

# A NEW CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION OF THE MEDICI GUARDAROBA IN THE PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE

*by Mark Rosen*

One of the most unusual projects overseen by Giorgio Vasari in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, the Guardaroba is a trapezoidal room containing a late-sixteenth-century cycle of fifty-three geographical maps of the earth affixed in two tiers to the front of a series of wooden cabinets (fig. 1). Vasari published a detailed program for the Guardaroba project in the second edition of “Le vite de’ piu eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori” in 1568<sup>1</sup>, at a moment when the project, begun in 1563, was still in development. The program defines it as a complete cosmography of the known universe, with maps, globes, painted constellations, illustrations of flora and fauna, and portraits of great historical leaders. Rarities and artworks placed inside the cabinets would act together with this custom-designed imagery to reflect back on the name and charismatic persona of Vasari’s patron, Cosimo I de’ Medici (1519–1574).

The idea and program behind the Medici Guardaroba had roots in late medieval *studioli* — small, womb-like study spaces that valorized private contemplation and collecting through complex humanistic decoration. Yet the goal of this new space was to be a public theater for the court’s cosmography and its power to collect and sort the duchy’s finest objects. The incomplete status of the room today — which includes only a series of empty cabinets, a terrestrial globe (1564–1568) by the Dominican scientist Egnazio Danti, and a cycle of maps painted by Danti (between 1563 and 1575) and Stefano Buonsignori (from 1576 through c. 1586) — belies the grandeur of its original plan. Although studies of the surviving Guardaroba maps and the cartographers have been published<sup>2</sup>, a surprising lacuna exists concerning the construction of this singular space. Recently, Giancarlo Lombardi has made the first attempt to flesh out the early stages of its development.<sup>3</sup> The present article introduces new documents concerning the building of the Guardaroba, establishing for the first time a coherent chronology for the early construction and outfitting of the room, as well as detailing the history of the room’s restorations. Rather than reflecting Vasari’s grandiose goals, the Guardaroba in reality encountered great obstacles in its construction that contributed to its abbreviated though nonetheless unique form. So long as the project is judged mainly by its aims rather than its problematic fabrication, the Medici Guardaroba cannot be understood as the frustratingly unrealizable space that it represented to the late-sixteenth-century Medici court.

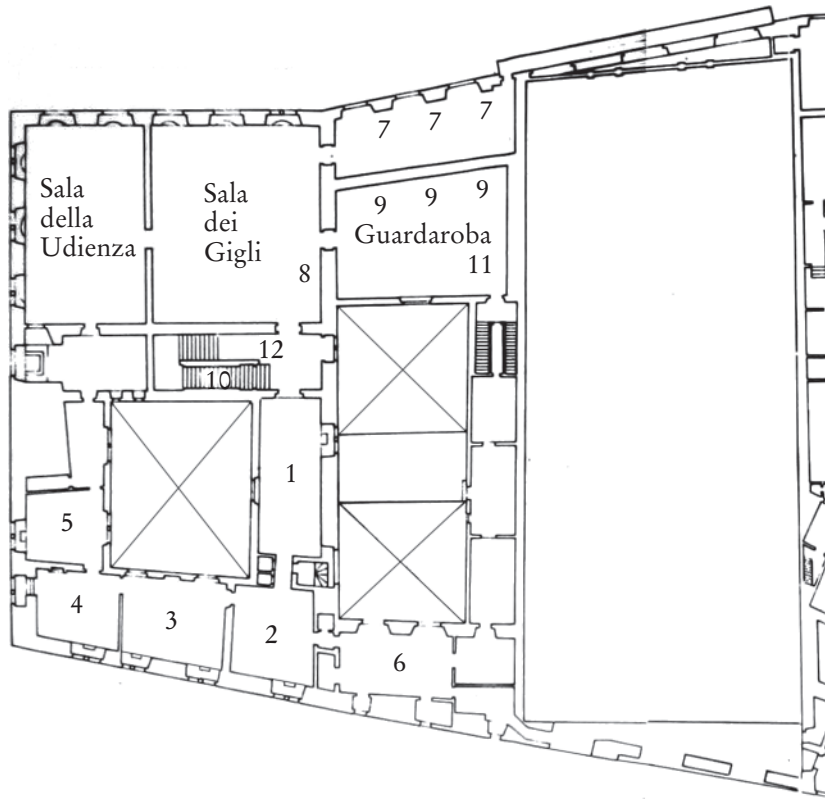
In his published program, Vasari wrote that he himself had “recently built on the second level of rooms in his [Cosimo’s] palace, as an addition to the Guardaroba, a very large new hall” (“sul secondo piano delle stanze del suo palazzo, ha di nuovo murato apposta ed aggiunto alla Guardaroba una sala assai grande”).<sup>4</sup> The term *guardaroba* (which traditionally meant a storage area similar to the term “wardrobe” in English) was already in use by Cosimo and the court since he had become Duke: the first inventory of his collection in 1538 used the word *guardaroba* to signify the collection of all the artistic commissions, diplomatic gifts, and purchased objects the family had gathered in its home, then the Palazzo Medici.<sup>5</sup> Once the family moved to the Palazzo Vecchio in 1540, a dedicated set of service rooms on the second floor near the Sala dei Gigli was designated to hold the Medici collection of art, antiquities, and diplomatic gifts not otherwise on public display. The first detailed inventory of the Palazzo Vecchio Guardaroba, compiled in 1553, itemizes the contents of the fourteen cabinets dispersed throughout these spaces on the second floor of the palace; in those cabinets were rugs, tapestries, arms, sculpture, porcelain,



1 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba.

silver, and paintings (including several Bronzino portraits of the Medici children).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Duke employed several full-time specialists to work in the rooms of the Guardaroba to repair damaged furniture, polish silver, catalog the collection, and register items being loaned or returned.<sup>7</sup>

The disposition of these rooms during the 1540s and 1550s, just before the addition of the new staircases and the trapezoidal space for the cosmographical decoration, has been much debated. A 1553 inventory of the Guardaroba indicates that the spaces of the old Guardaroba divided into a reception area, a larger room, and four very small chambers which served in part as a *foresteria* (guest quarters) for travelers who had business with the staff of the Guardaroba.<sup>8</sup> One of these smaller rooms probably also acted as the private workspace area for Duke Cosimo described by Benvenuto Cellini in the early 1550s.<sup>9</sup> Although Cosimo subsequently added several other *studioli* to the Palazzo Vecchio during its expansion, the placement of his first study alongside his collection seemed a logical temporary step; he could view his objects near to their cabinets rather than in a completely separate part of the palace. Writing in 1893, Cosimo Conti conjectured that the old Guardaroba began in the now-disused corridor between the Sala dei Gigli and the Sala delle Sabine in the Eleonora apartments and continued through four more rooms in a clockwise fashion around the Michelozzo courtyard, with a final storage space in the Camera Verde (fig. 2, nos. 1–6).<sup>10</sup> Using a late-eighteenth-century plan of the palace, Andrea Gáldy has convincingly reinterpreted the 1553 inventory to suggest that Conti misread the sequencing of the Guardaroba rooms, although Gáldy agrees that the Guardaroba of the second floor did occupy those same



2 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, western wing of the palace, second floor plan.

Legend:

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Corridor  | } | Rooms housing the old Guardaroba in 1553 |
| 2 Sala delle Sabine   |   |  |
| 3 Sala di Ester   |   |  |
| 4 Sala di Penelope  |   |  |
| 5 Sala di Gualdrada   |   |  |
| 6 Camera Verde  |   |  |
| 7 Wing built c. 1511 to connect the original palace block with Cronaca's Council Hall                                 |   |  |
| 8 Location of Trecento window walled in during reconstruction of the Guardaroba in mid 1560s                          |   |  |
| 9 Location of three southern windows of the Cancelleria, walled in during the Guardaroba's construction in early 1567 |   |  |
| 10 Upper section of Vasari's "scala piana"  |   |  |
| 11} Possible sites of the landing of Tasso's staircase  |   |  |
| 12}   |   |  |

spaces.<sup>11</sup> The question of how the old Guardaroba was accessed is significant. Prior to 1555 and the addition of Tasso's rear staircase (to be discussed below), visitors to the Guardaroba, Cosimo's study, and the *foresteria* had to pass through Eleonora's quarters — a great inconvenience for the Duchess. With the great expansion of the collection and Cosimo's increasing desire to house its most important objects with suitable grandeur, the new Guardaroba would be added next to those rooms in a space parallel to the Cancelleria, and would be reached by stairs rising from the Dogana rather than having to pass through Eleonora's suite.



