

TWO JEWELLERS AT THE GRAND DUCAL COURT OF FLORENCE AROUND 1618*

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The problem of associating known jewels or mounts with schools or specific artists is extremely complex. Attributions based on stylistic evidence alone must be considered unsafe. The same pattern books were used all over Europe, works of art were exported, and the artists themselves travelled from court to court bringing with them the traditions of their original training but also open to the impulses of their new homes. Documents alone may provide us with firm and unrefutable landmarks, and research in the State Archive of Florence has proved particularly rewarding in this respect. The Medici collection of works of art and of documents related to them is peculiarly well-preserved, and in the following a few results will be presented concerning two outstanding pieces in the Museo degli Argenti in Florence. At the same time some light is thrown on the complex workings of the grand ducal workshops in the early 17th century.

The two objects in question are the large rock crystal vase (fig. 1) and the well-known *pietre dure* relief of Cosimo II Praying (fig. 4). Both were executed for Cosimo II and at the same time, but they are so different in character that their stories will have to be told severally.

The vase was published by Kris¹ who rightly considered it executed in Florence but dated it around 1583 on account of the dated Buontalenti vase of that year.² It can now be established that it was finished in 1618 by Odoardo Vallet, a French jeweller working for the grand ducal court of Florence.

Cut to a simple shape of clear and smooth surface³ it is in fact totally different from the usual 16th century type of vase, and also the large and rather heavy design of the mount differs from documented examples of Milanese⁴ and German jewellery.⁵ The bowl is urn-like and oval in section, of a different piece of crystal from the foot to which it is joined by a gold enamelled

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¹ Ernst Kris, *Meister und Meisterwerke der Steinschneidekunst in der italienischen Renaissance*, Vienna 1929, vol. I, 131, ill. vol. II, p. 172 (n. 588 in the catalogue).

² The lapis lazuli vase in the Museo degli Argenti, inv. n. 802. Ill. in *Ant. Morassi, Il tesoro dei Medici*, Milano 1963, pl. 26 (text p. 28). The mount is by Jacques Bilivert and the preparatory drawing, in the Gabinetto dei Disegni of the Uffizi, by Bernardo Buontalenti.

³ H. cm 38; max. width cm 16.

⁴ For instance the Anfora and Josephskanne in the München Schatzkammer (nos 328 and 330 in the 1964 catalogue) executed by the Saracchi in 1579 for Herzog Albrecht V. of Bavaria. There is every reason to believe that not only the crystal but also the mounts came from Milan.

⁵ For instance the documented 'Hausaltar' in the München Schatzkammer, executed in Augsburg or München for the Bavarian Dukes (nos. 59 and 61, ill. n. 18 and 19 in the above mentioned catalogue).

band (figs. 1, 2 and 3). Surrounding the foot is another band, and a third edges the lip of the vase. The lower bands are black with a white design and surmounted by little turquoises set in arches; round the lip of the vase white is the dominant colour, with design in gold and bright blue. On the narrow sides of the oval the top band is interrupted by two masks of green enamelled gold (shaped as spouts); on the long side is a handle in the shape of a beast with woman's breasts — likewise mainly green — ending in a golden mask where the handle is attached to the body of the vase. The existence of a second handle, now lost, is indicated by a square lump in the crystal opposite the present handle. The whole mount is encrusted with rubies and emeralds though some of the former have turned out to be garnets.

The vase is n. 490 in the most recent inventory of the Soprintendenza.⁶ Backreferences enable us to trace it from inventory to inventory, directly to 1704.⁷ By 1769 the vase was *tutto di cattivo stato* and a note in the margin adds that in 1782 one handle was removed and sent to the Guardaroba where it was probably dismembered and the stones reused; it is at least never heard of again. The 1825 inventory already mentions the garnets that were probably the result of a restoration under the Austrian Grand Dukes, and speaks of cracks in the crystal which however seem to be only veins. In 1921 the vase was in the Sala della Niobe of the Uffizi, but in 1753 it was kept in the Tribuna⁸, in the left hand cupboard, where it is found throughout the period of Medici reign.

With the inventory of 1704 the direct sequel of numbers stops but we recognize the vase again in the inventory of 1635 (n. 88, p. 58), in the same cupboard of the Tribuna. Finally, also as n. 88, it appears in a note added to the oldest Tribuna inventory of 1589, p. 55⁹: *Addì 17 di Gennaio 1618 — un vaso grande di cristallo di monte alto br. 2/3 inc^a guarnito alla bocha e al piede di cerchietti d'oro smaltato e straforati e incastonatovi dentro smeraldi e rubini con due manichi scartocciati con teste e colli d'arpie con due maschere sotto, e due maschere per banda al cerchietto della bocha.*

The documents in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze continue the story. In the "Inventario Generale della guardaroba generale del Ser^{mo} Granduca Cosimo II di Toscana" of 1618¹⁰ we find the following entry: *Un vaso grande di cristallo di monte alto 2/3 in circa con un cerchietto d'oro alla bocca e due manichi, scartocciati con teste, et colli d'arpie, con due maschere sotto, e due mascherette alle bande di detto cerchio et due cerchietti d'oro al pie e tutto lavorato straforato e smaltato di più colori e commesso in detti cerchietti et maniche n. 161 rubini e n. 32 smeraldi, vi havto fatto da Odoardo Valletta a 17 Gennaio.* Opposite, on page 77 right, is added: *Un vaso grande di cristallo di monte alto 2/3 guarnito d'oro e commessovi n. 161 rubini e 32 smeraldi consegnato a Bastiano Buonavita per tenere nella Tribuna a 17 Gennaio.*

This is clearly our vase and the information corresponds to that obtained from the inventories. It is the record of the transfer of the vase to the Tribuna, and for the first time the name of the artist — that is of the jeweller — appears. The ins and outs of the grand ducal administration leading up to this point can be followed through the frequent references to the vase in the account books. Strangely enough I have found no record of the execution of the crystal parts but they originate undoubtedly from one of the *pietre dure* workshops of the Grand Duke.

⁶ Inventario di cammei e gemme del 1921.

⁷ Inventories of 1825 ("delle gemme", n. 91); of 1784 (n. 266); of 1769 (m. 1913); of 1753 (n. 2193); of 1704 (n. 2393). All kept in the Soprintendenza alle Gallerie di Firenze.

⁸ The central room of the grand ducal gallery in Florence — for the history of this room, see *Detlef Heikamp* in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* XXVI, 1963, p. 193-268.

⁹ The inventory was drawn up in 1589 but at the end of the list, objects that entered the gallery between 1589 and the time of the next inventory, of 1635, are added.

¹⁰ GR (Guardaroba) 373, p. 77 left.



1 Rock crystal vase with mount by Odoardo Vallet, 1618. Florence, Museo degli Argenti.

By November 16th 1618 they had been handed over to Odoardo Valletta who received gold, rubies and emeralds for the mount that was to join together bowl and foot.¹¹ On January 17th 1618 he delivered the finished vase to the Guardaroba (from where he had received the stones).¹² In the “Debitori e Creditori della Guardaroba”¹³ the delivery of the vase is recorded once more, as well as the transfer to the Tribuna, including a description that is word for word the same as in the above mentioned “Inventario Generale” and “Memoriale”. Odoardo’s payment for the mount, to be paid in instalments, is entered in the account book “Debitori e Creditori” of 1618, on February 1st (scudi 350).¹⁴

From various receipts for workshop material such as stones, coal, oil, lamps — loose chits kept in the *filze* of the Archive — it appears that Odoardo Valletta was a French jeweller to the grand ducal court. His real name was probably Vallet and Thieme-Becker records a French family of artists by that name though no Odoardo is amongst them. In the Florentine documents his name and his bottega appear regularly between 1603 and June 2nd 1621.¹⁵ The only other work described anywhere is a series of S-shaped jewels studded with rubies which is found in the inventory of Christine of Lorraine.¹⁶ It must have been executed some time before 1609 as it is listed under the heading *inventario di gioie et altro di Madama Ser^{ma} acquistate da Lei mentre visse il Ser^{mo} Gran Duca Ferdinando suo marito come per l’inventario fatto l’anno 1609*. They have not been found.

