

Body and Apparition: Material Presence in Sixteenth-Century Italian Religious sculpture

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2017

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Art History

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Abstract

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In early modern church interiors across the Italian peninsula, religious devotees gazed upon, spoke to, and touched sculptural sacred objects. These forms of contact reinforced the sensation of presence and communication between the devotee and the sacred figure, often inciting offerings of garlands, jewelry, and other adornment at many cult sites. Bound up in this religious practice, multiple materials are at work: in the offerings bequeathed—ephemera, wax, precious metals—but also in the sculptures themselves. Over the course of the sixteenth century, multiple artists and patrons used sculpture to underscore the sacred message of their subject matter through resonant materials: in the canonical materials of marble and bronze, but also in terracotta, wood, and wax. All of these materials have the potential to convey meaning. That confluence of subject and matter in Italian sacred spaces led to innovations of sculptural discourse across regions and media.

This dissertation addresses the position of sculpture in early modern acts of devotion. The case studies explore original installations and sacred ritual—specifically, how sculpture fit within the sacred interior—as well as the ways in which the medium physically, materially, and symbolically fostered a religious experience for early modern believers. This discussion begins with the Santa Casa di Loreto, or Holy House of the Virgin (1511-1579); Chapter One focuses

on how this cult site, seemingly composed of discordant materials, effectively transports the viewer into a biblical space, the home of the Virgin and supposed site of the Annunciation. Between crumbling bricks and polished marble, the Holy House combines a pilgrimage destination with an apparitional experience that is reinforced by the combination of material *trompe l'oeil* and tactile devotion. This multimedia experience appears also in the case of the Sacro Monte at San Vivaldo (ca. 1500-1530). As the first case study of Chapter Two, this Tuscan holy site combines innovations of sculpture and architecture to guide and instruct the visiting pilgrim through the stages of Christ's life, death and resurrection. Again, touch and physical proximity reinforce the sacred message. Conversely, the second case study of this chapter, Antonio Begarelli's *Deposition* in Modena (1531), compounds its sacred meaning through multiple material references. Through the surface treatment of the sculptures, Begarelli visually transforms his terracotta bodies into marble, and as such the artist conveys twice as many symbolic referents as would a single medium. Finally, this dissertation concludes with Chapter Three and two marble altarpieces: Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* (1514-1521), and Francesco da Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (1522-1526). As with the Santa Casa and Begarelli, marble assumes multiple material significances, referring to antiquity, immortality, and the immateriality of the apparition. The case studies explored in this dissertation illuminate the multivalence of sculptural imagery across sixteenth-century Italy in an effort to reveal the divine presence in sacred space.

Acknowledgments

A dissertation is never completed alone—we all rely on a web of support systems and institutions that make our research possible. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people and resources that have contributed to this dissertation.

First of all, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Stuart Lingo, for his consistent support throughout my graduate studies. Professor Lingo's open acceptance and enthusiasm for my research ideas have allowed me to fully engage in this material study. Furthermore, the skills gained over the past eight years working with Professor Lingo at the University of Washington—including teaching, writing, and independent research—will act as the foundation of my academic career. I would also like to express my deepest esteem for the members of my dissertation committee: Professors Estelle Lingo, Ivan Drpić, Ann Huppert, and Mary O'Neil. Their diverse backgrounds in the academic fields of art history, architecture, and history have greatly contributed to the depth of ideas conveyed in this dissertation. I thank you.

I would also like to thank the institutions that have facilitated this research; first and foremost, the University of Washington, as my home institution, and specifically the Department of Art + Art History + Design. Furthermore, I thank the de Cillia family, the Pell family, and the Nordstrom Foundation for creating awards in teaching, researching, and graduating with honors, all of which have funded the research presented in this dissertation. With regard to research institutions, I would like to thank the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Medici Archives Project, and the Dutch Institute in Florence for their support of burgeoning scholarship. Within these institutions, I would like to offer special thanks to Doctors Alessio Assonitis, Sheila Barker, Maurizio Arfaioli, and Elena Brizio, as well as Professors Michael Kwakkelstein and Gert Jan van der Sman for their guidance.

A number of professors from my undergraduate experience at Smith College also deserve an honorable mention, as early advocates for my graduate career. Professors Giovanna Bellesia, Alfonso Procaccini, Federica Anichini, John E. Moore, and Barbara Kellum all acted as positive influences and role models, helping me to envision a future in academia. Their investment in me speaks to the college's mission, but also to each person's inherent kindness and passion for education.

On a personal note, I would like to offer my deepest thanks to my family: my parents, my partner, and my many friends from childhood through college and beyond. You are all the bedrock of my being (and the source of my sanity!). To my graduate school compatriots, Tiffany Lynn Hunt, Devon Baker, Lindsay Alberts, Anna Wager, and Susan Dine, thank you for taking the time to field ideas and read drafts. Your consistent optimism and support will never be forgotten.

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Introduction

...ac in Oratorio horti S. Michaelis dicte Civitatis ante Imaginem Crucifixi humiles, ac devotas preces porrexerat...¹

...and in the Oratory of Orsanmichele the people offered humble, devout prayers before the Image of the Crucifix...

-Papal Bull regarding the canonization of Saint Antoninus,
Pope Clement VII de' Medici, November 26, 1523

On the day of his coronation, one of Giulio de' Medici's first actions as Pope Clement VII included the final canonization of the Florentine Dominican, Saint Antoninus.² In the papal bull commemorating the occasion, the Pope recounted the life and accomplishments of the man, as well as the circumstances of the saint's conversion, at that time believed to be tied to a fourteenth-century sculpted *Crucifixion* erected within the Florentine Oratory of Orsanmichele (Image 1). In the anecdote quoted above, Clement acknowledges the local Florentine tradition gathering before this sculpted image, effectively reenacting the young saint's devotion. According to the early narratives of Antoninus' life, the future Dominican Archbishop of Florence heard the words of Christ through the miraculous sculpture housed within the oratory, in what was then a prominent epicenter of the civic and religious community. After Antoninus' death in 1459, his followers in the Observant Dominican order at San Marco made yearly

¹ Thomás Ripoll and Antonin Brémond eds., *Bullarium Ordinis FF. Praedicatorum: Ab anno 1484 ad 1549. Sub auspiciis SS. D.N.D. Clementis XII, Pontificis Maximi, opera reverendissimi patris F. Thomae Ripoll, Magistri Generalis, editum* (Rome: Ex typographia Hieronymi Mainardi, 1732), 419.

² Canonization began under Pope Leo X de' Medici in 1515, and continued through the brief reign of Adrian VI. For a complete narrative of the path to sainthood, see Mauro Mussolin, "La promozione del culto di Sant'Antonino al tempo di Leone X e Clemente VII e i progetti di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane per la chiesa di San Marco," in *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459): La figura e l'opera di un santo arcivescovo nell'Europa del Quattrocento, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi storici (Firenze, 25-28 novembre 2009)*, edited by Luciano Cinelli and Maria Pia Paoli (Florence: Nebrini, 2010), 509-532.

pilgrimages to Orsanmichele, on what would become the Saint's feast day, to honor the object as well as the man.³ The tradition continued through the seventeenth century, as detailed in Lodovico Giamboni's *Sacro diario* of 1700, which describes daily devotions throughout the city of Florence in accordance with the Catholic calendar of saints. Giamboni maintains the Antonine association with Orsanmichele and the community efforts to recreate Saint Antoninus' actions before the *Crucifixion*.⁴ Devout prayers were favorably received at this sacred site: those who honored the image of Christ with a recitation of the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* hymn received an indulgence of seven years out of Purgatory, a bequest that dates back into the fourteenth century.⁵

Clement's and Giamboni's acknowledgments of the associations between man and object are compelling. Even so, no extant documentation from the lifetime of Saint Antoninus attests to his sacred communion with the crucified Christ at Orsanmichele. This lack of evidence is troubling for many modern scholars in search of the factual history of the Florentine saint. Since the eighteenth century, many scholars have either denounced or entirely omitted the association

³ Giuseppe Richa also comments on enduring Dominican devotion at Orsanmichele, citing the erection of a golden baldachin over the *Crucifixion* in 1714. Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine, divise ne' suoi quartieri*, Vol. I (Rome: Multigrafica Editrice s.r.l., 1989), 25.

⁴ "9 maggio ... Festa all'Oratorio d'Or. S. Michele, all'Altare del Crocifisso, avanti nel quale, il glorioso S. Antonino, quand'era fanciullo, ed andava alla scuola [sic], veniva quotidianamente a fare Orazione." Lodovico Giamboni, *Diario Sacro e guida perpetua per visitare le Chiese della Città di Firenze, e suoi sobborghi in tutt'i giorni dell'Anno, e per sapere le feste, che vi si celebrano l'Indulgenze perpetue che vi s'acquistano, e gl'Esercizi di devozione, e pietà che vi si fanno* (Florence: stamperia d'Iacopo Guiducci, 1700), 94-95. The association is reiterated in a nineteenth-century *Diario Sacro* compiled by Luigi Santoni: "Maggio 2 ... Festa nella Chiesa Propositura di S. Michele in Orto, scuoprendovisi l'Immagine del SS. Crocifisso, che dicesi essere stato adorato da detto Santo [Saint Antoninus] – Indulg. plen. in tutte le Chiese dell'Ordine." Luigi Santoni, *Diario sacro e guida perpetua delle feste principali delle chiese della città, suburbio ed arcidiocesi Fiorentina* (Florence: Tipografia archivescovile, 1853), 35.

⁵ For a discussion of the indulgences associated with the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, see Diane Finiello Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, S.p.A., 1996), 150. The case of the *Crucifixion* is discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

between Antoninus and the sculpted *Crucifixion*.⁶ Such efforts to divorce the holy man from the physical object raise important questions concerning both the intentions of the early conversion story and the assumptions of much modern scholarship.

The urge to illuminate the real history of Antoninus' devotion—to pinpoint his actual moment of conversion—is laudable within the framework of theological history. The growing distance between saint and sculpture, however, inadvertently severs the early modern man from the popular cult oriented around him. At the moment of his death, Antoninus' body was treated much like the Orsanmichele *Crucifixion*: Pope Pius II Piccolomini bequeathed seven years of indulgences to those who prayed beside and kissed the body of the deceased.⁷ Therefore, as early as 1459, locals revered the saintly body in a manner commensurate with the image to which the saint was reportedly devoted. Representations uniting the saint and the Orsanmichele sculpture throughout the early modern period highlight the ease with which Catholic devotees associated contemporary holy figures with longstanding traditions of object devotion. And at the heart of this particular devotion to Antoninus, there lies a sculpture.

The extent to which scholars combat the narrative of the Orsanmichele *Crucifixion* in Antoninus' saintly calling paradoxically reinforces the once dominant belief in the power of the sculpture. By virtue of its materials, construction, and physical presence, sculpture compels devotion by pushing into the space of the viewer. The effect is visceral, inciting visual, tactile, and even audible acknowledgment of the saintly figure portrayed. These interactions of physical contact, adornment, and vocalized prayer illuminate how three-dimensional imagery encourages

⁶ In fact, doubts regarding the speaking *Crucifixion* appear as early as in the work of the Jesuit scholar Giuseppe Richa: “*Non ci pare però di potere acconsentire a chi senza autorevole documento disse, che quel Crocifisso parlasse più fiate al Santo...*” Richa, *Notizie*, Vol. I, 25.

⁷ Vittoria Camelliti, “Antonino Pierozzi: “patrono” tra i “petroni” di Firenze,” in *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459)*, 457.

a personal, devotional experience. As with painted icons, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sculpture maintained intimate, spontaneous communication in Catholic interiors beyond the ritual daily procession of Church-sanctioned masses.

This dissertation reconstructs the position and power of sculpture in religious spaces. I seek to illuminate how sculptures functioned as foci of devotion across the sixteenth century, with a particular focus on the materials composing the image. Over the course of three chapters, this dissertation will address five case studies: in Chapter One, I will focus on the Santa Casa di Loreto, or the Holy House of the Virgin, an architecturally and sculpturally rich pilgrimage site combining weathered brick and polished stone, located on the eastern coast of the Italian peninsula. In Chapter Two, the Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo will be the first of two case studies regarding terracotta, in itself a central Tuscan pilgrimage destination filled with polychromatic terracotta renditions of holy figures; the second case study will address the material-defying creations of the Emilian artist Antonio Begarelli, including his *Deposition* in Modena. Similarly, Chapter Three will be split between Michelangelo's white marble *Risen Christ* in Rome and the referential meaning of a compositional copy located at Santo Spirito in Florence; and finally, the Florentine Francesco da Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* altarpiece and its rich history of veneration at Orsanmichele.

The five case studies address three principal objectives. First, each study examines the circumstances regarding a sculpture's inception, as well as the object's independent history within sacred space. Research includes primary- and secondary-source documentation, including church records, *Sacri diari*, and eyewitness accounts, together with signs of wear and ritual use visible upon the object itself. This textual and visual documentation illustrates the independent "life" of the devotional object, its interpretation, and investment into local culture. Second, the

case studies seek to confront the materiality of the three-dimensional sacred image, how the physical makeup of the representation references and augments its subject. For example, marble can evoke the accomplishments of ancient Rome; it can convey concepts such as permanence, endurance, and immortality; and it can also make symbolic gestures to ephemeral elements—such as cloud or light—through its brilliant, reflective surface. Material decisions on the part of the artist or commissioner have the power to mold the perception and experience of the viewer. Thirdly, the specific focus on sixteenth-century sculptural installations as foci of devotion seeks to highlight the simultaneous exaltation and acceptance of three-dimensional imagery in Catholic practice. I propose that the pointed use of sculpture in sacred interiors and at pilgrimage destinations reinforces the Catholic faith in an era of burgeoning religious reform. Overall, I seek to demonstrate that sixteenth-century sculptural altarpieces express religious subject matter through a combination of form, function, and perhaps most importantly, material. Through the physical make-up of each composition, sculpture resonates with multiple meanings that equivocally convey divine presence into the religious interior.

In early modern records regarding cult sites, the sacred image or object is almost unilaterally referred to as an “*immagine*.” This blanket term makes the reconstruction of altered sacred interiors quite challenging because of its material evasion: for example, does a specific document allude to a painting or a sculpture?⁸ The choice of this term was intentional, conflating all artistic media under the umbrella of the “image,” as approved religious foci supported by the

⁸ For example, the contract for Francesco da Sangallo’s *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* composition, discussed in Chapter Three, is annotated with the quick phrase “*ymagine s[an]ta anna*” in the left margin. Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF), Notarile Antecosimiano, vol. 9777, folio 287v.

Second Council of Nicaea, and therefore distinct from the “idol.”⁹ As a result, this term associates a wide array of artistic materials, equating sculptural installations of marble, bronze, terracotta, or wood together with two-dimensional painted icons. In accordance with this ambiguity, throughout this dissertation I will use “cult image” in reference both sculptural and painted sacred imagery. This choice is purposeful: I seek to return the sculptural object to its religious connotations, regardless of its material, and examine the object’s sacred value *in situ* on par with painted counterparts.¹⁰

Recent scholarship in the study of cult objects, such as Megan Holmes’ work on renaissance Florence, has explored the cultural and religious infrastructure that promoted and maintained cult sites across the medieval and early-modern city.¹¹ Holmes’ study tracks a series of “cultic accretions,” the remnants of personal communication with devotional objects through ephemeral and permanent gifts documented or otherwise extant at cult sites. Throughout the project, Holmes focuses her attention almost exclusively on painted icons and the tradition of votive offerings bequeathed to these images.¹² Her choice is logical, given the rich documentary history and well-known miracle narratives across the community: the *Madonna degli occhi grossi*, the Orsanmichele *Tabernacle of the Virgin*, and, most famously, the *Santissima Annunziata* fresco within the church bearing the same name. All three actively shaped the sacred

⁹ Eric Thunø, *Image and Relic: Mediating the Sacred in Early Medieval Rome*, (Rome: Erma di Bretschneider, 2002), 129-156. For renaissance approaches to idolatry, see Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach, eds., *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2009); Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 44-45. Special thanks to Estelle Lingo for her guidance regarding this issue.

¹⁰ I make use of the word ‘icon’ in reference to Early Christian or Byzantine cult imagery, in accordance with Holmes. I also use this term to reference those medieval or early modern objects believed to be the work of Saints Luke or Nicodemus (in two or three dimensions).

¹¹ Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

¹² Holmes does address briefly the tradition of the Bianchi processional crucifixes. Her analysis is understandably brief, given the paucity of primary documentation and disputed identification of extant wooden crucifixes across the city. Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*, 47-49.

institutions of Florence through wide-ranging acts of popular devotion. This dissertation at once builds and diverges from the scholarly precedent of Holmes by addressing the fate of similar sculptural devotional sites: as in the case of the *Crucifixion* at Orsanmichele, how and why did early modern viewers engage with three-dimensional installations in sacred spaces across the sixteenth century, and in what ways did those interactions shape religious devotion?

In the search for scholarly models to approach three-dimensional imagery, Caroline Walker Bynum's *Christian Materiality* has emerged as an emblematic examination of personal and communal cult ritual. Bynum identifies a shift in medieval religious representation, from a materialistic, apotropaic symbolism in the early medieval period to an increasing dependence upon visionary experience in the high and late medieval eras.¹³ The author reveals in her study the underlying material preoccupation of that visionary experience. The very "stuff" of the sacred image—the texture of the wooden panel, the colorful pigment—paradoxically promotes the divinity of the representation. The "thingness" of the object, as in its materiality, negates any misinterpretation of the image-as-God, even as the physical make-up of the object—composed of materials created by God—is inherently divine. In this respect, cult objects "disclose, not merely signify, a power that lies beyond."¹⁴

This dissertation seeks to reevaluate the arguments presented in Bynum's text in that the author distinguishes this medieval materialism from that of the renaissance. According to Bynum, renaissance artists prioritized *trompe l'oeil* effects that subsume the physical properties of the sacred image. She concludes that the materials of sacred imagery decrease in value in deference for the visual illusion. While I concede the author's point, I interpret the shift in

¹³ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 19.

¹⁴ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 35.

material perception differently. Renaissance artists and patrons indicate a similar, if not growing preoccupation with material construction by using *trompe l'oeil* techniques that effectively multiply the material references. For example, a terracotta composition coated in white clay, as Antonio Begarelli's *Deposition* discussed in Chapter Two, becomes a sculpture conceivably composed of both terracotta and marble. This material indeterminacy invests the three-dimensional representation with an array of meaning intended to heighten the religious experience overall.

The approach to sculpture as a conduit for early-modern religious practice has already emerged in select scholarly publications, such as the work of Alexander Nagel, Linda Ann Nolan, and Allison Terry-Fritsch.¹⁵ In his *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, Nagel couples Michelangelo's interest in antique precedent with a return to "traditional" Christian motifs, such as the *imago pietatis* (the Man of Sorrows), in pursuit of a form of religious representation that exalts the pristine nature of the body of Christ.¹⁶ The permanence of the material of white marble enhances the perceived eternal nature of the Son of God. From this vantage, Nagel asserts that critical aspects of the era's humanist antique revival should be understood as a "modality of Christian Reform," wherein the intellectual interactions with antiquity are interpreted and absorbed into contemporary, Christian visual language.¹⁷ In *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, Nagel continues this analysis of three-dimensional representation, arguing for a resurgent interest in sculpture circa 1500 as a potent religious medium.

¹⁵ Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Linda Ann Nolan, "Touching the Divine: Mobility, Devotion, and Display of Religious Objects in Early Modern Rome" (PhD Diss., University of Southern California, 2010); Allison Terry-Fritsch, "Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo," *Open Arts Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014): 111-132.

¹⁶ Nagel, *Michelangelo*, 17-20, 49-77.

¹⁷ Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 147.

Linda Ann Nolan’s study of the social history of sculpture, specifically the legacy of touch in sacred space, pinpoints the cult value of the sacred object. Nolan traces the history of physical interaction and adornment of two- and three-dimensional imagery across the city of Rome. Though the sculptures involved are monochromatic, the multimedia effect of early modern devotion—the crowns, jewelry, brocades, and garlands of flowers draped over the sculpted body—shaped the visual impact of sacred sculpture. Simply put, the modern assumption of monochromatic, pristine imagery is foreign to the polychromatic and interactive sixteenth-century experience.¹⁸ In this respect, white marble sculptures were treated similarly to the richly colored terracotta and wooden sculptural installations across the peninsula. As Terry-Fritsch discusses, the multimedia and multicolored spaces of the Sacred Mountain pilgrimage site at Varallo underscore the interactive nature of sculptural installations and the personal approximation of the pilgrim to the sacred bodies represented, linking the performative body with that of the viewer.¹⁹

Christine Göttler’s investigations into the Sacro Monte at Varallo trace not only the evolution of the pilgrimage site, but also its interactive function.²⁰ The series of chapel spaces at Varallo are populated with sculpted wooden and terracotta bodies and an array of frescoed compatriots. The earlier chapels on site were intentionally open for physical entrance, allowing for the “somaesthetic” experience asserted by Terry-Fritsch.²¹ Göttler explains how these interiors garnered “cultic accretions,” much like the miracle-working images in Florence.

¹⁸ For example, Nolan explores the rich, tactile history of the Madonna del Parto at Sant’Agostino in Rome. Nolan, “Touching the Divine,” 109-129.

¹⁹ Terry-Fritsch, “Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind,” 112-113.

²⁰ Christine Göttler, “The Temptation of the Senses at the Sacro Monte di Varallo,” in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, 393-451. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013.

²¹ Terry-Fritsch, “Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind,” 112.

Devotional graffiti, scratched into the frescoed walls of the Chapel of Calvary for example, speaks to this desire to leave behind a remnant of the pilgrim's body or identity in the sacred interior.²²

Compelling sculpture, echoed in the works at Varallo, historically precede the adoption of marble or bronze across the Italian peninsula by over two centuries. Tuscan and Lombard traditions of wooden and terracotta compositions offered myriad opportunities for tactile communion.²³ Rather than looking at the growing fifteenth- and sixteenth-century trends for marble and bronze as “canonical media” departing from the polychromatic past,²⁴ scholars such as Bruce Boucher and Giorgio Bonsanti reevaluate these earlier media as forerunners of the compelling, life-sized imagery of the sixteenth century, and the humanist response to antiquity. Each scholar's investigation of terracotta complicates the peripheral status of the sculptural material.²⁵ Bonsanti in particular stresses the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century value judgements that have overshadowed terracotta's inclusion in any cross-medial sculptural discourse, and the subsequent contemporary studies that have sought to rehabilitate the material.²⁶ He traces this discourse through R.W. Lightbown and Kathleen Weil-Garris, along with increasingly sensitive material studies, such as the work of Jennifer Montagu, in an effort to

²² Göttler, “The Temptation of the Senses,” 404-406.

²³ For more on the wooden tradition, see: Jacopo Lorenzelli, *Custode dell'immagine: Scultura Lignea Europea XII-XV secolo* (Bergamo: Galleria Lorenzelli, 1987); E. Carli, *La scultura lignea italiana. Dal XII al XIV Secolo* (Milan: Electa, 1960); Margrit Lisner, *Holzkruzifixe in Florenz und in der Toskana von der Zeit um 1300 bis zum frühen Cinquecento* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1970).

²⁴ Frank Fehrenbach, “Coming Alive: Some Remarks on the Rise of “Monochrome” Sculpture in the Renaissance,” *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2011): 47-55.

²⁵ Bruce Boucher, ed., *Earth and Fire: Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Giorgio Bonsanti, Francesca Piccinini, *Emozioni in terracotta. Guido Mazzoni, Antonio Begarelli: Sculture del Rinascimento emiliano* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore S.p.A., 2009).

²⁶ In this respect, the fate of Antonio Begarelli's oeuvre illuminates the demotion of the sculptural material. See the second case study of Chapter Two.

overturn the lingering perception of material inadequacy.²⁷ This dissertation will endeavor to continue this trajectory by opening a dialogue between terracotta and marble sculptural studies.

Preconceived notions of separation between media have compartmentalized the field of sculptural history into camps devoted to such materials as marble, bronze, and terracotta. These divisions have directly hampered the study of sculptural innovation because each separate historiographic thread risks missing the results of cross-medial engagement. Material divisions undervalue the overarching conceptual changes that took place across the sixteenth century. Through a careful exploration of sculptural materials, both literal and implied, this dissertation demonstrates how sculptures engage and catalyze overarching themes of early modern sculptural discourse.

Of course, any study crossing such divisions must take into account the recent innovations in material studies. From the seminal texts of Michael Baxandall and Thomas Raff, art historical scholarship has increasingly recognized the impact of materials on viewer experience.²⁸ The combination of proto-scientific studies, humanist translations and interpretations of ancient sources, and perceived miraculous occurrences all invest the physical matter of sculpture with a resonance otherwise lost on the modern viewer. The seven premises for material studies laid out by Michael Cole in his chapter, “The Cult of Materials,” eloquently traces the studies of real and fictive materials expressed through various artistic media, the value

²⁷ Bonsanti and Piccinini, *Emozioni in Terracotta*, 21-22. R.W. Lightbown, “Correggio and Begarelli: A Study in Correggio Criticism,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1964): 7-21. Kathleen Weil-Garris, “Were this Clay but Marble... a Reassessment of Emilian Terracotta Group Sculpture,” in *Atti del congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte*, Vol. 4, 61-79 (Bologna: 1979); Jennifer Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). For more on the craft of sculptural composition, see Marjorie Trusted, ed., *The Making of Sculpture: The Materials and Techniques of European Sculpture* (London: V&A Publications, 2007).

²⁸ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe* (Munich: Dt. Kunstverl., 1994); see also Malcolm Baker’s “Limewood, Chiromancy and Narratives of Making. Writing about the materials and processes of sculpture,” *Art History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1998): 498-530.

of material investigations in current feminist and linguistic studies, and the impact of materiality on acts of preservation and restoration.²⁹ Scholars such as Georges Didi-Huberman and Ann Dunlop explain how fictive, painted stones append material meaning—like the ancient belief in the generative quality of stone—to sacred subject matter.³⁰ Our recognition of this “material turn,” like the linguistic turn of the late 20th century, recognizes that materials and their associations act upon the viewer, as the structure of language shapes discourse.³¹ With careful analyses of individual works of art, modern scholarship can better excavate into the layers of material messaging encoded within compositional matter.

With regard to sculpture’s display and context on altars and in chapel spaces, baroque art historical studies greatly impact the objectives of this discussion. Scholars such as Fabio Barry have approached seventeenth-century religious interiors—in many cases the work of Gianlorenzo Bernini—as concerted spaces wherein multiple materials support a conceptual experience.³² Barry’s investigation of the Cornaro Chapel in Rome, for example, demonstrates the breadth of symbolism conveyed through “paintings in stone:” as sources of divine imagery (naturally occurring *Acheiropoieta*), and evocations of the heavenly Jerusalem.³³ Bernini’s

²⁹ Michael Cole, “The Cult of Materials,” in *Revival and Invention: Sculpture through its Material Histories*, edited by Sébastien Clerbois and Martina Droth (Bern: International Academic Publishers, 2011), 1-15. For more on Michael Cole’s study of materiality, see Cole and Zorach, *The Idol in the Age of Art*.

³⁰ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. Jane Marie Todd, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Anne Dunlop, “On the Origins of European Painting Materials, Real and Imagined,” in *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250-1750*, edited by Christy Anderson, Anne Dunlop and Pamela H. Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 68-96.

³¹ For a concise study on the history of the “linguistic turn,” see John E. Toews, “Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: the Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience,” *American History Review*, 92, no. 4 (1987): 879-907.

³² Barry addresses the cupola and its religious relevance, in Fabio Barry, “Lux Lumen: The symbolism of real and represented light in the Baroque Dome,” *Kritische Berichte; Mitteilungsorgan des Ulmer Vereins Verband für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Vol. 30 (2002): 22-37. See also Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf, “Life Transformed: Performative Meaning, Analogy, and the Art of Bernini’s Funerary Chapel Decorations,” *Konsthistorisk tidskrift / Journal of Art History*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (2012): 2-30; Mark S. Weil, “The Devotion of the Forty Hours and Roman Baroque Illusions,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 37 (1974): 218-248.

³³ Fabio Barry, “‘I marmi loquaci’: Painting in Stone,” *Daidalos*, Vol. 56 (1995): 106-121.

similar use of natural light as an active material in sacred space highlights the seemingly levitating Saint Theresa and the Angel while transforming the gilt wooden beams and fictive alabaster behind the sculptural group into rays of divine light and undulating cloud.³⁴ Such medial interplay in these seventeenth-century interiors can better explain those of the prior century. These earlier chapels, altars or pilgrimages locations must have served as inspiration—or, at the very least, served as a foil—for the conceptual leaps of later seventeenth-century innovators.³⁵

In bringing medieval object-oriented analyses forward, and pushing baroque spatial investigations backwards, this dissertation reevaluates the religious and cultural climate of the sixteenth century. Pilgrimage to, and interaction with, sculpture at sacred sites indelibly impacted the early modern religious experience. Likewise, the materials of these sculptural installations serve the dual purpose of physical representation and symbolic referent.

The possible confrontations between Catholic Reform thought and the medium of sculpture in sacred space is the final piece of this historical puzzle. Martin Luther's *95 Theses* of 1517 mark the start of the Protestant Reformation, which led to growing criticism and Protestant breaks with the Catholic Church over the course of the sixteenth century. At the outset, Martin Luther was not perceived as a particularly compelling threat: the Catholic Church already had quelled many reform-minded communities, including the Waldensians, Lollards and Hussites, not to mention the brief theocracy of Girolamo Savonarola.³⁶ What differentiated Luther from

³⁴ Barry, "I marmi loquaci," 110-118; Fabio Barry, "Sculpture in Painting / Painting in Sculpture (Italy, ca. 1485-1660)," in *Sculpture in Painting*, edited by Penelope Curtis (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2010), 13-19.

³⁵ John Shearman alluded to this conversation in his examination of the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal at San Miniato al Monte in Florence. John Shearman, *Only Connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 77-81.

³⁶ Whitford, David M., "The Papal Antichrist: Martin Luther and the Underappreciated Influence of Lorenzo Valla," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2008): 26-52; Bynum, 163-168.

previous reformers was the benefit of distance from the Papal States, protection by a sympathetic ruler, and resounding support from other Catholics dissatisfied with the inconsistencies of Catholic doctrine and administration. As more communities broke with Rome, the Protestant reevaluation of sacred imagery and its relevance to religion led to the removal and/or complete destruction of many Catholic images in the north, and forced a confrontation with sacred foci within the Catholic Church.

In this climate of heightened criticism, I perceive sculpture as an increasingly pro-Catholic medium in the era of Protestant Reform. In the middle and late-sixteenth century, many key Catholic Reformers that responded to Protestant accusations were also supporters of materially resonant sculptural installations. The reformists associated with Loreto, for example Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti, Pope Paul III Farnese, and Saint Carlo Borromeo, support the Holy House as a powerful site of structural and sculptural devotion. Likewise, I argue that the Observant Franciscans of Modena used Begarelli's *Deposition* as an implicit pro-Catholic declaration in a community where Protestant ideas circulated widely. By posing this interpretation of sculpture as Catholic responses to Protestant misgivings, I do not mean to imply that every sculpture discussed in this dissertation was constructed for the purpose of declaring the Catholic position in the Age of Reform. Rather, I would like to suggest that religious sculpture increasingly becomes a signifier for the Catholic faith in the face of the progressive exclusion of visual foci from Protestant sacred space. Sculpture's destruction in the north, so provocatively recounted in circulating *avvisi* of the era,³⁷ become object martyr narratives that incite devotion to the medium. Just as the materials of sculpture convey multiple sentiments

³⁷ One is reminded of the dramatic imprisonment and "public execution" of the sculptural icons of the Virgins of Walsingham, Cavesham, and Ipswich in England in 1538. Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 224.

simultaneously, the very presence of three-dimensional imagery in Catholic interiors also garners meaning.

The expansive questions laid down in this dissertation have forced careful winnowing of the field. In my choice of case studies, I have eschewed examples of memorial—what is most often associated with sculptural history—in deference for case-studies on altarpieces, cult loci, or pilgrimage sites in urban and rural contexts. These sculptures are the visual remnants of religious practice, where the object is the recipient of spontaneous or proscribed cultic interaction. Coupled with archival documentation, the works themselves detail early modern approaches to three-dimensional foci of devotion. Sensitive material appraisals of these sacred sculptures and their encompassing contexts reveal how artists and patrons sought to elaborate visually and materially on the compositional subject matter portrayed.

Almost all of the cases under discussion are associated with known sculptors. For example, the *Risen Christ* in Rome is as much a “Michelangelo,” a work prioritized for its artistic associations, as it is a representation of the Savior. That tension of artistic authorship invariably affects many sacred images produced across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Titian, for example, was known by mid-sixteenth century as the creator of the miracle-working *Christ Carrying the Cross* cult image at the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice.³⁸ Similarly, Donatello’s *Crucifixion* at Santa Maria dei Servi in Padua began enacting miracles and garnering votive bequests in the early sixteenth century.³⁹ These instances of accepted artistic attribution

³⁸ Christopher Nygren, “Titian’s Miracles: Artistry and Efficacy between the San Rocco *Christ* and the Accademia Pietà,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (2015): 321-349.

³⁹ Francesco Caglioti, “Donatello miracoloso: il Crocifisso ligneo dei Servi,” in *Atti e Memorie dell’Accademia Galileiana di scienze lettere ed arti in Padova* (Padua: Presso la Sede dell’Accademia, 2010), 59-85; Andrea Nante, Marica Mercalli, eds, *Donatello svelato: Capolavori a confronto. Il Crocifisso di Santa Maria dei Servi a Padova e il suo restauro* (Venice: Marsilio, 2015). See the first case study of Chapter Three.

coupled with miraculous narratives reframe intellectual artistic discourse as a conduit of devotion. Particularly in the case of Michelangelo, the “divinity” of the artist genius cannot be entirely separated from the divine nature of the sculptural body.⁴⁰

The first chapter of the dissertation explores the Santa Casa di Loreto, the Holy House of the Virgin Mary that is believed to have travelled miraculously from Palestine to the Adriatic Italian town of Loreto. The Holy House simultaneously behaved as a biblical edifice and as an objectified sculpture. The sacred site is the product of a multi-regional sculptural workshop whose concerted efforts enshrined the structure at the crossing of the Loretan Cathedral over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Holy House and its legacy of pre- and post-Tridentine papal approval sets a standard of religious sculptural installation, matched across the century by the other case-study subjects of this dissertation. But the decision to enshrine the structure offers more than a reliquary case for the Holy House: the marble exterior demarcates a biblical location, a permeable sacred space. Simultaneously, the materials decorating the structure manifest a miraculous moment to be encountered by the early modern pilgrim, perpetually enacting the structure’s divine arrival to Loreto. The medium of sculpture and the materials used in its fabrication play integral roles in the sacred narrative of the Loretan site, encapsulating the impact of invasive, three-dimensional imagery within sacred space.

The second chapter of the dissertation, entitled “Transformative Media,” approaches the issue of cross-medial and cross-cultural influence manifested in sculptural imagery. The first of the two case studies addresses the Sacro Monte of San Vivaldo, located southwest of the city of Florence. Sacri Monti, or Sacred Mountains, were major Italian pilgrimage sites nestled in rural pockets of the Apennine steps across northern Italy. Each of these pilgrimage sites showcase

⁴⁰ For more on this conversation, see the first case study of Chapter Three.

chapels recreating scenes from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his followers. In stark contrast to the other case studies of this dissertation, the sculptures of the Sacro Monte remain without definitive attribution and seemingly adhere to the more traditional mode of terracotta as a conveyer of polychromatic “*emozioni*,” to borrow a term from Giorgio Bonsanti.⁴¹ However, the Sacro Monte of San Vivaldo diverges from the preconceived notions of terracotta’s role in early modern devotion in that the chapels confound the expectations of the visitor. The structure of each chapel is not only a container of sacred narrative, but often an active contributor of meaning: the structure shapes and guides the visitor through each narrative moment. Equally, the sculptures housed within vary widely in their dependence upon the encompassing structure, on liturgical furniture, and upon the location of the devotee in the space. In short, San Vivaldo was a testing ground, a laboratory of early modern devotional practice rooted in the strategic interplay of sculpture and architecture. In this respect, the Sacro Monte at San Vivaldo builds from the same evolving objectives at Loreto, and further demonstrates a parallel narrative of terracotta innovation just outside a major urban center.

Antonio Begarelli’s urban terracotta *Deposition*, originally intended for the short-lived church of Santa Cecilia in Modena, will act as the second case study of this chapter. Anecdotally associated with Michelangelo in Giorgio Vasari’s *Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, the terracotta sculptor oscillates between regional and international sculptural milieu.⁴² Begarelli was keenly aware of the sculptural discourse fomenting in the urban centers of the Papal States, as reflected in his anatomically sensitive terracotta bodies seemingly

⁴¹ Bonsanti draws a distinct division between polychromatic terracottas that express *emozioni*, the extreme emotional realism of humanity, from Begarelli’s white creations, which the scholar deems “*opera d’arte, e non come personaggi reali*.” Bonsanti and Piccinini, *Emozioni in terracotta*, 27.

⁴² Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, 1568 edition, edited by R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence: S.P.E.S., già Sansoni, 1966-1987).

composed of marble. But Begarelli's works are more than a reductive rendering of terracotta masquerading as stone: his creations complicate the expectations of the material portrayed. Begarelli's visual rebuttal to marble sculpture is theologically potent: these fictive stones reflect sixteenth-century intellectual discourse of the divine body's multivalence.⁴³ That material slippage worked to the distinct advantage of the Observant Franciscan community that received the sculptural group, aiding in their efforts to promote devotion in the face of local Protestant misgivings. The material slippage broadcast across Begarelli's oeuvre is among the most intellectually forceful material declarations through sculpture of the sixteenth century; however, the sculptor's fame is curtailed today by his regionalism—almost all of the artist's career was spent within a thirty-kilometer radius of the town of Modena.⁴⁴ The transformative nature of Begarelli's materiality lends itself to larger questions of the material's relevance within sculptural installations, and reinserts the Modenese sculptor as a catalyst of artistic discourse.

As with the previous chapter, the third chapter of this dissertation addresses two independent yet interrelated case studies, this time from Rome and Florence: Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* in the Roman church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and Francesco da Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* in the Florentine oratory of Orsanmichele. Both investigations reevaluate well-known urban sculptural installations in light of the pilgrimage traditions and material messaging of the preceding cases. Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* stems from what began as a private memorial that evolved into a cult locus, the fact of which is visible in the degradation of the sculpture's surface caused by generations of tactile devotion. Through its design and material, the sculpture manifests the divine body. The subsequent replicability of that sacred

⁴³ Victoria Goldberg, "Leo X, Clement VII and the Immortality of the Soul," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1975-1976): 16-25.

⁴⁴ Giorgio Bonsanti, *Antonio Begarelli* (Modena: Cosimo Panini Editore S.p.A., 1992), 20.

body in the sculpted copy of the *Risen Christ* in the church of Santo Spirito in Florence enacts the same sensation of painted copies of Michelangelo's work explored by scholars such as Elena Calvillo.⁴⁵ Overall, the *Risen Christ* confronts the artist's role as *Il Divino* in both sacred and secular contexts, while the material of that body reiterates the resurrection of the soul. As in the case of the Santa Casa and in the sculptures at Modena and San Vivaldo, the sculpture embodies divinity.

Francesco da Sangallo's Florentine white marble monolith takes the conversation a step further by demonstrating a concerted communal effort to render a simultaneously civic and religious cult locus through the sculptural medium. Returning to the Oratory of Orsanmichele, Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*—still *in situ*—capitalizes on the cultic precedent of the oratory to engage with the viewer on multiple levels. Though aimed specifically at a particular sect of the Florentine intellectual elite, the material of the sculptural representation underscores the theological message embedded in the matrilineal lineage. Enduring devotion to Saint Anne across the sixteenth century highlights the particular brand of regional devotion to the mother of the Virgin Mary based in Florence. In the Sangallo sculpture, as with Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*, this dissertation returns the urban marble installation to its cultic intention, tracing acts of devotion in an effort to bring canonical, white marble compositions into the rich multimedia history of early modern devotion.

Throughout the case studies of this dissertation, I seek to demonstrate how a close reading of a sculpture's materiality, in conjunction with the composition's cult use, reveals a variety of meaning in sacred space. The pointed cross-medial discourse seeks to break apart the divisions of sculptural art history in order to better access the open exchange of sculptural

⁴⁵ Elena Calvillo, "Authoritative Copies and Divine Originals: Lucretian Metaphor, Painting on Stone, and the Problem of Originality in Michelangelo's Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (2013): 453-508.

innovation. As Chapter One will demonstrate, the Santa Casa di Loreto offers the grounding case-study for the devotional, spatial and material themes of this dissertation. The Holy House unifies issues of architectural space and objectified sculpture in the sacred interior. Its surrounding marble skin, appended over the course of the sixteenth century, reframes the humble brick structure as a reliquary case, transforming the edifice into a sculptural installation behind the Loretan high altar. Paradoxically, the very nature of the medium and decorative program manifest an ephemeral apparition, an object with the potential to disappear. This first dissertation chapter highlights the efficacy of the sculpture *cum* sacred object and its devotional relevance across the early modern era.

Chapter One: Rendering Religion

The Santa Casa di Loreto is an amalgam of object and place. The site at Loreto is made potent by a sacred structure believed to have flown miraculously from Palestine to the eastern coast of Italy in the late thirteenth century. Traversing both topographical and temporal boundaries, the structure elicits a visceral connection with divinity. The Holy House offers the most literal parallel of the sculptural cult object to the Holy Body, as a building that at once evokes and *is* the Madonna's presence on earth. The structure manifests a topographical memory in the Christian faith, perpetually reminding the viewer of the Holy Spirit's infiltration into the architectural structure and vessel of the Virgin. The bricks of the early Christian edifice (Image 2) enact simultaneous roles as architecture, object, and relic. Its surrounding marble revetment (Image 3), appended over the course of the sixteenth century, transforms the entire Holy House into a sculptural installation behind the Loretan high altar.

Of the various sculptural compositions discussed in this dissertation, the Holy House of the Virgin is the most compelling by virtue of its counterintuitive epicenter. The structure's emergent power relies upon the absence of a physical body: the Virgin Mary has ascended, corporeally and spiritually, into heaven. In this respect, the Holy House performs for the assumptive Virgin in a manner comparable to the Holy Sepulcher, the site of Christ's entombment (Image 4).⁴⁶ The very emptiness of the Savior's resting place paradoxically fosters an intimate connection with the devout visitor because that emptiness evinces Christ's resurrection. As with the Holy Sepulcher, the architectural edifice of the Virgin's home assumes the role of the relic body, infused with the memory of the woman's mortality, and consequently

⁴⁶ Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Fourth edition (New York: Penguin, 1986).

reinforces her immortal spiritual presence. Devotees at the Santa Casa feel the sensation of “pregnant absence” as they commune around and within the Holy House, often placing hands directly upon the structure. The insatiable desire for contact with the Santa Casa—with the marble exterior as well as the brick interior—demonstrates the tactile orientation of the sculptural pilgrimage installation. Physical connection with the Holy House reinforces the miraculous nature of the pilgrimage site: the fact of the structure’s transport, elicited through touch, reiterates the sacred nature of the building and the capacity of the sort of divine intervention so fervently desired by the visiting pilgrim.

This first case study explores the multi-medial and multi-referential objectives of the Holy House at Loreto. The sixteenth-century artistic community drawn upon to create the structure’s exterior reveals a combined effort of Tuscan, Lazian, Venetian and Lombard artists, which intimates the desirability of this far-flung (or, according to the miracle accounts, far-flown) commission. The number of Catholic reform-minded men associated with the site, such as Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti, Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, and Saint Carlo Borromeo, reorients the structure as a product of Catholic Reform, with a decorative campaign conceived in an era of heightened concern regarding the power of religious imagery. The efficacy of the decoration is pronounced by the penchant for replication of the Santa Casa edifice over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Copies of the original across the Italian peninsula and Europe indicate the status of the structure as a replicable cult object: the subsequent iterations are invested with commensurate value to the original. In this first chapter, I intend to demonstrate how the material and physical nature of pilgrimage sites like the Santa Casa bolstered spontaneous cultic behavior across the century. This chapter will discuss the chronological evolution of the site, from the early sixteenth-century foundation of the decorative program, to

the mid-late century revisualization of the site as an emblem of Catholic Reform. Through the integration of sculptural and architectural elements, the Santa Casa di Loreto emblemizes the priorities of early modern cult worship, setting a standard for three-dimensional imagery as a locus for personal devotion across the Italian peninsula.