3 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, northern façade showing c. 1511 construction linking original palace block to council-hall wing.

The choice of the precise location for the new Guardaroba project, typically referred to by the court as “the cosmographical work of the Guardaroba” (“*opera di cosmografia della guardaroba*”)<sup>12</sup>, not only derived from its proximity to these preexisting storage areas but also to the many construction works happening at the same time in this part of the palace. The wing containing the Guardaroba was developed in fits and starts over the palace’s history, causing considerable confusion about when precisely the Guardaroba space came into being. Far removed from most of the new constructions at the east end of the Palazzo Vecchio that were overseen by Vasari during the 1550s and 1560s, the section of the palace housing the Guardaroba was wedged between two significantly older parts of the building. The original palace block of the Palazzo dei Priori — with its western and northern façades projecting into Piazza della Signoria, its southern face opposite the church of San Pier Scheraggio, and its eastern end abutting the now-destroyed Via Bellanda — was built in the first two decades of the fourteenth century as the seat of the Florentine government of the priors.<sup>13</sup> Not long after the completion of this part of the palace, an extension was





4 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Cancelleria.

proposed in early 1343 during the yearlong reign of Walter of Brienne, the Duke of Athens.<sup>14</sup> The Duke planned to expand the palace to the east, nearly doubling its size. Only preliminary steps had been taken to acquire the adjacent land when his tyrannical regime collapsed in late July 1343; at that time, building had not begun on the site except, perhaps, at the level of the foundations.<sup>15</sup> Further construction in this direction resumed only during the Medici exile following 1494, when the original palace block was connected to Cronaca's newly built council hall (1495–1498) on the piano nobile of the Dogana across Via Bellanda.<sup>16</sup> After standing separate for a decade, the two independent buildings were joined under Gonfalonier Piero Soderini, first on the palace's southern side along Via della Ninna (1507–1508) and soon after on the north side along the piazza (c. 1511).<sup>17</sup> The facture of the buildings is visible today along the northern façade (fig. 3). This addition, at a slightly oblique angle to the fourteenth-century palace (fig. 2, no. 7), lacked the high battlements of the earlier structure and made no effort to provide a gentle visual transition to the squatter Dogana, which would subsequently be remodeled and redecored by Vasari in the 1560s. It was in this three-bay addition that Vasari chose to locate the Guardaroba.

During the circa-1511 construction in this part of the palace, the government added two new rooms on the second floor:<sup>18</sup> the Cappella dei Priori (just south of the Sala dell'Udienza) and the small Cancelleria, the office of the republic's first chancellor (fig. 2, no. 7; fig. 4).<sup>19</sup> The trapezoidal Cancelleria, accessed from the Sala dei Gigli via a narrow passage cut through the parapet of a Trecento biforal window of the Palazzo dei Priori's original eastern façade, formed a structural bridge between the Dogana and the palace.<sup>20</sup> However, one could not move between the two buildings on the second floor, since the eastern side of the Cancelleria abutted the upper level of the two-storey council hall. Traces of a second window along the Sala dei Gigli's eastern side also remain, although that window was completely walled in during the construction of the Guardaroba in the mid 1560s and only was reconstructed in its present state in the mid-twentieth century (fig. 2, no. 8; fig. 5).<sup>21</sup>



5 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Sala dei Gigli, east wall with doorway to Guardaroba and walled-in fourteenth-century window of original palace block.

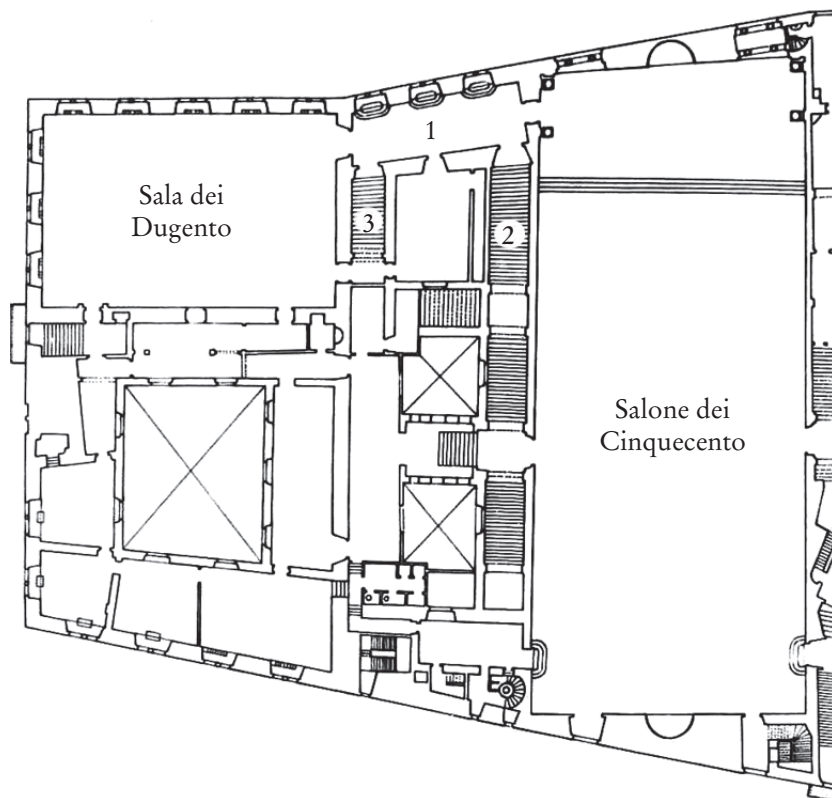


6 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, view of circa-1511 windows of the Cancelleria originally overlooking the Cortile della Dogana, walled in during construction of the Guardaroba in 1567.

To make the transition between the two structures more visually coherent on the exterior of the building, the early-sixteenth-century windows of the Cancelleria's northern side along the Piazza della Signoria emulated the fourteenth-century windows of the older palace. In addition, the Cancelleria's southern side originally had three windows overlooking the Cortile della Dogana, the courtyard formed in part from the now-blocked Via Bellanda.<sup>22</sup> The arches of the Cancelleria's southern windows, walled in during the later construction of the Guardaroba, can today be seen above the cabinets on the Guardaroba's adjacent wall (fig. 2, no. 9; fig. 6). This makes clear that the Guardaroba was not built during the republican construction that added the Cancelleria; instead, it remained open exterior space in the Cortile della Dogana until Vasari's tenure. The arches borrow their pointed form from the piazza-side windows and their tympanums contain the red-and-white *croce del popolo* insignia surrounded by painted ribbons and festoons. The appearance of the *croce del popolo* rather than the ducal *stemma* certainly indicates that the decoration of the arches greatly predates the rest of the Guardaroba and probably was contemporary with the construction of the Cancelleria.

The architectural palimpsest of the small wing of the palace between its original block and the expansions to the east demands extremely precise detailing to understand the stages leading to the Guardaroba's construction. Not every step can be documented, but some conclusions can be drawn from the order in which other projects — most notably the staircases beneath the room — were completed. At the ground-floor level of the palace, the space beneath the Guardaroba forms part of the wide, irregularly shaped, partly *all'aperto* reception area created by the annexation of the Palazzo della Dogana in the early sixteenth century. On the first floor is a landing along the northern façade directly beneath the Cancelleria (fig. 7, no. 1) and two different sets of staircases (fig. 7, no. 2 and 3) designed by Vasari in the years immediately prior to the Guardaroba's addition. In November 1561, Vasari destroyed Battista del Tasso's





7 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, western wing of the palace, first floor plan.

