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Author(s): Eve Borsook

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ART AND POLITICS AT THE MEDICI COURT II: THE BAPTISM OF FILIPPO DE' MEDICI IN 1577

by *Eve Borsook*

In 1574, as heir to the recently established Grand Ducal title, Francesco I de' Medici was still without a son after nine years of marriage. In 1575 his wife, the unhappy Giovanna d'Austria, disappointed him for the sixth time with still another daughter.¹ But on Monday, May 20th 1577, an heir was born at last and great was the rejoicing.² The rest of the week was declared a holiday, money was thrown to the cheering crowds from the palace windows, and from all the city wards bands of men, called *Potenze*³, staged jousts in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. Amid ringing bells, fireworks, feasting, singing and every kind of noisy celebration, barrels of wine were set up on the *ringhiera* and rivulets of the liquid flowed down to the Ponte Vecchio.⁴ Banquet tables were set up in front of the old Medici palace in the Via Larga and more wine was brought down by the workmen from Pratolino, the villa then being built by the Grand Duke for his mistress, Bianca Cappello.

Meanwhile, the court physicians battled for the sickly infant's life.⁵ It was decided to name the child in honour of the King of Spain, Philip II, who agreed to be the god-father. In the interests of political and social prestige, Francesco had so manoeuvred that history repeat itself in a grand manner. He renewed the old, un-official Hispano-Tuscan alliance and the ceremonial involved in Filippino's baptism was the occasion for openly declaring it.⁶ Francesco's mother was Eleonora of Toledo and his godfather had been Charles V. Now the Grand Duke's son and heir was given the name and special protection of that Emperor's son. Further, it was to Charles V that the Medici owed their *ducal* title and it was obviously Francesco's hope that Philip II would now be moved to concede his recognition of the *grand ducal* title assumed by Francesco's father. Francesco was surely encouraged in this hope by the fact that the Emperor Maximilian II had done just this the year before.⁷

¹ *Gaetano Pieraccini*, *La Stirpe de' Medici di Cafaggiolo*, vol. II, Florence, 1925, pp. 251-63.

² For accounts of Filippo's birth see: Archivio di Stato, Firenze (ASF), *Settimanni*, Diario Fiorentino, vol. 129 (henceforth to be referred to as *Settimanni*), c. 117; *Agostino Lapini*, *Diario fiorentino...* dal 252 al 1596, ed. *Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini*, Florence, 1900, pp. 194-95.

³ For an account of the *Potenze* see *Gaetano Cambiagi*, *Memorie storiche per la Natività di San Gio. Batista*, Florence, 1766, pp. 17 ff.

⁴ *Settimanni*, loc. cit.

⁵ *Pieraccini*, op. cit., p. 258.

⁶ Cf. *Francesco Inghirami*, *Storia della Toscana*, vol. X, Fiesole, 1843, p. 261.

⁷ Cf. *E. Borsook*, *Art and Politics at the Medici Court I: The Funeral of Cosimo I de' Medici*, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XII (1965), p. 36; *Riguccio Galluzzi*, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*, vol. II, Florence, 1781, pp. 283-84, 353. Probably Francesco also had some ground for hoping for Philip II's favour since the Spanish king's fourth wife was Giovanna d'Austria's cousin.

So that ambassadors from the courts of Europe would have sufficient time to reach Florence, the date for the baptism was set for the 29th of September — the feast of St. Michael the Archangel.⁸ On May 25th an embassy announcing the birth was sent off to Paris and five days later Bernardo Canigiani departed for the Spanish court. At about the same time, plans were laid for the decoration of the Baptistry of San Giovanni where the ceremony was to be held.

For two generations the interior of this church had been elaborately decorated for the baptisms of Medici first born. A brief review of these earlier affairs shows that certain features of the decor were traditional and that some of the props were even saved to be used again. The idea of transforming the medieval interior of San Giovanni goes back to the occasion of Francesco I's own baptism in 1541.⁹ Vasari, who contributed to the decorations, describes how Tribolo and Tasso were charged with their design. Because the medieval font seemed so old-fashioned, a new wooden one was carved for the centre of the room. This elaborate structure had lions' feet, garlands at each corner and wooden *putti* cavorting round the top. From the middle of the basin rose a pedestal on which was placed the youthful figure of the Baptist. This statue of white marble, variously attributed to Donatello or to Desiderio (Fig. 9), came from the house of Sigismondo Martelli who at the time was chamberlain of the Opera di S. Giovanni and was involved with the Baptistry's decorations.¹⁰ The "Giovannino Martelli", as the statue came to be called, was a regular fixture in future Medici baptisms. Otherwise, according to Vasari, the adornments were very "modern". Reliefs by Andrea Pisano in the *scarsella*, or tribune, were screened off by a large canvas of Christ's Baptism painted in *chiaroscuro* by Vasari. He boasted that after everyone else had refused the job, he took only six days to carry it out.¹¹ Like the "Giovannino Martelli", Vasari's picture was used again for Prince Philip's baptism.¹²

In 1567 it was Vasari himself who supervised the decorations in the Baptistry celebrating Eleonora, the first child of Francesco de' Medici and Giovanna d'Austria.¹³ This time the medieval font was concealed by a great platform which was reached by a ramped staircase with a silvered balustrade. In the centre was a font, again with putti, festoons, and the "Giovannino Martelli".¹⁴ On the walls hung fourteen "*pitture*" with subjects chosen by Vincenzo Borghini.¹⁵ These consisted of prophets, apostles and representations of "Natural" and "Moral" Law all painted to simulate bronze statues.¹⁶ These were probably the pictorial

⁸ *Settimanni*, op. cit., vol. 129, c. 118; ASF, Archivio Mediceo, Depositeria Generale, Filza 781, c. 55. The infant was baptized at a private ceremony shortly after birth; *Ibid.*, c. 56-57.

⁹ *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, Florence, 1881, pp. 89-90.

¹⁰ *Horst W. Janson*, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, Princeton, 1957, vol. II, pp. 191 ff.; *Paola Barocchi*, *Vasari Pittore*, Milan, 1964, p. 125. The "Giovannino Martelli" now in the Bargello, measures 1,73 cm in height. There is a discrepancy between this measurement and those given by Vasari and Borghini. The former says it was three *braccia* high (about 1,95 cm) and Borghini *Quasi due braccia* (or about 1,30 cm). For the Borghini reference see his *Descrizione* cited later. Vasari's mention of the figure's size occurs in the *Vite*, *Vasari-Milanesi*, pp. 89-90 and in his "Descrizione dell'Apparato Fatto nel Tempio di S. Giovanni di Firenze", Florence, Giunti, 1568, pp. 6-7.

¹¹ *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 670; for Vasari's erroneous date of 1542 for this baptism, see *Wolfgang Kallab*, *Vasari-Studien*, Vienna and Leipzig, 1908, p. 70, Item 98; and *W. and E. Paatz*, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, Frankfurt am Main, 1940-54, vol. II, p. 266, note 181.

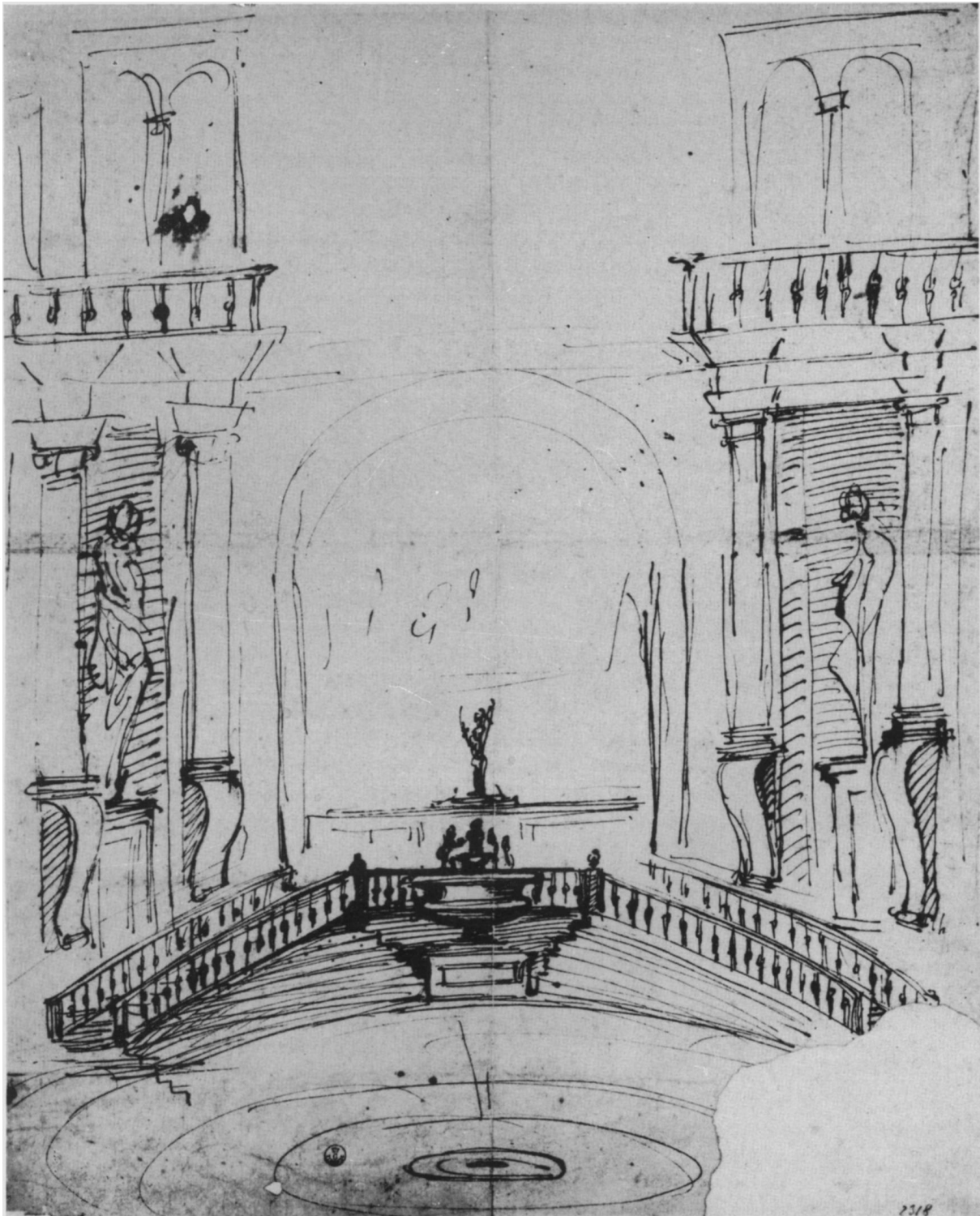
¹² *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 134 recto.

