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From Tomb to Tomb: The New Sacristy *Grottesche*

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Abstract

Michelangelo's New Sacristy at the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence is an incomplete 16th century family mausoleum commemorating the lives of four Medici members. The conception of the project in 1519 after the untimely death of the last legitimate Medici heir, Lorenzo de' Medici, was intended to compliment Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy within the same basilica. The incomplete chapel has raised much debate regarding theme and iconography; however, the marble reliefs of the two altar candelabra have yet to be proposed within studies of the 15th and 16th century *grottesche* genre. The candelabra present reliefs of gargoyles, animals, masks, jeering human-monster hybrids, and amphorae stacked upon one another in a candelabra-like manner. These forms show similar patterns of organization and iconography as late 15th and early 16th century *grottesche* expressions, originating from ancient Roman fresco painting. By tracking *grottesche* employment following the late 15th century rediscovery of the ancient *Domus Aurea* in Rome and the artists thought to be responsible for the New Sacristy candelabra, this thesis will maintain that the New Sacristy altar candelabra reliefs should be re-evaluated as *grottesche* expressions. Their aesthetic modes of resemblance and deviation from previous *grottesche* patterns prompts further investigation into the evolution of 16th century *grottesche* as it pertains to medium, size, and iconographic disposition.

Dedication

To all the mothers and sisters upon whose shoulders I stand.

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Introduction

Aquinas searched for God in details;
Michelangelo was equally preoccupied with them.

William Wallace in *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*

Michelangelo's New Sacristy at the Basilica of San Lorenzo is a family mausoleum commemorating the lives of four Medici members that remains unfinished.[1] Commissioned in 1520 by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici under the papacy of Leo X, the chapel was intended as a burial site where private masses and intercessions for the dead could be held.[2] The fully consecrated chapel offers a never-ending discussion surrounding funerary iconography, familial mausoleum decoration, and the tensions between religious and pagan motifs in a sacred space.[3] Escaping serious analyses or passed over as peripheral decoration, small reliefs with fantastical scenes appear on sides of the two altar candelabra. These reliefs have been broadly categorized alongside other grotesque decoration of the chapel due to their peculiar subject matter involving human-monster hybrids, mythical creatures, and expressive gargoyles. While the New Sacristy

[1] While the literature of San Lorenzo is too vast to be stated in its entirety, those most fundamental to the studies and interpretations of the New Sacristy include: Charles De Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Volume 3, The Medici Chapel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948); Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die Klassische Kunst: Eine Einführung in Die Italienische Renaissance*, 6 (München: F. Bruckmann, 1914); Frederick Hartt, "The Meaning of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel," *Beiträge Für Georg Swarzenski,* Zum 1 (January 1951): 145-155. Anton Heinrich Springer, *Raffael Und Michelangelo, Von Anton Springer*, (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1878); Henry Thode, *Michelangelo: Kritische Untersuchungen Über Seine Werke* (Berlin: G. Grote, 1908), 500-520. Anny E Popp, *Die Medici-Kapelle Michelangelos* (München: O.C. Recht, 1922); Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 171-230; William Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo: The Genius as Entrepreneur* (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[2] L.D. Ettlinger, "The Liturgical Function of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 22, no. 3 (1978): 287–304.

[3] For the earliest interpretations of the chapel, see Benedetto Varchi's two sonnets of Michelangelo's *Aurora* and *Notte* in the second lecture of his *Due Lezzioni di M. Benedetto Varchi*, 1549, as discussed in Leatrice Mendelsohn and Benedetto Varchi, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's Due Lezzioni and Cinquecento Art Theory: Due Lezzioni*, Studies in the Fine Arts, Art Theory, No. 006 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1982), 31; 91-93; Ascanio Condivi's interpretation in *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti raccolta per Ascanio Condivi da la Ripa Transone* from 1553 states that the allegories signify "…Time, which consumes all." This translation is from Ascanio Condivi and Hellmut Wohl, *The Life of Michelangelo,* Seconded (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 67.

candelabra reliefs certainly embody the adjective "grotesque," their aesthetic properties and systematic organization echo those of the original ancient Roman *grottesche* painting style that resurged in Rome during the late 15th and early 16th century. The New Sacristy candelabra reliefs deserve specification as agents of *grottesche* expressions, offering critical insight into the selective process of invention by the New Sacristy *grottesche* artists through their patterns of consistency and deviation from previous expressions.[4]

So how, then, do the New Sacristy *grottesche* exist? In what capacity? Located on the chapel altar are two four-sided candelabra that present isolated relief scenes that are different on every side. The right standing candelabrum shows two relief scenes of large birds with expanded wings framed beneath hanging festoons. Rotating clockwise around the object are two scenes characteristic of *grottesche* patterns. In the first scene, two open mouthed male faces are eternally yoked by rams' horns that protrude from behind their temples (Figure 1). The heads are in profile opposing one another, and together they are crushed by a large vase filled with bountiful fruits and vegetables. Their hair morphs upward into dolphin-like animals with beaks that fuse into the vase, creating curling handles. Similar forms are found on the next relief around the right-hand side of the candelabrum, where a horned male head writhes in agony as he supports a pediment decorated with dolphins in low relief (Figure 2). Two swans stand upon the pediment and mirror one another as they twist backwards.

Similarly, the left altar candelabrum presents four sides decorated with isolated reliefs of fantastical scenes. In the first relief scene, a lit torch is flanked on both sides by phoenix-like

[4] For a comprehensive study of the historiography and influence of 15th and 16th century *grottesche* ornament, see Friedrich Piel, *Die Ornament-Grotteske in Der Italienischen Renaissance: Zu Ihrer Kategorialen Struktur Und Entstehung*, Neue Münchner Beiträge Zur Kunstgeschichte, 3, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), especially pages 17-44; see also D'Elia, Una Roman D'Elia, "Grotesque Painting and Painting As Grotesque in the Renaissance," *Notes in the History of Art* 33, no. 2 (2014): 5–12. Geoffrey Harpham, "The Grotesque: First Principles," *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 34, no. 4 (1976).

birds with extended, curved necks and tails that spiral upward like smoke (Figure 3). In the second scene, an open-mouthed male head furrows his brow in agony as he is crushed by a wicker basket stacked on his head (Figure 4). This basket, filled with pinecones, flowers, and vegetation, droops down on both sides forming a comical hat for the tortured head. The third scene seems to present similar phoenix-like birds as the relief previously described; however, these long-necked aerial creatures appear to have mammal torsos and tails extend downward to combine with ribbons tied around a thin neck saucer (Figure 5). The final scene presents again an open-mouthed male head with exposed bat-like ears, expressively jeering his tongue at the viewer (Figure 6). His vision is eternally disturbed by a drapery that folds over his eyes and hangs around handles that seem to be connected to his ears. The head supports a vase, assumingly filled with liquid, as two birds actively drink from its opening. Further emphasizing the fantastical nature of these scenes, both altar candelabra sit upon pedestals decorated on four sides, each presenting hybrid creatures anatomically comprised of mammal heads, muscular torsos, wings, and dragon tails (Figures 7 & 8). These creatures billow and curl within their confining spaces, as if they want to burst out of their cages.

The selected iconography and systematic organization of these New Sacristy candelabra reliefs follow an aesthetic prescription reminiscent of the ancient *grottesche* decorative genre. The term refers to the expression of ancient Roman fresco painting rediscovered in the late 15th century on the walls of Emperor Nero's esteemed palace, the *Domus Aurea*, that had been buried beneath the Oppian Hill in Rome. This genre of painting, termed *grottesche* after the "grottoes" and tunnels that later explorers crawled through at the site, was comprised of dream-like

fantasies that defied the laws of nature. [5] Mysterious creatures, hybrid dragon-beasts, and wild monsters were found carefully orchestrated together, floating and balancing upon architectural supports in processions that mesmerized visitors (Figures 9-12). As artists, humanists, and antiquarians recorded their experiences within the *Domus Aurea*, the fascination with the painted *grottesche* increased alongside growing *all'antica* pursuits, favoring the manner of the ancients.[6] At the end of the 15th century, *grottesche* forms were reproduced in chapels and palaces by the first wave of *grottesche* inspired *Domus Aurea* artists such as Pinturicchio and Perugino. These artists used *grottesche* expressions to frame a subject or scene within peripheral spaces of architecture such as painted pilasters, window splays, or spandrels. However, the application of *grottesche* shifted as the turn of the century sought invention and discovery over replication.[7] What began as "first generation" marginal *grottesche* decoration evolved at the hands of Raphael, Giovanni da Udine, Giulio Romano, and others in Rome who desired to recreate authentic experiences of ancient interiors.[8] Considered the "second generation" of *grottesche* artists, they brought the expression to the Vatican Palace under the *all'antica* pursuits of the first Medici pope, Leo X, and his trusted cousin and advisor Cardinal Giulio de' Medici.[9] No longer

[5] Giorgio Vasari and Gaston du C. De Vere, *Lives*, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 1:488; Vicenzo Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book* (Milan: Electa, 2019), 62; 118-129. For more on the rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea* see Nicole Dacos, "Graffiti De La Domus Aurea," *Bulletin De L'institut Historique Belge De Rome / Institut Historique Belge* 38 (1967): 145-175; *La découverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques à la Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1969); see also Philippe Morel, *Les grotesques. Les figures de l'imaginaire dans la peinture italienne de la fin de la Renaissance* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001).
[6] J. Schulz, "Pinturicchio and the Revival of Antiquity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25, no. 1-2 (1962): 55.
[7] John Shearman, "The Organization of Raphael's Workshop," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 10 (1983): 44.
[8] Claudia La Malfa, "Dating Pinturicchio's Roman Frescoes and the Creation of a New All'antica Style," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 70 (2007): 119; Shearman, "The Organization of Raphael's Workshop," 41–57; Toby Yuen, "Giulio Romano, Giovanni Da Udine and Raphael: Some Influences from the Minor Arts of Antiquity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42, no. 1 (1979): 263–72.
[9] For an extensive study of the artists, humanists, principles, methods, and mediums involved in Medici papal patronage and antiquarian pursuits, see Yvonne Elet, *Architectural Invention in Renaissance Rome: Artists, Humanists, and the Planning of Raphael's Villa Madama* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University

solely framing narrative scenes, *grottesche* exploded vertically and horizontally on the walls of the Vatican Palace in comprehensive schematic programs. Although the scale and method fluctuated depending on patron or artist, the general form of *grottesche* remained consistent. The expression incorporated fantastical monsters and dream-like illusions together in stucco or fresco, creating stacked candelabra-like shapes that bent the laws of nature.

The New Sacristy altar candelabra echo similar aesthetic patterns as previous *grottesche* expressions. The members of the altar reliefs arrange themselves in the appearance of a single candelabra-like object, where fantastic creations maneuver within their spaces like a whimsical parade. Swirling vegetation, expressive masks and mythological creatures, and inanimate objects like vases and baskets conjoin, forming an illusionistic composition. Considering these properties, the New Sacristy *grottesche* are consistent with previous types in systematic organization and iconographic selection; however, their designs mark a departure from previous expressions. Deviating from the first generation's *grottesche* employment as marginal decoration and the second generation's employment of *grottesche* as recreation of *all'antica* spaces, the Medici Chapel *grottesche* are arranged in small, isolated spaces. Within the Medici mausoleum, intentionally selected moments of palpable agony radiate from the marble forms. They do not parade themselves on the walls of the chapel in celebratory moments reminiscent of antiquity or springtime; instead, it is if they have been painfully cut from a larger *grottesche* relief and mounted to a physical candelabrum. In a sort of sick humor, the damned have been locked to their respective candelabrum in an eternally debilitating fashion, crushed by heavy objects or

Press, 2017); Mauro Mussolin, "La Committenza Architettonica Fra Roma E Firenze Al Tempo Di Leone X: Le Città, Gli Edifici, L'antico," in *Nello Splendore Mediceo: Papa Leone X E Firenze*, ed. Nicoletta Baldini and Monica Bietti (Florence: Sillabe, 2013), 193-203; Anne Reynolds and Francesco Berni, *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement Vii: Francesco Berni's Dialogue against Poets in Context* (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, New York: Garland Pub, 1997).

disturbed by their metamorphic extensions. The artists most likely responsible for the borderline sadistic candelabra reliefs in the New Sacristy, namely Simone Mosca and Silvio Cosini, were sculptors sought by Michelangelo not only for their skill but also for their affinity for the fantastic and bizarre.[10] Both Mosca and Cosini were involved in various phases of the San Lorenzo projects and appear in Michelangelo's letters and *ricordi*.[11] According to these records, it is evident that Michelangelo curated his workshop based on his needs for each stage of the chapel's construction. The ornamental reliefs by Michelangelo's most specialized artists, or the *intagliatori*, suggest that the candelabra forms were carefully selected, invented, and prepared by experienced *grottesche* artists.[12] Their deviation from previous expressions injects the Medici mausoleum with palpable moments of agony at the site of the altar.

Categorized within the broad umbrella of "bizarre" or "grotesque", the altar candelabra of the New Sacristy deserves clarification as an intentional expression of *grottesche.* By tracking the progression of late 15th and early 16th century *grottesche* expression, Medici *all'antica* patronage in Rome, and the inventive artists responsible for the New Sacristy reliefs, this thesis will maintain that the study of *grottesche* expression and evolution should include Michelangelo's Medici Chapel project. In analyzing their means of adherence and deviation from previous *grottesche* patterns, the candelabra reliefs offer insight into the modes of invention that supported the creations of *grottesche* artists.

[10] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:374; 2:775. Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 120-124; 126-128.
[11] Michelangelo Buonarroti, *I Ricordi Di Michelangelo*, ed. Lucille Bardeschi Ciulich and P. Barocchi, (Florence, 1970); *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, ed. P Barocchi and R. Ristori, 5 vols., (Florence, 1965-1983); For translations of Michelangelo's letters from Florence from 1520-1534, see Michelangelo Buonarroti and E. H Ramsden, *The Letters of Michelangelo: Volume 1, 1496-1534* (London: Peter Owen, 1963), 175-188; 191-195.
[12] For more on the hierarchy within Michelangelo's workshop at San Lorenzo, see Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 93; 103-106; 120-134.

Chapter 1: Late 15th & Early 16th Century *Grottesche* Precedents and Properties

There is no heart so hard that it does not pity the great palaces, the buildings and the crumbling walls of Rome triumphant at the time when it was the mistress of the world.

Anonymous, *Antiquarie Prospetiche Romane*

Introduction

In a poem from 1496, an anonymous Milanese painter chronicled the exploration of the newly excavated *Domus Aurea* for his colleague Leonardo da Vinci. This poem contains the first written account of the term "*grottesche*" to describe the ancient frescoes discovered at the site, taking its name from the "grottoes" and tunnels in which the paintings were found underground. Pleading with Leonardo to come visit Rome, the author wrote:

> Far from here, there is a hill full of painted figures, so good, O Leonardo, that they cause the hair to stand on the end of all those who see them: medusas and harpies, priapuses and monsters, dryads and hamadryads and scenic ornaments, such that only in copying them I run out of ink, leopards and goats, tigers and satyrs and bears, dromedaries with camels, beautiful elephants together with noble travelers, foliage and friezes with splendid birds. Below the ground there are caverns of grottoes, tombs, sepulchers, epitaphs and sarcophaguses.[13]

In reflecting on his exploration of the *Domus Aurea,* the writer describes the visceral response associated with witnessing the mysteries of the *grottesche*. His letter to Leonardo serves almost as a warning to prepare the mind and body for the profound experience of seeing the ancient frescoes. This thrill excited artists like Pinturicchio, Filippino Lippi, Amico Aspertini, and Luca Signorelli, who began replicating the *Domus Aurea*'s creatures and scenes in their works

[13] *Antiquarie Prospetiche Romane*, ed. Giovanni Agosti and Dante Isella, Biblioteca Di Scrittori Italiani (Milano: Parma, 2006).