Odoardo certainly received a regular *provisione* during the later years but probably also before the first documented payment of 1618.¹⁷ The last payment found, of February 15th 1619, is accompanied by a letter from Odoardo asking for the money to be paid out to the bearer of the letter as he himself is sick and unable to leave his bed.¹⁸

So far the only piece of work by Odoardo known to us, and preserved, is the mount of the crystal vase. Stylistically it shows affinities to the Second School of Fontainebleau, to the ornamental prints and designs of Delaune and Ducerceau. It is, however, a late edition of the lively Mannerist inventiveness, for all is stylized and stiffened. 1618 is peculiarly late for this style; Odoardo was probably an old man in 1618, trained in the 16th century and still working in that style. Up-to-date is only the technique, with the use of large square-cut stones distributed sparingly and without the 16th century ‘horror vacui’.¹⁹

¹¹ GR 360, “Memoriale di artisti e manifattori della galleria”, 1618-1620, p. XXXIIII. *Smeraldi e rubini. — Odoardo Valletta gioielliere per conto d’oro deve avere addi 16 nov. 1618 oro lavorato in adornamento et cerchiotti smaltati per guarnire un vaso di cristallo di monte a urna et in detti pezzi sono commessi n. 161 rubini che n. 26 grandi, n. 14 mezzani e n. 121 piccoli, et n. 32 smeraldi che n. 12 grandi e n. 20 mezzani.*

¹² GR 360, “Memoriale”, p. XXXV (Roman numerals indicate the right hand page, Arabic the left). The Florentine calendar where the year ends at the end of March has been used throughout as in the original documents. — On the opposite page n. 35, the longer information of p. XXXIV (see note 11) is repeated: that Odoardo had been given 161 rubies and 32 emeralds per *adornamento, cerchiotti e maschere*.

¹³ GR 361, p. 26.

¹⁴ GR 359, p. VII: 1618 — *Odoardo Valletta gioielliere di conto. Havere adi primo di Febbraio 350 di Mj^c se li fa buoni per la fattura di più ornamenti et circuli d’oro smaltato con gioie incastonate per m e t t e r e i n s i e m e u n v a s o d i c r i s t a l l o d i m o n t e . . .* (The spacing is mine).

¹⁵ The reference to him of 1603 is in GR 366, c. 138; that of 1621 in GR 381 which is a list of workshops recorded week by week as they entered their expenses. On June 2nd (p. 70) the bottega of Odoardo is mentioned, in the following list of June 7th it is no longer there, nor does it occur again. His name recurs in all workshop accounts of the intervening years, they have not been cited here as they contribute no new information but only testify to his continued presence in Florence.

¹⁶ GR 152, p. 33 left. *36 pezzi in forma di S con 9 rubini per pezzo fatti fare S. A. da Odoardo.*

¹⁷ DEP (Depositeria) 647, c. 457: 15 ducati a month.

¹⁸ DEP 1004, c. 444.

¹⁹ A comparable example is a pendant of around 1600 (see *Joan Evans, A History of Jewellery 1100-1870*, London 1953, colour plate V).



2 Side view of vase fig. 1.

In conception as well as in detail the vase differs from the various late 16th century examples. In the Saracchi vases²⁰ the stone cut is infinitely more important than the mount, in the Buon-talenti vase body and mount form an organic whole, in the 1618 vase on the other hand the crystal is only the bearer of a splendid piece of jewellery. The simplicity of the shape, however, should not make one overlook the great technical ability necessary for its execution in crystal.

The crystal blocks were hollowed out by a rotating wheel, with the aid of *smereglio* — whether this was done on the lathe or not makes little difference as in the 17th century the cutting implement (chisel or wheel) was always handdirected, even in lathe turning.²¹ A passage in Del Riccio (1597)²² seems to confirm the use of the lathe: *Qui si puote ancora dire* he says about the Florentine practice *che i signori e i regi hanno vasi fatti di cristallo ma a tornio come si lavorano i vasi di lapis lazuli*. Amongst the documents of the Archivio di Stato di Firenze we find the following bill, from Jacopo di Bartolomeo Santini lathe turner to the court²³: *per fattura e tornitura duna ruota di fero servi per votare uno vaso di cristallo di montagna servi per la bottega di Cristofano milanese, e ruota grande*. It is dated August 22nd 1617 — over a year before the delivery of the vase so it may not refer to the wheels connected with the execution of this particular vase. Nevertheless it confirms the technique, and especially the mention of a second and larger wheel indicates that the lathe was used. The document also gives the suggestion of a likely author of the bowl: Cristofano Gaffuri, member of a famous Milanese family of stone cutters who came to Florence at the time of the Grand Duke Francesco.

Besides Odoardo Valletta, other Frenchmen appear in the documents; amongst these *Guglielmo francese di Giovanni*, the court smith (*magniano*). He was in Florence already in 1601²⁴ and died there before 1633 for in that year a certain *Matteo Tofani magniano* petitions the Grand Duke to assume him in the place of *Guglielmo francese* his late master.²⁵ A bill of 1604 mentions a *Dionigi francese in galleria che lavora di filo e smalto*²⁶ — in other words a French enamel worker. We hear of a certain *Ustachio Giarts francese* in 1607²⁷, and in 1618 is mentioned a *Mattio di Pasquino fransjoisi che lavora nel giardino di Pitti per fare composti di cristallo e cristallino*.²⁸ And finally of course there was Callot, between 1611 and 1621.²⁹ These few names indicate the presence of a small colony of French craftsmen and artists working at the court of

²⁰ Cfr. examples mentioned in note 4.

²¹ *Kris* (op. cit. p. 7) describes this technique which is confirmed by modern craftsmen.

²² "Storia delle Pietre", 1597, quoted by *Kris*, p. 130. — For Del Riccio see also *Kris* p. 102 note 18 and p. 128 f.

²³ GR 335, p. 793.

²⁴ The first reference to Guglielmo, of 1601, is in GR 366, p. 116; in 1618 he is described as *magniano* (GR 361, p. 32). As in the case of Odoardo, see note 15, the regular references to him during the years 1601 to 1633 only bear witness to his continued presence in Florence.