¹³ For a detailed account of these decorations see *Vasari's* *Descrizione*, op. cit., passim.

¹⁴ Vasari's description of the font so closely resembles the one designed by Tribolo for the 1541 baptism that one wonders if it was not the same object used again.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; to the right of the altar were figures from the Old Testament and on the left those from the New.



1 Bernardo Buontalenti, sketch for the Baptistry decor including Ammannati's statues in the niches of the octagon and the „Giovannino Martelli“ in the tribune. Uffizi 2318 A.

7.

precursors of Ammannati's stucco figures used in the 1577 baptism. In the tribune were tapestries of the Creation, Temptation and Expulsion together with a picture of the Baptist by Raphael and the arms of Charles V.¹⁷

Compared to these earlier Medici baptisms, the decor devised for Prince Philip's was the most ambitious in scale. Probably this was due to the fact that all the hopes of the as yet not too firmly established grand ducal dynasty were pinned on this feeble infant. Vincenzo Borghini was charged with the preparation of the iconographical programme while Bernardo Buontalenti was left to see that this was translated into architecture, pictures, and sculpture. Buontalenti was the Grand Duke's favourite architect and both he and Borghini were old hands at festival decor for the Medici court. The range of Borghini's scholarship included court ceremonial and among his manuscripts there are careful notes on the celebrations devised for the births, marriages, and deaths of foreign rulers and for the receptions and triumphal entries of visiting dignitaries.¹⁸ More than anyone else, it was to Borghini that the first Medici Grand Dukes owed the imperial character of the political and religious allegories on which the art of the court was based. It was Borghini who was the master mind behind the decor for the funerals of Michelangelo and the Grand Duke Cosimo I, the marriage of Francesco I and Giovanna d'Austria, and the baptisms of their children in 1567 and 1577.¹⁹ In these, Buontalenti had often collaborated.²⁰

For reasons unknown, Borghini only submitted his final plan for the decorative programme for Filippo's baptism on September 1st — barely a month before the ceremony was to take place.²¹ The Grand Duke's approval must have been immediate, for on the same day the Baptistery was closed for the construction work and Buontalenti was ordered to proceed.²² Baptisms which ordinarily would have been performed inside San Giovanni were transferred to the Misericordia. Aside from the architectural decor, Borghini left to Buontalenti the matter of choosing the painters for the various pictures and ornaments. It is clear from one of Borghini's letters to the architect that the two men had carefully discussed the plans and that this piece of correspondence was intended to confirm and clarify their talk.²³

Only a few weeks remained to carry out the vast decor which bristled with theology and political allegory. Buontalenti's style — elegant, elaborate, spiced with the exotic and the bizarre — was ideally suited to Borghini's complex scheme. Although Borghini was delighted

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21. Raphael's picture was probably the one now in the Pitti. This canvas (1.64 × 1.50 m; Inv. N. 1446) represents St. John in the Desert. Vasari says the picture was originally painted for Cardinal Colonna who later gave it to his doctor, Jacopo da Carpi. In 1568 it was owned by Francesco Benintendi in Florence and by 1589 it had passed into the Grand Ducal collections and was already in the Tribuna of the Uffizi. Today it is in the Galleria Palatina of the Palazzo Pitti. Cf. *J. D. Passavant*, *Rafael von Urbino*, vol. II, Leipzig, 1839, pp. 351 ff.; and R. *Galleria degli Uffizi: Catalogo dei Dipinti*, Florence, 1926, p. 59. As for the arms of Charles V, either these were left over from the Baptism of 1541, or were made anew to remind the public that the Emperor had been Francesco's god-father and the original sponsor of the Medici's claim to a ducal title.

¹⁸ Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS. Magl. II, X, 100, cc. 19–21, 24, 55, 57, 77–78. *Giov. Bottari and Stefano Ticozzi*, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura*, ed. Milan, 1822, vol. I, pp. 128 ff.

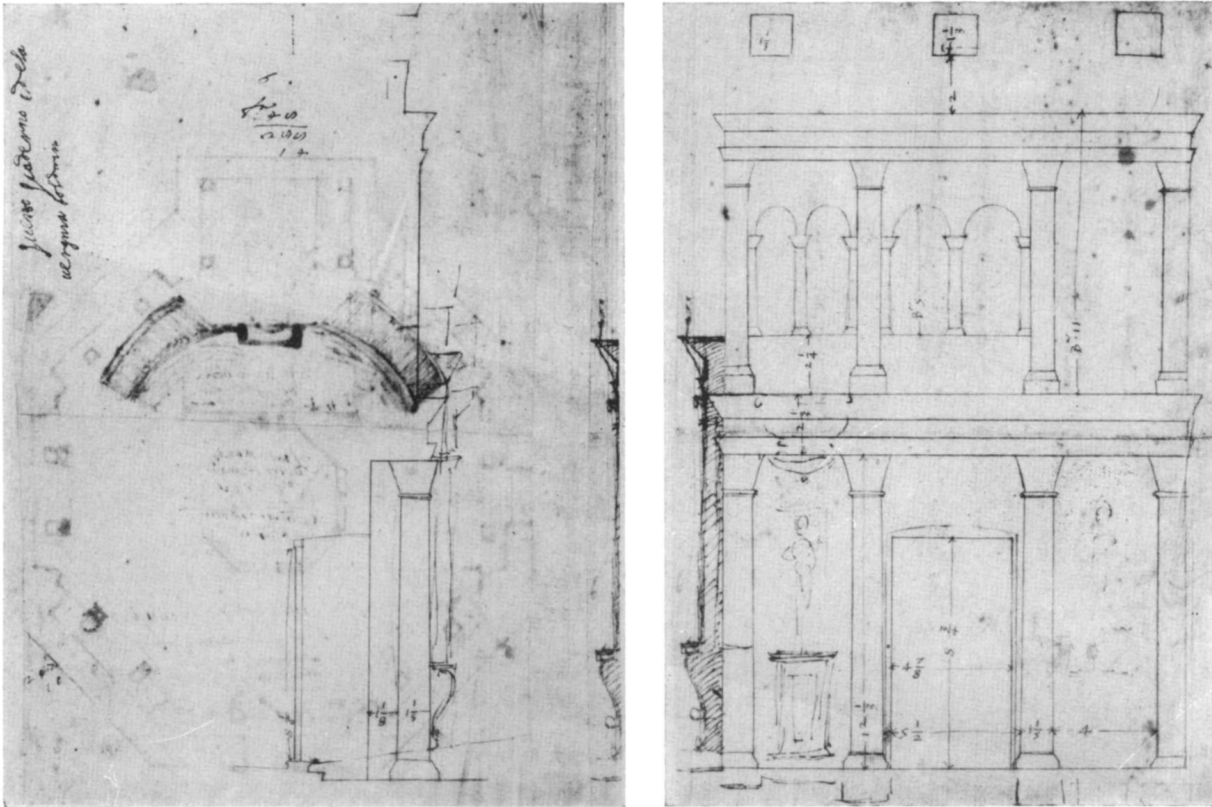
¹⁹ Cf. *Rudolf and Margot Wittkower*, *The Divine Michelangelo: the Florentine Academy's Homage on his Death in 1564*, London, 1964; *Borsook*, op. cit., p. 37, 48; *Piero Ginori Conti*, *L'Apparato per le nozze di Francesco de' Medici e di Giovanna d'Austria*, Florence, 1936; *Vasari*, *Descrizione*, passim.

²⁰ Buontalenti contributed to the decor for Cosimo I's funeral, to the marriage of 1565, and to both of the baptism ceremonies.

²¹ *Antonio Lorenzoni*, *Carteggio artistico inedito di Vincenzo Borghini*, Florence, 1912, p. 114.

²² *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 130 recto.

²³ *Bottari-Ticozzi*, op. cit., p. 241–42: ... *pensando stanotte agli ornamenti che si possono fare in San Giovanni nel modo che ragionammo iersera, mi occorre per l'invenzione quel che vedrete scritto nel foglio incluso in questo.*



2 a and b Buontalenti, decor planned to mask the Romanesque structure of the Baptistry. Profile and elevation (one sheet). Uffizi 2483 A recto.

with the artist's plans for the font and the staircases, he had hesitations about the rest of the decor. He warned Buontalenti not to overdo the decoration of the walls. Not only was there too little time to give so rich a scheme sufficient polish, but it also seemed futile to conceal the marble and granite which were in themselves the most impressive ornaments one could wish for:

Quanto alle colonne, e a' pilastri, e a' ballatoi di sopra, con tutto il disegno vostro, considerate di grazia di non metter mano in tanta pasta, che sia troppa a si poco tempo, e che ella non si possa condurre almanco con quella perfezione e pulitezza, e con tutto quel finimento che si ricerca volendo coprire marmi e graniti, che alla fine sono i più ricchi ornamenti che si trovino.