The Basilica of Loreto is a singular site of devotion. Today the massive Loretan cathedral, containing the Holy House of the Virgin at its crossing, permanently manifests a miraculous occurrence: the translation of the house of the Virgin Mary from Nazareth to the eastern Italian region of Le Marche.⁴⁷ In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Holy House is perceived as the actual site of the Annunciation, when the Virgin received news that she would bear the Son of God and accepted the Holy Spirit into her womb. According to regional belief regarding the Santa Casa, the Holy House was also the place to which the Holy Family returned after the flight into Egypt, and is thus the location where Jesus Christ spent his childhood. The structure acts as a relic for the Virgin, Christ, and Joseph, but also conceivably for Saints Anne and Joachim, the Virgin Mary's parents with whom the young woman lived before entering the house of her husband when already pregnant with Jesus.⁴⁸ The structure is therefore an extremely potent object to the Christian devotee by virtue of the layered points of contact with biblical

⁴⁷ The traditional terminology regarding the structure's relocation reinforces the interpretation of the edifice cum sacred body: "translation" refers to the relocation of a holy relic.

⁴⁸ The association of the house with the home of Saints Anne and Joachim is difficult to pin down. The New Testament Gospels offer the most concrete information. Luke 1:26-38 does not explicitly say where Mary resided at the time of the Annunciation, but the Gospel does explain that Joseph accepted Mary after reassurance from an angel. Matthew 1:18-24 is more conclusive, stating that the Annunciation occurred before the couple came to live together. This sparse information led to the understanding that Mary was in the home of her parents Anne and Joachim, whose narrative is apocryphal, documented in the *Protovangelium* of Saint James. The significance of Saints Anne and Joachim will be explored later on in this chapter and in the dissertation chapters following. For more on the Protovangelium and the narrative of Saint Anne, see Carlo Nardi, "Sant'Anna e gli antichi testi," in *Sant'Anna dei Fiorentini: storia, fede, arte tradizione*, edited by Anita Valentini (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2003), 73-82.

figures, encompassing the lesser cults of Saints Joachim, Anne, and Joseph, as well as that of the Virgin and Child.

Between the years 1291 and 1295, the domicile of the Virgin traveled with the aid of angels from Palestine, first to Trsat in modern Croatia, and then to Italy, resting ultimately on the summit of Loreto.⁴⁹ The mystical arrival of the structure became a popular narrative, inspiring increasing pilgrimage over the course of the fourteenth century: a hospital emerged in the environs of the Holy House at Loreto, intended to cure the incurable, which remains a popular locus at the pilgrimage site to the present day.⁵⁰ The miraculous circumstances of travel, compounded with intimate access to the structure's interior, made the Holy House a powerful conduit for the devout pilgrim: the religious visitor may make direct contact with the actual bricks of the Virgin's home and pass through the structure itself—much like the Holy Spirit entering the body of the Virgin—in pursuit of a cure.⁵¹

In its current state, the Santa Casa radiates light: the structure is overwhelmingly white with its Carrara marble superstructure that reads like a skin stretched across the architectural body. After the first monochrome impression of pervasively polished, reflective surfaces, the colorful details appended to the structure emerge; rosso antico, pavonazzetto, verde antico and purple porphyry dot the exterior, inlaid into the monochromatic framework. The entire structure is in fact raised on a black marble base.⁵² The white superstructure conveys the early-modern

⁴⁹ According to the fully-formed miracle narrative, on March 10, 1291, angels lifted the house of the Virgin from its foundation in Nazareth and brought it to Trsat. The house moved again on December 10, 1294, to a forest near Recanati (the largest city near Loreto in the Marche region). However, the forest was thick with thieves, so the house moved again the following year, in August 1295 to the top of a nearby hill. Since this site was also fraught with thievery, apparently controlled by a distrustful pair of brothers, the house moved one last time in December of 1295 to undisputed public land on the summit of Loreto. Kathleen Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto: Problems in Cinquecento Sculpture" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1965), 3.

⁵⁰ On the evolution of the complex and the hospital appended, see Kathleen Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," *Gesta*, Vol. 12, No. 1/2 (1973): 123-132.

⁵¹ The value of proximity and permeability will be discussed later on in this chapter.

⁵² The types of stone identified are based on inventory records from Loreto and from personal observation.

comprehension of ancient architectural language: pairs of engaged, Composite columns stand on complex podia supporting a rich entablature decorated with a Greco-Roman key motif, and topped with a balustrade. The paired columns and podia step out from the façade surface at regular intervals—two sets across each short side, and three sets across each long side—to frame low relief narrative scenes horizontally oriented in two registers. The structural surface is replete with detail, from low relief garlands and narrative compositions, to fully formed, three-dimensional sculptural bodies. Oriented with the short end of the structure facing the high altar, its wall pierced with the window through which the Archangel Gabriel entered the space, the long rectangular structure stretches lengthwise eastward through the cathedral crossing. The lateral entranceways along the north and south sides allow access to the interior, where the shrine of the Madonna and Child is located on the internal eastern wall.

As masses take place hourly at the altar before the Holy House each day, pilgrims habitually circumgenueflect the structure, shuffling upon their knees as they intimately connect with the minute details across its surface.⁵³ Parallel knee grooves encircling the structure today attest to this long-held practice. Above the heads of the crawling devotees, sculpted prophets and sibyls gesticulate with scrolls, tablets and books. In simultaneous acts of holding, presenting, reading and writing, these foretellers of Christ implicate the edifice itself as a source of knowledge, a valuable point of entry into biblical history.

The relief scenes covering large horizontal expanses of the structure detail both the life of the Virgin and the life of the Holy House itself. The *Birth* and *Marriage of the Virgin* decorate

⁵³ The multiple surface breaks visible across the lower portion of the Santa Casa walls (lost rabirian rings, acanthus leaf tendrils, etc.) indicates incidents of accidental fissure, or potentially purposeful manufacture of relic souvenirs taken away from the surface by devout pilgrims. This form of gentle vandalism will be discussed later in this chapter.

the north-facing side, what was the original point of entry into the structure.⁵⁴ On the western face behind the altar stands the *Annunciation* above smaller episodic scenes of the *Visitation* and *Census* flanking the single window into the interior. The *Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Adoration of the Magi* mark the southern wall. Finally, the *Dormition of the Virgin* and subsequent *Translation of the Holy House* to Loreto decorate the east-facing wall facing the cathedral apse.

The richly detailed decorative scheme without mirrors the extraordinary access within. After crossing the threshold of the marble revetment, the devotee physically enters the space where the Virgin is believed to have accepted the Holy Spirit into her body. Repeating the gesture of placing palms against exposed brick, the devotee gently darkens the baked terracotta with her pious actions. Simple, uneven brick delineates a humble interior measuring 9.5 meters deep and 4 meters wide. Long-since deteriorated frescoes decorate the walls, from which fragmented faces gaze calmly out at the religious visitor. An early-modern barrel vault springs from the truncated tops of the walls to enclose the space, uniformly decorated as a serene, starry night sky. The longitudinal orientation of the space impels the viewer to return focus to the shrine erected at the far end of the interior. There a sculpted, wooden black *Madonna and Child* (Image 5), swathed in rich brocade, stands above and beyond a low marble partition and marble altar, which divides the main room from a small, horizontally-oriented, hall-like passageway.

Embedded in the ornate wall of Proconnesian and Cipollino marble, which is itself embellished with gilt metal filigree, the wooden sculpture of the *Madonna and Child* behaves as an orienting fulcrum of stability. Attributed to the venerable Evangelist Saint Luke, the original columnar Virgin holding a standing Christ Child in her arms has become a visual signifier for the

⁵⁴ Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 24.

Loretan pilgrimage site replicated across the Christian world. The sculpture in place today is a replica of the original that was destroyed by fire in 1921 (Image 5). The current sculptural icon is painted a monochrome black, but as with many other polychromatic, wooden devotional sculptures, the original Loretan “black Madonna” actually became black over time due to prolonged exposure to the smoke of candle and oil lamps. Originally, the wooden sculpture would have been colorfully ‘enfleshed,’ and would have offered a vibrant focal point to those visiting the Holy House during its earliest phase at Loreto.⁵⁵

The lanterns within the space—today electric—bathe visiting devotees in a dark, ambient glow. The effect is surreal in its solemnity, transporting the many visitors into a historic place—where the Virgin once was—and a site of omnipresent divinity. The sacred silhouette of the modern wooden sculpture, immured in the interior shrine, is visible from the nave of the cathedral through the grate-covered window of the western-facing wall, believed to have been the point of entry of the Archangel Gabriel at the moment of the Annunciation. This visual penetration through the same point of access accorded to the Archangel allows the visitor’s gaze to effectively enact the Annunciation, accessing the sacred body within the holy structure, and simultaneously attaining visual confirmation of the biblical miracle.

The modern Loretan complex is a far cry from the ad hoc pilgrimage site constructed organically over the course of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. The Holy House was much less grandiose when Pope Julius II della Rovere first arrived at Loreto in 1511. Though already a favored site for pilgrims, the Holy House stood without revetment at the heart of a recently completed basilica that replaced the aggregate of hostels, chapels and fortifications once

⁵⁵ Giuseppe Santarelli, *L’Arte a Loreto* (Ancona: Edizioni Annibale, 2005), 11. For a rare photograph of the sculpture before 1921, see Santarelli’s *Tradizione e Leggende Lauretane* (Loreto: Congregazione Universale della Santa Casa, 1990), 171.

surrounding the Virgin's home. Julius II travelled to Loreto specifically to offer a cannonball as a gift of thanks: the projectile had narrowly missed hitting the pontiff in the battle of Mirandola, and the pope believed he owed his safety to the Madonna di Loreto.⁵⁶ Upon seeing the site for himself, Julius II made the decision to decorate the Holy House in a manner befitting its miraculous nature.

Julius II's interest in the Santa Casa can be interpreted as much as a product of the pope's personal lineage and political machinations as a spontaneous act of devotion. The newly completed basilica encompassing the Holy House had been a project supported by Julius' uncle, Pope Sixtus IV della Rovere, who had continued the program of his predecessor, Pope Paul II Barbo.⁵⁷ The architect Giuliano da Sangallo greatly expanded the fourteenth-century conglomerate of independent structures by transforming the site into a monumental, classicizing church built into the protective walls of the town.⁵⁸ Julius capitalized upon this program by enlisting Donato Bramante, his renowned papal court architect, to design a new exterior for the Holy House itself, concealing the simple, crumbling bricks of the structure. Bramante's intervention established a revetment program, which conceptually signified a reliquary case, one that would become a representative symbol of the edifice itself.

⁵⁶ In keeping with this aerial theme, the Madonna di Loreto is the official patron saint of air travel today. Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 124. For more on the ex-voto, see Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 6-7.

⁵⁷ Sixtus IV quickly assumed control of the Loretan building program upon ascension in 1471 (the church commission dates back to 1468). In 1476, Sixtus IV attempted to bring the pilgrimage site under apostolic jurisdiction, naming a Giorgio de Ruvere (a relative of the Pope himself) as Loreto's first apostolic vicar. Though control of the site by the Holy See only lasted for a year, the situation must have inspired Julius II, who retook Loreto from the jurisdiction of nearby Recanati again in 1507. Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 125-127; Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 6-8.

⁵⁸ The city required fortifications because of the frequency of pirate and Ottoman attacks on the small town. The basilica at Loreto was officially started in 1468, and the nave was constructed between 1477 and 1480. See Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 125.

Kathleen Weil-Garris's dissertation on the Santa Casa di Loreto offers a wealth of information regarding the progressive construction of Bramante's design, with a particular focus on the large relief carvings that decorate the double registers across the marble exterior. The Loretan project hosted many notable sixteenth-century sculptors and architects who came to Loreto from all over the Italian peninsula, including well-known names such as Andrea Sansovino and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, as well as lesser known artists such as the northern and central Italian Lombardi and della Porta brothers. Rather than provide a complete recounting of the construction trajectory, I will address the contributions of the many artists involved as they become relevant to the political and religious points discussed in the following paragraphs.

The near simultaneous deaths of Julius II and Bramante in the years 1513 and 1514 led to the reassignment of the Loretan program to the architect and sculptor Andrea Sansovino, chosen by the newly elected Medici Pope, Leo X de' Medici. Besides the della Rovere, the Medici family claims the most influential tenure at the Santa Casa construction site, spread over the reigns of Leo X and Clement VII, cousins Giovanni and Giulio respectively. Under the aegis of Leo X, Andrea Sansovino maintained the Bramantesque design scheme initiated under Julius II.⁵⁹ Andrea Sansovino was a Florentine, like the Pope himself, and his works were stylistically similar to Bramante's by virtue of his classicizing orientation. Together with his Florentine and Roman compatriots (including Raffaello da Monte Lupo, Il Tribolo, and briefly the cantankerous

⁵⁹ The most probable change to the original decorative program was the likely replacement of della Rovere insignia in deference for the Medici palle and diamond ring with triple feathers, found today flanking the four doors of the Santa Casa and interwoven into the decorative program of the podium and cornice of the entablature.

Baccio Bandinelli),⁶⁰ Sansovino's tenure saw the initiation of the horizontal bas-relief panels that line the exterior.⁶¹

Following a brief period of chaos immediately after the death of Sansovino in 1529, another Florentine, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, was appointed head architect of the site. Like Sansovino, Antonio da Sangallo came from an artistic background rooted in an established family of architects, designers and craftsmen. Furthermore, the Sangallo family already had ties to Loreto: Antonio's uncle, Giuliano da Sangallo, had completed construction of the dome over the crossing of the Loretan Basilica in 1500.⁶² When Antonio's tenure at Loreto ended in 1535, the bulk of the architecture and remaining relief decoration was complete, as attested by an engraving of the Santa Casa executed by the Portuguese visitor Francisco de Holanda in 1539 (Image 6).

The engraving illustrates both how the structure looked in the late 1530s, and also how early visitors to the site interacted with the new exterior. Francisco's engraving depicts the south lateral wall of the Holy House, with the entrance to the main internal room open to visitors below the carved scene of the *Adoration of the Shepherds*. From this vantage, the church high altar before the shrine is to the viewer's left, and the church apse to the viewer's right. The architectural decoration is accurately rendered, displaying the strictly classical organization of the wall surface in horizontal bands interrupted rhythmically with engaged columns, which flank the compositionally similar *Adoration* scenes. The intricacy of this external decoration does not

⁶⁰ Bandinelli was so unpleasant that the sculptor incited the normally mild-mannered Sansovino to violence: on one occasion, Sansovino reportedly launched himself at Bandinelli "*per ammazzarlo*." Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 40.

⁶¹ In the brief interruption between Medici popes, under the two-year reign of Pope Adrian VI Florensz, progress at Loreto was restricted to the bare minimum, an almost complete halt to the sculptural progress. Adrian's sudden death and Clement VII's assumption to the Papal throne less than three years after his cousin's demise effectively reinvigorated the project.

⁶² Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 5.

go unnoticed by the period viewer: to the left, a pair of men stand extremely close to the western wall, which faces the nave of the basilica. In the moment depicted, the men may be admiring the low relief panels of the *Annunciation*, *Visitation* or *Census*, or might even be gazing through the Archangel's window into the sacred interior. On the opposite end of the structure, a pilgrim kneels, with left hand pressed against his heart and right hand touching the architectural base. This small detail poignantly references the growing tradition of genuflection and crawling upon one's knees to commune with the structure. The only portion of the Santa Casa program as-yet incomplete at the time of Francisco's engraving are the niches intended for life-sized sculpture. The dark tint of the engraved spaces reference the rosso-antico revetment lining each niche that would have emphatically pronounced their emptiness to the contemporary visitor.

With the architecture and relief panels in place, artists were sought to execute the final three-dimensional sculptural additions to the Loretan construction site, in what Weil-Garris identifies as the third major sculptural campaign.⁶³ Between 1537 and 1579, two pairs of brothers—Fra Aurelio and Girolamo Lombardo, and Cavalier Gian Battista and Tommaso della Porta—headed the manufacture of the series of prophets and sibyls for the Santa Casa. Twenty in all, the sculptures stand, crouch, or sit in their respective niches, holding in their hands a scroll, tablet, or book. The designer behind these sculptures remains unclear: there is some debate regarding their genesis as part of the original Bramantesque program, or due to the intervention of Andrea Sansovino or other subsequent contributors, yet their style notably harkens back to the methods of representation fostered in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The muscular-bodied men and softly rounded women speak to the forceful forms of Michelangelo and the Dontetellesque serenity of Sansovino. Giorgio Vasari even credits Michelangelo with quality

⁶³ Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 90-99.

control regarding the three-dimensional sculptures at the Santa Casa. In his life of the sculptor Niccolò Tribolo, Vasari asserts that Clement VII de' Medici ordered Tribolo to take his wax models of the Loretan prophets to Florence, where Michelangelo could offer guidance.⁶⁴ In her careful study of primary documentation, Weil-Garris found no indication that Michelangelo ever participated in the Loretan program and offers no speculations regarding involvement of the illustrious Florentine. Regardless of the veracity of Vasari's assertion, the comment gives the impression of Michelangelo's perceived involvement at Loreto, according to the pilgrimage site with a level of status and artistic ingenuity, and intimating the consistent importation of artistic ideals from Florentine and Roman circles. The resultant intellectual *mélange* created at this outlying religious destination therefore reflects the tenets of sculptural discourse proliferating in major urban centers of the Italian peninsula over the course of the century.⁶⁵

The effect of stylistic precedent is nowhere more visible than in the fully-formed bodies of the prophets flanking the lower register reliefs along the external walls. The visual association is abundantly clear when these figures are compared to early-century representations of prophets and members of the pre-Christian Hebrew lineage of Christ wrought in two- and three-dimensional formats. Weil-Garris identifies the *Prophet Jeremiah* (Image 7) as one of the oldest prophets sculpted and installed on site.⁶⁶ Attributed to Fra Aurelio Lombardo, a Venetian-born Antonine friar from the nearby town of Recanati and nicknamed "*l'eremita*" in Loretan documents, the *Jeremiah* was reportedly installed in the Santa Casa façade by the final payment

⁶⁴ "Il Tribolo già fatto molti modelli di cera per far di quei Profeti che andavano nelle nicchie di quella cappella già murata e finite del tutto, quando papa Clemente, avendo veduto tutte quell'opere, e lodatole molto, e particolarmente quella del Tribolo, deliberò che tutti senza perdere tempo tornassino a Firenze per dar fine, sotto la disciplina di Michelagnolo Bonarroti..." See Vasari's Life of Niccolò il Tribolo in Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, 1568 edition, edited by R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence: S.P.E.S., già Sansoni, 1966-1987) 398-399.

⁶⁵ The relevance of the sculpted high altarpieces across the Italian peninsula will be discussed in detail in the third chapter of this dissertation.

⁶⁶ Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 36-37, 92.

notation in July of 1542.⁶⁷ With his long, slim legs tightly crossed, and his arms overlapping a closed book on his lap, the figure manifests a melancholic posture similar to Michelangelo's figures in the Sistine ceiling, a probable combination of poses derived from figures such as Michelangelo's own *Prophet Jeremiah* and the *Erythrean Sibyl*.⁶⁸ Aurelio's rendition of the aged figure's hands, rippling with veins, bring to mind Michelangelo's *Moses* for the tomb of Julius II, and even of the individualized carving style of the Venetian Tullio Lombardo, to whom Aurelio was related.⁶⁹ The *Jeremiah*'s pronounced high cheekbones and turban also support a claim of Venetian influence upon Fra Aurelio, who may have looked to the sensitive portraiture of eastern- and southern-Mediterranean trade partners of the Venetian state.

Weil-Garris identifies the *Prophet Belaam* (Image 8) and attributes it to Tommaso della Porta of Milanese descent and Roman training, a contributor at Loreto in the 1570s.⁷⁰ The figure pointedly builds on the visual precedent set by Raphael in his frescoed *Prophet Isaiah* (Image 9). This early sixteenth-century reconceptualization of a Michelangesque prophet for the funerary monument of Johannes Goritz in the church of Sant'Agostino in Rome presents a dynamic adult male unrolling a scroll inscribed with legible Hebrew text as his body leans out from his fictive stone perch.⁷¹ *Belaam* recreates a dynamic posture commensurate with Raphael's *Isaiah*, with

⁶⁷ Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 92.

⁶⁸ Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 319.

⁶⁹ Aurelio was the first-born son of Antonio Lombardo, younger brother of Tullio. Antonio relocated his family from Venice to the Marche town of Recanati during Aurelio's youth, but such distance does not preclude the possibility of stylistic influence from his well-known uncle. Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 92. Weil-Garris also cites Andrea Sansovino as a probable influence of the friar sculptor, specifically Andrea's drawing of *Saint Joseph Resting* in the Uffizi. See "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 318.

⁷⁰ Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 329-332. A surviving terracotta *bozzetto*, model, of *Balaam* has called attribution somewhat into question, with some scholars arguing for Tommaso and others for Tommaso's younger brother, Gian Battista.

⁷¹ The Hebrew text comes from the Book of Isaiah 26:2-3: "Open the gates that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in. The mind is fixed on thee, thou dost keep him." Julia Haig Gaisser has posed the hypothesis that the line from Isaiah comments on Goritz's intention to unify the members of his multi-national sodality. See Julia Haig Gaisser, "The Rise and Fall of Goritz's Feasts." *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (1995): 45-46. Raphael's *Isaiah* is in itself a permutation of Michelangelo's *Daniel* for the Sistine Ceiling, a

outward-jutting knees, swaths of thick, cascading drapery, and flexed, sinuous arms that bring the viewer's eye to the text offered. Tommaso della Porta's figure diverges from this precedent in that he does not actively engage with his text or present the words aggressively to the viewer, but rather sits quietly in his niche with his tablet held under his arm, gazing contemplatively past the viewer towards the apse of the cathedral. *Belaam's* inscription from Numbers 24, verse 17 reads: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel."⁷² The prophecy remarks on Christ's lineage, encapsulated by the very structure of the Holy House as the home of the Virgin and her parents, and speaks to the structure's status as vessel, and Christ's body as an emblem of dominion created at its epicenter.

As echoes of Michelangelo and Raphael appear in the body and posture of *Belaam* and *Jeremiah*, so too do the soft, feminine curves of the oeuvre of Andrea Sansovino manifest in the Sibyls flanking the upper relief register of the Santa Casa. The Sibyl directly above *Belaam*, identified as the *Pontine Sibyl* (Image 10) and again the work of a della Porta brother,⁷³ seems to build from Andrea Sansovino's ideal of feminine beauty as manifested in his sculpted version of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (Image 11), also constructed for Goritz's tomb in Rome. The shared characteristics of the Sibyl and Andrea's Madonna, including the fleshy curvature of the woman's delicate arms, fingers and neck, epitomize the classical ideal of the corpulent Venus. Their soft, oval faces, aquiline noses, and thick haloes of hair supporting diaphanous veils make the referent of the female type abundantly clear. The engagement of the Lombardi and della Porta brothers with these Romano-Florentine stylistic referents demonstrates how

dominating figure with wide-set knees supporting a book from which he takes notation upon an easel propped to his right.

⁷² Numbers 24:17. The inscription reads: "*Orietur stella ex Iacob et consurget homo de Israel et...*" The final 'et' signals the continuance of the passage.

⁷³ Weil-Garris attributes the Pontine Sibyl to the elder della Porta brother, Gian Battista. Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 95-98.

artists outside urban centers responded to dominant trends in sixteenth-century sculptural discourse, a point of discussion to which this dissertation will return in Chapter Two.

The record of participating artists and patrons has long been a source for discussion regarding the Santa Casa. What is less understood is the role of the series of *protettori*, high-ranking religious figures appointed by the Pope to maintain momentum and govern the construction site instated over the course of the century. The first official *protettore* to assume control of Loreto was Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi, called Il Bibbiena, who was elected by Leo X on July 1st of 1515.⁷⁴ Bibbiena came originally from the area surrounding Loreto and held the position of *protettore* until 1519. The position then passed to Cardinal Giuliano Ridolfi da Firenze, who was a relative of the Medici pope. Ridolfi retained the role of protector until the year 1527.⁷⁵

Given the political events in Rome, 1527 was a crucial year in the history of the Holy See and the papal territories: the city of Rome was sacked on the 6th of May by mercenaries acting on behalf of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. By September of that same year, Clement VII named Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti of Verona the new protector of the Loretan site.⁷⁶ His election came with a petition for funds from the Santa Casa repository to supplement payment of Clement's ransom incurred by his incarceration during the Sack of Rome. Giberti held the

⁷⁴ Floriano Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo della Santa Cappella di Loreto* (Loreto: Tecnostampa di Loreto, 1999), 11.

⁷⁵ Grimaldi tells us that the role of protector was temporarily redistributed by Adrian VI, bequeathed to a Spanish cardinal by the name of Pietro Flores during the years 1522-1523. Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 11-12.

⁷⁶ Giberti's biographer, Ballerini, emphasizes Giberti's status as a bishop and not a cardinal, as often mistakenly dubbed. Tucker, M.A., "Gian Matteo Giberti, Papal Politician and Catholic Reformer, Part II," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 18, No. 69 (1903): 274, n 22.

position until 1538, at which point Cardinal Gasparo Contarini of Venice assumed the role. Contarini maintained the position through 1542.⁷⁷

The personalities of these four men offer valuable insight into the Loretan decorative program. Il Bibbiena and Giuliano Ridolfi were both intimately connected with the Medici, as supporters of the family and, in the case of Ridolfi, a distant relative.⁷⁸ The insertion of pro-Medici men helped to ensure the maintenance of the original design program which, as discussed earlier, was made inherently Romano-Florentine in style by virtue of the artists chosen to initiate the project. The later protectors, however, are more perplexing at first glance: the modern perception of Gian Matteo Giberti and Gasparo Contarini prioritize these two men as early Catholic reformers in an era of growing Protestant opposition. Both men are most often painted as staunch supporters of austerity with a desire to return to the archaic origins of the Church. Careful analysis of the works of these men, however, yields a more nuanced interpretation.

Like Il Bibbiena and Ridolfi, Gian Matteo Giberti was another favored protégé of the Medici popes, having risen to the position of papal secretary under Leo X, and then as Bishop of Verona under Clement VII.⁷⁹ Giberti's eleven-year relationship with the Santa Casa, which saw the completion of the relief sculpture and architectural framework, demonstrates his approach to sacred art. In a letter dated the 26th of April, 1533, addressed to the bishop's secretary in Verona, Giovanni Battista Mentebuona, Giberti offers a strongly-worded statement about the place and use of religious art:

⁷⁷ Contarini was then replaced by Rodolfo Pio da Carpi. A humanist and major Catholic reformer, Cardinal Rodolfo was a prominent commissioner and antiquities collector in Rome, and helped establish the Inquisition in Milan. Fabrizio Capanni, *Rodolfo Pio da Carpi: Diplomatico Cardinale Collezionista* (Meldola: Accademia degli Imperfetti, 2000).

⁷⁸ Cardinal Giuliano Ridolfi's brother Piero married Contessina de' Medici, Leo X's sister.

⁷⁹ M.A. Tucker, "Gian Matteo Giberti, Papal Politician and Catholic Reformer, Part I," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 18, No. 69 (1903): 31-34.

...His Holiness will graciously think upon who can be of need and again I will go investigating, and as such I will offer good remedy, so to lease, and make calculations, and similar things, of which I appraise, when the principal of the honor of God, and health, and remedy of the soul, seems well upheld; but without that, one could draw from there a million in gold, and sculptures by the hand of Praxiteles, let alone by Sansovino, all of which I would not esteem at all; that same, accompanied with the first [the principal honor of God, health and remedy of the soul], even if they were mediocre, would seem to me most sufficient; [however] if the decoration serves only as adornment to its post, it would seem nothing to me.⁸⁰

Giberti's commentary in this passage has been taken as proof of the bishop's distaste for lavish, unnecessary decorative additions to sacred space. Upon close inspection, however, the phrasing offers up an ultimately positive argument in the case of the Santa Casa. If adornment bears no religious function, or is cultivated at the expense of piety, then the result in Giberti's view should be deemed repellent. Yet he supports the decorations, "even if they were mediocre," since they have the capacity to instill pious devotion when facilitating the praise of God. Imagery is therefore not without positive sway. Furthermore, the author implies that the Holy House decoration attributed to Sansovino stands in contrast to this negative interpretation because Sansovino's sculptural additions effectively *do* serve the praise of God and the maintenance of body and soul. The rhetorical placement of the artist on par with (or even arguably above) the great ancient sculptor Praxiteles, maintains the objective of the early-modern humanist competition with the past while exalting an artist with whom Giberti was connected exclusively through the Santa Casa commission. In this letter, Giberti recognizes the marble revetment of the Santa Casa as an integral component to the religious objectives of the structure.

⁸⁰ "Il proveder a'un Governatore, che sua Santità si degnerà pensare chi possa occorrere et ancor'io anderò investigando, è buon rimedio, così d'affitare, et computisti, et simil cose, le quali io apprezzo, quando il principal dell'onor di Dio, et salute, et rimedio delle anime, stia bene, ma senza quello, si potria trarre di la un milion d'oro, et far le statue di man di Prassitele, non che del Sansovino, ch'io non lo stimerò niente, et quello, che accompagnato col primo, per mediocre che fusse, mi parria amplissimo, a questo modo ampio a sua posta, non mi par niente." Dionigi Atanagi, *Lettere di XIII huomini illustri* (Venice: Trino di Monferrato, 1561), 129. Author's translation.

The Bishop's stalwart, if sparing, approval of artistic decoration in the 1533 letter indicates a personality at odds with the popular understanding of Giberti's religious objectives. Alexander Nagel offers an in-depth exploration of Giberti in his *Controversy of Renaissance Art*, wherein the author complicates the interpretation of Giberti as a staunch, aniconic Catholic reformist.⁸¹ According to Nagel, Giberti was not the iconoclast painted by the prelate's opposition, but a reformist whose ideology hinged upon a returned focus on the body of Christ through presentations of the Eucharist. Nagel proves his point through an analysis of renovations of the Verona Cathedral high altar, the seat of Giberti's bishopric and the prelate's chief renovation project over the 1530s. At Verona, Giberti's alterations originally included a broad, open *tornacoro* (an arched, columnar arcade) that still stretches today into the church crossing, and an apse replete with frescoed imagery, together framing a Eucharistic tabernacle. Though the original tabernacle is no longer extant, descriptions of the object indicate that the central tabernacle was a simple container for the Host, composed of marble and crystal, held aloft by four bronze angels.⁸² As with the Holy House of the Virgin, sculpture and architecture combine in the Verona tabernacle to promote the Eucharistic Host. Between the polychromatic columns of the *tornacoro*, the dark bronze, or possibly gilt, angels raised aloft the marble and crystal structure that presented and contained the body of Christ.

Nagel's investigation of Giberti effectively conveys the growing interest in the Eucharist-bearing tabernacle developed over the course of the mid-sixteenth century. The Host in these

⁸¹ Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 197.

⁸² Giberti's biographer, Pier Francesco Zini, describes the tabernacle as: "...*tabernaculum ipsum, ubi Sacrosanctum Domini Jesu Christi corpus ponitur, contineret. Quod quidem tabernaculum ex diverso ac pretioso marmore crystalloque, summo studio artificioque confectum, quattuor Angeli Aenei supra majus altare...*" For an expanded quote, see Derek Moore, "Sanmicheli's 'Tornacoro' in Verona Cathedral: A New Drawing and Problems of Interpretation," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (1985), 230, n 39.

cases became the stable mooring to which early sixteenth-century Catholic Reform was tethered, a known entity that offered the “real presence” of Christ in the sacred interior and simultaneously bolstered the Christocentric miracle of the Catholic faith.⁸³ At Verona, Giberti’s program focuses on Christ, but still affords due deference to the Virgin: the symbolic framework installed at Verona signals the Virgin through the “feminine” Ionic order of the *tornacoro* encapsulating the Eucharistic body of Christ in the central tabernacle. This Vitruvian association equates architecture and body, with the feminine architectural language demarcating the “vessel” that is the Madonna. The compelling conceptual trend of church architecture as embodiment and object quickly expanded beyond Giberti’s diocese and into other communities such as the mid-century renovations at Vicenza and Orvieto.⁸⁴

Giberti’s focus on the Eucharist relies on the physical presence of divinity. That divine material of the Host is enshrined and effectively validates the containing tabernacle. As with the Verona cathedral, the Loretan shrine promotes a structure invested with the resonance of the incarnation. The house mirrors the body of the Virgin in that the structure is a vessel into which the Holy Spirit passed. The white marble exterior displays composite columns with the delicate dimensions reminiscent of the Ionic order, like the columns at Verona. The Holy House can be read as a body unto its own—the Virgin Mary—and the container of another—Jesus Christ. In short, as the site of the genesis of Christ, the Holy House of the Virgin equivocally performs simultaneously as a Eucharistic tabernacle and Marian *tornacoro*.

The external decorations of the Santa Casa reinforce the metaphorical potency of the sacred space. The sculpted Sibyls and Prophets manifest the human foundations of the faith and

⁸³ Nagel, *Controversy*, 204.

⁸⁴ Alexander Nagel, “Experiments in Art Reform in Italy in the Sixteenth Century,” in *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by Kenneth Gouwens and Sheryl E. Reiss (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 385-409. Nagel, *Controversy*, 206.

reference to the sacred body—which they foretold—that is perpetually housed within the structure. The encompassing narrative of the life of the Virgin in white marble details the historic past of the house and intimates the structure as the equivocal vessel of the woman. Positioned directly behind the basilica's high altar, the Santa Casa invades the consciousness of the viewer by conveying the message of embodiment.

The confluence of body, presence and space through the Holy House are further heightened by the physical materials used to construct the sacred edifice. These media operate on multiple levels—as an evocation of the Madonna herself, but also as a referent of sacred transport. The narrative of the object's topographic translation—from Nazareth to Croatia, and finally to eastern Italy—melds with the temporal leap fostered in the pilgrim's own penetration of the structure and into the life of the Virgin. The urge to enter biblical history and feel the sacred space invested with the Holy Spirit was a powerful desire rooted in many cultic pilgrimage sites across the Italian peninsula. The transformative interior of the Santa Casa brought thousands of pilgrims to Loreto each year. As the gold and gems of a reliquary case reference the divine nature of the object housed within, so too did the white marble exterior of the Santa Casa effectively sacralize the interior and signal the miraculous relocation of the Santa Casa from Palestine to Loreto.

As the lower relief on the eastern external wall illustrates to the viewer, the Santa Casa flew over a rocky terrain on a bed of clouds from its eastern origin to its final resting place at the summit of Loreto. The clouds in this low-relief representation consciously signal the white marble edifice itself. As the viewer gazes upon this culminating scene, the eye expands outward to take in the surface of the structure: the pale veins running throughout the marble used across the façade surface, which are bolstered by bands of variegated pavonazetto, give the impression

of cloud formations that have coalesced momentarily to transport the Santa Casa. This material message of marble-as-cloud is further bolstered by the structural base of the Holy House: the band of solid black marble that demarcates the foundation of the structure. With no other black marble across the external surface, the sharp contrast of darkness against the luminous white emphasizes a visual illusion: the black stone reads like a shadow cast upon the ground beneath the Santa Casa.

Once the viewer notices the material conceit, the highly decorated Holy House transforms into a cloud-coated structure in perpetual levitation behind the high altar. This material deception alludes to the structure's miraculous arrival, but also its potential for relocation. If the structure does not receive adequate devotion, the Holy House could conceivably disappear before the viewer's enraptured gaze, off to another place in pursuit of devotion. As history proves, the Santa Casa is entirely capable of fickle relocation, as the bereaved religious community at Trsat knows all too well.⁸⁵ That tension between tangible presence and ephemeral flight perpetually activates the pilgrimage site by permanently manifesting the miraculous, vesting viewer interaction with a sense of immediacy coupled with a touch of uncertainty.

The Santa Casa's adornment fosters a paradoxical relationship between the heavy material of marble and the ephemeral nature of the apparition. The constant potential for transport elicits a sensation of ephemerality with an objectified form of architecture at its core. The white marble exterior becomes a signifier for, and proof of, the miraculous voyage. The

⁸⁵ Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 125. In 1367, Pope Urban V Grimoard presented pilgrims of Trsat at Loreto with an icon of the Madonna, presumably offering a replica of the sculpted, wooden "black" Madonna to take with them back to their homeland. Karin Annelise Vélez, "Resolved to Fly: The Virgin of Loreto, the Jesuits & the Miracle of Portable Catholicism in the Seventeenth-century Atlantic World," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2008), 451.

architecture *cum* sacred object remains permeable, the early-modern sculptural skin acting as a liminal barrier through which the devotee must pass. As a site of pilgrimage, this structure offers a convergence point between the cult object and the pilgrimage destination or space: the viewer not only witnesses the apparition, but physically attests to the miracle by touching, circumambulating, and passing through the architectural relic and biblical space.⁸⁶

The multi-layered dimensions of the Santa Casa di Loreto offered the early modern viewer an immersive experience rooted in visual and tactile associations. Beyond the replication of dimensions, or the enshrinement of a precious fragment, the building conveyed the devotee into the domain of the Madonna and the sacred moment of the incarnation. In this way, the Holy House reflects the visceral religious experiences facilitated by immersive chapel spaces and cultic shrines that emerged towards the close of the fifteenth century. A notable example of this phenomenon is constituted by the Sacri Monti, or Sacred Mountain pilgrimage chapels, wherein life-sized, three-dimensional terracotta representations of Biblical figures coexist with the viewer in compelling, immersive settings. The most well-known Sacro Monte in Italy is that at Varallo, located in the northwest Italian region of Piedmont. Authorized by Pope Innocent VIII Cibo in 1486 and under construction by 1491, the Sacred Mountain site was the creation of the Observant Franciscan Friar Bernardino Caimi whose career included multiple excursions to the Holy Land.⁸⁷ Caimi's site offers a topographically mimetic pilgrimage simulacrum that allowed the regional Italian devotee to make a far simpler pilgrimage to an equivocal Holy Land. At its

⁸⁶ The "circumgenuflection" around the Santa Casa deserves significantly more study. The deep grooves running around the perimeter of the Santa Casa caused by devotees crawling on their knees in close proximity to the structure indicate generations of contact with the white-marble exterior. This emphasis on touch harkens back to Jacopo Sansovino's *Madonna del Parto* and Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*, and the processional movement inherent to physical devotion brings to mind the Sacred Mountains, all of which will be discussed in later dissertation chapters.

⁸⁷ Damiano Pomi, *La parola si fa arte. Luoghi significati del Sacro Monte di Varallo* (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 2008), 23-29.

height, the Sacro Monte di Varallo included over forty chapel interiors recreating sites of Christ's life, death and resurrection that allowed the pilgrim to process through the biblical narrative, and share space with painted and sculpted biblical figures. The sensory impression fostered visceral, tactile points of connection with sacred history that conceivably catalyzed the increasingly emotive religious imagery produced over the course of the sixteenth century.⁸⁸

Sacred Mountains emerged at more or less the same moment that the reigning Popes turned their attention to the Loretan decorative program. In 1518 Pope Leo X de' Medici formally recognized Loreto by bequeathing comparable indulgences to pilgrims of Loreto as those bound for the Holy Land proper or Santiago de Compostela. By establishing equal indulgence value to the Santa Casa, the pope attested to the structure's position in biblical history, and its sacred transport.⁸⁹ From this point forward, the Santa Casa was treated with a reverence much like the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, but as a biblical site at an 'easy distance' of only a few day's walk from Rome.⁹⁰ Further reinforcing this status, replicas of the Santa Casa appeared as chapel spaces across the Italian peninsula, including at Sacred Mountain sites like Varallo. This act of emulation effectively verifies the narrative of the original Santa Casa for sixteenth-century visitors. This reflexive pilgrimage phenomenon indicates the emerging objectives of the Catholic Church in the age of Catholic Reform. This association is signaled by the involvement of Gian Matteo Giberti and is further reflected in the career of his successor, Cardinal Gasparo Contarini.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Allison Terry-Fritsch, "Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo," *Open Arts Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014): 111-132.

⁸⁹ Leo X's papal bull, *Ex superne providentia*, is dated August 1st, 1518. Floriano Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi a Loreto nei secoli XIV-XVIII* (Foligno: Bollettino Storico della Città di Foligno, 2001), 561.

⁹⁰ Vélez, "Resolved to Fly," 317.

⁹¹ This dissertation will return to the trend for Sacred Mountain pilgrimage sites, specifically focusing on the Sacro Monte at San Vivaldo, in Chapter Two.

Cardinal Contarini took over the position of *protettore* of the Santa Casa in 1538.

Contarini emerged from the same Catholic reformist background as his predecessor, Gian Matteo Giberti, and both men—along with such notable religious characters as Cardinals Reginald Pole, Jacopo Sadoletto, Gregorio Cortese, and Gian Pietro Caraffa (Theatine founder and future Pope Paul IV)—acted as members of the Catholic Reform committee first established by Pope Paul III Farnese in 1536.⁹² This reform committee predated the first Council of Trent meeting in 1545, and established many of the esteemed reform objectives of the Farnese pontificate.⁹³ These men circulated in many of the same social and religious intellectual circles, at times sliding perilously into the realm of Protestant ideology in their pursuit of Catholic Reform.⁹⁴

As the Bishop of Venice, Contarini was in close communication with the Theatines and early Jesuits, two Catholic reformist communities that found safe haven within his bishopric. Like Giberti, Contarini also believed in decoration only insofar as the adornment befit the religious objective, and did not detract from the relief of the poor. Contarini's involvement at Loreto coincided with a relatively stable era of pilgrimage devotion to the Holy House from an ever-expanding community of Christian followers. Francis Xavier, co-founder of the Jesuit order

⁹² Giberti and Contarini have also been associated with Gaetano da Thiene and Pietro Caraffa, the founders of the Theatine Order, in studies of the early sixteenth-century confraternity of Divine Love in Rome. Debate continues to plague study of the Order of Divine Love, particularly with regard to the original member's list: Antonio Caracciolo, in his *De Vita Pauli IV* (Cologne, 1612), identifies Giberti and Contarini as members of the Roman branch, however the 1524 list of members of the Roman oratory in Antonio Cistellini, *Figure della riforma pretridentina* (Brescia, 1948) does not include them. Regardless of their formal involvement in the order, Giberti and Contarini are indisputably linked to the founders of the Theatine order by the Catholic Reform committees of Pope Paul III Farnese. Tucker, "Gian Matteo Giberti," Part I, 27; John C. Olin, *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), 17, n 4.

⁹³ In addition to Giberti, Contarini chose the following religious men to join the 1536 committee: Reginald Pole, Gianpietro Carafa, Jacopo Sadoletto, Federico Fregoso, Gregorio Cortese, Tommaso Badia, Jerome Aleander. For more on the committee, see Elisabeth Gleason, *Reform Thought in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1981), 81-82.

⁹⁴ With regard to intellectual circles, an excellent example is the *Sodalità della sera*, of which Gian Matteo Giberti, Jacopo Sadoletto, and the humanist Cardinal Pietro Bembo were all members. Vittoria Colonna, Roman noblewoman and controversial religious practitioner, gathered Reginald Pole, together with Bernardo Ochino, Valdés, and Giovanni Morone, the bishop of Modena, into her circle of intimates. This community also included Michelangelo Buonarroti.

and later saint, pilgrimaged to Loreto in 1540, the same year of the order's foundation. The Holy House had an indelible impact on the evangelizing objectives of the nascent order: while communing within the Santa Casa, Francis Xavier received divine inspiration to take the Jesuit Order to the New World.⁹⁵ Judging by this narrative, the Holy House seemingly supported the increasingly evangelist objectives of the Catholic world by encouraging the latest religious community to "spread the faith."