Legend:

- 1 Landing added in early sixteenth century supporting the Cancelleria.
- 2 Section of Tasso's staircase between ground floor and first floor reused in Vasari's remodeled staircase.
- 3 Lower section of Vasari's *scala piana*.

vaulted Dogana staircase (built 1550–1555), although he utilized part of its path for his new monumental double staircase (fig. 7, no. 2). Tasso's staircase had ascended from the ground floor around three sides of the courtyard (southern, eastern, and northern) and connected to a preexisting landing on the first floor near the Sala dei Dugento.<sup>23</sup> This landing (fig. 7, no. 1) and much of the lower part of Tasso's stairs were kept by Vasari, although he completely removed the section of Tasso's stairs between the first and second floors.<sup>24</sup> To replace that section, Vasari added a more modest *scala piana* (built between January 1560 and August 1561) running from just outside the Sala dei Dugento to a reception area just south of the Sala dei Gigli (fig. 7, no. 3; fig. 2, no. 10).<sup>25</sup>

The remnants of the destroyed Tasso staircase between the first and second levels present a number of difficulties in reconstructing what (if anything) precisely stood in the space now occupied by the Sala delle Carte Geografiche on the second floor of the Palazzo Vecchio. Traces of the arched windows along the route of the upper section of Tasso's stairs remain visible in the Dogana courtyard, particularly on its north face where two walled-in arches can be seen directly below the current Guardaroba (fig. 8).<sup>26</sup> Judging from the ascending angle of its traces along the





8 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Cortile della Dogana, north wall showing walled-in arches following the route of Tasso's destroyed staircase (below) and exterior of Guardaroba (above).

courtyard's eastern and northern faces, the staircase had two possible landings on the second floor. One alternative is that the Tasso staircase emptied onto a landing occupying part of the space of the present Guardaroba, though somewhat narrower. The remaining traces of the staircase on the eastern wall of the Dogana courtyard (figs. 8 and 9) suggest that the staircase would not have reached the second floor at the point where the present room's southern wall is; instead, it might have landed further to the north, toward the middle of the present room (fig. 2, no. 11)<sup>27</sup>, and access to the rest of the floor would probably have been through the (now-walled-in) central doorway of the Cancelleria or through a now-dismantled doorway leading through the southern window of the Sala dei Gigli's east wall (fig. 2, no. 8; fig. 5).<sup>28</sup> The second possibility is that Tasso's staircase landed just south of the southeast corner of the Sala dei Gigli in a space that still acted as a landing or exterior terrace in the Vasarian rebuilding (fig. 2, no. 12).<sup>29</sup> In either case, the new Guardaroba on the second floor rested in part upon Vasari's new *scala piana*, particularly the section ascending from outside the Sala dei Dugento (fig. 7, no. 3). This chronology is important to note, since the vaulting of this last staircase in January–February 1561 acts as the *terminus post quem* for the addition of the room to house the new Guardaroba.



9 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Cortile della Dogana, east wall showing walled-in arches tracing the route of Tasso's destroyed staircase.

The completion date of the new Guardaroba is open to question, but the long-held assumption that construction in the room was finished at the moment in late 1563 when Egnazio Danti began painting its geographical maps is almost certainly incorrect. Documents in the Archivio di Stato in Florence reveal that Bernardo d'Antonio di Monna Mattea received payment for masonry work in the Guardaroba from January through November 1567.<sup>30</sup> (Fabrication of the room's ceiling began in June of that year, indicating that basic work on the room's walls was complete by then.<sup>31</sup>) No earlier records of the room's construction have surfaced, suggesting that Danti began painting the maps at his study in Santa Maria Novella well before the physical space of the Guardaroba in the Palazzo Vecchio was ready.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps because the preparations for the wedding celebrations of Francesco de' Medici and Giovanna d'Austria in late 1565 had demanded so much of the court's energy, construction of the Guardaroba appears not to have begun — or else to have stalled — until after that event. By October 1567, the basic space surely was complete, as arrangements were then made to build the storage room directly above the Guardaroba.<sup>33</sup> The following year, Danti's terrestrial globe was brought to the Guardaroba and Antonio Lupattino constructed an iron mounting for it, at which point (in late 1568 or early 1569) the only partly completed room probably welcomed some visitors.<sup>34</sup> It undoubtedly had little in common with the Vasarian program published around the same time.

The trapezoidal space designed by Vasari and prepared by Bernardo d'Antonio for the new Guardaroba, approximately twelve by nine meters at its longest and widest points, took a form different from the other new additions in the Palazzo Vecchio. The only possible source for natural light came from the southern side of the room; the three remaining walls abutted the Sala dei Gigli, Cancelleria, and Salone dei Cinquecento. In addition to walling in the Cancelleria

windows, Vasari had Bernardo add three new windows to the southern face of the Guardaroba (fig. 10). The largest rose four meters from just above the floor, while for additional light two rectangular windows were placed high up on the same wall, above the level of the cabinets. On the exterior of that wall, Vasari designed several blind windows — an arched one in the shape of the larger window, and two recessed square windows above the arches. He also added exterior balustrades beneath the arched windows and two empty niches (with equally wide rectangular ‘bases’) beneath each of the rectangular windows (fig. 8). Unlike the other walls facing the Dogana courtyard, this new façade on the second floor reads as a more stable, regularized surface.

To outfit the space appropriately to hold the collection and bear the maps, Vasari hired Dionigi di Matteo Nigetti, the master carpenter who served as Vasari’s *sottarchitetto* on many other palace projects.<sup>35</sup> Vasari set him to work on the room’s cabinets on 19 February 1564<sup>36</sup>, although the first payments for them were not recorded in the court’s registers until June 1566.<sup>37</sup> In that year, Nigetti subcontracted work to build the cabinets to several assistants, including Giovanni di Jacopo Moretti, a woodworker named Antonio (likely Antonio di Rombolo, who also worked under Nigetti on the cabinets in Francesco’s Studiolo), and Bastiano di Simone (called Il Confetti).<sup>38</sup> Payments went directly to Nigetti himself in eight installments over the course of 1567, with work



10 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, south wall windows.





11 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, central panels of coffered ceiling by Dionigi di Matteo Nigetti.

on the cabinets completed by the end of the year.<sup>39</sup> He also began to work on the room's wooden ceiling in June of 1567, a project much less carefully documented by the court than the progress of the cabinets.<sup>40</sup> No attempt was made to create a flat ceiling surface for the painting of constellations, as Vasari's program had intimated; instead, Nigetti's ceiling utilized a coffered system of squares and hexagons and does not appear ever to have held painted canvases (fig. 11).

Nigetti had a long-standing relationship with Vasari, but his work for the Guardaroba — particularly his vague estimate of the cabinets' cost — provoked significant resentment at the Medici court. In October 1570, nearly three years after finishing the cabinets, Nigetti wrote to Prince Francesco claiming that he had not received commensurate payment for his services and wanted the money because "I am poor and have the greatest need [of it]."<sup>41</sup> The court's depositor general, Agnolo Biffoli, sent word to Francesco the following week to say that he would check the quality of the cabinets to see whether the claim was valid.<sup>42</sup> Two weeks later, the court secretary Lelio Torelli dashed off a note to Nigetti agreeing to a further payment, but expressing the court's position that the carpenter should have given a more accurate assessment of the cabinets' cost ("from now on, neither Giorgio nor others should do work if [its price] is not estimated beforehand") and that Francesco was angry that Nigetti had asked for a second carpenter to es-

timate the value of the work (since they were “men of the trade [who] will never rule against the artisan”).<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the court did allow a carpenter not involved with the project to judge the quality of Nigetti’s carpentry and determine whether he should receive the money he sought. Antonio di Francesco (Il Particino), who had been involved in ceiling construction in the palace since the early 1550s, acted as the intermediary, ruling in Nigetti’s favor and suggesting that his work merited between 12 and 14 florins per *braccio*.<sup>44</sup> The court went with the lower figure, which — because Nigetti’s efforts for the room had produced a staggering 65 *braccia* (about 43 meters) of cabinets in all — totaled the impressive sum of 780 florins. Subtracting the 318 florins Nigetti had already received, the court owed him 462 florins, which it paid fairly promptly on 21 March 1571.<sup>45</sup> Francesco apparently did not bear any future grudges against Nigetti, as he employed him the following year to build the cabinets for his Studiolo.<sup>46</sup>

The amount of money spent to build the Guardaroba cabinets attests to the quality of their workmanship. Carved from walnut wood, they circle the room with a continuous cornice except for breaks at the room’s entrance and at its large south window. The front of each cabinet is divided into two tiers — each to hold a map — and includes a lower *basamento* level that in the Vasarian program would have contained depictions of the plant and animal life of the regions depicted above. The cornices meant to support antique busts, which Vasari described as projecting outward between each set of cabinets, were, like the images of flora and fauna, never added. In his completed cabinets, Nigetti designed smooth pilasters, alternating every second pair of maps with a vertical row of hinges, to unify the upper and lower levels. These are visually supported in the *basamento* by deep-relief herm-like figures. Throughout the room, Nigetti varied the patterning of the wood with classical motifs (egg-and-dart moldings around the pilasters, bead-and-reel chains surrounding each map) and patterns in the forms of waves and chains (fig. 12). The style of Nigetti’s work for the Guardaroba cabinets closely matches his other contemporary projects in the palace, most notably his *banco da magistrato* for the Sala dell’Udienza in which the same patterns appear in almost identical relationships.



