

Anna Tüskés, Budapest

## VENETIAN WELL-HEAD IN BLED

Venetian well-heads became increasingly popular in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> There was great demand for well-heads among European and overseas museums, the aristocracy, and private collectors.<sup>2</sup> During this period, as the supply of original pieces decreased, more and more copies and imitations appeared. As in most other European countries, there was also aristocratic interest in and demand for well-heads in Austria-Hungary.

There is a variety of forms among the Romanesque copies and imitations, and Venetian motifs are often mixed with other elements, mostly inspired by pattern books.<sup>3</sup> As the result of these combinations, the pieces vary considerably in forms and motifs. The use of pattern books containing unrelated groups of motifs led to the creation of carvings that are distinct from original pieces both in terms of form and decorative system. Copies and imitations are identifiable by taking into account three aspects: 1) the material the piece is made from; 2) the

<sup>1</sup> Anna TÜSKÉS, Venetian well-heads in nineteenth-century taste, *Sculpture Journal*, XIX/1, 2010, pp. 49–61; EADEM, The Well-Heads of the Schmidt Company, *Omnis creatura significans. Essays in Honour of Mária Prokopp* (ed. by Anna Tüskés), Budapest 2009, pp. 291–296.

<sup>2</sup> For a bibliography on Venetian well-heads see Alberto RIZZI, *Vere da pozzo di Venezia. I puteali pubblici di Venezia e della sua laguna*, Venezia 1981, 1992<sup>2</sup>, 2007<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> E. g. Giuseppe ANTONELLI, *Collezione de' migliori ornamenti antichi della città di Venezia. Coll'aggiunta di alcuni frammenti di gotica architettura*, Genova 1843; Carlo HEIDELHOFF – Lorenzo L'RBANI, *Raccolta De' Migliori Ornamenti Del Medio Evo E Profili Di Architettura Bizantina Disegnati*, Venice 1859; Gustav HEIDER – Rudolf von EITELBERGER – Josef HIESER, *Mittelalterliche Kunstdenkmale des Österreichischen Kaiserstaates II*, Stuttgart 1860, pp. 174–176; Jules GAILHABAUD, *L'architecture du V<sup>me</sup> au XVII<sup>me</sup> siècle et les arts qui en dépendent*, 3, Paris 1870, tabb. LIV–LVII; Ferdinando ONGANIA, *Raccolta di opere antiche sui disegni dei merletti di Venezia*, Venice 1878; Eugene COLLINOT – Adalbert de BEAUMONT, *Ornements vénitiens. Recueil dessins pour l'art et l'industrie*, Paris 1882, tabb. 3, 15–16; Charles ERRARD – Albert GAYET, *L'art byzantin d'après les monuments de l'Italie, de l'Istrie et de la Dalmatie, Vol. 4. Torcello*, Paris 1911, p. 24; Georg KOWALCZYK, *Dekorative Skulptur. Figur, Ornament, Architekturplastik aus den Hauptepochen der Kunst*, Berlin 1910.

similarity or dissimilarity of shapes and motifs to those of early medieval and Romanesque works; and 3) the stonecutting technique, which is closely related to its style. Even if the motifs had held particular meanings in the Middle Ages, nineteenth-century stonemasons were certainly unaware of this, and this is part of the reason that certain motifs were slightly transformed. Sculptors used existing forms and compositions as models, but they also invented new ones. Examination of the motifs also shows that nineteenth-century carvings often contain a significant number of modern motifs in addition to medieval elements.

Nineteenth-century motifs originate from earlier pieces; most of them also appear in medieval carvings. However, certain motifs are either unknown or do not occur in early medieval and Romanesque Venetian ornamental sculpture. The nineteenth-century masters also used motifs other than Venetian ones from other areas and periods, taken from contemporary pattern books. Motifs of different eras appear together in many nineteenth-century works. The nineteenth-century origin of a number of well-heads is also indicated by their style and stonecutting technique, in addition to the characteristics of the motifs used.

