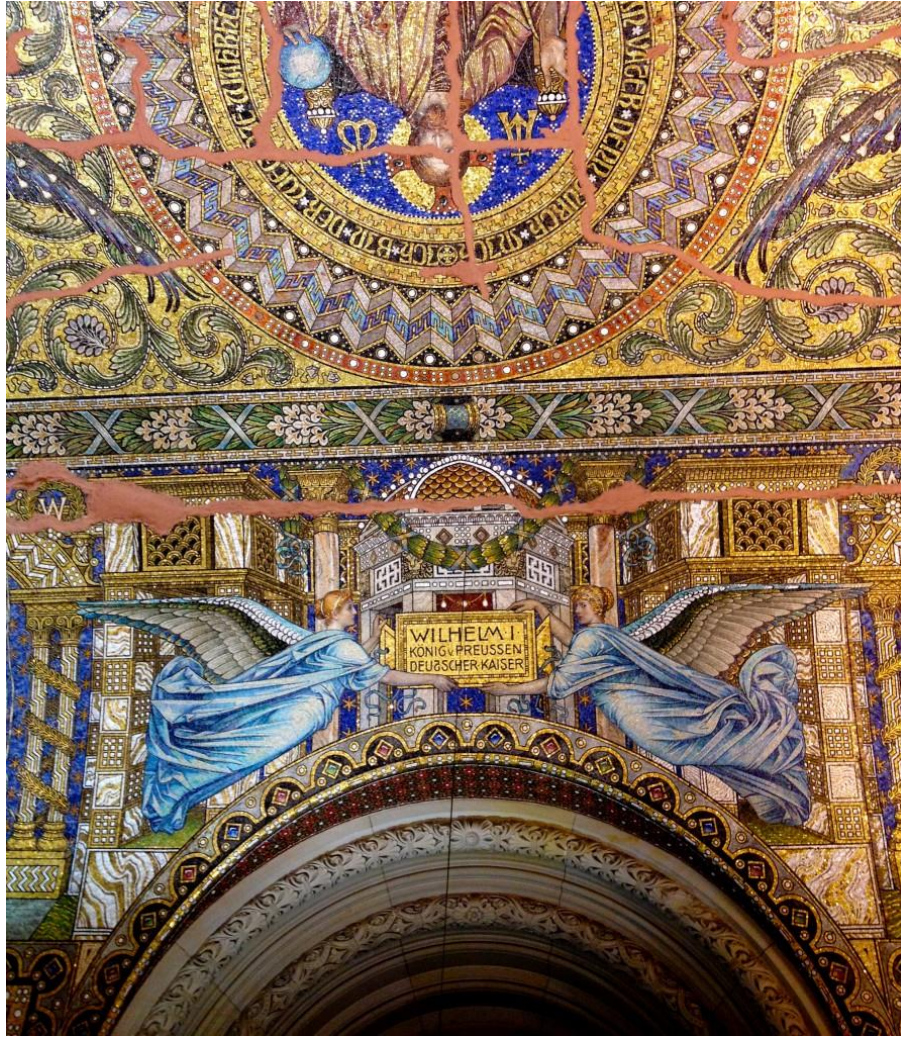


Figure 32: Medallion with image of Christ, Mosaic, Gedächtniskirche, Berlin.  
 Bolg.sofitet-Berlin-kurfurstendamm.com. Photo by Marie J. Bennet.

century. Antonio Salviati's firm, The Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company, designed and produced the mosaics for the drum inside the columned tempietto of the victory column, the Siegessäule.<sup>104</sup> It took two years, from 1874-1875, to manufacture the mosaics in Venice and set them into place on the monumental eight hundred square foot drum in Berlin. The allegorical and lifelike portraits are not religious but instead commemorate the defeat of Napoleon and the unification of the

<sup>104</sup> Sheldon Barr, *Venetian Glass Mosaics*, 50-54.



German Empire (Figure 33). In the Siegessäule, the depiction of the figures was more realistic than Byzantine imagery, but the extensive application of gold tesserae for the background clearly expressed a desire by the royal patrons for a connection to earlier mosaic tradition.