12 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, *basamento* detail of cabinets by Dionigi di Matteo Nigetti.



13 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, north wall, view of bricked-in doorway leading from the Cancelleria behind cabinet with map *L'Italia*.

Following the original program, Nigetti designed fields of varying dimensions to hold the painted maps. The widest and most square fields are found on the Guardaroba's north wall, while many of the cabinets on the east, south, and west walls have narrower vertical alignments.<sup>47</sup> In Vasari's program, each cabinet would have top and bottom halves whose doors opened independently. As the room stands today, some of the doors on the front of each cabinet open separately on the top and bottom halves, and some open as a single unit.<sup>48</sup> This is largely a function of changes to the room after the cabinets were emptied in 1587.

In addition to holding objects, Nigetti's cabinets serve to block earlier traces of construction on the north wall and also to 'hide' a passageway leading into a service corridor. On the north wall, the cabinet with the map of Italy obstructs a doorway to the Cancelleria that served briefly during the room's construction as a point of entry to the room.<sup>49</sup> Today the bottom half of the cabinet opens separately from its top, and the doorway is completely bricked in (fig. 13). The shape of the door-frame also remains visible on the Cancelleria side.<sup>50</sup> More important, however, is the access way in the room's southeast corner. There the cabinet with the map *Armenia* on its lower half opens to provide access to a narrow corridor hugging the upper wall of the Salone dei Cinquecento (fig. 14). To the left, stairs rise to the storage room above the Guardaroba and a second set leads down to another small access way on the mezzanine level.<sup>51</sup> Continuing south, the path leads through a doorway to two narrow exterior terraces (separated by an enclosed storage room) overlooking the Cortile della Dogana.<sup>52</sup> The path from the second terrace leads to a small doorway on the northern wall of the Cappella di Eleonora. The construction history of the terraces (1565–1566), the storage room (1581–1582), and the stairs upward to the room



14 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, south wall, view of passageway leading behind *Armenia* map.



above the Guardaroba (begun October 1567) makes clear that the southwest corner was never intended as the primary point of entry to the room. It rather would come to serve as one more of the room's delightful touches: what looked like just another cabinet opened to a secret passage allowing entry to an internal maze of secondary rooms and staircases. But it seems unlikely that guests were actually led through the cabinet door because of the narrowness of the quarters and the frequent reconstruction of the area. Certain custodians and employees of the Guardaroba, especially those who needed to carry items up to the storage space on the top floor, probably were the secret doorway's only regular users.

So much labor and expense had been dedicated to building the cabinets that there was never any doubt that they would hold some items of the collection even after the room's program had been hugely altered. The contents of the Medici collection expanded widely during the years of Cosimo's reign, as the duke brought more artists, goldsmiths, jewelers, and restorers into the palace to make decorative objects for the court and to prepare diplomatic gifts. Even before the Guardaroba cabinets were built, the Medici court had fully inventoried the family's entire collection every few years. The room briefly held the portrait series as well as some objects both within and outside the cabinets, as an inventory of the Guardaroba and the adjacent storage room made upon the death of Cosimo suggests<sup>53</sup>, but even then the recently built room only partly fulfilled its function. Many of its cabinets remained empty, while neighboring rooms held out of view many of the more important objects initially intended for the new trapezoidal space.<sup>54</sup> Although the Guardaroba attendants busily catalogued the contents of the room's many items, it seemed to be continually changing form, with new portraits and chests and recently commis-

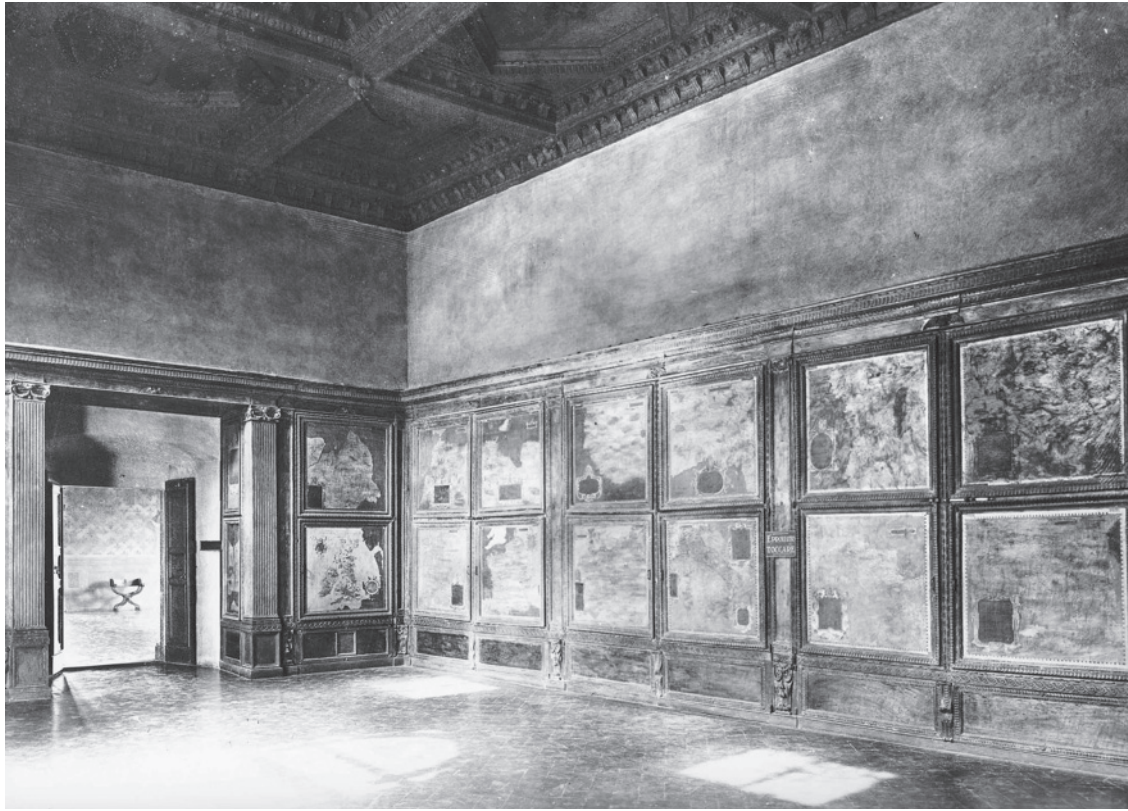


15 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, north and east walls after 1865–1870 restoration.

sioned tapestries moving from one cabinet to another or to elsewhere within the Medici domain. This should not be considered unusual for the period, especially for an area partly dedicated to storage, yet it does significantly undercut Vasari's published aim that the room should contain "le più importanti cose e di pregio e di bellezza che abbi Sua Eccellenza".<sup>55</sup>

The Guardaroba project significantly stalled with the deaths of Cosimo and Vasari in April and June of 1574, respectively. Francesco de' Medici, who inherited the project, showed little interest in dedicating attention to it, other than to finish its map cycle. He did place a personal imprimatur on the final form of the room by firing Danti in September 1575 and bringing in his own hand-picked cartographer, the Olivetan monk Stefano Buonsignori, to complete the maps.<sup>56</sup> Francesco increasingly turned his attention outside the palace, and most of the objects earlier inventoried in the Guardaroba were transferred in 1587 to the top floor of the Uffizi, where Francesco and later Ferdinando outfitted the Tribuna and its neighboring rooms to hold them.<sup>57</sup>

The final piece of construction work for the Guardaroba was the addition of the doorway leading from the Sala dei Gigli, built February–March 1589 (fig. 5).<sup>58</sup> As the room finally saw a belated end to its fabrication, it almost simultaneously was being dismantled, with nearly everything but the maps and the cabinets themselves moved elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> Instead of fulfilling its function as a triumphal frame for beautiful or rare objects, the Guardaroba became a disorganized repository for random objects as soon as the Uffizi galleries were completed, and it would welcome few visitors in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. During that time,