Francis Xavier was far from the only important theologian to make use of the divine Loretan conduit. Pope Paul III Farnese himself pilgrimaged to the Holy House on three occasions during his pontificate, in 1539, 1541, and again in 1543.⁹⁶ In 1545, the Farnese pope created a new chivalric society entitled the *Collegio dei cavalieri lauretani*, intended to protect the Holy House from invasions via the Adriatic. Loreto and its neighboring communities suffered on multiple occasions from acts of Turkish piracy.⁹⁷ In 1554, Cardinal Rodolfo Pio, successor to Contarini as Loretan *protettore*, installed a faction of the Jesuits permanently at Loreto to address the broad multilingual community of pilgrims in need of on-site confession.⁹⁸ This confluence of prestigious and anonymous visitors to the Holy House as the final sculptural program was executed reiterates the positive position of the Loretan sculptural installation in the topography of Catholic devotion.

⁹⁵ Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 14. A cursory check of cities and churches affiliated with the Santa Casa reveals a patchwork of centers across the Americas—in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Equador, Parague, Peru, and Mexico. Two cities are also dedicated to the Madonna di Loreto in the Philippines, indicating the eastward expansion of the concept as well.

⁹⁶ Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 15. Paul III's multiple pilgrimages to the site mirrors the devotional pilgrimages of Popes gone by, such as Julius II, who visited the site on three separate occasions as well, and Clement VII, who went to Loreto twice. Weil-Garris, "The Santa Casa di Loreto," 66-67.

⁹⁷ A notable sack of the communities in Le Marche happened in 1518. Weil-Garris Posner, "Cloister, Court and City Square," 130.

⁹⁸ Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 17, 101. Further research regarding Rodolfo Pio and his penchant for collecting antiquities may yield more on the confluence of humanism and Catholic Reform.

The reverberations of devotion are passed down to the modern interpreter of the Santa Casa through the litany of pilgrimage diaries and attestations held at Loreto and in community centers across the Italian peninsula (and abroad). A pilgrim by the name of Bartolomeo Fontana tells us in his 1538 diary that Loreto was crawling with devotees.⁹⁹ Men and women, families with children, and members of confraternities travelled to the Santa Casa from near and far to commune with the Virgin and Christ. Bartolomeo himself offered confession and partook of the Host before continuing his circuitous trip on to Santiago de Compostela. The French pilgrim, Louis Richeôme, author of a pilgrimage manual directed towards devotees to Loreto—which was published in French, Latin, English and Flemish—explains that the desire to travel to holy sites like Loreto was threefold: first and foremost, the topographical locations of thaumaturgical encounters were considered the most efficacious sites at which to honor Christ, the Virgin and saints; secondly, sacred pilgrimages offer among the most effective indulgences for those in need of penance or miraculous medicine; finally, the strongest motivation for pilgrimage from Richeôme’s perspective is the desire to increase one’s devotion by reenacting the actions of the saints.¹⁰⁰ The act of pilgrimage supis in itself a saintly pursuit, as is veneration of sacred objects and localities.

Once at Loreto, pilgrimage manuals instructed visitors to kiss the walls and floor of the Santa Casa. Giovanni Bellarino’s 1617 pilgrimage manual directly informs the devotee to touch the internal wall of the chapel, and then proceed to touch one’s own eyes, ears, mouth, throat, chest and heart to imbue them with the virtue of the “*santissima casa*.”¹⁰¹ Circumambulation of

⁹⁹ Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 390-394.

¹⁰⁰ Richeôme’s text was published in 1604, entitled “Le pèlerin de Lorette.” Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 28.

¹⁰¹ Multiple examples of instructions prioritizing touch appear in travel guides and journals of the Santa Casa. Giovanni Bellarino’s is but the most direct, in his *Guida per condurre con frutto spirituale alla Santa Casa di Loreto, et altri luoghi santi le persone di qualunque stato, et anco quelle che corporalmente non vi possono*

the holy structure upon one's knees seems always to have been a facet of Loretan devotion, at least since the addition of the white marble revetment in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, as attested by the depth of the groove lines still visible.¹⁰² The fragments of stone today chipped away from the exterior give the barest impression of the sacred souvenirs lifted inconspicuously from the structure. Most of the chipped portions of the Holy House come from the lowest register below the narrative reliefs and sculptural niches, coinciding with the path wrought by generations of genuflecting pilgrims [these include edges of acanthus leaves, heads missing from satyrs, and Rabirian rings dislodged from between molding dentils]. The administrators of the Santa Casa were entirely aware of the fetishization of the object-house and capitalized on that momentum by selling paper envelopes containing "*polvere*," dust taken from the holy structure.¹⁰³ These gentle acts of vandalism and object circulation create ever more portable contact relics of the sacred structure and reinforce belief in the Holy House. They also express the implicit incorporation of the sixteenth-century skin into the holy structure's cultural identity.

The official sanction of pilgrimage to the Santa Casa di Loreto is nowhere more evident than in the site's relationship to the great central Italian Catholic reformer, Saint Carlo Borromeo. As Bishop of Milan, the future saint visited the Holy House on multiple occasions, beginning in 1572 on his return home from Rome and the conclave that elected Pope Gregory XIII Buoncompagni.¹⁰⁴ During this initial trip, Carlo Borromeo spent an entire night within the

andare... di nuovo corretto et ampliato dall'istesso autore, published in Pavia in 1617. Bellarino writes: "*si toccherà con la mano la muraglia di dentro di quel santissimo luogo. Poi con la mano che toccò, si toccheranno il capo, gl'occhi, le orecchie, bocca, gola, il petto, o cuore con desiderio, che la virtù della santissima casa a loro sia applicata.*" For a complete transcript of Bellarino's instruction, see Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 74-75.

¹⁰² Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 36-37.

¹⁰³ Grimaldi offers photographic reproductions of the *polvere* envelopes. Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, tavola XXXIII.

¹⁰⁴ Carlo Bascapé, biographer and personal secretary of Carlo Borromeo, documents three visits to the Santa Casa during the saint's life: in 1572, 1579, and finally in 1583, a year before the man's death. Carlo Bascapé, *Vita e Opere di Carlo, Arcivescovo di Milano, Cardinale di S. Prassede* (Milan: O.D.C., 1965), 229, 479-481, 1034.

Santa Casa, communing with the home of the Virgin in quiet contemplation.¹⁰⁵ Shortly thereafter, Gregory XIII proclaimed a jubilee anniversary for Loreto in 1576 in an offer of thanks for the Madonna's assistance at the Battle of Lepanto. That year marked the height of Loreto's popularity, when the site was named the "second sacred city" of Italy.¹⁰⁶ Carlo Borromeo would return twice more to commune within the Holy House, including in 1583, the year before his death. After his beatification, Carlo became a standard facet in Loretan pilgrimage literature: Cesare Franciotti's 1616 travel guide builds directly from pastoral letters written by the saint as he itemizes the step-by-step process of Loretan pilgrimage.¹⁰⁷

Canonized in 1610 among the first wave of sainthoods following the Protestant Reformation, Saint Carlo Borromeo and his fellowship of newly-minted saints conveyed a strong message to the Catholic and non-Catholic worlds: the roster of near contemporary Catholic reformers and charismatic mystics upheld the ideals behind the Tridentine reforms and promoted personal acts of meditative devotion often centered on visual and/or tactile images. Their sanctification declared an unequivocal victory for the Catholic faith.¹⁰⁸ The seventeenth-century vantage on Carlo Borromeo is one of deeply reverent commemoration. The idea of the saint often supersedes the man and his list of accomplishments, though his achievements were many. His innovations include the rejuvenation of the Milanese bishopric and, crucial to the current

¹⁰⁵ Carlo Borromeo made a habit of nocturnal visits to sacred spaces, like the Holy House and the chapels of the Sacro Monte di Varallo, as fact to which this dissertation will return in the following chapter. Nocturnal visits to the Santa Casa interior was not unusual for the era: Cristina of Lorena, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, visited the Santa Casa at the 22nd hour of the day during her pilgrimage to the site in September through October of 1593. Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 428-429.

¹⁰⁶ "diventata ormai la seconda città santa d'Italia;" Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 19.

¹⁰⁷ Cesare Franciotti, *Viaggio alla Santa Casa di Loreto, distinto in dodici giornate, nelle quali si contiene l'ordine, e modo, che in questo, et in ogni altro pellegrinaggio di devotione, ò di obbligo si dovrebbe tenere per ritrarne frutto e salute. Del P. Cesare Franciotti della congregazione della Madre di Dio. Con licenza di Superiori, et privilegi*, published in Venice in 1627. Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 68-74.

¹⁰⁸ As a declaration of support, Pope Paul V Borghese interred a bone of Carlo Borromeo in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Borromeo's one-time prelateship and home of the revered Lucan icon of the *Madonna del Popolo*.

study, the popularization of what we could term “regional” pilgrimage across the Italian peninsula. Not only was the saint preoccupied with the Holy House of the Virgin, but Carlo Borromeo also made a point of visiting other relics like the Shroud of Turin and topographical recreations like the Sacred Mountain chapel conglomerate at Varallo. His personal devotional interest and actions speak volumes on the relationship between sixteenth-century theologians and the production of multi-medial religious foci.

As an idealist Catholic reformer, Carlo Borromeo modeled himself after the great bishops of the prior generation including Gian Matteo Giberti.¹⁰⁹ During Carlo Borromeo’s illustrious career, the religious man made pilgrimage a fundamental facet to his own personal devotion, and in so doing inspired his contemporaries to do the same. The saint’s biographer, Carlo Bascapé, informs us that the Shroud of Turin carried particular significance for Borromeo since it bore the impression of Jesus Christ’s form. The sacred outline of his divine body, like the Veronica Veil contemporaneously housed in Rome, revealed the true likeness of Christ. In an era when to see still implied touch, to view the Shroud was to look upon Christ’s human form and feel the impression of his body on earth. Again the body is signified through absent presence.

In multiple pilgrimage excursions, Carlo Borromeo would group his visits to the Shroud and Loreto with sojourns at Varallo. The Sacred Mountain chapels there offered the same spaces as the Holy Land by virtue of their commensurate measurements. Designer Fra Bernardino Caimi and his fellow Franciscans replicated the size and shape of Holy Land structures—even quoting the interior of the Santa Casa di Loreto for the Annunciation—to transport the viewer into moments of Christ’s life. These three religious centers allowed Carlo Borromeo to revere all

¹⁰⁹ Bascapé tells us that Carlo Borromeo consciously chose Gian Matteo Giberti after a concerted period of research for his wise episcopal governance and ecclesiastical reform in Verona. Carlo Borromeo also brought supporters and collaborators of Giberti into his orbit, such as the one-time vicar under Giberti, Niccolò Oramento, to join his diocese administration in Milan. Bascapé, *Vita e Opere di Carlo*, 45-47.

of the stages of Christ's life, from inception, through his travails, and his ultimate death and proven resurrection.

Carlo brought the notion of architectural replication back to his bishopric in Milan with the intention of constructing a replica of the Santa Casa in the heart of the city. Though the original project was not underway by the Archbishop's death in 1584, the idea was taken up in 1616 by his cousin, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, who expanded the preexisting Milanese church dedicated to Loreto and invested the building with a replica of the Holy House.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, Federico's Santa Casa copy does not survive, nor have details regarding its manufacture or appearance surfaced, but the mere fact of its existence illuminates the vogue for replication in the creation of domestic cultic devotionals.¹¹¹

The Holy House of the Virgin offers a format and concept that is rich with the potential for replication. Instances of veneration of the Virgin Mary as the Madonna di Loreto, and copies the Holy House across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries illustrate the potential for this iconic site to behave as an object of Catholic Reform. Recreations of the structure equate the renaissance pilgrimage site with the replicable early Christian icons attributed to Saint Luke, the likenesses of which were also liberally copied throughout the world. The function of the copied icon as an unbiased replica—an extension of the original—is equally enacted by the sculptural and architectural equations with the Holy House that emerged across Italy and even throughout Europe in the early modern era. In a sense, these Holy House replicas effectively enact the threat of relocation by traversing the European countryside.

¹¹⁰ For basic information regarding Federico Borromeo's intervention, see Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 101.

¹¹¹ A Piazzale Loreto still exists in Milan today, in the north-eastern region of the city center, which most likely indicates the general location of the church and its copy of the Holy House.

In many ways, the conversation laid out in this dissertation confronts the issue of the “recursive system” wrought between acts of substitution and performativity as defined by Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood in their 2010 publication, *Anachronic Renaissance*.¹¹² In the system of substitution, replicas of an original [physical or imagined] bear the same sacred aura as the prototype. In the truest sense, the sacred image exists independent of the media in which it is portrayed.¹¹³ In acts of performativity, the authored image is anchored in time because it performs the function of the sacred image even though its origin is acknowledged as the intellectual or cultural construction of the patron or artist: in essence, the authored image performs the substitution. To clarify their argument, Nagel and Wood cite multiple architectural substitutions and performances throughout their text. The clearest example of substitutional architecture rests in the Florentine baptistery, which assumed its topographical lineage as an “ancient” structure almost instantaneously, within a generation of its erection.¹¹⁴ A similar oscillation of replicable value permeates copies of the Santa Casa executed across the sixteenth century. As the visual and conceptual signifiers of the Santa Casa evolved, evocations of the Holy House shifted from a dependence upon the *Madonna and Child* sculpted icon to the brick structure and finally to the marble exterior.

The earliest iterations of Santa Casa devotion outside Loreto date back to the reign of Julius II.¹¹⁵ In 1507, the della Rovere pope sanctioned the construction of the Church of Santa Maria di Loreto in Rome.¹¹⁶ That same year, the Sienese banker and friend of the pope, Agostino

¹¹² Alexander Nagel, Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

¹¹³ This concept of image/idea independence (“divorced” from the medium in which it is portrayed) also recalls Hans Belting’s arguments in the *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, translated by Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 12.

¹¹⁴ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 135.

¹¹⁵ This statement obviously excludes what is believed to be the original site of the Holy House in Jerusalem, and the bare foundations to the Holy House left by the structure’s brief sojourn in Trsat, Croatia.

¹¹⁶ Weil-Garris, “The Santa Casa di Loreto,” 8.

Chigi, dedicated his family chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo to the Loretan Madonna as well.¹¹⁷ Other chapels dedicated to the Madonna di Loreto appeared over time, most notably the Madonna dei Pellegrini Chapel decorated by Caravaggio in 1604-1605 in the church of Sant'Agostino.¹¹⁸ In the earliest cases of Julian dedications, Loretan devotion predated the architectural skin appended to the Santa Casa. Their focus therefore relied predominantly on the wooden sculpted icon as signifier of the holy structure. The venerable cases listed above took the sculpted icon as the pilgrimage priority: a “black Madonna” of the Loretan type is invested into the high altar at Santa Maria di Loreto in Rome, and Caravaggio’s rendering of the Madonna and Child in the Cavalletti Chapel portrays a dark-haired Madonna holding a toddler-sized Christ draped across her abdomen in a size ratio quite similar to the Loretan icon type.¹¹⁹ Julius II’s 1507 papal bull conceded the existence of the Lucan sculpted icon, but gave priority to the Holy House as the divine epicenter of the pilgrimage site, signaling the initiation of the priority-shift from icon to edifice.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Christina Strunck has published a transcription of a 1526 document describing the Chigi chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo and its original dedication to the Madonna di Loreto, including a dedicatory inscription, in “Bellori und Bernini rezipieren Raffael. Unbekannte Dokumente zur Cappella Chigi in Santa Maria del Popolo,” *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. 30 (2003): 178-180. The actual document noting the transfer of the chapel dedication from Saints Sebastian, Roche and Sigismund to the Madonna di Loreto was issued by Julius II on December 3rd, 1507, cited in Ingrid D. Rowland, “Render Unto Caesar the Things Which are Caesar’s: Humanism and the Arts in the Patronage of Agostino Chigi,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (1986): 694, n 79.

¹¹⁸ See Pamela Jones, *Altarpieces and Their Viewers in the Churches of Rome from Caravaggio to Guido Reni* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishers Inc., 2008), 84-91.

¹¹⁹ William Wallace discusses the possibility of the Loretan Madonna come to life in Caravaggio’s painting, to which Howard Hibbard alluded in his own discussion of Caravaggio’s work for the Cavalletti Chapel. William Wallace, “Pedes peregrinorum/Pedes Christi,” *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2009), 22. While the case of Loretan devotion is clear at the church dedicated to the holy structure and in Caravaggio’s intervention at Sant’Agostino, the situation at Santa Maria del Popolo is much harder to decipher, given the multiple artistic interventions on site, from Raphael and Sebastiano del Piombo to Gianlorenzo Bernini. For more on the Chigi chapel, see John Shearman, *Only Connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 178-180.

¹²⁰ Julius II’s papal bull dated October 21st, 1507, decrees that veneration at Loreto not only involved the image of the Virgin but the room in which the Madonna received the annunciation and conceived. This bull brought Loreto directly under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic See rather than the regional control of the bishopric at Recanati. Archivio Storico della Santa Casa di Loreto, Pergamene 210, c.6, discussed in Grimaldi, *Pellegrini e pellegrinaggi*, 557.

More literal replicas of the Holy House, much like the one Carlo Borromeo planned for Milan, spread across Europe over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, a copy of the Santa Casa was constructed in Prague between the years 1623 and 1631, by the Italian architect Giovanni Battista Orsi, who was hired in Prague after having completed another replica in Vienna (no longer extant).¹²¹ Copies appeared in Germany and Switzerland, but also in the Italian towns of Cremona, Aversa, Casale Monferrato, Venice, Tresivio, Brescia, Lucca, Catania, Macereto di Visso, and even in the neighboring Marche town of Recanati.¹²²

Replicas of the Holy House of the Virgin step beyond the mere reference of commensurate dimensions or the relationships between sacred sites: many regional artists and patrons felt compelled to offer their own renditions of the sixteenth-century sculpted marble exterior in addition to the sacred interior of the Virgin's humble home. These external components were therefore understood as symbolically part and parcel of the House of the Virgin itself, figuring and functioning simultaneously as the replicated interior. Devotion to these subsequent recreations intimates the charged capacity of replicated spaces and the deeply interwoven significance of the sixteenth-century marble additions.

The Santa Casa is a monument, but also a phenomenon, a religious experience facilitated by the conceptual conceits of sculpture and architecture. At its most elemental, the Holy House is a relic and a place, a physical connection with the Holy Family and an access point into the biblical narrative. The Holy House is also an event, a spontaneous appearance that could conceivably disappear. The symbolic structure of the marble surface and the permeability of the architecture convey the personal connection with divinity so avidly pursued in the age of

¹²¹ Jan Boněk, *Esoteric Prague: Baroque Prague* (Prague: Eminent Publishing House, 2012), 61-67.

¹²² The Cremonese copy is of special interest to this conversation, given its location within a church controlled by the Theatine order, which was a new society founded by Saint Gaetano da Thiene and Gian Pietro Carafa (future Pope Paul IV). Grimaldi, *L'Ornamento marmoreo*, 94-111.

Catholic Reform. The brick relic “colonizes” its marble encasement, conferring sacred resonance to the sixteenth-century additions, but those added elements in turn enact the Holy House’s biblical and post-biblical narrative history through relief scenes, three-dimensional bodies, and conceptual levitation.¹²³ As a resplendent theological metaphor for the Virgin’s body, the structure—as well as its many subsequent iterations—receives devotion, taking within itself the bodies of the penitent. Relic, place, time, and body, the quadripartite significance of the structure manifests the multilayered capacity of architectural sculpture to convey meaning for early modern religious devotees.

The proliferation of Santa Casa shrines mimics older traditions of cult and site worship. As mentioned above, the icons of the *Madonna del Popolo* proliferated in the medieval era. In more recent history, miraculous images such as the *Santissima Annunziata* fresco, which first began enacting miracles in Florence in the fourteenth century, was recreated in other regional church interiors.¹²⁴ The foundations of the holy site at Loreto and its subsequent iterations are girded by the reformist minds of the Catholic Church, whose protection and advocacy allowed devotion of the Loretan Madonna to flourish. In short, the Santa Casa is an immersive, theophanic, objectified space that catalyzed early modern devotion. In the following chapters, we will explore other examples of immersion that conceptually enhanced the evolution of the Santa Casa and those religious sites both contemporary with, and influenced by the innovations at Loreto.

¹²³ The reference to colonization stems directly from Nagel and Wood’s discussion of relics and reliquaries, in which they make explicit reference to Loreto: “...just as at Loreto and Trier, the container, the reliquary, would have been converted by *contagio* into a relic, the seam between contained and container effaced.” Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 201.

¹²⁴ The *Santissima Annunziata* copies were not only visual reproductions but in a sense topographical: copies of the holy fresco were habitually recreated on the internal wall of church façades coinciding with the location of the prototype. One such example is at Prato. Megan Holmes, “The Elusive Origins of the Cult of the Annunziata in Florence,” in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Erik Thuno and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2004), 110.

Chapter Two: Transformative Media

At the Holy House of the Virgin in Loreto, the Lombardi and della Porta brothers collaborated with and maintained the sculptural vision set down by Bramante and Sansovino in the first thirty years of Loretan construction. These central and eastern Italian artists engaged with what have been perceived as Romano-Florentine modes of visual representation. Their involvement with the visual rhetoric attests to the multi-regional diffusion of new sculptural paradigms across the sixteenth century. The presence of artists from multiple regions at rural pilgrimage sites provided a chance for artists to engage in a visual dialogue that blurs the boundaries of perceived city-centric styles. Religious centers often provide a hotbed for artistic discourse, regardless of their location, but the case at Loreto still perpetuates the bias in favor of marble sculptural composition. What of sacred sites that prioritized the less canonical, yet far more common material of terracotta?

Baked clay is by far one of the most prevalent materials at sculpturally-oriented pilgrimage sites, but its legitimacy is often dismissed as a facile or even garish emotional representation of faith intended for the uneducated masses, in stark comparison with the loftier associations of marble. This compartmentalization fails to recognize the innovations of clay compositions and its impact on contemporary sculptural discourse. The northern Sacred Mountains, mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, demonstrate the vibrancy of this sculptural approach: the reliance upon two- and three-dimensional bodies populating narrative spaces fosters immediate immersion of religious devotees, bringing the viewer into the realm of biblical history. This chapter seeks to shed light on the experimental nature of terracotta, specifically its

capacity to evoke multiple materials—including other sculptural media, everyday ephemera, and human flesh—in the service of immersive, religious experiences.

Sculpting in terracotta requires the artist to think in additive terms—a “building up” of the body or image—rather than the subtractive method of carvings in stone, wherein the excess is chipped away. In each case, the rules of engagement regarding sculptural facture contour the visual message, invariably shaping the final composition’s impact through construction. Terracotta’s supple qualities derive from the material’s high plasticity, whereas stone often fights the impression of brittle, sharply-contoured surfaces. That being said, most sculptors of the early modern period had a working knowledge of both additive and subtractive methods. The choices made on the part of artists to cross such material divides—to borrow the visual hallmarks of one in executions constructed of another—demonstrate conscious decisions infused with artistic and cultural objectives. Many of the artists involved at Loreto worked in both materials, as did many famous urban sculptors of Florence and Rome, such as Donatello and Francesco da Sangallo to name just a few.

The case studies in this chapter will interpret two instances wherein terracotta transgresses its own materiality to convey something more. Underlying this focus, I seek to eschew the traditional limits erected around terracotta as a material rooted in the realm of “popular devotion,” so often set apart from the “intellectual” pursuits of either marble or bronze. That ability to transgress its own materiality allowed artists of terracotta to consider its potential symbolic value, thereby propelling sculptural discourse. Through this material-oriented investigation, terracotta will become an active voice in the evolution of sixteenth-century sacred visual representation, as a viable influence and catalyst impacting sacred imagery across the peninsula.

Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo

The Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo is located in the Tuscan countryside, almost equidistant from the cities of Florence, Pisa and Siena. Construction of the sacred mountain chapels at San Vivaldo mostly span the first quarter of the sixteenth century; however, multiple subsequent interventions of renovation and restoration have complicated any efforts of attribution or dating. This holy Tuscan site is one of many Sacri Monti compositions, including those in the regions of Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna. The case of San Vivaldo is often overshadowed by the more recognized Sacri Monti, most notably the Sacro Monte di Varallo.

The well-known Sacro Monte di Varallo, mentioned in Chapter One, is a well-documented site, and among the best preserved Sacred Mountain pilgrimage destinations. Approved in 1486 by Pope Innocent VIII Cibo, and under construction by the 1490s, the site grew in complexity over the course of the sixteenth century, achieving a height of popularity with the late-century involvement of Saint Archbishop Carlo Borromeo.¹²⁵ Varallo was not the only Sacred Mountain to emerge over the course of the early modern period, however. At least twenty Sacri Monti pilgrimage sites were interspersed throughout the northern lake region, with an untold number of other planned sites never to be realized.¹²⁶ The earliest such sites—Varallo near Milan, and the Tuscan site of San Vivaldo—materialize the burgeoning intentions of the Sacred Mountain concept. San Vivaldo will act as the first case study of this chapter as a cultic center, bridging the perceived gap between the sculptural discourse of Tuscany and Lazio and the tradition of popular cult devotion across Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna.

¹²⁵ Damiano Pomi, *La parola si fa arte. Luoghi significati del Sacro Monte di Varallo* (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 2008), 29.

¹²⁶ Roberta Corsini, *Affreschi del Sacro Monte di Varese* (Gavirate: Nicolini Editore, 2000), 16-17.

Varallo and San Vivaldo both materialize the sacred transport of the devout viewer into a topographical reconceptualization of the Holy Land. Sculptural and painted bodies populate each chapel, intended to incite intimate religious communion in the viewer. For example, in the Chapel of Calvary at Varallo, the viewer enters the dramatic Crucifixion scene beside the Virgin and John the Evangelist, sharing in their emotional agony in a richly polychromatic interior (Image 12). The objective of immersion is a fairly traditional one from the vantage of Santa Casa sites discussed in the previous chapter. What is so groundbreaking about the multi-chapel experiences at Varallo and San Vivaldo is their commensurate evolution: both stem from a similar point of departure, and emerge independently at the same moment in time to foster an intimate personal experience for the devout pilgrim. Contemporary scholarship explains this parallel evolution through various political and religious early modern upheavals—the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the rise of Protestant movements in the early-sixteenth century to name a few—but these associations do not adequately consider trends in lay religious practice of the era.¹²⁷ The Franciscans, a dominant force in Sacred Mountain construction across northern Italy, fostered a heightened level of visceral experience as an integral component of lay religious practice. An early modern pilgrim engaging in the Franciscan approach to piety was trained to seek a “somaesthetic” experience—a bodily, sensory appreciation for the sacred figures and spaces represented—that bring the pilgrim into the biblical narrative.¹²⁸ The growing interest in imagery in lieu of original sacred objects reflects a broader understanding of sacred practice that

¹²⁷ Annabel Wharton succinctly dismisses the association of Sacred Mountains as a counter to Protestantism: “...the vision of Varallo as a dam blocking the flood of heretical ideas flowing through the crevices in the Alps seems, frankly, ridiculous.” Annabel Jane Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem: Relics, Replicas, Theme Parks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 119.

¹²⁸ I utilize the term ‘somaesthetic’ in conscious association with Allison Terry-Fritsch’s “Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo,” *Open Arts Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014): 111-132.

became fully engrained by the year 1500: the act of pilgrimage to “a Holy Jerusalem” supersedes the literal traversal of distance to the actual origin site of the faith. The image has become as valuable as the archetype, for the archetype *is* the image: Varallo and San Vivaldo are each “Holy Jerusalem,” as the Santa Casa and its many copies act simultaneously as the home of the Virgin.¹²⁹

According to the mythology of Varallo, the site was chosen expressly for its topographical similarity to the Holy Land, with which its designer, the Franciscan Friar Bernardino Caimi, was well acquainted, having acted as a custodian to various pilgrimage sites in Jerusalem in the 1470s.¹³⁰ By contrast, San Vivaldo grew from a preexisting sacred site, where a hermit named Beato Vivaldo of San Gimignano lived out the last twenty years of his life in solitude, from circa 1300 to 1320. His hermitage became a devotional location for the nearby Friars of San Miniato, a community just northwest of the sacred mountain site.¹³¹ In 1498 the church at San Vivaldo and accompanying convent were taken over by the Franciscans,¹³² who rededicated the church to the Madonna of the Assumption and Saint Francis. By 1509 the convent at San Vivaldo counted among a list of Observant Franciscan communities.¹³³

¹²⁹ For more on the archetype as image, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

¹³⁰ In 1496 Bernardino Caimi received the official title of vicar of the provinces of Dalmatia, Croatia, Bosnia, and the Holy Land. A more secular influence on the choice of Varallo may rest in the Franciscan need to infiltrate the Duchy of Milan, still little influenced by the Franciscan order as of the late fifteenth century. Pomi, 24–28. The Franciscans held a monopoly on sacred sites in the Holy Land, established in an agreement with the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik an-Nasir in 1333. Franciscans took up permanent residence at the Holy Sepulcher, the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, the Chapel of Saint Thomas the Apostle, and the Cenacle on Mount Sion. They also controlled the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem*, 106, 137.

¹³¹ Current scholarship is unclear on the particular order of the friars of San Miniato. Further exploration into the primary documents of the site, today housed at the Franciscan archives in Florence, would greatly expand this avenue of research.

¹³² F. Ghilardi, *Le cappelle di San Vivaldo. Un documento di Leone X* (Castelfiorentino: Tipografia Giovannelli e Carpitelli, 1921), 12.

¹³³ Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem*, 128. The Observant Franciscan community was a new branch emergent from the preexisting, termed “Conventual,” Franciscan Order. The Observants split from the Conventuals in the mid-fourteenth century, led by the Umbrian friar Paoluccio dei Trinci. By the end of the century following, the

Though the permission for Varallo predates construction at San Vivaldo by over two decades (the Varallo plan approved in 1486, and consecration of the first chapel, dedicated to the Holy Sepulcher, in 1491), the decoration of the Tuscan Sacred Mountain unfolded contemporaneously to its Milanese cousin at the onset of the sixteenth century. Fredrika Jacobs states that, when Friar Bernardino Caimi first conceptualized his Sacred Mountain at Varallo, the chapels were purposefully constructed as empty interiors.¹³⁴ At some point between Pope Innocent VIII Cibo's authorization of the pilgrimage site on December 21st, 1486, and the construction of the first kiln at Varallo between 1503-1504, the objectives of the sacred interiors had changed. Early in the site's history, the empty chapels of Calvary and the Holy Sepulcher received wooden sculpted figures of Christ and, in the case of Calvary, the Good and Bad Thieves. Over the course of the sixteenth century, these earliest wooden bodies would be accompanied by a massive retinue of terracotta and frescoed companions. The evolution towards multimedia interiors demonstrates the Franciscans' acknowledgment of the efficacy of two- and three-dimensional representations in acts of contemplation and pilgrimage, ultimately preferring densely populated spaces over symbolic topography alone.¹³⁵

Similar to the situation at Varallo, decoration at San Vivaldo is most often dated from 1500 through 1530 or 1533. A 1514 description of the site lists twenty-eight chapels. At its height, San Vivaldo boasted thirty-four chapels in total, depicting the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the fate of his followers. The site was renovated in the first half of the

Observantist community had ballooned to approximately 1262 convents across Europe. Geraldine Johnson, "Approaching the Altar: Donatello's Sculpture in the Santo," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (1999): 642.

¹³⁴ Fredrika H. Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 17.

¹³⁵ By the time terracotta imagery began to people the tableaux at Varallo, they joined the company of preexisting wooden imagery. Kiln construction noted in Peter Cannon Brooks, "The Sculptural Complexes of San Vivaldo," in *La 'Gerusalemme' di San Vivaldo e i Sacri Monti in Europa*, edited by Sergio Gensini (Montaione: Pacini Editore, 1989): 272.

seventeenth century, indicating a resurgent interest in the location, which coincided with a renewed fascination with Sacred Mountains in general, but by this time the number of chapels at San Vivaldo had already dropped down again to twenty-eight.¹³⁶

As the seventeenth-century renovation intimates, San Vivaldo has its limitations as a contemporary case study of religious practice due to subsequent site changes and general neglect over the centuries. Before delving into the innovations at San Vivaldo it is important to explain the site's limitations and issues in current scholarship. Humid weather conditions have worn away most of the frescoed surfaces that once existed on the interior and exterior of the chapels: many of the sculpted compositions still benefit from frescoed backgrounds, but any other decoration in most of the chapel interiors—such as ceiling frescoes or decoration on the lateral or rear walls—have completely worn away. Outside, the family crests that once centered proudly above chapel entryways or adorned covered porches have mostly crumbled away. The loss of these details strains our current comprehension of contextual display, community participation, and private family devotion. Of the thirty-four original chapels, only seventeen remain open to the modern visitor. Multiple renovations to the site—from simple reapplications of paint and structural reinforcements to entire sculptural replacements—mar our current vision of the original Sacred Mountain.¹³⁷

The second issue of San Vivaldo studies rests in the lack of critical analysis brought into discussions regarding those sculptural creations populating the Sacred Mountain. Traditionally, the terracottas at San Vivaldo are attributed to the Tuscan della Robbia family, either specifically to members of the artistic dynasty and their workshop, or to followers and one-time students of

¹³⁶ Brooks, "The Sculptural Complexes of San Vivaldo," 273-274.

¹³⁷ Some of the more glaring sculptural replacements include compositions in the chapels of the Annunciation, the Flight into Egypt, the Veronica, and the chapel of St James.

the Florentine school. Though a tempting association with prominent sculptors of the community nearby, the varying qualities of sculpting techniques and diverse material treatments on site make this association tenuous.¹³⁸

Stylistically, the della Robbia traits most clearly reflected at San Vivaldo are those of Andea della Robbia and his son, Giovanni, who were active until 1525 and 1529 respectively. Their sensitivity to facial features, inclusion of voluminous attire, and penchant for high relief and three-dimensional terracotta sculpture blend well with the trends at San Vivaldo. The Chapel of the Madonna dello Spasimo, or swooning Madonna, presents one of the highest quality sculptural compositions on site, most often attributed to Giovanni della Robbia (Image 13). In the high relief composition, the Virgin lies unconscious in her anguish over the crucifixion of her Son, supported on either side by her attendants, including John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene. Her compassionate body is held up for the viewer in a protracted, cruciform posture, as if she too has just been taken down from the cross. The figural group mediates the impression of three-dimensionality as they arc out from the matrix of the wall to align vertically, referencing somewhat the planar quality of iconic painted representations of centuries prior.¹³⁹ The group is inset within an architectural framework of a local sandstone, *pietra serena*, named for its calm, grey tone. Located in the culminating apse of the Chapel interior, the grey stone framework is a trademark Florentine installation motif, one of the strongest influences of Florentine presence on site. The longitudinal orientation of the space is intended for contemplative procession toward

¹³⁸ The association is appealing, given the della Robbia work at La Verna, another sacred Franciscan site in Tuscany. For a summary of Andrea della Robbia's altarpieces at La Verna, see Stephanie Cole Miller, "Andrea della Robbia and his La Verna Altarpieces: Context and Interpretation" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2003).

¹³⁹ A popular comparison to this stylistic trope is the vertical orientation of angels flanking Madonna and Child imagery in Florence and Siena, for example the work of Cimabue and later Bernardo Daddi.

the altar before the sculptural image, but not for personal contact with the group. In this instance, the sculpted Madonna dello Spasimo prioritizes the visual.

Even though works like the Madonna dello Spasimo are declared confidently as products of the della Robbia, the family's famous inclination towards reflective, opaque glaze treatment is almost entirely absent from the sacred mountain site. The stylistic hallmark permeates the collective oeuvre of the family and workshop. Students of the della Robbia who went on to establish their own artistic styles also prioritize enameled glaze work, for example Benedetto Buglioni, often cited as a potential contributor at San Vivaldo, relies predominantly on the same luminous white, green, blue and yellow glazes standardized by the della Robbia.¹⁴⁰ The Florentine family's approach to terracotta is almost entirely unused at San Vivaldo, with the exception of a single dove of the Holy Spirit immured in the dome of the Pentecost Chapel. Even so, the roundel is distinctly simpler than recognized attempts of the subject by the della Robbia, and composed with a lesser quality of execution. Creators of San Vivaldo preferred instead the tonal diversity of applied polychromatic pigmentation rather than fired glaze.

Besides quality of sculpting and glaze, the della Robbia adhered to strict design decisions in their multi-sculpture commissions, choosing to work either in three-dimensions or in one uniform depth of relief. By contrast, many of the sculpted groups at San Vivaldo vary in their reliance upon the surface of the wall, some extending almost entirely away from the vertical plane, others barely intruding upon the interior. Given the family's habitual standardizations, the della Robbia School's style does not fit comfortably into the fluctuating parameters at San Vivaldo.

¹⁴⁰ Lorenzo Lorenzi, "Le terrecotte policrome di San Vivaldo. Precisazioni in margine ad alcune sculture del complesso gerosolimitano," in *Una 'Gerusalemme' Toscana sullo sfondo di due giubilei: 1500-1525*, edited by Sergio Gensini (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 110; Brooks, "The Sculptural Complexes of San Vivaldo," 278-279.

Overall, the wide diversity in sculptural styles problematize the della Robbia association at San Vivaldo. The range of artistic “hands” visible in the surviving chapel sculptures across the site indicate a diverse mix of participants in the creation and evolution of the sacred place. Who knows how many other influences have been lost completely in the process of chapel closures and site degradation. This criticism of attribution does not mean to imply that the della Robbia played no part at San Vivaldo: the Sacred Mountain was a major pilgrimage site in the sixteenth century that warranted the participation of established patrons and artists from the surrounding communities. However, the blanket association with the family grossly deemphasizes the diversity of artistic insights brought to this sacred site. These many artists, while offering diverse approaches to structural representation, all comply with certain stylistic themes, such as the preference for polychromatic painted detailing rather than glaze. This may have resulted from limited kiln space or technology on site, but more likely stems from a purposefully intended overarching design scheme, a fact to which we will later return.¹⁴¹

Although Varallo has endured as the most well-known example of a Sacred Mountain pilgrimage site, the papal investment in San Vivaldo, particularly in its early phase, is notable for this discussion. On February 19th, 1516, Pope Leo X de’ Medici accorded visitors to San Vivaldo seven years of indulgences out of Purgatory.¹⁴² The bull lists all thirty-four devotional sites, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the site’s design, if not complete construction.¹⁴³ The primary indulgence a visitor would receive was dependent upon visiting the sixteen major narrative chapels at San Vivaldo, which included the chapels of Calvary, the Holy Sepulcher and

¹⁴¹ For a concise summary of the complexity of terracotta glaze work, see Marjorie Trusted, ed., *The Making of Sculpture: The Materials and Techniques of European Sculpture* (London: V&A Publications, 2007), 43.

¹⁴² Ghilardi provides a complete transcription of the papal bull detailing the indulgences gifted to San Vivaldo: Ghilardi, *Le cappelle di San Vivaldo*, 28-31.

¹⁴³ Not all sculptural foci earned their own independent structure. For example, the Chapel of Pilate includes the *Flagellation* and the *Pilate Washing his Hands*.

the Ascension. An additional one-year indulgence was appended to those visiting the eighteen lesser chapels on site, which included the now-lost Chapels of Saint Anne, the Resurrection, and the Cave of Saint Helena.¹⁴⁴ Many of the chapel spaces listed in this initial group no longer exist on site or have changed in official title, which offers another insight into to the continual evolution of the religious topography.

When the Franciscans took over San Vivaldo circa 1500, the Observant Friars on site acted as personal attendants to the sacred chapels. The perception of pilgrims on-site has therefore changed little since the early modern period: twenty-first century visitors experience similar visitation rights as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pilgrims as a result of the mandate for Franciscan tour guides. Their involvement in the experience of the every visitor created a standard of interaction and mitigated the anonymous acts of vandalism (more often than not, devotional graffiti) used as fodder for viewing restrictions instated later at other Sacred Mountain sites like Varallo.¹⁴⁵ Franciscan friars still lead visits today, scrupulously unlocking and relocking each interior as the devotee passes through the narrative of Christ. Without the guide, visitors to the site are held at arm's length from the sacred scenes, restricted to heavily obstructed views through grilled windows in some (but not all) of the chapel façades. Involvement of the Franciscan friars conditioned the experience of the viewer then as now; their explanatory comments and careful answers to the visitor's questions maintain the educational and devotional

¹⁴⁴ The enigmatic chapel of Saint Anne remains an unexplored facet to the history at San Vivaldo. This author wonders at the possible structural associations between the Saint Anne chapel and the Santa Casa di Loreto, which was also the home of Saints Anne and Joachim, according to popular apocrypha of the era. This point is discussed briefly in the first chapter of this dissertation. Additionally, one wonders about the possibility of Florentine influence behind the choice of a chapel dedicated to Saint Anne, who acted as an important civic patroness to the city that was increasingly favored by the Medici. The Florentine interest in Saint Anne will be discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁵ In 1594 Bishop Bascapè decreed the prohibition of graffiti at Varallo. Christine Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses at the Sacro Monte di Varallo," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013), 406.

premise of the experience, a far cry from the “sacred theme park” interpretation commonly appended to Sacri Monti spaces.¹⁴⁶

As mentioned above, San Vivaldo is shocking for its varied decorative program, but also for its structural diversity. Chapels range from small, square spaces capped with sail vaults, to oblong, columnated interiors housing multiple narrative scenes, to external chapel spaces too shallow to accommodate both living and terracotta bodies. Each space hosts at least one sculptural installation, of polychrome, painted terracotta, mostly three-quarters life-sized. In some chapels the sculptural groups stand on the same ground level as the viewer. In other interiors the figures are elevated, immured in the wall itself, giving the impression of bodies that are neither of the wall nor part of the sacred space. Significantly, almost all of the elevated sculptural installations are oriented directly above an altar, which overlays the three-dimensional installations with an iconic valence: these constructions, like the Madonna dello Spasimo, prioritize the visual rather than the tactile and behave more like a painted *pala d’altare* than an interactive sculpture.

The final moments of Christ’s Passion are particularly gripping for their ingenious representation at San Vivaldo. Visitors accompany Christ from his condemnation by the people, through the Savior’s piteous progression to the Mount of Calvary, and to his ultimate crucifixion. Split between the chapels of the House of Pilate and the Progression to Calvary, two shallow, projecting external chapels flanking a central path house the scene of the *Ecce Homo*, Behold the Man. When opened, the external chapel appended to the Chapel of the House of Pilate (to the visitor’s right) reveals the figure of Christ, flanked by his two- and three-dimensional aggressors, his body bloodied and bare (Image 14). The figures are elevated and half life-sized, as if standing

¹⁴⁶ Wharton’s book title expresses this association explicitly: *Selling Jerusalem: Relics, Replicas, Theme Parks*.

upon a balcony well above the ground. Though Christ gazes humbly downward, his jailors stare boldly out towards the viewer and also past them to the external chapel appended to the Chapel of the Progression to Calvary (to the viewer's left). There, a community of frescoed and terracotta onlookers, three-quarters life-sized, gaze across the open air divide (Image 15). The Madonna and her attendants appear among the crowd, as do robed, Jewish men, Roman centurions, and disfigured, cruel-faced pagans. The entire assemblage gives the appearance of standing on the same ground level as the viewer.

Caught between the terracotta onlookers and the object of their scrutiny, the pilgrim enters the biblical narrative in the open air of the sacred site. This innovation at San Vivaldo is unprecedented: no sacred spaces at Varallo—or at any other sacred mountain, to my knowledge—unfold outside. These shallow external chapels, incorporating the path of the pilgrim visitor, effectively transgress the enclosing framework of a chapel interior to bring modern viewers into the biblical moment, and the biblical narrative into contemporary space. Up until this narrative point, scenes at San Vivaldo resided within complete chapel spaces and behind the grounding and protective barrier of an altar, oftentimes accompanied by a tabernacle niche in the wall adjacent. These liturgical implements remind the viewer of the iconicity of the sculpted devotional. Without altar, or even an encompassing chapel, the barrier between the modern world and the biblical falls away as we the viewer are compelled to Behold the Man.