Figure 33: Image of allegorical figure of Germania receiving the crown of the Empire, Detail of Mosaic, Siegessäule, Berlin. Wikimedia.com

In Britain, the use of Byzantine elements, including mosaics, in church design was a striking illustration of religious renewal. The decoration of St. Paul's Cathedral in London was one of the largest mosaic projects of the nineteenth century and Salviati's company was commissioned to produce its first mosaics. In 1836, the mosaics depicting Isaiah and Jeremiah were installed in the spandrels below the dome and were followed soon by mosaics of St. Michael and later St. John (Figures 34-35). Unlike Salviati's other commissions, the mosaics were based on



Figure 34: The four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Mosaic, Saint Paul's Cathedral, London. [salviatimosaics.blogspot.com](http://salviatimosaics.blogspot.com).



Figure35: Matthew, Based on a design by G.F. Watts, Mosaic, Saint Paul's Cathedral, London, 1866. [salviatimosaics.blogspot.com](http://salviatimosaics.blogspot.com).

renderings provided by artists outside of his studio.<sup>105</sup> Vying opinion about the decoration of St. Paul's created a protracted conflict with theological, political and aesthetic concerns.<sup>106</sup> The architect of the cathedral, Christopher Wren, had left the interior undecorated but had suggested mosaics. Funding for the project came from an appeal based on nationalist sentiment.<sup>107</sup> The conflicts that arose in the 1860s were about the style that the mosaics should follow, with some church leaders supporting a "Renaissance" with a greater appearance of realism and one point perspective. Ultimately, a neo-Byzantine design, supported by Salviati, with a background of gold tesserae was designed and installed. It was decided that the Byzantine style was preferred because it was the ancient model and the church officials rejected the Renaissance style as being too closely associated with St. Peter's in Rome.

Furthermore, in the nineteenth century there were great shifts in society from which emerged an idealization of earlier societies and a desire to recreate a set of ancient values. On the continent, these shifts came in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Nationalist sentiment in Germany, a reaction to the end of Napoleonic occupation, stimulated the search for a style reflecting its history. The appeal of Gothic architecture had diminished due to its perception as a French phenomenon. The recovery of a medieval heritage became one of the cultural means employed to visualize German nationalism. An adherence to an abstract notion of "nation" became associated with an interest in preservation and

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<sup>105</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 146.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.



restoration.<sup>108</sup> Mosaics in churches and other public spaces became an important visual connection to this history, providing an art form that had a direct link with Byzantium. Additionally, the establishment of a national past linked with traditions, such as art, typified many nationalist movements in the nineteenth century.<sup>109</sup> These beliefs were embraced by Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, who came of age during Napoleonic occupation and the Liberation war. Wilhelm looked to Constantine and his establishment of a “new Rome” with the founding of Constantinople as a role model for rebuilding his empire after the period of foreign occupation. Like Constantine, Wilhelm desired to build a monarchical state dedicated to strong Christian values.<sup>110</sup> In legitimizing his rule of the Prussian state, Wilhelm looked to the example of the Holy Roman Empire and its holiest and most sacred traditions.

Architecture held a special interest for Wilhelm and became the most prominent symbol of his political and social goals. As a distinctly Byzantine art form, monumental mosaics were installed in new building projects, such as the Friedenskirche, Potsdam. Such mosaics exemplified these objectives and connected Prussia to the earlier empire. Because of the city’s civic identity with Constantinople, Venice served as a logical source for mosaics. According to David Barclay, the Friedenskirche apse mosaics, purchased from the church of San Cipriano, Murano, with the depiction of *Christos Pantocrator* or Christ in Judgment (Figure 19),

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<sup>108</sup> David Barclay, “Medievalism and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Germany.” *Studies in Medievalism: Medievalism in Europe, Vo. 5*, ed. Leslie J. Workman (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 6.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>110</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 24.

symbolized Wilhelm's "vision of the monarchy, the essence of the Prussian state and himself as *Primas* of German Protestantism."<sup>111</sup> Wilhelm sought to establish a Prussian monarchy exemplifying an age of religious commitment, national unity, and the development of a Christian-German identity.<sup>112</sup> His ideal government was formulated on historic German succession. His rule was meant to legitimize such succession and closely resembled the Holy Roman Empire more than a modern nation-state.

