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*Hugh Ferriss*, *The Lure of the City, 1929. Detail.*

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# Visions of Far Places and Overlaying Illusions: the Gothic Fresco by Pisanello in Verona as a Graphic Crossing in Space and Time

Giorgio Verdiani, Pelin Arslan

## Abstract

*In the Church of St. Anastasia, in Verona, Italy, there is a fresco from Pisanello, dated between 1432 and 1438. It is named San Giorgio e la Principessa (St. George and the Princess), but it has received in time the final addition "of Trebisonda". The vision depicted inside this fresco opens a reflection about interpretation and representation, about resolution and dissolution of reality. The work of representation can be a way of visualizing an idea or a place from which there is just a vision coming from the words of others. No matter how uncertain it is, the vision of the author leads to the definition of the result, capturing myths and fascinations, like 'the East', 'the city far away', 'Trebisonda', 'the travel'. The traces inserted in the artwork may contain a specific code, later (mis)interpreted in a new cultural scenario. The idea of Pisanello depicting the city on the Black Sea is not supported by resolute evidence. It seems like a weird alchemy pushing ideas. In this paper, a 'state of the knowledge' about this artwork will be the frame for a reflection about the visionary contents and elements in the main scene and in the background. A test operated with a group of architecture students and artists will investigate what happens when representing a city in a landscape seen only through oral communication. A graphic and logical matching between the ideal representation of the city in the fresco and the past and present Trebisonda/Trebizond/Trabzon will complete the analysis.*

*Keywords: Fictional Cities, Gothic Painting, Church of St. Anastasia, San Giorgio, Trebisonda.*

## Introduction

In the Church dedicated to St. Anastasia, in Verona, Italy (fig. 1), there is a fresco that suffered the injuries of time and some neglect, but in the beauty of its artistry there is the focus of some original interpretations, most of them rising during the last hundred years. The fresco is a work from Pisanello, there is some debating about the exact date attribution, but its realization is mostly indicated between 1432 and 1438 (fig. 2). A general classification may insert this masterpiece into the International Gothic period [Castelfranchi Vegas 1966]. The name of the fresco is *San Giorgio e la Principessa* (St. George and the Princess) but it has received in recent time the final addition "of Trebisonda" a choice extremely appreciated and supported by some authors. This may be considered a popular choice linked to the will of building up

a greater story around basic facts, overlaying imagination to the contents of the fresco. The variation of the name started on the basis of an occasional definition written for the first time in the catalogue of an exhibition about the Artwork Paintings in Verona held in 1947 [Avena 1947]. The reason for a connection between Trebisonda and St. Giorgio is not cleared by the original author of this title. Defining the town of Trebisonda, at the present Trabzon on the Turkish coast of the Black Sea, is not an easy task in a few lines. The origin of the settlement is very ancient, the foundation is indicated by the Christian author Eusebius from Caesarea in 756 B.C. as a colony from Sinope in the progressive colonization of the Black Sea waterfront by the Greeks. In this initial phase, the town is characterized by Greek and Persian influences. In



Fig. 1. The Church of St. Anastasia in Verona, view of the front and of the entrance from the central nave (G. Verdiani, 2021).

the first half of the first century B.C., during Roman domination, it became a node in the borderline of the Empire placed along the Rhine and the Euphrates *Limes*. The following long series of events brought that area under the influence of the Byzantines with the creation of the Empire of the Komnenos, the Dynasty who ruled Trebisonda across almost three centuries with 21 different emperors, dealing with the Italians from the *Repubbliche Marinare*: from the beginning of the XIIIth century, the ships from Venice were moving all across the Black Sea, exchanging products, moving materials and goods from the nearby areas and from far away destinations. According to S. P. Karpov, there were five main reasons to bring Italians from Venice, Genoa and Rome to trade and settle their commerce in Trebisonda: 1) the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 caused the reorganization of all the routes in the East; 2) the presence of Italian settlements in Crimea and in the Azov Sea was making it easy to connect operations across the area; 3) up to the end of the XIIIth century the Trebisonda Empire consolidated its role, creating political stability; 4) the Italians had safe settlements and positions in Costantinopoli and in its nearby waterway passages; 5) the creation of the Ilkhanate [Melville 2012] offered the possibility to keep open and safe routes to central Asia and China [Karpov 1986]. Furthermore, Trebisonda was a crossway of people and goods, a fundamental point in the market routes to and from the East.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Trebisonda remained independent until 1461 when it was the last city to be conquered by the Ottomans.