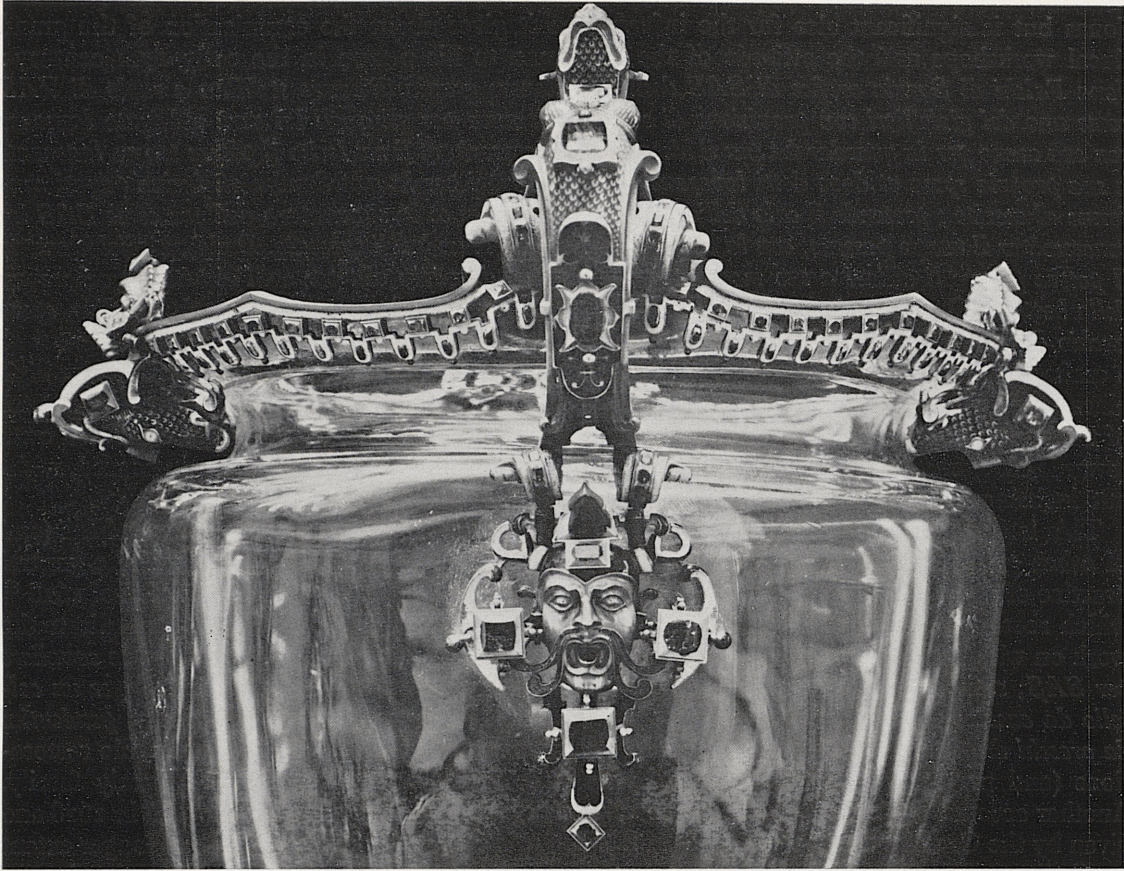
²⁵ GR 433, "Copialettere", p. 59.

²⁶ GR 366, c. 169.

²⁷ GR 366, c. 216.

²⁸ GR 350, c. 127 and GR 363, p. 43¹. The latter is called "Quaderno della lavorazione dei cristalli nel giardino dei Pitti, 1617-1618" and has the following subtitle: "Questo libro è del Ser^{mo} Gran Duca Cosimo Secondo Med: in sul quale si terrà conto per quaderno delle lavorazione delle fornacie de' cristalli da farsi dal giardino della Ser^{ma} archiduchessa a Pitti". It seems to have been the glass workshop of the Grand Duke, concerned not with the cutting of rock crystal but with the melting and re-shaping of crystal, cfr. the entry on p. 18²: received from the gallery *n° 77 di cristallo in tritami per... fonderlo per farne bicchiere*. Experiments in this direction were made already in the 16th century, cfr. *Kris* p. 129 note 4. Research to illuminate this rather obscure field is in progress.

²⁹ Work described occurs in: GR 350, c. 195 (*pianta e elevazione delle chiese di Gerusalemme*) and GR 373, p. 89 (*32 piastre di rame con luoghi santi di Gerusalemme; 3 piante di luoghi di Gerusalemme; 1 piastra: un impresa del Gran Duca Ferdinando; due pezzi di arcidosso: ritratto e opera; sei piastre con storie di Solimano messo in tragedia dal Conte Bonarello, e donato a lui; una piastra; battaglia di nave dell'impresa di Ferdinando*),



3 Detail of mount fig. 1.

Florence during the first decades of the 17th century. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Grand Duchess was a French princess after Ferdinando I had married Christine of Lorraine in 1589.

Odoardo Vallet was by no means the only jeweller employed by the Grand Duke, nor even the only foreign one. Already in 1610 a new name appears in the documents: *Jonas di Lorenzo tedesco con due compagni orefici*.³⁰ As *Jonas tedesco* he recurs frequently in the following years but when in 1618 he becomes *di ruolo* we learn that he was really Swedish, and from then onwards *di Svezia* is almost invariably added to his name. The document referred to is dated July first 1618 and is a copy of the letter which Jonas himself sent to the Grand Duke petitioning permanent 'state' employment.³¹ It reveals not only various data in the chronology of

³⁰ GR 366, p. 255; *Ant. Zobi* (in: *Notizie storiche sull'origine e progressi dei lavori di commesso in pietre dure*, sec. ediz., Firenze 1853, p. 343) lists a *Giona Falchi fiorentino* as *maestro orefice di ruolo* under Cosimo II.

³¹ GR 403, c. 29.

Jonas but is significant also for the information it gives about the organization of the grand ducal workshops and the attitude of the craftsman to his patron in the early 17th century: *Jona Falchi di Svezia orefice di SAS desidera ottenere grazia di essere stabilito a ruolo di VAS come uno dei gioiellieri con provisione di scudi 20 il mese per gli quali lui sarà obbligato lavorare con sua mano per la guardaroba per il bisogno che occorrerà, et li sia lecito il potere tenere lavoranti a sua propria spesa et dove detti lavoranti facesino lavori per la guardaroba gli fusino pagati conforme al merito; pretende il calo dell'oro d'ri due per once et la spazzatura dell'oro come SAS ha concesso per il tempo passato, con la casa pagata et letti come ha di presente. Desidera assolutamente il potere piliare li allievi a suo modo et anche poterne mandare via per ogni rispetto et ochorenza della bottega. Questa medesima gratia hanno ottenuto gli altri che sono stati in prima ordine, spero anchio della benigna gratia di VAS di non essere tenuto inferiore alli altri.* A confident letter of a craftsman who knew his own worth and could state his own conditions, it proves the high place held by jewellers at the court of the last Medici. It is interesting to note the importance of the apprentices for the workshop and the absolute liberty on which the master insisted even towards the grand ducal administration. In return he promises to do whatever is needed, without insisting on any particular field of goldsmith work.

This lack of specialisation is brought out also by the various references to work of his (and of other goldsmiths) in the Florentine documents; we may conclude that it was the general practice of the period. Particularly illuminating are the long lists in the "Memoriale" of 1618³² which record the gold and precious stones handed over to Jonas and incidentally indicate the work on which he was or had been engaged. They include items as varied as *croce da cavaliere per SAS; sopraciuffo per la Principessa Claudia; manico et fornimento d'oro massiccio per un coltello da caccia*; silver frames for pictures, rings, necklaces for the Grand Duchess; *pendentini da orecchi di pietre false; fiasca da munizione con granati et turchinetti* and innumerable restorations (and probably modernizations) of jewels for various members of the princely family. Another account book gives a detailed description of a silver gilt reliquary executed in 1618 and given by the Grand Duke to the chapel of SS. Annunziata.³³ Unfortunately it is no longer extant as all silver of the church disappeared during the French occupation of Florence at the time of Napoleon. A further bill, concerning the execution of the plinth, mentions *uno vaso doro che ci è drento uno crocifisso doro di mano di Jona tedesco*.³⁴ In a later "Memoriale" is even listed the mount of a crystal vase.³⁵

Jonas Falchi is last mentioned in 1636³⁶, after 26 years in Florence and 18 as head of a workshop. His output must have been enormous but the very nature of his work made it susceptible to the ravages of war and fashion, and it has not been possible to find any of the objects listed in the old inventories and account books. It would have been impossible to form any idea of the style of this Swedish jeweller to the grand ducal court had not a much later inventory brought an unexpected reference to him, associating his name with one of the most famous commissions of Cosimo II: the altar for San Carlo Borromeo of Milan (fig. 4).

