The plans and the work-site of Sant’Antonino’s chapel in St. Mark’s in Florence —the work of Giambologna— in a manuscript in the Salviati Archives

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The manuscript «Notebook of the building of Sant’Antonino’s chapel in St. Mark’s in Florence, 1579–1589» kept in the Salviati Archives in Pisa, forms a particularly interesting testimony to the planning and realisation of an architectural work in the last two decades of the 16th century in Florence.

The «Notebook» belongs to a kind of writing that is rather rare in the historical archives of noble families and of its kind it is extraordinarily detailed, rich and organic in data. It is divided into two parts: the first contains the journal of the expenses of the period 1579–94, with some copies of bills; the second —the memories of the work by masters and labourers who worked in the chapel from May 1580 to June 1589. Figure 1.

The analysis of the manuscript shows a number of interesting factors about the architect’s role in the second half of the 16th century, on the process of joint design, on client’s role in conceiving the work, on drawings, plastic works and on yard organization.

The subject of the «Notebook», the chapel of Sant’Antonio in the church of St. Mark’s in Florence, commissioned from Giambologna by the Salviati family, is one of the fundamental prototypes of a series of magnificent, celebratory chapels built between the end of the 16th century and the first decades of the 17th, in the Roman area, like those dedicated to Popes Clement VIII, Sixtus V and Paul V in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. In its composition we find a close link between architecture, sculpture and painting. The chapel, a

Figure 1
Frontispiece of the Notebook of the building of Sant’Antonino’s chapel in St. Mark’s in Florence, 1579–1589 (Archives of Salviati. Libri di commercio e di amministrazione patrimoniale, II, 113)
handsome architectural composition contrasting white and coloured marbles with great dark bronze plaques, assembles the small and rather idiosyncratic repertory of architectural details which recurs in all of Giambologna’s architecture. Figure 2.

The construction of the chapel, devoted to Antonino Pierozzi officially canonized in 1523 by Pope Clement VII, belonged to the renewal counter-reformist program, of the Dominican church of St. Mark. The decisive change of this church (after the elimination of the choir dividing the men’s area from the women’s) was introduced with the construction of the chapel of Sant’Antonino which stimulated the total change of the interiors.

The chapel is divided into two environments, one at the same level of the central aisle of the church and the other one underground. The upper level is composed of a hallway and of the chapel. Figure 3.

The funeral oratory and the crypt are located underground. Figure 4.

The entry to the hallway is characterised by a great round arch in serene stone, sustained by composite columns and pilasters, surmounted by the marble statue of Sant’Antonino. In the hallway, the two couples of doors on the side walls are inserted in the frescos of Passignano, _Traslazione del corpo di S. Antonino_ on the right-hand side and _Esposizione del corpo di S. Antonino_ on the left-hand side. An arc having the same size as the one at the entry toward the central aisle, sustained by two couples of marble pillars in composite style, separates the hallway from the effective chapel. Both inside the hallway and in the adjoining chapel, the architectural body is made of marble. The altar niches in ionic style and other architectural structures are located in the clear grate constituted by a system of composite pillars sustaining the trabeation, applied to niches or panels, elements framing sculptural and pictorial decoration. Under the trabeation each of the three walls is divided into three parts: in the central area we can find the marble altar, whereas marble statues and the bronze
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bas-reliefs are located on the sides. On the central altar, Alessandro Allori’s canvas with the Apparizione del Cristo is accompanied by statues by Saint Giovanni Battista and Saint Filippo Apostolo. The painting of the Vocazione da San Marco by Giovanbattista Naldini is placed near Saint Domenico and Saint Tommaso d’Acquino, while Francesco Morandini’s painting with Gesù che guarisce il lebbroso is set near Sant’Antonino Abate and Sant’Edoardo. Bronze panels above the statues tell the story of Sant’Antonino’s life. In the modelling of the walls, characterized by a great plasticity and chromaticity, the architecture is tightly connected to the painting and sculpture. In the middle of the chapel, the sarcophagus of Sant’Antonino rests on a marble pedestal.