In Europe and especially in Italy Trebisonda took a place in the common imagination like some exotic, far away location, sometimes with some doubts about its correct geographical location but also as a synonym of travelling into fabulous far places.

The anomalous association of Trebisonda with the legend of St. Giorgio depicted in the fresco is the object of many critics and it is widely recognized for being 'weird', the official texts presenting the fresco avoid any reference to this connection, while it is well known how the original description of St. Giorgio and the Dragon's legend develops all the events in the city of Silene, in Libya. At the same time, there are no references coming from the past to support the idea for a change in the location. According to the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacopo da Varagine, in his collection of the hagiographies of the life of the Christian Saints written between 1260 and 1289 [Le Goff 2011], St. Giorgio is documented for being



Fig. 2. View from the right nave and from the left transept towards the Pisanello's fresco, view of the fresco from the ground in the same perspective of any visitors (G. Verdiani, 2021).

born in Kapadokya in the III century A.D. but the *Legenda* leaves no chance nor any doubts about the location of the legendary fight with the dragon, the ideal reference to the town in the background cannot be Trebisonda, at least until the author keeps the representation aligned to the official version of the legend. Previously, accurate studies have well stated the inconsistency of this choice about expanding the name of this fresco [Puppi 1982; Franco 1992], thus, there is a certain number of online pages still referring to this artwork using the name defined in 1947. In its own way, this small case about the name and the localization of the fresco from the XV century testifies the love for imaginary places and the fascination coming from mythical events that happened in an undefined past and place. People read the story, wonder about the legend, get amazed by the events, maybe get the religious implications of the tale, but in the end, the age and the place start blurring away, the story is moved to a level of the purely imaginary and then its location can be replaced according to needs, opinions, ideals, intentions and even misunderstandings. The resulting story is not necessarily weaker than the previous, the new beliefs and the new integrations to the tradition are immediately accepted for their capacity in moving the levers of imagination, no matter how wrong, improper or weird they are. In a certain way, the transformation of the name seems to follow the words from Cicero: "omnis translatio, quae quidem sumpta ratione est, ad sensus ipsos admovetur, maxime oculorum,

qui est sensus acerrimus" which can be translated as "every metaphor; as long as it makes sense, produces direct influence on the senses and most of all on the sight, which is the most subtle one" (*De Oratione, Liber III, 161*). From this, the persistence of such an interpretation that brings a rich series of speculations, in between of them: the symbolic interpretation of the fresco as a representation of the resistance to the Ottoman invasion, where the Dragon should represent the Sultan's armies; the figure of the princess as the portrait of Maria Comnena of Trebisonda, wife of John VIII Palaiologos, a woman known in the tradition for her great beauty, who died in 1439 [Bryer 1962]; the possible complex relationships between the work of Pisanello and the court of the Emperor [Ronchey 2012]; but also of being an allegory to some events of the Pellegrini Family, the financiers of the artwork, connected to opposition to the Venetian domination [Bismara 2013]. For some Art historians, the attribution of the place is just because "Trebisonda is a place of the imagination" [De Vecchi, Cerchiarì 1999]. For sure the presence of the Trebisonda Empire was not something too far or ignored by the people in Italy and in Europe in the XVth century. In the years close to the realization of the fresco, there were two visits in Italy by the Byzantine imperial court and Pisanello made a specific bronze medal with the portrait of John VIII Palaiologos [Bernasconi 1862]. References to the "East" are well present in the dresses and details of the group around St. Giorgio and the Princess.



Fig. 3. Section of the transept towards the Pisanello's fresco, photogrammetric reconstruction (G. Verdiani, 2021).



The vision depicted inside this fresco opens an interesting reflection about interpretation and representation, about resolution and dissolution of reality. Creating artwork is creating a communication about personal ideas and concepts, the target may be a generic observer, a specific person or just the author. Then, the work of representation can be a way of visualizing an idea, a project or even a place of which there is just a vision coming from the words of others. No matter how uncertain it is, the vision of the author leads to the definition of the resulting work, capturing myths and fascinations, like those coming from the East, the far away city, Trebisonda, the travel.