(Figures 13 & 14).[14] These *grottesche* are characterized by playful fantasies, chimerical monsters, and exciting illusions that defy the laws of nature in a thrillingly complex ecosystem of images. Staying true to the *Domus Aurea* models, late 15th and early 16th century *grottesche* artists organized their fantastical motifs into candelabra-like structures that stacked upon one another, connected by various filaments or extensions. Pinturicchio and Raphael used similar patterns of *grottesche* expressions within their projects in Rome; however, their scales of application were dramatically different. Within their respective methods, both Pinturicchio and Raphael's designs echoed themes of eternal life and growth. Their designs, motifs, and *grottesche* organization serve as examples of systems that Michelangelo would deviate from with the *grottesche* expressions of the New Sacristy.

Pinturicchio and Peripheral Ornament

Pinturicchio was a pioneer in the resurgence of *grottesche* expression at the end of the 15th century after the rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea*.[15] Pinturicchio's first independent works in Rome followed his involvement in the Sistine Chapel decoration for Pope Sixtus IV. These independent works included the fresco decoration of the Bufalini Chapel in Santa Maria in Aracoeli and the Della Rovere Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo.[16] Although their execution dates are attributed by most scholarship to the 1480s, recent debates have questioned the order of Pinturicchio's project execution. While the Basilica of Santa Maria del Popolo places the execution of the Della Rovere chapel between 1488 to 1490, Claudia La Malfa argues that the

[14] Innis H. Shoemaker, "Drawings After the Antique by Filippino Lippi," *Master Drawings* 16, no. 1 (1978): 35-104; Marco Brunetti, *Nero's Domus Aurea: Reconstruction and Reception of the Volta Dorata* Studi Della Bibliotheca Hertziana, 15 (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana editorial, 2022), 88-198; Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*, 152-163.
[15] Schulz, "Pinturicchio and the Revival of Antiquity," 48.
[16] Pietro Scarpellini and Maria Rita Silvestrelli, *Pintoricchio* (Milano: Federico Motta Editore, 2004), 57.

chapel was completed between 1477 and 1479.[17] Her argument suggests that Pinturicchio first used *grottesche* decoration within the Della Rovere Chapel and then further developed his fresco techniques later in the Bufalini Chapel at Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Dating discrepancies aside, Pinturicchio's *grottesche* method within both the Della Rovere Chapel and his neighboring Basso Della Rovere Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo are vital precursors to the development of *grottesche* expression that cannot be overstated.

The Della Rovere Chapel was designed for Cardinal Domenico della Rovere and was executed, according to La Malfa's timeline, as early as 1477. Dating discrepancies aside, the Della Rovere Chapel is one of the first examples of frescoed *grottesche* in Rome since the rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea*. Similar in fresco organization and placement, the neighboring Basso Della Rovere Chapel confirms Pinturicchio's particular working method of *grottesche* expression. In both chapels, Pinturicchio and his workshop contain whimsical candelabra-like forms and fantastical scenes within the illusionistic painted pilasters on the walls, the frescoed window splays, and additionally the vault decoration of the Basso Della Rovere Chapel (Figures 15 & 16).[18] Candelabra-like decoration within illusionistic architecture or vaults had been popular since the 1460s, derived from medieval predecessors that allowed similar motifs to occupy architectural structures within a space.[19] Pinturicchio modified the organization of ancient *grottesche* forms to fit within the popular prescriptions of the time, resulting in

[17] La Malfa, "Dating Pinturicchio's Roman Frescoes and the Creation of a New All'antica Style," 119; "The Chapel of S. Girolamo in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. New Evidence for the Discovery of the Domus Aurea," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63, no. 1 (2000): 259–70; Scarpellini and Silvestrelli, *Pintoricchio,* 144-49. Scarpellini places the chapel between 1488-90.
[18] La Malfa, "Dating Pinturicchio's Roman Frescoes and the Creation of a New All'antica Style," 127-129.
[19] Dacos, *La découverte de la Domus Aurea,* 51-54; Alessandra Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique. Raphael's Discovery of the Fourth Style," in *Paradigms of Renaissance Grotesques*, ed. Damiano Acciarino (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2019), 61.

extensions of single stacked *grottesche* candelabra within the painted pilasters and window splays.

The *grottesche* decoration of the Della Rovere Chapel exist in thin, peripheral spaces. The chapel shape is half of a decagon, where the parishioner is confronted by five walls as he approaches the altar. Pinturicchio's *Nativity with St. Jerome* altarpiece welcomes the viewer into the space, and the altar fresco is framed by stuccoed pilasters decorated with fruits, vegetation, and the oak branch *impresa* of the Della Rovere family. Above the altar fresco is an arch adorned with *putti* heads, scallop shells, and Della Rovere oak branches. The altar wall is flanked on each side by two walls that contain preserved Neronian inspired *grottesche* frescoes. Architecturally symmetrical, both walls feature a recessed arched window between painted pilasters that occupy the upper two thirds of the wall. While the decoration of the bottom portion of these two walls have been mostly lost, their painted pilasters and window splays boast of a preserved *grottesche* expression that recalls a figural vocabulary comparable to those described by the Milanese painter in his letter to Leonardo.

The *grottesche* of the painted pilasters and window splays are contained in long panes that extend vertically (Figure 17). Their *grottesche* are organized in single columns of stacked objects, creatures, and architecture that form candelabra-like devices upon a yellow background, recalling similar color schemes found in the *Domus Aurea*'s Hall of Achilles at Skyros (see Figures 11 & 12). Each individual stack of Pinturicchio's *grottesche* has a base or pedestal from which it rises. In one instance, a candelabrum base decorated with serpents rests on a stand where two pot-bellied centaurs dance, unbothered by the coiling winged serpents that writhe in their hands (Figure 18). Any fantastical invention seems legitimate in these spaces; winged creatures fan their impressive appendages, *putti* bloom from flowers in harmony with the birds

and vegetation, and musical instruments wait to be played. In one moment, a large *putto* head with rosy cheeks and a laurel crown proudly wears an elaborate headdress made of vegetation (Figure 19). The *putto* rests upon a slender candelabrum that has been decorated by carefully strung seashells. A few scenes above, two harpies with budding breasts and curled hair stand at attention with majestic, winged appendages crowning above their heads (Figure 20). In another scene, a large bird fans its feathers that are decorated with hanging ornaments (Figure 21). Above this, more aerial creatures spread their wings upward to show off their prize: a victorious trophy of armor, fully equipped with two shields and lit torches. As if painted with a single bristle, delicate tendrils and tails swirl within their spaces in good health.

The neighboring Basso Della Rovere Chapel, furnished by Cardinal Girolamo Basso Della Rovere and dedicated to St. Augustine, consists almost entirely of fresco decoration arranged by Pinturicchio's workshop in the 1490s.[20] The chapel shape is identical to that of the Della Rovere Chapel, with five walls forming a half decagon along with two recessed arched windows flanking the center altar wall. Painted *grottesche* with yellow backgrounds appear in similar locations as the previously described Della Rovere Chapel. The window splays and frescoed pilasters consist of plump *putti*, decorated amphorae, and bizarre creatures stacked upon one another in a whimsical celebration. However, here the *grottesche* creatures also extend themselves to the ceiling vault where their eccentric interactions continue.

Within both chapels of Pinturicchio and his workshop, there is a playfulness in the organization of these creatures that embodies fantasy and whimsy. Their proud formations seem to suggest that their presence cannot be summarized within the context of pagan motifs in a

[20] Schulz, "Pinturicchio and the Revival of Antiquity," 44.

sacred space.[21] In a triumphal display, these creatures offer their best presentation to their visiting guests. With warm invitation to join alongside them, the *grottesche* of the Della Rovere Chapel and the Basso Della Rovere Chapel sing, dance, and parade together in a spectacle of celebration. This prompts their gathering while the candelabra architecture becomes the vehicle through which they organize themselves spatially. Almost 30 years later, a similar processional spirit would permeate the walls of the Vatican in the most ambitious application of *grottesche* since the rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea*.

Raphael and *All'Antica* Statement

At the time of Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici's election in 1513 as Pope Leo X, the Vatican Palace was already a hive of creative activity under the previous Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513).[22] As the second son of the great Florentine socialite and patron Lorenzo the Magnificent, Leo X sponsored extravagant political, social, and artistic projects supported by his trusted cousin and advisor Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (later Pope Clement VII, r. 1523-1534).[23] The rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea* had already prompted a certain level of *grottesche* reworking in chapels and palaces beginning with the projects of Pinturicchio and his workshop; however, the rise of the Medici in Rome marks a significant shift in the evolution of *grottesche* expressions. Under the

[21] Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel* (Doornspijk, Holland: Davaco, 1981), 9;26-27; 45-52; 56-58; Angelo Monteverdi, "La Leggenda d'Augusto e dell'Ara Celeste," *Atti del V. Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, II (Rome, 1940): 462-470; Ursula Schlegel, "The Christ Child as a Devotional Image in Medieval Italian Sculpture: a Contribution to Ambrogio Lorenzetti Studies," *Art Bulletin*, LII (1970): 8-10.

[22] For summaries and discussions regarding humanism and the papacy, see Paul Grendler, "Renaissance Humanism and the Papacy," in *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3:1293-97; John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 1-60.

[23] For information regarding the patronage of Pope Leo X and Pope Clement VII, see Julia Haig Gaisser, "Seeking Patronage under the Medici Popes: A Tale of Two Humanists," in *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. Kenneth Gouwens and Sheryl E Reiss (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), 293-309; Nicoletta Baldini and Monica Bietti, *Nello Splendore Mediceo: Papa Leone X E Firenze* (Florence: Sillabe, 2013).

papal rule of the Medici, artists employed *grottesche* on the walls of the Vatican Palace in the most comprehensive reimagination of the ancient genre that had ever been seen. This explosion of *grottesche* within the Vatican Palace began with the *stufetta*, or small washroom, of Cardinal Bibbiena and continued in the Vatican loggias at the hands of Raphael, Giulio Romano, Giovanni da Udine, and other workshop members.[24] Transitioning from the marginal decoration of Pinturicchio, the Vatican g*rottesche* covered the walls entirely in a new method of application that had not been attempted since antiquity.[25] Outside of the Vatican Palace, Raphael's workshop used *grottesche* in the stucco and fresco work of the Villa Madama commissioned by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici. These bold attempts at recreating a cohesive and fully immersive ancient interior bore a new generation of *grottesche* expression that was employed on a massive scale by Medici patrons. The Vatican Palace affectionately embraced the bizarre fantasies and illusionistic forms in various loggias and other rooms where *grottesche* became the main attraction.

As the first philologically complete replication of an ancient interior, the Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena marked the beginning of a new generation of *grottesche* that adjusted the expression's scale and grandeur (Figure 22). Raphael moved away from using isolated decorative panes to frame narrative scenes or architectural elements. Instead, Raphael and his close collaborators desired to recreate an environment in the manner of the ancients, or *all'antica*.[26] Beginning with the *stufetta*, *grottesche* became an integral member of the *all'antica* perception of the space. This

[24] Arnold Nesselrath, "L'antico Vissuto: La Stufetta Del Cardinal Bibbiena," in *Pietro Bembo E L'invenzione Del Rinascimento*, ed. Guido Beltramini, Davide Gasparotto, and Adolfo Tura (Venice, 2013), 284-291.
[25] At the Vatican Palace, this comprehensive method of application began with the Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena. See Sidney Freedberg, *Painting of the High Renaissance in Rome and Florence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 316-320; Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique. Raphael's Discovery of the Fourth Style," 63; Giovanni Becatti, *Raffaello E L'antico* (Novara: De Agostini, 1968), 493-569.
[26] Alessandra Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque: Fantastical Decoration from Antiquity to Art Nouveau* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 64; See also Nancy Edwards, "The Renaissance Stufetta in Rome: The Circle of Raphael and the Recreation of the Antique," PhD diss., (University of Minnesota, 1982), 11-13.

small room mimics an ancient Roman caldarium, where warm air circulates in a cavity between brick walls.[27] Raphael's workshop, namely Giovanni da Udine, committed to using ancient fresco and stucco techniques in conjunction with *grottesche* forms that followed Raphael's designs.[28] This comprehensive scheme was formulated through the studies of Raphael and Giovanni in ancient architectural commentary and ekphrases. Understanding ancient sources like those of Vitruvius and Pliny allowed the artists freedom to experiment with new motifs and forms while staying faithful to ancient original models (Figures 23 & 24).[29] Describing the astonishingly bold decoration of the *stufetta*, Juergen Schulz writes that, "…it seems unlikely from all we know of Quattrocento painting that any but a Leonardo would have dared to cover a whole wall, indeed a whole room, with vegetation articulated by nothing but itself."[30] Raphael, Giovanni da Udine, and other workshop members like Giulio Romano, Baldassare Peruzzi, and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger produced a genuine *all'antica* style room that successfully recreated an ancient interior.[31] The Bibbiena Stufetta was the first full papal adherence to *all'antica* and *grottesche* that continued into other rooms within the Vatican Palace.

As soon as the work was finished on the Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena in 1516, Raphael directed his workshop to another project within the same apartment, the Loggetta of Cardinal

[27] The exact origin of the red background is difficult to precisely identify, seeing as many other ancient sites and objects informed the design of the *stufetta* such as the Colosseum stuccos, known through drawings within Raphael's circle. For discussions on other potential ancient influences of the *stufetta*, see Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique," 64-65.
[28] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book,* 197-198.
[29] The Stufetta program adopts specific formal and technical requirements following the writings of Vitruvius and Pliny, such as the adding of substances or wax to the pigments to reproduce encaustic paintings according to the ancient formulas. These are technical procedures that move beyond the purely visual. This adherence to ancient methods by Raphael and his workshop emphasizes their full dedication to recreating an experience faithful to the original ancient model during every aspect of the execution process. See Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique," 64; See also Edwards, "The Renaissance Stufetta in Rome," 11-13.
[30] Schulz, "Pinturicchio and the Revival of Antiquity," 41. Deoclecio Redig de Campos describes the *stufetta* as a "triumphal moment" and Raphael's "little masterpiece" in "La Stufetta Del Cardinal Bibbiena in Vaticano E Il Suo Restauro," *Römisches Jahrbuch Für Kunstgeschichte* 20 (1983), 221-240.
[31] Edwards, "The Renaissance Stufetta in Rome," 11-13; 15-25; 48-54.

Bibbiena (Figure 25). Larger in scale and more public in nature than the private *stufetta*, this open-air porch bursts with Neronian inspired *grottesche* systems comprised of 16th century inventions (Figure 26).[32] From the lowermost sections of the walls to the top of the barrel vaults, fantastical forms consume a white background that recalls the decoration of Cryptoporticus 92 of the *Domus Aurea* and further develops elements that were introduced in the *stufetta* (Figure 27). In the loggetta, thread-like structures are suspended and surrounded by whimsical, fantastical characters. Hybrid beasts, celebratory *putti*, bearded masks, and bowls and amphorae gracefully merge with one another from within the candelabra-like filaments like a blooming parade. Small pinakes, or panels, with black backgrounds tell the mythological stories of Apollo and Marsyas, and in-between the pinake walls are large *trompe-l'oeil* statues resting in red niches.[33] The novel *grottesche* creations of the Loggetta of Cardinal Bibbiena by Giovanni da Udine and other workshop members represents their full commitment to *all'antica* production. The idea of *grottesche* artistic invention within ancient adhering systems is consistent with Michelangelo's requirements for his specialized carvers at San Lorenzo.