The chapel space is sealed by a segment dome with octagonal base, surmounted by a lantern in white marble. The intermediate area with pendentives, the underside of the arches and the dome are entirely decorated with frescos. The pictorial program of the dome is devoted to the Storie di Sant’Antonio: four episodes of the Saint’s life in the greatest segments and four virtues in the smaller spaces are united by grotesque decoration. Under the arches, the Saint’s life stories; on the pendentives and on the sides of the windows —Prophets and Sybille. Finally the floor drawing in colored marbles reflects the dome’s shape. Figures 5, 6.

The clients of the chapel were Averardo (1542–1595) and Antonio Salviati (1554–1619) who fulfilled the last wishes expressed in the will of their father Filippo of Averardo (1513–1572) particularly attached to the Dominican order and great venerator of Sant’Antonino. The construction of the oratory for the family, which had at that time in Florence a notable importance in the economic life and a prestigious political role at the grand-ducal court, was not only a religious fact but also a symbol of munificence and prestige. The work was committed by the family to Giambologna at that time considered as the most
famous artist at the grand-ducal court and, as reported by Vasari, «much in grace of our principles for his virtues . . . very rare young man». Francesco I, who employed him exclusively for his works, granted the artist to the Salviati family thanks to the good relationships between the duke and the family. Suffice it to remember on this subject the famous sculptures, realised by him a few years before the assignment, for example the Oceano for the Boboli Garden, the Venus in the Grotticella, the bronze Apollo for Francesco I’s private room and the Rape of the Sabine women for the Loggia dei Lanzi, initiated in 1579. During his first architectural experiences, Giambologna — like the other sculptors or painters of the 16th century that had been working as architects — used only his trained eye and his knowledge of the ancient architecture. It’s no wonder that he took part in the construction of architectural, even though small structures, without being in fact an architect, because the solution of structural problems was generally remitted to master builders and carpenters. After all, according to Alberti, who claimed the prominent role of the ideation and planning in his essay De re aedificatoria, the architect shouldn’t necessarily be the direct performer of the works, but he had to manage its realisation with intelligence. The first experience of Giambologna in architecture was the Altare della Libertà in the church of Lucca (1577–79). Contemporarily to the task entrusted to him by the Salviati family, he was working at the Grimaldi chapel in the church of San Francesco di Castelletto in Genoa (where, after all, he used the same compositive scheme of statues, bas-reliefs, painting and architecture) and since 1584 he had been working at the chapel of the Soccorso in Santissima Annunziata, Florence.9

The Quaderno, in which Giambologna is expressly named «architector», clearly confirms that the architectural ideation of the chapel of Sant’Antonino together with the plastic and figurative creation undoubtedly belong to him.10 The possible contribution in the planning and realization of artists such as Ammannati, Buontalenti and others, pointed out by some researchers11 is definitely overcome by the manuscript.

The two surviving drawings of Giambologna for the Salviati chapel, one of the general planimetry and the other of the wall with the main altar12 do not have the form of a free-hand sketch, which was the most frequent type during the 16th century, but are performed with drawing tools (except for the decorative patterns) and have a metric scale in Florentine braccio. Both in orthogonal projections, they are characterised by an extreme descriptive clarity and cleaned lines. The minute and elegant representation of the details is amazing. All the parts of the structure and the decorative body are well defined: not only pillars, columns, capitals, mouldings of the tympanum and frames, but also the entire iconographic program of the sculptures, of the bas-reliefs and of the pictorial panel. With these sketches the design architect transmits the whole and unitary idea precisely defining all the forms, themes and materials. Figures 7, 8.
Considering these particular qualities we can imagine the double finality of these sketches. Undoubtedly they were made to be deciphered by others in the yard. At the same time, considering their communicative completeness, they surely were directed to a cultured client. In fact, we know that some sketches were sent in 1579 in Rome to the archbishop Alessandro de’ Medici in order to get his approval. Indeed it was the archbishop who requested the execution of the chapel in the previous years and who then supervised the works with attention.

However, these sketches do not make up the principal means of communication between the architect and the material executors of the works. The transmission of the planner’s idea to the workers substantially occurred by using models. The manuscript tells about the great model which, expressing the global original idea, served as a starting point for the realization of single parts, but it also mentions several plastic models of some details in different scales such as the one of the hallway ceiling, of the «dome with eight sides covered with blue cardboards to make the sketch of the paintings», of the windows, of the arcs, of the roof, of the altar, of the cornice and of the sepulchre of Sant’Antonino. The realization of all plastic models was commissioned to the Florentine carpenter Bernardo di Francesco who was qualified for this type of work.

