The author analyzes two unpublished examples of classical borrowing in medieval Istrian monuments. He states that the three marble relief niches above the portal of the Canon’s House are Early Byzantine fragments (6th c) with the date added later (1251). The author also publishes the reconstructed ground floor of this building. The author believes that the motif of the leaf scroll on the portal of the Franciscan church in Pula (1285) was the imitation of the scrolls decorating the nearby Roman Arch of the Sergii family (2nd c). Finally, the author explains how — by forming several small squares — the monocentric classic town of Parentium was transformed into the polycentric medieval town of Poreč.

There is hardly a period in history that has not in one way or another imitated or inherited something from the classical tradition. In Croatian art history the study of Classical influence has focused mainly on the Pre-Romanesque period (the question of classical continuities) and the Renaissance (the question of the rebirth of classical art). Classical influence has, however, also been felt in the period between these two, which was the period of Romanesque art.

In this paper I wish to analyze and interpret two unpublished examples of the continuity or better the re-emergence of the classical substratum in Istrian thirteenth century art: the portal of the Canon’s house in Poreč (1251) and the portal of the Franciscan church in Pula (1285). In both cases the starting point and motivation for the return to classical form was undoubtedly the cult of Antiquity. However, the analysis of these two monuments will show that we are facing here two different methods and two typical divergent approaches to the heritage of Roman culture: the passive re-use of tradition and active innovation.

On the facade of the Canon’s house in Poreč the constructive frame of the portal is flat, on the same level as the wall surface, and the portal is sculpturally marked only by three marble spolia with niches in relief (6th century) arranged around the arch and bearing a carved inscription and date recording when they were placed on the facade of the church (1251). Along with an artistic appreciation of the quality of classical masonry and of “the value of antiquity”, to use A. Riegl’s definition, here the architect’s primary motivation was undoubtedly to show respect for the local Christian cult and traditions. The Antiquity fragments which originally had a religious function as church furnishings conferred a certain measure of sanctity to the Medieval building into which they were incorporated.

The monumental portal of the Franciscan church in Pula (1285) is an example of the Christian re-use of a classical ornament — the vegetable scroll motif copied from the adjoining (pagan) Roman “Arch of the Sergii” (cca 25 BC). exclusively as a hommage to classical craftsmanship. In this second
example the sculptor is showing his appreciation of classical carving, but is placing the classical decoration into a new architectural context, using it as an innovative insertion into the new compositional ensemble of the portal.

I PORTAL OF THE CANON’S HOUSE IN POREČ

The simple entrance opening surmounted by a rounded arch is cut into the stone wall in accordance with the strict criteria of Romanesque functionality, and detaches itself from the texture of the facade wall only by the contours of its constitutive parts: the door-posts are monoliths of unequal width, comparatively broad, surmounted by a semi-circular arch composed of radially arranged stone blocks forming a pointed arch on the exterior contour, a typical trait of the transitional Romanesque-Gothic style. Differing from that absolute flatness, only the inner edge of the arch is marked by a shallow proflillation.

The simple and modest portal is given a certain monumentality by the three added niches, shallow and rectangular, rounded at the top, arranged symmetrically — at the points of a imagined triangle — above and on each side of the portal arch. Apart from being unusual, even exceptional in the history of Romanesque architecture, the composition of this portal is also remarkable for its “mixed” origin: the niches are in fact spolia (three early Byzantine 6th century fragments), a fact which has not been noticed or published up to now. On the facade of this exceptionally long one-story building these three fragments stand out both for their material and their form. The facade is built of grey limestone blocks — as is the arch of the portal — while the door-posts and six Romanesque biforae with sickle-shaped arches on the first floor are of white limestone. In contrast, the three spolia monoliths into which the niches were cut are of light grey marble.