The following project within the Vatican Palace by Raphael and his workshop was met with resounding praise and adoration. Completed in 1519, the Loggia of Leo X capitalized on *all'antica* decoration with similar *grottesche* expressions and methods as the previous Vatican rooms by Raphael and his team (Figure 28). The loggia incorporates fresco and stucco *grottesche* on the pilasters and arches of the arcades (Figures 29 & 30). Incorporated in the barrel vaults are biblical stories from the Old Testament surrounded by blooming *grottesche* in a scheme reminiscent of *all'antica* barrel vault decoration. The reception of Raphael's popular decoration cycles within the loggias resulted in translations of his forms into engravings, which became

[32] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*, 124.
[33] Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque*, 64-68.

known as "The Bible of Raphael."[34] The visual impact of the decorations went beyond artistic replication as visitors were moved by their witness experience, prompting written retellings of their encounters. Baldassare Castiglione, a humanist and close friend of Raphael, wrote to Isabella d'Este that the rooms were, "worked in ancient style stuccoes: as beautiful as possible. Perhaps even more than what one sees today from modern folk."[35] In developing the later 16th century theory of *grottesche* expressions, Vasari described Raphael's loggias as a pivotal moment for the reemployment of ancient style decoration. In heightened excitement Vasari wrote that,

> Of all works of the kind this [Raphael's loggia] is the most beautiful, the most rare, and the most excellent painting that has ever been seen by mortal eye. And, in addition, I will make bold to say that this work has been the reason that not Rome only but also all the other parts of the world have been filled with this kind of painting.[36]

Raphael and his workshop used *grottesche* forms within other Vatican projects during the reign of Leo X, such as the borders of the tapestries for the Sistine Chapel and the astrological vault in the Hall of Pontiffs in 1519. Two of Raphael's most trusted colleagues that were responsible for the previous *grottesche* stucco and fresco work within the Vatican Palace, Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine, decorated the highly anticipated Medici Villa Madama between 1520-1525 after Raphael's untimely death in 1520.[37] Intended to symbolize the Christlike resurrection of Rome as Lazarus at the hand of Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the Villa Madama boasts of a complex system of *all'antica* and *grottesche* designs similar to those of the Vatican rooms (Figure 31).[38] Giovanni da Udine's revival of the *grottesche* stucco *all'antica* combined with

[34] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea* Book, 202.
[35] Francesco Paolo Di Teodoro, "La 'Lettera a Leone X' Di Raffaello e Baldassar Castiglione: Un Nuovo Manoscritto," *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa, Classe Di Lettere e Filosofia* 7, no. 1 (2015): 71-72, 212-214.
[36] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:490.
[37] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*, 202-203.
[38] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*, 203; Elet, *Architectural Invention in Renaissance Rome*, 15-46.

Giulio Romano's intensive commitment to revealing the ancient legacy of his native city produced a decorative program within the Villa Madama reminiscent of ancient types.[39]

Grottesche expressions became, at the hands of Raphael and Medici patrons, a vehicle by which a comprehensive *all'antica* experience was channeled. The presence of *grottesche* at the Vatican and the Villa Madama reminded onlookers of a lost era while simultaneously announcing a hopeful renewal under the Medici Papacy in a grandiose celebration. Through this classical return the "corpse" of Rome would be revived, marking a New Golden Age under the Leonine Papacy.[40]

Medici Chapel *Grottesche* Patterns and Relevant Scholarship

As *grottesche* expressions evolved from the first generation's marginal decoration to their explosion within the second generation's large scale *all'antica* schemes, a profound shift occurred. Through Medici patronage, *grottesche* forms embodied more than just a visual nod to antiquity. Their selective contextual presence in a comprehensive scheme opened their ability to signal multilayered patron ideals, thoughts, and intentions. The manifestation of this complex system required highly skilled artists able to adhere to ancient *grottesche* systems of organization while inventing unprecedented forms. With this established, considering the versatile potential of *grottesche* expressions in Medici projects following the decoration of the Vatican Palace cannot be overlooked.

At the height of religious, political, and dynastic threats against Medici power in Rome, Pope Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici turned their patronage sights towards San Lorenzo in their native Florence. Among one of these major projects was the Medici Chapel, a family mausoleum

[39] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book,* 203.
[40] Elet, *Architectural Invention in Renaissance Rome*, 15-46; E.H. Gombrich, "Renaissance and Golden Age," *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 24, no. 3-4 (1961): 306-309.

commissioned in 1520 by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici who would later be elected as Pope Clement VII in 1523 after Leo X's death.[41] Within the unfinished chapel, the previously described reliefs of the altar candelabra comply with certain aesthetic values of *grottesche* systems, such as the candelabra-like stacking and unnatural manipulation of creatures and objects. Beyond their reception as solely eccentric decorations, the inclusion of these forms within the New Sacristy is significant in the context of their Medicean sponsored *grottesche* predecessors, suggesting a shared antiquarian visual language.[42]

The limited existing scholarship treating the small, detailed ornamental reliefs of the New Sacristy generally associate the altar candelabra with other oddities or "grotesques" within the chapel, if they are even mentioned.[43] Using the adjective "grotesque" to describe the decoration of the New Sacristy like the spandrel creatures, the capitals and friezes of masks, and the altar candelabra categorizes them within a single category that is often overlooked. In her article "Tuscan Dispositions: Michelangelo's Florentine Architectural Vocabulary and its Reception," Caroline Elam thoroughly investigates Michelangelo's architectural language in the New Sacristy and suggests that the masks and shells on the capitals, the hybrid creatures on the spandrels of Duke Lorenzo's tomb, and the frieze of masks below the cornice on both tombs are "funerary grotesques."[44] In the same article Elam notes that Giorgio Vasari's description of Michelangelo's architectural order of the New Sacristy suggests the implementation of "new inventions *alla grottesca*", although this mention does not lead to further investigation of the expression.[45]

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[41] De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 52.
[42] For more on a shared antiquarian visual language within the circle of artists, humanists, and poets of the Medici court, see Elet, *Architectural Invention in Renaissance Rome*, 1-14; 15-46.
[43] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 120-128.
[44] Elam, Caroline, "'Tuscan Dispositions': Michelangelo's Florentine Architectural Vocabulary and its Reception," *Renaissance Studies* 19, no. 1 (2005): 49.
[45] Elam, "'Tuscan Dispositions'," 61.

Considering the analyses of Michelangelo's proposed architectural theory contextualizes the artist's working methods of the Medici Chapel.[46] In his article, "Michelangelo on Architecture," David Summers attempts to reconstruct the fragmentary evidence of Michelangelo's architectural theories, making mention of decorative *grottesche* and its existence in Michelangelo's artistic repertoire. Summers briefly discusses the controversial early 16th century reception of the expression, its pagan symbolism, and most importantly its representation of invention through novel images that only exist through the mind of the artist.[47] Regarding architectural influences on Michelangelo's design of the New Sacristy, David Hemsoll suggests Michelangelo's adherence to local Florentine models rather than those of ancient or current Rome. Hemsoll recognizes Michelangelo's unprecedented architectural order within the New Sacristy as a "combination of novelty with tradition," derived from popular *all'antica* usage but in the manner of past Florentine architects. This combination, Hemsoll suggests, results in an original presentation of *all'antica* motifs within Florentine architectural traditions.[48] The specification of *grottesche* expressions on the altar candelabra, in conjunction with their patterns of deviation from 16th century *grottesche* organizations, is in agreement with Michelangelo's observed architectural methods at San Lorenzo.

The New Sacristy altar candelabra reliefs present various creatures and inventions stacked in a candelabra-like fashion, consistent with the defining elements of *grottesche* expressions. However, unlike the organization of other 16th century *grottesche* expressions, the individual reliefs of the altar candelabra isolate singular *grottesche* moments as if they have been cut from a

[46] For the first comprehensive study of Michelangelo's architectural theory, see James Ackerman and John Newman, *The Architecture of Michelangelo*, Pelican Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), especially chapters 1 and 3.
[47] David Summers, "Michelangelo on Architecture," *The Art Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (1972): 146–57.
[48] David Hemsoll, "A Question of Language: Raphael, Michelangelo and the Art of Architectural Imitation," in *Raising the Eyebrow*, ed. Lauren Golden (Oxford, England: Archaeopress, 2001), 128.

larger program. Manipulated by expression, the disposition of the New Sacristy candelabra *grottesche* is not one of celebration or excitement. Echoing the sentiments of their funereal surroundings, the *grottesche* are openly disturbed. There is no relief or celebration for the cursed; like prisoners, the candelabra creatures are eternally mounted to and crushed by one another. Eyebrows furrow, nostrils flare and eyes bulge in horrific grief, and gaping mouths cry out in agony. With debilitating mutations coming from their heads, the masks unnaturally morph into amphorae and form handles for the objects. Is the inanimate object in the process of resurrection, or are the living becoming petrified? Do they feel this pain, and is it part of their agony? In some instances their extensions form amphorae handles, or dolphins that are shaped into handles, or vases that unbothered birds drink from, or cornucopias with ripe fruits. Could their sufferings be necessary for the living to be attracted to their bountiful head offerings at the altar?

Chapter Two: The Creation and Context of the Medici Chapel Candelabra

... a great painter makes a work which seems to be artificial and false, this falseness is truth; and greater truth in that place would be a lie.

Francisco de Hollanda in *Quatro Dialogos Da Pintura*

Introduction

Refiguring the New Sacristy altar candelabra reliefs within the studies of 16th century *grottesche* expressions calls into question not only their systematic patterns, but also the contexts of their creations. Who was responsible for the candelabra reliefs, and is it possible to know the iconographic intention behind their constructions? With over 150 documented workers between Michelangelo's projects at San Lorenzo, attribution of the New Sacristy altar candelabra poses difficulties. Although precise dating of the candelabra cannot be confirmed, their execution most likely occurred during the first campaign of the chapel's construction between 1524-1527.[49] Conflicting interpretations of reported damages to one of the candelabra from the eighteenth century further complicates their attribution, and the current eighteenth century dating of the left candelabrum has been rightfully questioned.[50] It is likely that the documented interventions by Girolamo Ticciati around 1741 were minimal, although close examination of the candelabra reliefs suggests that two different sixteenth century artists could have been responsible for their construction.[51] Regardless, not just any workshop member would have been assigned the technically demanding candelabra reliefs. Michelangelo's attentiveness at every stage of the construction process defends the intentionality of any seemingly arbitrary decisions or programs.

[49] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 126-127.
[50] Marco Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," *Nuovi Studi. Rivista di Arte Antica e Moderna,* vol. 11 (2007): 102-104.
[51] Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," 103-104.

While it is impossible to arrive at certain attribution and iconographic conclusions about the New Sacristy candelabra, the context of their execution is relevant for discussions regarding their *grottesche* expressions. The competence of Michelangelo's engravers alongside thematic parallels between ancient objects, the candelabra, and other chapel ornaments suggest a more intentional *grottesche* program for the altar candelabra than previously considered.

Michelangelo's *Intagliatori*: A Proclivity for Invention

Between the Medici sponsored Laurentian Library (1523-1559) and the Medici Chapel (1520-1534) projects of San Lorenzo, Michelangelo's workshop required the efforts of hundreds of collaborators. The majority of marble in the Medici Chapel was not carved or polished by Michelangelo at all, who trusted his recruitments with certain tasks based on their skill level.[52] It is impossible to distinguish the work of each individual hand within Michelangelo's team; however, attribution proposals have been made regarding the decorative aspects of the chapel. In his book *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, William Wallace offers the most extensive analysis of the San Lorenzo projects to date. By reconstructing the biographical and documentary information from the Medici Chapel during the first campaign, Wallace is able to make informed proposals as to the authorship of the pilaster capitals, mask friezes, and the altar candelabra which will be discussed in the next chapter.[53] Attribution aside, Michelangelo's expectations of the workshop members likely responsible for the altar candelabra required a knowledge of and proficiency in *grottesche* expressions.

During the construction of the Medici Chapel, Michelangelo exercised a great degree of control over the project and kept extensive records of his workers, their wages, and their

[52] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 89; 120.
[53] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 120-134.

schedules (Figure 32).[54] Michelangelo's documentation is so methodical that, in cross-referencing certain names, their recorded pay increases, and their assigned titles, a workshop hierarchy can be determined with clarity. As discussed by Wallace, there was a small group of marble carvers within the chapel who experienced short periods of increased wages for carrying out certain tasks.[55] These workers, called the *intagliatori*, were skilled artists responsible for more specialized assignments than that of the less technically demanding labours of other craftsmen such as the *scarpellini*.[56] The *intagliatori* were expected to "know how to carve arabesques, large and small foliage, Corinthian, composite and Michelangel-esque capitals, coats of arms, grotesques [*grotteschi*], temples, perspectives, landscapes, masks, and other such work…"[57] Wallace uses this working definition from Vincenzo Giustiniani's *Discorsi sulle arti e sui mestieri* to emphasize that Michelangelo greatly trusted the abilities of his *intagliatori* and delegated the most difficult ornamental aspects of the chapel to them.[58]

While Michelangelo's records and letters can be used to reconstruct the practicalities of daily activity within the San Lorenzo projects, limited preparatory material exists that contextualizes specific iconographic choices within the Medici Chapel. There are no finished plans or drawings that serve as models for the candelabra reliefs; however, there are a series of drawings associated with the surviving graphite material of the chapel that seem to have a relationship with its "bizarre" or "grotesque" decorations. Four sheets feature bizarre heads and

[54] For a comprehensive review of Michelangelo's Medici Chapel records involving workshop roles, wages, and schedules, see Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 4-7; 75-122.
[55] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 120.
[56] For more on the roles of the *intagliatori*, *scarpellini*, and other distinctions within Michelangelo's workshop at San Lorenzo, see Giorgio Vasari and Gaetano Milanesi, *Le Vite De' Più Eccellenti Pittori Scultori Ed Architettori* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1878-85), 1:127-8; Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 7-8; 120-124.
[57] "… e saper far intagli di rabeschi, fogliami grandi e piccoli, capitelli Corinti e misti, e alla Michelangelesca, armi, grotteschi, templi, prospettive, paesi, e mascheroni, ed altri lavori…" from Vincenzo Giustiniani in *Discorsi Sulle Arti*, quoted in Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 120.
[58] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 120.

masks of hybrid creatures comprised of devilish beasts and human heads, two sheets show studies of amphorae, and one sheet has a salamander-like crouching dragon (Figures 33-39). In his article "Silvio Cosini e Michelangelo," Marco Campigli discusses the wide range of these graphic notes and some of their questioned attributions to Michelangelo.[59] He notes their common relationship with certain decorative aspects of the Medici Chapel such as the heads, amphorae, and dragons of the tomb capitals, mask friezes, candelabra pedestals, and the 16 rectangular amphora reliefs above the sacristy doors (Figures 40-43). Campigli argues that a probable circumstance surrounding the creation of these drawings was one of demonstration, each note a quick indication or idea that served as a model that was advanced in later stages.[60] In considering the likelihood that, for example, Michelangelo's *Drago* drawing served as a rough model for the candelabra pedestals, Campigli explores the possibility that Michelangelo used drafts like these to indicate an idea for his workers. Describing the novel creations as "inventions," Campigli argues that Michelangelo did not need to provide exact models for the *intagliatori*; his trust in the abilities of his engravers included not only their technical artistic skills, but also their proclivities for invention.[61]

As Michelangelo organized the Medici Chapel workshop, his attention was seemingly alleviated from the peripheral decoration as he was able to delegate these tasks to specialized craftsmen. Most of the recruited *intagliatori* already had experience with *grottesche* expressions that required similar imaginative outputs. Wallace's attribution proposals come through close analysis of Michelangelo's expectations of his recruitments, and their processes of invention are comparable with known *grottesche* working methods of the 15th and 16th centuries.

