

DESIDERIO DA SETTIGNANO (AND ANTONIO DEL POLLAIUOLO):
PROBLEMS *

For John Pope-Hennessy on his 70th Birthday

by James Beck

“ [Desiderio] Die vita eterna
ai marmi e i marmi a lui.”
(Vasari)

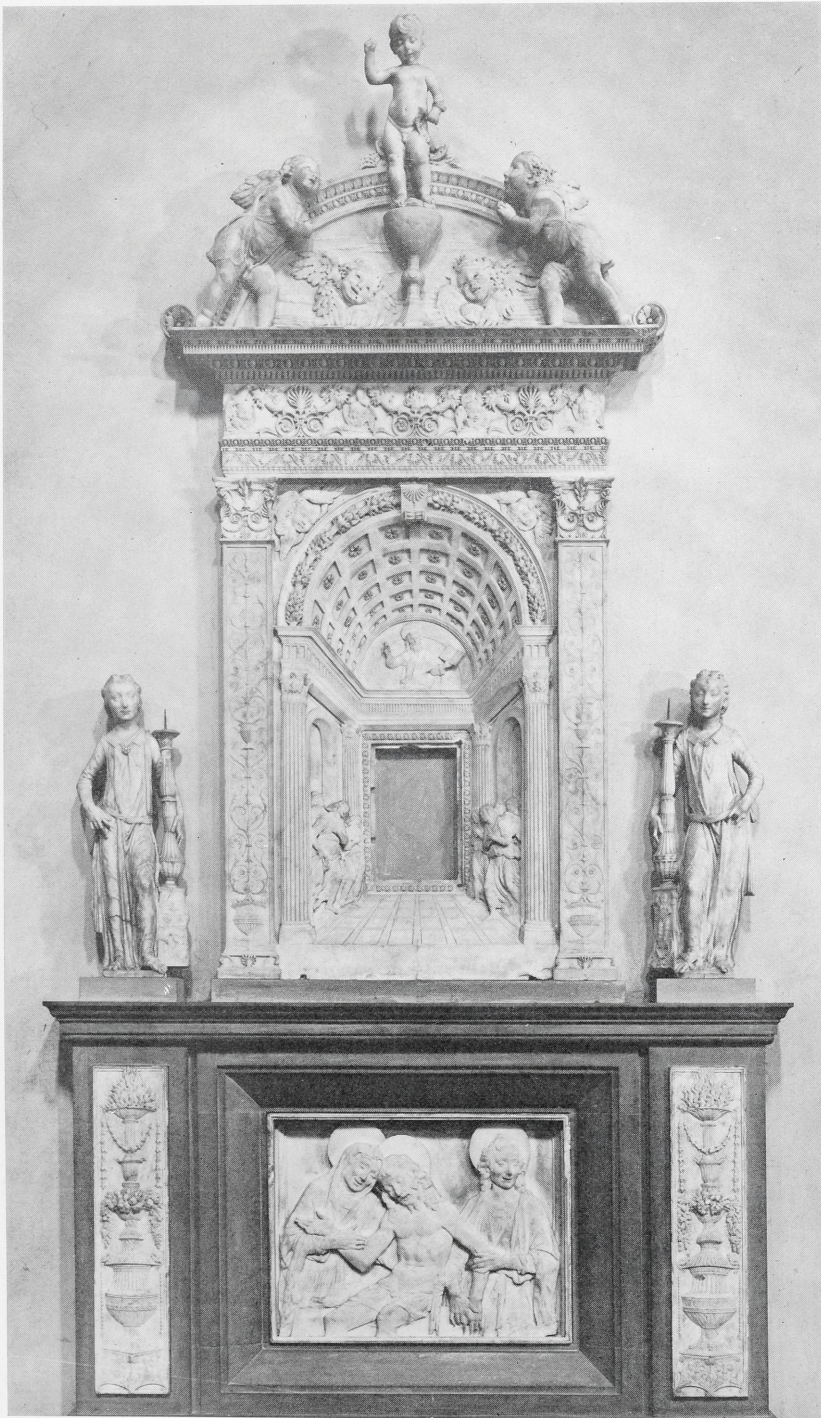
In a stream of reviews (often classics in their own way), museum catalogues, articles and books dealing with the art of the Italian Renaissance, John Pope-Hennessy has proved himself to be the most productive and sharp-eyed scholar of his generation. Those of us for whom sculpture has a particular fascination like to think of him principally as an historian of the plastic arts. His contributions have been fundamental and his intuitions are unerringly on target. In this paper I consider several newly discovered documents dealing with the career of Desiderio da Settignano and, obliquely, with Antonio del Pollaiuolo, two of the finest Quattrocento sculptors. Pope-Hennessy often pretends that the study and use of documents are for academics: objects are his true meat. But as all of us know who depend on *Italian Gothic Sculpture* (1955), *Italian Renaissance Sculpture* (1958), *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture* (1963), the *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1964), and *Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection* (1965) — not to mention a long list of papers and his monograph on Luca della Robbia (1981) — he has always used the documentary evidence rigorously, intelligently, and with a comprehension of its limitations. Since contemporary data is not usually rich for fifteenth century Italian sculpture, its study requires precisely that unique combination of historian and connoisseur that Pope-Hennessy epitomizes. By bringing attention to a couple of apparently insignificant notices, I hope that their meanings can be wrung dry and that in the process I can offer some conclusions about these artists and their art.

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Desiderio da Settignano, actually Desiderio di Bartolomeo (whose father was known as Meo di Ferro) was famous in his own lifetime, although it was short by any standard of measurement. Antonio Filarete mentions him four times in his Trattato and nowhere in those sections is he referred to as already dead. Consequently Filarete's text predates Desiderio's untimely death, which is known to have occurred on 16 January 1464 (= 1463, Florentine style): or at least news of it had not reached him. Indeed, the fact that Desiderio is thought of as still alive has been used to help date the composition of Filarete's fascinating manuscript. Desiderio is given high marks, having been listed directly following Donatello, who outlived him by two years as “...un altro solenne maestro chiamato Desiderio”.¹



1 Desiderio da Settignano, Marsuppini Tomb. Florence, Santa Croce.



2 Desiderio da Settignano, Tabernacle of the Sacrament. Florence, San Lorenzo.

Giovanni Santi named the Florentine sculptor in his poem honoring Federico da Montefeltro, composed in the 1480's in appropriate terms as "El vago Desyder si dolce e bello", a phrase that neatly describes his art, and presumably his person.² In 1481, perhaps even predating Giovanni Santi's reference, Christoforo Landino praised Desiderio: "Disiderio grandissimo e dilicato e vezoso e di somma gratia: e el quale molto repuliva le cose: et se morte molto immatura non lo rapiva ne' primi anni, sperava ogni dotto in quella arte che sarebbe venuto somma perfectione".³

The documentation on Desiderio is so sparse, however, that the year of his birth is not firmly fixed, nor are details concerning his training. Vasari tells us that he died aged only twenty-eight; and since we know (but Vasari did not) that he died in 1464, he could have been born in 1436.⁴ On the other hand, Vasari's reliability is never high when it comes to the ages of fifteenth century artists, partly, I am sure, because the artists were themselves sloppy or uninterested in recording them properly. One might have hoped that the *Portata di Catasto* of 1451 submitted by Desiderio's father, who was by then a *scarpellatore* and member of the guild, the *Arte dei Maestri di Pietra e di Legname*, would contain a clue about him, and indeed Desiderio is named along with his brothers as a stone worker — but nothing more.⁵ On 26 February 1453 (modern), Desiderio was called upon, along with several others including Antonio Rossellino, to estimate Buggiano's work on the pulpit in Santa Maria Novella, implying that he had achieved some status as a sculptor.⁶ In the same year, on 20 June 1453, he enrolled in the guild.⁷

In seeking to achieve an accurate, workable birth date for Desiderio we can, I believe, assume some independence on his part by 1453 when he could have hardly been less than 21, which would place his year of birth as 1432 or before: so much for Vasari's assertion! In a joint *Catasto* report of 1458 (= 1457 Florentine style in this case) prepared by Desiderio and an older brother, Geri, "ischarpellatori al ponte a Sancte Trinita", his age is given as 29; his wife Lisa (actually a *Monna Lisa* but not *the Monna Lisa*) is 20 and an infant daughter is mentioned; she died by the end of 1458.⁸ Such a clearcut indication would appear to settle the question since the information comes from the horse's mouth, so to speak, making the birth year 1429. In a subsequent *Catasto* of 1459 (20 December), however, this time with all the brothers now including Francesco, the eldest, that collectively claimed that "facciamo un pocho di articella di lastruola al Ponte a Santa Trinita in una bottegha..." Desiderio's age is given this time as 28, making his birth year 1431.⁹ In the nearly two years between the two tax reports, Desiderio actually lost a year of age, though Lisa properly did gain one as did brother Geri. At least for Desiderio the reported ages offer little for a confident dating of his birth, and there is no reason to accept one or the other as "more" correct; or for that matter to make an average between the two. I believe that the most reasonable date to take for Desiderio's birth in this uncertain situation is 1432, which at least gives some weight to Landino's and Vasari's assertions of a youthful death. Thus he would have been approximately twenty-one when he entered the *arte* on 20 June 1453.

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If the date of his birth and the conditions of his apprenticeship are uncertain the situation is hardly better with Desiderio's works. Only two extant monuments have some, though by no means decisive, documentary support: The Tomb of Carlo Marsuppini in Santa Croce (Fig. 1) and the Tabernacle of the Sacrament in San Lorenzo (Fig. 2). Chancellor Marsuppini's tomb is almost certainly datable after his death on 24 April 1453. It



3 Pietà (Detail), from Tabernacle of the Sacrament (see fig. 2).

may be assumed that Desiderio joined the *Arte dei Maestri di Pietra e di Legname* in order to be in a position to accept the commission.¹⁰ But if he actually began the elaborate project shortly after the death of Marsuppini, we have no idea of the progress of work or, for that matter, when it was finished. The situation is not much clearer for the Tabernacle in San Lorenzo, though instead of a *terminus post quem*, we have a *terminus ante quem* of 1461 when it was set up ("murato") in the church.¹¹ The date of its inception remains a question, as does whether the *Pieta* (Fig. 3) and angels now incorporated with it were originally part of the same ensemble, or made independently and subsequently added. (For Tabernacle, see Excursus).