Borghini then concludes with the celebrated *dictum* on Florentine taste which was intended to remind Buontalenti of the popular criticism he was likely to arouse:

Noi siamo in una città che ha buon occhio e cattiva lingua, e ognuno poi dice; e se quello, che si farà di sopra, non sarà più bello di quello, che si cuopre di sotto, fra che non mancano mai degli' invidiosi, e de' malevoli, andranno delle novelle attorno. E' tutto questo, Messer Bernardo mio, vi metto in considerazione per l'amore, ch'io vi porto e pel desiderio, che ho, che ne usciate ad honore...²⁴

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-43.

Two sketches in the Uffizi show what Buontalenti had in mind for the walls (Figs. 1 and 2 a, b).²⁵ The columns on the ground floor were to be concealed by great pilasters set on volutes. These pilasters were used, as in the manner of tabernacles, to frame a series of stucco statues by Ammannati. Above, impost blocks and a segmented cornice support a balustrade screening off the lower part of the gallery, or *ballatoio* as Borghini called it.²⁶ While Borghini agreed that it was appropriate to do something extraordinary (*è ragionevole uscire dell'ordinario*)²⁷ for the occasion, it is clear that he doubted there was enough time to carry all this out.

On September 14th, the Grand Duke gave the order allowing Buontalenti to remove the medieval high altar, monks' choir, and octagonal font.²⁸ In place of these medieval structures, Buontalenti's idea was to introduce a sense of movement into the Baptistry interior. In his plan, the main room is linked to the tribune by a double flight of ramped stairs. The effect was to exalt the tribune (which contained the altar) by means of a dramatic view. The sweep of stairs may have been a development on Vasari's design for the Baptistry decor of 1567 which also included ramped staircases.²⁹ The Uffizi sketches show two variants on Buontalenti's basic plan. In what was probably the earlier sketch, Uffizi 2455A (Fig. 3), instead of the ramps, there is a semi-circular staircase flanked by a low balustrade. This was aligned just to the west of the north-south axis of the interior. In the middle of this structure, on the semi-circular platform, an elaborately carved font was to be placed. This version certainly has less sweep and verve than the second plan which appears in Uffizi 2318A (Fig. 1) and Uffizi 2483A verso (Fig. 4). A drawing in the Vatican Library (Fig. 5)³⁰, kindly brought to my attention by Dr. Detlef Heikamp, shows that the final solution was more complicated: the ramped staircases were bent at angles, perhaps because the available space inside the Baptistry would not, after all, allow the soaring sweep of the plan jotted down on the two Uffizi sketches.

The recto of Uffizi 2483A shows how the tabernacles were to mask the medieval columns so as to confer a more grandiose appearance to the lower part of the walls (Fig. 2a).³¹ Their effect was to exaggerate the height of the first storey.

Given Buontalenti's sketches and the official account of the decorations, one might ask what kind of architecture the designer had in mind for the Baptistry interior. The series of tabernacle-niches for statues around the walls was derived from the Pantheon. This, the most famous round temple of Antiquity, was an obvious source for Buontalenti whose intention was to give back to the Baptistry ornaments appropriate to a building still regarded as an ancient structure. Even the columns of the tabernacles with their profiled impost-blocks were based on those in the Pantheon. As for the curving staircases around the baptismal font, these were a variation on the stairs Buontalenti had built three years earlier to frame the high altar of Santa Trinita (since removed to Santo Stefano al Ponte). The basic plan, along with the almost semi-circular tiers of seats rising behind these stairs, like Vasari's lost scheme of 1567, were probably based on garden and villa architecture in Rome such as Bramante's plan for

²⁵ Florence, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, 2318 A and 2483 A recto; these and other drawings from the Uffizi are here reproduced with the kind permission of the directress, Dssa. Anna Forlani Tempesti.

²⁶ *Bottari-Ticozzi*, op. cit., p. 242.

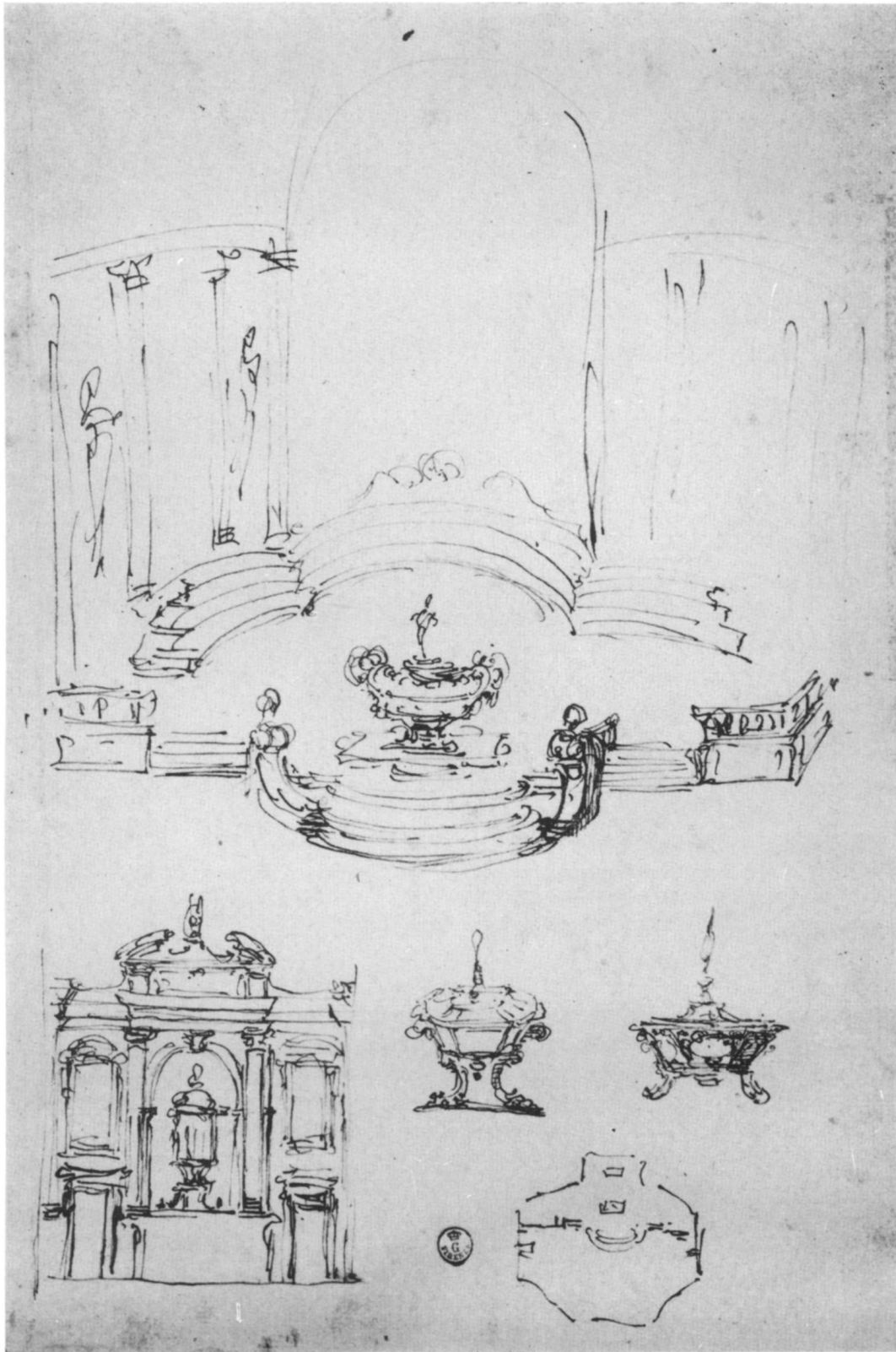
²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

²⁸ *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 133 recto. On an earlier occasion, Cosimo I refused a proposal to remove the medieval choir and font from S. Giovanni.

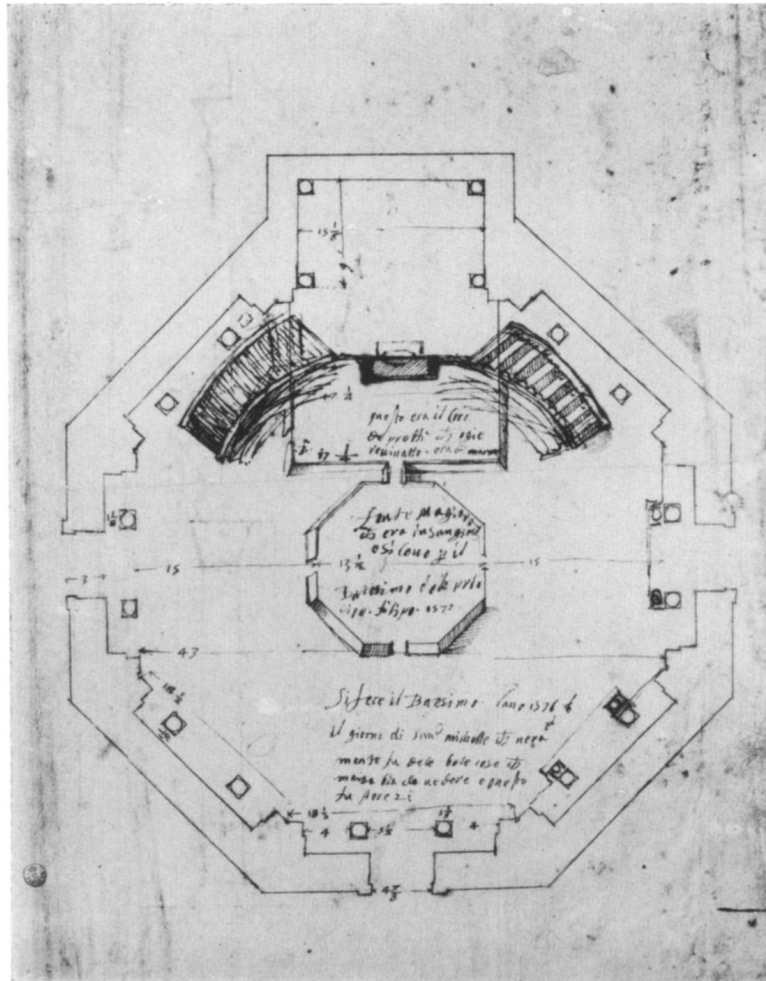
²⁹ Cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 426; *Vasari*, *Descrizione*, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

³⁰ Anonymous, Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 1282, c. 17 verso, 18 recto.