[59] Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," 95.
[60] Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," 95-96.
[61] Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," 95-96.

Defining *Grottesche* Invention

As *grottesche* expressions evolved from marginal decoration within architecture to more comprehensive *all'antica* schemes, a new *grottesche* artistic theory emerged. 16th century written observations of *grottesche* expressions defined the logistical and iconographic principles of the genre's construction. Beyond the physical considerations of the genre regarding medium and systematic organization, these writings also reflected upon the unique imaginative disposition required for the conception of *grottesche* forms. Later contained in the writings of Giorgio Vasari, these values defined the specific creative abilities and working methods of *grottesche* artists that parallel those seen in the artists of the Medici Chapel.

In his collection of artist biographies *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* originally published in 1550, Giorgio Vasari discusses the technique, history, and properties of *grottesche* expressions in the section "Three Arts of Design-Architecture, Painting and Sculpture."[62] As the first comprehensive analysis of the 16th century *grottesche* expression, Vasari established an artistic theory that combined physical employment strategies with theoretical studies of the genre.[63] In detail he describes how to use stucco, plaster, and fresco to create *grottesche* forms and warns against certain application techniques to avoid error or undesirable finishes.[64] 1st century BCE Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius wrote about similar application processes and painting principles in his multi-volume architectural commentary *De Architectura*. In chapter five of book seven, Vitruvius mentions a new style of painting that

[62] Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari on Technique: Being the Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, ed. G. Baldwin Brown and trans. Louisa S. Maclehose (London: J.M. Dent & Company, 1907); Liana De Girolami Cheney, "Interplay of Grotesques in Giorgio Vasari and Cristofano Gherardi," in *Paradigms of Renaissance Grotesques*, ed. Damiano Acciarino (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2019), 297-330.
[63] De Girolami Cheney, "Interplay of Grotesques in Giorgio Vasari and Cristofano Gherardi," 298.
[64] Vasari, *Vasari on Technique*, 244-247.

deviated from preferred narrative scenes. Recounting the nature of this new style as morphing from reality, he writes:

> For monsters are now painted in frescoes rather than reliable images of definite things. Reeds are set up in place of columns, as pediments, little scrolls, striped with curly leaves and volutes; candelabra hold up these figures of aediculae, and above the pediments of these, several tender shoots, sprouting in coils from roots, have little statues nestled in them for no reason, or shoots split in half, some holding little statues with human heads, some with the heads of beasts. Now these things do not exist nor can they exist nor have they ever existed…[65]

Using written ekphrases like those of Vitruvius in conjunction with other ancient commentaries to inform his historical analysis, Vasari introduces contemporary *grottesche* artists into his discussion. Referring to the *all'antica* decorations of Raphael and his workshop within the loggias of the Villa Farnesina and Vatican Palace, Vasari praises the *grottesche* mastery of his contemporaries in Rome.[66] In his *Lives*, Vasari records the names of many Renaissance painters and examples of their *grottesche* expressions, including those by Raphael, Luca Signorelli, Bernardino Pinturicchio, and Filippino Lippi.[67]

Within both his visual and literary efforts, Vasari commented on and contributed to relevant discourses regarding topics of reality, metaphor, artificiality, and aesthetics.[68] As the first true artistic theory of *grottesche,* Vasari's reflection on the properties of the genre is significant when determining which *grottesche* conceits were of the utmost value to him and his contemporaries. His descriptions of *grottesche* not only comment on the physical practicalities of the expression, but also on the ideal nature of its inception. First describing the paintings as free

[65] Pollio Vitruvius, *Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. by Ingrid D. Rowland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 91.
[66] Vasari, *Vasari on Technique,* 246-247. For Vasari's comments within his letters regarding the stucco work of Giovanni da Udine as "una delle più, belle et notabili cose che sieno in Firenze," see Giorgio Vasari and Karl Frey, *Der Literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris* (München Germany: Georg Müller, 1923), 29-33.
[67] Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque*, 31-47; Joscelyn Godwin, *The Pagan Dream of the Renaissance* (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 2005), 127-137.
[68] De Girolami Cheney, "Interplay of Grotesques in Giorgio Vasari and Cristofano Gherardi," 297.

and humorous, Vasari elaborates on the definition later when discussing the historicity of the expression. He writes:

> [the ancients] …fashioned monsters deformed by a freak of nature or by the whim and fancy of the workers, who in these [*grottesche*] pictures make things outside of any rule, attaching to the finest thread a weight that it cannot support, to a horse legs of leaves, to a man the legs of a crane, and similar follies and nonsense without end. He whose imagination ran the most oddly, was held to be the most able.[69]

Vasari's observations distinguish the art of invention, as opposed to imitation, within *grottesche* expressions.[70] Not only did the installation of *grottesche* require a certain level of artistic skill, but those who manifested the most outlandish creations within their schemes were hierarchically elevated above the others. Along with Vasari, other 16th century theories of *grottesche* are discussed by David Summers in his reflections on Michelangelo's architectural methods in "Michelangelo on Architecture." The genius of invention in the 16th century, Summers points out, was seen as a procedure of deviation from reality.[71] Any artist can produce or replicate a landscape or portrait; however, the ingenious artist can conceive of bizarre things that do not exist. Therefore, the most daring inventions were celebrated as the most creative.

The praise of *grottesche* invention can be seen in the reception of Raphael and Giovanni da Udine's Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican Palace discussed in chapter 1. The designs of the *stufetta* adopt the spirit of invention by creating novel and unused forms without deviating from the original ancient model. For example, the *Domus Aurea* decorations frequently use painted architectural structures as a device for figures to rest upon. Within the *stufetta*, Raphael's designs adhere to the same supporting schemes; however, *erotes* and *putti* now dance upon the thin scaffolding and stacked objects, giving the impression that their supports could

[69] Vasari, *Vasari on Technique,* 246.
[70] De Girolami Cheney, "Interplay of Grotesques in Giorgio Vasari and Cristofano Gherardi," 297.
[71] Summers, "Michelangelo on Architecture," 150-151.

instantly topple over. Raphael's designs adhere to the ancient models of painted architecture within a *grottesche* scheme but change the perception of the architecture's stability. In his book *Les grotesques,* Philippe Morel discusses this paradox of implied movement within the seemingly stable architecture of *grottesche* schemes that create apprehension.[72] As in the example of the *stufetta,* the ability to create original motifs and interactive scenes while remaining faithful to ancient models determined the success of 16th century *grottesche* artists.

The 16th century reflection on the genesis and invention of *grottesche* forms is a pertinent concept in assessing the intentionality of the *grottesche* expressions within the New Sacristy. Michelangelo recruited *intagliatori* with traditional *grottesche* experience, expecting them to adhere to known processes of invention required to conceive the most novel programs. In addition to the altar candelabra reliefs, the presence of other imaginative decorations consisting of screaming masks, jeering dragons, and monster-amphora hybrids within the chapel "should be sufficient to suggest that Michelangelo did in fact have a pronounced taste for such things."[73]

Ancient Antecedents

The rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea*'s *grottesche* paintings in the late 15th century was by no means the only source of antique inspiration for *all'antica* artists.[74] As ancient Roman ruins were explored and reproduced in drawings and prints, objects like ancient funerary altars, urns, and candelabra were also discovered. Surviving examples of these ancient objects present iconography such as oxen, ram, or goat skulls called *bucranium* or *aegicrane* with festoons and garland hanging between their heads. Sometimes ancient altars or urns also have vegetation, animals, or birds on their lower registers, such as this ancient Roman funerary altar from 14-68

[72] Morel, *Les grotesques,* 101-113; Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque,* 66-67.
[73] Summers, "Michelangelo on Architecture," 151.
[74] Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book,* 197-199.

CE (Figure 44). In his book *The Medici Chapel*, Charles De Tolnay discusses Michelangelo's "direct imitation" of antique tomb altars and sarcophagi. He explains that the combination of many motifs in the Medici Chapel, such as the jugs, shells, garlands of acorns, dolphins, and ram skulls are references to ancient Roman iconography.[75]

Other ancient Roman objects with vegetal, animal, and festoon motifs were imitated toward the end of the 15th century. Well known ancient candelabra held in the Basilica of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome were copied and reproduced in Italian manuscript illuminations, drawings, and prints.[76] One of the bases of a 2nd century CE candelabrum in Sant'Agnese is strikingly similar to that of the Medici Chapel candelabra, featuring protruding rams' heads in the upper corners and retaining a base with a slightly curved geometric shape (Figure 45). The bottom of the ancient candelabrum is supported by winged harpies and the center relief panel features a small *putto* framed by symmetrical rineaux designs. The ancient candelabra, along with the decorations of the *Domus Aurea*, are credited as having inspired drawings like this early 16th century composition (Figure 46).[77] The left side of the sheet mimics the design of the 2nd century ancient candelabrum from Sant'Agnese, featuring a base supported by harpies and decorated with rams' heads, *putti* with swirling tendrils, and an acanthus decorated shaft.[78] The right side of the sheet features *grottesche* expressions of stacked *putti*, harpies, monsters, and filament organized in candelabra-like shapes. In one instance, a muscular satyr reaches out and physically grips two separate supports connected to individual candelabrum arrangements as if he is struggling to bring them together.

[75] De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 165.
[76] Beth Holman and Cooper-Hewitt Museum, *Disegno: Italian Renaissance Designs for the Decorative Arts* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub, 1997), 21.
[77] Holman, *Disegno*, 22.
[78] Holman, *Disegno*, 22.

Other candelabra studies incorporating ancient motifs like this 16th century example combine similar fantasies (Figure 47). Comprised of stacked vases and a lit urn, this candelabrum design is ornately decorated with festoons, masks, ribbons, and is supported by harpies. Behind this design is a study of an incomplete shield or emblem with a monster's head above and a mask below. According to Beth Holman in *Disegno: Italian Renaissance Designs for the Decorative Arts*,, the drapery swags indicate that this candelabrum study could have been intended for a two-dimensional decoration. Holman later states that imagery of drapery embellished candelabra supported by sphinxes were designs revived during the Renaissance.[79] The altar candelabra of the Medici Chapel hold similar properties to these drawings and ancient candelabra; their shapes, ancient inspired motifs, and orientation toward fantastical iconography is not surprising in light of the 16th century interest in candelabra design. However, the Medici Chapel candelabra present something different in their designs that deserve further investigation (Figures 48 & 49). Imitating the shape of ancient candelabra like the 2nd century Sant'Agnese candelabrum, the New Sacristy altar candelabra isolate small, individual, *grottesche* moments of stacked masks and objects within their panels. These *grottesche* are not free to explore or venture beyond their candelabra, and instead it is if they have been cut from larger grottesche systems and caged within their confining spaces at the chapel altar..

These 16th century drawings and ancient candelabra are widely described as "grotesque." This adjective poses issues when used to describe ancient inspired aesthetic systems of stacked candelabra-like fantasies without delineation between *grottesche* expressions and, for instance, any peculiar or odd image. The broad category omits the implied method of invention that was required to create the expressions of candelabra-like stacks that adhere to ancient models. The

[79] Holman, *Disegno*, 26-27.

specialized craftsmen that were recruited for the Medici Chapel project were hired not only for their interest in bizarre forms but also for their inventive *grottesche* abilities.

Chapter Three: Greater than the Sum of *Grottesche* Parts: Artists of the Medici Chapel

And if the thought that grips me hadn't been that a happy death means
laughter in high heaven at the very notion death can frighten men,
my sorrow'd be far worse.

Michelangelo, poem from 1531
Trans. James Saslow

Introduction

After the death of Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici's election as Pope Clement VII in 1523, pressure on the importance of Michelangelo's Medici family mausoleum grew. Work on the New Sacristy was majorly interrupted from 1527 to 1530 beginning with the Sack of Rome, dividing the chapel's construction into two campaigns.[80] The execution of the altar candelabra occurred most likely during the first campaign between 1524-1527 along with the mask capitals and mask friezes, and their attribution cannot be maintained with certainty. As the candelabra required more technical skill than that of the *scarpellini*, Michelangelo's records indicate certain specialized carvers that have been credited with the candelabra execution.[81] Included in these records are the names of three artists who had worked with and showed proficiency in *all'antica* decoration and *grottesche* expressions: Silvio Cosini, Simone Mosca, and Giovanni da Udine.[82] While Giovanni was recruited by Michelangelo to complete the later removed *grottesche* inspired stucco decoration, the roles of Cosini and Mosca are more difficult to determine. Cosini and Mosca were responsible for some decorative reliefs during the first campaign, and both have been credited with their authorship.[83] Attribution aside, the organization of the altar candelabra

[80] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 7-8; 120-124.
[81] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 98-99.
[82] Buonarroti and Frey, *Briefe*, 280; 331, cited in De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 52-53; Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 126, 134.
[83] Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," 102.

required knowledge of past *grottesche* expressions and proficiency in their conception, invention, and execution. The inclusion of artists familiar with *grottesche* expressions, their previous works, and the evidence of other *all'antica* peripheral ornamentation like Giovanni's stucco decoration within the New Sacristy provides context for the intentional and unprecedented *grottesche* forms of the altar candelabra.

Silvio Cosini's Reliefs and Trophies

Silvio Cosini was a sculpting assistant of Andrea Ferrucci and first appears alongside his master in Michelangelo's employment roster from 1524.[84] Although he worked in the Medici Chapel for only eight months during the first campaign, Cosini was quickly promoted to *intagliatore* and is credited as having carved the tomb mask capitals, the spandrel dragon-hybrid decoration, and some of the mask friezes alongside Francesco da Sangallo (see Figures 40, 41, & 50).[85] Described by Vasari as having a proclivity for forms "alla *grottesca*," Cosini's promotion from *scarpellino* to *intagliatore* the same year he was hired is a testament Michelangelo's trust in the artist's abilities.[86] Not only was Cosini successful in his artistic execution, but his marble creations, like the weeping faces of the capitals, "…reveal a carver with a fertile imagination who evidently was left to invent on his own."[87]

Having worked previously with his master Andrea Ferrucci on the Antonio Strozzi Monument in Santa Maria Novella in Florence and later on the tomb of Raffaello Maffei of San Lino in Volterra, Cosini had experience with tomb organization and funerary decoration. Cosini's ability can be identified in his expert manipulation of marble to accentuate the swollen,

[84] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 93-94.
[85] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:774; Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 122-124.
[86] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:774.
[87] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 124.

bulbous qualities of his creatures or the smooth and rounded features of his masks. Although he only worked in the chapel for eight months, he was considered a valuable asset to Michelangelo's team and one of his most important assistants.[88] It is not surprising that he was recruited again during the second campaign of the Medici Chapel project after having left in 1524. Cosini was brought back to the mausoleum in 1532 to complete two tomb attic sculptures that are now located in the chapel's entrance hall and remain unfinished (Figures 51 & 52).[89] These sculptures represent two trophy groups that were intended to adorn the attics of the ducal tombs and consist of armor, decorated shields, helmets, and weaponry. In this tomb proposal that would have been exchanged with Pope Clement VII, Michelangelo's design features an effigy statue within a central niche seated above reclining figures and herms, festoons, and a sculpted trophy in the attic above (Figure 53). In the article "Michelangelo's Projects for the Medicean Tombs," Yoni Ascher describes the pagan iconography of this design and the Medici Chapel's original plan to have two monumental tombs facing one another.[90] Ascher discusses the importance of Andrea Sansovino's tomb of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza in Rome as a reference for the designs of the Medici Chapel tombs.[91] Sansovino's design also influenced Silvio Cosini during his involvement in the tomb project of Raffaello Maffei in Volterra from 1531-1532 before he began work in the second campaign of the Medici Chapel.[92]

Silvio Cosini's large, marble trophies consist of a single armor breastplate surrounded by shields, helmets, and weaponry. Upon closer investigation, it appears that these inanimate trophies are being consumed by worms with tentacle-like extensions that emerge from the necks

[88] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 131.
[89] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 94-95, 131.
[90] Yoni Ascher, "Michelangelo's Projects for the Medicean Tombs: Rereading of the Story of the Medici Chapel," *Artibus Et Historiae* 23, no. 46 (2002): 85-87.
[91] Ascher, "Michelangelo's Projects for the Medicean Tombs," 89.
[92] Rolf Bagemihl, "Cosini's Bust of Raffaello Maffei and Its Funerary Context," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 31 (1996): 41–57.

of the contorting breastplates. Trophy displays found on ancient tomb altars have been interpreted as emblems of immortality that celebrate the triumphal conquering of death.[93] As the former commemorative glory of the unfinished Medici Chapel trophy groups decay with time, their haunting effects are seemingly fitting within the context of a mausoleum.