None of the other works attached to Desiderio can be firmly dated or documented. Nothing like a convincing stylistic development can be reconstructed, and even the most engaging attributions like the marvelous relief of *St. Jerome in the Desert* in the National Gallery (Washington) are problematic. Desiderio appears to have collaborated with his brothers, especially Geri; yet their artistic personalities have not been isolated. Some provision should be allotted to them in the works nominally considered as by Desiderio. There is evidence to suggest that Desiderio had skill as a bronze caster, at least Pomponius Gauricus claimed as much: "Desiderius qui Neapoli sculpsit fores novae arcis, sculpsit etiam egregie marmora" in his *De sculptura* of 1504.¹³ Desiderio made a head of the Cardinal of Portugal (d. 1459) worth two florins, either while the young prelate was still alive or immediately after his death, which was obtained from Desiderio in 1463 (not 1462) for the use of the masters of the chapel then being constructed in the cardinal's memory in the church of San Miniato al Monte. It was presumably then used by Antonio Rossellino for the effigy of the deceased, to preserve the likeness.¹⁴

* * *

Given the limited amount of confirmable data about Desiderio and his art, I am publishing two documents that pertain to him from the years 1460 to 1462, involving the repayment of loans or debts he had incurred (Appendix Documents I and II). These records were made in the administrative offices of the Merchants' Court (the *Mercanzia*) in Florence, and while there are no direct references to works of art, several revealing conditions emerge from these otherwise colorless documents.¹⁵ In the first, which involves the fairly small sums of 12 and 3 lire, the latter to the guild (presumably the *Arte dei Maestri di Pietra e di Legname*), Roberto Martelli guaranteed to pay for Desiderio, as in fact he did, except that the smaller sum was subsequently cancelled (Appendix 1, Doc. I). Roberto Martelli is probably the same person who is accredited in early sixteenth century sources and in both editions of Vasari with having been the patron of Donatello.

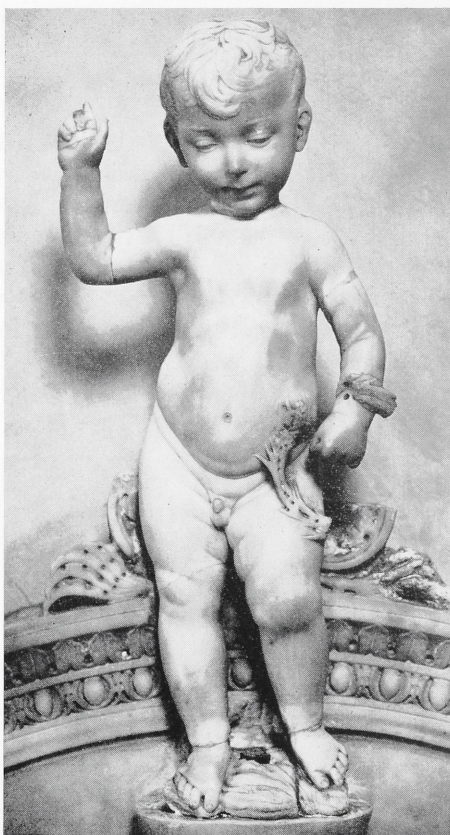
Two important works are known to have been in the Martelli household in the Cinquecento: the *Martelli David*, an unfinished statue in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and the *Martelli San Giovannino* in the Bargello (Fig. 4). They have long been associated with Donatello on the basis of the early sources, although in recent scholarship the attributions have been questioned and other names have been offered. The *David* has never been seriously attributed to Desiderio, though few experts on Italian sculpture still retain the attribution to Donatello.¹⁶ For the other work, the *San Giovannino* or *Young John the Baptist*, on the other hand, the attribution to Donatello retains a loyal following. Critics led by Lanyi, Planiscig, and Cardellini, however, have made a strong case for an attribution to Desiderio da Settignano. Pope-Hennessy, who has been unequivocal concerning Desiderio's authorship of the marvellous statue, totally rejects the attribution to Donatello in no un-

certain terms purely on stylistic grounds. He asserted, "... the so-called *Martelli Baptist* has been persistently ascribed to Donatello, but its handling and conception are not consistent with Donatello's style".¹⁷ Nevertheless many scholars still cling to Donatello's responsibility for the statue.

There is little purpose in rehearsing the history of the literature on the figure, well summarized in Cardellini's monograph. The older discussion is carefully surveyed by Janson who despite some soul-searching maintained the authorship for Donatello.¹⁸ It should be pointed out that the assumed analogies utilized by Janson between the *Martelli Giovannino* and the *John the Baptist* in Venice's Frari, a polychromed wood statue, no longer make any sense since a date has been found on it of 1438 rather than of the 1450's as Janson had thought. The figure can not be productively considered for a discussion of the work in the Bargello unless one is prepared to pre-date the *Martelli Baptist* by some twenty



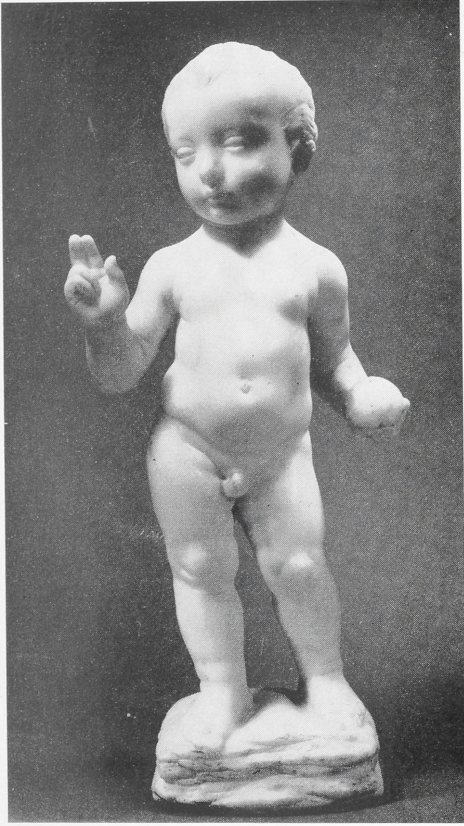
4 Desiderio da Settignano, "Martelli"
San Giovannino, Florence, Museo
Nazionale del Bargello.



5 Baccio da Montelupo, Blessing Christ. Tabernacle of the Sacrament, San Lorenzo (Detail fig. 2).

years.¹⁹ Furthermore, the powerful psychological and emotional components of the two figures are quite removed from one another, making a separation in time plausible. The only helpful comparisons for the *San Giovannino* are with the *Tabernacle of the Sacrament* in San Lorenzo (where, however, the sculptures are for the most part very low reliefs) and with portions of the Marsuppini Tomb, which has several analogous, though smaller, free-standing figures. They are, in my judgement, sufficient to make an attribution to anyone other than Desiderio impossible.

The value of the new document in the ongoing discussion of the *Martelli Baptist* in the Bargello is not as convincing as one may wish. Though not a payment for the statue, it does serve to connect Roberto Martelli with Desiderio da Settignano in 1460 and 1461, at a time when he could have been working on the *Giovannino* and, on purely stylistic grounds, when he should have been working on it. The willingness of Martelli to bail Desiderio out may have been based upon the fact that he owed Desiderio money for work underway, and instead of paying him directly, paid debts owed by Desiderio, a practice quite common in Renaissance Italy. And if Desiderio was working for Martelli at this



6 Desiderio da Settignano (?), Blessing Christ. Cleveland, Museum of Art.



7 After Desiderio da Settignano, Blessing Christ. Stuttgart, Private coll.

time, as now seems likely, why not on the *San Giovannino*? Taken with necessary caution, we can now date the statue that was once in the Martelli household, where it remained until the beginning of this century, to ca. 1460/61 — that is, at about the time that the Tabernacle in San Lorenzo was being set up and very likely after the completion of the Marsuppini tomb monument.

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The second document presented here follows the previous one in the same record book of the Mercanzia and is dated to the year 1461 (Appendix 1, Doc. II). Desiderio is required to cover a loan he had incurred with Domenico di Francesco *speziale* and it was partially paid, to the sum of three florins *larghi* by another person in his name, someone well known to art scholars: Antonio del Pollaiuolo. Here the situation may have been similar to the previous one, with a shift in the characters. Was Desiderio doing some work for Antonio del Pollaiuolo at this time? As Pope-Hennessy has pointed out, Pollaiuolo, a practicing painter, sculptor, and goldsmith, is not known to have ever worked in marble; thus he might have needed the collaboration of a carver.²⁰ I fear that we shall never know for certain the

conditions that threw Pollaiuolo and Desiderio together in this instance, but once an interaction between the two is proved by documents, speculations are possible concerning an artistic exchange. One might even postulate that there had been earlier connections between the two as well.

As with Desiderio, the birth date of Antonio is not absolutely fixed by the existing evidence, which is ambiguous. On his tomb monument (in San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome), which commemorates Antonio and his brother Piero, he was said to have been 72 years old in 1498 when he died, making his birth year 1426 or 1427. On the other hand, the *catalogo* reports of his father for 1433, 1442, 1446, and 1457 indicate that he was born in 1431 or 1432. These dates seem closer to the mark, making him, by my calculations, virtually an exact contemporary of Desiderio. The confusion once again, it may be added parenthetically, shows how little attention these artisans paid toward an exacting determination of ages.

It is well known that Antonio del Pollaiuolo was a practicing goldsmith and bronze caster throughout his life. He also produced paintings from time to time, especially earlier in his career.²¹ Both Antonio and Desiderio appear to have taken on projects of a purely routine and thoroughly unartistic character. In the case of Desiderio we have evidence that when Vittorio Ghiberti was proceeding with the restoration of the family "chasa da signore" located in the parish of San Giuliano a Settimo, he turned to "Desiderio lastraiuolo a Santa Trinita... per fare due finestrette sopra la palcho della logia".²² Such an assignment is a far cry from the prestigious Marsuppini Tomb or the *Tabernacle of the Sacrament*, but it probably reflects correctly the range of activity that a sculptor's workshop might engage in during the Quattrocento. Nor is the connection with Ghiberti to be dismissed without comment: after all, Vittorio could have gone to any number of other shops in town. Perhaps there was a longstanding connection between Ghiberti and Desiderio, as there might have been between Desiderio and Antonio del Pollaiuolo.²³

APPENDIX I

I would like to thank Dr. Gino Corti for controlling the transcripts of these documents, and others found below in the Excursus.