A shell is placed on top of each semi-cylindrical niche cut into the marble block, and the arch is supported by half-colonnettes with bases marked off only with a carved line and extremely linear, reduced “leaf-shaped” capitals. Above the arch each marble block has triple low proflilations. The only deviation from the uniform flatness of the facade are the frames of the biforae openings, cut step-like into the stone, but this is also a typically “flat” Romanesque solution, where the effect of depth does not result from the modelling, but rather from the juxtaposition of two parallel planes. The curved interiors of the niches, and even more the soft undulating modelling of the inverted shells are contrasted to the consistently uniform flatness characterizing the main facade as a whole. It was the opposition of two methods or principles: the predominant flatness of the facade juxtaposed to a different principle represented by the three inserted marble blocks, that prompted
me to analyze the latter more carefully and in turn led me to the conclusion that they are spolia of early Byzantine fragments. It should be pointed out that apart from the fact that their material and morphology clearly differ from those of the façade and its apertures, this same morphology can be identified with a series of similar marble reliefs in the famous Euphrasius’ basilica in Poreč dating from the 6th century. In his monograph on Poreč (1957) M. Prelog published a marble fragment quite similar in shape (identical flat columns and capitals, similar shells), only larger and more elaborate: with a protruding arch with carved inscription and two symmetrically placed dolphins in low relief. Also almost identically modelled is the prismatic foot (pillar) of the altar with confession aperture in the lateral apse of the Euphrasius’ basilica.

Apart from being inserted on the façade so as to be in harmonious relation with the Romanesque-Gothic portal, these three early Byzantine fragments have also been “adopted” by the building through the date (1251) subsequently carved in the left niche, and the hexameters carved in uncial letters into the right niche, inviting “all the honest folk” to enter the house, because the portal will always be open for them. Placed in the central niche is a cross with broad arms in low relief.

It is interesting to consider the method of composition applied by the architect, who arranged the three spolia at the “points” of an isosceles triangle. If we imagine the triangle formed by connecting the tips of the three niches, they will trace the contour of one of those gables set in bold relief on the portals of Early Romanesque churches in Croatia, for example the church of St Peter in Dragu Supetarska (Supetarska Bay) on the island of Rab. The position of the niches does not follow the rounded portal arch, for this would require the placement of the lower two niches laterally, at the height of the base of the arch, and of the third just above its apex. In our example, however, the niches stand approximately half-way between the foot and apex of the arch, with their tips at approximately the height of the apex of its exterior frame. On portals with gables in bold relief, such as the one in Supetarska draga, this is the height at which the vertical edges of the gable begin to slant. When the tips of the niche arches surrounding the Poreč portal are connected, they form a right angle, just as they do in the portal of Saint Peter on the island of Rab.

This composition, “hidden” to the superficial glance, shows that although the spolia morphologically go back to Late Classical or Early Byzantine tradition, their arrangement and its relation to the portal arch — constituting their “hidden” structure — reflects the spirit and tradition of Early Romanesque: the three-nave three-apse Benedictine basilica of St Peter on the island of Rab was built in the second half of the eleventh century, but its west front was structured only after a bay was added to it in the twelfth century.

II PORTAL OF THE FRANCISCAN CHURCH IN PULA

The west portal of the Franciscan church in Pula is the most monumental Medieval portal in Istria. “Although the church is marked by the transitional Romanesque-Gothic style, the portal as a whole can be considered Late Romanesque.” Its multiple frame has a standard step-like profiliation with colonnettes and pilasters keeping their rhythm and arrangement from its outer to its inner contour. With its richly articulated carving — the first colonnette is smooth, the second worked in “fishbone” pattern, and the third tordurated, while the outer border begins with motifs of stylized leaves, followed by dentils, then by a row of alternating convex-concave scallops, a row of small low volutes and at the second step a rich sinusoidal scroll of leaves and tendrils spirally curving in op-
posite directions. However, the Romanesque character of the Pula portal is determined most decisively by its reliance on classical models, reflected not only in the plastic outline of the dentils or the profilation of the bases, but primarily in the lively and "classically" sharply chiselled leaf scroll coming out of the amphoras. Although one can easily find numerous models for all these details in thirteenth century Adriatic and Mediterranean architectural sculpture, it must be pointed out that in its size, rich ornamentation, compositional harmony and sheer beauty of detail this is certainly one of the most notable portals (without figural sculpture) of that period.