³¹ The writing on the verso of this sheet (Fig. 4) seems to have been added later. Through oversight or forgetfulness the date of the baptism is given as "1576" instead of 1577.



3 Buontalenti, above : early version for the decor inside the Baptistry; below right : ground plan of this scheme. Uffizi 2455 A.

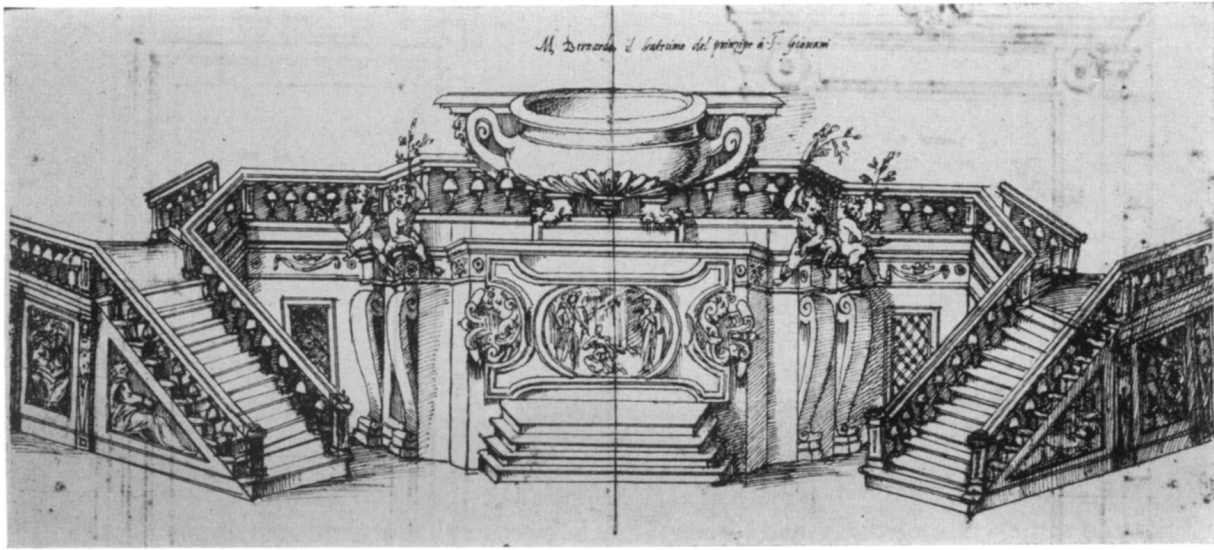


4 Buontalenti, ground plan of the Baptistry showing the medieval font and tribune enclosure with overlay of Buontalenti's festive staircases. Uffizi 2483 A verso.

the upper end of the Cortile del Belvedere and Ammannati's court for the Villa Giulia.³² Even if Buontalenti had not seen these himself, he could have seen illustrations of them in Serlio's handbook which also included details from the Pantheon.³³ Buontalenti's use of these motifs, however, was anything but neo-classical; they were simply the excuse for flights of fancy inspired by what the architect believed were plans of ancient pedigree. It is interesting that Buontalenti's design was, to a degree, anticipated earlier in the century by a curious bit of

³² Cf. *James S. Ackerman*, *The Cortile del Belvedere*, Città del Vaticano, 1954, pp. 73-82; *Eduard Vodoz*, *Studien zum architektonischen Werk des Bartolomeo Ammannati*, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, VI (1941), p. 5.

³³ Cf. *Sebastiano Serlio*, *Regole generali di architettura*, Venice, 1540, p. LI. Compare these with Uff. 2318A (Fig. 1). Probably Buontalenti was more familiar with Serlio's version of the Belvedere staircase because the actual project was rebuilt in 1551 by Michelangelo; cf. *Ackerman*, op. cit., p. 138.



5 Drawing by unknown hand of Buontalenti's ramped staircase and font as they were actually carried out. Vatican Library.

architectural phantasmagoria painted by Giulio Romano in a window embrasure of the Sala di Costantino in the Vatican.³⁴ In actual architecture of the period, a similar mixture of architectural elements existed in the upper end of Bramante's Cortile del Belvedere and in the sunken courts of the Villa Imperiale at Pesaro and in the Villa Giulia in Rome.³⁵ Here too are curved staircases, exedrae, statuary, and balustrades. Thanks to Bramante, Giulio Romano, Pirro Ligorio, and Ammannati, this kind of architecture appeared much earlier in Rome and Mantua. After 1555, through Ammannati and Buontalenti, it took hold in Florence too — making its entry in garden architecture and festival decor.

To return to the decorations for Prince Filippo's baptism: the stucco statues framed by Buontalenti's tabernacles consisted of the twelve Apostles and two allegorical figures of "Natural" and "Written" Law.³⁶ These measured about five *braccia* in height (about 3,25 m) and, according to Baldinucci, were made by Ammannati at his own expense.³⁷ It is uncertain if the figures were made especially for the baptism of 1577 because Biadi says that already in 1576 images, tabernacles, flags and other trophies were removed from the walls and that in

³⁴ Cf. *Frederick Hartt*, Giulio Romano, New Haven, 1958, vol. II, fig. 75 (Foto Sansaini, Rome). The fresco was part of a scheme painted for two Medici Popes, Leo X and Clement VII. It is unlikely that Buontalenti knew of this small fresco, but he and Giulio shared a similar taste for bizarre architecture.

³⁵ Aside from *Ackerman* and *Vodoz* see also *Craig Hugh Smyth*, *The Sunken Courts of the Villa Giulia and the Villa Imperiale*, in: *Essays in Memory of Karl Lehmann*, New York, 1964, pp. 304-13.

³⁶ *La Descrizione dell'Apparato Fatto in Firenze, nel Battesimo del Serenissimo Principe di Toscana*, Florence, Giunti, 1577, pp. 18-22. "Legge Naturale" was dressed as a simple shepherdess covered in animal skins with a garland of flowers on her head and an apple in her hand. "Written (or Mosaic) Law", also represented as a female figure was dressed in clerical vestments; a veil almost covered her face and she held a stone tablet above her head.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18; *Filippo Baldinucci*, *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, ed. *Ferdinando Ranalli*, Florence, 1846, vol. II, pp. 380-81.

their place Ammannati's stuccoes were installed.³⁸ However, the fact that their number and many of their subjects corresponded with the pictorial cycle made for the baptism of 1567, argues that Ammannati's series was also intended for a Medici baptism and that they were a variation on the pictorial scheme of ten years earlier. In any case, it is clear from Buontalenti's sketches and Borghini's letters that the statues were already in place by September 1577.

Between the columns and tabernacles and around the tabernacles themselves, there were also a series of pictures. In the planning stage, Borghini declared that he preferred colours to monochromes, but if there was too little time to have coloured pictures done in a superlative manner, then the *chiaroscuro* would be better because, he said, *portano seco un certo che di grandezza*.³⁹ One infers that this *certo che* consisted of the monumental effect or illusion of sculpture created by *grisaille* or *chiaroscuro* painting. Borghini proposed that the five main pictures be painted in colours, while the fourteen scenes be done in *grisaille*. These monochromes were originally intended to go high up over the statues and Borghini suggested that they might be varied by tones of bronze, indigo, and yellow.⁴⁰ Among the painters considered for them were Allori, Naldini, Macchietti, Santi di Tito, il Poppi, and Giovanni Maria Butteri — almost the same *équipe* which had already collaborated with Borghini and Buontalenti on the decor for Cosimo I's funeral three years earlier.⁴¹ In the end, Borghini's old protégé — Francesco Morandini, known as "il Poppi", saw to the paintings on the exterior while Allori prepared most of the compositions for those inside.⁴²

While construction and decoration were underway, Borghini came to see how things looked.⁴³ He noted that the four largest pictures which were "to go in the middle" (*vanno nel mezzo*) had an unforeseen amount of space beneath them which ought to be filled. In the letter addressed to "Messer Alessandro" (probably the painter, Alessandro Allori), he suggested that the problem might be solved by inserting appropriate inscriptions (*epitaffi*) held by pairs of *angioletti*.⁴⁴ A sketch of what he had in mind was included in the letter. Another change was made as to the position of the *chiaroscuro* scenes accompanying each of the stucco Apostles.

³⁸ Luigi Biadi, *Notizie sulle antiche fabbriche di Firenze non terminate*, Florence, 1824, p. 37. There has been a wide difference of opinion as to the date and occasion for which Ammannati's statues were made; see Paatz, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 265-66, note 80. Baldinucci believed them to have been made for Francesco de' Medici's Baptism in 1541. Yet Vasari's account of these decorations makes no mention of them. In his description of the 1569 baptism, Vasari cites neither stucco statues nor Ammannati; instead, he describes the fourteen *pitture* of prophets, apostles, and "Natural" and "Written Law" — see notes 15 and 16. Paatz suggests that Ammannati's statues may have been intended to replace a series of Gothic figures; cf. Paatz, *op. cit.*, p. 207. See also Antonio Lumachi, *Memorie storiche dell'antichissima basilica di S. Gio. Batista di Firenze, raccolte.. all'occasione del ripulimento e restauro fatto all'intorno di essa in quest'anno MDCCLXXXII*, Florence, 1782, pp. 70-72.