DOCUMENT I

2 April 1460-27 February 1462

+MCCCCLX

Disidero di Bartolomeo i[n]taliatore, dipositò lire quindici e
 lle spese per una presura di lui fatta a pitizione per
 uno stagimento di lui fatto a pitizione di Simone di Piero Baccelli per lire 12, e per uno stagimento di
 lui fatto a pitizione di Simone di Piero Baccelli per lire 12, e per uno stagimento di lui fatto a pitizione
 del'Arte de' Maestri per lire 3. E di tutto vuole esser richiesto. Promise Ruberto Martelli farmegli
 buoni a ogni mia volontà adì 2 d'aprile [1460]
 Adì 22 d'aprile ebi da Ruberto Ma[r]telli L. 12 s. 12 L. 12 s. 12
 Àne avuto adì 22 d'aprile lire dodici soldi 7, per lui
 e di sua licenza al sopradetto Simone, porto cho[n]tanti L. 12 s. 7
 Adì 13 marzo 1461 [= 1462, modern] per bulettino del'Arte de'
 Maestri, roghato ser Man[n]o di ser Giovanni Salvetti fatto sotto dì 27 di febraio 1461 [= 1462, mo-
 dern], e' [= essi?] licenziorono il diposito fatta a loro pitizione, e però si cancella perché non ebi se
 none Lire 12 soldi 12 di detto diposito.

Ego Barone subscripsi

ASF, Mercanzia, No. 11792 ("despositi"), fol. 45^r.

DOCUMENT II

22 August 1461 - 13 March 1462

+MCCCCLXI

Disidero di Bartolomeo, intagl[i]atore, dipositò adì 22 d'aghosto
 fiorini tre larghi per una presura di lui fatta a pitizione di Domenico di Francesco speciale, per lire
 10 soldi [blank]. E vuole essere richiesto. Dipositò per lui Antonio di Iacopo del Polaiuolo F. 3 larghi
 Àne avuto adì 3 di novembre lire quattro soldi 10, per lui e di sua licenza, al sopradetto Domenico di
 Francesco soldi otto chontanti. L. 4 s. 10
 Àne avuto adì 7 di novembre 1461 fiorini uno largo, re[n]demo i[n]drieto al detto Disidero soldi otto
 chontanti F. 1 largo
 Àne avuto adì 13 di marzo [= 1462, modern] lire cinque soldi tredici rendemo i[n]drieto al sopradetto
 Disidero, di licenza del sopradetto Domenico, soldi otto cho[n]tanti L. 5 s. 13
 E per llo diposito soldi 5 s. 5
 E per cha[n]celare uno diposito, c[arta] 46, per l'Arte s. 5
 Ego Barone subscripsi

ASF, Mercanzia, No. 11792 ("depositi"), fols/45/45^v. See also fol. 132^v.

DOCUMENT III

22 August 1474

Dinanzi a voi, messer ufficiale e corte, expone etc. Antonio orafo, figliolo emancipato di Iacopo Polla-
 iuolo, che Girolamo di Antonio Villani, cittadino fiorentino, è suo debitore di fiorini odo di suggello per
 una cintola d'ariento e più altri arienti a lui dati e venduti, come appare a libro d'esso Antonio Giornale
 di botega segnato B, c. [blank], e più volte richiese etc. Pertanto domanda che vi piaccia per voi messer
 ufficiale pronunptiare e dichiarare il detto Girolamo essere debitore di detto e di detti fiorini octo di
 suggello, e con dichiarato per vostra sentenza contro detto, a pagare e le spese, quale domanda....
 E produse detto libro e despoitò appresso a ser Nicolò di Guido, e domanda sia aprovato...
 E produse il drito pagato, a libro carta 136.
 Item tuti statuti et ordini, etc.
 Ad petitione di detto Antonio il detto messer ufficiale...commisse... al Cassaccia messo, la richiesta di
 detto Antonio in forma vallida etc.
 Ad petitione di detto Antonio, Cassaccia messo rapportò avere richiesto detto Girolamo ala casa, in
 detti modi e nomi...

ASF, Mercanzia No. 1483, fol. 758^r.

APPENDIX 2

EXCURSUS: THE TABERNACLE OF SAN LORENZO.

Of the two most prominent monuments by Desiderio da Settignano, the Marsuppini Tomb offers fewer problems because it has remained in its original location in Santa Croce. The Tabernacle in San Lorenzo (Fig. 2) on the other hand, has been moved a number of times, and its original purpose, location, and appearance are open to question. In a recent paper Alessandro Parronchi turned his attention to the Tabernacle's original placement: he assumed that it was first in the Medici Chapel dedicated to Saints Cosmas and Damian in San Lorenzo, but that it may have been ideated for the sacristy next to it (now known as the Old Sacristy), behind the altar made by Buggiano in 1432, against the (curved) wall.²⁴ He has also assumed that it must have been executed before 1453, specifically, before Donatello's return from Padua.²⁵ Parronchi has raised some basic issues that are still to be addressed. Did the Tabernacle originally rest on an altar, or was it attached to a wall? Parronchi opts for the second possibility and he also observes that the two angels that form part of the Tabernacle have been shaved in the upper back where wings have been removed (at some unknown time). This indicates that they were made as decisively three-dimensional, free-standing images. Thus, they were originally closer to the free-standing angels on the Marsuppini Tomb than is usually recognized. By taking a date of the early 1450's for the carving of the Tabernacle, Parronchi followed a small group of earlier scholars: the well-known document of the Tabernacle having been "murato" in 1461 is considered merely a *terminus ante quem*, without any implication of a recent completion.²⁶

In another line of discussion Parronchi suggests that the famous putto-like Blessing Christ (Fig. 5) that stands atop the Tabernacle today is not by Desiderio da Settignano, but a replacement created by Baccio da Montelupo. Here Parronchi calls into account the testimony of the one-time sacristan of San Lorenzo whose *Memoriale*, published in 1510, should be regarded as the earliest guide to Florence. Francesco Albertini stated: "La tavola marmorea del Sacramento con li suoi ornamenti è di Desiderio da Settignano excepto Christo sopra il calice, che è di tua mano [i.e. that of Baccio da Montelupo, referred to in humanist terms as Bartholomeo Lupio] quando fecesti il Crucifixo et li Angeli allo altare maiore al tempo fui sacrista in decta chiesa".²⁷

On the basis of this authoritative citation, which is also the earliest attribution of the undocumented Tabernacle to Desiderio, Parronchi persuasively removes the putto and its endless copies from Desiderio's *oeuvre* or inspiration. He suggests that the figure displaced by Baccio da Montelupo's Christ Child (Fig. 6) is the marble Blessing Christ, said in fact to have come from San Lorenzo, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art: fittingly enough, it was sold in 1868 as a Baccio da Montelupo.²⁸

New documents can be introduced concerning Baccio's activity at San Lorenzo and particularly his work on the main altar. These same documents offer fresh insights into Desiderio's Tabernacle. In 1499, there are payments for the purchase of a Crucifix and two Angels for the main altar. The text reads:²⁹

"Queste chose metto a uscita questo dì 11 di luglio [1499] quando hebbi el libro dal Priore per mettervi su certo grano e piombo venduto; perché più volte le ho richieste queste cose, non le ho potute havere, però le pongho qui quando le riarò satisfarò.
Imprima uno paio di viti molto belle, fiorini nove larghi d'oro in oro £ 63
Item uno Crucifixo all'altare maggiore, fiorini quattro larghi d'oro con sue [sic] ornamenti . . . £ 28
Item per uno paio d'angeli con chorone traforate di rilievo, con sue base etc, fiorini otto larghi d'oro £ 56"

Although these purchases (which were apparently made some time before the date of the entry) do not specify the names of the suppliers, perhaps because Albertini did not want to go on record as patronizing his friend Baccio, the missing link is unquestionably supplied by the citation from the *Memoriale* of 1510, given above. In both instances Albertini neglected to mention the material of the Crucifix and of the Angels although they, along with the Blessing Christ, constitute the earliest datable (but not yet recognized) works by the sometimes underrated and certainly poorly studied sculptor. On the other hand, more information is supplied by other documents. Another payment of 1499 very likely refers to the Crucifix and leaves every reason to believe that it was of wood:³⁰

"[1499] Item per pezzi 104 d'oro per dorare la croce di Christo e 6 reliquie in tondi, a Stefano Baptista

Lire 3 soldi 13".

A final confirmation of the material of these sculptures together with a full description of the new arrangement of the main altar is found in the Inventory of 1507:³¹

"Cappelle della chiesa

In coro in sull'altare maggiore.

Uno crocifixo di legnio di rilievo in sull'altare.

Due Angeli di terra coloriti, posti in su due pilastri intagliati et dipinti,

ii candellieri di ferro grandi, iiii leggi, 1^o grande

col ferro per la lanterna, ii mezzani, 1^o piccolo

per la epistola, ii lampanai grandi d'ottone, 1^a palla

di legno grossa ingessata in mezzo, iiii candellieri di legno ingessati in su iiii piramide di marmo.

Una predella rossa per acendere e cerotti".

During 1499, in the months of September and October, there are other payments that document the elaborate transformation of the main altar.³² Unquestionably in that year and continuing into 1500 (modern) the decoration of the altar was radically redefined. Among other objects purchased in 1499 was "1^a (= una) cortina dipincta da ogni parte per l'altare maggiore con jesus e dua graticule" and on 12 March 1500, there was an expenditure of 12 lire and 15 soldi "per la vela all'altare maggiore, per oro, fragia, maglie, e factura e dipincture...".³³

The question that leads us back to Desiderio's Tabernacle must now be faced: What was on the main altar from the time of its consecration in 1461 until these changes were put into action in 1499? The documents once again appear to provide the answer, and this time it is somewhat unexpected. From the context of the *ricordi* made in 1461 by an earlier sacristan on the momentous occasion of the consecration of the new, main altar, it becomes perfectly clear that Desiderio's Tabernacle of the Sacrament was there. It was "murato" or attached to the altar and was presumably made precisely to be positioned there. Although these *ricordi* have been published before and are in fact well known to specialists, they have not been presented in their proper order, that is to say as they originally appear on the

page; thus the context has been lost and the location of Desiderio's Tabernacle has never been properly understood. Below, I give the complete, relevant text (The numbers given in brackets are for the sake of clarity and are not in the document.):³⁴

- “ [1] Per tutto il mese di luglio 1461 si murò l'altare maggiore nostro.
 [2] Per tutto di primo d'agosto 1461 fu murato interamente il tabernacolo del Corpo di Cristo.
 [3] Domenicha adì 9 d'agosto 1461 fu consecrato detto altare maggiore per mano di Messer Orlando Bonarli egregio dottore e archivescovo di Firenze e con grande solennità e processione pel popolo e stendardo nuovo facto da' popolani, e col capitulo della metropolitana ecclesia e altri preti invitati collocamo in petto altare tre corpi sancti, cioè San Marco Papa, Sancta Concordia Martire, e Sancto Amato Abbate, e una capsetta plumbea bassa con reliquie di San Lorenzo, la quale è in una altra capsula plumbea maggiore, nella quale sono bossoli dodici di lengno quasi consunti per la vetustà; ne' quali è polvere solamente senza altre scritture. La detta capsula grande e la piccola etrovi con 12 bossoli trovamo nell'altare maggiore della chiesa vecchia.
 [4] La detta consecratione rogò Ser Lotto di Francescho Masi, popolano e notaio del capitulo ”.