Below the fictive balcony displaying Christ in the *Ecce Homo* scene, another facet calls to the early modern pilgrim. A small, cavernous and grilled space, the area below the balcony scene is entitled the Prison of Barabbas, named for the criminal who was freed in exchange for Christ. Though currently empty, the exposed niche once concealed a sculpted body of the prisoner, which was reportedly heavily mutilated in the early modern period by the throwing of

stones.¹⁴⁷ The construction of the *Ecce Homo* scene at San Vivaldo conscripts the time-travelling visitor to punish the criminal for causing Christ's unwarranted incarceration and judgment, all in an effort to forestall the inevitable crucifixion.

Having experienced the moment of judgment, the pilgrim passes from the open air and into the Chapel of the Progression to Calvary (Image 16). The viewer enters a long, shallow chapel space through the east entrance of the chapel façade. Inside, the viewer is confronted with a gruesome progression of Roman centurions and criminals, with Christ at the center. He bears the weight of his cross on his shoulder as he gazes out at the viewer. At three-quarters life-sized and elevated approximately four feet off the ground, the bodies seem somewhat distanced from the viewer; however, in this protracted, longitudinal space there is no barrier, no altar to prevent pious touch. The wear of that touch is readily visible down the front of Christ's tunic, and in the exposed terracotta of his toes. In this interior, we walk with Christ as we pass in from the east façade entrance and exit through the west, towards the Mount of Calvary.

The subsequent chapel immediately following the Progression is the Madonna dello Spasimo, discussed earlier with reference to Giovanni della Robbia and his workshop. Her rumpled body, this time enshrined behind an altar, heightens the sensation of foreboding in the viewer: we read the premonition that is her action, and foresee the direction of the narrative. Outside, the chapels of the Pious Women and the Veronica flank the uphill pathway. In the former, Christ appears again in a final apocryphal moment of farewell to the three Marys as he still bears the cross (this time frescoed). In the latter, the Chapel of the Veronica displays a much later sculpted and painted image of a devout woman presenting her veil icon of Christ to the

¹⁴⁷ Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem*, 130.

viewer. It is only after this moment of image replication that the viewer then passes on to the apex of the Passion.

Calvary is expressed in an idiomatic way at San Vivaldo. At the Milanese Sacred Mountain of Varallo, the chapel of Calvary immediately immerses the viewer in the devastating moment of Christ's Crucifixion. The devotee enters the narrative beside the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist who look towards Christ's demise on the cross at the heart of the interior. From this associative moment, the viewer must walk past the three crucified men to traverse the narrative and exit the space. The chapel dematerializes at Varallo in deference for an evocation of the open-air location of Golgotha: the ceiling fluidly arches up and away from the vertical planes of the walls, the conceit of which is further concealed by a multitude of spiraling angels and nebulous clouds. The objective at Varallo is an encapsulation of the biblical event, presented in one engrossing interior intended to overwhelm the viewer with sensations of empathy and remorse. By contrast, the chapel of the same narrative moment at San Vivaldo makes much greater use of the chapel's architecture to convey meaning: the articulation of the structure assumes an integral role in the sacred scene.

To arrive at San Vivaldo's Chapel of Calvary, the visitor has climbed an incline to a small, woodland plateau. The chapel itself is a dominating, two-story structure, much taller than the other chapels in this sequestered region of the San Vivaldo park, such as those of the *Noli me tangere* and the Holy Sepulcher. Faced with a small, gable-roof entranceway, the first interior at the Chapel of Calvary is another surprisingly diminutive, projecting external chapel space like the *Ecce Homo* (Image 17). This external chapel differs from those encountered previously in that the viewer is encouraged through the display to enter the space. The chapel's sculptural decoration is oriented on the right, internal wall of the interior. In a space measuring at most four

feet square, the visitor shares the claustrophobic space with a series of low-relief sculpted figures of the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and the three Marys, all immured in the wall to meet the eye level of the viewer. Joined in a tight cluster, the robed bodies run together, but for their individualized polychromatic articulation. John the Evangelist at right gazes at the viewer as she enter the dark interior; to the left, the Virgin Mary faces forward, looking down as she clasps her hands tightly in prayer; then Mary Magdalene, to the far left of the cohort, finally guides the eye of the viewer upward and to the left. At the far end of the small interior, a wide crevice in the ceiling coincides with the direction of Mary Magdalene's gaze and offers a privileged view of the horrific scene taking place in the upper level of the structure: the moment of Christ's Crucifixion.

To enter the *Crucifixion* space itself, the visitor must exit the external chapel, leaving behind the Virgin and her entourage, and walk around the exterior of the Chapel structure to access the stairway on the opposite side of the building. This division of the Calvary experience, disjunctive in nature, divides the empathetic experience of the pilgrim between a contemplation of the anguish of Christ's followers from a personal association with Christ's dying body. Inside the upper level (Image 18), the viewer enters into a protracted rendition of the Crucifixion, where the only sculpted bodies are those crucified; Christ, and the Good and Bad Thieves. The rest of the crowded Calvary scene is rendered in fresco along the wall directly behind the sculpted figures. Though some characters are dressed in vaguely classicizing styles, the crowd overtly conveys a sense of contemporary, renaissance accoutrements, which blurs yet again the temporal division between the biblical and the early modern present.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Some of these figures, admittedly, were restored at a much later date, particularly those angels flying around the top of the three-dimensional crucifixes.

Accessing the *Crucifixion* scene from the stairway appended to the north façade, the viewer enters the narrative on the side of the Good Thief, and must cross the room in order to glimpse the pious mourners left behind in the lower-level cavern. As one approaches this vantage, the viewer will take note of a deep, slender crevice articulated in the brick floor of the chapel interior. The line emerges from the frescoed wall of the *Crucifixion*, just to the left of the staked cross of the Bad Thief, and runs uninterrupted to the back, western wall of the chapel interior. This is the sign of the earthquake that split the ground at the moment of Christ's death, permanently separating the Bad Thief from the realm of the saved. The division is so important to the design scheme that it cuts through the external wall of the building to mar the west foundations of the structure. In fact, the conscientious viewer will have noticed this narrative detail as she passed by the gaping external crevice *en route* to the upper level. The structural detail manifests a readily apparent visual sign of terrestrial damage to the chapel's foundation, a rendition of holy topography and supernatural phenomena.

As with the *Ecce Homo*, the Chapel of Calvary blurs the division between the realm of the viewer and that of the biblical narrative. In the lower level, the cohort of the Virgin is immured into the wall on a slight elevation to approach eye-height of the viewer. Even more significant are the bodies of Christ and the Good and Bad Thieves in the space above: all three are nearly life-sized upon their respective crosses, giving the impression of immediate access and imminent proximity. The surviving painted figures at the foot of the Cross add to the sensation of inclusion: the viewer feels equal in size to the onlookers dressed in contemporary fashion who gaze upon the Savior's crucified form. We experience something similar at Varallo, where frescoed pilgrims adorn the walls of the Chapel of Calvary, viscerally connecting the viewer with

her painted equivalents.¹⁴⁹ If the chapel interior at San Vivaldo had originally benefited from frescoes on all sides of the interior, as in chapels like those at Varallo, the sensation of inclusion would have been potent indeed.

The progression of chapels at San Vivaldo amplifies the dynamism of the narrative of Christ's Passion through episodic divisions that forestall the inevitable confrontation with the *Crucifixion*. Such pauses in the narrative reinforce contemplation and personal identification with the tribulations of each group of holy figures portrayed. That meditative association is further heightened by the material transgressions of polychromatic terracotta. This sensitivity of color variation, shadow, and matt finish—visible across San Vivaldo—promotes interpretation of the sculpted figures as corporeally present bodies. The polychromatic uniformity across the chapel interiors subsume the material of terracotta in deference for the promotion of the “real presence” of the biblical bodies portrayed. The chapels themselves, as individualized, sculpted structures, mold the experience of the viewer and negotiate time as well as topography. The articulation of space, and one's passage through it, ingeniously bends the limits of sacred “interiors” by extending across the open space of the sacred park, providing something comparable to the layered experience at Loreto. Overall, this multimedia confluence enjoins the visitor to empathize with the numerous figures in the narrative series and conceptually (and corporeally) enter the moment itself.

The symbolic power of clay is no more apparent at San Vivaldo than in the chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, where Christ's nearly naked form is laid out within the tomb in a circular structure.¹⁵⁰ His clay body, so often touched that his form reveals more exposed clay than

¹⁴⁹ Göttler, “The Temptation of the Senses,” 406-407.

¹⁵⁰ The circular structure, like copies of the Santa Casa, replicate to a certain degree the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. For a concise history of the evolving structure at Jerusalem, and a notable Italian copy in

vivifying pigmentation, signals his simultaneous presence and absence within the sacred structure (Image 19). The Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher offers a “virtual” body—to borrow a term from Hans Belting—within a contextual space that traditionally prioritizes emptiness, for the Holy Sepulcher’s value is rooted in Christ’s capacity to resurrect. In the San Vivaldo Holy Sepulcher, as with most Holy Sepulcher spaces at other Sacred Mountain sites, the absence of Christ is made visible through the presence of the deceased.¹⁵¹ The presence of Christ’s inanimate form is in and of itself an image of an image, according to Maurice Blanchot, who argues that the corpse is its own image, offering its own True Likeness of the once living individual.¹⁵² Paradoxically, the terracotta sculpture’s placement within the tomb heightens the tense contradiction of pregnant emptiness inherent to the narrative structure.

As Didi-Huberman states, sculptural material is a receptacle for the spirit, the disegno behind the compositional program.¹⁵³ Clay, like wax, is organic matter, a material molded by the hands of man in the manner of God’s creation of Adam. The material is therefore imminently humble—born of the earth—but religiously potent. In that Christ’s body is the ideal representation of his Father, the body of Christ sculpted in clay re-presents the ideal form rendered in the likeness of God. That material association, between the earthen bodies of both sculpture and viewer, draws the religious devotee in to a visceral, bodily connection with the figure’s portrayed that is reinforced in spaces like the Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher through

Bologna, see Robert Ousterhout, “The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (in Bologna, Italy),” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2000): 20-35.

¹⁵¹ Hans Belting discusses the power of portraiture as the “virtual body” exchanged for the “lost body” of the deceased, wherein absence is made visible. Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*, 3-4.

¹⁵² Maurice Blanchot’s argument is discussed by Belting in his 2011 publication, distinguishing a difference between the living body from the body’s image after death. Belting, *Anthropology of Images*, 85.

¹⁵³ Georges Didi-Huberman, “The order of material: Plasticities, *malaises*, survivals,” in *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Brandon Taylor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 196.

moments of tactile communion. The body, exposed to the viewer, reflects her own creation and presence on earth.

The Chapels of Calvary and the Holy Sepulcher are among the few instances when Christ's body is almost completely exposed to the viewer. Christ wears only a loincloth about his waist. We see this as well in the *Ecce Homo* presentation scene and in the torturous scenes leading up to that apex inside the Chapel of Pilate. By contrast, in the Progression to Calvary and in the Chapel of the Three Marys, as in various others, Christ is dressed much more demurely in a voluminous, floor-length purple robe with gold trim, synched at the waist. The attire is not terribly unusual, particularly for the "King of the Jews" as he was so mockingly titled by his tormentors. But his outfit also bears a striking resemblance to the *Volto Santo*, the life-sized, sculpted icon of the Crucified Christ on display in the nearby town of Lucca (Image 20). The polychromatic, wooden body of the *Volto Santo* in this period was attributed to Christ's follower Nicodemus, whose work travelled from the Holy Land to Lucca supposedly in the eighth century. Even though stylistic analysis of the sculpture dates the work to the century in which it "miraculously" appeared in Lucca (sometime between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), the *Volto Santo* is still considered one of the most important religious objects in Tuscany today.

The *Volto Santo* represents Christ on the Cross, fully clothed, with his wide, cockleshell eyes gazing directly down at the viewer before him. His body, vertical and triumphant on the cross, is yet living as he communicates silently with the viewer. By the sixteenth century, the *Volto Santo* was displayed in a free-standing octagonal chapel within the cathedral at Lucca, constructed in 1484 by local sculptor and architect Matteo Civitali to the left side aisle near the entrance of the church. The sculpture was habitually dressed, its robe adorned with temporary

metal and fabric additions.¹⁵⁴ Adherence to the Luccan Christ is intensely local; few recreations of the *Volto Santo* gained traction outside of Tuscany.¹⁵⁵ The nod to the *Volto Santo* brands San Vivaldo with a particularly Tuscan vision of Christocentric cult practice and lends credence to the Luccan icon in that copies reinforce the validity of the original: the copy attests, or occasionally creates, its own model.¹⁵⁶

The multimedia chapel interiors manifest a phantasmagorical entrance into the biblical narrative that simultaneously seeks to eliminate the barrier between the modern world and the past, but also mediates and regulates the pilgrimage experience. The chapels at San Vivaldo convey the place, space, and time of biblical history much like Loreto and the many copies of the Holy House. Through intimate points of interaction, the clay figures at the Tuscan Sacred Mountain convey the physical presence of members of Christ's retinue, and signal the commensurate presence of the viewer, but also reflexively highlight the fact of the sculpted body as an object in space. The conglomerate compositions created by multiple artists at San Vivaldo demonstrate the material slippage capable through malleable clay. Equal transgression of material value appears in other manifestations of terracotta, particularly across the oeuvre of the Emilian Antonio Begarelli, the artist about whom the second case study of this chapter will focus.

¹⁵⁴ For a concise description and visual documentation of sculptural dress, see Iacopo Lazzareschi Cervelli's *Vestitio Regis. La vestizione del Volto Santo di Lucca* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi Editore, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ Eleventh- and twelfth-century England and Ireland, notably, are among the few Catholic communities outside of Tuscany to adopt the *Volto Santo* type. An example of a rare Italian copy outside of Tuscany is the fragmented fresco of the *Volto Santo* in the first chapel down the right side of the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome. Michele Camillo Ferrari, Andreas Meyer, eds., *Il Volto Santo in Europa: Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo* (Lucca: Istituto Storico Lucchese, 2005), 442.

¹⁵⁶ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 252-253.

Antonio Begarelli's *Deposition*

The famous sculptor Michelangelo Buonarroti is a constant presence in Giorgio Vasari's vision of sixteenth-century artistic production. Opinions attributed to the great artist pepper Vasari's biographies. For example, Chapter One discussed Vasari's assumption of Michelangelo's influence and involvement at Loreto through the Life of Il Tribolo. In this case, "*Il Divino*" likely express Vasari's evaluations as much as his own. Late in his Life of Michelangelo, Vasari offers in the 1568 edition of the *Vite* a description of the artist's brief encounter with terracotta. In the Emilian town of Modena, Michelangelo supposedly had the fortune to personally peruse multiple large-scale compositions by a "*Maestro Antonio Bigarino*," known today as Antonio Begarelli, a regional artist who spent his entire career in the terracotta-rich region of Emilia-Romagna. In response to Begarelli's artistic constructions, Michelangelo is reputed to have said: "If this clay were but marble, woe to the sculptures of antiquity."¹⁵⁷ At first glance, this comment implies a level of respect accorded to the Emilian artist: the praise associated with Michelangelo repositions Begarelli's terracottas near the realm of marble and commensurate with the great sculptures of antiquity. However, this popular quotation is just as often used as a marker of perpetual inadequacy. Terracotta sculpture invariably fails to surpass the heights of antiquity by virtue of its matter, "if this clay were but marble..." The material association identified by Vasari's Michelangelo is as much the result of the Emilian artist's creative process: just before firing his clay creations, Begarelli would coat his sculptures in a layer of white kaolin clay to create a monochromatic, uniform surface. The effect was often fortified post firing with a layer of lead white paint, as visible in his *Crucifixion*, today housed in

¹⁵⁷ "*Se questa terra diventasse marmo, guai alle statue antiche.*" Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, 1568 edition, edited by R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence: S.P.E.S., già Sansoni, 1966-1987), 779-780.

the Bode Museum in Berlin (Image 21).¹⁵⁸ Vasari personally attests to Begarelli's material association when he writes that the artist added the "color of marble" to his creations, which gave the impression of real stone.¹⁵⁹

As a result of the more derogatory interpretation of the Michelangelo comment, Antonio Begarelli often falls through the cracks of modern discourse. Composed of terracotta sculptures purporting to be marble, the artist's oeuvre exists on the periphery of terracotta studies. Moreover, Begarelli's sculptures remain completely outside the discourse of marble because they inevitably fail to meet the material requirement, perceived instead as mere facsimiles of the preferred material. Even so, Begarelli's fictive marble sculptures confound the restraints of the stone archetype: they do things that marble simply cannot accomplish. Begarelli's creations defy the material limitations of stone by virtue of terracotta's hollow construction and tensile strength, created by its plastic, ductile molding and kiln firing process. And yet, for the modern viewer—and for contemporaries such as Vasari—Begarelli's sculptures are marginalized because of their literal materiality, rather than the materiality they seek to convey. Not acknowledging the artist's intended referent of marble has led to the removal of the Modenese artist and his compositions from overarching conversations regarding early modern sculptural discourse. Rather than consign the work of Begarelli to the periphery of sculpture studies, let us consider the ramifications of the material dialogue taking place: I posit that the medial quotations and overt associations in Begarelli's oeuvre are as relevant as the material-defying capabilities expressed through terracotta.

¹⁵⁸ Markus Küffner, "Die Figurengruppe des von Engeln umgebenen Christus am Kreuz – ein neoklassizistisches Arrangement von Bildwerken Antonio Begarellis," in *Das Bode-Museum. Projekte und Restaurierungen*, edited by Dieter Köcher and Bodo Buczynski (Lindenberg im Allgau: Fink, 2011), 194-225.

¹⁵⁹ "...un maestro chiamato il Modana...alle quali tutte le figure ha dato tanto bene il colore di marmo, che paiono proprio di quella pietra..." Vasari, *Vite*, 557.

This second case study will focus on Antonio Begarelli's *Deposition*, currently on display in the church of San Francesco in Modena (Image 22). The *Deposition* is emblematic of an artistic climate—a moment of convergence between Tuscan and Roman artistic objectives, and Emilian ingenuity. I posit that the first quarter of the sixteenth century bore witness to a moment of rich artistic interplay wherein terracotta engaged with, and conceivably catalyzed canonical sculptural production in marble. Creations like Begarelli's, as active foci for devotion, draw from far reaching religious centers such as the innovations at the Sacri Monti as well as major urban sites of devotion to create simultaneously immersive narratives and materially resonant constructions that speak on multiple levels to the local community. Finally, I propose that Begarelli's *Deposition* steps beyond the confines of the sacred, visual stimulus to furthermore manifest a declaration of Catholic doctrine in the face of Protestant opposition.

Three-dimensional *Deposition* scenes on the Italian peninsula date back at least to the twelfth century. A series of five-figure, wooden sculptural installations representing Christ's descent from the cross were popular in Tuscany, just south of Emilia-Romagna (Image 23).¹⁶⁰ These sculptural renditions, often rhythmically symmetrical in orientation, offer the viewer a sculptural devotional locus recreating a "ritual act" rather than a mere historical event: instead of focusing on the effort of depositing the deceased, the meditative orientation conveys the active contemplation and lamentation of the Virgin and John the Evangelist.¹⁶¹ Contemporaneously, the rise of *Compianti* compositions, wherein focus is oriented upon the body of Christ once removed from the cross, grew in popularity in Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy. While Depositions

¹⁶⁰ Hans Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter: Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1981), 218-234. See also Daniele di Lodovico, "Revising Devotion, the role of wooden sculptures in affecting painting and devotion in the Late Medieval period in Italy (XII-XV century)" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2016), 35-67.

¹⁶¹ Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum*, 150.

traditionally involved only the Virgin, Christ, John the Evangelist, and Christ's followers Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the *Compianto* often expands to include Mary Magdalene or all three Marys, in the lamentation over Christ's immobile body. Begarelli himself relied heavily on the *Compianto* construct throughout his career, such as in his first independent commission for the Church of Sant'Agostino in Modena (Image 24). These two traditions directly influence Begarelli's conceptualization of the *Deposition*.¹⁶²

Regardless of material, size and complexity alone make Begarelli's composition a rival with contemporaneous sculptural production: his *Deposition* consists of thirteen life-sized figures, arrayed both horizontally and vertically in its display interior.¹⁶³ Begarelli's *Deposition* is today housed in the left, side aisle apse of the urban church of San Francesco in Modena. To the religious devotee standing directly before the altar on display, the composition reads like a cascade of undulating bodies reaching out beyond the limits of its lifted stage. Begarelli's rhythmic, meditative orientation offers an overtly symmetrical composition on par with the sculptural wooden depositions of generations past. The artist allocates figures across three tiers, graduating from the Christ-like figures of Saints John the Baptist and Francis nearest the realm of the viewer, to the centrally located swooning Virgin and her attendants, and culminating overhead with the dead body of Christ. From his precarious position, Christ's body spirals forward, revealing his right side to the viewer as his limp arm, already detached from the cross, gestures towards his fainting mother below. The composition is dramatic, but simultaneously

¹⁶² This discussion will return to the *Compianto*, installed at Sant'Agostino by 1524, later on in this chapter. For a brief synopsis of the sculptural composition, see Giorgio Bonsanti, *Antonio Begarelli* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore S.p.A., 1992), 130-137.

¹⁶³ Earlier sculptural *Depositions* do exist, for example the wooden composition at the Oratory of Sant'Antonio at Pescia, a small town equidistant from Lucca and Pistoia just to the west of Florence. The anonymous thirteenth-century composition is much simpler in orientation: with fewer figures, and a much lower cross. At the center, Christ hangs limp from the Crucifix with arms outstretched downwards to a waiting Madonna and John the Evangelist who actively bring the Savior's hands to their lips in order to reverently kiss. Belting mentions the sculptural group of the *Imago Pietatis* devotional image type in *Das Bild und sein Publicum*, 118-120.

quiet and contemplative, encouraging the viewer to meditate on the narrative moment. The scene eschews the spontaneous outbursts of emotion, anguished faces and wildly gesticulating gestures so often associated with compositions in terracotta. Instead, Begarelli infuses the scene with a sense of gravitas that urges the viewer to consider the death of the Savior.

Before delving into the symbolic resonance of the composition, a brief contextual history is required to untangle the complex evolution of Begarelli's most famous creation, specifically with regard to its site of presentation. When the thirteen life-sized sculpted figures were first planned for Santa Cecilia, located just outside the city walls of Modena, they were intended for the church vestibule.¹⁶⁴ At a cost of over 200 scudi, the ostentatious decoration was most likely funded by local benefactors: the period chronicler Tommasino de' Bianchi, nicknamed Lancellotti, argues that the friars of Santa Cecilia attained their funds from the women of the Modenese community, a detail to which this discussion will later return.¹⁶⁵ Begarelli's completed composition was in place at Santa Cecilia by August 1st, 1531, when Tommasino mentions of the commission in his chronicle. Sadly, the work would not remain *in situ* for long. Sometime during or after the year 1537, the church was demolished by Ercole II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, Modena and Reggio. His decision hinged upon the location of the church and accompanying monastery,

¹⁶⁴ Gusmano Soli describes the original location as the "*antiportico*" of the church. Given the one drawing of this church's external façade gives no indication of a loggia, I take this word to reference an internal narthex-like space before entering the nave proper. Gusmano Soli, *Chiese di Modena* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1974), 284. This interpretation is supported by Tommasino de' Bianchi, nicknamed Tommasino de' Lancellotti, a period chronicler who describes the Begarelli sculptures residing "*in capo del portico ... denanze a ditta giesia.*" Tommasino de' Lancellotti's diaries, spanning 1506 through 1554 and entitled the *Cronaca Modenese*, has been republished in nine volumes of the *Monumenti di storia patria delle provincie modenesi*, published in Parma by Pietro Fiaccadori between 1862-1870. Use of the *Monumenti di storia patria* can be somewhat confusing, because the first volume of the series contains the late fifteenth-century chronicle of Tommasino's father, Jacopo de' Bianchi, also nicknamed de' Lancellotti. The quotation above comes from page 289 of Vol. 3 of the *Cronaca Modenese*, within Vol. 4 of the *Moumenti di storia patria*. From this point onward, all citations of Tommasino's *Cronaca Modenese* will rely on volume numbers from the original texts rather than those of the later publication for the sake of simplicity.

¹⁶⁵ Tommasino de' Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, Vol. 3, 289.

which stood only 150 *braccia* (approximately 75 meters) outside the walls of the city.¹⁶⁶ Should the city be besieged, Ercole II feared the structure could become a strategic stronghold for potential aggressors.¹⁶⁷

Unmoored from its sacred bearings, the massive composition required a spacious new home. After 1537, the sculptural group moved to the church of Santa Margherita, where the observant Franciscan friars of Santa Cecilia also relocated in the 1540s. Begarelli's creation would remain there until the early nineteenth century. At Santa Margherita, the *Deposition* took up residence in the fifth chapel nearest to the high altar down the right side of the nave. A 1720 description of the church interior, composed by the visiting British art enthusiast Jonathan Richardson, offers the clearest explanation of the installation.¹⁶⁸ Richardson writes:

MODENA. In the Church of St. Margaret of the Cordeliers. On the Right-hand of the Altar of this Church is an Opening as into a Room, which if you would go into, you must climb as at a Window; for this Room is but to be Look'd into. Here is the Virgin supported by the three Mary's at the foot of the Crucifix between the two Thieves in Terra Cotta. These Figures are made, and beautifully colour'd in their proper Colours by Correggio himself, as some of the ancients are said to have painted their Statues. They are marvelously fine. The Crucifix and Thieves, and several of the Apostles which are here also are of Terra Cotta, and painted; these are of Begarelli.¹⁶⁹

Richardson's synopsis reveals much about how the composition was displayed in its second home and the changes made to the composition by the early eighteenth century. The sculptural group was inserted into the chapel on an elevated platform, which one would have to "climb as at

¹⁶⁶ Sources disagree on when the church was torn down. Lightbown, from the authority of Lancellotti, dates demolition to 1537, but Soli argues the church did not come down until 1549. R.W. Lightbown, "Correggio and Begarelli: A Study in Correggio Criticism," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1964): 9; Soli, 280-282.

¹⁶⁷ Far from paranoiac, Ercole's fears were rooted in recent history when the friars of Santa Cecilia were forced to flee the monastery from incoming Imperial troops in 1527. The church was partially destroyed during the siege on the city. See Tommasino de' Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, Vol. II, 189, 206.

¹⁶⁸ Jonathan Richardson, *An Account of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy, France, etc. with Remarks* (London, 1754), cited in Lightbown, "Correggio and Begarelli," 10.

¹⁶⁹ Lightbown, "Correggio and Begarelli," 10.

a window” to enter.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, the composition was intended for viewing but not for personal, tactile interaction (much like the Madonna dello Spasimo composition at San Vivaldo).¹⁷¹ At some point during its tenure at Santa Margherita, the composition was colorfully painted, which obscured the original impression of monochromatic “marble” materiality. This fact is attested by Richardson’s reference to Correggio-like coloration. Giorgio Bonsanti dates the addition of paint to 1572 as the work of local painter Orazio Grillenzoni.¹⁷² Otherwise, Richardson’s explanation of the composition is complete.

When the church of Santa Margherita was suppressed in 1810, Begarelli’s creation required another move. It was transferred two years later to the Accademia delle Belle Arti, founded in the seventeenth century, and installed within a niche on the ground floor of the great stairwell of the building along with an inscription that made explicit reference to Vasari’s association with Michelangelo: the author of the inscription, Giuseppe Baraldo, appends Michelangelo’s “were this clay but marble” comment directly to the *Deposition* as the apogee of Begarelli’s stupefying approach to sculpture.¹⁷³ Though the composition was hailed as the paradigmatic example of regional sculptural style at its installation in 1812, within a decade the composition was completely hidden from visitors to the Art Academy, concealed behind a curtain providing a fictive stone backdrop for a neoclassical creation, the white marble *Farnese*

¹⁷⁰ It should be noted, however, that a plan of Santa Margherita, drawn upon the church’s closure in the early nineteenth century, does not indicate actual chapel spaces off of the side aisles of the church. This may indicate that the sculptural group stood in the side aisle, on an elevated platform that may or may not have been visible from both the nave and down the left side aisle.

¹⁷¹ For more on the Madonna dello Spasimo, see the first case study of this chapter.

¹⁷² Bonsanti, *Antonio Begarelli*, 152.

¹⁷³ The full inscription: “*Opus / Antonii Begarelli / Plastic. sui temporis primo / pictorae lineamentis et plasticis in patria magistri / Antonio Allegrio corrigensi / Disciplina laboribus consuetudine juncti / qui Michaelis Angeli Buonarotii / socialum artium luminis / aeris et difficilis laudatoris / admirationem nactus est effatu illo / antiquis statuis male cessurum / si haec argilla marmor fieret / ex coenobio quod fuit ad S. Caeciliae Mart. / uti accademiae ornamentum / cultorum bonarum artium siet / inlatum A. MDCCCXII / Imp. Napoleone Magno / auspiciis Eugenii proregis / favente Aloysio Vaccario com. / praep negotiis regni interioribus cive n. / auctore Hieronymo Tadinio Oldofredio / Praep. Provinciae.*” Soli, *Chiese di Modena*, 63, Appendix II, no. 10.

Flora.¹⁷⁴ Thankfully, the reopening of the centrally-located urban church of San Francesco by Archduke Francesco IV d'Este in the late 1820s led to the restoration and relocation of Begarelli's *Deposition* from ignominious hiding to a position of prominence on the "*lato del Vangelo*" of the church interior, the culminating left side aisle chapel known liturgically as the Evangelical side of the high altar.¹⁷⁵ The sculpture group remains at the church of San Francesco to this day.

Since its relocation to San Francesco, Begarelli's multi-figural work has undergone a series of restorations. Archduke Francesco IV instigated the first attempt in 1828-1829,¹⁷⁶ and subsequent restorations more recently have progressively returned the composition to its more monochromatic state. Even so, flakes of polychromy still cling to Begarelli's once monochromatic forms, particularly in the case of the overhead group dislodging the dead body of Christ from the cross. In order to fully comprehend Begarelli's composition as we see it, modern scholarship needs to extrapolate backwards mentally to the warm, white tones of the original figural group and the lost interior of Santa Cecilia. Given the sparsity of documentation regarding the composition and its original installation, we cannot know exactly how the sculpture group was displayed: how high off the ground the group was originally placed in Santa Cecilia, or if any frescos or stone inlay added to the visual experience within the chapel.¹⁷⁷ However, if the subsequent display at Santa Margherita remained unaltered from the 1530s-1540s until its removal to the Accademia delle Belle Arti in the nineteenth century, then Richardson's

¹⁷⁴ Lightbown, "Correggio and Begarelli," 16. One cannot help but note how terribly apropos this form of concealment was for Begarelli's creation: a fictive marble composition concealed behind a fictive stone wall.

¹⁷⁵ Traditionally, the left side of the high altar would be referred to as the "*lato del Vangelo*," whereas the right side would be the "*lato dell'epistola*," or the side of the Epistles. For the location, see Soli, *Chiese di Modena*, 51.

¹⁷⁶ This restoration was carried out by Luigi Righi. Lightbown, "Correggio and Begarelli," 16.

¹⁷⁷ Thus far, no documentation elaborates on the internal decoration of the chapel, other than the presence of the sculpture group itself.

description of an elevated display may indeed represent the original Santa Cecilia construction: Begarelli lived and worked chiefly in Modena until his death in 1565, and therefore could have overseen the composition's first relocation.

Perceived as marble, the terracotta composition combines the conceptual single figure or small group altarpiece popular in Florence and Rome together with the richly diversified tableaux of the Emilian sculptural tradition. This dichotomy of sacred foci is exemplified respectively by the works of Jacopo Sansovino and Niccolò dell'Arca. Jacopo Sansovino was a contemporary of Begarelli, trained in Florence and active as a sculptor and architect in Rome and Venice. His two-figure white marble group at Sant'Agostino in Rome, entitled the *Madonna del Parto* and installed sometime between 1518-1521 (Image 25), typifies the monolithic sculptural altarpiece turned locus of popular devotion. In the *Madonna del Parto*, the Virgin and Child engage actively with the viewer: the young Christ stands upon his mother's thigh as he gazes out of their niche and down the nave, actively twisting his body away from the protective, encircling arms of his mother. The Virgin in turn looks beyond her Son to devout passersby as they enter the building from the central door of the church façade. Drawing from ancient and contemporary sources alike,¹⁷⁸ Sansovino creates a stable yet dynamic sculptural monolith that became one of the preferred cult sites in Rome for women embarking on the perilous act of child birth.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Sansovino's principal ancient model was known today as the *Sassi Apollo*, currently on display in the Naples Archeological Museum. In the early modern period, the porphyry sculpture belonged to the Sassi family and was more often identified as a female personification of Roma. Sansovino's *Madonna del Parto* will return to this conversation in Chapter Three of the dissertation. For more on the *Sassi Apollo*, see Mary Garrard, "Jacopo Sansovino's Madonna in Sant'Agostino: An Antique Source Rediscovered," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 38 (1975): 334-338.

¹⁷⁹ Bruce Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, Vol. I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 26, n 11. Boucher acknowledges that the site was a recognized locus of devotion by the eighteenth century. I posit that this sculptural group was the beneficiary of cultic devotion long before the Holy See formally recognized the composition as a devotional epicenter. Future research at the Augustinian Archives in Rome will further expand this hypothesis.

In contrast with the Sansovino construction, the polychromatic conglomerate of life-sized, emotive mourners in Niccolò dell'Arca's *Compianto* at Santa Maria della Vita in Bologna (Image 26) represents the most popular form of regional terracotta sculpture of the generation prior to Begarelli. Niccolò's late fifteenth-century figures display the gamut of emotional response, from silent, internalized grief expressed by the figure of Nicodemus that gazes calmly at the viewer, through a crescendo of outwardly expressed anguish directed towards Christ's body, so lovingly arranged on the floor before the sculpted mourners. The wild, rippling terracotta of Mary Magdalene's robes offer a *tour de force* of the material, fictively representing movement as the voluminous folds ingeniously counterbalance the forward-angled body of the silent, screaming postulant. Here, the sculptural medium evokes the pathos of human experience, coupled with the use of delicate pigmentation that augments the humanity of the biblical moment. The addition of paint (and contemporary clothing, in the case of Nicodemus) brings the sacred characters into the contemporary space as its terracotta foundation heightens the dual sensation of presence—through Christ's tactile body—and death, articulated in the inanimate, unmoving form at the heart of the composition.¹⁸⁰

Niccolò's approach to *Compianti* set a standard of the sculpted tableau that dictated similar creations across the region, as in the work of Begarelli's contemporary, Alfonso Lombardi. As in Niccolò's rendition, Alfonso Lombardi's version of the same narrative moment, dated to 1523 and today housed in the Cathedral of Bologna (Image 27), spans the grim determination of Nicodemus' wizened features to the expansive gesticulation of an opulently

¹⁸⁰ Prior to the sculpture's recent restoration, discoloration caused by generations of devotional touch shadowed the wounds across Christ's body in Niccolò's composition, particularly around his gaping side wound. The modern state of the surfaces, stripped of the accumulation of dust and grime, has inadvertently robbed the composition of the remnants of interaction that visually articulated the use of the *Compianto* as a fetishistic, tactile mediator, a connection between the corporeal body of the viewer and the inanimate body of the Savior. Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* and Jacopo Sansovino's *Madonna del Parto*, both located in Rome, offer a similar tactile relationship with divinity. See Chapter Three of this dissertation.

dressed Mary Magdalene. Alfonso's triangular composition, and symmetrically rhythmic figural placement, blends the harmonious, contemplative style manifested in the sculptural *Deposition* tradition with the rightward-moving emotional arc of Niccolò's rendition. As an artist documented to have travelled to major cities outside Emilia-Romagna throughout his lifetime, the cosmopolitan Alfonso produced a contemporary sculptural paradigm infused with a regional visual program.

The dichotomy between the white marble monolith versus multi-figural tableau is an overly simplistic bifurcation of the sculptural narrative, the two peaks between which artists such as Alfonso Lombardi and Antonio Begarelli oscillate. Begarelli pushed the envelope by consciously toying with the material expectations of the viewer in an era when sculptors from his region were travelling farther afield for prestigious commissions. Significantly, the 1530s mark the arrival of Emilian artists in Rome as well as at Loreto. For example, Alfonso Lombardi received the commission of the Medici papal tombs at Santa Maria sopra Minerva in 1534, before the Tuscan marble sculptor Baccio Bandinelli assumed control of their design and construction after Lombardi's death in 1536.¹⁸¹

Although the mid seventeenth-century historian Ludovico Vedriani theorized a trip to Rome by a young Begarelli in the 1520s, no extant documentation proves this assertion.¹⁸² If he did go to Rome, he left no mark. In lieu of personal connections with major sculptural centers

¹⁸¹ For more on Alfonso Lombardi's lost tomb commission, see Victoria Goldberg, "Leo X, Clement VII and the Immortality of the Soul," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1975-1976): 16-25; Franco Faranda, *Alfonso Lombardi: Il restauro delle sculture in cotto di Castel Bolognese* (Castel Bolognese: Itaca, 1999), 25.

¹⁸² The citation of Vedriani was first discovered in a summary of the artist's life by an early twentieth-century scholar, Luigi Magnani. According to Vedriani, Antonio Begarelli and his nephew, Ludovico, travelled to Aversa, to construct a sculptural composition for the Abbot Alfonso of Naples. Conceivably, this southern sojourn would have led the sculpting team through Rome. Magnani's investigation into the vignette painted by Vedriani produced no documentary evidence of the trip, or any record of the sculptural commission, let alone any surviving artifact. Luigi Magnani, "The Master of Silence: Terracottas by Antonio Begarelli," translated by Judith Landry, *Magazine of Francesco Maria Ricci*, Issue 114 (2002): 100.

such as Rome, the most readily apparent sources of inspiration for the sculptor—beyond local sculpture—come from the arena of early modern print culture. The dynamism of Christ’s forward-hanging posture in Begarelli’s *Deposition* recalls Albrecht Dürer’s widely circulated *Deposition* woodcut print from his *Small Passion* series of circa 1509-1511 (Image 28). The northern artist crops the desolate scene dramatically to focus on the foreshortened, limp body of Christ as it weighs heavily over the shoulder of one of his aggrieved followers. Even more evocative of the Begarelli creation, and a possible influence upon Dürer, is an engraving of the same subject matter by Andrea Mantegna. His late fifteenth-century vision of the *Deposition* (Image 29) also highlights the weight of Christ’s form as he is lowered down to the right side of the cross.

Like Begarelli, Mantegna chose to extend the inanimate, right arm of Christ downward as he hangs suspended from a swath of fabric held taut by one of Christ’s followers angling over the cross above. Directly below, Mary Magdalene stands with her back to the viewer, head upturned and arms outstretched in silent desperation. Meanwhile, the Virgin Mary has collapsed, held in the arms of her attendants offset to the left of the cross. In Mantegna’s composition, the weight of Christ takes a forefront position, visually reinforcing His death. The Mantegna composition made innovative leaps in the compositional program which Dürer and Begarelli pointedly emulate. Their intimate knowledge of the design is made possible entirely by the replicability and portability of the engraving medium: Vasari himself declares that the *Deposition* counted among Mantegna’s prints seen “by the whole world.”¹⁸³ One cannot help but

¹⁸³ Vasari is quoted by Keith Christiansen: “... the whole world has seen not only the *Bacchanal*, the *Battle of the Sea Monsters*, the *Deposition from the Cross*, the *Entombment*, the *Resurrection with Longinus and St Andrew*...” Keith Christiansen, “The Case for Mantegna as Printmaker,” *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 135, No. 1086 (1993): 604. Mantegna’s early career was spent in the service of the Este family at Ferrara, then rulers of Modena, before his famous move to the court of the Gonzaga at Mantua. At Mantua Mantegna had access to the printing press, and many scholars ascribe his printing career to between 1475 and his death in 1506. Christiansen argues for Mantegna’s own execution of engraving plates, however this is not the only argument. For a concise

consider the hand-held image acting as a surrogate for the devout viewer: with print in hand, she too holds the immobile body of Christ and in a sense assists with the deposition once removed. In his own medium, Begarelli also seeks to represent the tactile labor in the aftermath of Christ's crucifixion through the materiality of his art form, bringing the viewer into the sacred moment, but on a much grander scale.

Once the viewer is cognizant of the material associations, Begarelli's diverse mix of postures and intermingling bodies foster contradicting material messages throughout the composition. Billowing, weightless fabrics swirl around the sculpted figures, like the female attendants kneeling beside the Virgin Mary. This effluence of movement returns to mind the late fifteenth-century terracottas of Niccolò dell'Arca. Far-reaching, expressive gestures, such as the upraised arm of Saint Jerome, capitalize on the capacity of terracotta to push the boundaries of the perceived materiality of stone. Only recently had marble sculptors such as Jacopo Sansovino begun to challenge the limitations of monolithic marble construction by suspending appendages out and away from the body. As we can see in his *Bacchus* of 1511-1512 (Image 30), Jacopo Sansovino extends the figure's right arm horizontally from the shoulder to hold aloft a kylix-like drinking vessel. The arm's demonstrable stretch beyond the boundaries of the sculptural base gives the sensation of stepping beyond the columnar effect still often restricting marble sculptural production.¹⁸⁴ Begarelli's proliferation of unsupported, outstretched limbs fosters an uncomfortable sensation for the materially conscious viewer, particularly with regard to his Saints Jerome, Anthony and Francis. All three figures open their arms wide, drawing viewer

counterargument, see Suzanne Boorsch, "Mantegna and Engraving: What We Know, What We Don't Know, and a Few Hypotheses," in *Andrea Mantegna: Impronta del genio; Convegno internazionale di studi; Padova, Verona, Mantova, 8, 9, 10 novembre 2006* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2010), 415-439. For a history of Mantegna's stylistic training, see Evelyn Lincoln, "Mantegna's Culture of Line," *Art History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1993): 33-59.

¹⁸⁴ Boucher, *Jacopo Sansovino*, Vol. 1, 13.

attention up to the deposition taking place above. Rather than obey the restrictions of marble to manifest exact skeuomorphic likeness, Begarelli relies on the capabilities inherent to the material of clay to stretch the spatial boundaries of marble representation.

One of the greatest innovations of Begarelli's sculptural repertoire remains surprisingly underappreciated, perhaps because it is hidden in plain sight. Note the five figures on top of the cross, the four men lowering the limp body of Christ. Balanced precariously on wooden ladders, and leaning over the cross itself, these five fictive marble bodies enact something remarkable: they defy the static capability of the matter portrayed. In this moment, Begarelli flouts the limitations of stone, balancing conceptually weighty bodies on a wooden apparatus. Stabilized inconspicuously by horizontal supports in the wall behind, these figures convey the upward thrust of climbing ladders and the precarious suspension of dead weight. In this moment, Begarelli's active, "marble" figures comment on inert matter, on lifelessness and the death of Christ through the inanimate body actively lowered to the ground. They signal corporeal weight even as they themselves tower impossibly over the figural landscape.