³⁹ Bottari-Ticozzi, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*; Vasari-Milanesi, vol. I, p. 191.

⁴¹ Borsook, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 39, 45-46, 48.

⁴² *Descrizione* (1577), *op. cit.*, p. 28; cf. Lorenzoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96, and see note 60.

⁴³ Bottari-Ticozzi, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 246 ff. The undated letter was written to "Messer Alessandro" whom Ticozzi and Lorenzoni believed to have been Alessandro Caccini. However, it seems more likely that the "Alessandro" here was Allori who was responsible for the paintings inside the Baptistry which is largely the subject of Borghini's letter. In an earlier edition of Bottari-Ticozzi (Barbiellini, Rome, 1754, vol. I, p. 177), the letter is addressed to "Magnifico Messer Alessandro" — *magnifico* would hardly have been used for the painter — but would have been appropriate to the then archbishop of Florence who was Alessandro de' Medici. Only a check with the text of the original would clarify the matter. To date, I have been unable to find the letter on which the printed version of the text is based.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, 1822 edition, vol. I, p. 246.

Instead of setting these on top of the framed statues, as was originally planned, it was decided to set them below while the *epitaffi* taken from the Creed were to go overhead.⁴⁵

In the same letter, Borghini goes on to explain that the theme underlying the entire pictorial programme was the spread of Christianity throughout the world as demonstrated by baptism and the waning of idol worship. This had a particular significance for the Florentine Baptistry which was still regarded as having been originally built as a pagan temple in honour of Mars. The very font in which Filippo was to be baptized was set upon the spot where it was supposed that the god's idol once stood.⁴⁶ Borghini had made a careful study of the Baptistry and ancient temples in general.⁴⁷ We shall see that he used the occasion of Prince Philip's baptism as a pretext to restore certain features of the building which he thought appropriate to such ancient structures.⁴⁸

Judging from other passages in the undated letter to "*Messer Alessandro*", few if any of the *chiaroscuro* scenes had yet been painted.⁴⁹ Since baptism and conversion were the only subjects, there was risk of repetition and monotony in the compositions. To avoid this, Borghini suggested how the settings of the scenes and the gestures of the protagonists might be varied: some baptisms could occur in a river, others at a font; there could be some landscapes, a view of a piazza or an ancient temple. The same devices could be used for the scenes dealing with the end of idol worship. So as to better identify the locality of the action, Borghini advised the insertion of personifications of rivers or characteristic beasts as were used on ancient coins and medals.

While Buontalenti and his craftsmen worked against time, Philip II's proxy arrived on September 13th in the person of Don Antonio de Mendoza, chamberlain to the Spanish court and an able diplomat. It was he who ten years earlier had succeeded in obtaining free passage through Lorraine for Alba's troops en route to Flanders.⁵⁰ As the final preparations were being made, the rest of the important guests arrived. Cardinal Ferdinando, the Grand Duke's brother, came and a few days later, on September 26th, the Cardinal of Santa Fiore reached the city with the Pope's illegitimate son, Giacomo Buoncompagni, the bearer of the papal benediction.⁵¹

On the day of the ceremony, a great parade left the Palazzo Vecchio for the Duomo and the Baptistry.⁵² The procession was led by the gentlemen of the court on horseback followed by *otto vescovi dello stato*.⁵³ Then came Sigismondo de' Rossi's son dressed in white carrying a large *cero*, or candle.⁵⁴ After him a group of *Landsknechte* carried a great baldachin of crimson

⁴⁵ Loc. cit. and cf. letter written to Buontalenti in the planning stage for the Baptistry decor: *Ibid.*, pp. 244-46 (from the letter to Allori written while the decorations were well underway); cf. *Settimanni*, op. cit., 133 recto and 134 recto; *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 9; *F. Baldinucci*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 508.

⁴⁶ *V. Borghini*, *Discorsi*, Florence, 1755, vol. I, pp. 162 ff.; cf. *Giovanni Gaye*, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI*, Florence, 1839-34, vol. III, pp. 156-69; *Paatz*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 211. However, at least one contemporary of Borghini's doubted that the ancient temple was really dedicated to Mars; *Borghini*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 156, note 1 containing objections of Girolamo Mei.

⁴⁷ *Borghini*, op. cit., pp. 152-68.

⁴⁸ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., pp. 8-9: ... è stata levata via del tutto, non solo per meglio accomodare l'Apparato di questo Battesimo, ma anco per ridurre in miglior forma, & fare che al tutto di quel nobilissimo, & antico Tempio corrispondano le parti di dentro...

⁴⁹ *Bottari-Ticozzi*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 246-48. In the letter, Borghini gives suggestions as to how the scenes might be varied using the conditional and future tenses towards the end of the letter.

⁵⁰ *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 132 verso; *De Lamar Jensen*, *Diplomacy and Dogmatism: Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1964, p. 59.

⁵¹ *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 133 recto; *Ludwig von Pastor*, *Storia dei Papi*, Rome, 1955, vol. IX, p. 27. Giacomo Buoncompagni was also chamberlain of Castel Sant'Angelo. He was born before the Pope entered the clergy.

⁵² *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 134 verso.

⁵³ Loc. cit. and c. 135 recto.

⁵⁴ Loc. cit.

velvet which sheltered the infant prince who was held in the arms of Jacopo d'Appiano, the lord of Piombino. Mendoza was at their side accompanied by the wet nurse and the doctor.⁵⁵ Two-hundred and twenty-eight ladies of the court all dressed in white walked behind. Although Bianca Cappello, Francesco's favourite, had tactfully retired from the celebrations, it was noted that her daughter, Pellegrina, led the ladies of the court.⁵⁶ The rear of the parade was brought up by the Grand Duke himself in the company of two Medici cardinals (Ferdinando and Alessandro), Mario Sforza, and Jacopo Buoncompagni.

At the doors of the cathedral, the court was greeted by fifty small boys⁵⁷ dressed as angels. These were chosen from the city's juvenile confraternities. Each child held a lily in one hand and an unlighted candle in the other. After mass, the procession passed to the Baptistry. The fullest account of the decorations here and the ceremony performed inside it was made by Borghini for the souvenir booklet printed by Giunti to commemorate the event.⁵⁸

The exterior of the Baptistry around the "Paradise Doors" was entirely masked by a Buon-talentine structure which consisted of a portico in the guise of a triumphal arch. It was twenty *braccia* high, fourteen wide, and eight deep.⁵⁹ At the top were the grand ducal arms surrounded by a fine, balustraded balcony from which an orchestra and choir burst into music and song at the little prince's approach. The inner vestibule of the portico was painted with a rich pictorial scheme invented by Borghini. Here were set forth the ancient ties binding Rome and Florence which embraced even the rite of baptism. There were also allusions to the Medici as restorers of the city's most venerable churches. It was not forgotten that a century earlier the family had seen to the rebuilding of the first cathedral of Florence, the paleo-Christian basilica of San Lorenzo, and that now Francesco had provided for the "modernization" of the "ancient" Baptistry.

Inside the portico, the two largest pictures, "St. Sylvester Baptizing Constantine" and "San Felice Baptizing the Florentines while the idol of Mars is destroyed" were painted by il Poppi.⁶⁰ Both subjects were especially relevant to the Baptistry because it was then believed that Constantine and Sylvester were responsible for the conversion of the former temple of Mars into the baptistry of Florence.⁶¹ Around each of these pictures was an ornamental frieze with cameos on which further scenes were represented. Around the "Baptism of Constantine" were Helena's discovery of the True Cross, the defeat of Maxentius at the Mulvian bridge, and the erection of the arch of Constantine.⁶² Around the "Baptism of the Florentines",

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 134 verso.

⁵⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁷ *Loc. cit.* and c. 135 recto. While the *Descrizione* (1577), *op. cit.*, p. 26, and *Settimanni* say there were 35 little boys, *Lapini* (*op. cit.*, p. 196) says they numbered 50.