The conclusion that Desiderio's Tabernacle was attached to the main altar of the church at the time of its consecration seems inescapable. The chronology of events must have been: first, the altar table was put together, work that took the entire month of July; then the Tabernacle was set on the altar on the first day of August (at which point no decoration for the altar was mentioned except for the Tabernacle); and finally, on the ninth of the month, that is on the Sunday before the feast of San Lorenzo (on 10 August), the altar was consecrated amid elaborate festivities. Parenthetically, I should add that the only feasible alternative location for the Tabernacle compatible with the evidence of the *ricordi* would have been a wall nearby the altar. Even in this unlikely case, the Tabernacle must have been designed and planned in connection with the erection of the new, main altar and must have been in any case patronized by Cosimo de' Medici, whose family, it will be recalled, had given Desiderio several other assignments. However, the evidence is such that I am convinced that the Tabernacle stood in a place of honor on the main altar, for all to see. The thickness or breadth of the marble Tabernacle, now deeply engaged into the wall on the right aisle near the crossing, also permits the same assumption, for it would have had the stability to have been able to rest on the altar. It is very likely that there was some decoration on the back, but there is not a clue as to its character.³⁵ To be sure, we know that it stood free on the altar of the Chapel of Saints Cosmas and Damian by 1507, if not somewhat before. A notice from the inventory of 1507 proves that the Tabernacle was on the altar of the Medici Chapel by that year. The item reads:³⁶

“ Cappella de' Medici dello olio Sancto. Uno tabernacolo di marmo per sacramento in luogho di tavola con dua angeli di marmo bassi, dua angeli alti con uno bambino in mezo, il candellieri di ferro in catena, senza dossale et predella, 1^a campanella, con tre seggiole da confessare. ”

Consequently, the early history of Desiderio's Tabernacle can be reconstructed as follows: (1) The commission is of uncertain date, but probably coincided with the building of the new altar in Brunelleschi's church, and was also part of the larger program of the choir or main chapel; (2) It was put in place on 1 August 1461 and apparently remained there for nearly forty years; (3) In mid-1499, it had given way to a new organization of the altar, one that included a gilt Crucifix of wood and two Angels by Baccio da Montelupo; (4) Sometime before 1507, and probably as early as 1495-1498 the *Bambino* was exchanged with a new one by Baccio, made to conform to the rigorous demands of Savonarolian thinking; (5) In 1498 or 1499 the Tabernacle was moved to the Medici Chapel of Saints Cosmas and Damian.³⁷

Albertini, Vasari, and Borghini knew that Desiderio's marble Blessing Christ had been placed in the Sacristy and that it was used from time to time as an independent image at Christmas. The inventory of 1507 seems quite certainly to refer to Desiderio's figure which was then listed as in the Sacristy:³⁸ “ 1^o bambino di marmo bellissimo per porre in sul altare ”. A slightly later inventory made in 1526 is more specific and seems to settle the matter by actually identifying the sculptor:³⁹ “ Un bambino di marmo bellissimo di mano di Desiderio in una cassetta d'albero ”.

Now we may ask the question, what was the state of Desiderio's Tabernacle at the time of the consecration of the main altar. I suspect that the entire central section including the somewhat top-heavy lunette was already made by 1461. The viewing distance would help to explain the remarkable perspective in the main field (seen as analogous to Masaccio's *Trinity*) and the exaggerated forms in the lunette. The two angels supporting candlesticks do not seem to have been ready in time for the consecration, although they must have been planned for the Tabernacle from the start, for they form an inseparable element for the programs of similar tabernacles from the later fifteenth century. Since they are not mentioned in the *ricordi* we must assume that either it was merely an omission on the part of the sacristan, or that they were not in place in time for the ceremony. We do know that Desiderio was still very much occupied with work for San Lorenzo in 1462, and was not prepared to take on assignments from the Duke of Milan. Perhaps there was still outstanding work for the Tabernacle, including the two Angels and the Pietà, a theme appropriate to the program and found in a slightly different treatment on Donatello's decoration for the main altar of Il Santo, Padua. On the basis of stylistic analysis, most critics are convinced that Desiderio did make the Angels, and perhaps we can date them to 1461-2,

while the Tabernacle falls to the years from about 1458 to 1461; on the other hand, I do not believe that Desiderio himself actually carved the Pietà (Fig. 3), although he probably left a design or *modellò* which was followed later, after his unexpected death in the first weeks of 1464.⁴⁰

At this point it is fair to ask why Desiderio's Blessing Christ was put aside, only to give way to a new version not very different in style. The crucial difference, and the one that must have dictated the change, was iconographic, as Parronchi has already suggested. The *puttino* in Cleveland (Fig. 7), which is either the original by Desiderio or a derivation, shows the Child holding with his left hand a smallish ball, representing a piece of fruit or perhaps the universe, although the orb does not have a cross on top. He blesses with His right hand. The replacement by Baccio da Montelupo (undoubtedly imitative of Desiderio's so that, we must assume, it would harmonize with the rest of the Tabernacle to which it was to be attached) holds a crown of thorns and three nails (Fig. 5); in the original version on the Tabernacle, these elements have been partially damaged but from the many derivations in several media, they are fully revealed. A figure of this type and perhaps the very figure by Baccio (with an attribution to Donatello) was carried in a procession during the "Burning of the Vanities" under Savonarola's guidance on 27 February 1498, according to a biographer of the Frate (said to be Fra Pacifico Burlamacchi).⁴¹ It is described as follows: "...ritto sopra una basa d'oro ... con la destra [mano] dava la benedictione et nella sinistra teneva la corona delle spine, co' chiovi [= chiodi] della sua passione...". If this *puttino* were actually Baccio's, then this information would serve as the *terminus ante quem* for its carving, and very likely also an *ante quem* for the substitution of Desiderio's Blessing Christ on the Tabernacle. On the other hand the displacement of the entire altar does not seem to have taken place until slightly later on, at least until after the fall from power and the execution of Savonarola, which took place on 22 May 1498. If the replacement of the Blessing Christ of Desiderio, which has less specific religious features and is consequently more "pagan", with that of Baccio's can be attributed to the influence of Savonarola (who had preached in the church of San Lorenzo), then the removal of the Tabernacle as a whole from the main altar by 1499 might be explained as a reaction to Savonarola's views. At least the change and the construction of an altar decoration highlighted by Angels and a Crucifixion has an analogy in events that took place surrounding the main altar of the Duomo. According to Landucci's *Diario*, the Crucifix was taken from the main altar of Santa Maria del Fiore and placed down below among the cannons and a carved wooden, though not yet gilt, tabernacle for the host was put on the altar in its stead, on 29 November 1497.⁴² On May 2, 1498, less than a half year later, that is after the arrest and torture of Savonarola and shortly before his execution, the tabernacle was taken down and the Crucifix was replaced on the main altar, where it had been before.⁴³ The placement of the Tabernacle on the main altar of San Lorenzo in 1461 was probably prompted by the ideas of an earlier Dominican, St. Antoninus: its removal seems to have coincided with Savonarola's downfall, though there may have been another element involved.

It must have been widely recognized that the altar, with its unique program and its intimate connections with Cosimo's tomb, was too strong a reminder of Medici hegemony over the city and control of the church of San Lorenzo, once the family had been effectively expelled toward the end of 1494. The changes might thus have been implicitly political: part of a plan to "de-Medici-ize" the main altar and the Cappella Maggiore. After all, the main altar was very much part of a program that included Cosimo's tomb and the four large stucco figures in niches at the crossing of the church made by Donatello, not to mention the bronze *pergami*, also by Donatello, which were oriented, it seems, within the same complex. The entire main altar area, then, was a monument to the Medici, who were the patrons of the Cappella Maggiore, highlighted by the tomb of Cosimo Pater Patriae, a title which was removed from the tomb at precisely this time. It would be only natural for the cannons of the church, perhaps even prompted by the government officials, to reduce the Medici flavor of the church, and thereby explain the redecoration of the altar during 1499 and 1500. A somewhat analogous situation occurred in 1527 with the advent of the second, short-lived Republic. "Per commandamento delli Signori Octo di Balìa di Guardia" Medici arms were removed from the sacristy and, "Addì xii detto [giungno, 1527] lire una soldi xiii piccioli contanti, spixi in fare levare l'arme della palle sopra la porta di chiesa dinanzi, portò Tonio Fantori".⁴⁴

Confirmation of Medici proprietorship of the Altar Maggiore in the later Quattrocento is provided by an item in an inventory of 1526 at which time in a closet of the sacristy was "...un paliotto per la altar maggiore di veluto nero con bronche d'oro, arme Medici et Tornabuoni". Lucrezia Tornabuoni, who will be remembered, was the wife of Piero il Gottoso and the mother of Lorenzo il Magnifico. The *paliotto* was probably made during Piero's lifetime, that is before 1469.⁴⁵

That the Tabernacle of the Sacrament should have been designed for and placed upon the main altar of an important church in the fifteenth century is unexpected. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible and appropriate to the recommendations of the Dominican St. Antoninus, who actually advocated that every church have a suitable tabernacle for the Eucharist either on an altar or on a nearby wall.⁴⁶ Cosimo de' Medici was closely attuned to the ideas of his fellow Florentine. Besides, the presence of the Tabernacle for the Host on the main altar coincides with what we know about Donatello's two bronze pulpits which were placed in connection with it. Indeed, it seems to reinforce I. Lavin's claim that the iconographic program for the pulpits required a Last Supper, which he understood as taking place on the altar.⁴⁷

There remains to mention a final issue, the orientation of the altar in the later Quattrocento. Howard Burns has concluded, on the basis of an early plan he discovered, that the altar was approached by steps from behind so that the celebrant would face out to the church.⁴⁸ How this arrangement would have affected the placement of the Tabernacle is not clear, but it does seem to reflect a unified, intentional, and unique program that must be understood within the context of the other elements planned for the crossing, including Donatello's statues, the bronze pulpits, and the tomb monument in the area on the floor below.⁴⁹ I cannot imagine that the Tabernacle would have been oriented in any other direction but that of facing the congregation in the nave of the church. A view from a considerable distance might help to explain formal elements such as the extraordinary perspective found in the chapel-like central portion of the monument, and what appears to be a discordance between the main section of the monument and the lunette above, which many observers have found too heavy.