There is a well-head of white Istrian stone in the park near Lake Bled (Figs. 1–4), which was designed by Swedish landscape gardener Carl Gustav Swensson (1861–1910) in Bled (Germ. *Veldes*) in 1890. The well-head, which can be counted as part of the nineteenth-century art trade, has not been previously published.<sup>4</sup> While its provenance is unknown, the style of the relief carving is sufficiently specific to conclude that it derives from Venice and it was in all probability placed on the art market before 1890.

Before examining it in more detail, a word should be said about Carl Gustav Swensson. He received his primary education in artistic gardening from his father, the garden designer Anders Gustaf Swensson (1833–1911). He studied landscaping in Sweden and Germany. He designed many private gardens and parks in Sweden and abroad. He completed his first assignments in Würzburg and Zurich. Starting in 1887 he oversaw park layouts in Vienna, where he ranked

<sup>4</sup> I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Guido Tigler and Matej Klemenčič, who called my attention to the Bled well-head and offered their invaluable advice.



1. Venetian well-head in the park near Lake Bled, Bled.



2. Venetian well-head in the park near Lake Bled, Bled.



3. Venetian well-head in the park near Lake Bled, Bled.



4. Venetian well-head in the park near Lake Bled, Bled.

among the most sought-after experts. In addition to the park in Bled he also contributed to garden design at another spa, namely Marienbad (Cz. *Mariánské Lázně*), between 1901 and 1904.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Michael SCHWAHN, The Greenhouse of the Palace Okocim near Brzesko (Der Wintergarten im Schloss Okocim bei Brzesko), *Modus, Prace z Historii Sztuki (Modus, Studies on Arts History)*, VIII–IX, 2009, pp. 193–197; VIDEM, *Die Gartenarchitekten Jöns P. Lindahl (1843–1887) und Carl Gustav Swensson (1861–1910) – Leben und Werk, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung gestalterischer Prinzipien* (Dissertation, Technische Universität München, Lehrstuhl Landschaftsarchitektur und Entwerfen).



5. Venetian well-head in the Sárospatak castle park. Photograph taken before 1963.



6. Venetian well-head, Budapest Museum of Fine Arts.

The well-head is in good condition. It takes the form of a cylindrical drum, slightly tapered towards the bottom, and surmounted by a quadrangular upper element. This structure is a simplified form of the “Gothic” (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries) and “Lombardesque” (fifteenth to sixteenth centuries) well-heads, similar to capitals of columns. While the “Gothic” form has suspended arches on each side and the “Lombardesque” acanthus leaves on each corner, the Bled piece lacks these characteristic elements. A nineteenth-century well-head of pink Verona marble, now in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts, has a very similar structure;<sup>6</sup> this carving, bought in Venice by the

<sup>6</sup> Inv. no. 588.56. Height 66–69 cm, each side of top 82 cm. Cf. Le Musée des Beaux-Arts en 1963, *Bulletin du Musée National Hongrois des Beaux-Arts*, XXV, 1964, pp. 114, 178; Jolán BALOGH, Studi sulla collezione di sculture del Museo di Belle Arti di Budapest. VI., *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, XII, 1966, pp. 218–229, 272; EADEM, *Die ständige Ausstellung der Abteilung für Skulptur. Katalog in ungarischer und deutscher Sprache*. Museum der Bildende Künste, Budapest 1966, p. 7; EADEM, *Katalog der ausländischen Bildwerke des Museums der Bildenden Künste in Budapest IV.–XVIII. Jahrhundert*. I–II, Budapest 1975, p. 32, No. 5, Fig. 6; Gino VOLTOLINA, *Le antiche vere da pozzo veneziane*, Venezia 1981, fig. 24; RIZZI 1992<sup>2</sup>, cit. n. 2, p. 55.