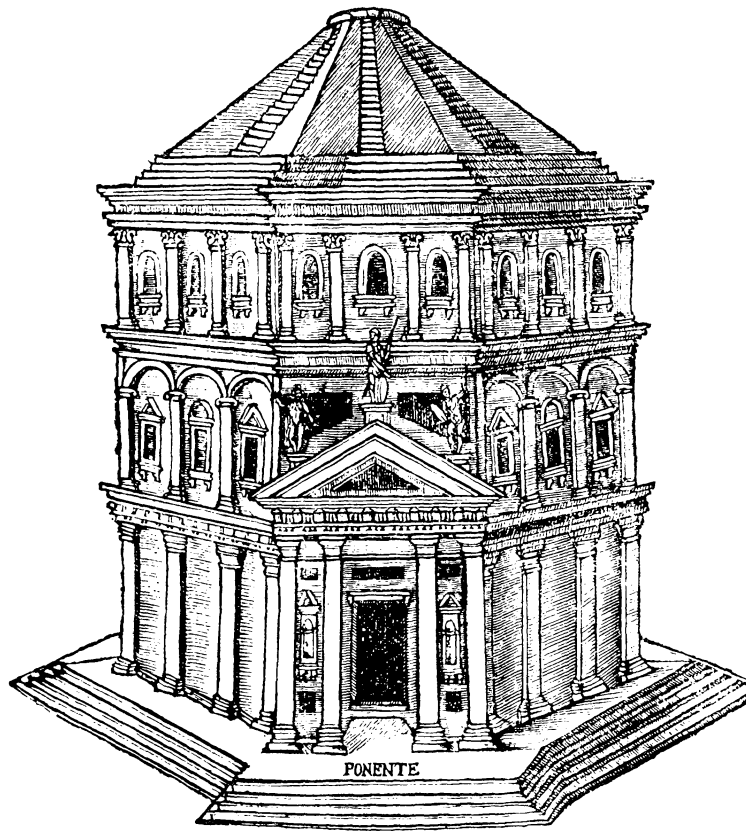
⁵⁸ That *Borghini* was the author of the *Descrizione* text has already been demonstrated by *Lorenzoni* (*Carteggio*, *op. cit.*, p. xiv and 115, note 2). To this may be added as further evidence Borghini's letter to the Grand Duke of September 25th which appears to have accompanied a draft of the text (*Bottari-Ticozzi*, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 245). See also the printer Giunti's letter to Borghini of October 3, 1577 (ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie Prima, Filza 133, c. 140: *Mando a V. S. 12 di questi apparati [i.e. the booklets] finiti stanotte, cioe, 10, per V. S., 1 a Ser Costantino, e 1 al prete che vi scrive, ne manderò al Poppi, al Bronzino et a 50, altri 11 manco, et so bene che alla fatica che V. S. ha durata se gli converrebbero tutti et il simile a don Silvano, et gli baccio le mani / Di bottega il di 3 Ottobre 1577 / Di V. S. R. / per servirla Jac. Giunti.*

⁵⁹ *Descrizione* (1577), *op. cit.*, pp. 8-12. In the letter to the Grand Duke, of September 25th (*Bottari-Ticozzi*, *op. cit.*, ed. 1822, vol. I, p. 245), the portico is referred to as *arco o portico di fuori*.

⁶⁰ *Descrizione* (1577), *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12, p. 28; *V. Borghini*, *Il Riposo*, Florence, 1584, p. 642: ... *in Pratolino due tele l'una il Battesimo di Costantino, e l'altra quello del popol di Firenze rappresentanti, che furon fatte per lo Battesimo del Gran Principe D. Filippo Medici felicissima memoria.*

⁶¹ *Loc. cit.* and *Paatz*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 211.

⁶² *Descrizione* (1577), *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.



6 Vincenzo Borghini's reconstruction of the Florentine Baptistery as a pagan temple. Woodcut from his *Discorsi*.

the scenes on the cameos included the Florentines rushing to adore the Baptist as the city's new patron saint and St. Ambrose consecrating San Lorenzo.⁶³ The rest of the available surface was painted with grotesques, trophies, scenes of pagan sacrifices, a medallion of Romulus and Remus (Romulus was regarded as the son of Mars)⁶⁴, and a victory holding a crown in one hand and a laurel in the other. In the vault was a picture showing salt put into the mouth of an infant brought for baptism. Borghini's explanation of the subject was that baptism as the first gift, was the "salt of wisdom".⁶⁵ The shape of the triumphal arch-portico with its decoration of scenes, friezes and medallions, suggests that Buontalenti's structure in many respects resembled the arch of Constantine which was included among the scenes painted on it. Certainly this suited Borghini's contention that such porticoes were often engaged to ancient Roman temples — including the Florentine Baptistery (Fig. 6).⁶⁶

⁶³ *Loc. cit.* The other scenes were: the "Defeat of the Gothic King Radagasio at Fiesole" and the "Founding of the church of Santa Reparata" to commemorate the great victory.

⁶⁴ *Loc. cit.* and *Borghini*, *Discorsi* (1584 edition), vol. I, p. 152.

⁶⁵ *Descrizione* (1577), *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁶ *Borghini*, *Discorsi* (1755 edition), vol. I, pp. 160-63; cf. plate in the original edition of 1584, vol. I, following p. 222. Note that the interior view includes gabled tabernacles between the columns — a motif used in the Pantheon as well as in Buontalenti's decor for the 1577 Baptism. See also *Paatz*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 212.

Borghini's description of the interior corresponds with several of Buontalenti's drawings in the Uffizi (Figs. 1, 2a, b, 7).⁶⁷ Besides Ammannati's stucco statues and the grisailed scenes⁶⁸, there were four large canvases devoted to the conversion of the four quarters of the globe — Asia, Africa, Europe and America.⁶⁹ These were probably painted by Alessandro Allori who was charged with the pictorial decor of the interior.⁷⁰ The galleried corridor overhead was partly covered by a fictive marble balustrade (Fig. 1). At the corners where the walls joined, torches blazed from great candelabra.⁷¹ In the tribune, Vasari's monochrome "Baptism of Christ" was brought out once more.⁷² Though the picture was painted thirty-six years earlier for the baptism of Prince Philip's father, Borghini singled out this work by his dead colleague for special praise.⁷³ In view of this, it is curious that the official *Descrizione* does not mention Vasari by name as its author. But Borghini's account of the picture is so exact that there can hardly be any doubt that it was Vasari's canvas. The shivering nude, the two angels, and the river god confirm Paola Barocchi's identification of the drawing in the British Museum as a study for this lost picture.⁷⁴ On the adjacent walls of the tribune we are told that there were two more pictures by the same master: the "Flood" and the "Passage through the Red Sea".⁷⁵ These subjects were viewed as pre-figurations of the baptismal rite and Borghini set appropriate inscriptions below each one drawn from texts by Saints Peter and Paul.⁷⁶

Borghini justified the removal of the old monks' choir and font on the grounds that these medieval additions were not in harmony with the ancient structure.⁷⁷ Apparently, he thought

⁶⁷ Note that Uffizi 2314 A verso (Fig. 7) shows one of the stucco statues in a niche below and that the font amid the ramped stairs at the top of the sheet roughly corresponds to that on Uffizi 2318 A (Fig. 1) and to that on the Vatican drawing (Fig. 5).

⁶⁸ The subjects of the grisailles, according to the *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., pp. 18-22, were based on the chief acts of conversion performed by the saints and personifications represented by Ammannati's statues above. These saints were, proceeding from the right of the altar: St. Peter (with Peter and Paul converting the Romans while the statue of Jupiter Capitolinus and other statues are broken with the personification of Italy seated atop the world); St. James Major (scene of conversion with personification of Spain); St. Philip (the saint preaching to the "ocean people"); St. Thomas (the saint preaches in India — allegorical figure of the river Indus and people with dogs' heads or one eyed faces appear); St. James Minor (the saint preaches to the twelve lost tribes); St. Mattia (Syria seated on a lion holding reins and a sceptre); Mosaic Law (with Moses breaking the tablets below); Natural Law (Expulsion of Adam and Eve); St. Simon (scene below shows the Ibis, Crocodile and Bull with human head — to represent the saint's work in Egypt); St. Matthew (personification of Armenia with Noah's ark perched on a mountain peak); St. John the Evangelist (saint preaching to the Greeks in front of an altar of Diana which is split); St. Andrew (the conversion of Scythia and Achaia with two female martyrs). In the end, the inscriptions above each saint were held not by *putti*, as Borghini had at one point suggested to "M. Alessandro", but by grotesque masques; cf. *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 18: *una bellissima maschera con l'ale, e capricciosa, tutta messa d'oro*.

⁶⁹ The four large scenes were: the Conversion of the East; and the Conversion of Africa, Ethiopia and Egypt represented by St. Philip Baptizing Queen Candace's Eunuch (these two pictures were on either side of the Paradise Doors); near Donatello's Magdalen, was the Conversion of New Spain wherein were shown the King of Spain with personifications of the countries he ruled (e.g. the rivers Tagus and Plate); opposite this picture was the Conversion of the Franks with King Clovis Baptized by St. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims. Cf. *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., pp. 6, 15-17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁷² *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 134 recto.

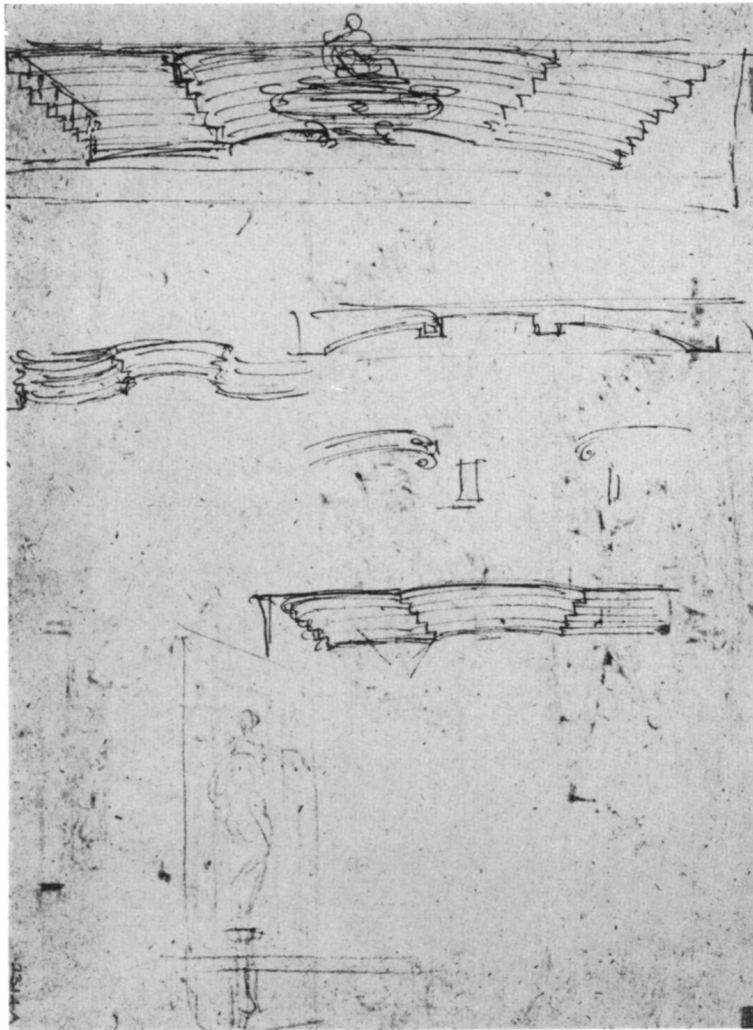
⁷³ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 13: *di mano di Maestro eccellente... tanto ben fatte, e con tanto giudizio e si bella maniera, che non è quasi possibil credere siano state fatte in così breve tempo...* According to Borghini, the figures were more than 6 *braccia* high (or almost 4 metres!). The canvas as a whole measured 15 *braccia* high and 13 wide (9.75 × 9.43 m). Cf. *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 134 recto.