NOTES

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¹ L. Grassi and A. M. Finoli, eds., Antonio Averlino detto il Filarete, 'Trattato di Architettura', Milan 1972, I, pp. 170, 258, 284, and 381. He is referred to as "intagliatore di marmi e pietre". Antonio Benivieni in his *Encomium* writes that Cosimo de' Medici "bestowed both honors and countless rewards on Donatello and Desiderio, two highly renowned sculptors" (See E. Gombrich, *Norm and Form*, London 1966, p. 40, citing ed. by R. Piattoli, 1949, p. 54).

² H. Holtzinger, ed., Giovanni Santi, *Cronica rimata...*, Stuttgart and Tübingen 1893, p. 189. C. Seymour, Jr. (*Sculpture in Italy: 1400-1500*, Hammondsworth 1966, p. 141) made this observation. The sculptor's very name, "Desiderio" and the joy his arrival caused his parents, much like a "Benvenuto", may have actually contributed to the formation of his character, temperament, and style.

³ *Commento di Christophoro Landino fiorentino sopra la Comedia di Dante...*, Florence 1481, cited in O. Morisani, *Art Historians and Art Critics — III: Cristoforo Landino*, in: *Burl. Mag.*, 95, 1953, p. 270. The passage concerning Desiderio is mentioned by M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, London 1972, pp. 129, 131, and 148. I am using the text as given by R. Cardini, *Scritti critici e teorici di Cristoforo Landino*, 2 vols., Rome 1974, vol. I, p. 125. That author (vol. II, p. 159) assumes Desiderio died at 36, and that he was a pupil of Donatello, both points being off the mark. He does make the interesting observation that Landino was a pupil of Carlo Marsuppini, whose tomb Desiderio made. Landucci in his *Diario (Landucci-Del Badia)*, pp. 2-3) places Desiderio among the luminaries in the 1460's but he may have written this segment later.

⁴ Vasari-Milanesi III, p. 110-11. Vasari seems to say that Desiderio died in 1485 which is far off the mark.

⁵ C. Kennedy, *Documenti inediti su Desiderio da Settignano e la sua famiglia*, in: *Riv. d'arte*, XII, 1930, pp. 243-291.

A. Markham Schulz, *Desiderio da Settignano and the Workshop of Bernardo Rossellino*, in: *Art Bull.*, XLV, 1963, p. 35, asserted that Desiderio is mentioned in his father's tax declaration of 1451, which is correct, but he is not among the "bocche" and therefore there is no indication of his age in that year, (Kennedy [n. 5], Doc. IV.) Markham sought, unsuccessfully I believe, to show that Desiderio was a member of Bernardo's shop in 1451 and that he worked on the effigy figure of the Beata Villana alongside Bernardo. Seymour ([n. 2], p. 140) apparently accepts the suggestion, taking it for granted that Desiderio was trained in Bernardo's shop. Since Desiderio's father and brothers were already *scarpellatori* it seems to me unlikely that he would have left the family shop, at least as early as 1451. Besides, it would be difficult to imagine a situation in which Bernardo Rossellino would have assigned important passages to the young outsider, when his talented younger brother was there, ready to take over whenever necessary. See also A. Markham Schulz, *The Sculpture of Bernardo Rossellino and his Workshop*, Princeton 1977, passim.

There seems to be a desire on the part of scholars to assume that a first rate artist must be taught by a first rate artist. Or, putting it in reverse, that a second rate master cannot produce a first rate pupil. It would thus be impossible for Desiderio to have been trained by his father or one of his elder brothers because they had no distinction as sculptors. Still, great artists did emerge from weaker artists' shops. After all, a lesser artist can pass on the rules and skills of the craft, and he may even be particularly generous, understanding, and an excellent "teacher". One has that impression about Cosimo Rosselli, for instance, to the extent that one of his pupils even took on his name (i.e. Piero di Cosimo); Squarcione should also be mentioned. I see no reason to think that Desiderio da Settignano was not trained in the family shop; he remained a partner with his brother Geri in the 1450's, although Desiderio seems to have become the head of the shop. On the other hand, there is no doubt that he looked around in the *botteghe* for skillful and original masters whose works served as models in the course of his development. Principal among them, as most critics agree, must have been Bernardo Rossellino.

- ⁶ *Kennedy* (n. 5), Doc. V. Of the three *scarpellatori* who gave evaluations, Desiderio's was the lowest, which may either be a comment on the skill of execution or lack of it, in his eyes, or the stiffness of the style. Since Antonio Rossellino was also one of the estimators, it seems to me impossible that Desiderio and Antonio were, at least at the time of the selection of each of them, in the same shop, which would have been patently unfair. To be sure, the appearance of both sculptors on the same commission speaks against Markham Schulz' argument of Desiderio's training in Bernardo Rossellino's shop (see note 5).
- ⁷ *Kennedy* (n. 5), Doc. VI. Although his father and brothers were long since members of the *Arte*, Desiderio joined only in June 1453. Since Marsuppino died on 24 April 1453, the city fathers seem to have moved rapidly in assigning the monument to Desiderio. He was probably required to be a guild member in order to take on this public commission. Although we have only circumstantial evidence, perhaps it is enough to suggest that the Marsuppini Tomb was being planned soon after the chancellor's death. Desiderio probably did not turn twenty-one until 1453.
- On the *Arte dei Maestri di Pietra e Legname*, see R. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore and London 1980, pp. 249-259.
- ⁸ *Kennedy* (n. 5), Doc. XI. The eldest of the brothers, Francesco, was listed in his father's return of this time (*ibid.*, Doc. IX).
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, Doc. XIII. The modest, almost tongue-in-cheek, term in which they framed their activity ("articella") is surely rhetorical and for the benefit of the tax collector. Since Desiderio died early in 1464 (*ibid.*, Doc. XVII), he could hardly have done any meaningful artistic activity in that year; we thus have only a ten year span when he can be documented as a sculptor, from 1453 to 1463.
- ¹⁰ See note 7, above.
- ¹¹ According to D. Moreni (*Continuazione delle memorie storiche dell'ambrosiana imperiale basilica di S. Lorenzo di Firenze*, Florence 1816, I, p. 15 n. 1) in a *Libro dei sagrestani* (presumably then in the Archivio di San Lorenzo which is now housed in the Laurenziana) "Per tutto di primo d'agosto 1461 fu murato interamente il tabernacolo del Corpo di Cristo". (corrected) The modern number is ASL, No. 2192. See Excursus, pp. 213-217.
- ¹² On the Tabernacle in San Lorenzo see I. Cardellini, *Desiderio da Settignano*, Milan 1962, pp. 217-223 and *Pope-Hennessy*, *Sculpture II*, p. 303.
- Even the Tabernacle and the Marsuppini Tomb are attributions, since there are no contemporary contracts or payments to Desiderio, or to anyone else. They have become "certain" works on the strength of older sources and on the fact that no modern critics have doubted Desiderio's responsibility for them. (For the Marsuppini Tomb see *Landucci-Del Badia*, pp. 2-3 and the *Memoriale of F. Albertini* of 1510, p. 15, who mentions frescoes beside the "sepulcro di Desiderio" in Santa Croce; these are the earliest "attributions" of the monument to Desiderio.
- In a published document, J. Spenser (Francesco Sforza and Desiderio da Settignano, in: *Arte Lombarda*, XIII, 1968, p. 133) quotes a letter of 17 February 1462 (presumably modern) in which Desiderio is said to have asserted that he could not do work for Sforza because he, "... essere obligato et essere ancora per un bon pezzo ad certi lavorri qui in San Lorenzo". On this question, see Excursus, pp. 213-217.
- ¹³ A. Chastel and R. Klein, eds., *Pomponius Gauricus, De sculptura (1504)*, Geneva 1969, p. 259. The passage apparently refers to bronze doors for the arch of Alfonso I of the Castelnovo. There is no record of such doors but the chronology of work on the arch corresponds with Desiderio's working career. It would be worthwhile to consider the possibility that Desiderio had some role in Naples. As a confirmation of a Florentine connection Alfonso had sought the service of Donatello in Naples, as we know from a letter of 26 May 1452 to Doge Francesco Foscari; see V. Herzner, *Regesti Donatelliani*, in: *Riv. dell'Istituto Nazionale d'Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, series III, anno II (1979), no. 340 (p. 213).
- ¹⁴ F. Hartt, G. Corti, and C. Kennedy, *The Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal, 1434-1459, at San Miniato in Florence*, Philadelphia 1964, pp. 53, 82, and Doc. 8. A payment of two florins to Desiderio for "... una testa del Chardinale di Portoghallo...". The sum may be too large to refer to a plaster or clay cast, as is claimed by the authors of this monograph, and probably was, after all, a small (marble?) head. One such head (by Desiderio!) that appears in the inventory of the Medici household taken after the death of Lorenzo il Magnifico in 1492 (ASF, *Medici avanti il Principato*, No. 165, fol. 42) was evaluated at three florins ("Una testa di marmo di tutto rilievo di mano di Desiderio, fiorini 3.", E. Müntz, *Les collections des Médicis au XV siècle*, Paris 1888, p. 85). In the same inventory (fol. 38 v) Mino da Fiesole's full-size portrait of Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici is evaluated at 25 florins. Besides a small marble head, the Medici owned "Una storia di fauni e altre figure di mano di Desiderio, fiorini 10". (fol. 42 v). Consequently, among Desiderio's patrons, besides the Martelli, were the Medici and the Rucellai (cf. A. Perosa, ed., *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo Zibaldone*, London 1960, p. 24) as well as other distinguished Florentine families. There is a confusion in the publication of the group of documents in *Hartt, et. al.*, in which the notice concerning Desiderio is found. The authors give the year as 1463 in the subtitle introducing the document; but at the beginning of the text as it appears in the manuscript as they rendered it, the year is given as MCCCCLXII (that is, 1462). But since the first payment that occurs in the document is June, the year would not have changed from 1462 to 1463. Dr. Gino Corti tells me that the date of the entry is 1463 and not

1462 (verified, June, 1983), confirming my suspicions. Consequently the argumentation in the book based upon these dates that affect the chronology of work requires modification. The notice about Desiderio's head was also published by *M. C. Mendes Atanasio*, *A Capela do Cardeal de Portugal em Florença a luz de novos documentos*, Milan 1961, but I have been unable to locate the volume.