16 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Guardaroba, west and north walls after 1908–1909 restoration.

the room served as a basic storage area, most notably holding the collection of hunting weapons of the last Tuscan Grand Dukes beginning in the 1790s.<sup>60</sup>

The unification of the Italian peninsula brought great changes to Florence, with the city temporarily serving as the capital of the country between 1865 and 1870. The Palazzo Vecchio, briefly the seat of the new state government, witnessed some restructuring, and the Guardaroba was turned into a government office.<sup>61</sup> On this occasion, the room was partly restored for the first time. Rather than cleaning and repairing the space, however, Carlo Falconiere, chief inspector of the Genio Civile, gave the room a bizarre neoclassical facelift. The wood of the cabinets was entirely painted white with gouache and oils, false fronts painted in an *all'antica* manner were inserted into the gaps between the cabinets and the ceiling, and the ancient Vaso Mediceo (or, perhaps, a plaster copy of it) stood in the center of the floor (fig. 15).<sup>62</sup> Nobody liked the Guardaroba's new look (Cosimo Conti called it “una stonatura” in 1893), and a heater placed in the room in the late nineteenth century did substantial damage to the maps.<sup>63</sup>

The Palazzo Vecchio officially opened to visits from the general public in 1909. Much of the palace underwent restoration the previous year in preparation for the crowds.<sup>64</sup> Led by Alfredo Lensi, the new restoration team took a lighter, more sensible approach, at least in terms of the space: the whitewash, false fronts, and urn were removed and the room returned to its starker semi-completed state (fig. 16).<sup>65</sup> The mayor of Florence, Francesco Sangiorgi, emblazoned his name boldly across two new inscriptions fitted into the upper jambs flanking the entryway;



the inscriptions themselves made note of how poor the previous restorations had been.<sup>66</sup> New handles were attached to each of the cabinets on the lower row, while signs warning visitors not to touch the maps were prominently displayed.

During the 1865–1870 restoration campaign, the maps of Danti and Buonsignori were untouched. They were restored for the first time from 1908 to 1909, although the results did not satisfy everyone. Writing in 1955, just before the most recent restorations, Florio Banfi claimed somewhat vaguely that “the restorations which were carried out in the Chamber in 1908–1909 did take away certain of their elements and characteristics.”<sup>67</sup> In 1956, a major repair of the room and restoration of the maps was undertaken. The window traces on the north wall were uncovered and restored, reminding visitors that the Guardaroba once formed part of the Cortile della Dogana.<sup>68</sup> All of the maps were removed from the cabinet doors and brought into a laboratory for cleaning.<sup>69</sup> Egnazio Danti’s terrestrial globe, in a terrible state of repair owing to its many years sitting outdoors in the courtyard of Florence’s Museo di Fisica e Storia Naturale (today La Specola)<sup>70</sup>, finally drew some attention from the Comune only after the 1956 restoration of the space. The globe had been partly restored in 1889, but its surface was warped and largely illegible and its original iron base had long been dismantled.<sup>71</sup> The globe was thoroughly cleaned and lightly restored in 1962, and in October of that year it was finally brought back to the Guardaroba. More recently, in 2003–2004, the Opificio delle Pietre Dure performed a cleaning and ran conducted diagnostic tests upon the globe, but ran short of funding to sponsor a full restoration.<sup>72</sup>

In its ambitions, the Guardaroba has often been likened to an early *Wunderkammer*: it displayed and even re-created the wonders and marvels of the natural world through man-made artifice. Yet that interpretation depends largely upon Vasari’s famous 1568 program for the room rather than the completed space as it ever existed in reality. The new chronology of its construction defined above indicates that only the roughest outline of Vasari’s program was followed. The unusual location of the new room in one of the oldest parts of the palace raised a unique set of construction problems, while the building of the walls and cabinets dragged on much longer than had been anticipated. By the time the physical space was complete in late 1567, fewer than half of the projected number of maps had been painted and little besides the terrestrial globe was ready. Even at the moment in 1568 when Vasari described the Guardaroba as a testament to the Duke’s interest in science, collecting, and cosmography, the room’s slow progress revealed the difficulty in realizing such a singular and unprecedented project. Soon after that, the deaths of Cosimo and Vasari essentially stalled the project for good. Cosimo’s son Francesco never took much interest in getting it back on track and instead dedicated his energy to newer, more ambitious undertakings; as a result, the room languished as a desultory storage closet for three centuries. After several rounds of restorations in the twentieth century, the Guardaroba today looks as it did for only a brief moment, from the completion of the maps in 1586 until the project’s dismantling less than three years later.

## NOTES

Much of the material for this article comes from my dissertation, *The cosmos in the palace: the Palazzo Vecchio Guardaroba and the culture of cartography in early modern Florence, 1563–1589*, University of California, Berkeley 2004. I would like to thank my advisors, Professors Loren Partridge, Elizabeth Honig, Randolph Starn, and Roger Hahn, as well as express my gratitude to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Medici Archive Project, and the Kress Foundation for research support.

- <sup>1</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, VII, pp. 633–636.
- <sup>2</sup> Many documents on the room and its makers are gathered in *Ettore Allegri/Alessandro Cecchi*, *Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici: guida storica*, Florence 1980, pp. 305–308. Studies of individual maps appear in *Gemmarosa Levi-Donati*, *Le tavole geografiche della Guardaroba medicea di Palazzo Vecchio in Firenze ad opera di Padre Egnazio Danti e Don Stefano Buonsignori (sec. XVI) = The geographical panels in the Medici Guardaroba of Palazzo Vecchio in Florence*, Ponte San Giovanni 1995, and *Francesca Fiorani*, *The marvel of maps: art, cartography and politics in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven 2005, pp. 17–137.
- <sup>3</sup> *Giancarlo Lombardi*, *Dalla Sala delle Carte Geografiche al Quartiere della Guardaroba: un'ipotesi di ricostruzione topografica*, in: *La Sala delle Carte Geografiche in Palazzo Vecchio: "capriccio et invenzione nata dal Duca Cosimo"*, ed. *Alessandro Cecchi/Paola Pacetti*, Florence 2008, pp. 135–149. My conclusions here are significantly different from those of Lombardi.
- <sup>4</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, VII, p. 633.
- <sup>5</sup> *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 292.
- <sup>6</sup> See *Cosimo Conti*, *La prima reggia di Cosimo I de' Medici nel palazzo già della Signoria di Firenze*, Florence 1893, pp. 137–194, which publishes the entire inventory. See also *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), pp. 294–299, on the little evidence known about the collection in the Palazzo Vecchio Guardaroba prior to 1553. The fourteen cabinets containing the collection in 1553 were built by the woodworker Bastiano di Simone (Il Confetti) in 1549–1550.
- <sup>7</sup> See *ibidem*, pp. 295–298. Although initially fairly broadly defined, the employees of the Guardaroba became increasingly specialized; the 1588 Guardaroba lists a department head (also referred to as *guardaroba*), a *sottoguardaroba*, a primary assistant (*coadiutore*), a bookkeeper, four helpers, a furrier, a polisher, and two porters.
- <sup>8</sup> See *Conti* (n. 6), pp. 79–80.
- <sup>9</sup> See *Benvenuto Cellini, Vita*, ed. *Ettore Camesasca*, Milan 1985, pp. 592–593. Although it does not contain enough information to hazard an exact reconstruction of the layout of the old Guardaroba or Cosimo's workspace, the passage does indicate that even before the Eleonora suite was completely decorated it served as the primary access to the Guardaroba rather than the Arnolfo di Cambio-Michelozzo stairs from the main *cortile* (Tasso's staircase was still in the process of being built). Visitors would cross a platform on the Via della Ninna side of the old Sala Grande, then pass beside the Cappella di Eleonora and through the Camera Verde and what would eventually become the Sala delle Sabine, from which the visitor would most likely enter the Guardaroba. The completion of the Tasso staircase in 1555 (and its reconstruction by Vasari from 1560 to 1561) meant that visitors to the Guardaroba, Cancelleria, Gigli, Udienza, and Cappella dei Priori most likely would access those rooms from the interior staircases rather than through Eleonora's apartments. After Vasari completed the reconstruction of the Salone dei Cinquecento (and the family had relocated its home to the Palazzo Pitti), the most likely entry to the area would again have been through Eleonora's quarters.
- <sup>10</sup> See *Conti* (n. 6), pp. 137–139. Conti also claims, almost certainly incorrectly, that the trapezoidal space of the present Guardaroba existed before Vasari, although at the time Conti wrote much less of the palace's construction history was known. However, Conti is right in stating that the corridor between the Sala dei Gigli and the Sala delle Sabine must have existed in the palace before the Vasarian remodeling. It fits between the Michelozzo courtyard to the west and the Cortile della Dogana to the east and is similar in layout to the same area directly below on the second floor. Today the northern room in the corridor is a landing, while the other space is subdivided into a long, narrow room (now used by the city government as an office) and a few tiny closets at the southern end. However, the division of the spaces then was almost certainly different from the way it is today. See also *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 294.
- <sup>11</sup> *Andrea Gáldy*, "Che sopra queste ossa con nuovo ordine si vadiano accomodando in più luoghi appartamenti." Thoughts on the organisation of the Florentine ducal apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1553, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XLVI, 2002, pp. 490–509.
- <sup>12</sup> Most court figures reply to it in the documents by this or a similar formulation; see, for example, ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 964, fol. 429a, in which ducal secretary Bernardino Gradino on 29 February 1564 calls it the "opera di Cosmografia per la nostra Guardaroba".
- <sup>13</sup> See *Nicolai Rubinstein*, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298–1532: government, architecture, and imagery in the civic*