⁷⁴ *Barocchi*, op. cit., p. 125; see also note 10.

⁷⁵ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁷⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.



7 Buontalenti, studies for ramped staircases ; below : sketch of a stucco statue by Ammannati. Uffizi 2314 A verso.

Buontalenti's substitutes more appropriate. On entering the church one had a view of the tribune, the floor of which was raised on a platform about four *braccia* high (about 3 metres). Here was installed the celebrated silver altar (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo) and various relics including a bone from the arm of St. Philip.⁷⁸ A double ramp of balustraded staircases swept up to this platform (Fig. 5). These were probably made of wood and painted to imitate white marble. The balusters were green and gold.⁷⁹ In the middle of this platform stood a font five *braccia* wide and two high (3.25 × 1.30 m).⁸⁰ It was oval in shape and painted the colour of lapis lazuli with gilded lions' paws supporting it. From the center, rose a subsidiary font (not shown in the Vatican drawing) which was gilded and silvered with rich orna-

⁷⁸ *Paatz*, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 208-10.

⁷⁹ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., pp. 23-24; *Paatz*, loc. cit.

⁸⁰ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 23.



8 Buontalenti, a version of the font related to the conception illustrated in Fig. 3. Uffizi 690 Orn.

ments.⁸¹ Buontalenti's study for this subsidiary font (Fig. 8) does not correspond exactly with Borghini's description in that the statue of the "Giovannino Martelli" (Fig. 9) was in reality not set on top of it but, rather, behind it on a raised pedestal of white and gold.⁸² Another drawing (Fig. 1) gives a rough idea of the statue's relation to the font.

⁸¹ Loc. cit.

⁸² Loc. cit.: *e quivi in guisa accomodata, che pare quasi sia sopra le fonti, o vero pile*. See Fig. 1. The statue originally held a metal cross as does the figure in the drawing (see also *H. W. Janson*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 192). Uffizi 690 Orn. (Fig. 8) which is a study for the font shows what is probably the "Giovannino Martelli" rising from its centre. On the extreme right of this drawing, there is a sketch of the statue viewed from its back. The drawing was first published by *Luisa Marcucci*, *Mostra di disegni d'Arte Decorativa*, Florence, 1951, n. 22, p. 11.

At the feet of the stucco statue of Peter and Paul, on either side of the tribune entrance, were two more holy water fonts made of gilded wood.⁸³ According to Borghini's description, a low table was set on the floor in front of the baptismal font on which the baby was to be laid. Its top was made of *pietre dure* inlays and was supported by four legs of gilt wood. The Vatican drawing (Fig. 5) does not include this rich litter, but it does show the scene of the child David being anointed by Samuel as the chosen king of the Hebrews which Borghini says was painted just above the low platform.⁸⁴ Accompanying it was the appropriate inscription: UNXIT TE DEVS / DEVS TUUS OLEO LAETITIAE. Thus, by the time Prince Philip reached the font, the imposing parallels had been drawn between this heir to the Grand Duchy and two divinely inspired rulers of antiquity — Constantine and David.

Holy water was especially brought for the occasion from the river Jordan⁸⁵ and during the ceremony the fifty small "angels" stood round the font with lighted candles.⁸⁶ While Monsignor Bolognetti, the papal nunzio, performed the rite, the courtiers watched from the gallery and from the tiers of seats built like a grandstand around the octagonal interior. These were set up about two *braccia* away from the walls.⁸⁷

After the ceremony, the fifty children accompanied the baby prince back to the Palazzo Vecchio.⁸⁸ In Piazza San Lorenzo the *Potenza* of the district, called the *Re della Graticola* (in honour of St. Lawrence, whose attribute was the grill or *graticola*), staged popular entertainments which included a tight-rope walker (Fig. 10).⁸⁹ The whole piazza be-



9 Donatello (?), the "Giovannino Martelli". Florence, Museo Nazionale.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24: ... *in capo di ciascuna delle dette due scale, & in sul pianerottolo, sotto i piedi di San Pietro, e Santo Andrea, e servono quasi per base, sono due vasi a guisa di fonti, intagliati riccamente, e messi d'oro. I quali spargendo acqua da piu zampilli il giorno del Battesimo...*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

⁸⁵ *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 135 recto.

⁸⁶ Loc. cit. See note 57.

⁸⁷ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 20.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27; *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 135 recto.

⁸⁹ Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, M. 1085.-16, Ordini, feste, e pompe fatte dal Re della Graticola, ecc., Florence, 1577. The print appears on the back of the frontispiece.

came a stage and the unfinished facade of the church was concealed by an arcade. That night there was a great banquet in the Salone dei Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio. At a raised table at the northern end of the room, the Grand Duke feasted with his most honoured guests.⁹⁰ Behind were two “*credenze*” laden with a display of precious silver.

During the celebrations, Francesco lavished his guests with presents. A gold collar made by Giovanni Battista Cervi worth over 2000 ducats was given to Mendoza, another worth 500 ducats was presented to the Austrian ambassador.⁹¹ A slightly less costly one by the same goldsmith was given the Portuguese representative.⁹² Another 2000 ducats were spent on further *donativi*.

The expense of the Baptistry decor came to 5000 ducats.⁹³ So much was spent on the occasion, that a financial advisor, Giovanni di Ser Jacopo, had to remind the Grand Duke that there was not enough cash on hand to pay the workers at Pratolino as well.⁹⁴

The festivities continued for several days. On October 1st a hunt was staged in Piazza Santa Croce. In preparation for it, the piazza was closed for two weeks and wild animals were assembled from far and near.⁹⁵ Although dogs and men taunted the lions, the beasts refused to be aroused for the occasion. One of the bulls fell ill and a doctor had to be summoned to nurse it.⁹⁶

The props for this affairs were also designed by Buontalenti who supervised the construction of various “counterfeit” monsters which belched fireworks. These beasts, made of wood, clay and cloth, cost over a thousand ducats.⁹⁷ From the accounts, we learn that a serpent required 30½ *braccia* (20 metres) for its green tail and that a turtle (a Grand Ducal emblem) and a frog needed 23 *braccia* (about 15 metres) of yellow stuff.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 135 recto.

⁹¹ ASF, Archivio Mediceo, Depositeria Generale, Filza 781, carta 64 verso and 65 recto. Both payments were made on October 19th: *A spese di donativi fiorini dua mila cento quarantuno di moneta L. [lire] 1.5.7. piccioli per valuta duna Catena d'oro a maglioni in o/6 havuta da Gio. Ba. de' Cervi di peso col calo di libbre 18.7.6 a scudi 105 libbra et scudi 45 per fattura consegnata in mano a S. A. che la donò al Sr. Antonio de mendoza mandato di spagna per il Battesimo.* 65 recto: *A spese di donativi fiorini cinquecento di moneta L. [lire] 1. III piccioli per una Catena doro a maglioni in 6º di peso col calo di once 52.5, a scudi 105 libbra e scudi 10 di fattura havuta da Gio. Batista de Cervi e compagni mandata al Poggio a messer Antonio Serguidi Cavaliere di Santo Stefano, il quale disse essersi donata per mano di S. A. all'ambasciadore del'Imperatore al Poggio Venuto per rallegrarsi del Principe nato...* Other works by this craftsman (Giovanni Batista Cervi) are cited by I. B. *Supino*, *L'Arte di Benvenuto Cellini*, Florence, 1901, p. 55.

⁹² ASF, Archivio Mediceo, Dep. Gen., F. 781, carta 65 verso. This collar cost 449 scudi.

⁹³ *Lapini*, op. cit., p. 196; Cf. *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 134 recto.