Nationalist sentiment driven by religious renewal also spurred interest in conservation and restoration in Britain. England had not experienced the radical change in society caused by war and occupation by foreign powers as had Germany. However, in Britain, a large portion of the population relocated from the countryside to the cities in the wake of the Industrial revolution.<sup>113</sup> As a consequence, by the 1850s, half the population in urban centers was cut off from its traditional roots.<sup>114</sup> This affected not only the poor, but also every stratum of the population. In response, the bucolic life of the countryside was idealized and nearly every medieval structure in the country was restored or altered in some way. The rural architecture most affected by this interest in preservation were Anglican churches, where conservation was associated with a desire for religious reform.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> David Barclay quoted in *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 25.

<sup>112</sup> David Barclay, *Medievalism and Nationalism*, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Heritage or Heresy: Preservation and Destruction of Religious Art and Architecture in Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 8.

<sup>114</sup> Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Heritage or Heresy*, 158.

<sup>115</sup> Chris Miele, "Conservation and the Enemies of Progress?," *From William Morris: Building Conservation and the Arts and Crafts Cult of Authenticity, 1877-1939*. Ed. Chris Miele (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 8.



This nostalgia for a simpler time envisioned by archaic architecture generated the publication of a profusion of articles and texts by architects, antiquarians, and historians. These books focused not only on British architecture but also commented on the conservation of important buildings in other cultures. It was during this period of time that John Ruskin wrote several of his well-known publications. An essay entitled *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was expanded to the three-volume text, *Stones of Venice*. In these works, Ruskin included his opinions on historic conservation, which were formed in part after visiting the basilica of San Marco and observing its condition after decades of “systematic and unrestrained” restoration.<sup>116</sup> His idea, radical for the time, was that the preservation of buildings should conserve every original detail. Ruskin declared:

“The single principle is that after any operation whatsoever necessary for the safety of the building, every external stone should be set back in its actual place; if any are added to strengthen the walls, the new stones, instead of being made to resemble the old ones, should be left blank of sculpture, and every one have its date of insertion engraved upon on it. The future antiquary would then still be able to study the history of architecture on the authentic building.”<sup>117</sup>

Further, Ruskin contended that Byzantine art and architecture was “masculine” in design because of its power that suggested mystery, majesty and, “undiminished awe.”<sup>118</sup> He extended this argument to include Byzantine mosaics, using San Marco as his prime example. Ruskin’s vivid descriptions of “small cupolas starred with gold and chequered with gloomy figures” filled with energy and motion, gave a different impression of Byzantine mosaics than those from other contemporary

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<sup>116</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 119.

<sup>117</sup> John Ruskin, as quoted in *Dynamic Splendor*, 31.

<sup>118</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 122.

accounts, which in Britain were often viewed as static and rigid.<sup>119</sup> Ruskin felt that the mosaics were not “barbarous,” as supporters of Gothic art purported, but rather authentically Christian.<sup>120</sup> Ruskin displays unconcealed derision of persons who held such views. He says of them that they “must be little capable of receiving a religious impression of any kind...who to this day, does not acknowledge some feeling of awe, as he looks up to the pale countenances and ghostly forms...or remains altogether untouched by the majesty of the colossal images?”<sup>121</sup>

It is due in large part to the popularity of Ruskin’s texts that the conservation of the basilica of San Marco became a *cause célèbre* with preservationists in Britain. However, Ruskin’s views belonged to a more purist tradition of conservation. To him, it was imperative to maintain the original appearance of the building and its mosaics without change. Ruskin felt that the nineteenth-century restoration work performed in San Marco was similar to iconoclasm, because it amounted to the deliberate destruction of the original art through the substitution of the reproduction.<sup>122</sup> His criticism was directed at the work, both in style and technique, produced by mosaicists such as Moro. His additional disapproval targeted the work of Salviati’s workshop in Britain. Ruskin stated that he regretted that the popularity of his books had inspired many imitations of Byzantine art that he felt were unsuited to English architecture.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>121</sup> John Ruskin, as quoted in *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 129.