Levitation is a characteristic trait of Begarelli's oeuvre. His early-career *Compianto*, consecrated in 1522 inside the church of Sant'Agostino, also in Modena,¹⁸⁵ features three-dimensional angels immured in the wall, seemingly whirling through the sky beside the cross, above the community of mourners oriented around a *Pietà* composition at its core. The tension fostered by the *Deposition* scene nearly a decade later takes liberties as yet untried in Begarelli's early composition. For all that the *Compianto* capitalizes on levitating angels, the artist restricts the actions of the mourners below. Gestures are held close to the body or angle downwards, replicating skeuomorphic restrictions of marble as their postures implode the composition upon

¹⁸⁵ For a synopsis on the Sant'Agostino *Compianto*, see Bonsanti, *Antonio Begarelli*, 13.

the body of Christ laid in state across his Mother's lap. The figures behave as marble sculptures should, yielding to the tensile strength of stone. The "marble" angels contorting in the sky offer the only clue to Begarelli's evolving relationship with sculptural media. In and of themselves, the angels radically challenge their proscribed materiality. By contrast, in the *Deposition*, the gravity-resistant fictive marble grappling with the weight of death expresses a material conundrum: the weight of Christ's death, like a stone hanging in space, coupled with the material's more vivifying associations with immortality and life.¹⁸⁶ From *Compianto* to *Deposition*, Begarelli plays with the viewer's expectations of marble through the material capabilities of clay in deference of the religious message.

The capacity of a plastic material like terracotta to traverse material limitations offers an invaluable insight into the religious and political objectives of early-modern patrons. Scholars such as Anne Dunlop have already established the resonant capacity of materiality—literal or implied—to foster religious experience.¹⁸⁷ Quattrocento evocations of stone in the medium of painting, like the fictive stone exteriors of Gentile da Fabriano's meditative *Madonna and Child* imagery (Image 31), capitalize on the Aristotelian concept of generative material, of living stone.¹⁸⁸ Famous lapidaries of the medieval and early modern period expounded that stone existed between the realms of the animate and inanimate. The Dominican theologian Albertus Magnus wrote in his *De lapidibus* that stones emanated a "generative power," a concept built upon Aristotle's understanding of the subterranean creation of stone in unseen reservoirs of

¹⁸⁶ These material references will become explicit in the Third Chapter of this dissertation, wherein the marble compositions of Michelangelo and Francesco da Sangallo will demonstrate stone's viable reference to immortal flesh.

¹⁸⁷ Anne Dunlop, "On the Origins of European Painting Materials, Real and Imagined," in *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250-1750*, edited by Christy Anderson and Anne Dunlop (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 68-96.

¹⁸⁸ Schoonheim, Pieter L. *Aristotle's Meteorology in the Arabico-Latin Tradition* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000).

water or vapor condensed through a process of heating or cooling.¹⁸⁹ Stone is therefore generative by virtue of its spontaneous creation, and immortal by virtue of its durability. Gentile da Fabriano's articulation of stone across the versos of personal, devotional altarpieces elaborates abstractly upon the miraculous genesis and immortality of the Son of God, which is represented concretely in portrait form on the recto of the panel painting. In the case of Begarelli's *Deposition*, that generative capacity of stone is compounded by the use of clay, the substance from which Adam emerged. Clay is also a generative material: the matter of man's creation. Between marble and clay, Begarelli exploits multiple meanings through his white terracotta. Yet that capacity for animation, eloquently highlighted by the dynamic contortion of Christ's limp body, artfully contends that liveliness with the narrative of death. Marble "in" terracotta therefore conflates parallel material significances from Biblical and pre-Christian sources to create a visionary construction of impossible materiality manifesting an all but impossible fact: the death of the Son of God.

The material play visible in Begarelli's *Deposition* is ultimately hopeful, by bringing the viewer into a contemplative moment that juxtaposes the death of Christ invested with allusions to His impending resurrection. In this respect, I believe the *Deposition* mirrors the material construction at Loreto: the skin of the Holy House of the Virgin, and the bodies shoring up its exterior, are vested with an apparitional nature that hearkens back to the structure's miraculous narrative. Begarelli's animate bodies, oriented around a static Christ, combine a traditional format of the religious narrative with a "new" material of representation. In short, Begarelli

¹⁸⁹ The concept of "Living Stone" stems in part from Aristotle, and in part from the unattributed writings of Avicenna: "water allowed a kind of coagulation of the earth to occur, under the action of either heating or cooling." Dunlop, "On the Origins," 83. See also Fabio Barry, "Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (2007): 631.

creates in the *Deposition* a liberality of resonance: implied marble likens the impossible capacity of stone to the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection.

Below the scene of Christ deposed, the Virgin Mary lays limp in the arms of her attendants, the three Marys. Her seemingly lifeless form leans backwards, legs outstretched and somewhat opened towards the viewer, in perfect alignment with the spiraling body of Christ above. Amy Neff associates the Madonna's posture as expressed in *Deposition* scenes such as Begarelli's with the woman's *Compassio*, her commensurate pain at the death of her Son.¹⁹⁰ The *Compassio* unites the Virgin with her son in a "second birth," wherein the Virgin's status as the origin of the redemptive process is reinforced. She is effectively the "mother of mankind in salvation."¹⁹¹ The pain of childbirth is relevant to both Franciscan and Dominican dogma: for example, Saint Anthony of Padua, an important early saint of the Franciscan order, wrote of the Virgin's "*partus dolorosus*" on the Mount of Calvary.¹⁹² Again Aristotelian belief touches on Begarelli's composition: Aristotelian thought regarding the generation of the child in the womb associated the form of the child with the male sperm and the matter of the generative body with the woman. At the epicenter of this composition, the generative "matter" of the faith that is contained in the Virgin's body is centered beneath the inert form of the Son. Housed in an Observant community, and in close proximity to the intellectually charged university city of Bologna—and relatively close to the forerunning Franciscan community at Padua—the sculptural group at Santa Cecilia engaged actively with the intellectual ruminations of early modern visual culture. Begarelli's materiality speaks on multiple levels to the early modern viewer, and reflects the community for which the composition was commissioned.

¹⁹⁰ Amy Neff, "The Pain of Compassio: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (1998): 254-273. We see something similar in terms of posture in Mantegna's *Deposition* print.

¹⁹¹ Neff, "The Pain of Compassio," 255.

¹⁹² Neff, "The Pain of Compassio," 257.

As mentioned earlier, Tommaso de' Lancellotti somewhat caustically attributes Begarelli's sculptural group to the women of Modena. The author implies that the friars must have extracted the funds from their gullible, feminine hands, otherwise they would have been unable to raise the princely sum.¹⁹³ Alone, this information indicates an element of popular devotion in the local community towards the narrative of the Crucifixion and the Virgin's *Compassio*. If the women of the community did indeed commission Begarelli for the sculptural group—coalesced their funds anonymously for this spectacular installation—then their actions fall closer to the realm of cultic devotion than that of a single-party commissioner, where personal or familial memorial often overshadows devotional intent. The Franciscans promoted scenes of the Passion in spaces oriented specifically for female piety. The church of Sant'Antonio in nearby Ferrara attests to this relationship: the women of a Benedictine community commissioned a similar image under the express tutelage of the Franciscans, in that instance frescoed scenes depicting multiple narrative moments of the Passion. The frescoed chapel predates the Modenese composition by over two centuries, and appears amid a wave of passion cycle commissions in religious interiors for women, most commonly for communities of the Poor Clares, the female community associated with the Franciscan Order.¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, at the time of Begarelli's installation, Santa Cecilia was the most important Observant Franciscan church in the community of Modena, arguably the most important in the

¹⁹³ "...tuti cavati da mane a femine, perchè altramente non ge hano el modo a fare tal spexa." Tommasino de' Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, Vol. 3, 289.

¹⁹⁴ The Spaces that benefitted from installations of Passion cycles include a Clarisse house in Latium, and another Poor Clare institution dedicated to San Pietro in Vineis at Agnan. These spaces, as well as the fresco cycle at Sant'Antonio, stem from circa 1260-1300. Anne Derbes discusses early Passion cycles in her publication *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19, n 44. I find particularly relevant the fact that the church of Sant'Antonio was founded by Beatrice d'Este, of the ruling Este family that controlled Ferrara, Modena and Reggio. Though the bias toward female spaces may be due to the capricious survival of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sacred spaces, the prevalence of narrative images established for the benefit of women is undeniable. The position of female devotion will return to this discussion towards the end of the current chapter.

region, according to Roberto Cobianchi.¹⁹⁵ The strategic venue locates the Begarelli composition squarely within a stringent, sixteenth-century Catholic reformist community bent on returning Catholic practice to its original, pious roots while simultaneously promoting an increasingly empathetic association with the biblical narrative.¹⁹⁶ The commission of a large-scale sculptural composition, funded through donations from multiple patrons of the community, is without precedent at this point in sculptural history. In effect, the women of Modena offered through the Observant Franciscans a sculptural cult image that spoke to their own physical travails: reclining backwards, with legs parted, the Virgin visually manifests a spiritual *partus*. The expensive, large-scale creation effectively walked a fine balance between ostentation and affective devotion.

The *Deposition* attests visually to the spiritual trends of the era and the enduring power of sculpture in sacred contexts. Though we cannot replicate the exact format of display and acts of worship within the now-lost church interior, the magnitude of Begarelli's composition is felt through the threads of surviving documentation.¹⁹⁷ The commission of Begarelli's *Deposition* was undoubtedly an act of pious devotion, and its subject matter was likely orchestrated by the receiving religious community: the Observant Franciscans are unlikely to have agreed to the installation of such a grandiose offering without prior approval. But underneath the surface of this act of local devotion, I believe that there simmers an expression of pro-Catholic and implicit anti-Lutheran ideology embedded in Begarelli's creation. The following paragraphs will illuminate the tense religious climate of sixteenth-century Modena and the role of the Observant community.

¹⁹⁵ Roberto Cobianchi, "The Practice of Confession and Franciscan Observant Churches: New Architectural Arrangements in Early Renaissance Italy," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (2006): 300.

¹⁹⁶ Cobianchi, 300.

¹⁹⁷ Access to any surviving archival evidence from the church of Santa Cecilia would further illuminate the conundrum of early modern display and devotion. The location of any such surviving archives is currently unknown to this author.

Tommasino de' Lancellotti's chronicle is again instrumental for a reconstruction of the historical context surrounding Santa Cecilia. In the years leading up to the sculpture's installation (by August of 1531), Tommasino tells us that the city of Modena was well aware of the acts of spontaneous iconoclasm breaking out in newly Protestant communities north of the Alps. A letter copied by Tommasino, received on September 19th, 1530, describes the mass destruction of crucifixes and images of the saints in Landau, Germany. As Lancellotti recounts, a miracle occurred during this dark moment in sculptural history. As a massive wooden crucifixion was torn to pieces by Lutherans on the floor of one of the Landau churches, a mute man spontaneously cried out in protest against the sculpture's destruction. When the angry crowd descended upon him, the mute man miraculously spoke, denouncing their actions and decreeing that they did not properly fear God.¹⁹⁸ The letter, Lancellotti tells us, had been sent to a Fra Lodovigo Molza of Modena, a friar of the Observant Franciscan order at Santa Cecilia.¹⁹⁹ The anecdotal narrative demonstrates the Franciscan community's knowledge of image destruction, specifically sculpture, in the Protestant north. Information such as this letter to Lodovigo helped fuel the local interest in overt demonstrations of powerful imagery considered inherent to the Catholic faith and may have reinforced the community decision to welcome the Begarelli commission.

¹⁹⁸ "...in Lindo qua in Lamagna li Luterani in ditta città in le giese hanno desfatto tutti li crucifissi et le figure de tuti li Santi, finalmente ge ne restò uno crucifisso vechio de legno et li ditti luterani lo portono per la tera con disprezio grandissimo, tagliando uno pezzo in qua et uno pezzo in là, per tante se ge ritrovo uno homo, el quale era muto che haveva deli anni 40, vedendo questa cosa che faceva questi maledetti luterani a quello crucifisso comenzò a cridare come fano li muti e sbatere dele mane insemo, e li luterani ge furno adosso con le alabarde et ge deteno dele bastonade, e per miracholo de Dio el ditto muto comenzò a parlare dicendo: che facevano male a fare tal cosa e perchè non tremavano Dio..." Tommasino de' Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, Vol. III, 105-106.

¹⁹⁹ Lodovigo Molza's identity is made clear in the summary of the life of his natural son, the celebrated poet Francesco Maria Molza. Interestingly, Francesco Maria's mother, Bartolomea, was also a member of the Observant Franciscan community at Santa Cecilia, and both father and mother were buried at Santa Cecilia during or after the year 1531. See Pierantonio Serassi, *Delle poesie volgari e latine di Francesco Maria Molza*, Vol. 1 (Bergamo: Pietro Lancellotti, 1747), xxvi-xxviii.

Beyond its express intention for the Franciscan order, the sculptural group also emerged at a moment in Modena's history when connections to the Mother Church were in a state of flux. Begarelli was approximately eleven years old when Modena had first come under the control of the Papal States.²⁰⁰ In 1510, the nephew of Pope Julius II, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, took the city peacefully after years of political uncertainty sparked by the League of Cambrai.²⁰¹ After a spate of political machinations, the city came under the jurisdiction of Pope Leo X de' Medici in 1514 and remained under papal control through the 1527 Sack of Rome. Following the Sack, the greater need to maintain control of Bologna drew away the papal troops stationed at Modena, at which point Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara and one-time ruler of Modena (who had lost control of the city back in 1510), reassumed power. The papacy, however, did not cede control of Modena until August 12th, 1531, when Pope Clement VII de' Medici agreed to the restitution of Modena to the Este at a cost of 100,000 gold ducats (to be paid in installments) and an additional yearly donation of 7,000 gold ducats to the Holy See on the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul.²⁰²

This brief political summary serves the discussion of Antonio Begarelli and his religious compositions because these governmental shifts had an indelible impact upon the religious community at Modena. Early modern papal power operated simultaneously on sacred and secular levels. For the first decades of the artist's adult life, the city was part of the Papal States, the swath of territory cutting northward diagonally across the Italian peninsula from Rome. As a vassal of the papacy, the community benefited from an increased proximity to the artistic and

²⁰⁰ Antonio Begarelli was born in 1499, a date reconstructed from the declaration of the artist's completion of a *Compianto* in the church of Sant'Agostino in Modena at twenty-five years of age in 1524. Bonsanti, *Antonio Begarelli*, 11.

²⁰¹ Paolo Golinelli and Giuliano Muzzioli, *Storia illustrata di Modena*, Vol. II (Milan: Grafica Sipiel, 1990), 414-416.

²⁰² Golinelli and Muzzioli, *Storia illustrata di Modena*, 416-419.

religious climate of the Holy See. On display by August 1st of 1531, Begarelli's *Deposition* was commissioned, constructed, and installed right at the moment of the political pendulum swing from the papacy and back into the hands of the Este. Though the artist may never have travelled to Rome, it might be fair to assume that the visual discourse of Rome came to him.

Given the city's instability as a papal vassal, the political power and cult dynamics of Modena began to evolve. The city came under increasing scrutiny as a hotbed for Protestant and Catholic Reform, possibly in response to papal encroachment on local affairs. As early as 1524, Pope Clement VII de' Medici issued a papal brief to the religious men of Modena regarding appropriate attire and possessions. The fashions and accoutrements prohibited were those sanctioned by Martin Luther. The pope's mandate stipulated that his restrictions must be followed on pain of excommunication.²⁰³ This marks the first in a series of Lutheran-related preoccupations and limitations levelled at the local community, which would culminate with the arrival of investigators of the Inquisition in 1542. This localized threat to Catholicism, whether real or invented, would have added pressure to the religious orders of the community and fostered outward demonstrations of ideological solidarity.

What role did Begarelli's sculptures play in the immediate aftermath of their installation? As mentioned earlier in this discussion, the years following the papacy's release of Modena back to the Este saw an increasing polarization of the religious community that leaned dangerously into the realm of Protestant Reformation thought. Simultaneously, three important Catholic Reformers emerged from Modena during this era: Cardinals Jacopo Sadoletto, Gregorio Cortese,

²⁰³ "al 26 ditto la santità del Papa ha mandato un breve ali religioxi de Modena, che sotto pena de excommunicatione, e de perdere li beneficii, che tuti debiano andare in habito da prete honesto senza barbe et altri portamenti desonesti como portano, de scarpe de veluti, camixe lavorate de seda, calze talgiate, e con pragete desoneste, e questi cussì vani erano certi zovenastri beneficiati, innamorati, li quali stariano bene in galea, e Martin Lutero alega questi portamenti in le soe prediche che lui fa in Lamagna contra ala santità del Papa, e Sua Santità ha fatto vestire la corte a prete e più non vano da sbrichi ["briccone," as in "scoundrel"] como facevano." Tommasino de' Lancellotti, *Cronaca Modenese*, Vol. I, 293.

and Tommaso Badia. All three men were born in Modena and played active roles in the mid-century evolution of the Catholic faith. While their careers often took them far afield from their place of birth, Tommasino de' Lancellotti carefully reports their actions, attesting to their status as favored sons of the community. Sadoletto and Cortese both contributed to the 1536 Catholic Reform committee that predated the Council of Trent under the guidance of Cardinal Gasparo Contarini.²⁰⁴ Though Sadoletto and Badia rarely returned to the city, Gregorio Cortese became a significant player in the “suppression” of local heresies. Cortese was brought to the community by the bishop of Modena, Giovanni Morone, who called upon Cortese, as well as Gasparo Contarini, to assist with the issue of unsanctioned theological disputes supposedly spearheaded by a local intellectual community known simply as the *Accademia*.²⁰⁵ Members of the *Accademia*, mostly noblemen from established Modenese families, had been under investigation for openly discussing and promoting Lutheran beliefs since 1538. In his preoccupation with the spiritual unrest in Modena, Bishop Morone wrote to his friend Cardinal Guido Ascanio Sforza of the unsettling engagement of the Modenese who debated publicly over religious questions such as the existence of purgatory, the use of indulgences, the practice of mass, the efficacy of saintly intercession, and even the authority of the pope himself.²⁰⁶ The primary concern of Bishop Morone and the Holy See was to curtail Lutheran ideology in Italian communities. In their private correspondence, Cortese, Contarini and their compatriots questioned the actual heretical,

²⁰⁴ At the time of the 1536 committee, both Sadoletto and Cortese held the status of bishop. In December of that year, Sadoletto, Gian Pietro Caraffa and Reginald Pole—also members of the Catholic Reform committee—were all three raised to the College of Cardinals. John Olin, *A Reformation Debate: John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 4. This reform committee is discussed in greater detail in the first chapter of this dissertation. See Chapter One, 44.

²⁰⁵ This controversial *Accademia* bears no relation to the *Accademia delle Belle Arti* discussed earlier in this chapter.

²⁰⁶ Letter dated May 8, 1540. Adam Patrick Robinson, *The Career of Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509-1580): Between Council and Inquisition* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2016), 45.

Lutheran intent behind members of the *Accademia*.²⁰⁷ Even so, in December of 1541 Pope Paul III Farnese officially called upon Cortese to curb the Lutheran tendencies of the Modenese.²⁰⁸ In light of the perceived problem at Modena, along with the Protestant rumblings in the Tuscan city of Lucca and the issue of widespread religious debate across the Catholic world at large, Paul III officially reinstated the Inquisition on the 21st of July, 1542, and sent his inquisitors across Italy—including Modena—to quell local dissent.²⁰⁹

The perturbed Giovanni Morone had been the bishop of Modena since 1529. Under his jurisdiction the Begarelli composition was commissioned and installed at the short-lived Santa Cecilia, and relocated to Santa Margherita. The mere fact that the sculptural group was actively re-displayed following the 1537 destruction of Santa Cecilia—during a moment of rising allegations of heresy in the local community—casts yet another valence across Begarelli's thirteen life-sized figures. I propose that Begarelli's *Deposition*, so ensconced in the Observant Franciscan community, acted as a rebuttal to perceived Lutheran inclinations in Modena. As Martin Luther urged his congregation away from images of death and suffering, opting instead for a reorientation grounded in Christ's Resurrection and Easter masses, the Franciscan community declared their enduring empathetic contemplation on the *Deposition*.²¹⁰ While

²⁰⁷ Sadoletto expresses his doubt of the accusation when he characterizes members of the Modenese *Accademia* as “*veri christiani*” in a letter dated to 1542. Marvin Anderson, “Gregorio Cortese and Roman Catholic Reform.” *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, Vol. 1 (1970): 94.

²⁰⁸ The papal directive reads in full: “*Dilecte fili, salute. De probitate, pietate ac doctrina tua confisi, volumus ad tibi iniungimus ut ea, qua maiori poteris, dexteritate investiges, an in civitate Mutinae, ex qua orindus es, luterana vel aliae hereses sint, et si aliquid huiusmodi inibi pullulare repereris (et) ad dos de re et de tuo in ea re consilio scribas, ut ipsi opportune desuper providere possimus. Datum Rome, X. decembris 1541.*” Anderson, “Gregorio Cortese,” 91, n 44.

²⁰⁹ Interestingly, the Inquisition would eventually imprison and try Bishop Morone on the charge of heresy between 1557 and 1559. The bishop was ultimately acquitted in 1560 and eventually became the presiding legate of the final meeting of the Council of Trent in 1563. Robinson, 87-109. The papal bull initiating the Inquisition is entitled the *Licet ab initio*. Robinson, *The Career of Cardinal Giovanni Morone*, 50.

²¹⁰ Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 97.

Protestant ideologies incited bouts of icon destruction across central and northern Europe, such as the outbreaks of iconoclasm, Italian communities rallied behind visual and intellectual embodiments of the Catholic faith.²¹¹ From this perspective, the sculptural renditions of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and various saints in the *Deposition* resonate as a visual manifesto, through its commission, medium, and display.

Though Begarelli's creation adheres to the tenets of Catholic cult practice, that did not protect it from the stylistic intervention of subsequent Modenese generations. Within a decade of the artist's death in 1565, Begarelli's major compositions such as the *Deposition* and the *Compianto* at Sant'Agostino received polychromatic pigmentation. Few of Begarelli's white compositions survived the sixteenth century uncolored. This decision on the part of the local community implies a change of taste, perhaps a conservative retreat from the aggressive material evocations fostered and promoted by the artist in life. Or perhaps the material message had lost its resonant value, and therefore seemingly required conversion by the 1570s into the more recognizable polychromatic tableau tradition. Contestants to these alterations did not go quietly: the late sixteenth-century chronicler Francesco Forciroli wrote in 1586 that he preferred Begarelli's sculptures left in their original state, because they replicated the most pure, white marble.²¹² The choice to revert the implied materiality of Begarelli's creations into the more widely accepted, polychromatic visual referent for terracotta signals the increasingly closed parameters encroaching upon the medium, and potentially upon sculptural representation in general, sparked by increasingly conservative, late-century cultic interaction.

²¹¹ For example, Genevan Protestants, urged by the preacher Guillaume Farel, engaged in city-wide iconoclasm in 1535. Olin, *A Reformation Debate*, 8.

²¹² "finguravano candidissimo marmo." Faranda, *Alfonso Lombardi*, 74.

Regardless of the apocryphal nature of the Michelangelo quote in Vasari's *Vite* mentioned at the outset of this case study, it is important to recognize that Vasari's inclusion of terracotta artists in his compendium—especially with Begarelli's prestigious association with '*Il Divino*'—intimates the elevated status of terracotta in sixteenth-century sculptural discourse. In the case of Antonio Begarelli, his *Deposition* purposefully manifests conflicting material messages that drive home the religious aims of the composition portrayed and the commissioning community. In this sense, the artist consciously manipulates the expectations of the viewer, promoting the polyvalent mysteries of divinity through ambiguous materiality. The creations of Antonio Begarelli are infinitely more than mere facsimiles. In essence, and by design, these sculptures are not what they seem.

The case studies of this chapter illustrate that terracotta rarely manifests its own materiality. Through pigment or other applied surface treatments, terracotta transgresses its own "thingness" in pursuit of evoking the physical presence of another material. In Begarelli's case, terracotta references marble. More often than not, early modern terracotta creations manifest the fabric, hair, and flesh of the human form, augmented with a sensitivity to textural treatment and the addition of colorful pigmentation. This approach to terracotta was by far the dominant one, as we see in the Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo, in the work of Niccolò dell'Arca and in the late-century fate of Begarelli's *Deposition*. The phenomenon of polychromy paradoxically pushes the illusion of terracotta into the now uncomfortable realm of the "true likeness": as scholar Georges Didi-Huberman notes, nineteenth- and twentieth-century art historical studies "would rather cling to marble busts and ignore the 'dubious' taste of works formed of polychrome..."²¹³

²¹³ In this discussion, Georges Didi-Huberman is speaking of Horst Woldemar Janson and his indebtedness to Erwin Panofsky. Didi-Huberman, "The order of material," 204.

Disconcerting though they may be, the colorful inhabitants of the Sacri Monti are served by their material slippage, confronting the viewer with three-dimensional bodies framed by immersive settings in both interior and exterior spaces.²¹⁴ At Varallo, many of the biblical figures are augmented with glass eyes and real human hair: a few even wear actual cloth dipped in plaster and arranged like papier mâché around the sculpted form.²¹⁵ Add to this list the fact of nocturnal visits to the chapel spaces, when visitors required hand-held lanterns and close proximity to interpret figures on display, and this multimedia panoply gives the sensation of true immersion.²¹⁶ The devotee passing into the crowded Chapel of Calvary physically enters the devastating moment of Christ's death and stands at the foot of the crucified Savior together with Christ's followers, His mother, and other early modern pilgrims. The state of immersion facilitates a cohabitation with members of the Christian pantheon.²¹⁷

At first glance, a sacred mountain construction is a far cry from an urban terracotta installation, particularly when the former is polychromatic and largely dependent on high relief while the latter is one of Begarelli's monochromatic, life-sized and fully three-dimensional creations. What unites the chapels at San Vivaldo and the *Deposition* installation by Antonio Begarelli are the acts of pious devotion oriented toward each sacred assemblage. Both became foci for the Observant Franciscan order, and thus both manifest objectives inherent to this strict religious community that centered their philosophy upon an empathetic relationship with the

²¹⁴ The situation at the Sacro Monte di Varallo is discussed in greater detail in the first chapter of this dissertation.

²¹⁵ Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses," 407.

²¹⁶ For more on nocturnal visits, and the history of Saint Carlo Borromeo at Varallo, Chapter One, 48, n 105.

²¹⁷ "Rather, the creation of the sacri monti was a response to the same shift we have documented, from the culture of relics and the seeking of outward sources of divine power that stimulated Holy Land pilgrimages to a premium on inner transformation via the transformative power of imagination and empathy." Randi Klebanoff, "The Bolognese sculpture of Niccolò dell'Arca and Michelangelo: Studies in context" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1993), 62.

biblical narrative. Surprisingly, both sites also benefited directly from the devotion of local women. Like the case of the *Deposition*, San Vivaldo was also a favored experiential locus for female pilgrims, who arrived in such great numbers to warrant visitation regulations established by the Franciscan site guides. A protective wall was constructed around the perimeter of the sacred mountain to regulate access to the chapel spaces, abolishing independent visits without the guidance of Franciscan interpreters.²¹⁸ Women were also forbidden to enter the sacred mountain on particular liturgical feast days: on the days of the Resurrection and Pentecost and the two days following each holiday, on the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, and on the feast days of Saints Francis and Vivaldo.²¹⁹ The purpose of these restrictions were to preserve the site for local friars of the order, but they also seem to indicate a particular fervency fomenting in the devotional, cult practices of women which was deemed over exuberant by male contemporaries. Unfortunately, the role of women may also explain the relegation of such complex, intellectually informed sculptural installations to the realm of “popular devotion,” perpetually severed from the more canonical, ‘masculine’ sculptural media.

Both the chapels of the Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo and Begarelli’s urban *Deposition* bestow upon early modern viewers a privileged vantage of the sacred body. As we move into the final chapter of this dissertation, the discussion will shift from the concert of sculpture and architecture to frame and present immersive biblical narratives and into the sculpturally driven visual discourse revolving around the monolithic, three-dimensional cut locus. The third chapter, entitled “Body Politics,” will reevaluate canonical sculptural creations of the sixteenth century in light of the cultic and materialistic innovations in terracotta explored at San Vivaldo and

²¹⁸ Ghilardi, *Le cappelle di San Vivaldo*, 26.

²¹⁹ Ghilardi, *Le cappelle di San Vivaldo*, 26. Annabel Jane Wharton also adds to the female dimension in her discussion of the habitual stoning of the prisoner Barabbas. Wharton, *Selling Jerusalem*, 130.

Modena. Such reappraisal will reveal the capacity for narrative and personal interaction in monolithic sculpture, and the ability of white marble to engage urban viewers as devotional foci in the urban centers of Rome and Florence.

Chapter Three: Body Politics

Devoid of any physical relic, and often standing in stark contrast to the polychromatic religious interior, the white marble sculpture stands alone as a declaration of artistic and material presence. The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century trend towards monochromatic or two-toned forms in urban religious spaces brought unfamiliar symbolic references into the religious interior. The association is at first ancient, a reinterpretation of the Greco-Roman cult icon reoriented for the Christian faith, and yet new, a characteristic representative of dynamic trends in sixteenth-century sculptural discourse.²²⁰ In many ways, these foreign bodies were treated on par with cult objects of other media, evoking popular devotional sites much like the terracotta compositions discussed in the previous chapter. How are modern scholars to interpret such cult objects in canonical media? The modes of interaction and acceptance of these sacred forms—documented in perpetual acts of devotion found in archival records, or “registered” on the objects themselves—transformed the monochromatic images into rich, multicolored sites of devotion. Perceived on parallel planes of the secular and sacred, the sculptural compositions simultaneously exalt their sculptor-creators, and underscored the sacred figures represented. This complex vantage on the sacred object pushes these early modern creations into an active discourse with religious belief.

This final chapter will discuss two sculptural installations. The first, Michelangelo Buonarroti’s Roman *Risen Christ* exemplifies the sacred sculptural monument that efficaciously acted as a religious locus in addition to its original, funerary intent. Both the original and copy

²²⁰ Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 17-20, 49-77. Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 147.

demonstrate the object's capacity to inspire devotion. The second case study, Francesco da Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, acts as a link in a chain of visual representations, and the epicenter of a potent local cult spanning both religious and civic spheres.

Each example of this final chapter typifies the agency of white, sculptural compositions in religious interiors and their enduring value across sixteenth-century religious practice. The creations of Michelangelo and Francesco da Sangallo demonstrate the coexistence of sacred intent enmeshed with visual ingenuity on par with the audacious Loretan Santa Casa, the immersion of the Sacro Monte of San Vivaldo, and Begarelli's material defying *Deposition*. Ultimately, the *Risen Christ* will prove the capacity to create a replicable, three-dimensional cult object in the latest humanist and artistic vogue. Its installation and replication—namely the Florentine copy at the church of Santo Spirito—declares an abiding faith in the sculptural cult image at the close of the century. The enduring use of a sacred sculptural installation for devotional purposes will be revealed in the subsequent, culminating case of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, where the civic patroness underpins a longstanding tradition of spontaneous devotion unimpeded by early modern political strife. These sculpted cases will redefine the modern vantage on sacred sculpture, and will demonstrate the interdependence of sculptural discourse and artistic innovation with sixteenth-century religious practice.

Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*

Thanks to the biographies of Condivi, Baglione, and Vasari, the myth of Michelangelo's genius establishes the dominant narrative of sculptural production across the sixteenth century.²²¹

²²¹ Ascanio Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti* (Florence: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1998); Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti: dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII fino a tutto quello d'Urbano VIII* (Bologna: A. Forni, 2008); Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, 1568 edition, edited by R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence: S.P.E.S., già Sansoni, 1966-1987).

Unfortunately, the primacy of Michelangelo's reputation often impedes a more nuanced interpretation of the artist's visual oeuvre. The religious intent of the Roman *Risen Christ* at Santa Maria sopra Minerva (Image 32), for example—its capacity to incite devotion through context, composition, and medium—has become subordinate to the dominant narrative of Neoplatonic classicism: the sculpture, as a white marble monolith, must compete with and surpass the innovations of antiquity *a la* Bishop Giberti's commentary regarding the prowess of Andrea Sansovino at Loreto.²²² That being said, the timeliness of Michelangelo's sculptural creation—commissioned in 1514 and installed in 1521—represents a precise moment in intellectual and religious history. Michelangelo's nude Christ spans the publication of Martin Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* in 1517.²²³ In this light, the sculpture resonates with the humanist-infused praise of the faith rebuffed in Luther's text. The proud, nude form of the *Risen Christ* reflects the courtly discourse circulating within the Papacy in the first decades of the sixteenth century, and emblemizes the *avant-garde* visual traits of the artist's later career. I hypothesize that sculptures like the *Risen Christ* increasingly signify the polemical nature of sacred objects in Protestant and Catholic debates regarding the image's suitability in sacred space.

When the commissioner Marta Porcari was interred within Santa Maria sopra Minerva in 1512, her will stipulated that her executors, Metello Vari and Bernardo Cenci, would commission a representation of the resurrected Christ for the church interior. The 1514 contract of Michelangelo plainly states the commissioners' objectives: "a life-sized figure of Christ in marble, nude, standing, with a cross in his arms, in that attitude which will seem best to the

²²² See Chapter One.

²²³ The church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva is particularly relevant to the discussion of Protestantism because the site became the epicenter of the movement against Lutheran reform under Pope Leo X de' Medici. Nagel, *Controversy*, 142.

above-mentioned Michelangelo.”²²⁴ However, the sculpture did not enter the Dominican church until 1521, in large part because of a significant flaw discovered in the marble block of the first version: an unacceptable black vein had appeared across the face of Christ.²²⁵ Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt argues that the second version of the *Risen Christ* was only initiated in 1519, coupled with increased pressure from the commission’s frustrated procurator, Metello Vari.²²⁶ The second version of the sculpture was completed by the summer of 1521, when the creation left from the artist’s Florentine workshop to Rome. The handling of the object fell to Michelangelo’s associates and assistants in the Papal city. Sculptors Pietro Urbano and Federigo Frizzi worked to negotiate the sculpture past local customs and install the altarpiece in the church itself. All the while, Michelangelo’s faithful correspondent, Leonardo Sellaio, and the artist’s devout adherent, Sebastiano del Piombo, kept the master apprised of the sculpture’s progress (and, inevitably, its installers’ perceived ineptitude).

The sculpture currently stands on the left side of the high altar in the Dominican church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva; however, this lofty position was not the location originally chosen within the church interior. A series of letters from Michelangelo’s assistants in 1520 and 1521 detail the contemporary dispute over the original presentation site. On the 10th of March, 1520, Federigo Frizzi detailed in a letter to Michelangelo the events of his visit to Santa Maria sopra Minerva with the commission executors. Together with a priest of the Porcari family, Frizzi, Metello Vari and Bernardo Cenci previewed an internal wall of the church beside the entrance to

²²⁴ “Una figura di marmo d’un Cristo grande quanto el naturale, ignudo, ritto, con una croce in braccio, in quell’attitudine che parrà al detto Michelagnolo.” Irene Baldriga, “The First Version of Michelangelo’s Christ for S. Maria Sopra Minerva,” *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 142, No. 1173 (2000): 740.

²²⁵ Baldriga, “First Version of Michelangelo’s Christ,” 740-742; Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, “The Body as “Vera Effigies” in Michelangelo’s Art: The Minerva Christ,” in *L’immagine di Cristo dall’acheropita alla mano d’artista: Dal tardo medioevo all’età barocca*, edited by Christoph Frommel and Gerhald Wolf (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), 284.

²²⁶ Weil-Garris Brandt, “The Body as “Vera Effigies,”” 283.

the cloister (no longer extant).²²⁷ Based on contemporary drawings of the church in its urban location, access to the cloister would have been found somewhere along the wall of the left side aisle, predetermining the location of the niche. In this location, the left-facing gaze of Christ would have been oriented in perpetuity down the nave and towards the apse of the church. This choice for the original installation, however, did not meet Frizzi's expectations. The light, according to Frizzi, was too dim to adequately showcase Michelangelo's composition. In contrast, Frizzi suggested relocating the sculpture to a column along the church nave towards the center of the structure on account of the better lighting: "*perché v'è un buon lume.*" According to Frizzi, this suggestion was approved by all, implying that the decision was final.²²⁸

Unfortunately for the eager installer, by October of the year following, the location of the commission had changed: the sculpture was erected, against Frizzi's recommendation, before a pier between the sacristy and the high altar. Frizzi goes so far as to complain that the choice of location does not offer the lighting that he felt the sculpture deserved.²²⁹ Frizzi's series of letters imply to the modern reader that the sculpture has always stood to the left of the high altar, as it does today, though the late decision to relocate implies that the sculpture's ultimate location was not a component of the original design.

²²⁷ The original cloister shared the north wall of the church, prior to its partial demolition in the mid-sixteenth century to make room for the series of chapels that run along both sides of the nave. A cursory study of early-modern church plans reveals that the cloister must have been accessible from the left side aisle between nave piers two and six.

²²⁸ Federigo Frizzi writes on March 10, 1520: "*E siàno andati insieme, el veschovo de' Porchari e messer Bernardo e Mettelo Porchari, ne la Minerva; e ànomi mostro e' luogo dove la vogl[i]ono murare, c[i]oè in quella facc[i]ata de la chiesa a presso a la porta che va nel chiostro. Dicce v'è un tristo lume, per la qual chosa io ne gl'ò schonfortati, e ògli chonsigliati che la metino in una di quele cholone, o pilastri che si sieno, de la nave di mezo, perché v'è un buon lume; e loro ne son contenti.*" Paola Barocchi, Renzo Ristori, *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, Vol. II (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1965), 222-223.

²²⁹ Federigo Frizzi writes on October 19, 1521: "*E per darvi aviso de la figura, c[i]oè de l'esere in opera, el'è mesa a prèso a l'altare grande, – c[i]oè la ccapela grande è i[n] mezo infra 'l Sagramento e la figura –, in uno di quegli pilastri che regono la volta de la chapela, e non à u' lume a modo mio. In quello pilastro, che io vi schrisi g[i]à, de la nave di mezo, v'era uno buono lume. Per quello che non ve l'abin voluta metere, io non lo so.*" Barocchi and Ristori, *Carteggio*, vol. II, 324-325.

Months before this decision appears in the written correspondence, Pietro Urbano wrote to Michelangelo on March 31st, 1521, to declare that the design for the sculpture's display—executed by Frizzi—had been chosen.²³⁰ A cursory check of the March 1520 letter by Frizzi reveals his initial plans: Frizzi foresaw the sculpture within a niche, "*pocco chavato*," only slightly curved, to ensure visibility of Michelangelo's creation.²³¹ In both Frizzi's and Urbano's letters, the niche is termed significantly as a "*tabernacolo*." The relevance of this word choice will soon become apparent.

The summary above regarding the *Risen Christ* installation offers insight into the evolution of the project. Given the late date of the proposed relocation of the sculpture, we must assume that the artist executed the commission with the original context in mind: that is, in a niche, down the nave and/or beside the now-lost cloister. The sculpture's ultimate placement beside the high altar may have been the direct result of Medici intervention. At the death of Clement VII in 1534, Cardinals Ippolito de Medici, Innocenzo Cibo, Giovanni Salviati, and Niccolò Ridolfi catalyzed the commission of tombs for the two Medici popes, the initial plans of which date back to the sudden death of Leo X in 1521.²³² Initially, the cadre of Cardinals hired the multimedia sculptor Alfonso Lombardi to execute the papal monuments²³³—the artist is

²³⁰ Pietro Urbano writes on March 31, 1521: "*Ò parlato ogni giorno chon messer Mectello e chon messer Bernardo Cienci e chol Veschovo e chon Antonino Porchari e tutti questi Porchari. E pure sabato della Pasqua si sono risoluti del tabernacholo, che v'era el Frizi. E sono d'achordo, loro insieme, del tabernacholo.*" Barocchi and Ristori, *Carteggio*, vol. II, 282.

²³¹ Federigo Frizzi writes on March 10, 1520: "*E per anchora no s'è terminato el modo del tabernaccolo. Io ne ò fato loro una mostra e ò promeso di farne a[n]chora de l'altre, e fo pensiero di fare 'l vano del tabernaccolo largo palmi quatro, chredendo che basti. E per esere la statua più veduta, penso di fare 'l tabernaccolo pocco chavato.*" Barocchi and Ristori, *Carteggio*, vol. II, 222-223.

²³² For a synopsis of the evolution of the tombs at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, see Detlef Heikamp, "Die Entwurfszeichnungen für die Grabmäler der Mediceer-Päpste Leo X und Clemens VII," *Albertina Studien*, Vol. 4 (1966): 134-154; Alessandra Bigi Iotti, "Andrea Sansovino and the Design for a Funerary Monument for Leo X," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 150, No. 1268 (2008): 757-759.

²³³ Alfonso Lombardi is particularly relevant to the discussion in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Giancarlo Palmerio and Gabriella Villetti make an astonishingly brief comment that the commission of Lombardi coincided with a relocation of the tomb project to Santa Maria Maggiore, however I have yet to find any tangible

relevant to this dissertation as a terracotta sculptor, well versed in multiple sculptural materials—however Baccio Bandinelli ultimately headed the program together with architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger.²³⁴

Pope Leo X de' Medici had always intended Santa Maria sopra Minerva to be his final resting place. During his pontificate, the architects Baldassare Peruzzi and, again, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger produced designs for an extended choral space behind the high altar of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.²³⁵ The staunch Medici support of the Dominican center emerged from longstanding associations between this Roman Dominican community and their counterparts at Santa Maria Novella in Florence. The fact of association underlies Michelangelo's decision to accept the commission of Marta Porcari, and likely influenced the sculpture's ultimate location, flanking what is now, for all intents and purposes, the Medici papal chapel.

Even in its altered location, Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* connects with the high altar through the act of sight. The increased proximity to the altar only highlights the relationship forged between body and altar, an association integral to Michelangelo's original artistic message. The resurrected body of Christ is more than a symbolic referent: the medium of sculpture provides literal presence.

The substantive body of the sculpted image viscerally brings the Savior into the space. That corporeality of Christ is a valued component of the artistic creation, which was craved by the early modern devotee. Such longing for a physical connection is visible in the signs of

indication for this shift. See Giancarlo Palmerio and Gabriella Villetti, *Storia edilizia di S. Maria sopra Minerva in Roma, 1275-1870* (Rome: Libreria Editrice s.r.l., 1989), 121.

²³⁴ The Medici popes were officially interred at Santa Maria sopra Minerva on June 6, 1542 under the auspices of Pope Paul III Farnese. Palmerio and Villetti, *Storia edilizia di S. Maria sopra Minerva*, 124.

²³⁵ These drawings are housed today in the Uffizi. Palmerio and Villetti, *Storia edilizia di S. Maria sopra Minerva*, 100-132.

deterioration across the sculpted surface. Today, the sculpture is visibly marred by yellow and brown swaths of discoloration and excessive polish to the marble from Christ's knees downward, as with Christ at San Vivaldo and the circumgenuflection trail at Loreto. Wear pronounces the long-standing reliance on touch as a form of devotion. The local community felt compelled to interact tactilely with the sculpted figure of Christ. Sometime during the sculpture's history, a gilt slipper was appended to the figure's extended right foot to, in the words of William Wallace, protect the body from the "zealous devotion of the faithful."²³⁶ Crucially, such protective measures illustrate that the Church as an institution did not choose to curb the method of devotion that sparked the repetitious burnishing wrought by faithful hands. Rather, the Dominican community reinforced the body for continual acts of tactile devotion.

Along with the literal presence of the figure, Michelangelo also conveys a spiritual message through the materiality of the body. The choice of marble is especially efficacious in Michelangelo's rendition of the divine because of the material's physical composition as understood in the period. According to medieval scientific thought based in Aristotle's *Meteorologia*, marble was made under the surface of the earth by the compression (freezing or burning) of unseen reservoirs of water and vapor.²³⁷ The Arab physician Avicenna, writing in the eleventh century, agreed with the fourth-century BCE philosopher and deduced that there must be some "mineral force" that effectively solidifies water. Comments such as these were often associated with, if not attributed directly back to Aristotle and other venerable ancient sources.²³⁸

²³⁶ William Wallace, "Michelangelo's Risen Christ," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1997): 1272. Wallace does not offer a date for the addition of the bronze cover. If possible, I hope to find this information in church records, if such documentation survives.