Instead of hunting for possible earlier models of individual motifs, it is much more important to stress their creative fusion into a complex ensemble which surpasses the significance of any potential individual model, and makes it the second finest portal in Croatia after Radovan’s portal in Trogir (1240). I also wish to point out the possibility that the Romanesque artist was directly aware of the classical monuments in Pula which are numerous, universally acknowledged for their quality earlier in Imperium Romanum, and were even later often used as models by Italian Renaissance architects.

The leaf scroll of classical inspiration is certainly one of the most frequent motifs on Romanesque stone carving. The stylization of the scroll on the Pula portal could therefore reflect numerous Italian models (e.g. the portal of Todi cathedral). On the other hand, it bears such resemblance to the type of modelling found on the Roman Arch of the Sergii in Pula that, as in so many other Dalmatian examples (e.g. the portal of Zadar cathedral), one can safely assume that the sculptor of the Franciscan portal was inspired directly by a local Classical model.14

Thus, although the motif of the vegetable scroll is a “commonplace” in European Romanesque sculpture, and of portal decoration in particular, I believe that the the Arch of the Sergii in Pula was the direct source and model for the portal of the Franciscan church. “This is even more probable because the scroll stands in full sight on the most classical of Pula’s classical monuments, the Arch of the Sergii, and this is one more example of the long-established fact that Romanesque sculptors “learned from classical precepts.”15

A scroll is placed on the front side of the first external pilaster (step) of the portal of the Franciscan church, just as it is placed on the front of the inner pilaster of the Arch. Although on the portal the scroll emerges from a jug,16 and on the arch from a cluster of acanthus leaves, both are marked by a dynamic double spiral, by articulated contours and lively carving of the leaves, and finally by a rhythmical alternation of leaf and rosette at the centre.

With respect to the theme of this conference, I also wish to draw attention to one of the classical motifs I mentioned earlier: a continuous series of little volute or wave-motifs which is both classical in itself and applied in a completely classical version: the volutes are quite smooth, flat and raised only slightly (three millimeters) from their ground. Identical versions of this motif can be found on several classical architectural stone fragments exhibited in the Archeological Museum of Istria in Pula.17 This ornament shows no trace of the interface ornaments dominant in Croatian Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque sculpture, which is characterized by much higher relief and the division of the vertical segment of the volute into at least two parts.18 Thus this continuous series of volutes on the Franciscan portal could also be a direct replica of some classical monument located in Pula.

III ROMANESQUE VS CLASSICAL ELEMENTS IN THE URBAN STRUCTURE OF POREĆ

In conclusion, I would like to use this occasion to add some remarks to my views on Classical and Medieval structures in the urban shape and composition of classical Parentium and Medieval Poreč,19 analyzing it as an example of a large-scale
combination of traditional and innovative models, and comparing it to the urban structure of Pula which is dominated by another Classical model.

Pula, like Zadar, is one of those cities whose Classical urban structure remained unchanged not only throughout the Middle Ages, but all the way down to the present. These towns are excellent examples of Classical continuity because they are mutually contrasted: Zadar as a perfect embodiment of a strict castrum type of city, a totally rationalized system of cardo and decumanus, of orthogonal crossing streets and the repetition of identical rectangular blocks of housing (insulae). On the other hand, located as it is on the foot of a hill, Pula has a segmented, circular and radial arrangement of streets. However, both towns have preserved their Classical structures.

Poreč also seems at the first glance even today a perfect model of continuity of a classical shape. Although originally built on a consistent classical orthogonal system of streets and housing blocks, Roman Parentium underwent an apparently small but structurally important change in the Middle Ages. It retained the classic Roman network of parallel streets crossing at right angles, but developed a new system of assembling locations: instead of two large squares typical of former Roman towns, — one of religious character, located at the tip of the peninsula, the other profane (commercial), placed next to the harbour — in the Middle Ages several small squares appeared at the crossings. Most interesting among them is the triangular square flanking the south facade of the Franciscan church (14th c) resulting from the need for a space for outdoor preaching so important for this preaching order. In fact, the first space to be used as such an “inner square” announcing the beginning of Early Medieval particularism was the rectangular atrium of Euphrasius’ basilica (6th c) instead of the fact that it was half-private and only during the day open to the public and belonged to the community. All these small interventions transformed the original Roman model of Parentium and created a new structure of Poreč: the monocentric Roman imperial city was transformed into a polycentric, typically feudal structure, a Medieval town, consisting of relatively independent small units connected in an additive manner.