The head of a young male saint of terracotta in the Sacristy of San Lorenzo, which is passed between Desiderio and Donatello (see *Janson*, Donatello, pp. 236-7 for background and early bibliography) is called either a San Leonardo or a San Lorenzo. While the Inventories of San Lorenzo do not help with the attribution, one of 1526 refers to the bust as: "Una testa in un tabernacolo di legno di S. Leonardo," which is probably the proper identification, (ASL, No. 2634, fol. 45v). By the seventeenth century, however, the identification of the representation had become confused as is attested to in an inventory of 1642 (ASL, No. 2135, fol. 28) where the following entry appears: "Una testa di terra cotta dentro un tabernacolo con cornice in carate, dicesi ch'è l'effigie propria di S. Lorenzo." ["in sacrestia", in the margin]. In the same inventory is the following item, which is of interest: "Un effigie di Cosimo Medici Pater Patris di terra cotta con ornamento di legno dipinto attorno."

¹⁵ Desiderio and his brother Geri had been involved in litigation in the Merchants' Court in 1457 (ASF, Mercanzia, No. 1406, fol. 155) for rent owed to them. The notice is published in *Kennedy* (n. 5) Doc. VIII.

¹⁶ *A. Parronchi* has dealt with the question most recently (*Le due statue Martelli*, in: *Donatello e il potere*, Florence/Bologna 1980, pp. 129-131) where he clings to the attribution to Donatello for both these marbles. For the earlier bibliography see *Janson*, Donatello, pp. 21-23, who adheres to the traditional attribution of the *David*, although he remained puzzled about its proper date. *J. Pope-Hennessy's* attribution to Antonio Rossellino (*The Martelli David*, in: *Essays on Italian Sculpture*, London 1968, pp. 65-71, first published in the *Burl. Mag.* Cl, 1959, pp. 134, ff.) has not had a wide following, but with the benefit of time for reflection, it remains the most persuasive alternative. The statue is unfinished and may have been retouched to accommodate a mid-sixteenth century taste, making the determination of the author even more difficult.

Other works that have been connected with the Martelli collection that date from this period are the *Martelli Mirror* (for which see *J. Pope-Hennessy*, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London 1964, I, pp. 325-329) and the *Martelli Arms*, which have a traditional association with Donatello (see *L. Grassi*, *Tutta la Scultura di Donatello*, Milan 1963, p. 81). The *Martelli Sarcophagus* is discussed by *Paatz II*, pp. 503, 572 n, 226.

For the Martelli family see *Litta* under "Martelli di Firenze". Roberto was the fifth of nine brothers whose family seems to have become increasingly wealthy in the decade 1440-1450 (see *L. Martines*, *I Martelli e il ritorno di Cosimo Medici*, 1434, in: *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, CXVII, 1959, p. 33); the family lent Cosimo de' Medici substantial sums of money (loc. cit.). In 1448, Roberto married one of the Strozzi, Andreina di Francesco (ibid., p. 35). Roberto Martelli is mentioned as an employee and perhaps an intimate of Cosimo in: *P. D'Ancona* and *E. Aeschlimann* eds., *Vespasiano da Bisticci, Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV*, Milan 1951, p. 424; and he was known to have been the manager of the Roman branch of the Medici Bank in 1445, (see *K. Gutkind*, *Cosimo de' Medici*, Oxford 1938, p. 214). The Martelli were involved in the wool and silk trade as well as in banking during the fifteenth century. For further essentially unpublished information on the Martelli cited by *Martines*, see ASF, *Carte strozziana*, V, 1461 ("ricordi di Ugolino Martelli"); BNCF, *Manoscritti Passerini*, 8, fols. 148 r-149 r; and ASF, *Carte Bardi*, 108, fol. 6 r.

There is an unpublished inventory of a Luigi Martelli dated 6 September 1510 (ASF, *Carte strozziane*, 1428, fols. 101 v and ff.) which lists some objects of interest for the problem of the Martelli as patrons, including "una bambino di terra a diacere", "Una testa di un Cristo di terra", and "una San Giovanni invetriato di Giovanni Martelli", which were in the "sala".

The House of Roberto Martelli was at this time in the via degli Spadai, now via Martelli, not far from the Medici Palace which he purchased in 1457 (according to *Ginori Lisci*, *Palazzi I*, p. 330). In the later sixteenth century the family residence was transferred to the Palazzo Martelli in via Zannetti 8 (formerly via della Forca, ibid, pp. 327-330), where there is a painting of the *salotto* that shows the San Giovannino by a follower of Batoni, G. B. Benigni, dated 1777.

In a letter of 1459 from Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero di Cosimo de' Medici in Careggi, it is clear that Roberto was an intimate friend of Piero's and was looking after the decoration of the chapel in the palazzo on via Larga. Gozzoli says, in part, that concerning the serafim, nine had been made somewhat hidden behind the clouds. Roberto Martelli had seen them, and thought there was no need to be concerned, "... E più intesi chome voi avate ordinato a Ruberto Martegli che mi desse quello che bisognava..." (See *Gaye*, *Carteggio*, I, pp. 191-192, and *A. Grote*, A hitherto unpublished letter on Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, in: *Warburg Journal*, XXVII, 1964, pp. 321-322).

Roberto, a factor in Rome since 1424, was then in Basel from 1433 to 1438, at which point he was sent to Ferrara. He was in Rome until at least 1458, but the Roman record has gaps from 1439 to 1464, so his activity in Rome cannot be followed with certainty. In Florence in 1459 Roberto was mentioned in letters from Gozzoli, and, of course, in the documents published here in the appendix. (See also *R. de Roover*, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494*, Cambridge/Ma. 1963, passim, but esp. pp. 58, 66, 72, 159, 211-213, 217, 219).

¹⁷ *Pope-Hennessy*, Sculpture II, p. 38. *Parronchi*, in his recent paper (n. 16), dates it to shortly before Donatello's trip to Padua on the basis of an assumed borrowing from it by Filippo Lippi.

¹⁸ *Janson*, Donatello, pp. 191-196, esp. pp. 193-194.

¹⁹ See *Parronchi*, Il Battista dei Frari, in: Donatello e il potere (n. 16), pp. 93-97. An inscription was found on the base of the statue with the date of 1438 and Donatello's name, as reported for the first time by *W. Wolters*, (Freilegung der Signatur an Donatellos Johannesstatue in S. Maria dei Frari, in: *Kunstchronik*, XXVII, 1974, p. 38). See also *D. Strom*, A New Chronology for Donatello's Wooden Sculpture, in: *Pantheon*, XXXVIII, 1980, pp. 239 ff., where it is advocated that the *Magdalen* for the Baptistry (now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo) should be dated close to the *Baptist* in Venice, an opinion I do not share. The modelling, for example, of the later figure (the *Magdalen*) is quite different; it is treated more summarily and in broader planes, as can best be seen in the head. It corresponds to the treatment in the Siena *Baptist* and the *Judith* and is certainly post-Paduan.

The relationship between the *Martelli Baptist* and the polychromed wooden *Magdalen* in Santa Trinita, said by Vasari (*Vasari-Milanesi* III, p. 111) in his life of Desiderio to have been begun by Desiderio and finished by Benedetto da Maiano: "[Desiderio] lasciò abbozzata una Santa Maria Maddalena in penitenza, la quale fu poi finita da Benedetto da Maiano..."), never was convincing to me. On the basis of Vasari's statement the *Magdalen* in Santa Trinita often ends up being considered a late, undisputed work by Desiderio and is connected with the *Martelli San Giovannino*. In his life of Benedetto, Vasari (*Vasari-Milanesi* III, p. 340) again mentions the sculpture in much the same terms. "[Benedetto] finì in Santa Trinita la Santa Maria Maddalena stata cominciata da Desiderio da Settignano..."). The circumstances seem to make this *post mortum* collaboration quite unlikely. Benedetto was born in 1442, and would have been 21 or 22 years old when Desiderio left the work unfinished. Did Benedetto take up the work immediately? Making the scenario somewhat questionable, Vasari was under the impression that Desiderio died in 1485 (see note 3, above) so that the *Magdalen* would have to be dated after that time at least for its completion, according to the writer of the *Lives*. If indeed by Desiderio or even begun by him, it would have been the only important work by him in wood although Vasari does say that Desiderio made an angel of wood for the Brancacci Chapel in the Carmine, a work never identified and presumably burned in the fire of 1771 (*Cardellini* [n. 12], p. 292). Benedetto was, conversely, raised in a shop where woodworking took place and was known to have done other works in that medium. At this point, I would eliminate any recognizable role for Desiderio in the Santa Trinita *Magdalen*, and consider it entirely by Benedetto. *Strom* (op. cit., p. 244) calls it a close replica of Donatello's statue of the same subject, which it is not: the poses are quite different as are their conceptions. *Strom* apparently dates the Santa Trinita *Magdalen*, which she calls "attributed to Desiderio", to either the last quarter of the fifteenth century or ca. 1470-75 and believes that it is by neither Desiderio nor Benedetto, a judgement she bases on its presumed low quality. See *D. Strom*, Studies in Quattrocento Wood Sculpture, Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University 1979, pp. 193-197. On the other hand, Albertini in 1510 described the work as begun by Desiderio, probably the source for Vasari's assertion, who in turn, seeing the stylistic difficulties, brought up Benedetto's name. The work has been removed from Santa Trinita (1984) and is apparently now being restored.

The life-size Magdalene is currently (summer 1984) being restored at the Fortezza da Basso, where I was able to examine it close at hand, thanks to the kindness of Dr. Paolucci. Its approach differs from Desiderio's, lacking the refinement of conception. The treatment of the head is more realistic, parallel to solutions found in, say, Guido Mazzoni, rather than the idealized ones of Desiderio (and Donatello). Even when Donatello, for example, represents old or haggard persons, as in the case of his own *Magdalen*, the qualities specific to old age are filtered through a Greco-Roman experience. On the other hand, the quality of the work is exceptionally high, and there is nothing comparable in Benedetto's known work. Perhaps the final cleaning will supply a solution. One thing is clear, the carving seems to be that of a seasoned *intagliatore di legno* and not a marble carver.

²⁰ *Pope-Hennessy*, Sculpture II, p. 317. This was the case with Vittorio Ghiberti (see note 22).

It has been suggested by *Seymour* ([n. 2], p. 149) that around 1460 Desiderio had "taught" Verrocchio marble sculpture; this was restated by *J. Shearman* (A Suggestion for the Early Style of Verrocchio, in: *Burl. Mag.*, CIX, 1967, p. 125 and n. 15). The notion is, I suspect, naive and implies that Andrea would have become an apprentice or "student" at such a late age, when he was, after all, already a master himself. For a trained goldsmith who had control over problems of design and form, probably hardly more than a few months would have been necessary to learn the rudiments of carving.