²³⁷ Bissera Pentcheva, "Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics," *Gesta*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2011): 96; Fabio Barry, "Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (2007): 630. Alexander Nagel, in a discussion on alabaster revetment states definitively, "Stone, understood as condensed vapor, is cloud." Nagel, *Controversy*, 275.

²³⁸ Barry, "Walking on Water", 631. Another popular resource is, of course, Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*.

This metamorphosis is transubstantive: the liquid or vaporous matter has become solid, yet retains facets of its original state (smooth surface, semi-opaque, cold to the touch, etc.).²³⁹ Once transformed, the solid stone cannot be returned to its liquid form.

As with the case of the Santa Casa exterior and Begarelli's material allusion, the choice of marble to compose the body of the *Risen Christ* invests the figural representation with an almost living, animate quality rife with associations to the miracle of Christ's flesh. The white marble substance speaks to the transubstantiation of the Eucharist on the high altar: Christ's literal body has materialized upon the altar platform before the devout gaze of the viewer. In this construct, the color of the white stone mirrors the pale wafer of the Eucharist.²⁴⁰ The resurrected body of the Savior above the altar is referenced and reinforced by the trans-materialized sculptural body.²⁴¹

Either along the left wall of the church, or flanking the high altar, Christ mirrors the miracle of his flesh: both sculpture and wafer are embodied, and resurrected. Michelangelo's composition offers the real presence of Christ in the sacred interior, its placement within what Urbano and Frizzi identify as a tabernacle—a form associated with containing the Eucharist—reinforces the interpretation of stone-as-flesh. The sculptural declaration builds pointedly from the words of Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians:

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is*

²³⁹ Though I have yet to find an author who explicitly states this fact, the works of Fabio Barry, Bissera Pentcheva and Alexander Nagel have provided the foundation of this assertion.

²⁴⁰ Aden Kumler discusses the perpetually pale face of the Eucharistic wafer, wittily nicknamed by Protestant dissidents as "*Jean Blanc*", in her chapter entitled "The 'Genealogy of Jean le Blanc': Accounting for the Materiality of the Medieval Eucharist" in *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250-1750*, edited by Christy Anderson, Anne Dunlop and Pamela H. Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 119-132.

²⁴¹ It should be noted that Martin Luther believed in consubstantiation rather than transubstantiation, which maintained a sense of divine presence, though not literal embodiment, of the Host. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 164-165.

also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.²⁴²

Michelangelo's sculptural composition manifests the salvation of the devout viewer through the invasive reality of sculptural presence, materializing Christ's transubstantive resurrection that consequently signals the viewer's ultimate redemption.

The message of resurrection is manifested in the white marble, "transubstantive" body standing erect beside the high altar. Beyond the fact of literal presence within the sacred space, the body is animate, extending his right foot forward, inviting touch but also destabilizing the body. We have caught the figure mid-motion. As the viewer passes before the sculpture from left to right—as she would have, had the sculpture been installed in a niche down the left side of the church—the stance of the body transforms from a tentative touch of the right foot upon the ground, to an active footfall. This momentum implies that, all too soon, Christ will leave the confines of his podium and enter into the realm of the viewer. Descending from his sculptural podium, Christ will accompany the viewer as she walks towards the sacred epicenter of the church.

The power of Christ's motion is compounded by the juxtaposition of pliant flesh against the implements of the Passion in his hands, particularly the cross around which Christ's form curls. The plastic malleability of the body combats the literal qualities with stone: if anything, it is the cross that reads as the durable, intractable material. The hyper-planarity of the cross' surface belies the automatic assumption of wood, and its diminutive size relegates the object to the status of a signifier. The contrast is made all too apparent in light of the reed staff, rope and sponge also clasped in Christ's hands, which each portray individual textural traits. The cross has

²⁴² 1 Cor. 15:12-18 NKJV.

collapsed from a resolute object into a referent, a symbol. The triumphant body has relinquished its dependence upon the instrument of death as thoroughly as it belies the reality of its marble confines.

Outlandish though the comment above may seem, the concept is not necessarily foreign to the artist's career. One is reminded of Michelangelo's mid-century, meditative drawing of the *Crucifixion* executed for Vittoria Colonna. In this scene, Christ seemingly levitates before, rather than upon the cross. The artist's rendition of Saint Peter's martyrdom in the Pauline Chapel of the Vatican also pointedly lacks physical nails in flesh. In both cases, the sacred body is associated with, yet intrinsically independent from the literal object of torture. In the case of the *Risen Christ*, the Savior manifests dominance over the inanimate, just as his supple form is transcendent. The complex dance of triumphant body coiling around the symbol of death encapsulates the interrelationship between the Christian Faith and the materiality of figural representation, as Antonio Begarelli—Michelangelo's contemporary—has also demonstrated.²⁴³

The visual referent of triumph bears a poignant association with the dogmatic discourses taking place in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Only a year before the sculpture's commission, Leo X decreed the immortality of the soul at the Fifth Lateran Council with an apostolic bull entitled the *Apostolici regiminis*.²⁴⁴ This declaration, with its basis in the brand of Neoplatonism circulating in the Medici court, became subject to the Protestant reformist fire of Martin Luther.²⁴⁵ The pope's rebuttal to Luther in the bull *Exsurge Domine* of the 15th of June, 1520, itemizes the Protestant's many heresies, including his denial of the soul's immortality. In

²⁴³ See the second case study of Chapter Two.

²⁴⁴ The papal bull was published on the 19th of December, 1513. Victoria Goldberg, "Leo X, Clement VII and the Immortality of the Soul," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1975-1976): 22.

²⁴⁵ Goldberg, 22.

this climate, Michelangelo's resurrected Christ carries with him more than the instruments of his passion, but also physically connotes the perseverance of the soul, bearing a heightened resonance into the sacred interior of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, which acted as the Dominican epicenter against Lutheran doctrine as per the orders of the first Medici pope.

The animate nature of Michelangelo's sculptural Savior demonstrates Leo's notion of immortality. White marble flesh extends out and away from the sculpture's podium, emerging from any confines of its now absent tabernacle and actively entering the communal space. The resurrection is simultaneously theophanic and corporeally present: the compelling materiality of the *Risen Christ* incites cultic devotional touch, and that touch affirms the tense association of animate and inanimate, flesh and stone.

As Christopher Nygren states in his recent reevaluations of Titian's miracle-working *Christ carrying the Cross* in San Rocco, Venice (Image 33), modern studies of sixteenth-century art history still grapple with the inherent division of what is considered "art" from what is associated with cult practice.²⁴⁶ Painted circa 1510 and at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco by 1519, Titian's painting walks the line between art and cult image, just as Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*. Almost immediately after its induction into the Scuola Grande, the image began enacting miracles. The addition of the painting's encompassing frame sometime shortly after the relocation to the Scuola declares authorship as the monumental gilt setting emphasizes the sacred "otherness" of the image.²⁴⁷ The association between the Venetian artist and miraculous painting was not widely acknowledged before mid-century. Nevertheless, Nygren asserts that the artist was inextricably linked to the modern, miraculous work of art through the painted, reliquary-like

²⁴⁶ Christopher Nygren, "Titian's Miracles: Artistry and Efficacy between the San Rocco *Christ* and the Accademia Pietà," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (2015): 323.

²⁴⁷ Nygren, "Titian's Miracles," 332.

entablature, which references Titian's God the Father in his *Assunta* at the Frari.²⁴⁸ However, in the author's subsequent discussion of Titian's potential emulation of Michelangelo, enacted in Titian's late-life *Pietà*, Nygren sells "*Il Divino*" surprisingly short when he states that Titian "would not find miraculous agency anywhere in his model."²⁴⁹ The author's tone, possibly reinforced by Venetian biases against the artist, implies that Michelangelo divorced his works from divine or miraculous connotations.²⁵⁰ This assumption dismisses the potential cult value of Michelangelo's compositions.

Disassociation from the sacred remains a common problem in modern studies of sculptural history, particularly in the case of canonical media like marble or bronze with regard to sixteenth-century devotion. Contrary to this scholarly predilection, sculpture of any media had the capacity to hold sacred sway in religious spaces across the era. These works were not solely anonymous representations or careful copies of sculptural relics like the *Volto Santo*, but also recognized as contemporary creations. In 1512, a polychromatic, sculpted wooden *Crucifixion* by the famous Florentine sculptor, Donatello, was documented as a miracle-working object in the university city of Padua (Image 34).²⁵¹ That year, the crucifix, housed in the church of Santa Maria dei Servi, began to bleed spontaneously and continued to do so for fifteen consecutive days. The blood emanating from the sculptural body was collected, and the vials were perceived

²⁴⁸ Nygren, "Titian's Miracles," 336.

²⁴⁹ Nygren, "Titian's Miracles," 344.

²⁵⁰ I find Nygren's dismissal surprising, given his reliance upon Vasari in both cases—Nygren argues that Titian is the only artist in Vasari's 'third epoch of art' to author a miraculous image, yet the period author's attestations to the "miraculous" qualities of Michelangelo's sculptures is demoted to the status of hyperbole. Nygren, "Titian's Miracles," 324. Perhaps Nygren at this point builds upon the prejudice of period authors like Ludovico Dolce in his *L'aretino*, or *Dialogo della pittura*, 1557. Special thanks to Stuart Lingo for discussing this situation with me.

²⁵¹ Francesco Caglioti, "Donatello miracoloso: il Crocifisso ligneo dei Servi," in *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Galileiana di scienze lettere ed arti in Padova* (Padua: Presso la Sede dell'Accademia, 2010), 59-85; Andrea Nante, Marica Mercalli, eds, *Donatello svelato: Capolavori a confronto. Il Crocifisso di Santa Maria dei Servi a Padova e il suo restauro* (Venice: Marsilio, 2015).

as relics of Christ's own corpus.²⁵² By 1565, the polychromatic Christ and the blood vials garnered a wealth of votive offerings both inside and along the external walls of the sculpture's presentation chapel.²⁵³ The *Crucifixion* at Padua was recognized simultaneously as the work of a great Florentine sculptor, and also as a divine cult object capable of miracles.

Artistic authority alone does not negate the possibility of sculpture's capacity to motivate devotion. Like Donatello's venerated crucifix, the power of Michelangelo's creations can clearly be traced through the vibrant interactive culture instigated by the early modern devout community. Touch, as mentioned earlier, has played a significant role in the history of the *Risen Christ*. Copies and quotations—of the Santa Maria sopra Minerva cult object, as well as from across the artist's oeuvre—further emphasize the desirous quality of the sculpted image. In the Augustinian church of Santo Spirito in Florence, two copies of Michelangelo's work flank the entrance of the religious interior. The niches that face each other across the nave were both commissions of the del Riccio family and contain replicas of two of the artist's best known Roman monoliths: the *Pietà* of Saint Peter's, also known as the *Madonna della Febbre* (Image 35) and the *Risen Christ*. The first was executed by the sculptor Giovanni Lippi (nicknamed Nanni di Baccio Bigio) and installed at Santo Spirito circa 1549, and the second, by Taddeo Landini, was set in place around 1579. Rather than perceive these two installations as artistic “idol worship,” I propose they be reevaluated for their devout potential in this civically potent Florentine space.

²⁵² By 1559, Donatello's Crucifix was engaged in a sort of miracle-working competition with another sculptural focus at Santa Maria dei Servi, a sculpted, standing Madonna and Child attributed to Rainaldino di Francia, and suspiciously similar in design to the Madonna di Loreto. Marco Ruffini, “Il Crocifisso ligneo di Donatello a Padova. I documenti,” in *Donatello svelato*, 68.

²⁵³ Elisabetta Francescutti, “Svelare il divino. Il restauro del crocifisso ligneo di Donatello della Chiesa dei Servi di Padova,” in *Donatello svelato*, 74-75. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that Donatello's polychromatic wooden sculpted image was painted in the late nineteenth century to give the impression of bronze, but this Victorian or Edwardian alteration was removed during the sculpture's most recent restoration. See Francescutti, “Svelare il divino,” 78, n 33.

When standing before the Santo Spirito compositions, one realizes that the term ‘emulation’ is a more accurate appellation than ‘copy.’ Each rendition manifests idiosyncrasies that distinguish the subsequent version from the prototype, which foster questions of authorship and visual intent. Of the two, the case of Nanni’s *Pietà* (Image 36) is better known in contemporary art historical discourse, and so the following conversation will take both into account in the search for meaning behind Landini’s late-century *Risen Christ* (Image 37). But before embarking on the history of these sacred sculptures, a brief synopsis of the man at the heart of the del Riccio commissions is necessary to comprehend the intent of each installation.

Luigi del Riccio was a trusted confidant of Michelangelo. Though Vasari does not explore their relationship, the surviving correspondence between the artist and del Riccio reveal the intimate friendship between the two.²⁵⁴ The association most likely formed sometime after Michelangelo moved permanently to Rome in 1534,²⁵⁵ and reached a peak of intimacy in the year 1544 with the shared loss of Luigi’s nephew Francesco di Zanobi Bracci, nicknamed Cecchino. The flurry of epigraphic poetry that transpired between Michelangelo, del Riccio, and a group of contemporaries over the tragic death of the fifteen-year-old youth demonstrates the empathetic commitment of each man to the other. In one of his epitaphs, Michelangelo writes of constructing a funerary monument in honor of the deceased, “*in pietra viva / Eterna.*”²⁵⁶ Given

²⁵⁴ Michelangelo even comments expressly on del Riccio in his first published biography by Condivi in 1547. The letters about Michelangelo in the months immediately following Luigi del Riccio’s death describe the artist as inconsolable. See Ernst Steinmann, *Michelangelo e Luigi del Riccio. Con documenti inediti* (Florence: Vallecchi Editore, 1932), 7, 28.

²⁵⁵ Luigi also moved permanently from Florence at this time, and quite possibly for the same reason as the famous artist: the shifting power dynamic sparked by the death of Duke Alessandro de’ Medici and the rise to power of his distant cousin, Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici. Louis Alexander Waldman, “Nanni di Baccio Bigio at Santo Spirito,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (1998): 198.

²⁵⁶ A tomb for Cecchino was in fact constructed in the church of Aracoeli in Rome. William Wallace poses the hypothesis that, though reserved in style, the monument is the work of Michelangelo himself. William Wallace, “Michelangelo, Luigi del Riccio, and the Tomb of Cecchino Bracci,” *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 69 (2014): 97-105.

the resurrection associations in the *Risen Christ*, the allusion to crafting an image of the young man in living, eternal stone takes on a deeper valence.

Just months after the death of Cecchino, Michelangelo fell seriously ill. The sixty-nine-year-old artist repaired to del Riccio's apartments in the Roman Palazzo Strozzi, where his convalescence was attended by the best physicians. Pope Paul III Farnese demanded daily reports on the artist's health.²⁵⁷ Again, the trust and priority given to del Riccio in this moment of crisis speaks to his privileged position. In this light, it is unsurprising that the artist would allow copies to be made of his creations for the sake of this beloved friend.

Our modern understanding of Nanni's *Pietà* remains vague due to a lack of clear chronological evidence: scholars often date the sculpture to approximately 1545, when it was on display in the church of Santo Spirito (though not yet formally installed) by early 1549. I posit that the commission came in 1546, for reasons that will become clear in the following exploration.

Contemporaneous to the creation of the Santo Spirito *Pietà*, Michelangelo and del Riccio were both engaged in international affairs. On the 8th of February, 1546, the King of France, François I, appealed to Michelangelo in a letter addressed to the artist in Rome. François requests, for the sake of his love, his own versions of the *Pietà* and *Risen Christ*: "...for the sake of my love, I hope that you are happy for him [François' artist, Francesco Primaticcio] to take molds from the *Christ of the Minerva* and from *Our Lady della Febbre* so that I may adorn one of my chapels with them, as things which I am assured are the most exquisite and excellent in

²⁵⁷ Maria Ruvoldt, "Michelangelo's *Slaves* and the Gift of Liberty," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2012): 1033.

your art.”²⁵⁸ The “*molle*”—or “*moule*,” meaning “mold”—implies the exact replication of the artist’s original creations.²⁵⁹

Even though the King’s request for sculptural replicas was never fulfilled, del Riccio’s sculptural commissions at Santo Spirito were. The eventual installation of the same two compositions as those requested by the King of France into del Riccio family chapels is hardly coincidental. Michelangelo received the 1546 letter from François I while convalescing from a second bout of illness in the rooms of Luigi del Riccio at the Palazzo Strozzi.²⁶⁰ This request was but the latest in a tennis match of written correspondence between the famous artist and the King of France. Two years prior, we find del Riccio involved in that ongoing discourse: in 1544 del Riccio relays to his employer, Roberto Strozzi, Michelangelo’s offer to execute a bronze equestrian statue on behalf of the French ruler.²⁶¹ Del Riccio was therefore aware of the dialogue between artist and monarch: the one in search of securing liberation for the subjugated Florentine Republic, the other desirous of works from the famous artist. Ten months pass between the composition of the King’s letter requesting copies of the *Risen Christ* and *Madonna delle Febbre* and the death of del Riccio in November 1546: it is entirely plausible that the associate and friend of the artist was aware of the ruler’s request. I hypothesize that in the months leading up to

²⁵⁸ “...pour l’amour de moy, qu’il molle le Christ de la Minerve et la Nostre Dame de la Fèbre, afin que j’en puisse aorner l’une de mes chappelles, comme de chose que l’on m’a asseuré estre des plus exquis et excellentes en votre art.” Barocchi and Ristori, *Carteggio*, Vol. IV, 229. English translation from Anthony Hughes, with slight alterations. Anthony Hughes, “Authority, Authenticity and Aura: Walter Benjamin and the Case of Michelangelo,” *Sculpture and its Reproductions*, edited by Anthony Hughes and Erich Ranfft (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1997), 38.

²⁵⁹ Translations of this text, even in Barocchi’s *Carteggio*, slightly alter the language of the original text with the addition of the word ‘copy’ or ‘copia.’ In so doing, the conversation changes in the mind of the modern viewer due to the negative associations appended to the status of the exact replica. See Barocchi’s translation of the text in *Carteggio*, Vol. IV, 229-230. For more on the deflated status of the copy, Hughes, 35.

²⁶⁰ Michelangelo retreats once more to the apartments of Luigi del Riccio at the Palazzo Strozzi in January of 1546. Ruvoldt, “Michelangelo’s *Slaves*,” 1049; Steinmann, *Michelangelo e Luigi del Riccio*, 16-28.

²⁶¹ Ruvoldt, “Michelangelo’s *Slaves*,” 1048.

his death, del Riccio commissioned the *Pietà*, and potentially made plans for the *Risen Christ* as well, in a compositional program inspired by royal precedent.

The first of the two Michelangelo copies was installed at Santo Spirito approximately three years after Luigi del Riccio passed away. Stylistically, Nanni's interpretation of the *Pietà* reveals multiple liberties taken on the part of its creator.²⁶² While Michelangelo's Madonna sways back in her grief, offering her expansive lap as an altar upon which to venerate the dead body of Christ, Nanni's Madonna pitches forward, curling over the crumpled (and somewhat diminished) body of her Son. From afar, the Santo Spirito Madonna reads as an unstable foundation for the precariously placed Savior, but directly before the altar, the artist's intent is clear: the Madonna extends her upper body out and over to commune directly with the viewer as she simultaneously offers the nearly cascading limbs of her son.²⁶³ Counter to the original, Nanni's Madonna does not truly sit in repose. Rather, she actively engages with the viewer through compelling contact. Though her eyes are lowered, her insistent posture and inclined head connects viscerally with the viewer as she offers the lifeless form of her Son.

The apropos choice of the *Pietà* in honor of the deceased Luigi del Riccio speaks to the original context of Michelangelo's early sixteenth-century *Pietà*, which served as a funerary monument for the French ambassador and abbot of Saint Denis, Cardinal Jean de Bilhères Lagraulas, inside the Constantinian basilica of Saint Peter's.²⁶⁴ Michelangelo famously signed

²⁶² Anthony Hughes offers an insightful discussion on the issue of relegating Nanni's creation to the level of the "copy" in his chapter. The Santo Spirito *Pietà* is not Nanni's first experience recreating Michelangelo's famous composition: in 1530-1532 the young artist went to Rome to complete a copy of the *Pietà* begun by his master, Lorenzetto, for the church of Santa Maria dell'Anima in Rome. Elena Capretti, *Il complesso di Santo Spirito* (Florence: "Lo Studiolo" Cooperativa s.r.l., 1991), 26.

²⁶³ Though the chapel was heavily remodeled in 1832 by Federico Fantozzi, the neoclassicist preserved the sensation of direct contact between the viewer and the Madonna through direct eye contact. For information on the renovation, see Waldman, "Nanni di Baccio Bigio," 200.

²⁶⁴ The sculpture was specifically held in the Rotunda of Saint Petronilla, no longer extant. Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, "Michelangelo's *Pietà* for the Cappella del Re di Francia," in *"Il se rendit en Italie": études offertes a André Chastel* (1987): 77-119.

his first *Pietà*—his only signed composition—declaring authorship and simultaneously alluding to the image-as-text. Michelangelo wrote across the belt traversing the breast of the Madonna: “Michelangelo Buonarroti of Florence was making me.”²⁶⁵ Vasari paints an Apelles-like association with the signature in his 1568 edition of the *Vite*: Pliny tells the narrative of the ancient Greek painter who, upon hearing criticism regarding his composition, stealthily rectified the issue. Duly, the young Michelangelo, supposedly overhearing a group of Lombards misidentifying his masterpiece as the work of “Gobbo”, a hunchbacked Milanese contemporary, appended his inscription to the composition by night to broadcast his triumphant authorship.²⁶⁶ A more nuanced interpretation of the signature offers a much deeper association behind the artist’s word choice: ancient authors may have used the imperfect to allude to the never-ending craftsmanship of literary invention. In keeping with the artist’s model, Nanni provides his own inscription on the Santo Spirito *Pietà*. The purposefully fragmentary inscription reads: “I, Lippi, from imitation had been making.”²⁶⁷ The second degree of separation—“had been making” (*stat faciebat*) rather than “was making”—pushes the classical allusion even farther, in an *imitatio Dei* of *Il Divino* himself.

One of the presumed objectives of the French King was undoubtedly to obtain replicas of Michelangelo’s sculptures as products of the artist’s genius, as “Michelangelos.” His praise of the artist’s two sacred commissions at the close of his request makes this clear. But the works of Michelangelo oscillate between the status of art object and sacred locus. Francisco de Holanda frames Michelangelo’s awareness of the hybridity of sacred and secular art in the third dialogue

²⁶⁵ “*Michelangelus Buonarrotius Florentius faciebat.*”

²⁶⁶ Livio Pestilli, “Michelangelo’s *Pietà*: Lombard Critics and Plinian Sources,” *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2000): 21; Aileen June Wang, “Michelangelo’s Signature,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2004): 450-451.

²⁶⁷ “*IO LIPPUS STAT EX IMITATIONE FACIEBA[T].*”

of the second book of his *Da pintura antiga* from 1548. In this text, the author paints Michelangelo as a philosophical creator entirely aware of the authoritative value of sacred imagery, and conveys this comprehension through a conversation regarding portraiture. Holanda's Michelangelo chooses a discussion on holy representations, including the *Lateran Christ*, to insert an anecdote on Alexander the Great and his reliance upon Apelles to render his portrait.²⁶⁸ After declaring that the ruler would only countenance Apelles as his portraitist, for he was the only man capable of producing the ruler's visage with appropriate "severity and liberal spirit," Holanda's Michelangelo declares: "how much more reason have princes, ecclesiastical or secular, to take care to ordain that none but the most illustrious painters they could find in their dominions and regions should paint the benevolence and gentleness of Our Redeemer or the purity of Our Lady and the saints!"²⁶⁹ The careful allocation of secular portraiture is but a minor issue when compared to the immense responsibility of authoritative sacred representation and icon replication.

Holanda's text goes on to reveal Michelangelo's devout adherence to the divine portrait known as the *Lateran Christ*, ascribed to Saint Luke. On the prodding of their compatriots, Michelangelo and Francisco explain that they met on multiple occasions at the Sancta Sanctorum, one seeking grace and salvation and the other on assignment to replicate the visage of the *Lateran Christ* for the Queen of Portugal.²⁷⁰ The discussion that ensues expands on the role of the copyist before a sacred image. Diego Zapata asks of Francisco: "did you give it the severe simplicity that the ancient painting has, and the awesomeness of those divine eyes, which

²⁶⁸ Alexander Nagel, "Icons and Early Modern Portraits," in *El Retrato del Renacimiento*, edited by Miguel Falomir (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2008), 421.

²⁶⁹ Francisco de Holanda, *On Antique Painting*, translated by Alice Sedgwick Wohl (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 210-211.

²⁷⁰ Holanda, *On Antique Painting*, 211.

seem supernatural, as befits the Savior?" To which the miniaturist affirms that he sought to imbue the composition with "grave austerity, without increasing or diminishing anything." However, Francisco also prophesizes that this work, difficult as it was for him to execute accurately, will be his least known creation.²⁷¹

The confluence of secular portraits and divine visages in Holanda's text likens the ancient Greek artist Apelles to the Christian creator of the *Lateran Christ*, Saint Luke, as an authoritative portraitist of Christ. The transition in the dialogue to Francisco's copy of the *Lateran Christ* offers up an icon authored both by the contemporary artist and by Saint Luke himself. The copy will be Francisco's least known work because his hand acts as a purveyor of Luke's divine knowledge. In this respect, Francisco elevates himself to the level of authoritative author, a prized position in the eyes of Michelangelo as a conveyor of "true likeness." In his text, Francisco associates himself with Michelangelo, insinuating that both were accepted as artists of that illustrious ilk capable of rendering faithful portraits of the Son of God. Yet, Francisco is also well known for copying the creations of Michelangelo, as discussed by Elena Calvillo.²⁷² If Michelangelo is Vasari's Apelles, he is equally Francisco de Holanda's Saint Luke, a source of divine visual knowledge. In the case of the *Pietà* and *Risen Christ*, Michelangelo acts equally as Nicodemus, a sculptor with first-hand knowledge of the perfection of the Virgin Mary and the body of her Divine Son.

Although the association of artist and composition may have been a contributing factor to del Riccio's initial request, the Santo Spirito *Pietà* emerged amid a wave of copies of Michelangelo's composition, in two- and three-dimensional media. A flurry of prints and

²⁷¹ Holanda, *On Antique Painting*, 211-212.

²⁷² Elena Calvillo, "Authoritative Copies and Divine Originals: Lucretian Metaphor, Painting on Stone, and the Problem of Originality in Michelangelo's Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (2013): 453-508.

miniatures spread Michelangelo's disegno across Europe.²⁷³ In some cases, as in the engraving of the *Pietà* by the anonymous Master IHS, the inscription below the composition declares divine intervention: "*Divini fecit.*" The comment is as much a referent to Michelangelo as the artist's namesake—Michael the Archangel, and therefore "*Il Divino*"—as an invocation of God. This elision of artist and divinity has long been considered a declaration of Michelangelo's mastery, as an allusion to artifice instead of actual religious import. And yet the promotion of the illustrious title coincides with the era in which Titian became recognized as the author of the miraculous *Christ carrying the Cross* and Donatello's *Crucifixion* garnered a chapel-full of votive offerings.²⁷⁴ The divinity of the image rests in the authority of its author, who is equally an artist "genius" and an instrument of God.

Surprisingly, the terminus ante quem establishing the arrival of Nanni's *Pietà* at Santo Spirito stems from a vehemently anti-sculpture diatribe written in an anonymous local diary entry on the 19th of March, 1549. The author writes of a *Pietà* inside Santo Spirito, the copy of an original crafted by the "inventor of indecency, savior of art but not of devotion, Michelangelo Buonarroti."²⁷⁵ The diarist decries sculptures such as these with the ironic epithet of "*caprici luterani*," Lutheran caprices, and hopes for the day when God will send his saints to make idols come crashing to the ground.²⁷⁶ The suitability of sacred foci and of sculpture was obviously of serious concern in the late 1540s: the northern-European trend for image destruction was as well

²⁷³ One need only examine the contemporaneous engravings of Giulio di Antonio Bonasone, Antonio Salamanca, and Master IHS, all of whose prints circulated both in and outside of Italy.

²⁷⁴ Vasari includes the *Christ carrying the Cross* in his list of attributions to Titian in his 1550 publication, however he also ascribes authorship of the same painting to Giorgione, an error which he rectifies in the second edition of 1568. Nygren, "Titian's Miracles," 332.

²⁷⁵ "...inventor delle porcherie, salvandogli l'arte ma non devotione, Michelagnuolo Buonarruoto." Waldman, "Nanni di Baccio Bigio," 198.

²⁷⁶ "...spero che un giorno Iddio manderà e' sua santi a buttare per terra simile Idolatrie come queste..." Waldman, "Nanni di Baccio Bigio," 198.

known in Florence as it was in Modena. Clearly, not everyone found Michelangelo's work "divino." The vehemence with which the mysterious author rebuffs Michelangelo's sculpted *Pietà*—as well as Baccio Bandinelli's *Adam and Eve*, newly installed in the high altar *tornacoro* of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore—capitalizes on the fraught status of the three-dimensional sacred object and artistic authorship. At the same time, the comment demonstrates the efficacy of the medium through the perceived *terribilità* of the product.

Even in this apparently tense environment of public opinion, the first Santo Spirito copy garnered acts of devotion, specifically from descendants of the del Riccio family. Discovered in the Archivio di Stato in Florence, an unpublished contract reveals the request of perpetual masses to be held before the Santo Spirito *Pietà*.²⁷⁷ The September 1557 contract states explicitly that the Lady Lisabetta, wife of the recently deceased Giulio del Riccio, bequeathed thirty scudi for the commitment of mass to be held every Wednesday at the family chapel before the white marble *Pietà*.²⁷⁸ The phrasing of the bequest illuminates the valued markers defining the del Riccio chapel. The omission of the artist's name or reference to his model indicates their subordination to the sacrality of the image. By contrast, the explicit mention of the devotional object's materiality in white marble denotes the significance of the composition's material. In a volume containing multiple contracts of religious practices and bequests held at Santo Spirito, few mention the subject matter of the devotional object on the altar in question, and no other provides information regarding material composition. The word-choice of Lisabetta and her notary expresses a heightened awareness of the physical monument, and the bequest promotes

²⁷⁷ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF), Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal governo francese (hereafter Conventi soppressi) 122, vol. 78, fol. 140v.

²⁷⁸ "mona Lisabetta donna già di Giulio del Riccio ci dette trenta scudi con l'infrascritti oblihi cioè che noi diciamo ogni mercoledì una messa alla loro cappella ch'è la pietà di marmo bianco." ASF, Conventi soppressi 122, vol. 78, fol. 140v. Author's transcription.

the efficacy of the holy mass contingent upon its orientation towards the sculptural form. The fact that Lisabetta's request is reiterated in church documents of the late sixteenth century, in a 1598 collection of *oblighi* and accompanying *sacro diario* regarding the church interior, reveals the persistence of such material-oriented devotion.²⁷⁹

Del Riccio's installation of Nanni's *Pietà* in Santo Spirito reflects a rich era of recreations in (and of) sacred spaces. The cross-century trends for recreations of sacred interiors, such as the Holy House and the Sacri Monti pilgrimage chapels, gave way to copies of known works of art that doubled as foci of religious worship. Progressively, the call for copies of recognized early Christian icons further blurred the barrier of original and replica in the realm of sacred imagery. Take for example the *Salus Populi Romano*, otherwise known as the *Madonna del Popolo* icon in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. In 1569, Cardinal Francesco Borgia, third General of the Jesuit Order, requested and received permission to replicate the *Madonna del Popolo* from the then-acting archpriest of Santa Maria Maggiore, Carlo Borromeo.²⁸⁰ Though not the first copy to be made of the icon, Borgia's version provides an explicit example of the terms for replication in Post-Tridentine Rome: the request was expressly sanctioned by Pope Sixtus V Peretti, and executed by an unnamed "*gran pintor de Roma*."²⁸¹ Anonymity stresses the original author of the holy image, Saint Luke, and subordinates the hand of the replicator: such was the fate of Francisco de Holanda with his copy of the *Lateran Christ*.

In this rich environment of artistic quotation and icon replicability, Michelangelo's *Pietà* served the double intention as emblem of artistic ingenuity *and* sacred object. Intentionally or not, the second Michelangelo copy at Santo Spirito, Taddeo Landini's *Risen Christ*, behaves in a

²⁷⁹ ASF, Conventi soppressi 122, vol. 37, fols. 3v, 78v, 95v.

²⁸⁰ Kirsten Noreen, "The Icon of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome: An Image and Its Afterlife," *Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 5 (2005): 662.

²⁸¹ Noreen, "The Icon of Santa Maria Maggiore," 664.

similar manner by returning the composition of Santa Maria sopra Minerva to its original planned display: Landini's completed figure, installed circa 1579, sets the Michelangelo composition in a niche, located in the family chapel down the left wall of Santo Spirito. Spatially, the location harkens back to the sculpture's originally planned orientation in Rome, and offers a vantage onto a lost funerary visual program otherwise inaccessible to the modern viewer.²⁸² In terms of artistic precedent, Nanni's declarative inscription—"...*IO LIPPUS STAT EX IMITATIONE FACIEBA[T]*"—simultaneously signaled the object's status as an emulation and conveyed the presence of its Roman, Michelangesque prototype.²⁸³ But what of the late-century recreation of the *Risen Christ*? Posed directly across from Nanni's work, the *Risen Christ* emerges from the subsequent era of religious replication born of the now longstanding integration of the copy within sacred space.

The chapel for the *Risen Christ* at Santo Spirito was acquired by Guglielmo del Riccio on October 8th, 1575.²⁸⁴ The chapel's decoration is often dismissively identified as the Riccio family's homage to the recently deceased Michelangelo on the part of the del Riccio family.²⁸⁵ This assumption does not take into account the earlier involvement of Luigi del Riccio and the international machinations of the artist. The Santo Spirito *Risen Christ* was executed by Taddeo Landini, and its installation is associated with the year 1579.²⁸⁶ No documentary evidence has appeared thus far to prove or deny this date; however, research thus far has uncovered another

²⁸² Wallace, "Michelangelo's Risen Christ," 1273-1274. However, it should be noted that the niche as it stands today is not the original display inside Santo Spirito, but a creative, neoclassical restoration contemporary to the alterations to the *Pietà* chapel.

²⁸³ Aileen June Wang, "Michelangelo's Signature," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2004): 452.

²⁸⁴ Purchase of the chapel space is noted in another unpublished document discovered by this author in the records of Santo Spirito. ASF, Conventi soppressi 122, vol. 83, fol. 4r.

²⁸⁵ Capretti, *Santo Spirito*, 51.

²⁸⁶ Capretti, *Santo Spirito*, 51; Karin-edis Barzman, "The Università, Campagna, ed Accademia del Disegno" (PhD Diss, Johns Hopkins University, 1985, 417, n 111.

unpublished from May 7th, 1581, which provides modern historians with another definitive *terminus ante quem*. The document describes an agreement between a Messer Annibal Fabbroni and Frate Alessandro of the Santo Spirito Augustinian community, wherein Messer Annibal agrees to rent a house on Piazza Santo Spirito that had been bequeathed to the Augustinian community as a bequest for the Riccio Chapel.²⁸⁷ Guglielmo del Riccio's real estate *dota*, or offering, acts in a similar manner to Lisabetta's bequest offered to attain services held in perpetuity before the completed *Pietà*. The 1598 list of local *oblighi* at Santo Spirito proves Guglielmo's intentions. The late-century document confirms Guglielmo's gift of a house on Piazza Santo Spirito, in addition to six-hundred scudi, for the construction of his memorial chapel and the perpetual offices of daily mass to be spoken before the altar.²⁸⁸

In light of the memorial capacity of the second del Riccio chapel, how are modern scholars to interpret Landini's visual program? The artist does not offer Michelangelo's name on his rendition of the *Risen Christ*—Michelangelo himself never signed the original composition—rather, Landini offers his own: “*Taddeus Landinus Facieb.*” The stylistic deviations of the copyist from the original are more subtle than in the case of Nanni, implying a diminution of personal style on the part of Landini. Posture and pose are remarkably similar to the prototype, but for a gentle restriction of the planes of Christ's body, as if the artist chose to work with a more frontal model rather than actively spiral Christ's form around the cross.²⁸⁹ The starkest deviation from Michelangelo's original is the surface treatment of the sculpture: a pervasive matt finish—neither too polished or too rough—manifests a subtlety of execution that effectively

²⁸⁷ “...*per dota della cappella del Riccio.*” ASF, Conventi soppressi 122, vol. 89, p. 594.

²⁸⁸ “*Siamo obbligati ogni mattina dirci messa per lascito di Guilielmo di Giulio del Riccio qual' detti al conto scudi secento, quali si spesero à fabbricare una casa nei la nostra piazza.*” ASF, Conventi soppressi 122, vol. 37, fol. 29r. Author's transcription.

²⁸⁹ The flatness of the Landini version may imply the artist's reliance upon two-dimensional, drawn or printed replicas.

conceals the exertion of creation.²⁹⁰ The lack of polish diminishes the sensation of work even as its indeterminate treatment broadcasts the materiality of marble: the body is undoubtedly composed of the bright, white stone.

In the *Pietà*, Nanni asserts his presence by manipulating the compositional creation, altering the message from a passive to active Madonna. The artist inserts himself into the composition and its humanistic allusion: “*stat. faciebat...*” By contrast, Landini assumes a role comparable to Francisco de Holanda, accurately rendering the original, “Divine” icon. The omission of visible facture promotes a material message; however, Landini signs his sculptural creation, signaling authorship. What the artist intended by appending his name to the sculptural rendition remains unclear and a source for future investigation. Perhaps the late-century artist sought recognition for his position within the chain of authoritative images, as Francisco laments in his mid-century dialogues. Regardless, the inclination to build from Michelangesque precedent informs the mid- and late-century trends in sacred sculptural representation. Landini’s copy of the *Risen Christ* manifests the faithful likeness of the Savior in the same manner as Apelles and Saint Luke through the *disegno* of Michelangelo.

The installation of the *Risen Christ* within Santo Spirito circa 1580 brought to completion the decorative program instigated by Luigi del Riccio. By this date, the del Riccio commissions accompanied a third referent to the famous artist in the church interior: Michelangelo’s own polychromatic, wooden *Crucifixion* (Image 38), crafted early in his career, was then on display over the high altar.²⁹¹ Together, the referents and original create a triad of sculptural, sacred imagery that traverses the entire church nave. Landini’s *Risen Christ* gazes in perpetuity upon his own *Crucifixion* and, simultaneously, one “Michelangelo” gazes upon another. In this respect,

²⁹⁰ I am indebted to Estelle Lingo for pointing out this detail to me.

²⁹¹ Michelangelo’s wooden *Crucifixion* is often dated to the year 1498.

the invocation of authorship seems to outweigh the sacred subject. However, by the 1580s, the artist's persona was ingrained as "*Divino*," with both sacred and secular portent. The multi-compositional dialogue remained in place until the *Crucifixion*'s relocation to the Sacristy around the year 1600.²⁹² Given that the church held longstanding anti-Medici associations, one wonders at the focus upon the expatriate artist and its potential to convey a political valence. Regardless, through the design of a Brunelleschian interior and the infusion of the chapel spaces decorated with Michelangelo's various sculptural compositions, Santo Spirito crystalizes circa 1600 as an emblem of *Fiorentinità*, culminating in a sacred interior that was truly *Divino*.

The question of latent republicanism and civic pride potentially read into the Michelangelo copies at Santo Spirito emerge from a long-standing history of subtle, socially-charged references in Florentine visual culture. The *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (Image 39), a white marble sculptural composition by Francesco da Sangallo, still visible in its original location inside the oratory of Orsanmichele, manifests remarkably similar tensions. The distinction between the Michelangelo copies and the Saint Anne composition rests in the central intent of the object: while the Santo Spirito *Pietà* and *Risen Christ* return each subject to their funerary nature, the Saint Anne is a purely devotional, cult locus. Through subject matter, design, and execution, the Saint Anne sculptural group walks a fine line between anti-Medici sentiment and pro-Medici propaganda. Simultaneously, the sculpture vacillates between the tenets of intellectual, "high art" and the organic evolution of quotidian cult practice. In an investigation of visual and textual evidence regarding the Saint Anne composition, this final case study will shed light on the intersection of sculptural rhetoric and sacred devotion, and the efficacy of the invasive, three-dimensional body in religious space.

²⁹² Between 1599 and 1607 the high altar was redesigned by Giovan Battista Caccini, which led to its relocation inside the church sacristy. Capretti, *Santo Spirito*, 29.

Francesco da Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*

In 1522, the captains of Orsanmichele commissioned the artist Francesco da Sangallo to reinvent the Saint Anne altar within the oratory of Orsanmichele. The choice to revitalize the long-established local cult site was fraught with political entanglements, potentially placing the captains of the confraternity at odds with the increasingly totalitarian political state of Medici rule. But the decision was vested as much with religious value as political: from the mid-forteenth century onward, Saint Anne had acted as a protectress of the city on par with her illustrious daughter and Grandson. The position of Saint Anne as a local patron of *Fiorentinità*, stalwart against the ebb and flow of governmental rule, is visible in acts of devotion enacted before the sculptural installation by the local community across the sixteenth century, and is simultaneously legible in the Sangallo creation itself.

The location of the Saint Anne composition comments on the political winds dictating the course of saintly devotion. In its evolution from open-air granary to religious edifice, the centrally situated Orsanmichele behaved as an architectural microcosm of the local community. Patron saints of the twenty-one recognized city guilds decorate the exterior and interior of the building. Embedded in niches and painted on walls, these figural forms visually buttress the structure itself, shoring up one of the most important joint civic and religious sites in the commune.²⁹³

The encompassing ring of symbolic communal referents encapsulates a space increasingly recognized for its divine powers over the course of the early modern period. Prior to

²⁹³ For a detailed history and synopsis of the oratory and its evolution from grain market to collegiate church, see Diane Finiello Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze / Orsanmichele Florence* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, S.p.A., 1996).

the installation of Saint Anne, an image of the Virgin and Child, painted most likely on the eastern central pier of the original interior, became the site of a popular *laudesi*, or singing confraternity, established in 1291. Within a year of the company's foundation, the image of the Madonna began to enact miracles. As a result, the site garnered a vast community of adherents to the holy image, whose devotion is visible in surviving company records of votives and monetary offerings. Even after a fire that destroyed the first market structure in 1304, along with the Marian image venerated within, the community remained undaunted. A panel painting replaced the lost fresco of the Madonna and Child, set within a free-standing, protective tabernacle structure inside the new grain market erected over the first quarter of the fourteenth century.²⁹⁴

The trajectory of events regarding the devotional image of the Madonna and Child is significant: at Orsanmichele, devotion precipitated the miraculous. Community performance before the image in honor of the Virgin was not catalyzed by divine intervention. Rather, the Madonna responded to Florentine devotion. This is a crucial detail because in many cases the opposite occurs: the miraculous instigates adoration, such as in the case of the miracle-working fresco nearby at the Servite church of the Santissima Annunziata. The painted image of the Madonna receiving word of the Incarnation from the Archangel was believed to have been completed by the hands of angels. It was this gift of a divine image that incited local fervor.²⁹⁵

By contrast, the reciprocity set at Orsanmichele by the precedent of the Marian *laudesi* company

²⁹⁴ This first free-standing image of the Madonna and Child was later replaced by yet another panel painting, which is the work we see in the space today, executed by Bernardo Daddi and housed within the second tabernacle on site, by Andrea Orcagna. Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 30. See also Francesco Caglioti, "Giovanni di Balduccio at Orsanmichele: The Tabernacle of the Virgin before Andrea Orcagna," in *Orsanmichele and the History and Preservation of the Civic Monument*, edited by Carl Brandon Strehlke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 89-112.

²⁹⁵ Megan Holmes, "The Elusive Origins of the Cult of the Annunziata in Florence," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Erik Thuno and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2004), 97-121.

became directly associated with miraculous acts at the oratory itself and the tradition of sacred imagery housed inside.