### Documenting the fresco

To have better support in the analysis and reflections about Pisanello's fresco, an intervention of documentation and survey was conducted in August 2021. The intervention was based on photography and photogrammetry. All the pictures were taken using a Nikon D850 Digital SLR camera, with a sensor resolution of 47.3 Megapixel [1]. A series of shots aimed to be used in Structure from Motion/Image Matching photogrammetry was done for the whole bay around the fresco, covering the floor, the pillars, the chapels, the altars, the vaults, the windows and all the frescos and mural paintings [2]. The following photogrammetric processing was done using Epic Megagames Reality Capture software [3]. The resulting model was then scaled according to one measure taken in place using a metric tape on the base of the bay hosting Pisanello's fresco (fig. 3). The pictures detailing the fresco were first corrected in their optical distortions [4] and then aligned and adapted on the base of the model coming from the SfM/IM photogrammetry. In this way, a geometrical correct version of the fresco with a resolution of 133 Megapixel for the whole fresco (fig. 4) and of 75 Megapixel for the main cityscape (fig. 5) was completed and used for studying the artwork in detail.

### Description of the fresco

The interpretation of the fresco, done in place and studying the results from the survey, assumed that there should be traces inserted in the artwork that may require a specific reading, according to rules defined in the time of the author, but later interpreted by the new actors and audience

Fig. 4. The whole fresco of St. Giorgio and the Princess by Pisanello (G. Verdiani, 2021).

Fig. 5. Detail of the cityscape (G. Verdiani, 2021).



of the cultural scenario, then the investigation was made with the effort of thinking in the time of the artwork, trying to remove elements coming from events yet to happen at that time and reflecting about the meanings and strengths given to the landscape and architectural parts.

Today, after a period of restorations and exhibition in different locations, the fresco is back in its original location, in the bay at the right side of the apse, the restoration work has recovered and preserved well (for what was possible) the artwork, thus the subdivision of the plaster into three parts (the large central one and two smaller panels at the side of the arch) with the introduction of large hinges between the panels, together with a not perfect alignment between the arch and the repositioned fresco, make it look a little misplaced. This condition is barely noticed by the visitors who have some difficulties in seeing it well, because of the height (about 12 metres from the floor) and because of the subtle tones. A multimedia display, placed just at the feet of the bay, helps the reading and understanding of the masterpiece, showing details, and telling the story about this suffered artwork. In the panels, guides and in the multimedia product, the town in the background is mentioned just like an imaginary city which is perfectly correct, while there is no solid evidence supporting any other matching. The visit to the church, on a sunny day in August, shows how the fresco is well illuminated by reflected natural light, during the morning the rays enter the large window on the right and flood the floor; this, together with the height, bring to imagine that the metallic and golden and silver parts originally assembled with the paint were aimed to expand the readability of the scene, capturing attention and modulating the shapes of the figures. The presence of glossy elements is reported by Giorgio Vasari in 1550, when he wrote about another Fresco by Pisanello in the same church that in time got lost: "S. Giorgio armato d'armi bianche fatte d'argento, come in quell'età non pur egli ma tutti gl'altri pittori costumavano" which can be translated in "St. George is equipped with cold steel weapons made in silver, in the same style used by him and by other painters from that age" [Vasari et al. 2015, p. 402]. The group with the dragon, the landscape, and the city in the background, are characterized by numerous details, articulated all around the specific shape of the fresco, centred on the pointed arch and divided into clear areas. Indeed, it is possible to recognize sectors dedicated to the human group, the cityscape, the animal and dragon group, with the natural landscape connecting the whole composi-

tion. The parts in the lower panels fill and complete the narrow areas on the sides of the arch. Pisanello, working on the front of the chapel, succeeded in exploiting such a difficult area. The layout develops in a shape that can be included in a rectangle with a ratio height/width of about one to three in the main scene and of about one to two considering the lower parts, some alteration caused by the removal during the restoration and the new positioning of the plaster on a panel may have altered a little the original sizes, thus, the artwork seems to fit with some tolerance the old measuring units in use in Verona at that time [Gylenbok 2018], with a width of about ten short arms (one short arm is equal to 0,642449 metres when the panel of the fresco is large about 6,2 metres) and a height of about four short arms (the height of the panel is about 2,3 metres). The overall area of the fresco is asymmetric, about one quarter on the left is dedicated to the dragon/animals' group and three quarters on the right are dedicated to the human group, both the groups enter the area of the arch even if the parts immediately in contact with the lintel are lost. In vertical, about three-quarters of the area are occupied by the groups while the top quart is all dedicated to the cityscape. In the fresco the cityscape and the landscape have an extremely important rule, with their strong visual presence they define and complete the whole image, creating a specific scenario in which the characters are frozen in their actions. In this fresco "stands the human pathos of every character in Pisanello's epic drama, where every small element in the scene, from the ram and the lizard to the St. George and the corpses, play an equally important part." [Fossi Todorow 1959, p. 13]