The combination of the arts is the prominent factor also during the realisation of the chapel. The manuscript describing the works includes, in fact, the payments for the architectural parts together with those for the sculptural and pictorial parts, that are considered to be inseparable. The works of architectural decoration interlace and overlap in time with those related to the execution of sculptures and paintings.
The accounts minutely recorded in the *Quaderno* makes it possible to explain some uncertain attributions to the artists. For instance the role of Giambologna as executor of marble and bronze sculptures is explained, this role being ignored by a certain historiography. The manuscript reports the contract signed by the artist and the payments exclusively made out to Giambologna for all the six statues in the niches and for the one of Sant'Antonino above the arc of the hallway. In addition, the plastic ideation of the bas-reliefs in bronze, all made by the Florentine foundry of the Dominican monk Portigiani is confirmed. Portigiani is also the executor of the great winged angel on top of the altar and of the group of two angels lying on the sides of the arch frontispiece, besides the statue of Sant'Antonino for the same altar. Another Florentine smelter, Antonio Susini, was the executor of the oil lamps and grids for the altar and of the finishing of the same altar.

The evidences about the pictorial works are very important as well. as we well know, Alessandro Allori had been chosen for the entire decoration in fresco of the dome, the pendentives and the areas under the arches, and for the main painting with the *Apparizione di Cristo alla Vergine Maria dopo il ritorno dal Limbo*. The manuscript also reports the payments for the assistants in his workshop, particularly to Giovanmaria Butteri, to Taddeo di Francesco Curradi and Giovanni Balducci. There is evidence of other painters' works: Francesco Morandini and Giovanbattista Naldin for the two paintings of the side altars, and Domenico Passignano for the two great frescos of the hallway. And Simone di Domenico Ferri da Poggibonsi for the paintings of Martini's chapel altar and Lorenzo di Francesco Nelli for the fresco grotesques in the shelter.

The entire manuscript shows the organisation of the yard managed by Giambologna. The role of supervisor and keeper of the *Quaderno* is assigned to Benedetto Gondi, an erudite, expert and collector of Florentine art. He draws up two account books of the above mentioned works organised in two different ways: one is drawn up as a real "diary", and the other reports the payments registered according to their gender and under general expenses. Both manuscripts are extremely precise and full of details in the description of each item. Particularly the first one follows the chronology of the interventions: the preparation of the works in autumn 1579, the reinforcement of the bases in 1580, the construction of the upper part in the 1582-85 years, the mounting of the dome in August 1585. The four subsequent years were mainly devoted to the introduction of the architectural bodies together with the sculptural and pictorial decoration.

As regards the architectural part, a remarkable role was played by the stoneminer Jacopo Piccardi. It was up to him to choose the marbles in Carrara, to realize some elements and to get them under way. For instance, thanks to the manuscript, we know that he spent one year, in several journeys, in Carrara applying himself to the choice of the marbles.

Piccardi had also to interpret the design produced by the architect and guarantee its realization in the most consistent form. He acts as a foreman: he organises the works, sees about tools and materials and supervises the workers. In fact the realization required to let out several workshops and technicians on contracts. The stoneminers had a major role in the realization of the work as the attendance records show with up to seventy-five workers, while the master masons were only eleven. A long list of other workers is listed, among which carpenters, plasterers, whitewashers, braziers, blacksmiths, panel makers, *tiraferrai* (suppliers of copper wire), tinsmiths, *lanciaio* (supplier of iron and copper), locksmiths, receivers, conductors, wheelwrights, *navicellai* (conductors of special boats), quarrymen, sawyers, fornacementi, grinders, sand diggers and lustrators.

Among the main supplies listed we obviously find Carrara marble having the major role in the articulation of the interiors. The architectural elements in this material were worked out in the laboratories of Carrara according to the models provided for by the architect. Subsequently they were carried by sea up to Marina di Pisa and from here by the river Arno up to the port of Signa.