The miraculous assistance of the Orsanmichele Madonna continued through subsequent installations in the oratory interior. By the mid-fourteenth century, the miraculous Virgin was soon accompanied by a polychrome, wooden *Crucifixion* secured to the inward face of the central eastern pier of the new oratory structure, which would become another potent site of devotion. The *Crucifixion* is known most famously for its calling of Saint Antoninus to the religious life in the early fifteenth century.²⁹⁶ Like the Virgin, the *Crucifixion* responded favorably to community outreach through the gift of indulgences: devotees received seven years out of purgatory for speaking the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* hymn before the sacred image.²⁹⁷

Devotion to Saint Anne on site was perpetuated by the guild-system government as an anti-tyrannical emblem. On Saint Anne's feast day, July 26th, 1343, the Florentine community successfully rose up against a man famously known as the 'Duke of Athens', Walter VI of Brienne, who had usurped power away from the republican government.²⁹⁸ The successful ousting of the tyrant was attributed to Saint Anne, whose intervention was perceived as a sign of

²⁹⁶ The case of the Crucifix is still an underdeveloped area of Orsanmichele studies. The connection between the *Crucifixion* and the local Saint Antoninus is discussed in greater detail in the introduction of this dissertation. Diane Zervas attributes the composition to Andrea Orcagna, and has published archival research on the topic in a 2003 article, entitled "Niccolò Gerini's Entombment and Resurrection of Christ, S. Anna/S. Michele/S. Carlo and Orsanmichele in Florence: Clarifications and New Documentation," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 66 (2003): 33-64.

²⁹⁷ A copy of the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* is documented within the oratory interior by the late fourteenth-century poet and historian Franco Sacchetti. Diane Zervas theorizes the inscription was located on the plinth below the *Crucifixion*, however the length of the poetic hymn—at twenty stanzas long—makes this location unlikely. Zervas, "Niccolò Gerini", 55. Sacchetti's explicit description of the hymn's location "*drieto a l'altare di santa Anna d'Orto San Michele*" in the year 1388 should be taken at face value. Franco Sacchetti, *Il libro delle rime*, modern publication edited by Franco Brambilla Ageno, Franco (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1990), 386. For a discussion of the indulgences associated with the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, see Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 150.

²⁹⁸ For a brief synopsis of the political conflict that brought Walter of Brienne to Florence, see Roger Crum and David G. Wilkins, "In the Defense of Florentine Republicanism: Saint Anne and Florentine Art, 1343-1575," in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, edited by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 132-133.

her support by the local community. Within a year, an altar had been erected for the saint inside the still-functioning grain market at Orsanmichele, and the Mother of Mary was added to the pantheon of local saintly patronage. In the declaration of Saint Anne's feast day as a civic holiday on January 13, 1344, the community pledged to pay homage to an "*immagine*" of the saint, attesting to the interactive inclusion of visual stimuli in Saint Anne worship from the outset of her local induction.²⁹⁹

The original decorative program of the Saint Anne altar is unknown. Prior to Sangallo's intervention, the altar may have been decorated by another sculptural rendition of holy lineage: multiple scholars identify the polychromatic, wooden *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (Image 40) currently housed at the Bargello as a likely antecedent.³⁰⁰ In the wooden rendition, Anne's form dominates the visual program, with a diminished Virgin Mary seated frontally upon her mother's lap, holding the impressively large Christ Child upon her own, diminutive legs in a tripartite "Throne of Wisdom" visual construction. Scholars have debated the suitability of the wooden sculptural composition at length: for example, Anita Valentini believes the Bargello sculpture to be the original decoration, whereas Roger Crum and David Wilkins find the "foreign" quality of the composition—most likely in reference to the *encarnaciòn* of the flesh pigmentation—to be an illogical choice for a definitively local saint.³⁰¹ No surviving documentation indicates the sculpture's inclusion at the cult site. Regardless, the Bargello

²⁹⁹ Crum and Wilkins, "In the Defense of Florentine Republicanism," 133.

³⁰⁰ Detlef Heikamp assumes the Sangallo composition replaced a preexisting wooden sculpture, though he does not explicitly reference the Bargello composition. Diane Zervas also discusses the potential for a wooden precedent, and mentions the Bargello composition, albeit with reservations. Detlef Heikamp, "Der Werkvertrag für die St. Anne selbdritt des Francesco da Sangallo," in *Kaleidoskop: Eine Festschrift für Fritz Baumgart zum 74. Geburtstag*, edited by Friedrich Mielke (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1977): 79-85. Zervas, "Niccolò Gerini," 39.

³⁰¹ In turn, Valentini asserts that the Iberian traits of the composition stem from the importation of Saint Anne worship, which was a "foreign" cult. Anita Valentini, *Sant'Anna dei Fiorentini: storia, fede, arte tradizione* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2003), 106; Crum and Wilkins, "In the Defense of Florentine Republicanism," 133-135.

sculpture cannot have been the original decoration on the site for stylistic reasons alone, given the polychromer's fifteenth, or at most late-fourteenth century approach to the treatment of flesh.³⁰² Scholars, like Crum and Wilkins, doubt the sculpture was even manufactured by an Italian. If such is the case, this object would have been a highly unusual choice for the captains of a patriotic, civically-oriented space.

Another, just as likely candidate for the role of decorative predecessor is a panel painting, also housed today at the Bargello, entitled *Saint Anne with the Child Mary* (Image 41).³⁰³ The atypical composition depicts the child Virgin Mary, dressed in a sparkling blue tunic, in the arms of a seated and enthroned Saint Anne. The program builds from the traditional “*Maestà*” depiction of the Madonna holding the Christ Child and would have made a potent visual counterpoint to the *Tabernacle of the Virgin* in the oratory bay adjacent. Furthermore, the traits of the elderly saint match Anne's visual traits visible in frescoed renditions of the woman in the Orsanmichele interior, executed in the last decades of the fourteenth century by the revered poet, humanist and politician Franco Sacchetti.³⁰⁴ In particular, the frescoed image of the saint in the groin vault directly above the altar, executed in 1398, offers the clearest association. Dressed in her purple garment and fitted wimple, with elegantly wizened features, the saint stands holding a miniature of the gated city of Florence, with its octagonal baptistery prominently displayed

³⁰² See Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 61; Crum and Wilkins, “In the Defense of Florentine Republicanism,” 133-135.

³⁰³ Zervas herself intimates that the more likely precedent of the Sangallo composition was a panel painting, as attested by an oratory record detailing newly-prepared supports for what seems to be a panel painting installation within the grain loggia immediately before Easter 1347. See Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 61; ASF, OSM vol. 244, fols 51r-53v.

³⁰⁴ Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 168-171.

across from an abbreviation of the Palazzo della Signoria of parallel dimensions.³⁰⁵ In the ceiling fresco, Anne's local, religious, and civic associations are made abundantly clear.

In the tumultuous years of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, Saint Anne devotion was renewed under a resurgent manifestation of republican ideology. Following the brief Savonarolan theocracy, a republican governing body—known as the Second Republic—was instated from the turn of the sixteenth century until the Medici acquired the political means to reenter the city following the ascension of Medici Pope Leo X. From 1512 until 1527, the Medici maintained tenuous control of the territory, only to be expelled again at the onset of the Third Florentine Republic.

During these years of wavering Medici control, Saint Anne appeared as patroness on both sides of the political debate. Among Republican circles, Anne remained a symbol of political autonomy, incorporated into visual programs sponsored for governmental and religious spaces. Saint Anne played a significant role in the decorative program of the Sala del Gran Consiglio, the great meeting hall within the central government building, the Palazzo della Signoria. The space had been constructed during the era of Savonarolan rule and politically baptized under the Second Republic's head governor, Piero Soderini. Intended as a meeting hall and display space for the spoils of freedom—namely, objects once owned by the Medici—the Sala del Gran Consiglio was to be capped by an altar composition that drew upon the local tradition for Saint Anne worship.³⁰⁶ The project was aborted by the death of the initially commissioned artist,

³⁰⁵ Facing towards the back wall of the oratory, to what was originally an open archway onto Via Calzaiuoli, the structural objects in Saint Anne's hands correspond with the physical location of the local landmarks in relation to the structure: the baptistery lies to the north of Orsanmichele (to the left), and the Palazzo della Signoria to the south (to the right). See Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 331.

³⁰⁶ The collection of "spoils" included Donatello's bronze *David* and *Judith and Holofernes*, three statues of *Hercules*, and two statues of *Marsyas* (which may have included Donatello's joint restoration, together with Andrea del Verrocchio, of a life-sized, ancient rendition of *Marsyas* hanging, completed under commission of the Medici). For a brief history of the Sala del Gran Consiglio, see Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 228.

Filippino Lippi in 1504, and later reprised by the Dominican friar and painter, Fra Bartolomeo, in 1510.

The original terms of the commission for the altar painting by Filippino Lippi remains unknown. By contrast, Fra Bartolomeo's unfinished altarpiece is still visible today in the Museum of San Marco in Florence. Dedicated to Saint Anne, Fra Bartolomeo's *Pala della Signoria* (Image 42) depicts a *sacra conversazione* encompassing multiple patron saints of the local community. At the heart of the composition, the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child sit at the summit of a flight of stairs in an *all'antica* niche.³⁰⁷ The attentions of the Mother and Child are absorbed by the figure of the youthful John the Baptist, who kneels on the top step of the staircase and makes direct contact with the Christ Child's bare foot. Behind the kneeling figure stands a group of religious men: the sensitivity of facial features indicate that the representations may be portraits of particular members of the local community, most likely of the Dominican order.³⁰⁸ To the right, the Virgin and Child are flanked by a kneeling young woman, most likely Saint Catherine of Siena, and an assortment of vague saintly figures. Before the Holy assembly, on the ground level before the stairs and aligned with Saint Catherine, the Bishop Saint Zenobius kneels. Bare headed, with staff in hand, the first bishop of Florence offers a monstrance to the Virgin and Child. A close examination of the monstrance reveals a Florentine *giglio*—the spiked lily and symbol of the Republic—sketched onto the monstrance's back face.³⁰⁹ In the finished version of the altarpiece, Zenobius would have offered the body of Christ in a Florentine

³⁰⁷ Special thanks to Ann Huppert for her input on the architectural context.

³⁰⁸ One wonders if the standing figure gazing out at the viewer could be the Archbishop Antoninus, first abbot of San Marco, whose process of beatification was begun in 1516 by Pope Leo X de' Medici. Mauro Mussolin, "La promozione del culto di Sant'Antonino al tempo di Leone X e Clemente VII e i progetti di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane per la chiesa di San Marco," in *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459): La figura e l'opera di un santo arcivescovo nell'Europa del Quattrocento, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi storici (Firenze, 25-28 novembre 2009)*, edited by Luciano Cinelli and Maria Pia Paoli (Florence: Nebrini, 2010), 509-532.

³⁰⁹ Special thanks to Laura Overpelt for pointing out this detail to me.

reliquary case to the Holy Family. This action, together with the presence of Antoninus, Catherine of Siena, and most importantly John the Baptist, frame the Virgin and Child with symbols of the Florentine community, which is furthermore augmented by the poignant inclusion of Anne.

Saint Anne is located behind the Holy pair in Fra Bartolomeo's composition, seated on an elevated bench resting upon the platform of the central staircase. Though approximately the same size as Mary, Anne's higher position and voluminous mantle encapsulate and dwarf the Virgin and her Son, mediating the distance between the Virgin and Child at the center of the composition and the dome space hinted above, where an assortment of angels with musical instruments hover around the open pages of a blank book. Above the reference to the Holy Word, at the composition's apex, God the Father appears in a three-in-one face hovering over the central group. The frontal, tripartite visage is reminiscent of the *Vera Icon*, Christ's iconic impression, levitating in space. As in various other iterations of Saint Anne imagery in the city, Fra Bartolomeo places the Holy Grandmother in a position of spatial and compositional dominance: it is she who acknowledges the Holy Trinity entering the sacred space from the dome, engaging in her own *sacra conversazione* with God. Meanwhile, Anne's mantle silhouettes the form of her beloved progeny as a Misericordia Madonna envelopes the devout in her voluminous folds. She is equally the protectress of her offspring and the savior of the Florentine Republic.

The unfinished state of Fra Bartolomeo's panel painting speaks to the fate of the Second Republic. The early sixteenth-century independence movement in Florence was short-lived: in 1513, the concerted efforts of the Medici, instigated years prior by Lorenzo the Magnificent, brought Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici to the Papal throne as Pope Leo X. With the backing of

the papacy, the Medici found traction once more in their ancestral community. In a characteristic act of cunning, the Medici continued the commission of the *Pala della Signoria*, however with the *provviso* to relocate the completed work where they saw fit. Ultimately, Fra Bartolomeo's project remained incomplete in his workshop in San Marco, but the shell of a fully-fleshed conceptual ideal.³¹⁰ Ultimately, the painting moved in 1540 to decorate the Medici family chapel of Ottaviano de' Medici within San Lorenzo, a church with long-standing overt associations with the ruling family, by which time the revolutionary connotations of the composition had become subsumed by the Medici appropriation of Saint Anne imagery, which will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

With the Medici back in power as of 1513, the resonant concept of "The Republic" underwent a transformation. Rulers in all but name, the Medici maintained a façade of democratic governance with Leo's cousin Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, future Pope Clement VII, at the helm.³¹¹ As we see in Medici cooption of the *Pala della Signoria*, civic worship did not disappear in the second era of Medici control, but rather evolved. Such was the case at Orsanmichele. The choice of Francesco da Sangallo on the part of the oratory captains was purposeful: the artist was known for his Medici associations, having worked under Michelangelo on such prestigious contemporary commissions as the New Sacristy at San Lorenzo.³¹² In the notarial record of the Saint Anne commission, dated February 12th, 1521 (that is, February 1522

³¹⁰ For a concise history of the political environment surrounding the *Pala della Signoria*, see Alessio Assonitis, "Fra Bartolomeo della Porta: Patronage and Clientelism at San Marco in the Early Cinquecento," *Memorie Domenicane*, Vol. 42, No. 2011 (2012): 439-440.

³¹¹ Technically, control of the city was first vested in the young Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, in 1516. However, Cardinal Giulio was a constant presence in Florence, and the Duke's death in 1519 left Cardinal Giulio the undisputed, *de facto* ruler.

³¹² William Wallace finds Francesco da Sangallo in the records for the New Sacristy, starting in September, 1524. William Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo: The Genius as Entrepreneur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 124-128.

in the modern calendar year),³¹³ Cardinal Giulio is mentioned in his capacity as sanctioning governor of the project.³¹⁴ His involvement in the oratory sheds light on the recognition of the civic religious space as a key political symbol post-Second Republic.

Initiated approximately one year after the death of Pope Leo X de' Medici in 1521, the Orsanmichele commission came at a poignant moment in the history of the family. With the austere Pope Adrian VI Florensz travelling to take up his position in Rome, the Medici retrenched to their regional stronghold. Reestablishing local ties became paramount in the papal backlash against Medicean opulence. The decision to support the renovation of Orsanmichele alludes to Cardinal Giulio's reinforced efforts to revive republican ideology under the aegis of Medici control. In this vein, Cardinal Giulio had invited members of the Orti Oricellari, a literary community founded in the gardens of the Ruccellai family, to advocate for political reform.³¹⁵ Though the experiment was quelled by the discovery of an assassination plot orchestrated by Orti member Zanobi di Buondelmonti in April of 1522, Cardinal Giulio continued to foster symbolic—if no longer literal—allusions to republicanism. His objectives are plainly visible in Sangallo's multivalent work at Orsanmichele, completion of which continued unimpeded by the

³¹³ The notarial record for the commission of the Saint Anne sculpture group is dated February 12, 1521. However, given the Florentine calendar year did not begin until March 25th, the liturgical feast day of the Annunciation, the modern date of the commission is actually February of 1522. ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, vol. 9777, folio 287r-287v.

³¹⁴ The notarial record of the commission reads: "...allogorono a Francesco di Giuliano da Sancto Gallo maestro di scultura, presente et conducente a fare tale opera, cioè una figura di Sancta Anna con dua anglioli a canto, cioè la figura di Sancta Anna madre, della gloriosa Vergine Maria e suo unigenito figliuolo Giesù XPO nostro Signore, e tucte a ttre dette figure insieme secondo la forma d'uno modello facto per decto Franco, che è stato veduto per el reverendissimo cardinale de' Medici, el quale modello per da oggi a XV di proximi futuri detto Francesco lo debba aver messo di rilievo nella audientia de' prefati Capitani..." ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, vol. 9777, folio 287r, transcribed in Heikamp, "St. Anne selbdritt," 83-84.

³¹⁵ Patricia J. Osmond, "The Conspiracy of 1522 against Cardinal Giulio de' Medici: Machiavelli and "gli esempli delli antiqui"," in *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture*, edited by Kenneth Gouwens and Sheryl E. Reiss (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 56-79.

assassination attempt. By November of the same year, Giulio would assume the papal throne as Pope Clement VII, dramatically changing the fate of the family yet again.

The Sangallo sculpture was in place on the altar of Saint Anne by the patroness' feast day of July 26, in 1526. From her altar, Saint Anne gazes directly upon the viewer as she approaches. The saint's contemplative stare is unnerving: Anne is entirely aware of those before her, as is the Christ Child on Mary's knee. With her left arm braced against the stony outcropping of her makeshift throne, the Mother of Mary holds her posture erect as her bent, spread legs create a stable foundation for her daughter. With her arm wrapped around the young woman's shoulders, Anne envelopes Mary in a declarative posture of allegiance and protection. Mary's fully grown, adult body rests upon her mother's right thigh, with her own legs extending out from between her mother's capacious form. In turn, the Christ Child sits upon his mother's left knee, elevated by the spontaneous jutting of stone underfoot at the bottom center of the composition. Again the legs of the Son emanate from the gently opened legs of the mother, manifesting visually the progression of corporeal birth from the Grandmother, to the Mother, to the Son. The medium of sculpture greatly enhances the triad's resonance simply by bringing the physical corpus of the lineage of Christ into the Florentine oratory: sacred bodies infiltrate the sacred space.

The artist's rendition of holy lineage builds from the precedent of Sangallo's immediate predecessors and contemporaries. By the 1520s, Fra Bartolomeo's *Pala della Signoria* was in the Dominican friar's studio at San Marco; however, Sangallo could very well have seen the work on display in its originally intended location in the decade before receiving his own Saint Anne commission.³¹⁶ Similar to Fra Bartolomeo's interpretation, Sangallo offers a composition

³¹⁶ It should be noted that there is still some uncertainty regarding the dates of the painting's display in the Sala del Gran Consiglio. Assonitis implies the painting was in the space before the Medici return in 1512, however Crum and Wilkins believe the painting was installed only during the age of the Third Republic, 1527-1530.

wherein the Virgin and Child emerge from the dominating figure of Anne. In search for the tradition of overlapping figures, Leonardo da Vinci offers an even closer precedent: his preparatory cartoon of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Young Saint John the Baptist*, today at the National Gallery in London (Image 43), and his incomplete *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (Image 44) panel painting at the Musée du Louvre, both represent the Virgin Mary sitting on top or across her Mother's stable lap, with a squirming, active Christ Child in her extended hands. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, another one of Leonardo's cartoons of the same subject matter was put on display within Santissima Annunziata. Produced circa 1503 during Leonardo's brief return to the city following his twenty year residence at the court of Milan, the now-lost design drew significant crowds to the Servite church: Vasari tells of the pilgrimages made by the laity and artistic community alike to the Santissima Annunziata in order to see the cartoon.³¹⁷ Sangallo may have counted among them.

A sketch by Michelangelo (Image 45), contemporaneous to Leonardo's Santissima Annunziata cartoon, offers the closest visual precedent to Sangallo's version of the subject matter.³¹⁸ As with the Sangallo composition, Michelangelo portrays the Virgin Mary sitting upon and between her Mother's outstretched, open legs. As the foundation of the triad, Anne curls her body inward for stability, her left arm anchored behind her against an ambiguous, rock-like seat. The Virgin in this moment seems to shift her position upon her mother's right leg, extending her left arm across Anne's torso for balance as she holds a squirming Christ Child in her right. The

Assonitis, "Fra Bartolomeo della Porta," 440; Crum and Wilkins, "In the Defense of Florentine Republicanism," 152.

³¹⁷ Jack Wasserman provides a detailed analysis of the lost cartoon, its commission and display (possibly as late as 1524), in "A Re-Discovered Cartoon by Leonardo da Vinci," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 112, No. 805 (1970): 194-204.

³¹⁸ Both the Leonardo cartoon and the Michelangelo sketch are tentatively dated to circa 1500-1501. Further information regarding the provenance of the surviving Michelangelo drawing would greatly improve this author's comprehension of Sangallo's possible interaction with the older artist's design ideas.

sharp angle of her arm, coupled with the band of fabric crossing down diagonally over her chest—so like the belt bearing Michelangelo’s signature across the breast of the Roman *Pietà* Madonna—brings the eye of the viewer to the Christ Child cradled against his Mother’s side. The ‘V’ formation of arm and belt signals the harmonious, triangular shape of the tight figural grouping, and the chiasmic lines of form, fabric, and sight crossing the composition.

Michelangelo’s rendition prioritizes the relationship between the Virgin and Anne: the active chiasms bisecting the drawing pull the viewer’s eye inward to the points of contact between Mary’s body and her Mother’s. By relegating the Christ Child to the periphery, Michelangelo focusses entirely on the body of the Virgin, and the physical and spiritual relationship between Mary and her Hebraic lineage.

Though we cannot state with certainty that Sangallo saw this particular drawing of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, the younger sculptor’s involvement in the New Sacristy commission at San Lorenzo—a prominent Medici commission—provides a convenient intersection between artists. Michelangelo’s subsequent drawings of the adult Christ’s infiltration between his mother’s legs—specifically the chalk drawing to Vittoria Colonna of the *Pietà* from the late 1530s—take the corporeal element of physical proximity even farther, demonstrating the lengths to which the artist would take this germinating visual concept. Christ’s lifeless form rests between and is anchored by the Virgin’s firm, open legs, simultaneously signaling his birth and his death via position and posture.

Even if Francesco da Sangallo never saw Michelangelo’s musings on the Virgin and Saint Anne, the career and visual rhetoric of preceding artists plays a key role in the Orsanmichele creation. It is tempting to associate the artistic quotation with the stone itself: in

1525, the Captains of Orsanmichele purchased a marble block, weighing 5300 *libbre*,³¹⁹ from Michelangelo, left over from the unfinished façade program of Santa Maria del Fiore.³²⁰ An emulation of Michelangelo wrought in a material block once possessed by the artist seems tantalizingly apropos, almost as if the captains of Orsanmichele sought to conflate sculptural matter with the famous artist, Sangallo's design acting as a reliquary molding the relic of stone. However, Michelangelo's status was still evolving and rising in artistic circles of the 1520s, he had yet to fully assume the mantle of "*Divino*." In the Saint Anne composition, Sangallo pointedly looked to the visual precedent of another eminent Florentine sculptor of the century prior, Donatello, whose works offer a clearer precedent for the young artist's project in the Florentine oratory.

Donatello's sacred sculptural imagery offers a wealth of visual inspiration for Francesco da Sangallo. The fifteenth-century artist's most literal precursor for the Sangallo composition rests in his rendition of *Mary Magdalene* (Image 46), a gilded, polychromatic, free-standing wooden sculpture of the penitent female follower of Christ, executed circa 1454.³²¹ The emaciated, fragile frame of Donatello's *Mary Magdalene* contrasts pointedly with the traditional representation of the opulent courtesan turned postulant. Donatello manifests the reformed woman in the viscera of her physical body: her weathered limbs are the result of her avid, ascetic belief, posing an almost jarring counterpoint to the beauty of her soul. Sangallo's rendition of the

³¹⁹ 5300 *libbre* is the equivalent of approximately 3972 lbs. Weight conversion based on the contemporary standards published in Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 8.

³²⁰ This purchase coincides with a work extension bequeathed to Sangallo by the captains of Orsanmichele between 1524 and 1525. Wallace notes that the marble purchased from Michelangelo marked Sangallo's second attempt at the Saint Anne composition, the first having been discarded following the discovery of imperfections in the stone. In all likelihood, Sangallo carved the Saint Anne composition between August 1525 and its installation in July 1526. Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 72, 125; Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 234, n 37.

³²¹ John Pope-Hennessy theorizes the Magdalene was executed immediately following the artist's return to Florence from Padua in 1454, based off of a copy of the Magdalene at Empoli, which is often dated to 1455. John Pope-Hennessy, *Donatello Sculptor* (New York, Abbeville Press, 1993), 276-277.

same subject matter, dated to circa 1519 and today housed in the Museo Diocesano in Florence, is heavily indebted to his predecessor (Image 47).³²² The overt similarities in posture and hair-as-garment is augmented with subtler visual cues, manifested in the woman's slender bone structure, sinuous neck and commensurate strong jawline. Even the mouth, slightly agape, reveals a series of missing teeth just like the Donatello *Magdalene*. The older representation communicates directly with the viewer through her active gaze, as the later Magdalene engages in a personal communion with God with head upturned and eyes closed in ecstatic devotion.

Like Donatello's *Mary Magdalene*, the Saint Anne of Sangallo makes direct eye contact: her unwavering gaze confronts the devotee as she approaches the saint's altar. The connection fosters the sensation of physical presence of the deity within the space. Furthermore, the central and frontal location of the Christ Child, who also looks out towards the viewer, recalls another one of Donatello's creations, the *Virgin and Child* for the high altar of the basilica of Sant'Antonio in Padua. The tendency for persistent contact through sight in many of Donatello's religious creations—think also of his *Saint John the Baptists* in Siena and Venice, and even his *San Rossore* reliquary originally in the church of Ognissanti in Florence—and the direct gaze of Sangallo's protagonists becomes a charged association, indicating Sangallo's sensitivity to the communicative potential of sculpture and the artist's objective to integrate facets of his fifteenth-century predecessor into a modern installation.

Sangallo's choice of Donatello's *Mary Magdalene* as a source of inspiration signals not only the artist's reliance upon the body of a penitent, moral woman in his conception of Anne, but also plays upon the original display of Donatello's arresting creation. In the sixteenth

³²² Esther Diana ed., *Una famiglia di scultori: i Sangallo* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2013), 28-29. Prior to the sculpture's entrance into the Museo Diocesano, the work was on display in the Pia Casa di Rifugio delle Convertite of the monasteries of Sant' Ambrogio and Sant' Elisabetta.

century, the polychromatic *Mary Magdalene* stood within the Florentine baptistery (Image 48). The baptistery of San Giovanni acted as the social “*umbilicus*” of Florence. One’s communal induction through baptism in the sacred interior, believed in the period to be a reclaimed ancient Roman temple of Mars, tethered all Florentines to the commune and to the historic associations of site and space. Used throughout the calendar year, the baptistery would have been readily available to the young Sangallo. The visual signal back to the baptistery united the space of one city patron—Saint John the Baptist—with another, the more recent addition of Anne. Donatello’s style, rendered through Sangallo, vests the sculptural group with the sacred imprint of the elder artist. Through the visual associations of Donatello coupled with the new standard of Michelangelo, Sangallo proffers in his rendition of Saint Anne an evocation of *Fiorentinità* in the body of the Florentine civic patroness.

The history of Saint Anne in Christian worship is convoluted, as a result of the saint’s omission from the four canonically recognized gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Her narrative appears instead in the apocryphal gospel of the Apostle James, who recounts the lives of Mary’s parents, Anne and Joachim, as well as the fate of John the Baptist and his parents Elisabeth and Zachariah. Known as the *Protoevangelium*, James’ text was widely known and circulated in the medieval period, and served as the source for Jacobus de Voragine’s retelling of Anne’s narrative in the *Legenda Aurea*, a compilation of saint’s lives and miracles first circulated in the mid-fourteenth century.³²³ In the 1470s, the first edition of the *Legenda Aurea* appeared in the *volgare*, translated by the Camaldolese monk Nicolò Malerbi, and multiple editions were printed by the 1490s.³²⁴ This monumental translation exponentially increased

³²³ Virginia Nixon, *Mary’s Mother: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Europe* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 10-12.

³²⁴ Linda Pagnotta, *Le edizioni Italiane della “Legenda Aurea”* (Florence: Apax Libri, 2005), 15.

circulation of the legends of the saints. Commensurately, on February 28, 1476, Pope Sixtus IV della Rovere had taken the first official steps to establish worship of Saint Anne by establishing the feast day of the Immaculate Conception. This decision marks the beginning of the theological shift in doctrine towards the Virgin Mary's immaculacy within the womb of Anne.³²⁵

Mary's Immaculate Conception was a matter of serious theological debate in the early modern period.³²⁶ The concept is rooted in the question of Mary's redemption: is Mary saved by her divine Son after animation in the womb (thus, maculate), or does the prophetic nature of her birth and her capacity as the future holy vessel of the Son of God preclude the contagion of sin (therefore immaculate)? Must Mary be contaminated with Original Sin because she is the product of the lineage of both her father and mother, or does her conception from the chaste kiss shared by her parents at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem side-step the automatic assumption of sin?³²⁷ The two most powerful early modern mendicant communities, the Franciscans and Dominicans, held opposing opinions regarding Mary's immaculacy. The Franciscans predominantly accepted the argument for the Immaculate Conception, citing the power of Christ to preserve the body of his mother even outside the chronology of time. Dominicans, by contrast, strongly disagreed: Mary must be maculate in order to be the source of Christ's humanity.³²⁸

³²⁵ Interestingly, Martin Luther offers an account of the exponential rise of the Mother of Mary in local devotion. He writes: "...it was the big event of Saint Anne's arrival happened when I was a boy of fifteen. Before that nobody knew anything about her; then a fellow came and brought Saint Anne. She caught on right away, and everybody was paying attention to her." Luther would have been fifteen in the year 1498. It should also be remembered that it was to Anne, not to Mary or Christ, that Luther called to in his moment of conversion in the thunderstorm of 1505: "*Hilft du sankt Anna, ich will Monch warden.*" Nixon, *Mary's Mother*, 38-39.

³²⁶ Belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary only became official Catholic dogma in 1854.

³²⁷ A concise history of the debate surrounding the Immaculate Conception can be found in Michelle A. Erhardt, "The Immaculate Kiss Beneath the Golden Gate: The Influence of John Duns Scotus on Florentine Painting of the 14th Century," *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 66 (2008): 269-280.

³²⁸ At this point, one must acknowledge the Medici family's long-standing affinity for the Dominican order. Given this association, one wonders at a Medici-sanctioned sculpture fostering associations with the Immaculate Conception. This is where the Medici differ from the dogma of the Dominican community: Clement VII's first Papal Bull in 1523, in which he completes the canonization of the Florentine archbishop Antoninus (see Chapter One), explicitly references the Madonna as "*Sancta et immaculata Virginitas.*" The new pope's word choice, and its conscious association with a beatified Dominican abbot, conflates his official interpretation of the

Saint Anne studies have long argued over the association between representations of the saint and the argument for the Immaculate Conception. If the conception of Mary is miraculously rooted in the body of Anne, then Anne is the originator of both Mary's and Christ's human flesh. The wooden *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* composition at the Bargello clearly describes this association, for Mary is as much a child in the visual construction as Christ.³²⁹ Both are therefore the children of Anne for both are dependent upon Anne as the source of their humanity. Virginia Nixon's study of Saint Anne cults across northern Europe has recently called into question the blanket association of Anne with the Immaculate Conception, proving that Anne is more often incorporated into the maculate argument than the immaculate.³³⁰ In written discourse, Anne serves as proof of hers and Joachim's shared involvement in the conception of Mary, falling therefore on the maculate side of the argument. While I agree that Saint Anne's presence does not automatically advocate for the Immaculate Conception, the context of each representation of the saint deserves individual scrutiny. Nixon does believe images referencing the Immaculate Conception exist, but those consist solely of Saints Anne and Mary. One is reminded at this point of the other potential preexisting altarpiece on the Orsanmichele altar: the panel painting of the child Virgin in the arms of the enthroned Anne. Does this imply that the altar inside Orsanmichele, whether sculptural or painted, could have advocated for the Immaculate Conception?

This dogmatic debate is significant to the story of Orsanmichele devotion because of the local community's identification of Saint Anne as a salvific, medicinal intercessor. Saint Anne's popularity began much earlier in Florence, long before the Immaculate Conception debate

Virgin's miraculous birth and the Dominican friar. Laerzio Cherubini, et al., *Magnum Bullarium Romanorum*, Vol. 1 (Lugduni: Borde, Arnaud, & Rigaud, 1692), 636-645.

³²⁹ See page 137 of this chapter.

³³⁰ Nixon, *Mary's Mother*, 15-16.

became codified in Catholic dogma. In 1348, the plague ravaged Florence, along with communities all across Europe and the Mediterranean. In the midst of this devastating tragedy, the Florentine people turned to their latest civic patroness for divine intervention. Of all the cult sites in the city, Saint Anne at Orsanmichele garnered the most devotion from the terrified local community. Saint Anne received an immense influx of votive donations: Orsanmichele amassed over 9,000 gold florins by the year 1350, which further grew to around 12,000 florins by the year 1353, augmented with repetitive boons that corresponded with subsequent plague outbreaks in the city.³³¹ Donations to Orsanmichele far surpassed other sacred locations like the Santissima Annunziata. The collection was so pronounced for the governing Signoria to warrant the construction of a votive church dedicated entirely to Saint Anne. In 1349, the captains of Orsanmichele allocated 3,500 gold florins to the construction of the small church across Via Calzaiuoli from Orsanmichele, with another thousand scudi donated to the project in the year following.³³² However, by the time the structure was completed in 1352, the Orsanmichele captains had changed their minds about removing the lucrative saint from their central space. The church of Saint Anne was dedicated instead to Saint Michael in 1376, and was later converted into the religious epicenter of the Lombards in the sixteenth century.³³³

The outbreak of plague solidified the perception of Anne as a protector of the soul and gateway to heaven. Her reputation was further augmented by the growing discourses surrounding the saint. In widely translated and circulated texts such as the *Legenda sanctae Annae*, published

³³¹ John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 186-190. The subsequent plague years of 1363, 1374, 1384, and 1400 brought ever more funds into Orsanmichele's coffers.

³³² While the Orsanmichele confraternity provided significant funds, actual construction of the votive church fell to the Commune. Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 75. Documentation of the construction of the votive church can be found in ASF, OSM vol. 247.

³³³ The church of the Lombards was rededicated into the Oratory of San Carlo Borromeo in 1615. See Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 74, 145; Zervas, "Niccolò Gerini," 33.

by an anonymous Louvainian Franciscan in 1496, Saint Anne is characterized as the beginning of the “redemptive process.”³³⁴ Her capacity to heal in the predominantly Franciscan texts in circulation, coupled with the more broad understanding of the Saint’s life through editions of the *Protoevangelium* of Saint James and the *Legenda Aurea*, transformed Saint Anne into a viable conduit of redemption for the local community, not unlike Michelangelo’s *Risen Christ* in Rome. In accordance with the popular understanding of the saint, Francesco da Sangallo crafted a sculptural image with the capacity to cure.

The sedate nature of the Sangallo composition belies the innovation invested in the image wherein text plays a significant role. Latin and Hebrew letters are visible on all sides of this sculpture.³³⁵ The epigraphic element encourages circumambulation and close visual interrogation. On the back of the monolith, an Italian inscription details the subject matter of Sangallo’s composition as well as the date of its installation in the year 1526.³³⁶ Supplemental inscriptions in Latin adorn each lateral side, the text corresponding with the figure directly above. The right side of the composition references Anne: “Sterility has gifted the fruit so long desired.” To the left, the text regards the Madonna: “You gave birth to Him who made you a virgin eternal.”³³⁷

³³⁴ Nixon, *Mary’s Mother*, 46.

³³⁵ For that matter, text and literacy are also directly referenced in the Madonna’s distraction away from the viewer, engrossed instead in a book, potentially the “Word” of her divine Son.

³³⁶ The Latin text on the back reads: “*RE DEL CIEL VERGIN FIGLIA SPOSA ET MADRE ANNA CHEL SOL DI GRATIA PATORISTI ONDE IL CIEL CHIUSO AL PECATORE APRISTI DRIZA TE IPENSIER VANI AL SOMMO PADRE AD MDXXVI*,” “King of Heaven, Virgin daughter bride, and mother Anne, who gave birth to the son of grace, raise your vain thoughts to the supreme father, there where heavens closed to the sinner open. AD 1526.” Translation taken from Colin Eisler, in collaboration with Abbey Kornfeld and Alison Rebecca W. Strauber, “Words on an Image: Francesco da Sangallo’s *Sant’Anna Metterza* for Orsanmichele,” in Strehlke’s *Orsanmichele and the History and Preservation*, 294.

³³⁷ Text with Anne: “*STERILITAS DIV DESIDERA / DONATVR FRVCTVR*”; text with the Virgin: “*GENVISTI QVI F. FECITET / INTERNVM PERMANES / VIRGO*.” Translations, with slight alterations, from Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 605.

While Latin offers explanatory reference and predominates the lateral sides and back, Hebrew letters take center stage above the altar. A fictive paper inscription incised with black letters is appended to the craggy, rock face of the triad's stone base. An increased local interest in the translation of Hebrew meant that a significant faction of educated Florentine society would have been capable of deciphering this text.³³⁸ Yet the letters are nonsensical and uncommunicative: these Hebraic letters do not form Hebrew words. As Colin Eisler illustrates, when the Hebrew letters are read aloud, the text becomes Latin. The Hebrew reads, from right to left: "I am the light of the world."³³⁹

This Hebraic text signals the sonorous performance of the devotional object to the viewer. Without the spoken transliteration, the Hebrew remains decorative, mute. Sound completes the image. The biblical phrase, "I am the light of the world," from the Gospel of John, is a direct reference to the Christ Child, but also implicitly references the monochromatic material of Sangallo's creation. In the richly polychromatic interior of Orsanmichele, the white marble *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* shines like a beacon. Nothing else in this space is purely white. I would assert that the effect of this sculpture is more than a reference to antiquity—an artist's virtuoso response to the perceived three-figures-in-one monolithic feat of the *Laocoön* (which Sangallo himself saw unearthed in Rome in 1506)—but also conveys an

³³⁸ Humanists ca. 1500 were deeply interested in Hebraic studies and translation. The *Titulus Crucis*, a purported fragment of the trilingual label attached to Christ's cross, had been miraculously "rediscovered" within the depths of the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome in February of 1492. The object highlights a predisposition for Hebrew by placing the Old Testament language at the top of the panel and orienting the Greek and Latin letters below in the same right-to-left format of Hebrew. The object is one of many that reinvigorated Hebraic studies and became a valued source of information in the creation of subsequent Tituli in crucifixion scenes, most notably in Michelangelo's early career polychrome wooden *Crucifixion* for the altar of Santo Spirito. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 219-239. Pico della Mirandola, as a humanist scholar sponsored by the Medici, is an excellent example of one Florentine's interest in Hebrew. Savonarola was also interested in the Hebraic lineage of Christ. The charismatic preacher perceived Florentines as modern-day Israelites. A more direct relation to the humanist interest in Hebrew lies in Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, who was himself a participating member of the local literati community. Eisler, "Words on an Image," 297-298.

³³⁹ "Ego sum lux mundi." Eisler, "Words on an Image," 294.

explicit religious message. In the flickering light of votive candles, the sculptural group would have seemed apparitional, as condensed light upon the altar. Even the inscription signals the importance of the word “*Lux*,” the third in the four words inscribed across the sculpture face from right to left, which is the only word to trespass the boundaries of its fictive frame with a small, six-pointed star extended onto the sculptural base. Taken as “*Lux*,” the weighty material of marble—combined with the vocal participation of the viewer—paradoxically expresses the ephemeral nature of the Saint Anne composition. In essence, the Holy Trio enacts a perpetual illusion.

In addition to the focus on “*Lux*,” the inscription’s personal, declarative phrasing—“I am the light”—across the face of the sculptural composition heightens the connection between the viewer and the figures portrayed. Alexander Nagel discusses in his interpretation of the monument to Giotto in the Florence Cathedral that the auditory intention of early modern epigraphs brought the reader into the composition itself. When reading the monument epigram, the viewer declares, “I am Giotto,” and in this moment, the living person manifests and equivocally embodies the artist as civic monument.³⁴⁰ In the presence of the holy grandmother, mother and Son, the viewer of the Sangallo sculpture group share in the familial lineage portrayed for she too are the “light of the world,” and that lineage stems from the vessel of Anne.

The stark, black Hebrew letters across the sculpted surface encourage the viewer to search for other textual referents. Beyond the artist’s signature around the girdle of the saint, which clearly reads in Latin “*Franciscus Sangallus Faciebat*,” a marked reference to Michelangelo’s *Pietà* and the classical textual tradition,³⁴¹ the careful viewer will discover two

³⁴⁰ Alexander Nagel, “Authorship and Image-making in the Monument to Giotto in Florence Cathedral,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, vol. 53/54 (2008): 146.

³⁴¹ The signature may also behave as an ex-voto similar to Duccio di Buoninsegna’s across the base of the Madonna’s throne in his monumental *Maestà* for the Siena Cathedral, dated between 1308-1311.

more Hebrew inscriptions adorning the front of the sculpture. Along the angular, squared neckline of the Christ Child's garment, the raised, transliterated Hebrew letters declare: "Christ, son of the living God."³⁴² The phrase is a line taken directly from the Gospel of Mathew, spoken by Saint Peter in a clear testimony of Christ's glorious parentage. Simple though the phrase may seem, this statement associates the sculpture with the debate surrounding the Immaculate Conception. In 1494, Pope Alexander VI Borgia appended Saint Peter's words to Saint Anne devotion. The prayer reads in full:

*Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum, tua gratia sit mecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedicta sit sancta Anna mater tua, ex qua sine macula et sine peccato processisti virgo Maria, ex te autem natus est Jesus Christus, filius Dei vivi. Amen.*³⁴³

When spoken before an image of Saint Anne, the devotee received indulgences amounting to between ten and twenty thousand years out of purgatory.³⁴⁴ Though the prayer is predominantly directed towards the Virgin Mary, the speaker suddenly reverts to a recognition of the Virgin in the third person at the mention of Saint Anne: "*sancta Anna mater tua, ex qua sine macula et sine peccato processisti virgo Maria.*" The recognition of Mary's status "without mark and without sin" circles the prayer back to Saint Anne as the miraculous originator of the divine mother and Son. Vested literally on the body of Christ, in dialogue with Mary, and in explicit reference to Anne, the prayer unifies the three sculptural figures into one conglomerate source of salvation.

³⁴² "*Christus, filius Dei vivi.*" One is reminded in this instance of the quattrocento penchant for faux Arabic script lining neck and hemlines.

³⁴³ P. Armel, "Le culte de sainte Anne dans les Pays rhénans au Moyen Age et les Franciscains," *Études Franciscaines*, Vol. 36 (1924): 603.

³⁴⁴ Armel, "Le culte de sainte Anne," 602-603. Eisler cites this gift of indulgences as well, however it should be noted that the citation incorrectly accords devotees with ten to twenty million years out of purgatory; Eisler, "Words on an Image," 297.

The final Hebrew inscription on the Saint Anne sculpture brings the conversation full circle. Around the neck of the Holy Grandmother, another transliterated phrase reads concisely: “*Matris Dei*,” “Mother of God.”³⁴⁵ The simple declaration, coupled with the salvific text on the body of the young Christ, declares concretely the saint’s status in the eyes of the community as the originator of both the Madonna and Christ Child. The Immaculate Conception takes on a particularly valuable resonance to the local community of Florence, enmeshed with the salvation of republican ideology and, by the third decade of the sixteenth century, equally appended to the ruling Medici dynasty.