<sup>122</sup> Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Heritage or Heresy*, 161.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 162.

In addition, members of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England were influenced by mosaics as an art form, but from a different perspective. As a leader in Arts and Crafts ideology, William Morris was crucial in promoting Byzantine art, placing it on equal footing with other historical styles. However, Morris's interest was focused on the social aspect of mosaic decoration. In the labor of the Byzantine artist he discerned a contrast to modern industrialized production methods, which separated the artist from the final product.<sup>124</sup> He idealized mosaic art and the guild workshops of the artisans, whose efforts he perceived as consistent with archaic methods, compared to the laborers in factories, who were separated from the end product of their efforts. The labor-intensive craftsmanship of mosaic production appealed to Morris, and he pointed out Byzantine art as illustration of his philosophy.<sup>125</sup> Mosaics required the time and labor of skillful artisans. However, there was a perception among members of the Arts and Crafts Movement, that as an art form, mosaics represent permanence because of their physical attachment to architecture. The idea of permanence can be traced back to eighteenth-century historians who believed that the value of a historic building was associated with its sheer age and the continuity of material over time. Morris felt that this patina created by age was important for both architecture and the fine arts and should be maintained. In his Manifesto, Morris was critical of then current restoration practices, in which "the partly-perished work of the ancient craftsman (was) made neat and smooth by the tricky hand of some unoriginal and thoughtless hack

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<sup>124</sup> J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 131.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

of today.”<sup>126</sup> William Morris, as a leader in the Arts and Crafts movement, believed that restoration practices should be centered on solid conservation methods that protected the original art and architecture instead of creating an idealized renovation.

The practice of art restoration has remained a controversial topic. Debates continue to arise concerning the value of returning a work of art to its original appearance, real or imagined, as well as the extent of the work that should be undertaken. But the complex nature of mosaics provides distinctive challenges for a wide range of reasons. While the initial visual impact of the mosaics discussed herein is one of solid, monumental, and two-dimensional works of art; contradictorily, the images are composed of thousands of glass and stone fragments. This dichotomy illustrates one of many challenges for the restorers who must focus on reestablishing the placement of these small, individual three-dimensional tesserae within a larger iconographic schema. As discussed before, a wide spectrum of materials was, and today is still, used in the production of mosaics ranging from marble and other stone, to ceramic tiles, and specialty glass. However, the ability to access or duplicate damaged or lost pieces becomes more difficult over time. Natural stone varies dramatically when quarried centuries apart, even if it is possible to identify the original site. Glass, as a man-made object, is not only difficult to precisely reproduce, but due to the chemical composition, its color may have been transformed by the temperature and moisture fluctuations within the architectural

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<sup>126</sup> William Morris, as quoted in “Morris and Conservation,” *From William Morris: Building Conservation and the Arts and Crafts Cult of Authenticity, 1877-1939*. Ed. Chris Miele (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 52.

space.<sup>127</sup> Alteration in color over time, degeneration of the material, even mold, makes both the restoration of existing, and the replacement of missing tesserae challenging.

Identification of original mosaic images and later restorations is accomplished by verification from written sources, when available, but more importantly, by close inspection on scaffolding. This visual examination of the materials, which involves identifying old or new tesserae, and looking out for irregular or uniform cuts, extends to scientific analysis. All of these contribute as critical elements of current mosaic restoration. It has been noted from the study of the mosaics in the church of San Vitale that most of the tesserae were of regular size and shape and were likely cut by workers at ground level. However, the artists on the scaffolding were more likely to cut specialty pieces made for highly detailed areas, such as faces.<sup>128</sup> The distribution of materials also varied with more valuable or exactly cut materials reserved for the most important images in the most significant sites.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, specialists consider mosaic restoration to include the plaster or concrete substructure, referred to as the setting bed. Variables of color and texture are recognized, which are dependent on the content of the material used at the time and the location of the production or restoration of the

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<sup>127</sup> Cesare Fiori, "Mosaic Tesserae from the Basilica of San Severo and Glass Production in Classe, Ravenna, Italy," *New Light On Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, 40.

