

Guan Liu: The Spatial Balance of Loggia

The loggia was one of the most symbolic and indispensable architectural components of the Italian Renaissance. Studies have been largely devoted to loggia's utilitarian function, such as the sheltered effect and monumental meanings, and its sociopolitical purposes. However, what interests me most is the formal analysis of the loggia. I prefer to regard a loggia as the spatial transition between a building's interior and exterior space. This is especially prominent within a garden context. In this regard, I chose the cloister of the *Convento di San Marco* as my case example for its representativeness, simplicity and purity. As a convent for Dominicans, it keeps a relatively austere appearance in the building environment, and the undecorated lofty facades enclose a courtyard from all sides with a giant pine standing alone at the center of it. Nevertheless, the beholders will not feel a sense of monotony within the space. This was partly thanks to the beige walls, that constitute the harmony of color with the sunshine in Tuscany, but more decisive factors are the loggia's handsome arches and the rhythmic shadow which breaks the plain vertical face with structural depth and thus endow the space with a dynamic and serene balance. To be specific, the balance is kept by many means, for instance, the roof and pillars of the loggia extrude into the courtyard about 1.5m versus the metope of the arches stretches back inside about 3m; the intermittent lunette murals compose a dark belt versus the continuously bright beige arches; and the loggia's massive roof and arches versus the delicate pillars which have the capitals just right at the golden section between the ground and the eaves of loggia. Maybe this is the so called Renaissance elegance.