From its installation onwards, the Sangallo sculpture became a locus for religious and civic devotion. Even throughout the brief Third Republic, dating from 1527 to 1530 and the subsequent recognition of Alessandro de’ Medici as Duke of Florence in 1532, Saint Anne remained an integral component of local civic and religious life. Pontormo’s ambiguous painting of the *Virgin and Child with Saints*, dated arguably between the years 1527 and 1530 (with all political vagaries included), continues in the vein of governmental utilization of the Saint, represented in this composition again as the throne of Mary.³⁴⁶ Unlike Sangallo’s rendition, Pontormo’s Christ Child makes intimate contact with his grandmother: the right foot of the Child is anchored against Anne’s thigh, as the older woman directly grasps Christ’s left hand, the tension of which visually demarcates the center of the composition. Below the feet of the Virgin and her mother, a medallion portraying a miniature procession of men in contemporary, early sixteenth-century garb walks out towards the viewer. Valentini identifies this assembly as the Saint Anne procession, held each year on the Saint’s feast day of July 26th, that progressed from

³⁴⁵ Eisler hypothesizes that this text is potentially a fragmented line from the Antiphon of Saint Anne that reads in full “*Ave Mater, Matris Dei*,” from the *Missale Romanorum*; Eisler, “Words on an Image,” 296.

³⁴⁶ The Pontormo painting was executed for an altar in the convent church of Sant’Anna sul Prato. Valentini, *Sant’Anna dei Fiorentini*, 112-113.

a convent dedicated to Saint Anne outside the city to the Saint's centrally located altar at Orsanmichele.³⁴⁷ Though Valentini believes the procession was no longer active by Vasari's first publication of the *Vite*, given his use of past tense, no documentation left by the confraternity captains indicate a cessation of the procession.³⁴⁸ Furthermore, *Diari Sacri* detailing day-by-day religious rituals enacted throughout the city attest to the continuance of Saint Anne worship at Orsanmichele as of the year 1700 and beyond.³⁴⁹

Interaction with this civic cult image seems to have continued unabated over the course of the sixteenth century. The captains of Orsanmichele rewrote their community statutes in the year following the Medici's final and incontestable return in 1530, reiterating the tradition of celebrating the Saint Anne feast day on site as the "*liberatore civitatis*."³⁵⁰ Donations on par with the bequests to the Santo Spirito *Pietà* and *Risen Christ* appear in Orsanmichele's records throughout the period: in 1550, an Antonio di Sinidro degli Amberti bequeathed a house in the vicinity of San Lorenzo to Orsanmichele for the payment of two and a half *libbre* of white wax

³⁴⁷ Anita Valentini theorizes that the procession involved the convent of Sant'Anna Verzaia, but it may have involved Sant'Anna sul Prato instead (or in addition). This hypothesis is based on the Orsanmichele records of the sixteenth century, which expressly reference the convent of Sant'Anna sul Prato as the beneficiary of habitual offerings of grain from the captains of the confraternity. Furthermore, the Pontormo altarpiece including a scene of the procession (see note above) was intended for the church interior at Sant'Anna sul Prato. See ASF, OSM vol. 350, [unpaginated, see notation dated 22nd of August, 1591]; ASF, Conventi soppressi 80, vol. 79, fol. xi. Valentini also describes the procession beginning at Orsanmichele and ending at the convent, however Diane Zervas argues the reverse. Valentini, *Sant'Anna dei Fiorentini*, 112; Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 59-60.

³⁴⁸ Valentini, *Sant'Anna dei Fiorentini*, 113.

³⁴⁹ Lodovico Giamboni identifies the 26th of July as the feast day of the "*S. Anna Madre della gran Madre di Dio*" and includes in the sites of celebration "*S. Anna sul Prato, Monastero di Monache Benedettine ... [la] Compagnia di S. Anna de Palafrenieri in Via della Scala ... S. Maria degl'Angeli de' Monaci Camaldolensi ... [le] Chiese dell'Ordine Carmelitano, per essere questa gran Santa Protettrice di dett'Ordine*" and a "*Festa solennissima all'Insigne Oratorio della gloriosissima Vergine Maria d'Or. S. Michele*." In addition, indulgences of 140 days are to be gifted to devotees at "*Santiss. Nunziata, ... S. Lorenzo, a S. Pietro Maggiore, a S. Ambrogio, ed in altre Chiese dove sono Altari a detta Santa dedicati*." Giamboni, *Diario Sacro*, 149-150. A manuscript documenting eighteenth-century *doti* attests to the altar's continued receipt of family bequests. See ASF, OSM vol. 239, dated 1728-1767. Similar notation regarding the Saint Anne feast day can also be found in a *Diario Sacro* compiled by Luigi Santoni in 1853, in his *Diario sacro*, 64-65. Additionally, a proto-*diario sacro*, dating to January 1512, appears in a collection of *avanti-principato* documents at the Florentine State Archives, intimating celebration of the saint during the Second Republic as well; ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano vol. 9780 [unpaginated].

³⁵⁰ ASF, OSM vol. 1, fols. 18v-19r.

twice-yearly for Saint Anne.³⁵¹ Similarly, a 1544 contract agreement is renewed in the year 1568 between the oratory captains and two local *botteghe*, wherein the rental of buildings owned by the oratory included the provision of worked, white wax to be gifted every six months for Saint Anne worship over the subsequent twenty-nine years.³⁵² The continual richness of the decorative program on the altar is attested by a case of theft documented in the oratory's records: a golden medallion, decorated with the confraternity's initials "OSM," was stolen off the sculpture's altar during Saint Anne's feast day celebrations in 1578. The guards responsible for protecting the altar, one of whom named Antonio di Papi (through whose voice we hear testimony of the events), requests to be exempted from the loss in pay corresponding with the worth of the precious object. He argues that similar thefts had recently occurred at the baptistery of San Giovanni Battista as well.³⁵³

A seventeenth century document of unclear date testifies to the many objects required for proper decoration of the Saint Anne altar over a three-day period of time, including decorative laurel and flowers, silver lanterns, and even soap needed for cleaning crowns.³⁵⁴ These banal details intimate the multimedia additions appended to the sculpted surface, including crowns on

³⁵¹ The bequest reads: "*Pier d'Antonio di Sandro Giamberti pensi et la sua linea masculina... Una casa con paleschi, sale, camere, terreno, vostra e pozzo or sue tribitori et appartenenti posta nel popolo di Sa' L[oren]zo di Firenze ... da pagarsi ogni sei mesi la ½ et lib 2 di cera bianca per la festa di santa Anna.*" ASF, OSM vol. 76, fol. 153r. Author's transcription. This bequest is reiterated in a subsequent manuscript, dated 1579, which attests to the continued gift of wax. ASF, OSM vol. 78, fol. 314r.

³⁵² ASF, OSM vol. 76, fol. 415r, dated August 17, 1568. Twenty-nine years is a standard time limit for contractual obligations in the quattro- and cinquecento. If honored, these contracts indicate Saint Anne worship—at least in terms of lit candles—occurred on site from 1544 until potentially 1597.

³⁵³ A description of the altar is included in the record: "*quest'anno facendosi in detto tempio la principal' festa che vi si facci cioè di Santa Anna adi 26 di luglio, nella qual' festa et per quella onorare s'usa parare l'altare maggiore de più ricchi paramenti che vi sono, et si viene così parato otto giorni, el di seguente che fu la Domenica fu spiccato dal paliotto del detto altare un'fregio di ricamo d'oro buono à santi col segno d'O.S.M. con frange rosse foderato di valuta di scudi 10 et portato via.*" ASF, OSM vol. 78, fol. 298r. Author's transcription. A refutation of the initial deposition appears in the same manuscript on fol. 403r.

³⁵⁴ ASF, OSM vol. 151. The document is unfortunately undated and unpaginated, but surrounding documents date to 1642 and 1682 respectively. A similar, albeit shorter list of decorative needs, appears in a manuscript regarding the 26th of July, 1566; ASF, OSM vol. 217, fol. 29r.

the heads of Anne, the Virgin and the Christ Child. A manuscript of collected *ricordi* notes the continuous installation of new candles against the piers surrounding the Saint Anne altar throughout the year—not only in anticipation for her feast day—between the years 1591 and 1595.³⁵⁵ Finally, maintenance of the altar, such as the cleaning of unknown brass additions to the altar along with the marble itself, appear in 1595 and 1596.³⁵⁶

The most intriguing realization uncovered during this research process is the active involvement of the Medici with Orsanmichele over the course of the sixteenth century. Records of the oratory prove the involvement of various Medici men of lesser family branches to the Dukes—known as the *popolani* Medici—active as captains and *provveditori* of the confraternity. Appearing first in the early 1550s, a series of Medici men infiltrate the administration records of the structure; Niccola di Tanai de' Medici, Raffaello di Francesco di Giuliano de' Medici, Marco d'Antonio de' Medici, and Carlo di Bernardo de' Medici.³⁵⁷ In these documents, the *popolani* Medici engage in periodic restoration programs, such as Niccola di Tanai de' Medici's 1552 proposal to sell “certain marbles” already purchased for the ambiguous high altar of

³⁵⁵ ASF, OSM vol. 63, fol. 11r, 35r, 37v.

³⁵⁶ ASF, OSM vol. 63, fol. 27r, 39v. The manuscript also includes a 1595 notation of a mice infestation at the oratory, from which the Saint Anne altar must be saved (see fol. 36r).

³⁵⁷ ASF, OSM vol. 77, fols. 261r, 283r, 297r, 412r, 707r, 737r; ASF, OSM vol. 78, fols. 5r, 15r, 224r, 247r. In a reconstructive analysis of Pompeo Litta's extensive family tree of the Medici family, in conjunction with information found through Bía, the Medici Archive Project's online database, I have begun to piece together the fragmented history of these men. A Tanai de' Medici, or Tanai di Niccolò de' Medici, appears in the Ducal Carteggi dei Segretari from the late 1540s through the 1580s. This man seems to have been employed under Cosimo I in relation to the family estate at Poggio a Caiano and was involved in the renovations of the Palazzo Pitti. Based on Litta's family tree, Tanai di Niccolò seems to be the son of the Niccola di Tanai referenced in the Orsanmichele documents. Carlo di Bernardo de' Medici—who appears in every administrative meeting from December of 1569 through June 1570 in ASF, OSM vol. 32—was a government administrator as a member of the *Nove*, a Florentine senator in addition to his role as a Capitano at both Orsanmichele and Montepulciano. Giulio di Raffaello de Medici was the most prestigious of the *popolani* Medici associated with Orsanmichele, as a member of the order of Santo Stefano, a chivalric society founded by Duke Cosimo I. Litta tells us that Giulio acted as an ambassador to Spain and commissioner of the Bande Ducali, and Bía adds an additional diplomatic voyage to London late in life in the 1620s as well. Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri italiane*, vol. 2 (Milan: Tip. del dottore G. Ferrario, 1825-1832), tables VII, XVII.

Orsanmichele to a man named Francesco of the town of San Jacopo.³⁵⁸ This mention of raw materials for an aborted “high altar” in marble may indicate a preexisting intention to renovate the Saint Anne altar before the oratory was required to do so by post-Tridentine Catholic reformers in the decade following. A letter to Grand Duke Francesco I, dated August 11th, 1575, describes the need to renovate the Saint Anne altar in order to meet the standards set by visiting Bishop Alfonso Binnarini di Camerino,³⁵⁹ who surveyed church interiors across Italy on behalf of the Holy See and advocated for the standardization of religious centers in accordance with the mandates of the Council of Trent.³⁶⁰ The bishop also required the altar be moved farther back towards the enclosed rear wall to minimize the dark space behind where “indecent acts” may occur.³⁶¹

Orsanmichele was hardly the only church to undergo changes to address the new standards laid down by the Council of Trent. The cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore offers a touchstone for the mandates across the Florentine religious community. The Bishop of Camerino makes two significant notations in his summary of the Duomo interior: one is valuable for the information provided, and the other for what it leaves out. For the altar dedicated to the institution’s titular saints—the Virgin Mary and Saint Bishop Zenobius—the bishop mandated a

³⁵⁸ ASF, OSM vol. 77, fol. 261r.

³⁵⁹ A clarification: in contemporary scholarship, the visiting bishop is referred to as Bishop Camerino, however his actual name is Alfonso Binnarini, a point of which I became aware only after going back to the original document. Archivio Diocesano di Firenze (hereafter ADF), Visite Pastorali (hereafter VP) 12, vol. Z.IV.6.

³⁶⁰ The letter reads: “...*Hora che ci è stato comandato dal Reverendissimo Visitatore Apostolico di far’ di pietra l’altar’ maggior’ di Santa Anna in esso tempio quale è di legname, Che altrimenti non vuol’ vi si celebri sopra. ... vorremmo insieme con l’altare fare innanzi et più presso al muro che non sono le trè figure di Santa Anna, della Gloriosa Vergine et di Giesù Christo fanciullo messe insieme in un’cappo di marmo quale è innestato in detto altare Conciò sia che si lenorà un’ troppo grande, sproporzionato et inutile spazio che è dietro intra il detto marmo et il muro dove come in luogo riposto et non aperto bene spesso si fanno cose indegne et non convenevoli ne luoghi profani non che sacri come è questo et si farà maggior’ lo spazio che è dinanzi à l’altare et più ampio et commodo auditorio delle messe che sopra il detto altare si celebrano...*” The letter explains that the captains have approached “Messer Francesco San’Galio scultore” to design the new altar. ASF, OSM vol. 78, fol. 265r. Details of the renovation appear on fols. 266r-267r.

³⁶¹ “*Cose indegne*” seems to be a convenient accusation leveled at church interiors in the wave of late-sixteenth century renovations. Special thanks to Joanne Allen for pointing out the frequency of this exact phrasing.

complete reconstruction in stone, as befitting the status of the holy figures. In this respect, Saint Anne's altar at Orsanmichele matches the altar of Saints Mary and Zenobius for its refitting in the more illustrious material. The second remarkable notation of the bishop is his description of the *tornacoro* then encircling the crossing of the Duomo.

In his description, the bishop tells us that the *tornacoro* encircled a marble statue of a prostrate *Christ* with a single angel in mourning. At the back of the *tornacoro* enclosure, sculptures of *Adam and Eve* stood on top of the stone railing, flanking a diminutive tree.³⁶² Sculpted by Baccio Bandinelli, the then acting head of the Opera del Duomo, the composition had been part of the encircling *tornacoro* of the Duomo crossing since the early 1550s.³⁶³ Bandinelli's work had already come up against stiff criticism—the same anonymous diarist decrying the *Pietà* copy at Santo Spirito laments the pagan, nude idols of the *Adam and Eve*. However, the bishop's description of the *tornacoro* is not accompanied by a litany of alterations. In fact, he offers none.

The fact that the *tornacoro* was completed only in 1572, albeit without Bandinelli's massive God the Father intended to stand over his deceased son, indicates that the composition was completed with the apostolic review close upon its heels. The lack of criticism regarding the composition intimates the success of the project to meet the standards of the visiting bishop. How are we to intuit this complacent acceptance of a massive sculptural composition at the heart of the central Florentine cathedral? What made the sculptural group doctrinally acceptable, even

³⁶² “*statua erecta marmorea Dei omnipotentis necnon alia Salvationis nostri Jesu XPI et altera Unius Angeli super dicto altari prostrate atengo autem eiusdem altaris sunt eracte ex marmore une statue vide Adam et Eva cu' arborerite.*” Author's transcription. ADF, VP 12, vol. Z.IV.6., fol. 3r.

³⁶³ For a complete survey of the documentary evidence surrounding the *tornacoro*, the chronology of Bandinelli's career and see Louis Alexander Waldman, *Baccio Bandinelli and the Art of the Medici Court: A Corpus of Early Modern Sources* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2004), xv-xxviii, 206.

if members of the local community found the composition somewhat aesthetically or devotionally unappealing?³⁶⁴

The underlying theme running through the changes mandated for subsidiary altars within the Duomo emphasize the dual need for increased prestige and delimiting borders: fine *pallii*, or fabric coverings for altar surfaces, and pairs of gilt candelabra to flank each crucifix upon its altar, which itself would be encompassed upon the wall by a gilt wooden cornice frame.³⁶⁵ The *tornacoro*'s architectural construction, arcing around the crossing in a mirror plan of Brunelleschi's dome above, completely encapsulated the figures of *Dead Christ and the Angel*, and would have also housed the imposing figure of *God the Father* as well. All three were intended to be placed on, or immediately behind, the high altar. *Adam and Eve*, by contrast, were placed on the back perimeter of the architectural structure, above the parapet supporting the columns of the running arcade. Even in their case, the nude pair occupied the liminal space surrounding the interior sanctum. They were not part of the space of the viewer; rather, their presence was qualified by the flanking double columns supporting the framing archway above

³⁶⁴ In a letter dated August 20th, 1552, Bernardetto Minerbetti, Bishop of Arezzo, described the Bandinelli composition in a letter written to Giorgio Vasari in Rome. He states: "...del grandissimo Cristo di Baccio Bandinelli, cittadino fiorentino ... vi mando un schizo di queste figure, perché mi diciate, che vi pare di questa postura? Et se quella gamba manca può ragionevolmente star così? ...ha gran muscoli, grandissime pollice, buon coscioni et insomma è tale che io non crederò che e' digiunassi quelli quaranta giorni, né anche che poi havessi si gran sete et fame, come ci testimifica l'evangelio, se tale era el di della sua morte." Waldman, *Baccio Bandinelli*, 505.

³⁶⁵ Multiple altars within the Florentine Duomo are described displaying crucifixes, mostly in wood though some in finer materials such as silver. Some of these crucifixes are accompanied by the explicit mention of an "*Imagine Salvatoris*," implying the presence of Christ's corporeal form on the crucifix itself. For example, the altar of San Giovanni Evangelista bears a wooden crucifix bearing a gilded image of the Savior: "*crux lignea depicta Imagine salvatoris ac deaurata*." Author's transcription. ADF, VP 12, vol. Z.IV.6., fol. 5r. Standard upgrades for these altars include a new pallio—or, altar cover—of *ciambellotto* (camel or goat hide), and a pair of gilded, iron candelabra. Intriguingly, as the bishop progressed through the interior, he integrates gilt wooden cornices, or frames, into his estimation of lacking altar decoration. Though the terminology is somewhat vague, the increasingly formulaic presence of the cornice among the list of required changes implies that, even if the bishop did not begin his estimation with frames in mind for demarcating the crucifixes against their wall settings, he felt their necessity by the end of his investigation. At the altar of San Bartolomeo, Bishop Alfonso Binnarini di Camerino mandates: "...ligneis depictis in parte deauratis et tabula secretorum ipsumq[ue] altare cornice lignea circumcirca ornari." ADF, VP 12, vol. Z.IV.6., fol. 6r-v. The bishop required that each altar be changed in compliance with his estimations or risk the penalty of twenty-five scudi.

their heads as the crucifixes framed by gilt cornices along the nave, as altars and framing devices at the Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo constrain the terracotta bodies in the early chapels of the Life of Christ.

In late sixteenth-century Italy, in the era following the Council of Trent, containment was the order of the day. The same level of mediated viewing was crafted at Sacri Monti sites such as Varallo, where artists like Galeazzo Alessi were employed to create sight-specific barricades across the entranceways of chapels to condition the pilgrim's modes of interaction with the multimedia interiors. Alessi's *Libro dei Misteri*, published in the late 1560s, itemizes his plans for the sacred interiors and his addition of more patently diorama-like chapels to the pilgrimage program, including an Adam and Eve in an Edenic space filled with sculptural plants and animals that would prohibit one's approach to the sculptural figures and mediate visual access, even if the chapel were fitted with doors for the devout pilgrim.³⁶⁶

Just as rural pilgrimage sites underwent a compartmentalizing evolution after the Council of Trent, so too did the condition of urban cult sites spark post-Tridentine reconceptualization. The renovations at Orsanmichele took place over the following decade. For this project, the oratory captains returned to an aging Francesco da Sangallo to re-design the Saint Anne altar in marble to replace what was probably a preexisting altar in wood.³⁶⁷ The final inscription across the central stairs now leading up to the stone altar declares prominently the completion of the project in the year 1586. Bishop Alfonso furthermore required a balustrade be erected between

³⁶⁶ Christine Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses at the Sacro Monte di Varallo" in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013), 428-430.

³⁶⁷ This project was later assumed by the sculptor Jacopo di Zanobi Paccardi after Sangallo's death in 1576. A series of unsigned drawings in OSM vol. 350, depicting a balustrade and altar design with explicit measurements, indicate the final approval of the design, see ASF, OSM vol. 35, fol. 17r. Altar renovations appear as late as 1590, when a marble altar predella and cornice is added to the Saint Anne installation. See ASF, OSM vol. 350 [unpaginated, see entries dated between the 28th of January and 2nd of March, 1589 (Florentine year dating)]. Zervas provides a small reproduction of the balustrade drawing in *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, 234.

the piers of the final bays of the oratory. The new barricade kept religious devotees at least fifteen feet away from the Saint Anne composition. Consequently, the backwards move and added barrier effectively obliterated the sacred communication fostered by the subtle Hebrew messages across the sculptural surface, sequestering the sacred image away from the devout viewer who now stands too far away to be truly engaged.

The new balustrade between the piers of the eastern bay fosters a level of remoteness foreign to the original context of the composition. In Orsanmichele's original layout, the viewer would have been capable of entering the eastern bay: the permeability of space is plainly visible in Bernardino Poccetti's early seventeenth-century rendition of the oratory interior, depicting the young Saint Antoninus kneeling in devout communion with the *Crucifixion* immured in the back central pier. In many ways, the fate of the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* mirrors the increased restrictions imposed upon Sacri Monti pilgrimage sites: what were once open spaces where interaction was encouraged became a diorama-like effect that predetermined the experience of the late sixteenth-century viewer.³⁶⁸ In addition to the enforced distance, I believe the aging Sangallo also increased the elevation of the Saint Anne composition in order to maintain eye contact with devout viewers. While Saint Anne still gazes upon the pilgrim approaching the altar, the Christ Child originally would have only become an active conduit for the viewer when directly before the altar itself. His downward pitched gaze was oriented expressly towards the postulant kneeling at his feet, like the young John the Baptist in Fra Bartolomeo's *Pala della Signoria*. Elevated on a higher podium, the Christ Child's gaze now connects with the viewer standing in the central bay of the oratory, in an area once delimited by the stone balustrade that is

³⁶⁸ For a concise history of the Sacro Monte di Varallo, see Allison Terry-Fritsch, "Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo," *Open Arts Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014): 111-132; Göttler, 393-451.

today replaced by a red velvet rope. The situation at Orsanmichele, with the tragic loss of the sculpture's originally interactive function, is but a consequence of the larger objectives of the Church to dictate and moderate the immersive experience of early modern viewers. That immersion is marked today with separation.

In its original display, the Saint Anne composition would have been available for circumambulation, the fact of which is clearly apparent in the presence of the textual inscriptions on all sides of the sculpture. Approaching the altar, the viewer would have easily noticed the incised, black Hebrew letters then at eye level across the front of the composition. The recitation of "I am the light of the world" references the material makeup of the sculpture, but also signals a union between the viewer with the Son of God and his Hebraic genealogy. The theological metaphor behind the title of Christ, meaning "light," underpins the decorative program. To return to the Aristotelian sense of materiality, the cloud of water or vapor condensed into its new permutation as marble reflects the light of the religious structure in which it is placed.³⁶⁹ The assimilation of the physical sculpture with vapor and light effectively transforms the weighty, solid object into a momentary vision that is constant, a-temporal, and yet transient.³⁷⁰ Much like the Santa Casa di Loreto, the vision could disappear. This material effect brings the period viewer into a *sacra conversazione*—of apparitional immaculacy—within the miraculous oratory.

³⁶⁹ Fabio Barry's article, "Lux Lumen," comments on the symbolic import of light and its use as a sculptural and pictorial material in the seventeenth century. This argument can effectively translate to the humanist discourse ca. 1500. Fabio Barry, "Lux Lumen: The symbolism of real and represented light in the Baroque Dome," *Kritische Berichte; Mitteilungsorgan des Ulmer Vereins Verband für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Vol. 30 (2002): 22-37.

³⁷⁰ At this point I am reminded of Alexander Nagel's extensive discussions on the capacity for imagery to reach across time, the ability for modern art creations to equal and therefore become invested with historical potency, even without the existence of precedent. Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*; Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*.

The bold, frontal inscription across the Saint Anne composition signals the viewer to search the surface for more. The subsequent discovery and recitation of the fragmentary prayer around the neck of the Christ Child would effectively heal the soul of the devout viewer as the *Tabernacle of the Virgin* miraculously healed the sick. The shocking bounty of indulgences in this minute detail builds exponentially upon the indulgence precedent set by the *Crucifixion*, as does the reliance upon text emanate from the earlier composition's use on site of the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. Sangallo's creation capitalizes on one of the newest benefices of the cult of Saint Anne, offering redemption specifically to an erudite, humanist audience. In order to participate in the devotion and complete the auditory element of the sculpture, the viewer must comprehend the transliteration that conceptually traverses the lineage of the Son of God, from Hebrew into Latin.

Just as the *Risen Christ* and Rome, the case of Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* reflects a vibrant history of acts of devotion mapped onto a sculptural religious object over the course of the sixteenth century. Through visual and textual remnants of intimate interaction—either with the original or with an emblematic copy—these sculptures resonate with the capacity of white marble monoliths to transport the viewer into an immersive religious experience. Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* visually manifests the immortality of the soul dictated by the Neoplatonist ordinances of the first Medici pope. Its medium of representation and material construction feed commensurately into the transubstantive body of the Savior. Likewise, Sangallo's sculpture is both an intellectual pursuit—an artist's manifesto on the cultural foundations of his community—and a visual treatise on the joint corporeal and divine lineage of Christ, and the miraculous status of Saint Anne as the generator of divinity and a portal of salvation.

As with the Holy House of the Virgin, the Sacred Mountain of San Vivaldo, and the *Deposition* of Antonio Begarelli, the works of Michelangelo and Francesco da Sangallo capitalize on material and tactile modes of communication to transport the viewer into a sacred communion with the holy figures portrayed. Through invasive sculptural bodies, each devotional site folds biblical, narrative history into contemporary, sacred space and time. Each composition expresses the divinity of the sacred body through material overtures constructed jointly upon proto-scientific and theological doctrine that reinforce the early modern Catholic worldview. Visual and tangible communion with these three-dimensional objects furthermore stress the Catholic construction of devotion in direct opposition with the deep distrust and outright iconoclasm of Protestant movements fomenting on the Italian peninsula and abroad.

I have chosen to end this dissertation with Francesco da Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* because the composition has brought the subject matter full circle: from the Annunciation and Christ's youth at Loreto, through Christ's life and death between San Vivaldo and Modena, to his Resurrection in Santa Maria sopra Minerva and back again to an evocation of his holy lineage, and implicitly of the viewer's as well. The consideration of sculptures designed in the first decades of the sixteenth century as capacious sacred objects effectively reinstates the power of religious sculpture in multiple media across the early modern period. The recurrent recourse to sculpture, the persistence of devotion geared towards these sacred foci, denounce the purely aesthetic interpretation of three-dimensional imagery. These bodies are more than exercises in classical antiquarianism, they are embodiments of the Catholic faith.

Conclusion

Francesco da Sangallo's late-century alterations to the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* composition signals the fate of religious sculpture at the close of the sixteenth century. Though the shifts in sculptural worship evolved, sculpture remained a powerful medium in sacred space. The national church of Florence in Rome, San Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini, houses a composition that demonstrates the continued use of sculpture in acts of personal communion. As a conclusion to this dissertation, I would like to pose one final, brief case study of sculpture within the Florentine epicenter in Rome as an emblem of the continued material preoccupations into the seventeenth century.

The grey-toned church interior of the Roman church San Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini, so reminiscent of the *pietra serena* and plaster of the *chiese della patria*, is filled with chapels commissioned by the local Florentine community. In the early modern period, the church acted as a locus of Florentine expatriate circles, starting with the assumption of Pope Leo X de' Medici in 1513. In this space, families proudly declare their foreign status, effectively transplanting *Fiorentinità* into the capital of the Papal States.

As the modern visitor walks up the south aisle of the church, one's eye is inevitably drawn to the composition housed within the chapel just to the left of the high altar, the Sacchetti family chapel. The ambient light of the interior ricochets down the nave to illuminate a puzzling composition in the Sacchetti space: a black, bronze *Crucifixion* mounted before an expanse of black, *nero di belgio* revetment (Image 49). At a distance, the saturated, dark stone dramatically refracts the light entering from a corresponding window across the church interior, creating a white halo around the sculpted body and matte finish of the painted, wooden cross. Hanging limp

from its confines, Christ's body visually recedes into the reflective wall, giving the impression of a dark silhouette in an otherwise brilliant façade.³⁷¹ As the viewer draws closer, the direct refraction of light abates, and the *nero di belgio* stone progressively recedes into the darkness of the chapel din. Meanwhile, the smooth planes of the body of Christ slowly emerge to the viewer's eye, catching the light across its polished surfaces. By the time the viewer stands directly before the chapel, the *Crucifixion* has become the prominent epicenter of the interior, outlined only by the barest gilt wood frame lining the surface of the cross.

In the Sacchetti Chapel, the body of Christ enacts the narrative of death reiterated in multiple artistic renderings of the *Crucifixion*. This composition differs in that the conflicting perception of presence *and* absence is wrought through a body that (de)materializes through viewer interaction. The confluence of movement, material, and light fosters a religious experience wherein the viewer incites the 'apparition' of the *Crucifixion*.³⁷²

The history of this late sixteenth-century *Crucifixion* in the Sacchetti chapel remains somewhat vague. Giovanni Baglione tells us that the sculpture was designed by Prospero Antichi in 1587, a commission of Cardinal Giacomo Savelli for the interior of the Jesuit epicenter of Il Gesù; however, this original installation was never realized. The ultimate placement of the *Crucifixion* in San Giovanni is attributed to Paolo Sanquirico, who most likely obtained a model for the Gesù composition from Prospero's studio after the artist's death.³⁷³ It's installation in the

³⁷¹ The visual interplay immediately calls upon the perception of gold mosaic, where the figural form alternates between protrusion and recession from the golden surface. Rico Franses, "When All that is Gold does not Glitter: On the Strange History of Looking at Byzantine Art," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, edited by Anthony Eastmond and Liz James (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 13-18.

³⁷² For more on the materiality of bronze, see Michael Cole, "Benvenuto Cellini and the act of sculpture" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1999); Michael Cole, "Cellini's Blood," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (1999): 215-235.

³⁷³ Alessandro Angelini, "Il crocefisso di Prospero Antichi," in *Una gemma preziosa: L'oratorio della Santissima Trinità in Siena e la sua decorazione artistica*, edited by Gabriele Maccianti, Mario Ronchi (Poggibonsi: Tap Grafiche, 2012), 127-129; Oreste Ferrari, Serenita Papaldo, *Le sculture del Seicento a Roma* (Rome: Ugo Bozzi Editore s.r.l., 1999), 139. If this is indeed the work of Paolo Sanquirico, questions remain regarding the original

Sacchetti chapel is tentatively dated to circa 1620.³⁷⁴ More than a recycled sculptural composition of Jesuit origins, the location of Sanquirico's sculpture assumes sacred precedent rooted in the Florentine communal traditions upheld at San Giovanni. This tradition leads intriguingly back to Saint Antoninus and the *Crucifixion* at Orsanmichele.

On August 26th, 1624, newly elected Pope Urban VIII Barberini signed a papal bull that appended the gift of plenary indulgences to those who prayed before the Sacchetti sculpture.³⁷⁵ A careful study of the church archives reveal that Prospero's *Crucifixion* was not the first sculpted altarpiece to be invested with such power at San Giovanni. The Sacchetti altar was but the newest sacred crucifix on site—the “*nova Imago Sanctissimi Crucifixi*”—which benefitted from the transferal of indulgences from a previous, no longer extant composition.³⁷⁶ An older papal bull, this one signed by Pope Paul V Borghese and dated February 26th, 1606, mentions the crucifix at San Giovanni and maintains a gift of six years' indulgence for faithful devotion to the cross. According to that papal bull, the accession was originally bequeathed to the church by Pope Clement VII de' Medici. An undated document in the church archive reveals that the first sculpted *Crucifixion* invested with the power to offer indulgences was promoted by the second Medici Pope on April 30th, 1532.³⁷⁷ Devotees praying before the seventeenth-century Sanquirico

format of display, specifically with regard to the atypical black-on-black compositional layout. Further research into the sculptural composition at the Sacchetti family archives is required.

³⁷⁴ Angelini, “Il crocefisso di Prospero Antichi,” 128.

³⁷⁵ Archivio di San Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini (hereafter AGBFR), *Protocollo degl'indulti privilegii concessi apostoliche*, vol. 319, folio n. 21.

³⁷⁶ One cannot help but wonder if the previous crucifixion was also placed in the same chapel interior. Further research will hopefully illuminate the potential of both physical and location supplanting.

³⁷⁷ AGBFR, vol. 310, doc. 123 (filza dated 1620-1627): “...Clemente 7° fu per special privilegio concesso che qualunque sacerdoti celebrando qualsivoglia Messa Avanti l'immagine del'R.mo Crocifiss[hole in paper]stente nella Chiesa di San Gio. della Natione fiorentina per l'Anime de fratelli della Compagnia della Pietà ò della Misericordia di d.a Natione conseguissero quelle Indulgenze che son concesso all'Altare di San Gregorio di Roma come per il Breve spedito sotto di 30 Aprile 1532.” Author's transcription.

Crucifixion in the Sacchetti family chapel therefore benefit from indulgences bequeathed to a sculptural installation of nearly a century prior.

Clement VII's choice to declare a sculptural image as a site of indulgences in the immediate aftermath of the Protestant Reformation and Sack of Rome is too poignantly resonant to be coincidental. Nor was the location haphazardly chosen: the Sacchetti family's association with the renovations at the Florentine oratory of Orsanmichele, including the immersive installation of the *Crucifixion* with its later associations with Saint Antoninus, offers a strong undercurrent of communal tradition.³⁷⁸ The canonization of Antoninus fell to Clement VII on the day of his coronation in 1523.³⁷⁹ That first sculpted rendition of Christ at the Roman church—whether in wood, marble, or even bronze as in its current state—would have hearkened back to the version within Orsanmichele, offering indulgences and communicating with the faithful.

Beyond bringing the case of Saint Antoninus full circle, this brief case of sculptural adoration reiterates the endurance of the sculptural medium, and its capacity for material resonance into the seventeenth century. Just as Francesco da Sangallo's Saint Anne composition at Orsanmichele acts as the culminating iteration of Saint Anne worship, so too does the sculpted *Crucifixion* at San Giovanni perpetuate the redemptive role of the lost original. And like the replicas of the Santa Casa, the Sacri Monti, and the works of Michelangelo, Sanquirico's *Crucifixion* brings biblical bodies into a visceral communion with the early modern devotee, as

³⁷⁸ Franco Sacchetti, the fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century poet and Florentine politician, was responsible for the reorientation of the Orsanmichele interior circa 1400. Diane Zervas, *Orsanmichele a Firenze / Orsanmichele Florence* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, S.p.A., 1996), 168-171. For a synopsis of the Orsanmichele interior, see the second case study of Chapter 3.

³⁷⁹ Pope Adrian VI had every intention of canonizing the Florentine, however his sudden death prevented him from completing the process by writing the Papal bull of canonization. Mauro Mussolin, "La promozione del culto di Sant'Antonino al tempo di Leone X e Clemente VII e i progetti di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane per la chiesa di San Marco," in *Antonino Pierozzi OP (1389-1459): La figura e l'opera di un santo arcivescovo nell'Europa del Quattrocento, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi storici (Firenze, 25-28 novembre 2009)*, edited by Luciano Cinelli and Maria Pia Paoli (Florence: Nebrini, 2010), 510.

the latest iteration of longstanding devotional practice. Like the Holy House of the Virgin, the Sacchetti *Crucifixion* perpetuates the sensation of apparition, materializing through the shifting refractions of light caused by the viewer's approach. Commensurate with the *Deposition* of Antonio Begarelli, the material oscillations of Paolo Sanquirico's sculptural composition encourage the viewer to contemplate the body of the deceased and its present absence within the sacred interior. Simply put, the radical aesthetic experience fostered by the black stone and dark bronze within the Sacchetti chapel consciously builds upon the sculptural precedent on site and material messaging enacted across the century prior.

The many case studies of this dissertation demonstrate how the materiality of sculpture shape acts of early modern devotion. Whether the material is miraculous—as in the perpetual levitation of the Santa Casa—or earthly—as in the joint marble and terracotta of Begarelli's *Deposition*—sculptural forms convey meaning through a confluence of subject and matter. The forerunning religious figures that promoted sculptural installations and their cult worship within sacred spaces include key bishops, cardinals, popes, and saints. These men supported the medium across a plethora of religious contexts and communities, proving the complex interrelationship between sculpted, sacred imagery and sixteenth-century Catholic thought. The independent devotional life of each object within sacred space furthermore demonstrates the overarching lay adherence to sculpture as a viable conduit of communication. Each of the case studies of this dissertation have explored sculptural installations as favored foci of local devotion and sites of sacred presence in religious space.

Out of this research, a number of unforeseen themes have emerged. The potential resonance of the copy is one example. Rather than perceive the replication of imagery as a derivative or devaluation of the original, the emulations of the Santa Casa or Michelangelo's

sculptures comment on the status of the prototype as valued sources of religious thought and devotional experience. The resultant sculptural discourse that emerged from acts of emulation manifest not only stylistic associations, but pregnant visual cues, adding layer upon layer of meaning to the sacred message. The continued devotion accorded to these sculptural replicas across the century denote their efficacy. Even the late sixteenth-century reevaluations of space and moderated proximity to the viewer—at Orsanmichele and the Sacri Monti—shine a light on the rapacious zeal for sculptural imagery in acts of personal devotion across the Italian peninsula.

In future research, I intend to build upon the question of regional recreations of sculptural imagery through a study of Holy House replicas across Italy. Since the original structure's miraculous appearance in Loreto, architectural recreations of the Santa Casa have appeared in Italian communities from Venice to Sicily. Each structure resonates with regional priorities of devotional interaction through installation, adornment, and cult ritual. I intend to investigate the mechanics of Holy House installations—display methods, forms of devotional worship, and aesthetic similarities or divergences from the Loretan original—to illuminate the multivalent use of sacred architecture as simultaneous sculptural installations, permeable relics, and manifestations of holy topography.

As with the case of the Santa Casa, the five explorations of this dissertation are far from exhaustive interpretations of sculptural imagery in early modern Catholic ritual. This discussion could expand in multiple directions. Venice and Naples, for example, are both rich centers of sculptural production. In particular, the connections between Venetian holy men and artists, hinted upon in the discussion of the Santa Casa, is but the tip of the cultural iceberg. Likewise, the many terracotta figures populating sacred spaces across Emilia-Romagna remain underappreciated as contributors to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sculptural discourse, as

are the lesser-studied and chronologically more recent Sacred Mountain complexes in the north, such as at Orta and Crea.

The extension of sculptural devotion into the seventeenth century, like the *Crucifixion* at San Giovanni, marks the continuing material messaging that stretches beyond the scope of this dissertation. The innovations of Gianlorenzo Bernini tend to dominate the discussion of sculptural discourse of the baroque era; however, Bernini is not alone in the conceptual developments across the century. Take for example the works of Melchiorre Cafà, an artist of the generation immediately following Bernini, whose sculptural relief installations use a variety of materials—marbles, alabasters, jaspers, and lapis lazuli—to convey a visionary experience.³⁸⁰ Cafà's *Glory of Saint Catherine of Siena* altarpiece (1662) for Santa Caterina a Magnanapoli in Rome (Image 50) combines relief sculpture and “painting” in polychrome stone to convey levitation, as Bernini also conveys in his *Ecstasy of Saint Theresa* of the Cornaro Chapel (1645-1652) (Image 51).³⁸¹ In effect, Cafà's Saint Catherine expresses levitation through her very materiality.

In contrast with Saints Catherine and Theresa, Alessandro Algardi's *Beheading of Saint Paul* in San Paolo Maggiore in Bologna (1634) (Image 52) steps away from the surface of the wall entirely, bringing the sculpted pair of aggressor and saint into the crossing, encapsulated by a protracted architectural framework that blurs the recognition of location and time.³⁸² The death of the saint, as well as the salvation of the viewer, are perpetually enacted over the altar of the seventeenth-century interior. The innovations of design are as much dependent upon the local

³⁸⁰ Keith Sciberras, *Melchiorre Cafà: Maltese Genius of the Roman Baroque* (Valletta, Malta: Midsea Books Ltd., 2006), 64-65.

³⁸¹ Similarly, Saint Catherine's indeterminate location, neither in the room, nor entirely part of the gently curving wall, harkens back to the structural tropes promoted at the Sacro Monte di San Vivaldo.

³⁸² Jennifer Montagu ed., *Algardi: L'altra faccia del barocco* (Rome: Edizioni de Luca s.r.l, 1999); Jennifer Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

tableau tradition and narrative impact of creations like Niccolò dell'Arca's *Compianto* or Begarelli's *Deposition*, as the product of a purely marble-oriented visual discourse.

On the other side of the relationship between sculpture and architecture, this dissertation also hints at the larger trend for architectural edifices transformed into sacred, sculptural foci within church interiors. Contemporary to the instigation of the Santa Casa revetment, Pope Julius II della Rovere also ordered Bramante to design the *Tegurium* constructed over the altar of Saint Peter's in Rome, which was sketched in the 1530s by the visiting artist, Maerten van Heemskerck (Image 53). Thanks to the research of Lex Bosman, the *Tegurium* is no longer considered a temporary protective covering placed over the altar during the drastic reconstruction of Saint Peter's, but is increasingly recognized as a permanent architectural and sculptural adornment encapsulating the tomb of the saint.³⁸³ Commensurately, regional sites of devotion like the *Porziuncola* outside Assisi (Image 54) became engulfed by large basilican complexes at the same moment as the spatial evolution at Loreto. A diminutive, one-room church just outside the epicenter of Saint Francis' devotional community, the *Porziuncola* transformed from a structure in and of itself into a sculptural installation at the crossing of its encompassing renaissance cathedral.³⁸⁴ The capacity of these architectural edifices to behave as sculptural installations, elevating the same tenets of sacred presence and tactile proximity as the Santa Casa, are rife for exploration. These topics will greatly expand the objectives inherent to this dissertation because each structure "embodies" the past in the midst of the devout present.

³⁸³ Lex Bosman, *The Power of Tradition: Spolia in the Architecture of St. Peter's in the Vatican* (Hilversum, Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004). See Also William Tronzo's chapter in Gianfranco Spagnesi's *L'architettura della Basilica di San Pietro. Storia e costruzione* (Rome: Buonsignori Editore, 1997), 161-166.

³⁸⁴ Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "Images of a Miracle. Federico Barocci and the Porziuncola Indulgence," *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 27, No. 54 (2006): 9-50; Chiara Frugoni, "L'ombra della Porziuncola nella Basilica Superiore di Assisi," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2001): 345-393.

Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to convey sculpture's value as an active agent in the church interior. By its very nature, sculpture pushes into the consciousness of the viewer, reinforcing the recognition of material presence. At the Holy House of the Virgin, the walls of the edifice signal the divine presence of the Virgin and Child and the apparitional status of holy topography. At the Sacro Monte of San Vivaldo, the presence of Christ volleys against the cognizant participation of the viewer, who is no longer a passive onlooker but an active participant in the life, death, and resurrection of the Savior. The resonant Christ hanging limp from Begarelli's *Deposition* similarly forces the viewer to contemplate on the physical sensation of loss and the weight of death, even as the material intimates the imminent resurrection. Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* actively brings the resurrected, animate form of the Savior into the church interior to declare triumphantly the salvation of the soul. Finally, Sangallo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* is an apparitional family lineage from which we the viewer are descendent, reiterated by the declaration, "I am the light..." In this confluence of case studies, the interdependence of sacred form and material messaging have become self-evident: the elision of inanimate sculpture with the agency of the divine body engulfs the avid viewer by evoking a personal, experiential *sacra conversazione*. In each instance, sculpture creates an affective spiritual communion.

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