<sup>128</sup> Cetty Muscolino, "The Observation and Conservation of Mosaic in Ravenna in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries" *New Light On Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, 43.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

mosaic.<sup>130</sup> Even the placement of the tesserae is examined in current restoration. Earlier work can be distinguished not only by the use of new tesserae, but also by the compact placement of the same, compared with the gaps and the poor fit often seen in restored sections.<sup>131</sup> Though mosaic art is most often viewed from a great distance, the artists of the fifth and sixth centuries were exceedingly concerned with precision and accuracy when setting the tesserae to an extent not understood or characterized by the work of later restorers.

Not only the methods, but also the attitude concerning restoration practices as discussed in the previous case studies, significantly altered, or in some cases even fabricated, the appearance of original mosaics. During the middle of the nineteenth century, restoration was defined as “returning a building to its original condition, which could entail remedying a false earlier restoration or repairing mutilated features of the building.”<sup>132</sup> This philosophy has led to the profound transformation of the images of mosaics already mentioned. The intervention work done by mosaicists such as Giovanni Moro and Antonio Salviati, which involved the removal of original mosaics and their replacement using a reverse copy method and new material, was common practice. Moreover, in 1860, a report created by the influential conservation organization, *Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia*, indicated concerns not for the loss of the original mosaics, but for whether the mosaicists had

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<sup>130</sup> Ann Terry and Henry Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufraius at Poreč*, 34-35.

<sup>131</sup> Cetty Muscolino, “The Observation and Conservation of Mosaic in Ravenna in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries,” 47.

<sup>132</sup> Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Heritage or Heresy*, 146.



gone far enough to rehabilitate the images.<sup>133</sup> The debate centered on whether perceived defects in earlier mosaics should be preserved or corrected to the then current standards of practice. The Accademia Commission endorsed two viewpoints that they deemed acceptable concerning recent mosaic restoration. One was to create a duplicate of the original mosaic with all of its positives and negatives. The other was to “remove in the new work all those characteristics that are not encompassed by the diversity of one or another style, but are essential defects in all styles, in all generations, for whatever time and region.”<sup>134</sup> As their example for this requirement, the commission pointed out the restoration work performed by Giovanni Moro on the angels in the top register in Santa Maria Assunta. They asserted that Moro should have corrected flaws in the original mosaic. They referenced specifically the Archangel seen on the right side, whose one shoulder is noticeably wider than the other shoulder. The commission stated in their report that a new copy should correct glaring defects, adding “one does not have a new work that has all the errors of the antique without having the merit of age.”<sup>135</sup>

Mosaic restoration in nineteenth-century Europe had significance beyond the need for conservation of the archaic art. Byzantine mosaics became symbols tied to political and theological ideologies during periods of political, religious, and social turmoil in Germany and England. The perception of Byzantine mosaics as

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<sup>133</sup> Irena Andreescu-Treadgold, “Torcello. I. Le Christ Inconnu. II. Anastasis et Jugement

Denier: Têtes Vraies, Têtes Fausses,” 212-213.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 213.

representations of higher ideals established a new category for collection of this art form. This impression had the effect of an expanded market for mosaic acquisitions from both public institutions, such as newly founded museums, and private collectors. While a market existed for reproductions designed in a fanciful neo-Byzantine style, original mosaic fragments originating from historically important sites, such as Venice and Ravenna, were highly prized. Individuals involved in mosaic restoration work, such as Giovanni Moro and Antonio Salviati, had direct access to these ancient works of art. Whether their intentions were nefarious or not, the mosaicists employed methods that, at the time, created a quantity of original fragments. Some of these pieces were sold, but others were given as inducements to garner contracts for restoring existing or producing new mosaics. The method of reverse image mosaic production, identified by the artists as either "*a rovescio sua carta*" or as "prefabrication," was an acceptable technique of restoration that later came under scrutiny. The controversy following Moro's trial and a new inclination, both inside Italy and abroad, for preservation of art in its authentic character halted work on San Marco in 1879.<sup>136</sup> Reformed practices for conservation of mosaics were instituted that overturned the previous practice of substituting large areas of fragile or missing mosaics with entirely new work.