According to De Tolnay, Cosini's decorations in the Medici Chapel can be traced to ancient burial altars and sarcophagi like those discussed in the previous chapter. He interprets the aquatic hybrid-monster on Lorenzo's tomb as a symbol of the journey to Hades. He also interprets the laughing masks as making a mockery of those who fear death and the capital masks act as guards of the afterlife. It is possible, De Tolnay suggests, that these images executed by Silvio Cosini could have been intended by Michelangelo to symbolize death and immortality within tomb architecture in the form of an "idealized palace façade."[94]

Silvio Cosini was one of the few artists that worked during both campaigns of the Medici Chapel project.[95] As one of the 15 to 20 carvers that comprised the "core group" of carvers in Michelangelo's San Lorenzo workshop, Cosini was given tasks that required technical skill and an ability to invent exciting and bizarre ornament like those of the mask capitals and friezes.[96] His work in the Medici Chapel during the second campaign with his decaying, worm ridden, tomb attic trophies is an example of the chapel program's orientation toward certain types of mysterious decorative elements. Cosini's inclusion within the Medici Chapel emphasizes the level of commitment required to create the most bizarre and wild fantasies that aligned with Michelangelo's vision for the chapel space.

[93] De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 165.
[94] De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 64.
[95] Wallace, *Michelangelo's Medici Chapel*, 94.
[96] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 110.

Simone Mosca's Orpheus Pedestal and the Cesi Chapel Reliefs

In 1524 Michelangelo wrote to a friend in Rome named Giovanni Francesco Fattucci, asking for help in recruiting skilled workers for the chapel. Fattucci's most praised suggestion was a sculptor from Settignano named Simone Mosca, who he describes as "uno buono maestro."[97] Fattucci assured Michelangelo that Simone Mosca would be ready to join the San Lorenzo project within a month's time; however, it would be more than a year later that the recruited artist would arrive in Florence. Mosca had received a commission to complete decorative ornament within the Cesi Chapel in Santa Maria della Pace which kept him occupied in Rome. Michelangelo would not have witnessed Mosca's Cesi Chapel decoration until much later, but it is likely that he would have been familiar with Mosca and Benedetto da Rovezzano's pedestal of Baccio Bandinelli's statue of Orpheus in the Medici Palace courtyard.[98] Regardless, both the Orpheus pedestal and the decoration of the Cesi Chapel are vital precursors in evaluating the properties of Mosca's ornamental reliefs and his proclivity for *grottesche* systems. It is likely, according to Wallace and supported by Campigli, that Mosca could be the author of the altar candelabra based on similarities between relief patterns, imagery, and overall style. Although the candelabra are smaller than the Orpheus pedestal, they have a "depth of relief carving, and a repertoire of decorative motifs that compare well with the decoration of the Orpheus base."[99] Wallace also describes the Cesi Chapel as an excellent example of Mosca's ability and a "tour de force of ornamental relief carving."[100] Whether keeping with Wallace's attribution or not, Mosca's Orpheus base and decoration in the Cesi Chapel are examples of the

[97] *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, 3:48 (1965-1983): 66-67; as cited in Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 97.
[98] Wallace discusses the likelihood that Michelangelo was familiar with the Orpheus pedestal in *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 127.
[99] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 127. For Mosca attribution, see also Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo," 102.
[100] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 97.

necessary skill level and iconographic experience that Michelangelo was looking for when assigning decorative projects.

In 1519, Simone Mosca and Benedetto da Rovezzano completed the base for Baccio Bandinelli's statue of Orpheus in the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence (Figure 54). The square marble base is comprised of decoration in both high and low relief that continuously wrap around each side and corner of the block. This side of the pedestal features a festoon with flowers, fruits, and ribbons along with various Medici family emblems such as lions, falcons, the Medici *palle*, and the yoked oxen device of Leo X.[101] With the lions' heads above and the falcons below, the animals wrap themselves around the corners and let their respective extensions of festoons and wings spread across the sides of the base. The bulky festoons filled with ripe fruits and flowers are in such high relief that the shadows push each individual shape forward. The heavy festoons pull down vertically to open the mouths of the lions, connecting them to one another across the object. The falcons' wings below the festoons and the various Medici crests that rest above mimic the curve of the garland, but the depth of their relief is much less dramatic in comparison.

The Orpheus base and Medici Chapel candelabra are both objects that recall similar iconography as the previously discussed ancient Roman marble cinerary urns or altars. The iconographic reliefs of the Orpheus base are so dramatic that they come into the viewers space, pushing and pulling the marble with a three-dimensional force that alters the perceived shape of the object (Figure 55). According to Wallace, this connection suggests that Mosca may be the author of the candelabra in the New Sacristy. He writes, "In both cases, the marble block has

[101] For more on the devices of the Medici and Leo X, see Elet, *Architectural Invention in Renaissance Rome*, 20; Claudia Rousseau, "The Yoke Impresa of Leo X," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz 33*, no. 1 (1989): 113-126.

been deeply carved at the center of the four sides whereas the protuberant corners have been treated as high reliefs."[102] Similar to creating sections of tension or excess by tugging fabric, both the Orpheus pedestal and New Sacristy candelabra have major moments of pull that create a sense of dynamism.

The New Sacristy candelabra fluctuate between high and low relief with more nuance than the Orpheus pedestal. Treating the background as an active member in the composition, the reliefs dramatically swell and recede as if they are being dipped in liquid. For example, in this scene the highest point of relief seamlessly melts into the lowest point (Figure 56). The height of the protruding cheeks and brow bones of the male masks recedes slowly and dramatically as their hair and beards become flesh with the background. As their hair recedes, the reliefs gain height again to emphasize the heads of the amphora dolphins. Adding to the sense of three dimensionality, the high relief amphora in this example has low relief garland decorating its register. Above, the coiled ribbon incorporates both high and low relief to accentuate its curls.

Strengthening Wallace's attribution of the Medici Chapel candelabra to Simone Mosca, there is continuity among the relief properties and iconography of Mosca's Orpheus pedestal, the Medici Chapel altar candelabra, and Mosca's reliefs within his Cesi Chapel decoration. Purchased by Agnolo Cesi in 1515 and designed by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, the Cesi Chapel houses the tombs of the later Angelo Cesi and his wife Francesca Carduli Cesi. The Cesi Chapel exterior is fortified by a monumental triumphal arch comprised of elaborate marble relief decoration. Mosca is credited with the delicate reliefs of the middle register, establishing a repertoire of imaginative reliefs similar in iconographic organization and stylistic properties to those of the Medici Chapel candelabra (Figure 57). Described by Wallace as "a tour de force of

[102] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 127.

ornamental relief carving," the Cesi Chapel is a testament to Mosca's aptitude for carving large scale *grottesche* forms.[103]

Mosca's rectangular relief panes of the Cesi Chapel façade are a testament to his mastery of marble *grottesche* expressions. These panes, six visibly accessible without having to enter the chapel, include the four panes flanking Peter and Paul two within the arch entrance facing one another. Not only do they follow a prescribed method of organization reminiscent of former *grottesche* expressions, but the inimitable iconography of each pane boasts of *grottesche* inventions. As with the previously discussed decorations of Pinturicchio's Della Rovere Chapel, the Cesi Chapel *grottesche* forms are defined by single ignited candelabrum that extend along the full height of the pane. Each *grottesche* relief pane of the Cesi Chapel has a designated base with legs of various winged creatures or mammal paws (Figure 58). As with the later Medici Chapel altar candelabra, four of the Cesi Chapel *grottesche* relief bases have *bucranium* or *aegicrane* skulls holding blossoming festoons (Figure 59). Mosca's bases support an ensemble of stacked vases, amphorae, pediments, and other inanimate objects that are decorated with impossible illusions and fantasies. At various points open mouthed comedic masks appear on vases, birds and harpies balance carefully on the candelabra, and bountiful vegetation gives the impression that the object is alive and self-sustaining. Dangling from the center candelabrum are instruments, roundels, books, tools, and lamps organized like a visual riddle, emphasized by mid-action moments in a swirling carousel of objects. In this particular moment, two muscular beasts with feathered appendages and thick tails support a candelabrum base decorated with two bearded masks with wings (see Figure 58). As the candelabrum extends upward by way of stacked vases and amphorae, two more masks adorn the middle register of a large vase. Above, a

[103] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 97.

furrowed browed and bearded mask with a headdress balances a blank pediment on his head (Figure 60). From both handles of the vase dangle three major ornaments tied with ribbons: a krater with a tool or utensil, flailing dolphins, and finally an open book to finish the ensemble. Similar to the relief style of the Medici Chapel candelabra, Mosca's background pane acts almost like water in which his candelabra are submerged. Mosca's *grottesche* reliefs protrude and recede with deep shadows, giving the illusion that the candelabra could be removed by the viewer.

Mosca's relief properties involve variations in depth by swollen or protruding shapes and gentle receding details that create a light push and pull effect. Transitioning effortlessly between high and low relief, Mosca's Cesi Chapel reliefs create the illusion that his *grottesche* forms are easily malleable as they become one with the background. These transitions allow the candelabra-like stacks of curious masks, mythological creatures, decorated amphorae and pediments to not simply attach to the object but become one with the candelabra. Similarly, the ease by which the marble motifs of the New Sacristy altar candelabra flow in and out of high and low relief is indicative of a highly skilled artist like Simone Mosca that was capable of achieving such nuanced transitions. However, instead of members of larger *grottesche* systems, the New Sacristy altar candelabra isolate individual *grottesche* moments. Their confined fantastical candelabra-like stacks must be contextualized within this new system: a literal candelabrum. In an almost poetic display, the *grottesche* are given an unprecedented physical function as their candelabra systems are interacted with, ignited, and extinguished at the altar.

Giovanni da Udine's Ornament and Decoration

Due to the unfinished nature of the New Sacristy, it is difficult to form concrete conclusions as to Michelangelo's iconographic and thematic intentions within the program.[104] While the majority of the chapel's plans were never fully realized, the decoration and later removal of Giovanni da Udine's fresco and stucco work in the cupola holds contextual significance in the discussion of the candelabra *grottesche* expressions. Only a few years after his extraordinary *all'antica* decoration for the Medici at the Vatican Palace and the Villa Madama, Giovanni da Udine was brought to the Medici Chapel to complete the ornament of the cupola.

Letters between Michelangelo and Clement VII reveal that the chapel's paintings and stuccoes were a concern from the beginning stages of the construction process. Michelangelo and Clement VII first discussed the cupola's stucco decoration in 1524, after which Michelangelo sent the pope a proposal drawing for approval.[105] Not long after this, scaffolding was erected in the chapel and work began on the stucco decoration.[106] In 1526, Giovanni da Udine's name was proposed for the cupola's painted decoration; however, his work within the chapel did not begin until 1532.[107] Aside from the decoration of the cupola, other paintings and frescoes were intended for the choir walls and potentially the three lunettes above the tombs; however, none of these were completed. These paintings have been associated with some sketches by

[104] See n. 1.
[105] Michelangelo Buonarroti and Karl Frey, *Sammlung Ausgewählter Briefe an Michelagniolo Buonarroti* (Berlin: Siegismund, 1899), 204f, cited in De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 52; For more on the working relationship between Michelangelo and Clement VII, see chapter 11 in Sheryl Reiss, "Cardinal Giulio De' Medici as a Patron of Art, 1513-1523," PhD diss., (Princeton University, 1992).
[106] Michelangelo Buonarroti and Gaetano Milanesi, *Le Lettere Di Michelangelo Buonarroti* (Florence, 1875), 585f, cited in De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 52.
[107] Buonarroti and Frey, *Briefe*, 280; 331, cited in De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 52-53.

Michelangelo consisting of stories of the Brazen Serpent as well as the Resurrection of Christ.[108] The only paintings executed in the chapel were that of the cupola by Giovanni da Udine and were comprised of "beautiful foliage, rosettes, and other ornaments of stucco and gold" and "foliage, birds, masks, and figures," suggested by De Tolnay to represent symbols of eternity and happiness.[109] Apparently Clement VII did not like the colors of the cupola decoration and suggested a more figural program instead. As an established and successful ornamental artist with experience in *all'antica* designs, Giovanni was frustrated by Clement's suggestions. Giovanni wrote that his skills were not best represented by figural compositions and that he desired to be left to his own manner of creation.[110] In 1533, Giovanni's work within the chapel ended prematurely with his cupola decoration almost completely finished.