The landscape is defined by a sequence of hills rising over the coast, the sea passes in between the two main parts of the land creating a sort of bay and presents a place along the right coast where a ship has just stopped. Both the two main hills are urbanized, but the paint on the left is so ruined that just some walls and towers are still readable. The same for the faraway land at the end of the water, where it is barely possible to distinguish the profile of some towers. The main town rises behind the hills, it is depicted with rich buildings full of details, all in a gothic language that is typical of many representations of that time, the architecture is oriented to communicate richness, with high buildings, churches, towers, fortifications. At the limit towards the sea, there is a large building with a gate, apparently inviting people to move from the ship and enter. The presence of the two hanged men seems to underline the presence of



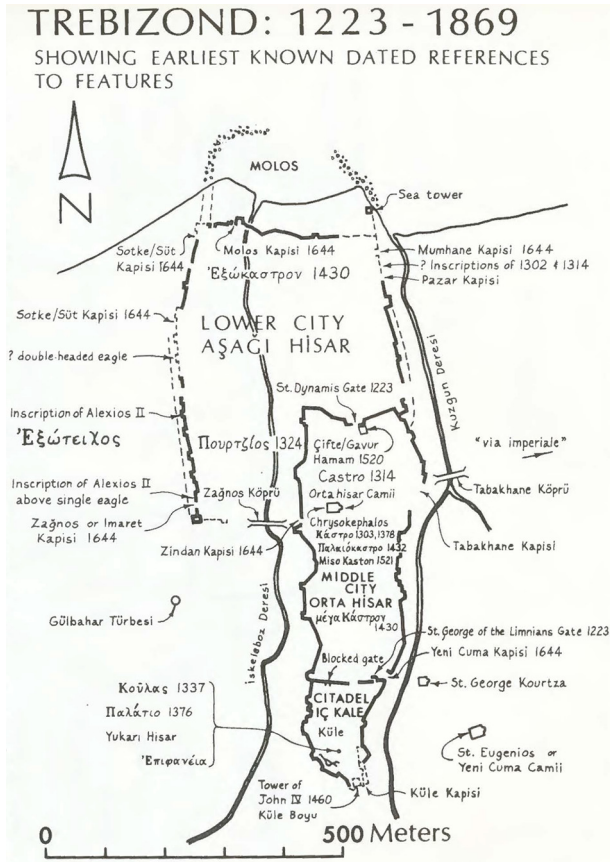
Fig. 6. Views of the modern Trabzon/Trebisonda (G. Verdiani, 2019).

that gate, which is compliant to past habits about showing the punishments at the entrance of the towns. The presence of the corpses acts as a guarantee for the sight to move there. This element seems like a symbolic presence added to enhance the dramatic atmosphere and including references to life and death in both the groups, a sort of *memento mori* in the epic of the whole scenario, an element maybe thought to balance the richness and the glory in the overall scene, but also saying that the town applies the laws of that time to secure the social system. The castle, in the inner part, appears more essential, with a severe mass and a classical organization with towers at the corners and a high wall, an iconic medieval castle.