7.1. Bird, detail of the Bled well-head



7.2. Bird, detail of the Budapest well-head

Windischgrätz princes and transported to the castle park of their castle in Sárospatak (Hungary) in the second half of the nineteenth century, arrived in the Museum in 1963 (Figs. 5–6).<sup>7</sup>

Its relief decoration consists of a rank of acanthus scrolls inhabited by birds and quadrupeds. This plant is surmounted by a different band of patterning on each side: a leaf scroll, a two-stranded twisted band with four-petal rosettes in the intervals, four-petal rosettes in circles, and a row of rhombs with a round button in the lattice. Below this is a sequence of half palmettes. Many of these motifs have a long history, some going back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. However, the main decorative concept of the Bled piece has no medieval parallel. Its decorative scheme is close to the Budapest well-head mentioned above: a three-stranded band with stylised acanthus leaves, flowers, birds, and quadrupeds in the intervals. The quadrangular upper element is decorated with a three-stranded band.

<sup>7</sup> Anna TÜSKÉS, *A velencei díszítő kőfaragás kérdései a koraközépkori és román kori kútkávák tükrében. Questions of Venetian Ornamental Sculpture in the Light of the Early Medieval and Romanesque Well-Heads*, Budapest 2009 (PhD Dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Arts, Doctoral School of Art History), cat. 71.

Proceeding to the analysis of the style and stonecutting technique, it is apparent that the Bled and the Budapest pieces show a very comparable range of decoration. Comparison of the birds and quadrupeds shows clearly that the two well-heads were probably carved in the same Venetian workshop in the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Fig. 7). The form, decoration, and stylistic details clearly prove the nineteenth-century origin of the Bled well-head.

To conclude, this paper not only contributes one more example to the stock of Venetian well-heads studied and published, it also indicates another feature concerning the genre: the inherited traditional forms and motifs transformed in the course of the nineteenth century, when the cult of Venice and the high demand for art resulted in a tendency to carve new pieces based on the surviving original medieval models.

Photo: Matej Klemenčič (Figg. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7.1), Hungarian National Office of Cultural Heritage (Fig. 5), Anna Tüskés (Figg. 6, 7.2)

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## | BENEŠKI VODNJAK (VERA DA POZZO) NA BLEDU

### Povzetek

V parku ob blejskem jezeru stoji še neobjavljena krona beneškega vodnjaka (vera da pozzo) iz belega istrskega kamna. Park je načrtoval švedski krajinski arhitekt Carl Gustav Swensson (1861–1910) leta 1890, vodnjak pa lahko uvrstimo med številne sorodne primerke, ki so nastali za potrebe umetnostnega trga v 19. stoletju. Provenienca vodnjaka je sicer neznana, a po slogu reliefa lahko sklepamo, da je prišel iz Benetk in da je bil na umetnostnem trgu pred letom 1890.

Cilindrično oblikovani vodnjak, nekoliko zožan spodaj in kronan s kvadratnim elementom, spominja na obliko kapitela. Reliefno dekoracijo sestavlja akantovo listovje s ptiči in štirinožnimi živalmi. Podobno strukturo in dekoracijo ima tudi 19. stoletni vodnjak iz rožnatega veronskega marmorja, ki ga hrani budimpeštanski Umetnostni muzej; zanj vemo, da so ga člani družine Windischgrätz kupili v Benetkah in v drugi polovici 19. stoletja postavili v parku svojega gradu v Sárospataku, v muzej pa je prišel leta 1963.

- 1–4. Beneški vodnjak v parku ob Blejskem jezeru, Bled (foto Matej Klemenčič, 2009).
5. Beneški vodnjak v grajskem parku Sárospatak (Madžarski nacionalni urad za kulturno dediščino, foto arhiv).
6. Beneški vodnjak, Budimpešta, Szépművészeti Múzeum (foto Anna Tüskés, 2005)
- 7.1. Ptič, detalj z blejskega vodnjaka
- 7.2. Ptič, detalj z blejskega vodnjaka