By the time his name was first proposed for the cupola decoration in 1526, Giovanni da Udine was well known for his *grottesche* expressions and *all'antica* work within the Medici projects of Raphael's workshop. As friends and collaborators, Raphael and Giovanni shared similar interests in antiquarian pursuits. Drawn to the witness accounts of the monsters and fantasies of the Oppian Hill, Raphael and Giovanni da Udine explored the underground tunnels of the *Domus Aurea* together.[111] As the rediscovery of the *Domus Aurea* prompted an explosion of *grottesche* expressions in Rome, Giovanni committed himself to reviving ancient stucco techniques which he would then later use in the Vatican Palace projects. In recounting the life of Giovanni da Udine, Vasari praises the artist's total commitment to the study of the *Domus Aurea*

[108] De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 48-49; Popp, *Die Medici-Kapelle Michelangelos*, 158-159.
[109] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:495; De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 48.
[110] Giovanni da Udine writes, "Che l' ci era da fare storia grande da una banda; per le quali la mia perfexione non è da scultore, fate mi fare cose che siano da me," Buonarroti and Frey, *Briefe*, 321, cited in De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*, 157.
[111] Farinela, *The Domus Aurea Book*, 197.

grottesche forms and ancient stucco techniques. Vasari comments on the profound impression the paintings of the *Domus Aurea* had on Giovanni, saying:

> … their little scenes so pleasing and beautiful, entered so deeply into the heart and mind of Giovanni, that, having devoted himself to the study of them, he was not content to draw and copy them merely once or twice; and he succeeded in executing them with facility and grace…[112]

Vasari describes Giovanni's intense process of reviving the ancient methods and praises his application of the technique in the Loggia of Leo X. He goes on to say that Giovanni's *grottesche* are comprised of "the most varied and extravagant things that could possibly be imaged… he touched the highest level, as it were, that art can reach in that field."[113] Giovanni da Udine's work within the Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena, the Vatican loggias, and the Villa Madama earned him recognition as the first *all'antica* artist to reproduce and master ancient style stucco methods. His reputation as having surpassed that of the ancients in design, invention, and application earned him the commission for the Medici Chapel cupola decorations.[114]

During the Florentine Academy's campaign to organize the remaining marbles and statuary of the unfinished chapel during the 1540s, Vasari had the cupola decorations completely whitewashed.[115] Although the cupola remains without decoration, the once present frescoes and stucco work of Giovanni da Udine suggest an elaborate program of animals, masks, and vegetation. Reminiscing upon his comprehensive *all'antica* and *grottesche* decorations within the Vatican Palace and Villa Madama, Giovanni's inclusion within the Medici Chapel is another example of Michelangelo's preference for skilled artists with a mastery and knowledge of

[112] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:488.
[113] Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:489.
[114] Vasari writes: "In all this he not only equaled the ancients, but also, in so far as one can judge from the remains that we have seen, surpassed them, for the reason that these works of Giovanni's, in beauty of design, in the invention of figures, and in colouring, whether executed in stucco or painted, are beyond all comparison superior to those of the ancients…" Vasari and De Vere, *Lives*, 1:489.
[115] Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*, 134.

antique systems and *grottesche* expressions. Michelangelo trusted the minds of *all'antica* artists like Silvio Cosini, Simone Mosca, and Giovanni da Udine to invent new forms inspired by antiquity within the Medici Chapel.

Conclusion

Regardless of the fluctuation in the scale and framing of *grottesche* expressions throughout the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the systematic organization and iconographic scheme of the genre remained consistent. The Medici Chapel altar candelabra adhere to the defining principles of *grottesche* expressions that used candelabra-like stacks of objects, masks, and fantastical creatures within their compositions. Michelangelo's trust in his specialized artists to not only execute but also to invent novel scenes and creatures within their ornate carvings confirms the abilities of his recruitments. These were men who were known or trusted in *grottesche* expressions, qualified to create the screaming mask capitals, the mask friezes, spandrel monsters, and altar candelabra for the Medici family mausoleum. Within the confined space of the altar candelabra, the masks are eternally burdened by the weight of their crushing extensions. As if they have been cut from larger *grottesche* relief panels and caged to physical objects, the Medici Chapel *grottesche* expressions of the altar candelabra suggest a new mode of deviation from 15th and 16th century predecessors. By manipulating the expressions of their *grottesche* to suggest moments of agony and placing them within altar objects, the artists of the Medici Chapel reveal new methods of deviation within *grottesche* patterns. This evolution should be considered within 16th century *grottesche* studies and the invention methods of the artists responsible. In an almost poetic display, the physical candelabra become agents of the candelabra-like *grottesche* expressions. They imprint the New Sacristy with crushed and tortured souls, whose misery has been locked in marble for eternity within the chapel of tombs.

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Appendix of Images and Illustrations

Figures 1-8: Michelangelo Collaborators, Medici Chapel candelabra, First Campaign (c. 1524-1527). The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Images Source: Beck, Paolucci, and Santi, *Un Occhio Su Michelangelo*.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figures 5

Figure 6

Figure 7: Altar candelabrum with pedestal

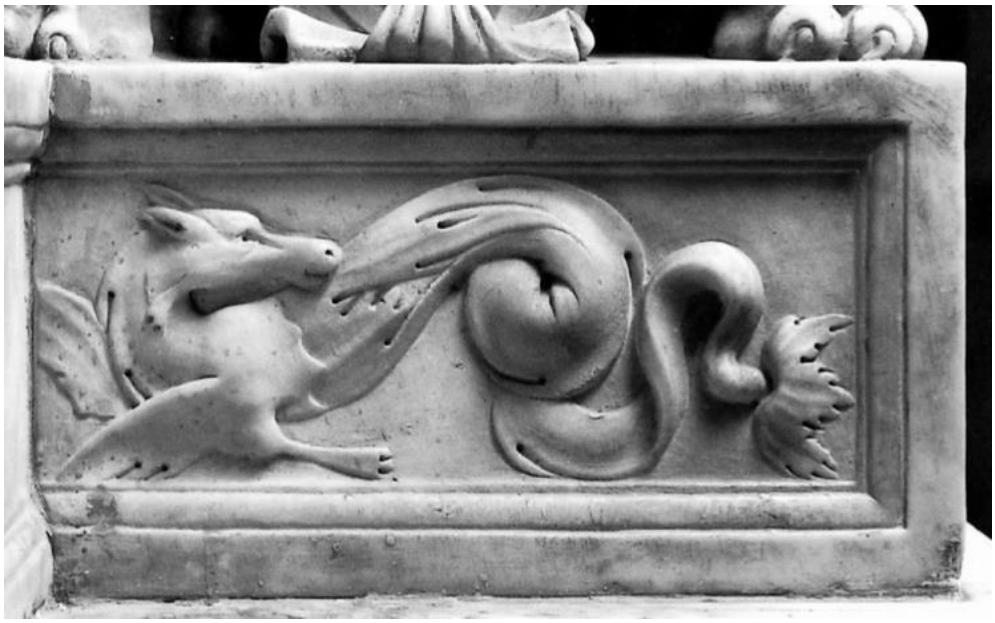


Figure 8: Detail of candelabrum pedestal

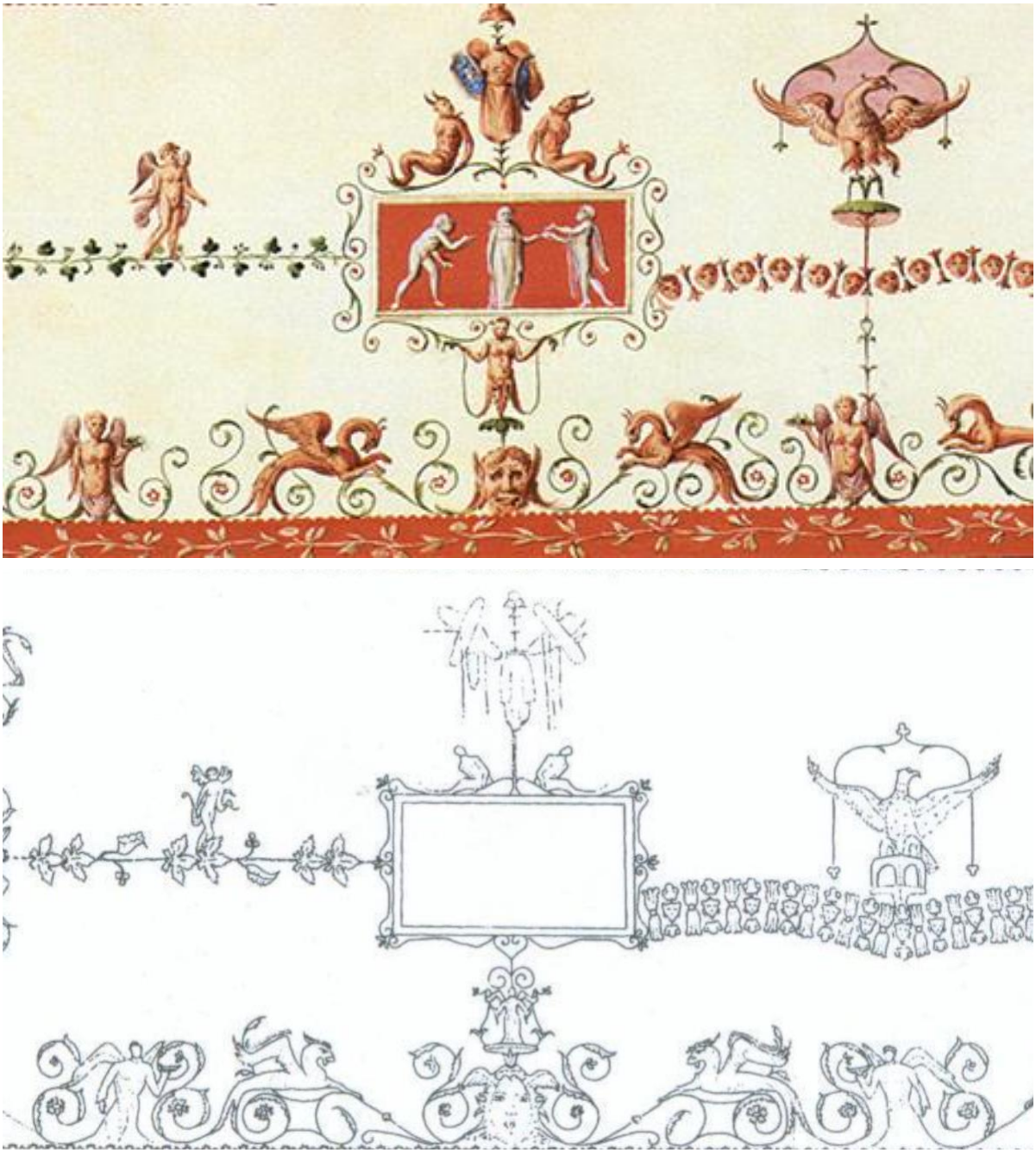
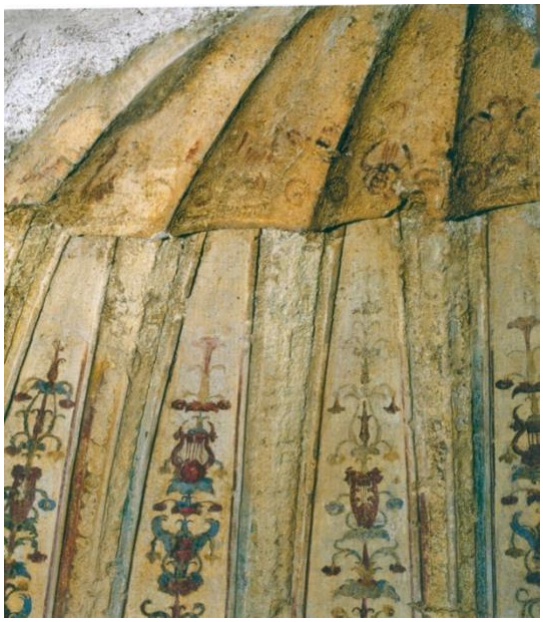


Figure 9: Ludovico Mirri, 'Yellow Vault,' of the *Domus Aurea,* 1776. Color reconstruction with outline of the vault decoration in its current condition.
Image Source: Brunetti, *Nero's Domus Aurea*.

Figure 10: The *Domus Aurea*, 'Of the Eagles Vault,' (Corridor No. 50), detail of hippocampi (sea horses) with vegetation, c. 65 CE. Fresco.
Reconstruction with black background by Carly Craig.
Image Source: Brunetti, *Nero's Domus Aurea*.




Figures 11 (Left) & 12 (Right): The *Domus Aurea*, 'Hall of Achilles at Skyros' (Room 119) (left), with details of sphinxes on pedestals (right), c. 65 CE. Fresco and stucco.
Image Source: Borghini, Farinella, and Russo, *Raffaello E La Domus Aurea*.

Figure 13: Filippino Lippi, *Sketches of Motives from the Golden House of Nero*, c. 1490. Pen and ink on paper, 255 x 193 mm. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, no. 1637E verso.
Image Source: Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*.

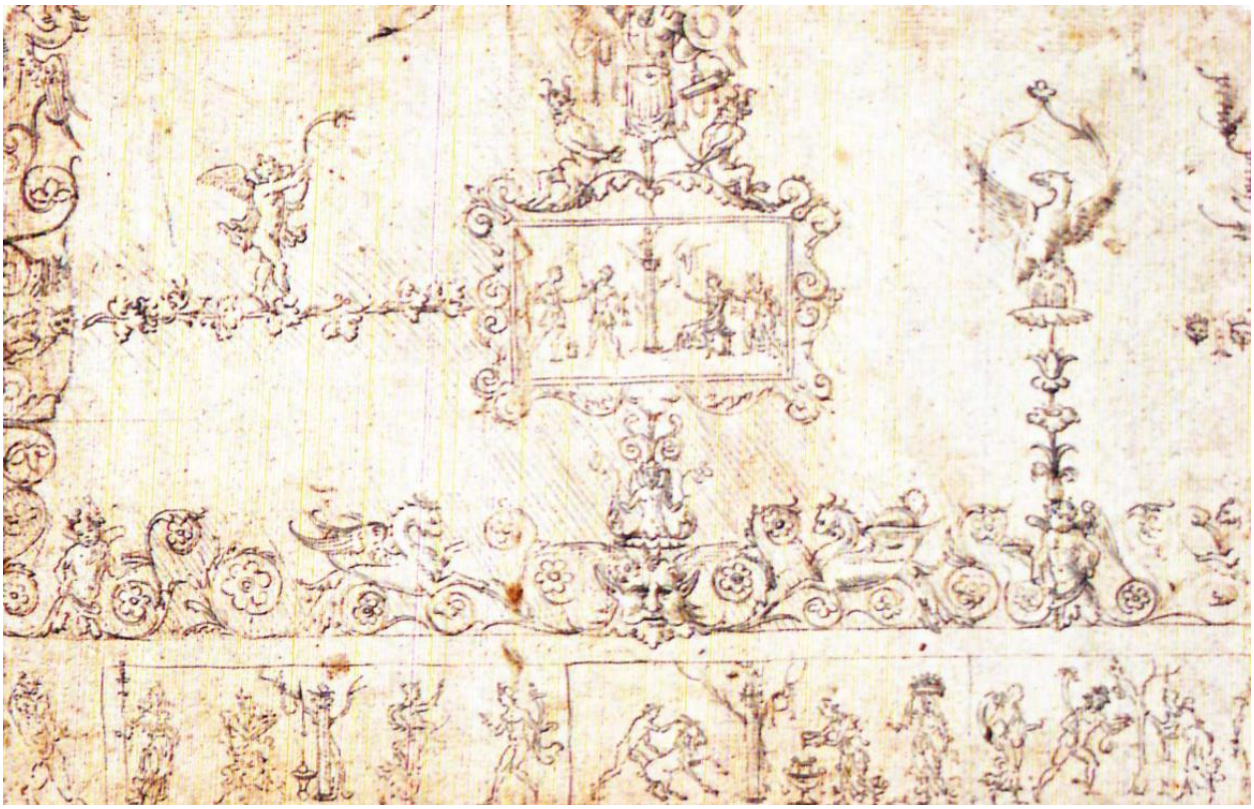


Figure 14: Amico Aspertini, '*Volta Gialla" of the Domus Aurea* (Yellow Vault, Room 31), c. 1495-1496. Pen on paper, 180 x 269 mm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 3336 DR *recto.* Image Source: Brunetti, *Nero's Domus Aurea*.