### Imaginary visions and real places

The cultural scenario in which the fresco by Pisanello is developed takes place in a period where the discovery of the landscape and of the cityscape is starting to reach new solutions and approaches. Far from dominating the rules of the perspective that will take decades to be well intuited

and centuries to be completely structured in procedures, the representation of the background is the discovery of a layer that opens the stories and the events in the representation towards new depths and richness. The landscape is then the integration of the characters, it follows the meaning of the story. It is rarely a single representation like it happens for the *City by the Sea* by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1340), but in this same author it can be found a sequence of frescos with one of the most complex integrations of landscape and cityscape: the *Allegories* and the *Effects of the Good Government* and of the *Bad Government* (1338-1339) a precious masterpiece that extends to the scene and communicates through the many details the contents, with all the characters with their aspects, dresses and behaviours well integrated to the general scene [Carlotti 2010]. Free from these complex contents, the *City by the Sea* is considered one of the first representations focused only on the landscape, realized in an unprecise date, probably between 1320 and 1348, it appears without the presence of characters, even if a large number of lost artworks from that period may give a partial view on the overall production. It is interesting to put in parallel this artwork painted



on wood in modest size (22.5x33.5 centimetres) [Lubbock 2009] to the town painted by Pisanello, both the cities are on the sea, have a similar structure, with a sequence of walls, towers, fortifications, and buildings that well express the use of a similar concepts about how a town built on the sea should be. At the same time, the artists who operated previously exploring the balance between the foreground and the background, giving value and rules to the townscape have adopted well-structured choices, creating towns that are not exactly the city in which the depicted events take place, but an idealised place. It is the case of Giotto, with his *Cacciata dei diavoli da Arezzo* (Ban of the Devils from Arezzo), painted in the Church of St. Francesco in Assisi in 1295-1299 [Thode 2003]. Arezzo is represented as a town of tall and colourful towers, with the walled perimeter completely filled by the buildings. St. Francesco is banning away the devils from the town standing close to the apses of a Church, but Arezzo has no such large churches out of the city walls, if not the lost cathedral of St. Donato, which was placed in a small walled city on the Pionta hillock, existing in the time of Giotto and later destroyed under the order of Cosimo I (1519), probably to avoid interferences from this enclave to the Tuscan politic [Melucco Vaccaro 1991]. In any case, the idealisation of the townscape obeys the need of the representation, the graphic and the construction of the buildings are something that collaborates with the narration; thus, the townscape and its landmarks are firmly in place and well recognizable even after centuries of urban transformation. Other artists like Spinello Aretino, may prefer to represent the city on the landscape with a transfiguration, for example in his *Ascesa al Calvario* (Way to Calvary) in the Sacristy of the *Basilica di Santa Croce* in Florence, a large fresco painted between 1392 and 1395 [Giura 2016]. Here the townscape of Jerusalem, at the back of the group of people around Jesus Christ climbing the hill with the wooden cross on his shoulders, is completely idealised and took elements from the Florentine skyline creating a fantastic town that is out of time and free from a rigid geographical position. The operation of creating a town on the basis of real elements and then declining it to personal artistic choices is clearly present in all these artists, the true

Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the plan view of Trebisonda/Trebizond (A. Bryer, W. Winfield, R. Anderson, 1985).

Fig. 8. View of Trebisonda at the beginning of the XVIII century (J. Tournefort, 1700-1702).

town is not interesting, the town that transforms itself and became the symbol of a way of living, demonstrating the behaviours and having the needed symbols to recall values. The image of the cityscape is then a secondary, but often strongly present, character from the background of these artworks. And so Pisanello operates, in the complex frame he has for his fresco, he defines a large rectangular area dedicated to the cityscape, he paints a town out of time, a cityscape that follows the idea of a distant place, created to be elsewhere but surely based on some reference from similar places seen or received by an oral or written description.

The idea about the city on the Black Sea was probably created by a mix between popular beliefs and some suggestions by past exhibition curators following intellec-

tual exercises. But this weird alchemy is still at work and pushes ideas and new suggestions. Internet/social media dissemination and the wish of expanding the cultural contents to a wider level of entertainment support this fascination, offering a modern reading oriented in giving full value to feeble traces. The elements which may be considered in parallel between Trebisonda and the scene by Pisanello should emerge analysing the historical city in the background and its environment. But taking a look at the present Trabzon it comes out, obviously, how the city changed in time (fig. 6). In recent years it received a chaotic expansion, with heavy alterations in the urban aspect and in its relationship with the previous landscape, the insertion of the airport and of a system of highways along the sea have isolated the town from direct access to the

Fig. 9. Details from the Pisanello's fresco: walls and towers, the harbour, the church on the hill, the building on the walls with a gate, towers and walls, the castle in the inland (G. Verdiani, 2021).