- palace of the Florentine republic, Oxford 1995, pp. 5–13. On the evidence regarding the exact site of Via Bellanda, see *Paula Spilner*, Giovanni di Lapo Ghini and a magnificent new addition to the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, in: *JSAH*, LII, 1993, p. 453, n. 2.
- <sup>14</sup> See *Rubinstein* (n. 13), pp. 15–16; *Staal Sinding-Larsen*, A tale of two cities: Florentine and Roman visual context for fifteenth-century palaces, in: *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, VI, 1975, pp. 175–178; and *Spilner* (n. 13), pp. 460–462.
- <sup>15</sup> See *ibidem*.
- <sup>16</sup> See *Rubinstein* (n. 13), p. 40.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40. See also *Piero Bargellini*, Scoperta di Palazzo Vecchio, Florence 1968, p. 240, who attributes the construction of the three-bay annex to Il Cronaca, who also built the council hall. Cronaca might have been involved in the preparations to link the two structures, but he died in September 1508, meaning that he would not have been present during the construction on the north side.
- <sup>18</sup> To avoid confusion, this follows the European, as opposed to the American, system of numbering floors, so that the piano nobile (rather than the ground floor) is the first floor, and the level with the Guardaroba the second floor.
- <sup>19</sup> See *Alfredo Lensi*, Palazzo Vecchio, Milan 1929, p. 106. In the early Cinquecento, Giovanni Cambi wrote of this addition that between the palace and the Dogana the builders “alzorono sopra la porta di Doghana di verso la Merchatanzia di pietre abozzate, chom’era el resto del palazzo, e feciono dua finestrati insu dua anditi, che l’uno di sopto va nella sala nuova del Chonsiglio Gienerale [...] e in su l’altro andito, che viene di sopra, e al piano della sala de l’Udienza, feciono la Chancielleria, ché dove è la porta della Chancielleria insu detta sala, era una finestra che ghuardava in Dogana” (quoted in *Rubinstein* [n. 13], p. 45, n. 351).
- <sup>20</sup> See *Giulio Lensi Orlandi*, Il Palazzo Vecchio di Firenze, Florence 1977, p. 114; *Lombardi* (n. 3), pp. 139–140. The original Cancelleria was taller than the present room; the vaulting was lowered at the same time the southern windows were walled up during the construction of the Guardaroba. Lombardi includes a photo of the doorway taken prior to 1954, showing it to be much smaller than the present one. During the 1954 restoration, the Trecento biforal window that surrounded the smaller doorway was rediscovered, and some reconstruction work was performed. It is inconclusive which form the doorway took in the late sixteenth century. The Cancelleria is today often referred to as ‘Machiavelli’s office’, although his role as secretary to the Second Chancery of the Florentine Republic ended in 1512. The Cancelleria would likely have been complete only at the very end of his time working in the palace.
- <sup>21</sup> See *ibidem*.
- <sup>22</sup> See *Lensi Orlandi* (n. 20), p. 114; *Lombardi* (n. 3), pp. 136–137 (which reaches a different conclusion about the path of the staircase).
- <sup>23</sup> See *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 9. This landing and entry to the Sala dei Dugento must have been added to the palace at the same time in the early sixteenth century as the Cancelleria, since it supports the room above and has its dimensions. This first-floor space possibly also served as an exterior landing in the Trecento and Quattrocento iterations of the palace, before the original palace block was connected to Cronaca’s council hall; see n. 29, below.
- <sup>24</sup> See *Lensi* (n. 19), p. 184; *Lensi Orlandi* (n. 20), p. 125.
- <sup>25</sup> See *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), pp. 213–215. This staircase arrives at nearly the same place that the Tasso one would have, but does so at a different angle (it lands from the west rather than the east). Although details of the earlier Arnolfo-Michelozzo staircase remain sketchy, it is possible that the uppermost part of this new staircase followed its route. If so, Vasari’s stairs would have united the most useful remnants from its earlier iterations.
- <sup>26</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 9; *Lensi* (n. 19), pp. 124, 184.
- <sup>27</sup> *Lombardi* (n. 3) emphasizes this as the more likely possibility. Part of his reasoning is based on the ascending traces of the molding from the Tasso stairs that one can see inserted into the present wall of the ‘secret’ passageway just behind the cabinet with the map *Armenia* (fig. 14). Yet the molding traces on the inside of the passageway do not evenly match the height of the traces on the exterior, overlooking the Dogana; the interior ones seem to have been stuck into the passageway at a later date (perhaps during the work on the terrace; see n. 52) rather than as true relics of their previous location. Lombardi also notes that on the rear side of the *Armenia* cabinet/passageway leading into the room is a crowning arch with the symbol of the Golden Fleece, and suggests that this probably was part of the Tasso stairs that survived. This seems extremely unlikely; the same sculpted Golden Fleece also appears on the exterior face of the largest Guardaroba window as well as atop the blind arched window beside it (fig. 8), which were without question part of the Vasarian construction of the Guardaroba. Considering this, I definitely think the second possible landing site discussed is the more likely one.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 138–140.
- <sup>29</sup> This is not to be confused with an earlier staircase, part of the original palace with some refurbishing under