³² GR 360, pages 17, 69, 200 — left and right.

³³ GR 373, p. 85. The full description is given in the Appendix II.

³⁴ GR 375, c. 1225 — dated December 30th 1620.

³⁵ GR 389, p. 4, entry dated August 17th 1623, see Appendix III.

³⁶ GR 534, p. 5 and XXVIII. His stay in Florence during the years 1610-1636 is amply and regularly documented through frequent references to him or his bottega in all account books of the period. — A certain confusion is caused by the fact that Tobias Scivent, one of the Northern *doratori* in the service of the Grand Duke, named his son after Jonas. This Jonas Scivent took up the profession of his father (cfr. GR 491, c. 10: 1640 — the father who has worked for the gallery for 40 years, is now old and the son *Jonas di Tobia* who has worked there for 14 asks to take over the workshop). As the *doratori* were often called *orefice*, we find in later years a *Jonas orefice* who is not Falchi at all.



4 Pietre dure relief, Cosimo II Praying; grand ducal workshops, 1617-1624. Florence, Museo degli Argenti.

The inventory is the “Inventario del tesoro della Guardaroba”, dated 1783³⁷, but the compiler notes that he is relying on an older “Giornale” of 1624 so that the information must be considered reliable. The names mentioned must have been completely obscure to the writer in 1783 and there is no reason to believe that the attributions are of his own invention.

The entry gives a detailed description of the preserved central panel of Cosimo II Praying, in its original setting; it is in fact the first picture we get of the *paliotto* as a whole.³⁸ It finishes with the following words: *Detto paliotto è stato lavorato dall'orefice Cosimo Merlini della R. Galleria, col disegno di Giulio Parigi architetto, e lo sfondo della formella di mezzo, e figura* (in other words the part preserved), *da Michele Castrucci e Gualtieri Cecchi pietristi di Galleria*

³⁷ Revisioni e Sindacati 84, p. 12, n. 127; see Appendix I.

³⁸ A verbatim transcription of the entry is given in the Appendix I.

e dall'orefice *Jona Falchi*. According to Zobi³⁹, repeated by subsequent writers⁴⁰, the artists connected with the altar were Nigetti, Bilivert and Orazio Mocchi. Zobi never mentions his sources but the information undoubtedly goes back to a document though so far I have found no reference to these three people in any of the accounts connected with the altar. It is, however, possible that all may indeed have collaborated on the altar which was one of the main enterprises of the grand ducal workshops during the years 1617-1624.

Executed in gold studded with jewels the altar was divided into three parts by four pilasters and enclosed at top and bottom by a lapis lazuli border.⁴¹ In the lateral panels Medici and Hapsburg coats-of-arms were supported by putti and surmounted by crowns; in the centre the stone relief was set in an elaborate frame. A preparatory drawing in the Biblioteca Marucelliana⁴² gives an idea of the whole *paliotto* (fig. 5). According to the 1783 inventory it should be by Giulio Parigi which is also stylistically possible.⁴³ It differs in certain details from the finished work and may be considered only a sketch for the general lay-out, with a second and more detailed drawing — which could of course have been by Bilivert, cfr. Zobi — intervening before the execution of the relief. In the final version the cartouches at the sides holding the crown were changed into putti and the figure of the Duke was dressed in regal robes; the interior of the room was changed and a view of the cathedral of Florence through the open window added.

According to Berti⁴⁴ a drawing in the Uffizi⁴⁵ represents the sketch by Nigetti for the altar. As the inscription of the top band implies, this may well be the case; this means, however, that the design by Nigetti was discarded, for the drawing bears no relation, except in a general way, to the finished work as described in 1783. One has to remember that Nigetti was the director of all work executed in the grand ducal workshops at this time and as such he would naturally receive the commission (cfr. Zobi) for the project without necessarily taking an active part in its execution; he would chiefly be responsible for distributing the work among the various workshops.

There can be no doubt that Cosimo Merlini and his bottega took a leading part in the exe-

³⁹ Zobi, op. cit., p. 266-268. "... A tal oggetto si dette commissione a Matteo Nigetti di formarne il progetto, e di farlo sollecitamente eseguire con la massima profusione di ricchezza. ... Giovanni Bilivert disegnò il predetto bassorilievo, che doveva esser situato nel mezzo del sopraindicato dossale; Orazio Mochi lo modellò e ne diresse l'esecuzione".

⁴⁰ Filippo Rossi, *Capolavori di oreficeria italiana*, Milano 1956, p. 51, tav. LXXVII; Klaus Lankheit, *Florentinische Barockplastik*, München 1962, p. 96; Luciano Berti, Matteo Nigetti, in: *Rivista d'arte* XXVI and XXVII, 1950-1952, p. 94 (vol. II), nota 9; A. Morassi, *Il tesoro dei Medici*, Milano 1963, pl. 35; John Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, vol. II, London 1964, under n. 605.

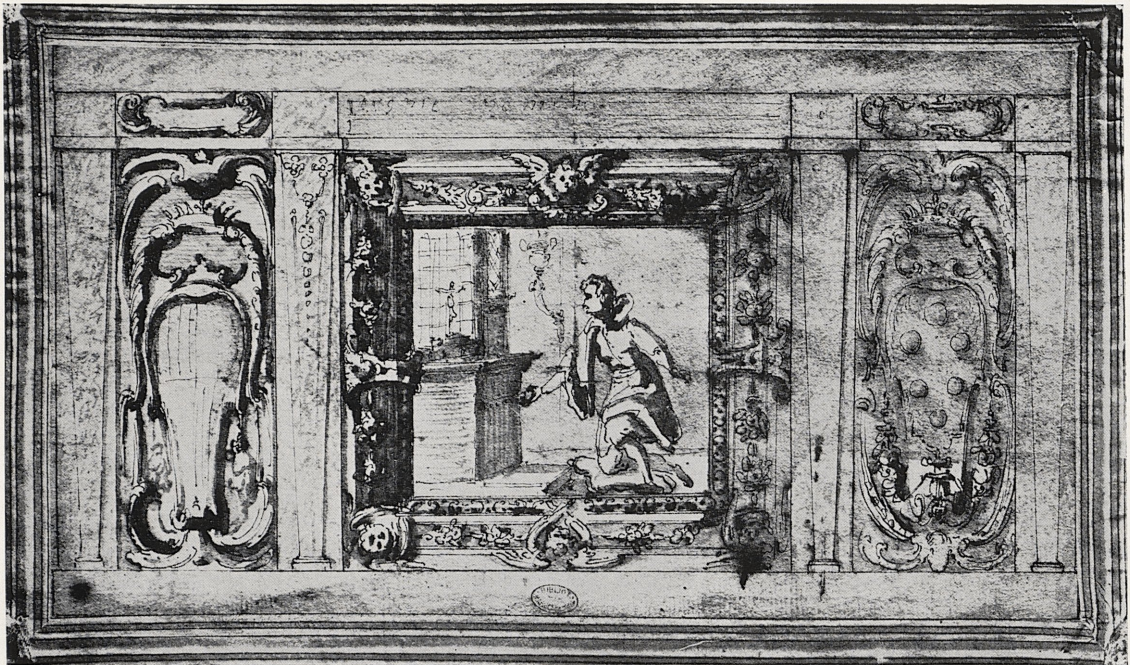
⁴¹ The inventory definitely mentions them as *fregetti di lapis lazuli*. There is a curious bill in the archive (GR 375, n. 134) from a certain Raffaello di Orlando pittore: *15 di Giugno 1618 de dare 1) per avere dato di verde due volte con indaco fine a uno armadio dove va drento il paliotto doro che va a Milano (dato a Cosimo Merlini); 2) deve dare per avere dato di gesso e dato di azzurro due volte a finti di lapis due regoli che uno va sotto detto paliotto e uno sopra venati di oro macinato (dati a Cosimo Merlini)*. The second item seems to refer to the altar itself but this can hardly be the case. A painted lapis lazuli frame would be unthinkable on so precious a piece and it was probably intended for a full-scale model for the goldsmith, such as existed for the ciborio of San Lorenzo.