Fig. 10. The Church of Hagia Sophia in Trabzon, view of the maquette from the local town museum, main façade, view from the hill towards the sea (occluded by the motorways) and the expansion of the city (G. Verdiani, 2019).



waterfront, luckily the parts of fortifications still standing have received some intervention and some large recovery of the external fronts and of their area in the nearby, but at the same time the making of new buildings in historical style in the downtown is making order in quite neglected areas just inserting culturally weak architectures, in general, the town centre seems oriented to a historical restyling sometimes more aimed to the creation of some kind of resort/thematic park than to recovering valuable elements and rethinking the urban fabric in a contemporary and more sustainable way. But in this articulated condition, many elements from the medieval Trebisonda are still well readable: the walls with towers, the passages in the walls where once there was the sea (and now there is a series of motorways), a church from the XIII century, Hagia Sophia [Eastmond 2004], on a hill out of the city walls. The castle, once placed in the inner part of the walled town, has completely disappeared leaving just poor traces. According to maps presenting a historical reconstruction (fig. 7) compliant with the time of Pisanello [Byrer; Winfield 1985], the city was configured as a walled town occupying from the front on the black sea, where the harbour had direct access to the town centre by gates, closed by walls developing to the top part of the hill in the inland. The presence of tall walls and numerous towers were a typical characteristic of this fortification. An image of the town in between its transformation can be seen in the drawings by Joseph Pitton de Tournefort who visited the area between 1700 and 1702 (fig. 8), showing the fortified town emerging in the landscape and still in a relationship with the original harbour [Tournefort 1717]. From these elements, it comes out a series of possible similarities in the urban and architectural components with the fresco (fig. 9): 1) the walls on the left part of the fresco are compliant with the walls of Trebisonda; 2) the ship in the fresco arrives on the coast in a sort of bay, like it probably was in the old harbour; 3) the main building towards the coast has a gate opening in that direction. 4) the cityscape is rich in towers, only a few of them appear part of a wall, but in general, they seem compliant to the idea of Trebisonda, city with towers; 5) the urban settlement seems to follow a long shape, according to the nature of the cliffs; 6) the right side of the fresco shows a castle in the inner part of the town, it may be considered the one in the inland of the settlement; 7) on the left side of the town, on the hill nearby, there is an isolated church with a tower bell, a similar condition that

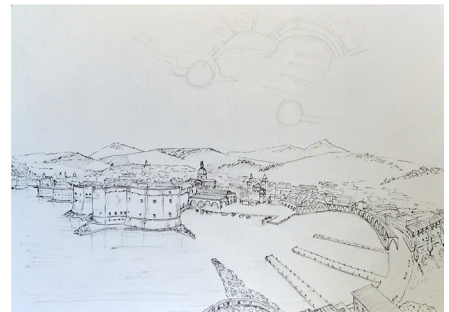
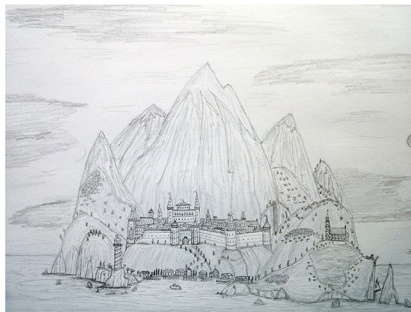
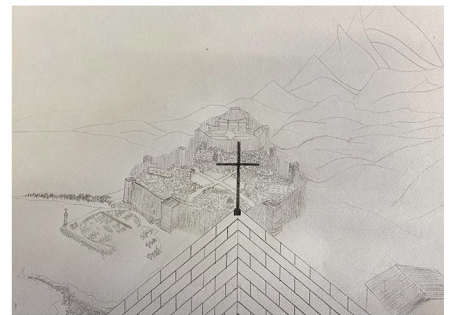
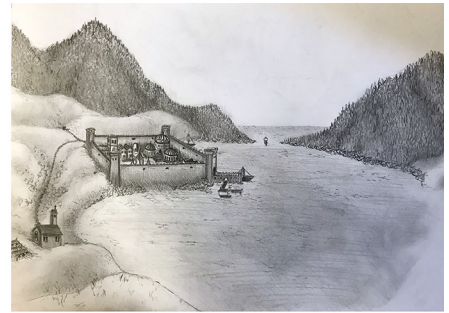
exists in Trabzon, with the Church of Hagia Sophia (fig. 10). In a marginal way, even the plants and stones may correctly represent the natural environment of some part of the coast along the black sea.