The «mixed stones» i.e. the coloured marbles, acquired mainly in Rome, but also in Faenza, Ravenna and Genoa had an important position in the supplies. Giovanni Antonio Dosio, a known expert of Roman antiques and experienced in marble sales is involved in the prospecting and purchase of these stones of archaeological origin in Rome, thereby providing the greatest part of the materials for wall coverings and for the floor. It should be pointed out
that the visual and symbolic meaningfulness of semi-precious stones and the correspondence between the nobility of the subject and the beauty of the shape are confirmed in this period by the Medicean passion for these materials, particularly in Francesco I’s interests. However it was Cosimo I who solicited this type of interests after his trip to Rome in 1565, where he had seen the flourishing antiquarian market for their use in the panels, in the wall coverings and in the floors. After his return to Florence he entrusted Giorgio Vasari with the project of a porphyry floor and semi-precious stones and subsequently he entrusted him with the planning, in colored mosaic marbles, of the Chapel of the Principles at San Lorenzo in Florence, wanted by the duke all in colored mosaic marbles. Even though this solution was not immediately realized, this marked the birth of chromatic decorations for private chapels.

The importation from Rome to Florence of the new techniques of marble mosaics starts during the sixties of the 16th century thanks to Dosio who used his experience first in the sketches of panels and then in the planning of the chapel Gaddi in Santa Maria Novella, realized between 1574 and 1578, that is to say immediately before the construction of the chapel of Sant’Antonino. In the last years of the 16th century and in the following century, the predilection for colored and semi-precious stones took the worldly accents in the whole peninsula. The sumptuary use of semi-precious stones replaces with time their symbolic connotation being used in noble chapels.

The success and the diffusion of the chromatic covering in Tuscany is due to the activity of the new Florentine laboratory, specialized in the creation of mosaic and carvings of semi-precious stones. In this laboratory, supervised by Francesco I, Giambologna worked for a long time as one of the nine draftsmen. Such experience, undoubtedly affected the ideation of the chapel Salviati, in which he proposed a new solution in Florentine environment playing chromatic effects with the colored stones, sculptures and painting.

In the chapel, Giambologna introduces the coloured stony reflexes in the panels with white architectural structures, combining them with the marble statues placed in the dark grey background of the niches in serene stone, and with the bas-reliefs in bronze and, at the same time, with the pictorial paintings of the altars. He matches the dome frescos with the floor filled with colored stones that reflect the pattern of the dome. A yellow marble column sections, two «African» columns and a piece of green marble, coming from villa d’Adriano in Tivoli, a «white and black» column, two columns of black marble, but also red marble, red and green jaspers and alabaster, all acquired by Dosio in Rome, together with a column of Genovese slate, «mixed stones» from Faenza and Ravenna supplied by Piccardi have been used in the wall coverings and in the floor. This work was very involving when considering the fatiguing and expensive transport on mules. The chapel became famous just for the use of polychrome marbles, as evidenced by Del Riccio in his work *Istoria delle Pietre*.

Among the other materials, almost all of local origin, we find: gritstones, strong stones, serene stones, tiles, *mezzane, quadrucci* (quadrangular bricks), flat tiles, small tiles, pounded bricks, brick dust and marble, chalk, limes, various metals, as iron, tin-plate, brass, tin, copper and lead, lumber of fir-tree, of chestnut tree and of cypress and glasses.

The contract of these last ones was given to the Ingesuati friars of Florence. For the execution of the windows of the oratory, the ones under the arcs of the vault and the ones under the lantern, the white glass plates coming from Lyon, from Venice and from the same Ingesuati glassworks were used, together with the painted plates from Flanders and the colored glass supplied by the Florentine *bichierai*, Cesare Bandinucci, as well as the blue and yellow glasses of the same Florentine friars.

The total cost of this «much more regal than civil» chapel appears to be of 34000 scudo (145 scudo per sq. m.). It is a high financial engagement corresponding to the clients’ wish for having a grandiose and elegant oratory following the example of the Medicean chapels in Florence. To have an idea of such engagement just compare it with the expense of 12000 scudo for restructuring the Palazzo dei Cavalieri in Pisa realized by Vasari some time before, between 1561 and 1564, upon Cosimo I order.

Great amounts of money, approx. 5700 scudo, are paid for buying construction materials (4000 scudo only for marbles including transport) and approx. 6110 scudo for the stone cutters’ work. Giambologna was paid 5400 scudo: 5000 for the sculptural works and 400 for the supervision lasting eight years.