- Michelozzo in the mid fifteenth century, that ascended on the exterior of the main (not Dogana) courtyard to just beside the Sala dei Dugento on the piano nobile and then continued internally up to the Sala dei Gigli. It too was destroyed by Vasari (1560–1561); see *Edmund P. Pillsbury*, Vasari's staircase in the Palazzo Vecchio, in: *Collaboration in Italian Renaissance art*, ed. *Wendy Stedman Sheard/John T. Paoletti*, New Haven 1978, pp. 125, 131, n. 1.
- <sup>30</sup> See ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 5, fol. 19r (payments totalling 294 scudi, 2 lire when accounts with Bernardo d'Antonio were closed on 11 October 1569): "M<sup>o</sup> bernard<sup>o</sup> dant<sup>o</sup> di m. mattea muratore per la m<sup>ta</sup> duno suo conto di piu muramenti et acconchini fatti in dett<sup>o</sup> palazzo dal 17 di Genaiio 1566 [1567 in the modern calendar] ad di 24 di novembre 1567 per la guardaroba."
- <sup>31</sup> See n. 33, below.
- <sup>32</sup> On Danti's living at Santa Maria Novella, see *Thomas Settle*, Egnazio Danti and mathematical education in late sixteenth-century Florence, in: *New perspectives on Renaissance thought: essays in the history of science, education and philosophy: in memory of Charles B. Schmitt*, ed. *John Henry/Sarah Hutton*, London 1990, p. 27.
- <sup>33</sup> See ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 5, fol. 12r. On 31st October 1567 the court spent 212 scudi for a scaffold to build the upper room. Planks of wood from Casentino trees were used to make the ceiling of the Guardaroba. Already in 1565 the Vasarian plan to have two globes (one celestial, one terrestrial) hidden above the two central ceiling compartments had been undermined by prince Francesco. At this point, the space over the Guardaroba would have been intended mainly for storage and access to the ramparts above.
- <sup>34</sup> Danti received payment for the terrestrial globe as early as October 1564, but his work continued through early 1568; see *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 309. On the various installations held by the room between 1568 and the transfer of all of its objects to the Uffizi in late 1587, see *Mark Rosen*, The cosmos in the palace: the Palazzo Vecchio Guardaroba and the culture of cartography in early modern Florence, 1563–1589, Ph. D. diss., Ann Arbor 2004, pp. 280–294.
- <sup>35</sup> On Nigetti, see *Lensi* (n. 19), pp. 134, 179, 218, 237–238; *Fiorani* (n. 2), p. 31. Nigetti's initial involvement was helping Danti make a wooden mock-up model of the Guardaroba to show the Duke in late January 1564.
- <sup>36</sup> *Frey*, Nachlaß, III, pp. 22–23.
- <sup>37</sup> See ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 966, fol. 21b, the supplication by Nigetti to Francesco on 18 October 1570, which claims that he had begun working on the cabinets four years earlier: "Nigi legniaiuolo S[ervito]re di V. Al., gli fu q[uest]a 4 ani sono datto ordine dal gran Ducha che dovesi fare gli armadi della guardaroba Magore di V. Al. e all dipositorio che di mano in mano a quello chonte mi paghasi danari del che i lavoro si trova ogi fornito dell tuto. E chosi o auto in piu partitte buona soma di Danari, e di tuti ne sono debitore a' libro di Tanai de Medici e no sono chreditore de li armadi e fatura loro: pregho umilmente a V. Al. che quela si degni che tale chonto mi sia saldo e ne vadia chreditore e avendo avere resto mi sia paghate, perche sono povero e ho gra[n]disimo bisogno."
- <sup>38</sup> The first two received payments on 30 June 1566. For the fifteen-scudi payment to Moretti, see *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 309. For Antonio, who is not identified further, see the document (ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 5, fol. 2v) paying him for designing, among other things, the cabinets' keyholes ("la valuta di piu sorte, toppe a chiave fatte et messe agli armari de la guarda roba di sua alteza"). Confetti, who appears to have done the most substantial amount of work on the Guardaroba cabinets under Nigetti, was paid on 23 October 1566 (ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 5, fol. 5r) for "due armari dasso dalbero alti b[raccia] 4 e lungi 2 con cornice da capo con sua ispalette a L[ire] 20 S[oldi] – al b. andant<sup>e</sup> et piu per b. 36 qua a di in 4 palcetti fatti in l<sup>o</sup> di detti armari a lire una soldi dua b. quadro fatt<sup>o</sup> tutt<sup>o</sup> a sua spese di legniamie et di feram[en]ti [...] nel palazo ducale per la gua[r]d<sup>a</sup> roba di S. alteza." Confetti continued to work on the room through the following year, and was paid 292 lire and 5 soldi on 14 June 1567 (ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 5, fol. 10r).
- <sup>39</sup> See payments (all listed in ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 945, fols. 11a–11b) of 1 March (10 florins), 26 April (15 florins), 9 May (15 florins), 31 May (15 florins), 14 June (15 florins), 28 June (15 florins), 31 July (15 florins), and 20 December (10 florins). On 28 February 1568, a final tally of those payments totaling 110 florins was also recorded.
- <sup>40</sup> Nigetti was paid 292 lire and 8 soldi on 14th June 1567, for "la mont[atura] [...] duno palgo fatt<sup>o</sup> ala guardaroba di S. Ecc<sup>za</sup> in dett<sup>o</sup> palazo" (ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 5, fol. 8v). See also n. 42, in which the court (in October 1570) notes that Nigetti was satisfactorily paid for his work on the room's ceiling.
- <sup>41</sup> See n. 37.
- <sup>42</sup> ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 966, fol. 21c (24 October 1570): "Il suplicante Nigi legniaiuolo espone a V. Alt<sup>za</sup> che per ordine della Alt<sup>za</sup> paterna ha fatto gli armadi nella guardaroba maggiore et ha ricevuto giornalmente danari in dep[osite]ria a buonconto, tal' che resta debitore per tal conto di fiorini 317, lire 5.12 — et resta pag<sup>o</sup> e sadisfatto del' palco di detta guardaroba come appare a libri di Tanai de Medici. E pero supplica V. Alt<sup>za</sup> di farli saldare detto conto e apprezzare li detti armadi con chiamare uno per uno, o come meglio piacera a'

V. Alt<sup>za</sup>: e che quello che restassi avere gli sia pagato perche dice che ne tiene grandissimo bisogno, delle quale domande V. Alt<sup>za</sup> ne comandera piacendoli la sua volontà.”

- <sup>43</sup> ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 966, fol. 21c (9 November 1570): “Quando si dette a far questo lavoro bisognava prima che se li desse a principio farne i patti et veri[fic]ato et non dopo tanto Tempo voler’ chiamar’ huomini del mestiere che non faranno mai contro all’Artefice; però questo modo non piace à S. A. haven’ havuti tanti danari. Però saldinseli i conti et dà qui avanta ne da Giorgio ne da altri si faccia lavori se p[ri]ma non sia stimato.”
- <sup>44</sup> ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 966, fol. 21e (the document is undated, but included in a set of documents with a cover letter of 21 March 1571): “Io antonio di Fra<sup>o</sup> nomato el particino Ma<sup>o</sup> di legname, sendo stato chiamato a vedere certi armari fatti in guardaroba del nostro Gran ducha fatti per mano di Ma<sup>o</sup> nigì et così visti et considerato e visto la spesa e fattura ecetto feramenti, giudichai esere la valuta di fiorini dodici sino a fiorini 14 al braccio andante luno per laltro e tanto. Insegnio della verita io sopradetto Antonio, o fatto questi versi di mia propria mano.” Below follows a note from ducal secretary Ferdinando Tassegli in which the figure of 12 florins is decided upon and sums are made of the amount owed versus the amount already paid.
- <sup>45</sup> ASF, Dep. Gen., parte antica, 966, fol. 21a (signed by Bernardino Gradino): “Agniolo Biffoli Nostro dip<sup>rio</sup> gen<sup>c</sup> in Virtù di q<sup>o</sup> Nostro mandato, mettete a’ Uscita a’ Dionigi di Matteo legnaiuolo fiorini quattrocen-tosessantadua di m<sup>ta</sup>, lire 1.8 p[ic]cio]li, che questo di gliene havete per banco de Ricci pagati a compimento di fiorini 780 di m<sup>ta</sup> per il prezzo di braccia 65 andanti di Armarii fatti nella guardaroba Magg<sup>re</sup> del’ Ser<sup>mo</sup> Gran Duca a fiorini 12 di m<sup>ta</sup> il’ braccio.” See also *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 312 (account of outgoing payments from 28 April 1571).
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 346–347.
- <sup>47</sup> See *ibidem*, pp. 305–308, and *Rosen* (n. 34), pp. 301–429, for the dimensions of the individual fields and a catalog of all the maps. The majority of the vertically oriented maps were painted by Danti; it seems likely that many of those had been completed before Nigetti began to build the cabinets, and that he made the cabinets (particularly in the room’s southwest corner) to fit the shape of preexisting maps. With the exception of the four charts of the polar regions, most of Buonsignori’s maps, by contrast, are found on the northern wall in largely square fields.
- <sup>48</sup> For example, the evidence from the north wall (where I was permitted to open some of the cabinets) gives a sense of the inconsistency of the cabinets in their present state. The cabinet with Buonsignori’s maps *Libia interiore* on top and *La Germania* on bottom opens as a unit, but the *basamento* level does not open with the maps. By contrast, the top part of the cabinet to its immediate right (with *Parte dell’Agisimba* on the front) opens independently of the cabinet with *L’Italia* below; the bottom half, however, opens in tandem with the *basamento*.
- <sup>49</sup> The doorway may have been an access point to the rest of the floor from the destroyed Tasso staircase; on this possibility, see n. 28.
- <sup>50</sup> *Lombardi* (n. 3), pp. 139–140, includes a photograph of the Cancelleria from 1954 showing the south wall without the door-frame in place. The current frame on that wall apparently was the frame used prior to 1954 for the doorway between the Sala dei Gigli and the Cancelleria. Where it is placed now it masks a larger opening in the wall behind it (once leading toward the Italy cabinet), indicating that this passageway indeed was once used as an entry into the Guardaroba.
- <sup>51</sup> The access corridor on the third floor between the Guardaroba and the Cappella di Eleonora is above the lower branches of the main Vasarian staircase from the ground floor up to the Salone dei Cinquecento.
- <sup>52</sup> The terraces were added by Vasari soon after the raising of the Salone dei Cinquecento’s ceiling in 1565. The *stanza da lavoro*, which separates the two terraces, came later, based on the designs (1581–1582) of Ammannati. It is not clear whether before 1581 another interior space stood between the two terraces. See *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), pp. 351–352; however, I disagree with the authors’ statement that the old Guardaroba spaces were along this corridor rather than the one between the Sala dei Gigli and the Sala delle Sabine. Although it is not clear what (if anything) stood just north of the Cappella before the 1565 rebuilding, the route to the old Guardaroba described by *Cellini* (n. 9) does not discuss squeezing through the inconvenient access point of the chapel; nor could this corridor have been reached from the north side before the new Guardaroba’s construction. The interior access stairs just north of the northern terrace, which possibly (though doubtfully) could have existed earlier, were not mentioned by Cellini as his point of entry; instead, he specifically mentions coming from Eleonora’s suite. A likelier location for those rooms was the Gigli-Sabine access way.
- <sup>53</sup> See ASF, Guard. Med., 87, fols. 48v–57v, 76v (all concerning the Guardaroba) and fols. 30r–42v (the large room adjacent to the Guardaroba).
- <sup>54</sup> *Lombardi* (n. 3), pp. 142–148, believes that the lengthy inventories of 1574 and after, naming now-disappeared spaces such as the “Stanza del Coccodrillo”, reflect a series of rooms completely separate from the old Guardaroba in the corridor toward Eleonora’s rooms. Instead, he notes that the Salone dei Cinquecento after