Figure 15: Pinturicchio, Della Rovere Chapel, c. 1488-90.
Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 16: Pinturicchio & Workshop, Basso Della Rovere Chapel, c. 1490s.
Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.
Image Source: Carly Craig

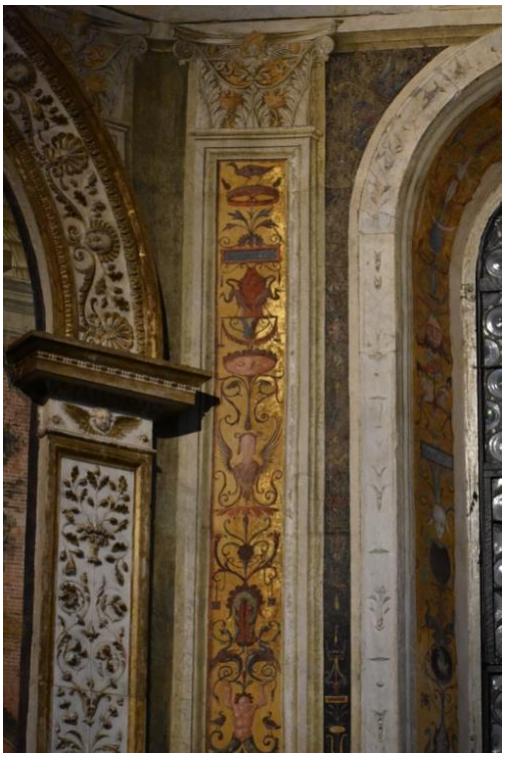


Figure 17: Pinturicchio, Della Rovere Chapel, detail of painted pilaster and window splay, ca. 1488-90. Fresco. Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 18: Della Rovere Chapel, detail of painted pilaster with centaurs and serpents.
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 19: Della Rovere Chapel, detail of painted pilaster with putto head.
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 20: Della Rovere Chapel, detail of painted pilaster with harpies.
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 21: Della Rovere Chapel, detail of painted pilaster with bird and hanging ornaments.
Image Source: Carly Craig


Figure 22 (Left) & 23 (Right): Raphael & Workshop, *Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena* (left), with detail of lunette decoration (right), 1516. Fresco and stucco.
Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique."

Figure 24: Giovanni da Udine (from Raphael's designs), *Stufetta of Cardinal Bibbiena*, detail of lunette *grottesche* decoration, 1516. Fresco and stucco.
Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Borghini, Farinella, and Russo, *Raffaello E La Domus Aurea*.

Figure 25: Raphael & Workshop, *Loggetta of Cardinal Bibbiena*, 1516-1519. Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique."

Figure 26: Raphael & Workshop, *Loggetta of Cardinal Bibbiena*, wall of *grottesche*, 1516-1519. Fresco. Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Scala, Florence/Art Resource, NY.

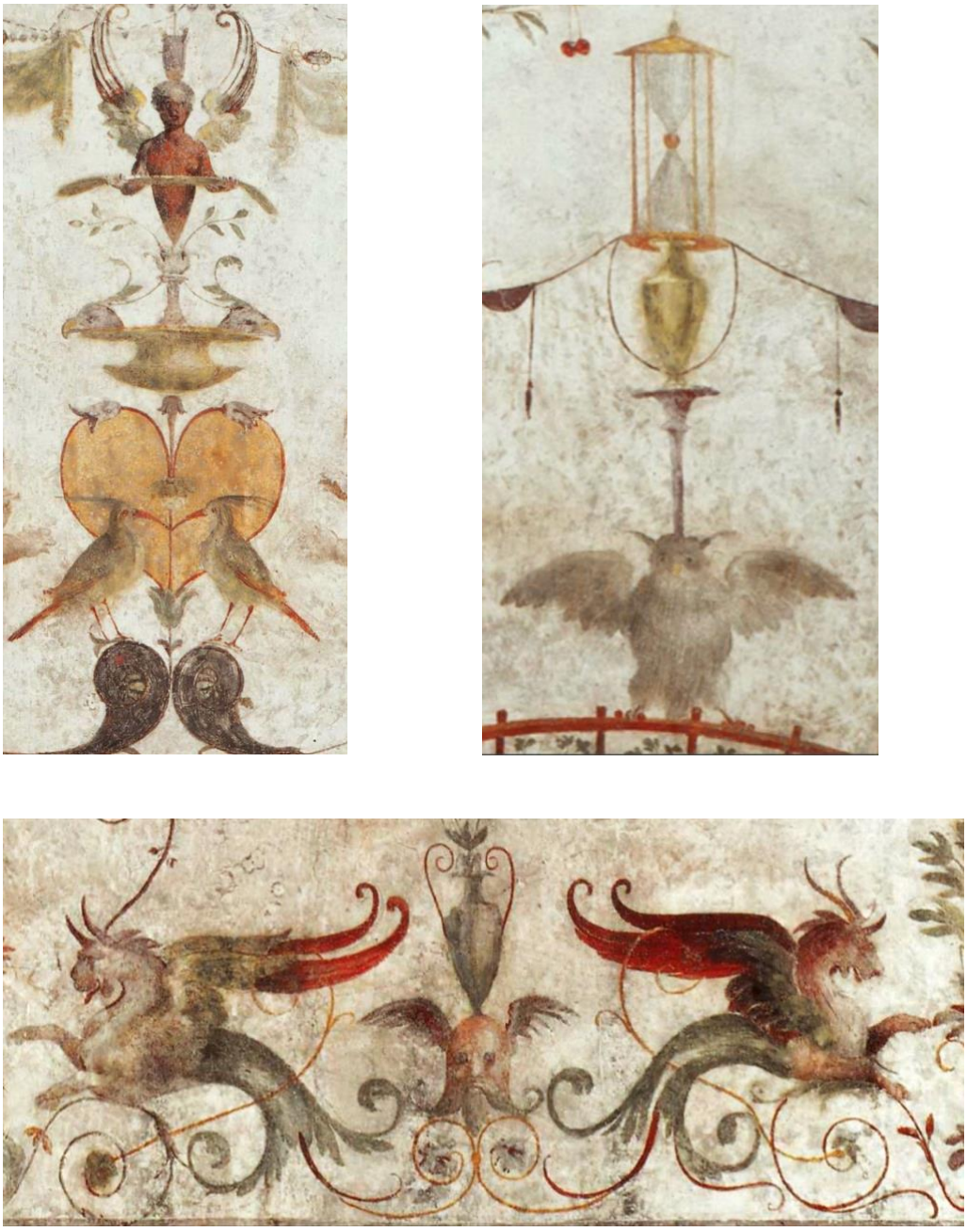


Figure 26 (details): Raphael & Workshop, *Loggetta of Cardinal Bibbiena*, details of *grottesche,* 1516-1519. Fresco.
Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Scala, Florence/Art Resource, NY.

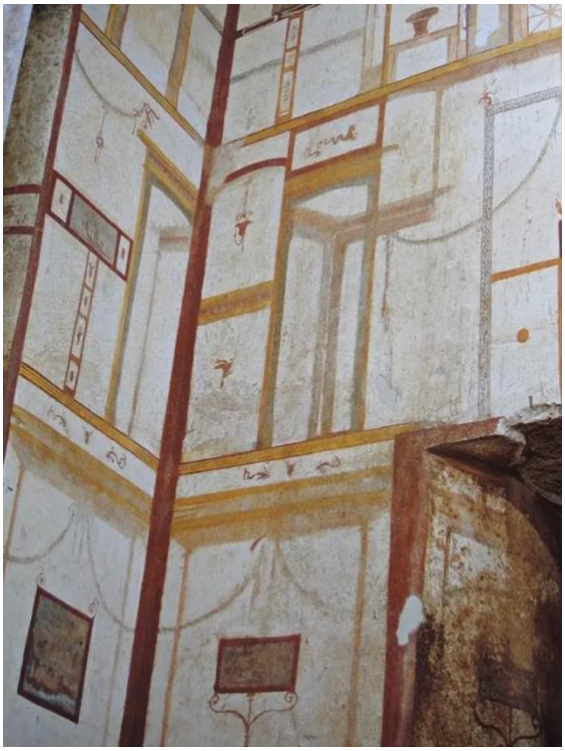


Figure 27: The *Domus Aurea*, Cryptoporticus 92, c. 65 CE. Fresco.
Image Source: Zamperini, "Grotesques and the Antique."

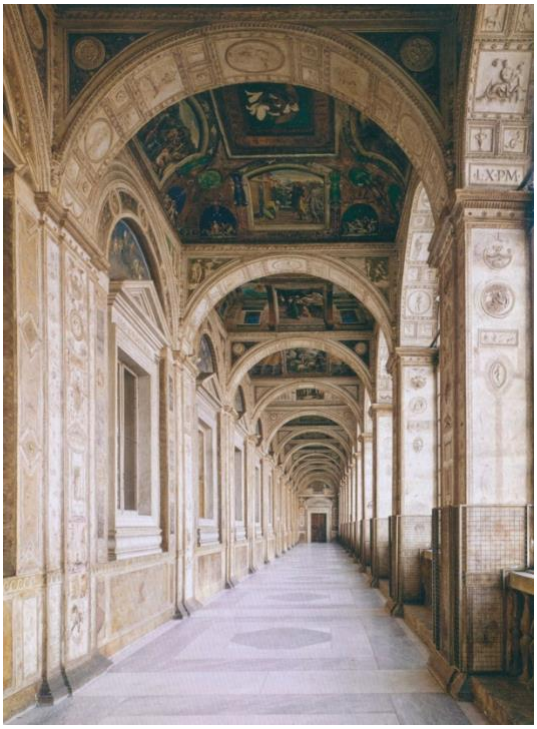


Figure 28: Raphael & Workshop, *Loggia of Leo X*, 1518-1519. Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*.

Figures 29 (Left) & 30 (Right): Raphael & Workshop, *Loggia of Leo X*, details of *grottesche* decoration, 1518-1519. Fresco and stucco. Vatican Palace, Rome.
Image Source: Farinella, *The Domus Aurea Book*.

Figure 31: Giovanni da Udine and Giulio Romano, *Villa Madama*, 1520-1525. Stucco and fresco decoration of loggia, Rome.
Image Source: Borghini, Farinella, and Russo, *Raffaello E La Domus Aurea*.

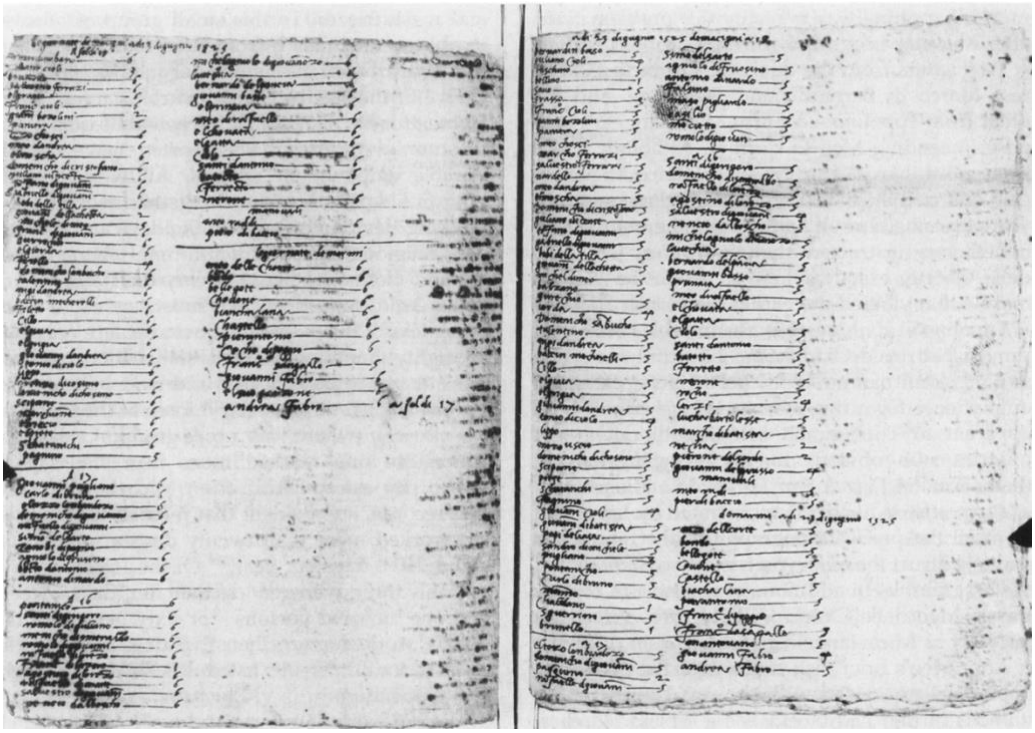


Figure 32: Michelangelo, two pages of his employment roster from June 1525. Archivio Buonarroti, Florence, I, 62, folios 2 *verso*-3 *recto*.
Image Source: Archivio Buonarroti, cited in Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*.

Figure 33: Michelangelo, *Grotesque head*, c. 1525-1530. Black and red chalk on paper, 24.9 x 11.9 cm. London, Windsor, Royal Library.
Image Source: Archivio Buonarroti, cited in Hirst, *Michelangelo and His Drawings*.

Figure 34: Michelangelo, *Grotesque heads* (detail), c. 1520-1525. Red chalk on paper, 25.5 x 33 cm. London, British Museum.
Image Source: Archivio Buonarroti, cited in Chapman, *Michelangelo: Drawings.*

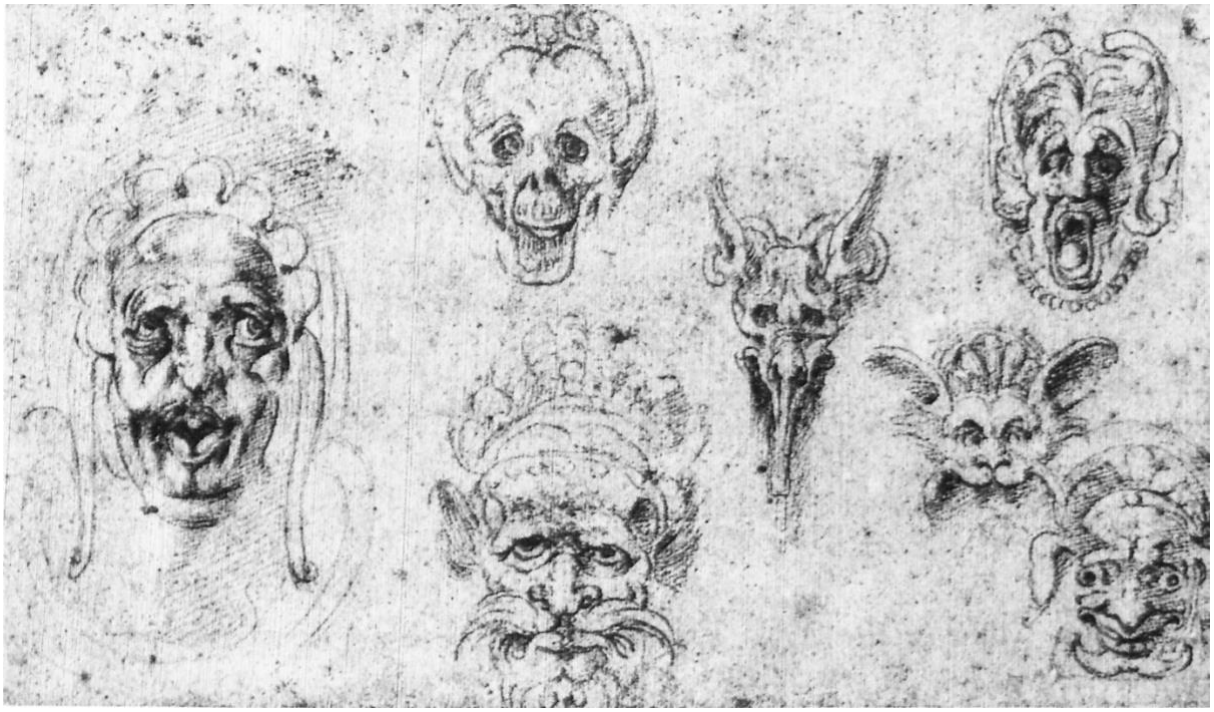


Figure 35: Michelangelo Collaborators, *Decorative heads,* c. 1520s.
Red chalk on paper, 26 x 41 cm. Lille, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire.
Image Source: Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo."