In general, the elements represented seem somehow similar to the past Trebisonda, but at the same time, they may fit many Mediterranean and eastern towns on a sea. What is depicted seems like that town, but it is not exactly that town, it seems, most of all, an idea of Trebisonda, maybe created from an oral description. A vision of a place imagined and then represented on the base of the needs (like the articulated shape available for the fresco) and of personal style. It is the image of a fantastic city, far away, a symbol of travelling and of other places, something that may be well identified (for a European) even with the city of Trebisonda. A fantastic city told by words and never seen by Pisanello but created in that style to evoke the perfect background for the representation of the legend.

### Making an experiment

To verify what happens when a city is represented only on the basis of an oral description, a specific test was run with a group of architecture students and graphic artists. This kind of approach based on graphic has a certain number of variations in previous studies, especially in those oriented to urban studies accommodating both subjective and objective variables related to built environment, people's perception as well as experience, in these the final maps are formed by data coming from verbal interviews and sketch maps [Groat, Wang 2013]. In this experiment, the test started asking for drawing with any preferred tool the city defined by the following description: "Imagine a historic city, of ancient construction, settled on the coast of a sea, on which it overlooks, the city is a bridge between West and East, surrounded by walls with towers, it has a sheltered harbour on the sea, in a bay where the water is lower; it is the destination of ships that arrive with travellers and merchants who undertake long journeys with their goods. The walls face the port and have access to it. The plan of the city stretches from the sea, towards the inland where hills and mountains rise up. Within the walls, buildings and palaces, churches and markets, streets, squares and people, in the innermost part, towards the hills, a castle concludes the

Fig. 11. Representing a town from an oral description selection of the results of the test with the students (from the top left to the lower right: L. Crociani, A. Albrecht, E. Graizani, L. Gianassi, M. Giordano, L. Abbado, V. Gianformaggio, G. Dolci, C. Basso, 2020).