the Vasarian rebuilding once had a passageway leading along the upper north wall similar to the still-extant second-floor terrace on the Salone's south wall; traces of the passageway remained visible on the exterior north face of the palace until the 1870s. The passageway, which would have led through the Cancelleria and continued into the undecorated rooms of the northeast corner of the Palazzo Vecchio expansion, would have then led to the new, larger storage areas for the Guardaroba after the mid 1560s. This seems like a plausible model for how Cosimo and Vasari would have utilized the spaces behind and beyond the Guardaroba for storage of the court's objects.

<sup>55</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, VII, p. 633.

<sup>56</sup> The reasons for Francesco's enmity toward Danti are still largely unclear, although Danti's exile from Florence did little to hinder his future success in Bologna and later in Rome under Gregory XIII. On his firing, see *Iodoco Del Badia*, Egnazio Danti, cosmografo e matematico e le sue opere in Firenze, Florence 1881, pp. 15–16; *Rosen* (n. 34), pp. 228–231; *Pascal Dubourg Glatigny*, Egnatio Danti O.P. (1536–1586): itinéraire d'un mathématicien parmi les artistes, in: *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée*, CXIV, 2002, 2, pp. 543–605.

<sup>57</sup> See *Detlef Heikamp*, Zur Geschichte der Uffizien-Tribuna und der Kunstschränke in Florenz und Deutschland, in: *Zs. f. Kgesch.*, XXVI, 1963, pp. 193–268; *idem*, L'antica sistemazione degli strumenti scientifici nelle collezioni fiorentine, in: *Antichità viva*, IX, 1970, 6, pp. 3–25.

<sup>58</sup> On 27 February 1589, builders were paid to remove an earlier doorway from the room to the Sala dei Gigli (of which nothing is today known) and to begin building the current one ("smurare e rimurar porte dalla guardaroba e altri vari affari per il palazzo"; ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 24, fol. 223r). Over the following months, payments went to the builders Cosimo d'Andrea Mazzantini, Antonio di Domenico Lombardo, and Bartolomeo di Matteo Sarchi; see ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 24, fols. 102r, 229v, 232r, 242v. On 22 March 1589, the doorway was complete, as workmen were being paid to polish its columns ("per lustrare le colonne della porta della guardaroba"; ASF, Scritt. Fort. Fabb., Fabb. Med., 24, fol. 102r).

<sup>59</sup> *Heikamp*, 1970 (n. 57), pp. 3–25.

<sup>60</sup> The rare visitor that made the effort to gain entry to inspect the room's maps often operated with misleading information about their contents. The geographer Francesco Costantino Marmocchi, asked by the historian Filippo Moisé to contribute a few comments to an 1843 guide to the palace, praised the cartographic cycle and indicated that he believed they were all by Danti. In fact, the maps he singled out for discussion were the work of Buonsignori. See *Filippo Moisé*, Illustrazione storico-artistica del Palazzo de' Priori, oggi Palazzo Vecchio, e dei monumenti della piazza, Florence 1843, pp. 125–128.

<sup>61</sup> See *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), pp. 312–313.

<sup>62</sup> See *Lensi* (n. 19), p. 326. On the Vaso Mediceo, see *Guido A. Mansuelli*, Galleria degli Uffizi. Le sculture, I, Rome 1958, pp. 189–192. Referring to rooms in the Uffizi, Mansuelli writes: "Nel sec. XIX era nella sala della Scuola Veneziana (poi sala dei Capolavori); attualmente si trova nella sala dei Niobidi." Other than this photo, I have yet to find further reference to the Vaso Mediceo being in the Guardaroba in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>63</sup> *Conti* (n. 6), p. 139.

<sup>64</sup> *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), pp. 312–313.

<sup>65</sup> See *Lensi* (n. 19), pp. 342–344.

<sup>66</sup> The inscription on the south jamb reads "SINDACO FRANCESCO SANGIORGI / NEGLI ANNI 1908–1909 / FU RIAPERTA ALL'AMMIRAZIONE DI TUTTI / L'ANTICAMERA DEL TESORETTO / FURONO DELLE ANTICHE TAVOLE DECORATE LE CAPPELLE / E DELLE STATUE E DEGLI ARAZZI LE SALE / E DALLE TURPI VERNICI FURONO LIBERATI / I SUPERBI ARMARI MEDICEI. / Questa memoria fu posta non tanto a ricordanza del già fatto quanto per ammonire il Consiglio del Comune a compiere quel che ancor manca per restituire all'antico splendore questo palazzo glorioso dove Firenze ha vissuto la sua vita pubblica prima al mondo per varie leggi di democrazia e per artistica originalità." On the north jamb, a second inscription says "IMPERANTE NEL COMUNE / LA PARTE POPOLARE / IL SINDACO FRANCESCO SANGIORGI / NEGLI ANNI 1908 E 1909 / VOLLE E CURÒ / CHE RIORDINATI FOSSERO I QUARTIERI / D'ELEONORA DA TOLEDO E DEI PRIORI / E RITORNATO ALL'ANTICA BELLEZZA / QUELLO DETTO DEGLI ELEMENTI / DALLA BARBARIE E NEGLIGENZA DEGLI UOMINI / TRASCURATO E DESTINATO A PUBBLICI SERVIZI."

<sup>67</sup> See *Florio Banfi*, The cartographer "Stephanus Florentinus", in: *Imago Mundi*, XII, 1955, p. 93.

<sup>68</sup> *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 313.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>70</sup> *Heikamp*, 1970 (n. 57), pp. 13, 22 n. 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Allegri/Cecchi* (n. 2), p. 313.

<sup>72</sup> *Alfredo Aldrovandi et al.*, Linee guida per un progetto preliminare di indagini diagnostiche e di restauro del globo terrestre di Egnazio Danti, in: *La Sala delle Carte Geografiche in Palazzo Vecchio* (n. 3), pp. 274–279.



*RIASSUNTO*

La Guardaroba nel Palazzo Vecchio è notevole non solo per le sue splendide carte geografiche ma anche per la sua insolita gestazione nell'ambiente vasariano del tardo Cinquecento. Poco conosciute sono la storia della fabbrica della sala, le varie fasi della sua costruzione e le vicende del successivo restauro di questo spazio in epoca moderna. Si presenta in questo studio una nuova cronologia, basata su documenti inediti, per offrire un quadro sistematico dell'intera vicenda e chiarire sia com'era organizzato il progetto originario sia quali vicissitudini abbia sofferto durante la lunghissima gestazione.

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