The rather moderate expense, only 1549 scudo, were paid for the paintings, while it surprises the
significant sum of 3023 scudo paid for the hangings of the church of San Marco on the occasion of the ceremony of Sant’Antonino translation which occurred on 8 and 9 May 1589. For the celebration the façades of the chapels, with their pillars, their frames and frontispieces were performed in wood, in line with the Salviati oratorio. This stage pretense constituted in fact the 1:1 scale plan of the architectural transformation of the church occurred within the following decade.

NOTES

1. AS. Libri di commercio e di amministrazione patrimoniale, II, 113 e 114. The first record was transcribed in 1996, therefore refer to Karwacka Codini and Sbrilli 1996. This record (113) will be from now on referred to as Quadero.
2. It is an important private fund deposited since 1994 at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa. Declared of historical interest by the State, these records documents a long period of family story at the end of the 14th century up to the beginning of the 19th century.
4. For family story refer to Hurtubise, 1985 ; Karwacka Codini and Sbrilli 1987 ; Pinchera1999.
5. Saint Mark’s Dominicans played an important role in defining the new theology of the Concilio di Trento. At that time Antonino Pierozzi’s thought was recovered by reprinting his doctrinal work Opera di S. Antonino, arcivescovo fiorentino utilissimo et necessaria per l’istrazione di sacerdoti ( Pierozzi 1559). The first idea for the reconstruction of the chapel was born already in 1526, three years after the Saint’s canonization.
6. The relationships between the family and the church and Saint Mark’s convent date back to the 15th century. At the beginning of the 16th century Francesco di Bernardo Salviati became the convent’s prior; afterwards Filippo di Averardo, who religiously converted thanks to the spiritual influence of the Dominican nun Caterina de’Ricci, ordered the construction of the new church of San Vincenzo in Prato and expressed in the will his desire of building Saint’Antonino’s chapel.
7. The Salviati family, already known in the political life at the end of the 13th century, since the end of the 14th became famous for their activity of merchants. Since the half of the 15th century they belonged several counters in Florence, Pisa, Bruges, London and Constantinople. Between the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century they covered prestigious roles in the political life of Florence. Since the end of the 15th century the family split up into two branches, the roman and the Florentine one. Jacopo (head of the roman branch) and his sons, thanks to the relationships with the Medici family, and in particular with popes Leone X and Clemente VII, moved a great part of their activities to Roma and in the pontifical state. Alamanno descendants (head of the florentine branch) works during the 16th century in the economic and commercial field and during the 17th century they became landowner and court dignitary.
10. Refer to Karwacka Codini and Sbrilli, 1996. 135. Payments to Giambologna are reported in the manuscript in due time throughout all construction years.
12. Drawings are kept in Florence at GDSU, (237a ).
13. Quaderno, c.1v.
15. Ibid., cc. 105(bis), 106r e 106v, copy of an account received by Bernardo di Francesco, carpenter.
16. Ibid., cc. 29r, e 93r.
17. Ibid., cc. 16r e 93r.
18. Ibid., cc. 75v e 93r.
19. Ibid., cc. 81r, 88r, 102r e v.
21. Quaderno, cc.26r e 90r. Naldini is also the author of two fresco paintings of putto in the subterranean chapel.
22. Ibid., c.114r. Frescos Processione e Traslazione tell episodes of the ceremony dedicated to Saint Antonino on 8 and 9 May 1589.
23. Ibid., c.90r.
24. Ibid., c.82v.
25. Payments to Piccardi are reported in the Quaderno throughout the length of the works. As regards marble elements provided for by him, refer to his account a cc. 74v e 75r where, among others, columns, pillars, architraves, frieze, mouldings, fliers, frames of doors and windows are mentioned.
26. See in particular the list of workers’ names include the number of days worked by them: Quaderno, cc.145r-325v.
28. See in this regards Morrogh 1985a.
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30. Quaderno, c.91v.
31. Ibid., cc. 25v, 26v e 43r.
32. Del Riccno (1597) 1979, cc. 3, 6, 10v, 21v, 105v.
33. Quaderno, cc.60v e 91r.
34. Ibid., c.89r.
35. Ibid., c.91r.
36. Ibid., c.91v.
37. Ibid., cc.52v e 112v.
38. Bocchi (1591) 1971, 8.
40. Refer to: Karwacka Codini 1989, 72.
41. Quaderno, c.93r.
42. Per la descrizione della festa si veda in particolare Buoninsegni 1589, 3.

REFERENCE LIST