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<sup>136</sup> Ann Terry and Henry Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrosius at Poreč* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 30.

## CONCLUSION

The history of the sixth century church of San Michele in Africisco presents an important example for understanding the methods and the cultural context base of restoration practices in the nineteenth century. Although there was an interval of twelve hundred years without written testimonies on the church, it can be assumed that the church continued to serve the Christian community of Ravenna. The interest lies in the foundation of San Michele as a comparatively small, but important, ecclesiastical building primarily endowed by the same patron associated with San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe. Although there are few records about this influential citizen, Julian *argentarius*, his connections with these particular churches, invites us to examine these important monuments. In the nineteenth century these churches' mosaics were not only perceived as beautiful and exotic, but they were also coveted for their political influence and capitalized upon as historical symbols visually linking the empires of Europe to the glory of Byzantium. The divergent directions taken for the maintenance and restoration of San Michele in contrast to that of its sibling churches, reflects the cultural and political understanding of mosaic art at that time.

Italy during this period was not a unified country, but broken into politically separate regions. The Veneto had been governed by Austria, Napoleon, and then Austria again. There was not a central authority of persons from the region for oversight of important cultural monuments, even as large as San Marco in Venice, much less a small building in provincial Ravenna that was in use as a fish market.

This allowed the historically significant mosaics from the apse of San Michele to be sold, removed and restored, and shipped to the Kaiser in Prussia.

The mosaics were further harmed when they were stored in “baskets” and fell victim to natural and man-made disasters in Venice preventing their ultimate repair. There is only speculation what their path may have been if the first artist hired for the contract had not died and the baskets turned over to the head mosaicist for San Marco, Giovanni Moro.

Here, the history of the San Michele in Africisco mosaics becomes obscure. Six years after they were removed from the building in Ravenna, Moro was given the contract to restore them with substantial payment if he completed the work within a six-month period. Even among his contemporaries, Moro’s reputation was not admirable. His restoration of mosaics in San Marco was criticized both on their artistic and technical merit. Moro proudly claimed to have invented the *a rovescio sua carta* method he used to restore mosaics, but this seems unlikely. It was certainly not the method in which he had been trained. Even though this new technique made the process faster and easier for the artist, the end product was a perfectly flat surface without the play of light found in traditional mosaics. When Giovanni Moro “restored” the San Michele mosaics, this method allowed him to fulfill the contract within the allotted timeframe and send the mosaics to Germany.

With no plans for the instillation of the San Michele mosaics upon their arrival in Berlin, the mosaics were stored in the museum’s basement and remained unopened in the crates sent by Moro. They were discovered there in 1875 during a reorganization of the museum and experts called in from Italy determined that they

were not, in fact, restorations of the original mosaics, but a complete substitution with no original tesserae from the sixth century. There was still no interest or space to display the large work and it was not until 1904, long after the major players in the drama had died, that the crates with the San Michele mosaics were again opened and installed in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, now the Bode Museum in Berlin.

The question that arises concerns the fate of the fragments from the sixth-century San Michele mosaic. Several mosaic fragments have come to the attention of scholars. A specific example is the mosaic depicting the face of Christ, which was substantially reworked. It includes the extensive addition of nineteenth-century gold tesserae for the background. This fragment is housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which also owns a second fragment acquired by the museum close to the same time and possibly identified with Moro's workshop: the mosaic face of Saint Catherine from San Marco.