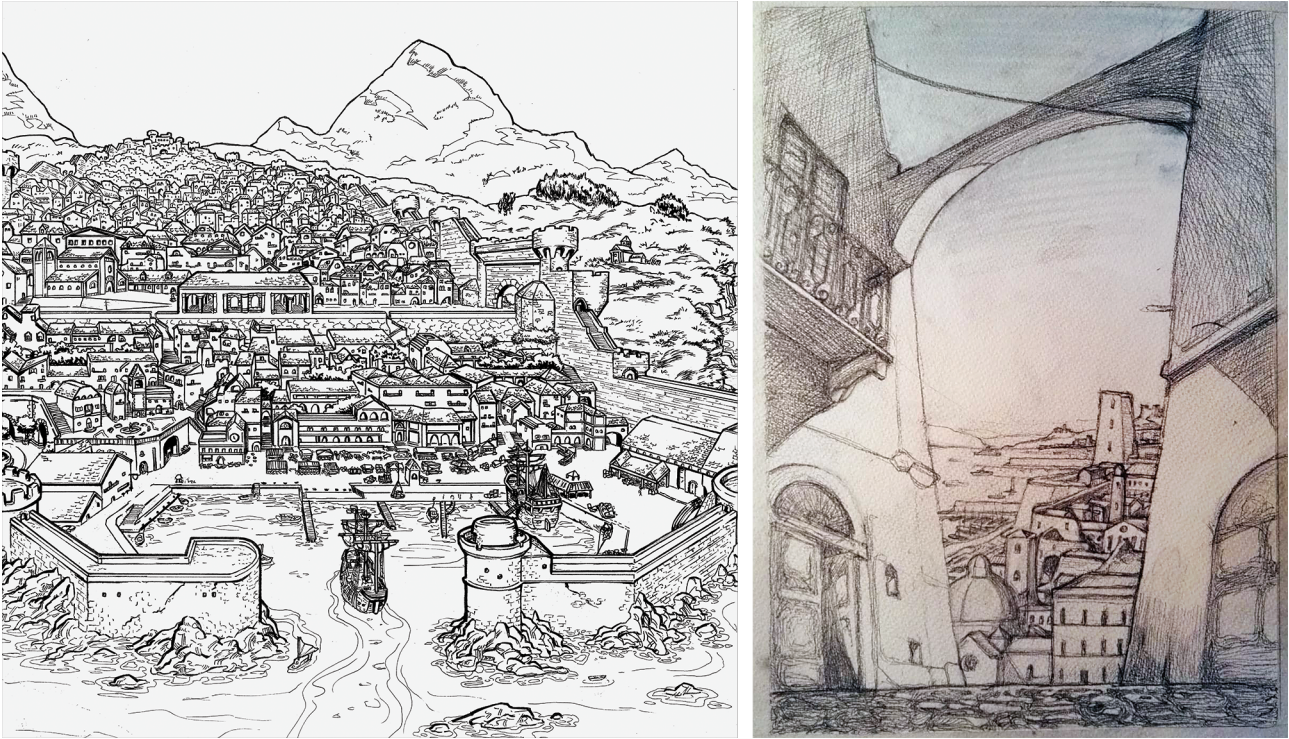


Fig. 12. Representing a town from an oral description the work of two graphic artists (G. Ferrara, L. Albergoni, 2021).

urban structure. Outside the city, fields and hills full of lush greenery and clearings and paths along the coast and an external church with a bell tower on a small hill". The group of students taking part in the exercise was made of 78 participants, with an age ranging from 19 to 24, all of them had about four hours of time to complete the drawing. From this test a group of nine with the best graphical quality was selected (fig. 11). Then, two graphic artists were invited to produce a drawing on the same description (fig. 12). In none of the cases the participants received any indication about "Trebisonda" or any reference to the masterpiece by Pisanello, the written description was the only information. The set of results shows how the transfer from words to graphics is subject to iconic references and personal styles. In all the cases, the graphic project presents all the elements described in the

text: the harbour, the walls with towers, the church out of the walls, etc. What is in the description, always appears. At the same time, it is clear that a description of a faraway town is soon declined into the exceptional reference of a fantastic landscape, the legend needs legendary places. But all is soon adapted to personal graphical skills and styles, the patrimony of things seen may inspire, but the rules and preferences about the graphic orient the final result. A process of the mind that probably has not changed in about six centuries.

## Conclusions

In the fantastic representation by Pisanello, a graphic and logical matching between the ideal representation

of the city and the past Trebisonda/Trebizond/Trabzon seems possible. Probably this is nothing more than a parallel due to an occasional series of coincidences, but it keeps on suggesting that the idea for a fantastic town may develop from oral transmission, both the place of the legend and in its own way the far eastern city with its foreign emperor and princess are parts of a world between real and fantastic of that age, so both may exchange each other being a part of the same imagistic way of formulating a background. In this, the story of a city far away, coming from the words of travellers and foreign visitors may influence and be the perfect reference in an artwork that has to express fascinating contents. Silene in Libya was as well a distant and fabulous place, the exchange between fidelity to the 'Golden Legend' and a poetic change of location, may be stimulated by the contacts with the court of the last Byzantine Emperor. It is probably just a fantastic story, mere speculation that opens the vision to a world of incredible events and places, perfectly in line with the imaginative strength of the graphic language of the International Gothic. A rich occasion for an intellectual investigation that has not enough evidence nor enough

solid references for solving all the knots of this representation, but is a worthy challenge for any art, architecture, archaeological landscape scholar. Maybe even an interesting graphic exercise for any architecture student to enhance its capacity of graphically representing ideas and planning visual communication, in the hope of learning valuable contents that maybe will help them in valorising and enhancing the historical town instead of converting it into some sort of thematic park, gradually deprived of real values and then converted into a real flat background to everyday life.

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#### Notes

[1] The general shots for documenting the architecture and the artworks were taken using a Nikkor 16-35mm F4 AF Zoom lens, using the camera handheld. The specific shots of the fresco were taken using a Sigma 150-500mm F4,5 AF Zoom lens, all the shots with the tele-zoom lens were taken from a robust tripod.

[2] A Nikkor 35mm F2.8 AF lens was used for the photogrammetry, operating with the camera handheld, setting the sensor sensitivity on 320

ISO and the lens stopping down at F4. In this way, about 600 shots were taken to cover all this sector.

[3] The processing gave back a polygonal model of 142 million triangles mapped with four textures of 16.000 by 16.000 pixel.

[4] The distortions from the lenses were corrected using ePaper PTLens software.

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