The desire to have a great teacher for a great pupil also seems to have been behind the suggestion of Verrocchio's apprenticeship with Desiderio (see above, note 5 on this point). The two masters and Giuliano da Maiano were linked together in 1461, since all three submitted designs for the Oratorio della Madonna della Tavola in the Cathedral of Orvieto; but here they were competitors for a valuable commission. The documents have been published by *E. Fumi* (Il Duomo di Orvieto, Rome 1891, p. 433) and read:

1461 (after 1 April)

"Desiderio scultori pro uno designio facta pro dicta cappella. Andrea Michaeli pro uno designio pro dicta cappella. Giuliano Leonardi de Florentia pro 1^o designio pro supradicta cappella".

²¹ It is commonplace to accept literally Antonio del Pollaiuolo's claim made in a letter to Virginio Orsini dated 13 July 1494 in which he says in part that, "...pensate che glie 34 anni che io feci quelle fatiche d'Ercole che sono nella sala del palazzo (Medici) suo che la fecemo tra un mio fratello ed io..." (See *L. D. Ettlínger*, Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo, Oxford/New York 1978, p. 164). Judging from the imprecision about dates that is so typical of the period and well demonstrated in this paper, I see no reason to accept the information about precisely when the brothers Pollaiuolo produced the paintings.

²² The information comes from a *Libro di ricordanze* started by Lorenzo Ghiberti and continued by his son, which was published by *P. Ginori-Conti*, Un libro di ricordi e di spese di Lorenzo e Vittorio Ghiberti (1441-1492), in: Riv. d'arte, XX, 1938, p. 294. The manuscript was purchased at Sotheby's in 1969 by the BNCF, where it is now located and catalogued as N.A., No. 1181. See also *G. Marchini*, Ghiberti architetto, Florence 1978, p. 30. Lorenzo purchased the house, known today as the Palazzaccio, on 2 January 1442 (= 1441 Florentine style).

²³ In order to demonstrate that Pollaiuolo also took on fairly ordinary commissions, I am presenting for the first time a document that proves that despite his achievements by 1474, he was still prepared to take on routine works, in this case a silver belt for a certain Girolamo di Antonio Villani as well as other silver items. (Appendix, Doc. III).

It may be worth noting that the documents for Antonio del Pollaiuolo still need to be brought together, since the most recent monograph on the artist and his brother by *Ettlínger* (n. 21) does not do so. Among the most recent contributions are those by *M. Haines* (Documenti intorno al reliquiario di San Pancrazio di Antonio Pollaiuolo e Bartolomeo Sali, in: Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Ugo Procacci, I, Milan, 1977, pp. 264-9) and *D. Liscia Bemporad* (Appunti sulla bottega orafa di Antonio del Pollaiuolo e di alcuni suoi allievi, in: Antichità viva, XIX, May-June, 1980, pp. 47-53, and *D. Carl*, Zur Goldschmiedefamilie Dei, in: Flor. Mitt., XXVI, 1982, Heft 2, pp. 129-166. The author produces evidence that Antonio was an employee of Miliano di Domenico Dei from 1457 to 1459, the same family shop, apparently, where Verrocchio is found between 1453 and 1456 (with Antonio di Giovanni Dei, as *discepolo*). Carl also corrects Bemporad (see above) who gave 1460 as the year of Pollaiuolo's membership in the Arte della Seta: the appropriate year is 1466 (p. 150, n. 55).

Later Pollaiuolo had dealings with the Merchants' Court in 1486, as published by *W. Bombe* in (Urkundliches aus dem Archiv der Mercanzia in Florenz, in: Monatshefte f. Kwiss., V, 1912, p. 354, who gives the citation as ASF, Mercanzia, No. 11585 (" pegni "). Pollaiuolo had pawned some objects for the value of 7 lire and 16 soldi to one Francesco di Francesco Bonaparte. (See also *Ettlínger*, [n. 21], p. 173).

²⁴ *A. Parronchi*, Sulla collocazione originario del tabernacolo di Desiderio da Settignano, in: Cronache di archeologia e di storia di arte (Università di Catania), 4, 1965, pp. 130-40. See also note 35, below. For the background see *Cardellini* (n. 12), pp. 217-235, with rich illustrations. The most recent discussion of the Tabernacle is by *G. C. Vines*, Desiderio da Settignano, Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia 1981, pp. 88-99.

²⁵ The assumption that had Donatello been available in Florence he would have *per force* been the recipient of the commission should be challenged. The potential mobility of Quattrocento artists is too often undervalued. The issue is judiciously raised by *G. Passavant* (Beobachtungen am Lavabo von San Lorenzo in Florenz, in: Pantheon, XXXIX, Jan.-Mar., 1981, p. 49, n. 43), precisely in the case of Donatello. I think we must assume that Donatello in the decade or more he was in Padua, spent some time at least on short visits in Florence. He could even have had some sort of shop in operation there during a portion of the time.

²⁶ The document is cited above (p. 208 and note 11) and will be referred to again shortly.

²⁷ *F. Albertini*, *Memoriale...*, ed. *G. Milanese*, *C. Guasti* and *C. Milanese*, Florence 1863, p. 11. Vasari (*Vasari-Milanese* III, p. 108) recognized that Desiderio's Christ had been substituted with one by Baccio as did V. Borghini (*Il Riposo*, p. 273), apparently following Albertini. *O. Kurz* in a fascinating paper of 1955 (A Group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar, in: Warburg Journal, 1955, pp. 35-53, and esp. p. 49 and n. 3) maintains as do most scholars that "today Desiderio's *Bambino* stands again in his old place atop of the Tabernacle of S. Lorenzo". The judgement must be based upon stylistic consideration, for when, and how, and if the re-replacement took place is completely undocumented.

For Francesco di Santi di Jacopo Albertini da Acone, who was made *canonico* of San Lorenzo in 1499, see *Diz. Biogr.*, I, s.v. (pp. 724-725) and *Moreni* (n. 11), I, pp. 134-138. He had been a student of Poliziano and Landino, whose well-known interest in local artists might have been engendered in Albertini.

²⁸ See cat. Cleveland Museum of Art, *E. P. Pillsbury*, Florence and the Arts: Five Centuries of Patronage, Florentine Art in Cleveland Collections, Cleveland 1971, no. 34. There is a copy (painted gesso) in a private collection in Stuttgart (KIF, Fototeca, no. 2793921, Fig. 7); Baccio da Montelupo used the identical type in a late work at Segronigno Alto (Lucca) for a Tabernacle of the Sacrament, datable to ca. 1530-35, and illustrated by *Parronchi* (n. 24), plate LIX, 2. In an article that appeared after I had written this paper, *P. Verdier* (Il Putto Ignoto: A Marble Statuette of Christ in Quest of a Father, in: Bull. of the Cleveland Museum of Art, September 1983, pp. 303-311) summarized the situation concerning the statuette in Cleveland. He accepts Parron-

- chi's position in the earlier article, giving the figure presently on the Tabernacle to Baccio da Montelupo. He rejects, however, the attribution of the Cleveland figure to Desiderio and seeks to date it to ca. 1500, and doubts that this figure was ever in the church of San Lorenzo (p. 310). Desiderio never made such a putto according to a somewhat confused account by Verdier; Baccio made his *Blessing Christ* in order to complete Desiderio's Tabernacle (p. 310). The same author also accepts the notion that the Tabernacle was originally designed by Donatello for the Old Sacristy (who for whatever reasons did not do it), and the assignment was subsequently turned over to Desiderio.
- ²⁹ Biblioteca Laurenziana (= BLF), ASL, No. 1935¹, fol. 76 r (84 r in pencil). In the summary of financial activities for the year, or a review (fol. 80 r, 88 r in pencil) we find the following: "Messer Francesco di Santi [di Jacopo Albertini prete] d'Accone... similmente fecie donare uno crocifixo all'altare maggiore e um[sic]paio d'angioli a detto altare, descritti in questo, carta 76".
- ³⁰ BLF, ASL, No. 1935¹, fol. 71 v.
- ³¹ BLF, ASL, No. 2634 (Inventories, 1507-1542), fol. 125 v. The inventory is dated 1 June 1507. There is another version of the same inventory found in the same book but it is slightly less complete and must be a contemporary copy. For the item in question (fol. 14), the words "di terra" were omitted. The two terracotta angels were repainted in 1526, according to a payment (BLF, ASL, No. 2295 [Giornale, 1524-1532], fol. 152); "Addi dicti [4 Aprile 1528] per fare ridipingere 'agnognioli dell'altare maggiore, portò maestro Andrea... Lire 3 soldi 3".
- ³² Such payments are found in the same account book (No. 1935¹) on fols. 72 and 73. On fol. 73 v is the following item: "[1499] adì detto [28 ottobre] e adì 26 a Giovanni [di Salvi] pictore in Porta Rossa, fiorini quattro larghi d'oro per parte di legni dell'altare maggiore".
- ³³ BLF, ASL, No. 1935¹, fols. 3 and 74 v. Also from 1499 (3 July) is this puzzling item: "Adì 3 di luglio per 4 tondi per le buche dall'altare maggiore dalla sepultura di Cosimo Lire 3 soldi 10". (fol. 70 v). These *tondi* are mentioned again in 1507 (No. 2471, Giornale, 1506-1521, fol. 201 v): "Spexe minuto e extraordinarie della nostra sacristia deon dare adì 2 settembre [1507] Lire due due [sic] denari 2 per rimettere 4 tondi di legni a traforati della sepultura di Cosimo...".
- ³⁴ BLF, ASL, No. 2192 (Entrata e uscita, 1456-1462), fol. 21 v. All four items (the numberings have been added here for the purposes of easy identification) have been published by Moreni, I, p. 15 and n. 2. For item (3) he left out the word "detta". Other small corrections have been made throughout. An abbreviated version of the text in the correct order has been given in *P. Roselli* and *O. Superchi*, *L'Edificazione della basilica di San Lorenzo. Una vicenda urbanistica*, Florence 1980, pp. 127-8, without reference to Desiderio or the implications for a larger plan by Cosimo. The notarial records of ser Lotto di Francesco Masi, who is mentioned in the *ricordi*, are preserved in the ASF but only go back to 1464.
- ³⁵ In a subsequent paper *A. Parronchi* (Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano, in: Filippo Brunelleschi. La sua opera e il suo tempo, I, Florence 1980, pp. 239-355) has again taken up the question of the Tabernacle, restating earlier convictions but with certain modifications, including the removal of the main section from Desiderio's responsibility. The Tabernacle of the Sacrament made for the Duomo of Pienza datable to 1461-62, that is precisely contemporary with Desiderio's, was also a free-standing tabernacle, not attached to a wall, but resting on an altar. *E. Carli*, (Pienza, la città di Pio II, Rome 1966, p. 100 and fig. 34) sees it as Florentine in style and derived from Bernardo Rossellino in design. If *J. T. Paoletti* (Il tabernacolo del Fonte Battesimale e l'iconografia medievale, in: ed. *G. Chelazzi Dini*, *Jacopo della Quercia fra Gotico e Rinascimento*, Florence 1977, pp. 131-138) is correct, Jacopo della Quercia's tabernacle of the Baptismal Font in Siena was used to house the Host, and consequently would be an earlier example of a free-standing monument for the Corpus Domini. On 28 August 1453 Neri di Bicci was commissioned by Martino della Scharfa for, "lo padiglione chon tre agnioli attorno uno lavoro di marmo overo tabernacholo da tenere il corpo di Xpo...il quale padiglione ò a fare nella chiesa di Santo Branchazio di Firenze nella chapella mag[i]ore," for 100 lire. (See *B. Santi* ed., *Neri di Bicci: Le Ricordanze*, Pisa 1976, p. 9.)
- ³⁶ BLF, ASL, No. 2634, fol. 3. This item was first published by *Parronchi* (n. 35), p. 250.
- ³⁷ In describing the Medici Chapel of Saints Cosmas and Damian, which was also known as the Chapel of the Sacrament and that of the Holy Oil at different times, *Moreni* ([n. 11], I, p. 131) says, "In origine non aveva tavola alcuna, ma bensì un tabernacolo di marmo con sopra un bellissimo Bambino Gesù e quattro angioli, lavoro stupendo di Desiderio da Settignano, e sotto una Pietà travagliata mirabilmente da Silvio da Fiesole". It appears that Moreni was familiar with the Inventory item given above.
- ³⁸ BLF, ASL, No. 2634.
- ³⁹ BLF, ASL, No. 2634.
- ⁴⁰ Not without interest is *Moreni's* ([n. 11], I, p. 131) attribution of the Pietà to an artist other than Desiderio. The assignment of the relief to Silvio (Cosini) da Fiesole, however, is not easily accepted: there is a long tradition in the criticism for removing the *Pietà* from Desiderio's oeuvre (see *Cardellini*, [n. 12], pp. 218-19). *C. Seymour, Jr.*, (The Sculpture of Verrocchio, Greenwich 1971, p. 115) has sought to attribute the candleholding angel now on the viewer's left to Verrocchio, to whom he also gives a role in the