In 1858, Giovanni Moro was fired from his position as head mosaicist at San Marco, which spared the art in the basilica from further of Moro's questionable restoration practices, divergent in both method and style from its historical models. The details of the lengthy trial and subsequent incarceration resulting in his removal have never been published but like any gossip and hearsay reported, there are many theories about the events. During the time that he was jailed, fragments of mosaics not made by Moro were discovered in his workshop, which may have originated from San Marco, Santa Maria Assunta, on Torcello, and San Michele in Africisco.

However, Giovanni Moro was not the only artist working on mosaics in Venice at this time. Antonio Salviati, a lawyer by trade, teamed up with glass artist Lorenzo Radi from the island of Murano and started a company for the production of new mosaic installations and also the restoration of existing works. As a lawyer, Salviati had more business acumen than Moro and he also launched his endeavor at a different moment in time. There was an increased interest in Venice and Byzantine art, particularly mosaics. International exhibitions and competitions introduced artists to a wider market and, in particular, to persons of authority and prestige who could help them gain access to important commissions. For Salviati, this was his entrée into to the court of Queen Victoria with the commission to install mosaics at the Royal Mausoleum in Frogmore. These designs owed their inspiration from the fifth and sixth century mosaics still in the churches of Ravenna. These British investors were also Salviati's contacts for restoration work in San Marco, and Santa Maria Assunta on Torcello.

Salviati also claimed to be the creator of the reverse paper method of mosaic reconstruction that Moro had "invented" and used in mosaic restoration. Salviati's "prefabrication" was hailed as a nineteenth century improvement on the ancient hand-set method which was also more expensive and time consuming. For both workshops, it was faster and easier to use these reverse image cartoons in order to make a section of new mosaic. One difficulty was in fitting these sections into the original mosaic. Additionally, the new smooth surface contrasted sharply with the hand-set tesserae. Bits of original tesserae were often missing, so that it became



expedient to replace entire sections of original mosaics with the new materials at hand.

The restoration work by Salviati's workshop also gave him access to fragments of original mosaics, particularly faces, which were valued by museums and private collectors. Several of these works associated with Salviati's restoration on the *Last Judgment* in Santa Maria Assunta have been identified, including a face of an angel in the Louvre. Interestingly, a fragment was put up for auction at Sotheby's, London in 1987. It had been discovered in a church in Talygarn, Wales, where it had been installed in the small chapel in 1887. Byzantine specialist, Robin Cormack identified the fragment as the face of one of the apostles from the Torcello mosaic and declared the original sale of the piece to be the work of the unscrupulous restorer Giovanni Moro. Later investigations of the fragment led specialists to revise that opinion. The face in Talygarn came from a larger section of the *Last Judgment* mosaic that was not the work of Giovanni Moro, but the workshop of Antonio Salviati. Therefore the reputation of Moro, while not stellar by any account, was further tainted in the twentieth century, but this time the accusations were unfounded. Salviati was not implicated until much later in this mosaic theft. He not only avoided charges of larceny against him, but on the contrary, his contemporaries acclaimed him for his acumen and skill.

The market of collectors of mosaic art in nineteenth-century Europe that led to the dissemination of these fragments emerged from several political and social factors. Nationalist sentiment driven by nostalgia for an earlier age in Britain inspired a renewed interest in Byzantine art and architecture. The popularity of

publications, such as John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, made the basilica of San Marco a cause célèbre among preservationists. Ruskin's view was that archaic buildings should be preserved in their original state and not restored to appeal to modern taste. This course of action was taken up by his successor, William Morris, as a leader of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In Prussia, Kaiser Wilhelm IV desired to legitimize his rule by building a monarchical state dedicated to strong Christian values. He looked to the example of Constantine and the Holy Roman Empire and the installation of Byzantine-style mosaics in his imperial church in Potsdam were an unmistakable statement of this connection. Wilhelm's purchase of the apse mosaics from San Michele in Africisco was a further example of his interest in Byzantine art and architecture, and under different circumstances, would have resulted in their preservation. However, the history of the mosaic cycle from San Michele in Africisco is an important illustration of invasive and detrimental restorations that were standard practice in the nineteenth-century.

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