⁴² Vol. D. 170. — I am grateful to Professor Ulrich Middeldorf for having told me of this drawing and allowing me to publish it.

⁴³ Giulio Parigi can be proved to have done a number of designs for decorative work: for a frame in 1610 (GR 332, c. 20); for a reliquary in 1618 (GR 332, c. 188); for the *paliotto* di San Lorenzo his collaboration with Cosimo Merlini in 1622 is also documented (GR 433, p. 12).

⁴⁴ op. cit.

⁴⁵ N. 6799 A; fig. 4 in Berti.



5 Giulio Parigi, preparatory drawing for paliotto d'oro, c. 1617. Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana.

cution of the altar.⁴⁶ Between September 1617 and January 1618 Merlini received innumerable consignments of gold *per l'altare di San Carlo di Milano*.⁴⁷ It may be assumed that he was responsible for the main goldsmith work, in other words the lateral panels and frame of the stone relief; in fact another account mentions 36 *girasoli* (mistakenly for *grisolide* that is chrysolite) handed over to Merlini 'that he might set them in gold for the altar of San Carlo'⁴⁸: these stones appear as decoration on the side panels according to the 1783 description. The same account book, which is dated 1617, is full of other references to the altar indicating that work was in progress already in that year.⁴⁹ It may be that the date of 1619 inscribed in enamel above the lateral panels, marks the end of this part of the work.

Michele Castrucci and Gualtieri Cecchi had botteghe specialized in stone mosaics and were frequently engaged on major commissions during these years; to them the cutting of the stones and the execution of the relief in stone are due — both the figure in high relief and the inlaid work of the background.

⁴⁶ Cosimo Merlini was head goldsmith in the first half of the 17th century (at least from 1614 onwards); in 1641 his sons petition the Grand Duke to be allowed to take over the workshop stating that their father is dying (GR 491, c. 18). Around 1700 (cfr. *Lankheit*, op. cit.) the head jeweller of the galleria was also called Cosimo Merlini: evidently a grandson of our goldsmith.

⁴⁷ GR 360, p. 7; several entries (chits) in DEP 647, of 1618.

⁴⁸ GR 351, p. 303.

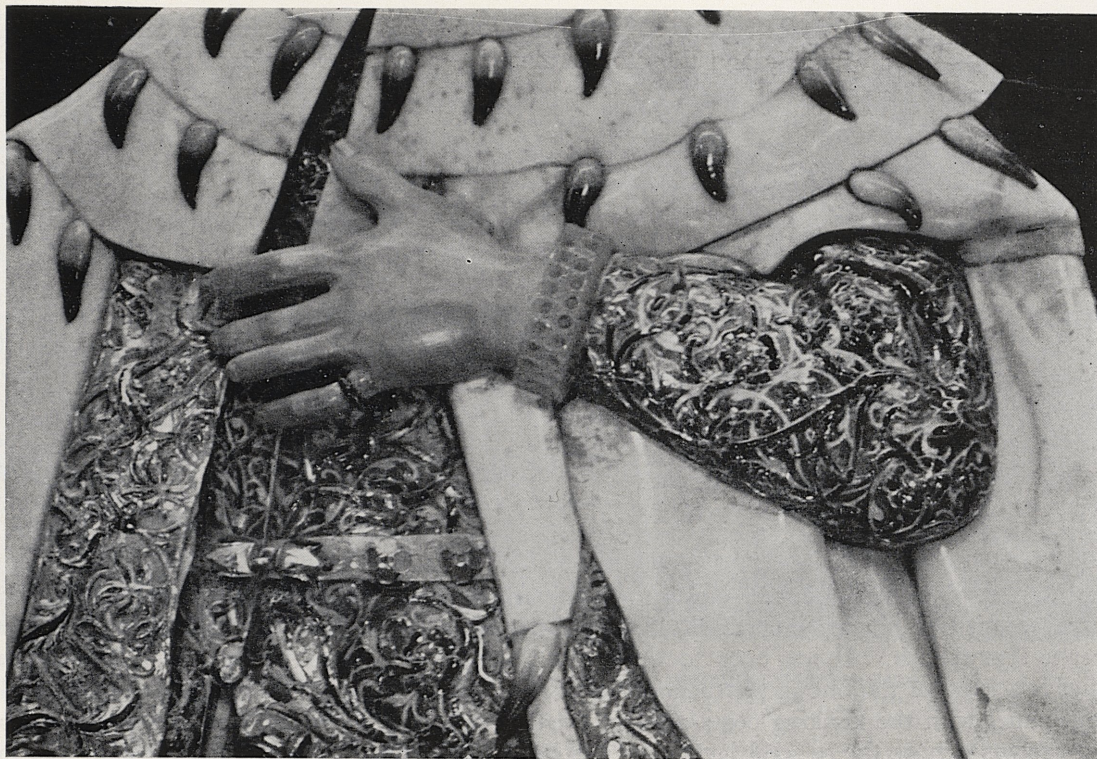
⁴⁹ The references have not been quoted as they never indicate the type of work that was being executed.



6 Detail of relief fig. 4.

To confirm the collaboration of Jonas Falchi, as head jeweller the most likely candidate for the jeweller's work anyway, there is an entry in a "Memoriale" of 1620-1626 which lists the precious stones handed over to Jonas in 1623 and 1624 *per il voto d'oro per l'altare di San Carlo*.⁵⁰ This leaves us no doubt that Jonas was responsible for the crown and sceptre on the altar, the jewels that adorn the figure, the dress studded with diamonds and probably also the enamel work of the mantle. It is the type of work which we might have expected him to do: the simple account entries include similarly enamelled and bejewelled decorations of munition flasks, dagger hilts and sheaths. The work is of extremely fine quality. The floral motif of the cloak (figs. 6 and 7) is typical of the early 17th century and betrays contact with the new style that was breaking through in Holland and Southern Germany, a style that was to lead up to the free and grandiose floral designs of the mid-17th century. In Falchi the pattern is still comparatively formalized, but the naturalism evident in the individual flowers marks a break with the past tradition of purely stylized designs.

⁵⁰ GR 389, p. 4; see Appendix n. III.