The interpretation of these three Istrian examples can thus remind us of three basic models of Classical-Medieval interaction. The first — the Canon’s house in Poreč — represents the direct continuity of use and re-use of classical monuments, buildings and ambiances; the second — the Franciscan portal in Pula — sees Antiquity as a model, taking over and duplicating its motifs (mutatis mutandis); the third — the urban model of Poreč — is the result of transformation, a process in which any classical property can be used just as a starting point, a basis for a new departure.

1 Among others see, for example: PANOFSKY E. Renaissance and Renaisssances in Western Art, New York 1969 and GREENHALGH, M., The Classical Tradition in Art, New York 1970, both with very comprehensive bibliographies.

2 The relationship between Classical and Pre-Romanesque (in terms of “old” or “early” Croatian) art as a process of continuity has been extensively interpreted in several works and on numerous occasions especially by E. DYGVGE and M. PRELOG. Cf. DYGVGE, E., The History of Salontian Christianity, Oslo 1952 and PRELOG, M., Između antike i romanike (Between Antiquity and the Romanesque), Zagreb 1995. See also my recent contribution to the theme concerning the small Pre-Romanesque churches articulated inside with niches as continuity of Roman family mausoleums from Antonine epoch (2nd c., Isola Sacra, Ostia or necropolis under apsis of St. Peter’s church, Rome). IVANČEVIĆ, R., Predromaničke crkvice računanji nišuma — kontinuitet antičkih obiteljskih mauzoleja, Zbornik radova znanstvenog skupa Radanje hrvatskog kulturnog jeziga, Zagreb, 1996.

3 Cf. FRANKOVIĆ, E., Prilag upoznavanju odnosa romanike prema antičkoj umjetnosti u Dalmaciji (On the relation of romanesque to the classic art in Dalmatia), Peristil 2, Zagreb, 1957, discussing the vegetal and figurative reliefs of romanesque portals of Zadar Cathedral reproducing the motifs of a classic architrave incorporated in the interior of the church.

4 Cf. MUTNJIKOVIĆ, A., Slavoluk Sergijewca (Arch of the Sergii), Pula-Bijeka, 1989, p. 13. The author offers a thorough analysis of the monument as well as a complete bibliography. The arch was constructed about 25 B.C., inspired and modelled after the triumphal arches which Emperor Augustus

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Interpretirajoči dva dosad neobjavljena primjera kontinuiteta antičke kulture u umjetnosti XIII stoljeća — portal kanonske kuće u Poreču i portal franjevačke crkve u Pulu — autor analizira dvije različite metode pristupa antičkoj baštini u srednjem vijeku i dva karakteristična različita odnosa tradicije i inovacije u spomenutim djelima. U oba je slučaj kult starine pretpostavka preuzimanja antičkih fragmenta ili motiva, ali polazište umjetnika je različito.