Marsuppini tomb. According to the *ricordi* of Neri di Bicci (*B. Santi*, ed., Neri di Bicci; *Le Ricordanze*, Pisa 1976) works by Desiderio are mentioned in the 1460's, including a gilt "Vergine Maria di marmo di mano di Desiderio" (Doc. 308 and note p. 157) on 3 January 1461 and a gesso Madonna "di poco rilievo" on 4 June 1462 (p. 186) and still another gesso after Desiderio's death in 1465 (p. 239). It is not known when the works were made however, for Neri may have had them for some time. In an earlier mention of Desiderio of 19 February 1456 (modern) Neri purchased from the sculptor "uno smalto di stucco" (see p. 59) which he applied to a terracotta head of St. Catherine.

⁴¹ Cited in *Kurz*, (n. 27), p. 49 and n. 4, and in *Parronchi* (n. 35), p. 138. Both authors give the date as 7 February 1497, but the event seems to have taken place in February 1497 according to the old Florentine calendar, which of course would be 1498 modern. For a full description of the event, see also Landucci's *diario* (*Landucci-Del Badia*, p. 160).

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 160.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 174.

⁴⁴ BLF, ASL, No. 2295 (*Giornale*, 1524-32) fol. 146 v. On the other hand, after the fall of the First Republic and the return of the Medici we have the following notice (BLF, ASL, No. 2471, fol. 268 v): "Adì 26 detto [Settembre, 1513] Lire dua soldi dua, sono per raconciare l'arme dei Medici che sta sopra la porta, portò Benedecto Buzalini Lire 2 soldi 2; Adì detto Lire sei, soldi sette per pictura de l'arme dei Medici, ci porto Messer Francesco Dini Lire 2 soldi 2".

The arms of Clement, called "nostro patrone", were provided for in 1523 as is indicated by the following, substantial payment (BLF, ASL, No. 2368, fol. 138 v) [in margin]: "Arme di Clemente 7° E adì 24 decto [dicembre 1523] fiorini dodici larghi d'oro in oro, per fare dipignere una arme del nostro papa Clemente Septimo de' Medici, la quale starà nello ochio della nostra chiesa, pagati a Francesco d'Andrea, dipintore, come giudico messer Lorenzo Epifanio, nostro canonico; et per fare appicare decta arme in decto loco, soldi quarantacinque: in tucto. L. 86 [soldi] 5".)

⁴⁵ BLF, ASL, No. 2634, fol. 37 v.

⁴⁶ The article by *E. Borsook*, *Cults and Imagery at Sant'Ambrogio in Florence*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XXV, 1981, Heft 2, pp. 147-202, is remarkably rich in material about the devotion to the Corpus Domini in Florence. Her reference to Antoninus is on p. 158. See also *S. Orlandi*, *Sant'Antonino*, Florence 1959, I, pp. 82-83, according to *Borsook*.

⁴⁷ *I. Lavin*, *The Sources of Donatello's Pulpits in San Lorenzo*, in: *Art Bull.*, XLI, 1959, p. 23.

⁴⁸ *H. Burns*, *San Lorenzo in Florence Before the Building of the New Sacristy: an Early Plan*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XXIII, 1979, Heft 1/2, pp. 145-54.

⁴⁹ *I. Hyman*, *Notes and Speculations on S. Lorenzo, Palazzo Medici, and an Urban Project by Brunelleschi*, in: *JSAH*, XXXIV, 1975, p. 98, n. 3 with earlier bibliography, recounts that Cosimo already agreed to finance the Cappella Maggiore of San Lorenzo in 1441, whose decoration must have included the main altar. See also *J. Clearfield's* instructive article (*The Tomb of Cosimo de' Medici in San Lorenzo*, *Rutgers Art Journal*, 1981, pp. 13-30). The author refers (p. 20) to the "modest unornamented tomb", but seen as part of the large plan for the Cappella Maggiore it is anything but modest.

For Cosimo's plans see also the speculations of *V. Herzner*, *Die Kanzeln Donatellos in S. Lorenzo*, in: *Münchner Jb.*, XXIII, 1972, pp. 100-164, and, *Zur Baugeschichte von San Lorenzo in Florenz*, in: *Zs. f. Kgesch.*, XXXVII, 1974, 2, pp. 89-115.

That Cosimo's main altar once had some or all of the reliefs that form the two bronze pulpits on it or connected with it has been suggested by *Herzner* 1972, pp. 101-164; *L. Becherucci*, *I pergami di San Lorenzo*, Florence 1979; and *A. Parronchi*, *Donatello e il potere*, Florence 1980, pp. 211-229. This is not the place to review the various theories, but before any final conclusions can be reached further archival search may be necessary.

RIASSUNTO

L'autore riesamina la cronologia di Desiderio da Settignano e presenta due nuovi documenti della Mercanzia di Firenze degli anni 1460-1462 concernenti il pagamento di prestiti e debiti; per mezzo di questi documenti l'autore trae alcune conclusioni sull'opera di Desiderio e marginalmente su quella di Antonio del Pollaiuolo.

In data 2 aprile 1460 Roberto Martelli si impegnò a pagare alla Corporazione la somma di lire 12 e 3 a favore di Desiderio. Nelle fonti dei primi del Cinquecento e nel Vasari il Martelli è considerato committente di Donatello. È noto che il *San Giovannino Martelli*, tradizionalmente attribuito a Donatello, è rimasto nella famiglia Martelli almeno dal Cinquecento. L'autore si vale di questo documento che mette in relazione Roberto Martelli con Desiderio da Settignano negli anni 1460-1461 per sostenere la più recente attribuzione a Desiderio da Settignano, poiché il San Giovannino si inserisce stilisticamente assai bene nell'opera di Desiderio.

Antonio del Pollaiuolo pagò 3 fiorini *larghi* alla Mercanzia per conto di Desiderio il 3 Novembre 1461. Questo alimenta congetture su un eventuale scambio o cooperazione fra i due artisti.

Nell'*excursus*, trattando del tabernacolo del Sacramento in S. Lorenzo, sono presentati documenti recentemente scoperti — inclusi quelli riguardanti l'attività di Baccio da Montelupo in S. Lorenzo — i quali rivelano nuovi particolari sulla storia del tabernacolo di Desiderio. Inoltre i *Ricordi* del 1461 indicano che il tabernacolo stava sull'altar maggiore, senza esservi fissato, dall'epoca della consacrazione della chiesa, rimanendo lì per quasi quaranta anni. Intorno al 1495-1498 il Cristo benedicente di Desiderio che coronava il tabernacolo fu cambiato con uno nuovo di Baccio da Montelupo. Infine nel 1498 o 1499 l'intero tabernacolo fu spostato dall'altare maggiore alla cappella dei Santi Cosma e Damiano: i pagamenti del 1499 a Baccio da Montelupo documentano l'elaborata trasformazione dell'altar maggiore.

L'autore premette che la sostituzione del Cristo benedicente di Desiderio fu dettata da esigenze iconografiche savonaroliane: la versione di Baccio (fig. 5) aveva una corona di spine e tre chiodi, mentre il *puttino* originale, evidentemente ora a Cleveland (fig. 6), tiene un semplice globo. La rimozione del tabernacolo dall'altar maggiore può essere parzialmente spiegata come reazione *contro* le idee del Savonarola, e anche come gesto politico per attenuare l'impronta medicea dell'intera chiesa dopo l'espulsione dei Medici nel 1494. L'area dell'altar maggiore era stata concepita come monumento ai Medici (punto focale la tomba di Cosimo "Pater Patriae", titolo che fu rimosso dalla tomba esattamente alla stessa epoca) e includeva i due pergami di bronzo di Donatello e le sue quattro grandi figure di stucco nel transetto.

La collocazione iniziale del tabernacolo sull'altar maggiore può essere suggerita a Cosimo dalle idee del domenicano S. Antonino, il quale insisteva che ogni chiesa dovesse avere un tabernacolo per l'Eucaristia o su un altare o su una parete vicina. Il disegno del tabernacolo ed il suo collocamento sull'altar maggiore sarebbe stato quindi iconograficamente in armonia con i pulpiti, le statue e la tomba di Cosimo di Donatello; sarebbe quindi stato designato per essere veduto da una certa distanza.