7 Detail of relief fig. 4.

The style suggests what we might have imagined: that Jonas passed through Copenhagen — where around 1600 a flourishing school of German-inspired goldsmiths existed under Christian IV^{50a} — and Augsburg/München on his way from Sweden to Italy.

The last entry referring to Jonas's work on the altar is dated March 31st 1624. The work of the jeweller must have been the last to be done and in fact on March 22nd the altar is referred to as finished, in a note stating that a certain *Virgilio Lotti pittore* was to be paid *per aver colorito il disegno del paliotto simile a quello che va a San Carlo a Milano finito di oro con gioie*.⁵¹ It is possible that the description and information of the "Giornale" of 1624, copied in the 1783 inventory, were entered on the occasion of the final delivery of the *paliotto*.

By 1624 Grand Duke Cosimo who had commissioned the altar as an ex-voto to San Carlo Borromeo had died (in 1621). The altar was nevertheless finished but never sent.⁵² It was placed in the *tesoro*, the treasury, of the Guardaroba where it figures for the first time (to my

^{50a} For a general survey of Danish silver, see *Erik Lassen, Dansk Sølv*, Copenhagen 1964.

⁵¹ GR 411, p. 16. The fact that Jonas is given stones after the altar is referred to as finished must mean the he is being compensated for jewels that he had already used on the altar and taken from his own reserves.

⁵² Rather soberly a little note of 1789 explains that the relief *è quello che stava nel mezzo del paliotto d'oro il quale si mostrava nel tesoro della guardaroba, ed era un voto di Cosimo Secondo che dicesi destinato per San Carlo Borromeo a Milano nel caso che detto sovrano avesse riacquistata la sua salute*. In other words as he did not get well there was no point in sending it to San Carlo (cfr. Filza quoted note 54).

knowledge) in an inventory of 1770.⁵³ By 1789 the golden panel, the main part of the *paliotto*, had gone⁵⁴ — fused probably and the stones reused — and the *pietre dure* relief was transferred to the Galleria where it was finally received in 1791, by now complete with its present frame which has sadly mutilated the once square relief.⁵⁵ The relief remained from then onwards in the gallery where it appears in the inventories of 1825 and 1921.⁵⁶

Two preparatory reliefs for the central panel exist, one in pigmented stucco in the Victoria and Albert Museum⁵⁷, the other in coloured carta pesta in the Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence.⁵⁸ The statement in Zobi that a *bassorilievo* was *modellato* by Orazio Mocchi undoubtedly refers to these: working models for the *pietre dure* cutters were generally used and often executed by the Mocchis who never cut in stone. Whether the reliefs were actually preparatory or done after the stone relief has been the object of much discussion, later authorities⁵⁹ opting for the former possibility. An entry in the "Quaderno" of 1624 finally settles the problem⁶⁰: on May 31st a certain *Francesco Bianchi pittore* is paid for having *dipinto li quattro modelli di carta pesta del voto della felice memoria del Ser^{mo} Cosimo Secondo cavati al naturale da quel di pietre...* In other words the models for the central panel containing the portrait of Cosimo II were preserved and venerated by his son, to the point of having them painted later in imitation of the stone relief.

Veneration of the memory of Cosimo II combined with admiration of the San Carlo altar had another interesting sequel. On August 6th 1622 Cosimo Merlini delivered to the *Guardaroba* a silver reliquary intended for one of the altars of San Lorenzo and duly handed over to that church.⁶¹ It has been found in the Cappella delle Reliquie (fig. 8).⁶² The central relief is a copy of the one in *pietre dure* including all details of the background, and the whole front panel with the flanking coats-of-arms (in this case they are both Medici arms), cherubs and crowns echoes the general lay-out of the *paliotto*. Merlini had also been responsible for the goldsmith work of the altar; so from the reliquary, the one documented work by him so far, we may now get an idea of the quality of his work and so much the more regret the loss of the golden *paliotto* panel.⁶³

The crystal vase by Odoardo Valletta was delivered in 1618; the *paliotto d'oro* was executed between 1617 and 1624. Of the two jewellers employed one was still working in the 16th century tradition, the other in an advanced modern style. That two so different craftsmen should be

⁵³ Imperiale e Real Corte 1288, Inventario a Capi del tesoro del 1770, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Filza XXIV, n. 5² and 3; in the Soprintendenza alle Gallerie, Firenze.

⁵⁵ Same filza, n. 5⁴.

⁵⁶ Nos 90 and 489; both are inventories *delle gemme*, see notes 6 and 7.

⁵⁷ N. 605 (fig. 591) in the "Catalogue of Italian Sculpture", op. cit.

⁵⁸ Cfr. *L. Bartoli and E. A. Maser, Il Museo dell'opificio delle pietre dure di Firenze, Prato 1953, p. 14, fig. p. 60.*

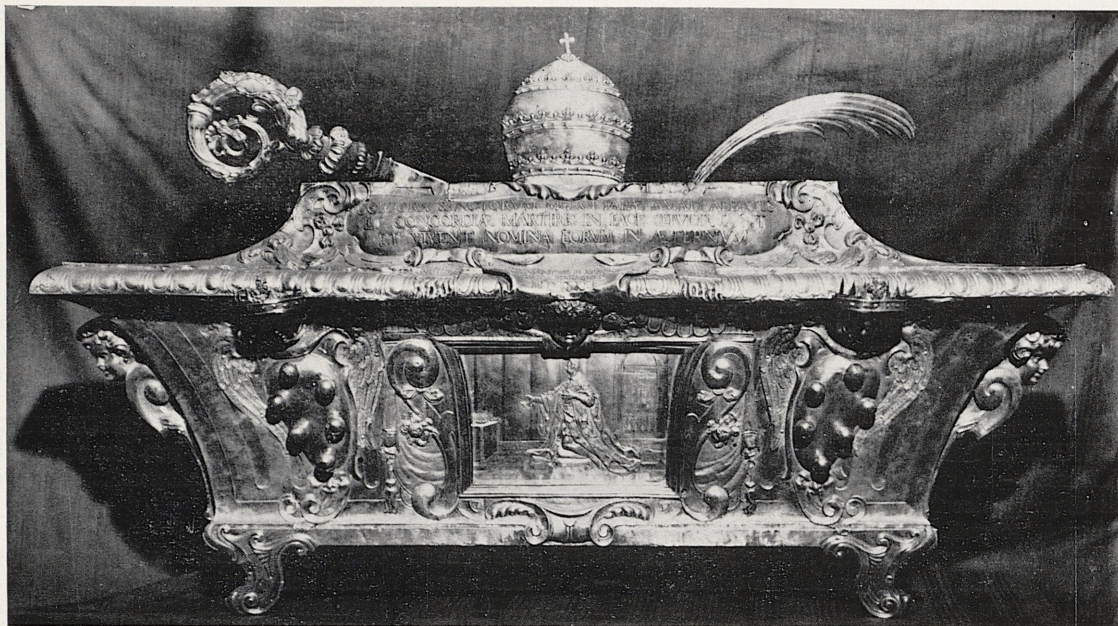
⁵⁹ *Pope Hennessy, op. cit.*

⁶⁰ GR 411, p. 62 verso.

⁶¹ GR 373, p. 279 (left), see Appendix IV.

⁶² A photograph of the reliquary was pointed out to me by professor Middeldorf. The piece turned out to be in a closed cupboard in the church itself; it is a flat silver panel, about cm 150 × 50, with a simple wooden box behind for the relics. It was evidently meant to be inserted under the altar, like a *paliotto*.