Na fasadi kanonske kuće u Poreču (1251.) jednostavni ulaz oblok luka usjećen je u zidnu plohu po strogim kriterijima romaničke funkcionalnosti i izdvaja se od tekst nažna zida samo obrisom konstruktivnih dijelova; širokim monolitima dovršnika s plosnatim impostima i klinastim slaganim kameno- novima koji formiraju polukružni luk, kojen je vanjski obris silajst, što je tipično označa okvira otvora prelažnog roman- nikoćiškog stila. Portal je plošan i ne izlazi iz ravnine zidne plohe, a akcentiran je samo s tri mramorne bloka s plitkim reljefom niša sa školjkom raspoređena trokutno uokolo luka, za koje autor konstatira da su ranobizantska spolja VI st., što do sada nije bilo uočeno. U njih je prilikom sekundarne upotrebe uklasan latinski napisi u stihu i dataca. Uz likovni kriterij valorizacije umijeće i kriterij “vrijednost starosti” (A. Riegl “Alterswert”), u ovom je slučaju za korištenje antičkih frag- menata primarno bilo poštivanje kulta lokalne kršćanske tradi- cije, a uz to, sekundarnom upotrebom fragmenata što su neko bili u sakralnoj funkciji i kanonska je zgrada na izvjestan način bila “posvećena”. Raspored triju fragmenta kompozi- cijom podsjeća na trokutne zabele iznad polukružnih lunita ranoromaničkih portalja (npr. Sv. Petar u Supetarskoj Draj). Autor usput upozorava da fasada kuće kanonika — naj- monumentalnija zrelo romanička stambena zgrada sačuvana na istočnoj obali Jadran a šest bifora na kat — nije sačuvana
u izvornom stanju, jer su joj u prizemlju naknadno otvorena dva portala. Objavljuje, također, idejnu rekonstrukciju fasade, odnosno izvornu kompoziciju prizemlja koje je na desnoj strani (umjesto novog portala) imalo jedan pravokutni prozor, identičan s preostala tri i s njima u nizu (od kojeg je *in situ* sačuvan široki nadprozornik, djelomično oštećen), a na lijevoj strani, bio je drugi romanički portal širi od recentnog, ali uži i niži od glavnog, vjerojatno također završen polukružno, od kojeg je ostala u zidu vidljiva fuga jednog dovratnika. Ovaj drugi portal česta je pojava u romaničkoj gotičkoj stambenoj arhitekturi i po tradiciji služio je prvenstveno za iznošenje tijela pokojnika iz kuće. Više romaničkih fasada XIII st. s dva nejednačaka portala identificirao je I. Petricioli u Zadru.

U oblikovanju monumentalnog portala glavne fasade franjevačke crkve u Puli (1285.) kipar preuzima motiv lisnate vitice s nedalekog Luka Sergijevaca, iz I. st. Ovo citiranje dekorativnog motiva s poganskog spomenika na kršćanskom spomeniku protumačivo je isključivo po kriteriju valorizacije antičkog likovnog umijeća od strane srednjovjekovnog kipara. To je standardni primjer poštivanja umjetničke tradicije majstora unutar likovnog zanata, ali u novoj namjeni i s inovacijskim uklapanjem u novu kompozicijsku cjelinu portala. Autor upozorava da se i motiv valova (rakovica, kuka ili "pasjeg skoka") na okviru portala franjevačke crkve javlja u klasičnom obliku i veoma plitkom reljefu, kakvo nažalost na fragmentima antičkih arhitektonskih vrijenaca u Arheološkom muzeju Istre u Puli.

Kao treći temu odnosa antike i srednjeg vijeka autor podsjeća na svoj raniji prilog o odnosu antičke i srednjovjekovne bujane strukture Poreča (1964), analizirajući ga kao primjer dijalektičkog tradicijsko—innovacijskog modela odnosa prema antiču u velikom mjerilu, jer zadržava osnovnu uličnu mrežu *carda i decumanusa*, paralelnih i okomitih ulica što se sjeku pod pravim kutem, ali oslobađanja prostora na raskršćima za male trgovine i južno od franjevačke crkve (također kraj XIII. st.) za trokutni "propovjednički" trg, pretvarajući model mo nocentričkog antičkog grada u model policentričkog grada, po tipično srednjovjekovnom strukturnom "aditivnom" načelu, koji veće cjeline gradi zbrajanjem relativno samostalnih dije lova (u ovom slučaju "mjenskih zajednica", nalik okupljanju stambenih četvrti u bratovštine). Nasuprot tome, autor podsjeća na antičku urbanističku sliku Pule koja je zbog konfiguracije terena atripčna za rimsko urbanino planiranje — koncentričnim ulicama koje slijede izolirane brijegove i radijalne poprečno, ali se zadržala u srednjem vijeku i u kontinuitet do danas kao monacenstrički grad.