⁹⁴ ASF, Archivio Mediceo, Dep. Gen., Filza 983. At the beginning of the volume is written: *Copia d'uno conto levato dal libro bianco S^o A. del castello di Firenze... Spese per le feste fatte nel battesimo del Serenissimo Principe di Toscana ecc.* Unnumbered pages: *Serenissimo Gran Duca: Giovanni Ser Jacopi Proveditore del Castello di firenze humil' servitore di Vostra Altezza Serenissima humilmente gli espone come dovendo per il battesimo del Serenissimo: Gran Principe fare piu spese straordinarie et trovandosi scharso di danari rispetto alle faccienze di Pratolino Pero con Riverenzia la supplicha si degni farli Grazia di farli pagare al magnifico messer Napoleone Cambi depositario generale fiorini dugento per una volta sola oltre al solito assegnamento di fiorini 300 accio possa seguitare le sua solite faccienze senza disordinarsi che tutto riceverra per grazia singulare pregando nostro Signore Dio per sua felicità.* Beneath: *el depositario generale lo accomodi di dugento fiorini | Belisario Vinta... 12 Settembre '77.*

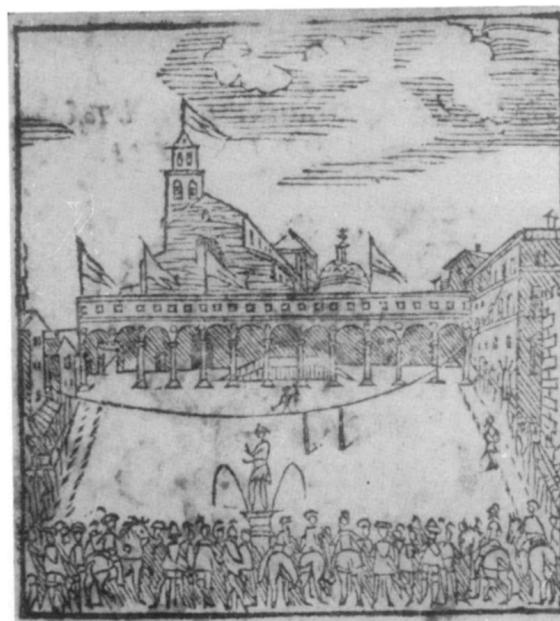
⁹⁵ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 29; *Settimanni*, op. cit., c. 136 recto; ASF, Archivio Mediceo, Depositeria Generale, Filza 983, unnumbered page with dates of payment on verso marked *primo ottobre* and *3 di dicembre*.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, unnumbered pages; see entry for November 9th in the *quadernuccio* marked 3.5 on the first page. The bull subsequently died.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, unnumbered pages with title reading: *Copia di uno conto levato dal libro bianco S^o A. del castello di firenze [323.] spese per le feste fatte nel battesimo del Serenissimo principe di Toscana...* Among those named working under Buontalenti's direction were: *Zanobi Lastricati* and *Vincenzo di alessandro gianini*. The latter is also mentioned in documents of 1590; cf. *Dominic E. Colnaghi*, *A Dictionary of Florentine Painters*, London, 1928, p. 124.

⁹⁸ Depositeria Generale, Filza 983, op. cit. (October 1577): *E addi detto lire ventiquattro soldi X piccioli, pagati a zanobi Lastricati scultore portò contanti per haverci fatto di terra un fantoccio sopra un carretto,*

The celebrations were a great success and although the life of Buontalenti's monsters was short, features of his rearrangement of the Baptistry were left for several centuries. However, the removal of the medieval monks' choir and baptismal font did not meet with universal approval. As Borghini feared, it was not long before bitter criticism came from the Florentines who deplored these changes just as they disapproved Buontalenti's dismantling of the old Duomo facade ten years later.⁹⁹ The defender of Buontalenti's Baptistry decor might, however, claim that its details borrowed from the Pantheon and from garden architecture *all'antica* were more suitable to the ancient building than the medieval choir and font. At any rate, Borghini was so pleased with the final result that he left it on record that all was "*dignissimo di lunga vita*".¹⁰⁰ His enthusiastic description of the Baptistry decor and the events immediately preceding and following it were printed by Giunti with what was then incredible speed: by October 3rd, the first copies were ready so that the departing guests might take a souvenir away with them.¹⁰¹ Some of the sculpture and a few of the canvases lived up to Borghini's hopeful predictions. Ammannati's statues remained in situ until 1870 when they were finally demolished.¹⁰² Poppi's large canvases of the "Baptism of



10 View of the festivities in Piazza S. Lorenzo. Print of *Ordini, feste, e pompe fatte dal Re della Graticola*, Florence, 1577.

quale doveva essere tirato dal toro e poi non si messe in uso, et per havere fatto di terra il muso a un mostro marino contrafatto come a uscita 230. ... E addi detto fiorini sette di moneta pagati a vincenzo di alessandro giannini dipintore portò contanti per haverci dipinto una testuggine, una ranocchia, uno mostro marino e una figura di terra, tutto di ordine di Bernardo buontalenti ingegnere di S.A. Serenissima... e addi detto lire quarantuna soldi XVI piccioli (?) a francesco di giovanni batista gabburi e compagni portò Lorenzo di lessandro codilunghi contanti, che lire 24. soldi 8 piccioli... per braccia 30 1/2 di tela verde della serpe a soldi 16 il braccio e lire 17.8.4 per braccia 23 1/4 di tela bottana gialla a soldi 15 il braccio, che ha servito alla testuggine e al ranocchio contrafatti, come a uscita, carta 233.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Girolamo Mancini*, *Il bel S. Giovanni e le feste patronali di Firenze descritte nel 1475 da Piero Cennini*, in: *Rivista d'Arte*, VI (1909), p. 193, who cites the contemporary critic whose MS. is in the Biblioteca Marucelliana (Cod. Marucel., A. 199, I, folio 382). We are told that after the font had stood there for 400 years it was demolished *non senza dolore di tutta la città* and the pieces used for the city walls *senza reverentia di tante unzioni e di tanti incensi*. See also *Domenico Maria Manni*, *Principj della Religion Cristiana in Firenze*, Florence, 1769, p. 83. Cf. *Paatz*, op. cit., pp. 228-29, note 42 and *Ferdinando Leopoldo Del Migliore*, *Firenze Città Nobilissima*, Florence, 1684, p. 99.

¹⁰⁰ *Descrizione* (1577), op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁰¹ See note 58.

¹⁰² The decision to remove the statues was made in 1869 when it was proposed that the figures be moved to the "Magazzino di Piazza del Capitolo". But on December 27th 1870, De Fabris, the architect, ordered their destruction. See *Archivio dell'Opera di S. Maria del Fiore*, Serie XI^a. 2. No. 38, Insetto 13. De Fabris wrote: *Il sottoscritto considerando che le statue di cui guarda il presente Rapporto mancano affatto di ogni importanza artistica, e che molto importa di trasportarli dal locale che occupano nei magazzini dell'Opera; Considerando che manca luogo e modo per assegnare ad esse altra conveniente collocazione, e che in ogni caso la spesa per restaurarle non resterebbe giustificata a cagione dell'assoluta loro deficienza di merito, Propone che prima si faceiano pratiche di convenienza e d'accordo colla Deputazione Ecclesiastica; che vengono quindi ridotte in pezzi e distrutte*. Cf. *Giov. Battista Befani*, *Memorie Storiche dell'Antichissima Basilica di S. Giovanni Battista di Firenze*, Florence, 1884, pp. 101-102.

Constantine" and the "Baptism of the Florentines" were taken to Pratolino.¹⁰³ Since then, the latter picture was hidden away in a storeroom of the Uffizi where it recently fell victim to the fickle Arno.¹⁰⁴

As for Philip II of Spain, he appears to have been sufficiently pleased by Francesco's gestures of respect that after a time he officially congratulated the Grand Duke on the succession to his father's title (three years after the event) and later conceded to him the address of *Illustrissimo* with its appropriate prerogatives.¹⁰⁵ If this was not the *Serenissima* with which Francesco was accustomed to in Italy, it was certainly an improvement to his previous status in Spanish protocol.¹⁰⁶ In 1579, Philip II even approved Francesco's unpopular marriage to Bianca Cappello which followed Giovanna d'Austria's death in 1578.¹⁰⁷ The *quid pro quo* consisted of an enormous loan in 1581 of 900,000 ducats made by Francesco to help Philip wage war against Portugal. In the same year Francesco was rewarded with the collar of the Golden Fleece and an increase in status from *Illustrissimo* to *Altezza*.¹⁰⁸

However, Francesco's friendly relations with Spain did not go down well with his subjects. To the Grand Duke's embarrassment, his brother the Cardinal Ferdinando openly supported the French. In the end, Francesco's pro-Spanish policies proved to be as feeble as his son, the Spanish monarch's namesake. Filippino died in 1582 and the remaining years of the Grand Duke's life were troubled with concern for the succession, quarrels with his brothers, and efforts to legitimize the rights of a putative heir brought to light by Bianca Cappello.

¹⁰³ *Borghini*, *Il Riposo*, op. cit., p. 642; *Baldinucci*, op. cit., III, p. 531.

¹⁰⁴ Uffizi Inventory of 1769, no. 4082, p. 674 recto mentions the picture in the "Primo Scalone che conduce al corridore de' Pitti". The Inventory of 1881 of the "quadri non esposti", no. 399 (richiamo no. 747). In the Inventory of 1890, the picture is found as No. 5076 (3.80 × 2.25 m). Thanks to a note supplied me from the file of the Soprintendenza alle Gallerie by Signor Senzi, I learned that the picture was consigned to the restoration department of the Uffizi. There it remained since 1931 and at the time of the recent flood was located on the ground floor of the "Esportazione" storerooms.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Settimanni*, vol. 129, c. 28 and 39; *Pieraccini*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 126 gives the year of the change of status as 1578, but *Settimanni*'s full account (op. cit., vol. 129, c. 172) of the occasion gives the date as April 1579 (Cf. *Borsook*, op. cit., p. 50, note 102).

¹⁰⁶ Loc. cit. – Francesco was known previously to the Spanish court as "Messer Illustre Gran Duque".

¹⁰⁷ *Galluzzi*, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 90.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 137.

RIASSUNTO

Lo schema per le decorazioni progettate da Vincenzo Borghini e Bernardo Buontalenti per il battesimo del principino Filippo de' Medici riflette lo stile imperiale ostentato dalla corte medicea durante il periodo di rapporti toscano-spagnoli. Benché il tema degli ornamenti nel Battistero fosse quello della vittoriosa diffusione del Cristianesimo nel mondo pagano, tuttavia lo schema si prestava agli interessi antiquari del Borghini che esaltava i legami fra l'antica Roma e l'antica Firenze. Con gli stessi intenti, il Buontalenti approfittò dell'occasione per restituire almeno in parte il Battistero all'antico aspetto romano che lui e Borghini ritenevano essere la sua autentica forma.

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