⁶³ The *voto* was copied once more according to an enigmatic entry in a "Quaderno", GR 412, p. 81V: *22 Giugno 1624 - a Francesco di Orazio Mochi scultore lire 34 a buon conto per fare il ritratto del Voto del Ser^{mo} Cosimo al cielo che va nell'altare d'oro che si manda a Milano per farsi conforme a quello è stato fatto di pietre et oro ove resti qua quella memoria e tutto di parola di M^o Matteo Nigetti architetto quale agura di farlo fare.* It would appear that a copy was made in gold and sent to Milan instead of the original *paliotto* which remained in Florence, but I have not as yet found a satisfactory solution to this problem.



8 Cosimo Merlini, silver reliquary, 1624. Florence, San Lorenzo.

working in Florence at the same time must be considered extremely revealing of the scope and size of the grand ducal workshop organization. It is also a measure of the possibilities of work in grand ducal Florence of the early 17th century, and one cannot wonder that Florence became the goal of innumerable artists and craftsmen who at about this time started flocking to the town making it one of the most important centres of the decorative arts.

APPENDIX

I

Revisioni e Sindacati 84 :

Real Tesoro della Guardaroba Generale 1783

p. 12 :

Un paliotto da altare di piastra d'oro alto br 1 3/4, compresi i due fregetti di lapis lazuli, lungo br 3 1/4, tutto lavorato e architettato, con quattro pilastri cesellati a festoni smaltati, frammazzati da due nicchie e da formella grande centinata, e risaltata a scartoccio, qual formella resta sotto Padiglione fiorito di piastra d'oro sud^o, con testa di Cherubino in mezzo, e nicchia abbasso; e sopra a ciascuna delle due nicchie iscrizione smaltata che dice — Anno D MDCXVIII—

I detti quattro pilastri sostengono il fregio d'oro per daccapo che è lavorato in parte alla sagri, e in parte cesellato, con cornicette a meandro; e sopra al medesimo altro fregio o listra di lapis lazuli per termine, qual listra ricorre ancora nel dappiede.

Nell'interno delle due nicchie laterali vi sono due putti alati, di mezzo rilievo, in piede, di piastra d'oro, ciascuno dei quali sostiene corona d'oro reale con la destra, e con la sinistra scudo d'oro, con arme de' Medici e Austria che nella fascia della corona vi sono sei rubini per ciascuna incastonati in oro, e giglio sopra d'oro e granati; ciascuno di dⁱ scudi contiene cinque grossi granati, e mezza palla di lapis lazuli, internatevi tre giglietti formati di topazzi esprimenti l'Arme di Casa d'Austria, anzi di Casa Medici, e il restante dello scudo è formato di diaspro e calcedonio, per l'Arma di Casa Austria; nei quattro scar-

tocci di d^e due Armi vi sono quattro fila di perle degradate che lasciano per quasi 2/3 detti scartocci, e altro filo simile di perle al termine dei medesimi per davanti.

Il fondo della formella di mezzo figura una stanza con parata di eliotropio, guarnito per ritto di striscio-line d'oro che formano gallone, con pavimento commesso di pietre dure diverse cioè lapis, agata etc.; e nel mezzo a d^a stanza figura intera di mezzo rilievo esprimente il Gran Duca Cosimo II — genuflesso su due guanciali di lapis lazzuli, con guarnimento e fiocchetti d'oro; qual figura è fatta di pietre dure diverse, con veste d'oro smaltata e lavorata a stricce tutta commessa di diamanti, con manto d'oro smaltato, e sopraveste Reale di pietre dure, spada al fianco, e cinturone d'oro, e diamanti, anello con diamantino, e fermezza simile al collo.

Dirimpetto al med^o si vede piccolo tavolino con tappeto di diaspro rosso contornato d'oro sopravi scettrone d'oro smaltato, e mezza corona simile con diamanti, e rubini, e dall'altra parte finestrone con veduta della metropolitana fiorentina, il tutto di pietre dure.

E guarnito d^o Paliotto di diverse Gioie seminata, come appo: Nel primo giro sotto il Fregio di Lapis per da capo vi sono ventotto perle corrispondenti nelli scavi dei capitelli — diciotto Perle simile legate in rosetta d'oro smaltata — otto rosette d'oro, e granati, con turchina in mezzo — sette smeraldi di più grandezze, incastonati in oro.

Nel secondo ordine si legge a lettere d'oro e granati: COSMUS II — DEI GRAT: MAGNUS DUX ETRURIAE EX VOTO — quale iscrizione è framazzata da otto rosette di granate, e oro con turchina in mezzo — da quattro smeraldi incastonati in oro — sotto a d^e rosette, e granati corrispondono dodici fili di perle piccole, che restano tra un modine e l'altro dei capitelli.

Nel terzo ordine vi sono centotto perle che fanno ornato di meandro.

Nei quattro modiglioni tra il pilastro e il capitello vi sono quattro grossi topazzi incastonati in oro smaltato, e trentasei perle degradate in quattro fili — e ventidue perle minori nei termini di d¹ Modiglioni.

Nei quattro pilastri vi sono ventiquattro perle mezzane, e diverse altre minute delle quali ne mancano alcune.

Nelle due nicchie vi sono cinquantacinque Grisolide — venti ametiste e diverse turchine, e girasoli, o siano calcedoni con foglia sotto di più grandezze — otto perle che due maggiori abbasso della nicchia, e sei minori tra i festoni delle cartelle — e due topazzi mezzani sul piano della nicchia.

Nella formella di mezzo vi sono — ottantasette rubini incastonati a rosetta in oro smaltato — otto topazzi mezzani di più grandezze — sei smeraldi mezzani — due granati grossi — e diverse perle di più grandezze alle ali del cherubino in due fili — ai quattro scartocci della formella — Nelle due mezze teste laterali — nella nicchia abbasso dove sono legate in rosette d'oro smaltate, e finalmente nel contorno intorno della formella.

Tra le perle che guarniscono il Paliotto ve ne sono molte delle scavamazze.

L'ossatura del di dentro è di rame e ferro, e per di dentro coperto di velluto rosso guarnito di galloni d'oro, confitto di bullette d'ottone, e per davanti con cortina di damasco turchino, e cornice guarnita di gallon d'oro; e sua cassa di legno tinta rossa con due sportelli, e sua armatura e serratura di ferro.

Pesa l'oro di tutto d^o paliotto libbre 84 once 2 e denari 23 1/2, e le gioie e pietre libbre 3, once 4, denari 19; il tutto come distintamente apparisce dal giornale terzo A — del 1624/27 a 9 — nel quale si legge esservi stato impiegato il sudd^o oro ecc.

Detto paliotto è stato lavorato dall'orefice Cosimo Merlini della R. Galleria con Disegno di Giulio Parigi Architetto, e lo sfondo della formella di mezzo, e figura, da Michele Castrucci e Gualtieri Cecchi Pietristi di Galleria e dall'orefice Jona Falchi, il tutto come si legge dove sopra; Inv. V.N. 206, e segn. di n. n. 127.