Figure 36: Michelangelo Collaborators, *Heads of animals and fools,* c. 1525-1535.
Red chalk on paper, 26 x 41 cm. Frankfurt, Städelsches Kunstinstitut.
Image Source: F. Cicciaporci, cited in Chapman, *Michelangelo: Drawings.*

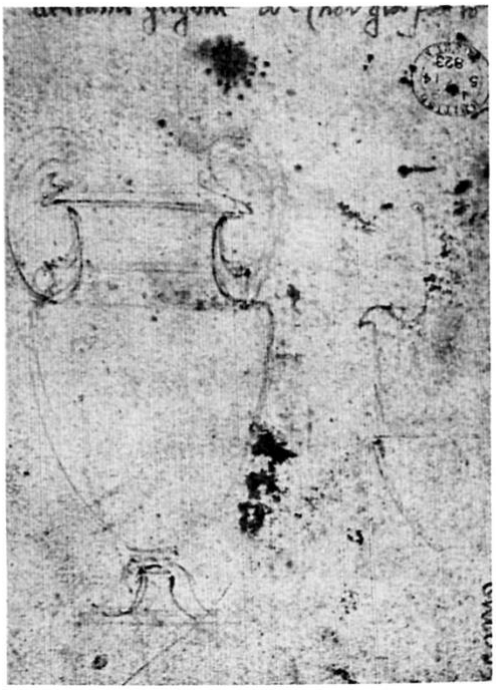


Figure 37: Michelangelo, *Vase* (detail), c. 1520s. Black chalk on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. London, British Museum.
Image Source: Casa Buonarroti, cited in Chapman, *Michelangelo: Drawings.*

Figure 38: Michelangelo, *Vase* (detail), c. 1520-1525. Black chalk, 12.3 x 12.8 cm. London, British Museum.
Image Source: Archivio Buonarroti, cited in Wilde, *Michelangelo and His Studio.*

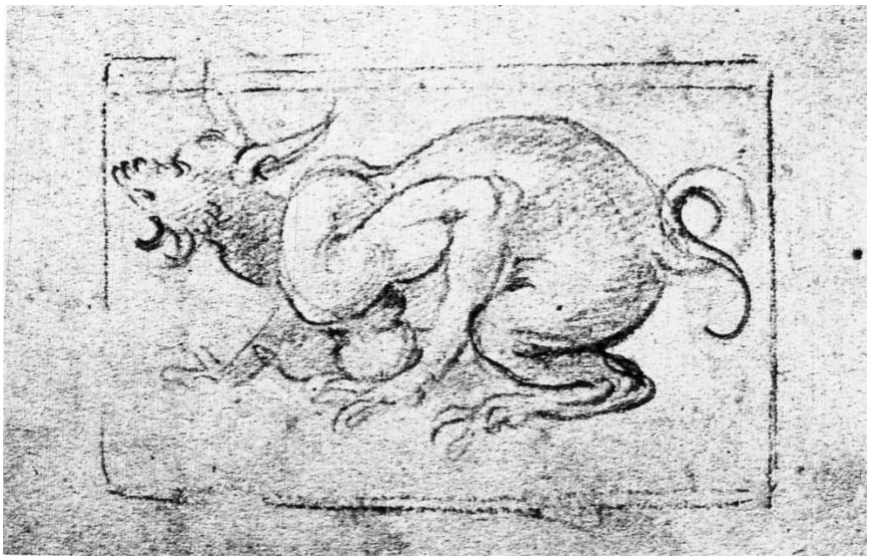


Figure 39: Michelangelo, *Dragon*, c. 1531-1533. Black chalk, 41.2 x 27.3 cm.
London, British Museum.
Image Source: Archivio Buonarroti, cited in Wilde, *Michelangelo and His Studio.*

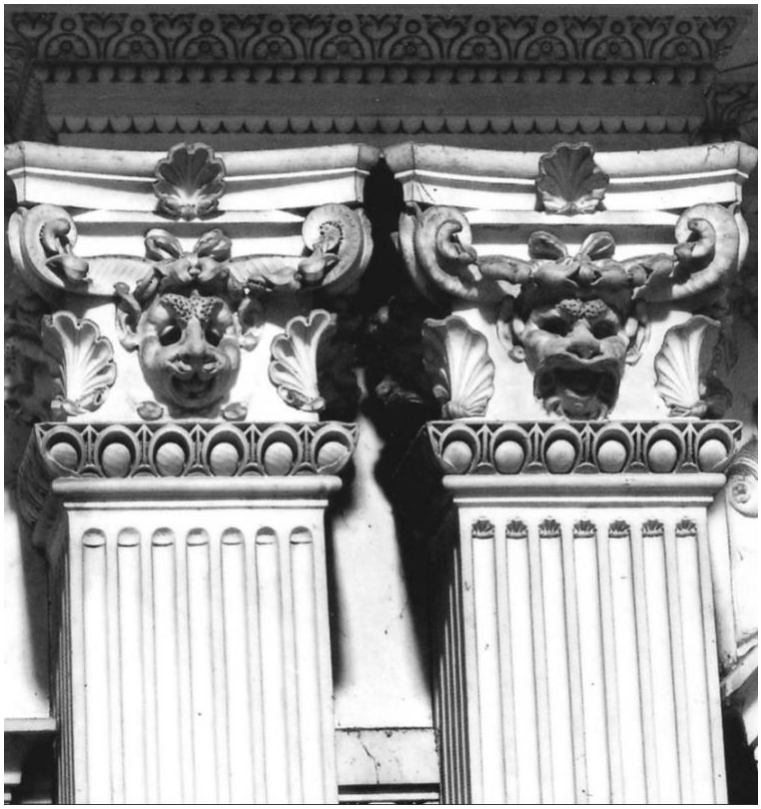


Figure 40: Silvio Cosini, capitals with masks, c. 1524.
From the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino.
The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Beck, Paolucci, Santi, *Un Occhio Su Michelangelo*.

Figure 41: Francesco da Sangallo, mask frieze, c. 1524
From the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, Duke of Nemours.
The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: De Tolnay, *The Medici Chapel*.

Figure 42: Michelangelo Collaborators, detail of an altar candelabrum pedestal.
The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Beck, Paolucci, Santi, *Un Occhio Su Michelangelo*.

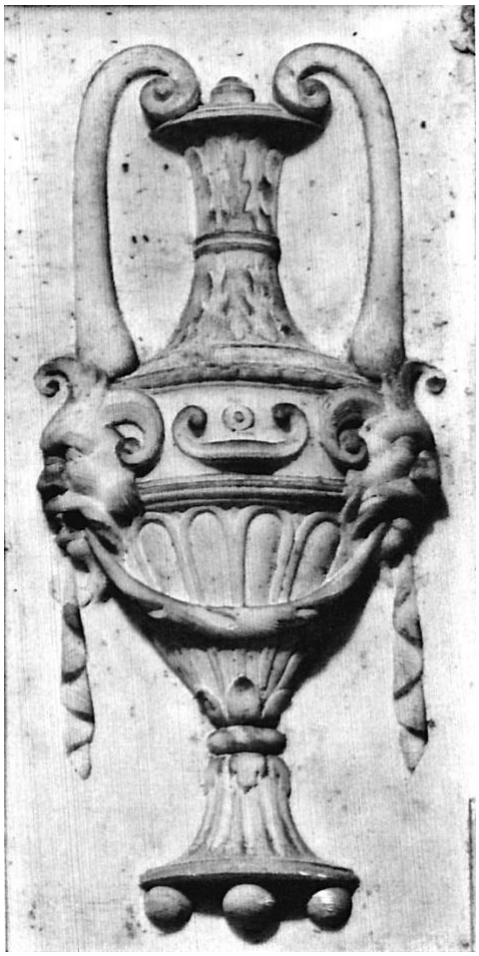


Figure 43: Michelangelo Collaborators, relief from a niche above the chapel door.
The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Campigli, “Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo.”

Figure 44: Roman, marble funerary altar, ca. 14-68 CE. Marble, 80 x 43.2 x 35.6 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Image Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art public domain website.

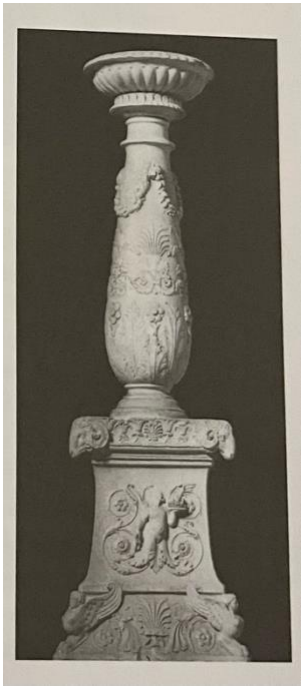
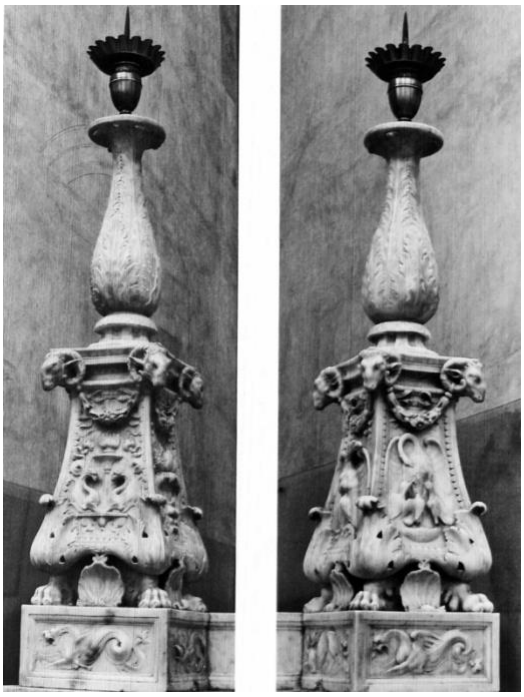


Figure 45: Roman, *Marble Candelabrum*, 2nd Century CE.
Vatican Museum.
Image Source: Holman, *Disegno: Italian Renaissance Designs for the Decorative Arts*.

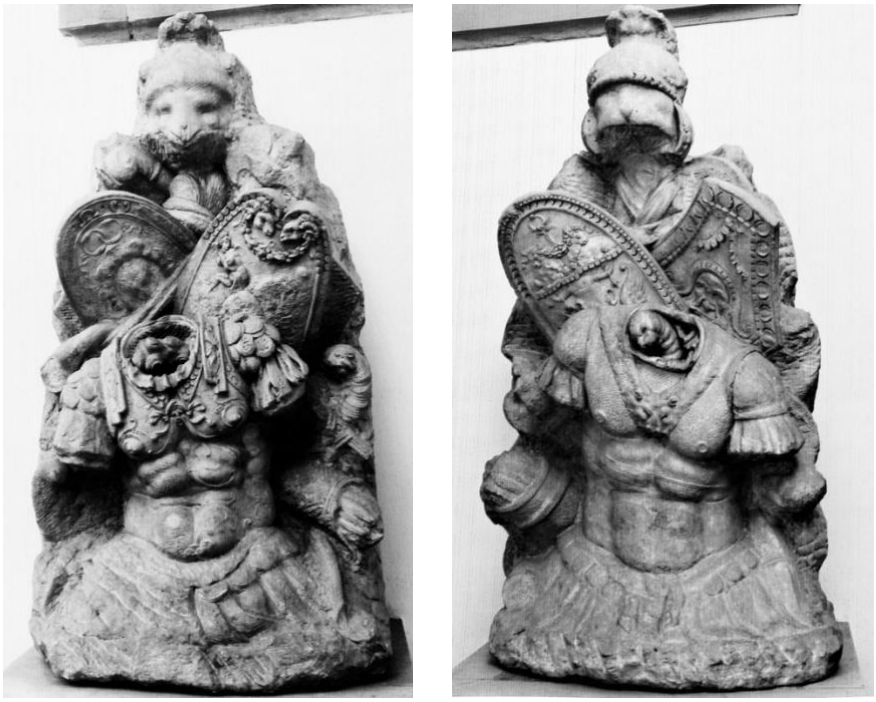
Figure 46: Northern Italian, *Design for Candelabrum and Panel of Grotesques*, early 16th Century. Pen and brown ink on paper, 25 x 18 cm. New York, Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.
Image Source: Holman, *Disegno: Italian Renaissance Designs for the Decorative Arts*.

Figure 47: Italian, *Study for Candelabrum Motif and Strapwork Escutcheon*, c. 1560s. Pen and brown ink, black chalk, violent watercolor, 26.3 x 12.5 cm. New York, Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Image Source: Holman, *Disegno: Italian Renaissance Designs for the Decorative Arts*.



Figures 48 & 49: Michelangelo Collaborators, Medici Chapel altar candelabra, First Campaign (c. 1524-1527). The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo."

Figure 50: Silvio Cosini, detail of decoration on the spandrel of the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, 1524. The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo."



Figures 51 & 52: Silvio Cosini, *Trophies*, Second Campaign (1530-1534). The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Campigli, "Silvio Cosini E Michelangelo."

Figure 53: From Michelangelo designs, *Louvre 838,* 1524. Graphic drawing, 32 cm x 20 cm. Study for one of the Medici tombs at San Lorenzo, Florence. Image Source: Louvre Museum, from Ascher, "Michelangelo's Projects for the Medicean Tombs."

Figure 54: Simone Mosca and Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Orpheus Pedestal*, 1519.
Marble. Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence.
Image Source: Online, The Web Gallery of Art

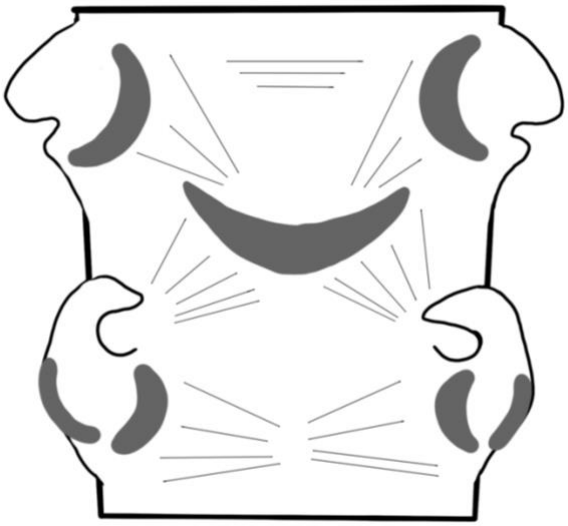


Figure 55: My reconstruction of the *Orpheus Pedestal*, demonstrating the force of push and pull.
Image source: Carly Craig

Figure 56: Michelangelo Collaborators, Medici Chapel altar candelabrum, First Campaign (c. 1524-1527).
Marble reliefs. The New Sacristy at San Lorenzo, Florence.
Image Source: Beck, Paolucci, Santi, *Un Occhio Su Michelangelo*.

Figure 57: Simone Mosca, Cesi Chapel, 1524.
Marble reliefs. Santa Maria della Pace, Rome.
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 58: Simone Mosca, Cesi Chapel, detail.
Santa Maria della Pace, Rome
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 59: Simone Mosca, Cesi Chapel, detail.
Santa Maria della Pace, Rome
Image Source: Carly Craig

Figure 60: Simone Mosca, Cesi Chapel, detail.
Santa Maria della Pace, Rome
Image Source: Carly Craig