II

Guardaroba 373:

Inventario Generale della guardaroba generale del Ser^{mo} Granduca Cosimo Secondo di Toscana comm^{to} 3 Sett. 1618.

p. 85:

1 Reliquiario grande d'Argento dorato e sfogliami a fiori a uso di una pianta di rosario le quale rose sono tutte di commessi di cristallo di diversi colori, acciottoli e lavorati a facette, con un giglio sopra in punta con med¹ cristalli, con croce in mezzo e troncho d'Arg^{to} dorato avvoltatovi il serpente del mist^o del testam^o vecchio tutto pieno di d¹ cristalli di diversi colori, con un crocifisso d'Arg^{to} dorato in sud^a croce con suo piede di d^o Reliquiario fatto a uso di vaso d'Arg^{to} dorato tutto lavorato e cesellato a bassi rilievi e commessovi di sopra a d^o cristallo a faccette, con una cornice di piastra d'Arg^{to} tonda a ottangoli dorata la quale

si ferma e che regge d^o Reliquiario e pesa in tutto d^o Reliq^o con la cornice e ogni cosa û 20.8.12 h^{to} da Jonas Falchi a 12 di Marzo.

Reliquiario donato SAS alla Santiss^a Cappella della Annunziata di Firenze a 12 di Marzo.

III

Guardaroba 389 :

Memoriale della Guardaroba 1620-1626.

p. III : a Jonas Falchi di Svezia Gioielliere —

adi 12 Marzo 1620 — û 18.8.11 di argento dorato in un Reliquiario, a sfogliamenti e fiori, uso di una pianta di rosaio.

[This is the reliquary for the SS. Annunziata, see Appendix II].

adi 10 di Dicembre — û 2.1.10 d'argento messo in una lumiera da muro tutto lavorata a sfogliamenti smaltati di verde e vi nè di rose grande e piccole, commessovi dentro cristalli rossi, con suo viticcio e padellina a fogliami smaltati di verde, e cannone per mettervi la candela a bonta di û 10 1/2 per tenere nella cappella della Ser^{ma} Arch^{ssa} a Pitti.

p. 4 : a Jonas Falchi di Svezia Gioielliere —

(1621) Adì 7 di Aprile — un diamante in tavola

adi d^o — diciotto diamanti piccoli quadri

adi 11 di Aprile — û 21 d'oro in verghe

(1622) Adì 20 Giugno — û 3.0.0 d'oro in verghe

(1623) 17 di Agosto — û 2.3. — d'oro per legare e dorare una tazza di cristallo di monte.

12 di Dicembre — quattro rubini per la croce da cavaliere, per il voto d'oro per l'altare di S. Carlo.

adi d^o — un diamantino piccolo per la corona di d^o voto

(1624) Adì 31 Marzo — n. 308 diamanti per il voto che un maggiore per la legatura del abito del voto, e due per l'anello, e legatura della scarpa e cinque per la corona di d^o voto...

[This means eight large diamonds for the special places mentioned, the remaining 300 must be the ones set in rows on the dress of the Grand Duke].

IV

Guardaroba 373 :

Inventario Generale della guardaroba generale del Ser^{mo} Granduca Cosimo Secondo di Toscana; comm^{to} 3 Sett. 1618.

p. 279 (left) 1622 :

Una cassa di piastra d'Arg^{to} che fa altare tutto cesellato con un voto nel mezzo di SAS con cherubini e corone sopra, e sopra a d^a cassa un Regno con un pastorale e una Palma con l'iscrizione delli Santi e memoria di SAS che serve per mettere all'altare grande di San Lorenzo dove sono li tre corpi santi- h^{to} da Cosimo Merlini à 9 Agosto.

mandata a San Lorenzo e consegn^{to} a... Sagristano di d^a chiesa.

V

[The following document related to Odoardo Vallet was found in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, after the MS had already gone into print. It has been added here although it was not possible to include its information in the text. It gives us the year of Odoardo's entering the service of the Grand Dukes as 1584 — earlier than we had hitherto assumed; and it confirms

our hypothesis that he was an old man when he executed the mount of the crystal vase in 1618. Moreover, it becomes exceedingly likely that the abrupt disappearance of his name between June 2nd and June 7th 1621 (see note 15, p. 110) denotes the exact date of his death].

Guardaroba 382 :

Copialettere della Guardaroba 1619

Ser^{mo} G.D. — Odoardo di Nicc^{lo} Valletti Gioelliere di VAS con Magg^{re} humiltà e riverenza Li narra come dalla feliciss^a buona memoria del G. D. Ferdinando Li fu asseg^{to} la provisione di ducati 15 il mese e che di poi fu confermato dalla feliciss^a buona memoria del Ser^{mo} G. D. Cosimo Pr^e di VAS per la servitù fatta di anni 33 alla Ser^{ma} Casa di VAS per ciò li core genuflesso a piedi benigni di VAS supplicandola per essere povero vecchio di Anni 80 a carico di figlioli acciò che ne abbia andare mendicando in sua vecchiaia che del tutto pregherà N^{ro} Signore per ogni sua magg^{re} felicità e grandezza.

— Cav. Giugni soprintendente delle Gallerie dica quanto li occorre.

Ser^{mo} Pp^e e Ser^{ma} tutrice — per informazione del Supplicante si dice essere vero tutto quello che li narra, ed ordine del Ser^{mo} Ferdinando P^{mo} al celo me dette che io lo faccia paghare per mio mandato ciascuno mese ducati 15 dalla depositaria generale come ho fatto sino a tutto di 6 febb pross^o passato perchè dal Ser^{mo} Cosimo Sec^o mi fu ordinato che sequitasse di farli paghare li sud^l ducati 15 il mese come gioielliere della sop. Altezza et adesso aspetto mi sia rinovato l'ordine per poterlo far pag^{re} dalla medesima depositaria generale, essendo meritevole e per havere servito et invecchiato in questa Ser^{ma} casa aspetterò la sua Ser^{ma} deliberazione, et eseguirò quanto comandano e pregandoli dal celo Sanità e Magg^{re} grandezza Li bascio la veste.

Li 7 di Aprile 1621.

— Il med^{mo} Cav^e Giugni Lo seguiti di farlo paghare come per il passato fino a Nuovo ordine.

RIASSUNTO

Sono riportati documenti trovati dall'A. nell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze i quali dimostrano che la montatura del vaso di cristallo di monte al Museo degli Argenti, n. 490, è stata eseguita a Firenze da un orafo francese, Odoardo Valletta, nel 1618. La presenza di Odoardo a Firenze viene provata tra il 1603 ed il 1621. In seguito viene presentato un altro orafo di corte, Jonas Falchi di Svezia, finora sconosciuto. Arrivò nel 1610, divenne „di ruolo“ nel 1618 e lavorò almeno fino al 1636; a lui può essere attribuita — in base ai documenti — la parte d'orafa del rilievo di Cosimo II per l'altare di San Carlo Borromeo di Milano (ora al Museo degli Argenti). Si pubblicano nuovi documenti riguardanti la storia di questo paliotto: fu eseguito tra il 1617 ed il 1624 nelle botteghe granducali di Firenze, su disegno di Giulio Parigi. Responsabili erano: Cosimo Merlini per il pannello d'oro e la cornice del rilievo centrale; Gualtieri Cecchi e Michele Castrucci, „pietristi in Galleria“, per il rilievo di pietre dure e lo sfondo intarsiato; Jonas Falchi per l'oreficeria del rilievo. Il paliotto non fu mai mandato a Milano, a causa della morte di Cosimo II nel 1621, ma tenuto nel tesoro della guardaroba granducale. L'oro fu fuso tra il 1783 ed il 1789, e nel 1791 il rilievo entrò nella galleria nello stato attuale. Il motivo del rilievo fu adoperato in una cassetta-reliquiario d'argento eseguito da Cosimo Merlini nel 1624 e regalata alla chiesa di San Lorenzo dove è tutt'ora conservata.

Photo Credits :

Soprintendenza alle Gallerie, Florence: Figs. 1-8.