

MITTEILUNGEN  
DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN  
INSTITUTES  
IN FLORENZ



LXIII. BAND — 2021  
HEFT 2



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HEFT 2

# MITTEILUNGEN DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN INSTITUTES IN FLORENZ

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## New Evidence about the Patron, Date, and Original Location of Giovanni della Robbia's *Antinori Resurrection*

Roberta J. M. Olson

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The polychromed terracotta *Resurrection of Christ* by Florentine sculptor Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529/30) in the Brooklyn Museum features life-size and nearly life-size figures with a symbolic garland frame that reinforces the Resurrection theme (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The monumental relief composed of forty-five sections returned to Florence in 2017 for an exhibition at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, whose catalogue contains essays that consider its iconography and past scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Since no commission document has been discovered for the relief, its original placement is unknown, although its Antinori provenance remains undisputed. As discussed below, the consensus in recent publications holds that it was most likely commissioned for an unspecified location at the Antinori family's Villa Le Rose, today in the *comune* of Impruneta. Following a summary about the *Antinori Resurrection* and its patronage – including new archival information – this article will examine the work's unusual features, identify its original location, and offer new dates for both its patron's death and, therefore, the work itself.

### Niccolò di Tommaso Antinori

Della Robbia's *Resurrection* honors Niccolò di Tommaso Antinori, who is portrayed as the half-length praying donor. Born

in 1454, it has been thought that he died in 1520; new evidence that will be discussed below, however, reveals a new, plausible death date of 1523. Niccolò Antinori was a prosperous silk merchant who followed in the footsteps of his father and advanced the family's mercantile and banking interests, notably in France and Germany.<sup>3</sup> He was also the far-sighted initiator of the family's entrepreneurial fortune and responsible for raising its profile to the height of the leading houses of Florence. He moved the household's location in the lower-class Oltrarno – in the community of San Frediano, today the *quartiere* of Santo Spirito – to the other side of the Arno. Nevertheless, Niccolò stipulated in his final will that he wanted to be buried like his father in Santo Spirito in the white habit of the Benedictines.<sup>4</sup> In 1506, he purchased from the Martelli family the former Boni palace that is today known as Palazzo Antinori. Niccolò held important civic offices, among them serving as a communal prior of Florence (1483, 1497, 1501, 1514), *gonfaloniere di compagnia* (1502), *gonfaloniere* of the Santo Spirito quarter (1514), and officer of the Monte (1501, 1503, 1506, 1515).<sup>5</sup>

Scholars now agree that Niccolò Antinori was the patron who initiated the commission for the relief, which has been dated ca. 1520–1525 on the basis of style and his presumed

<sup>1</sup> Inv. 99.5; the relief measures 174.6 × 364.5 × 33 cm.

<sup>2</sup> *Da Brooklyn al Bargello: Giovanni della Robbia, la lunetta Antinori e Stefano Arienti*, exh. cat. Florence 2017/18, ed. by Ilaria Ciseri, Genoa 2017; see also Allan Marquand, *Giovanni della Robbia*, Princeton et al. 1920, pp. 190–192.

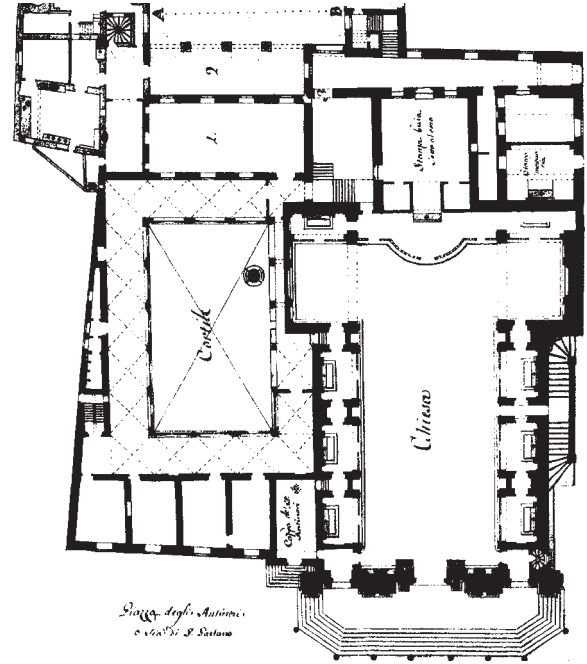
<sup>3</sup> Donatella Pegazzano, "Le pale di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio e di Michele Tosini per il monastero di San Jacopo di Ripoli", in: *Capolavori a Villa La Quiete: Botticelli e Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio in mostra*, exh. cat., ed. by Cristiano Giometti/Donatella Pegazzano, Florence 2016, pp. 35–59: 40.

<sup>4</sup> ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, I8277, fol. Iv. However, the will states that the rector of the church of San Michele Bertelde, near where Niccolò and his family lived, will celebrate the funeral mass.

<sup>5</sup> For a list of his offices, see Stefano Calonaci, "Traces of a Family History from the Origins to the Contemporary Age (XII–XIX Century): The Antinori of Florence", in: *Futuro Antico: The History of the Antinori Family and Their Palace*, ed. by Rossella Carrus/Valentina Tofani, Florence 2007, pp. 174–223: 214, note 44. There are slight differences in the details re-



2 Stefano Bonsignori, *Nova pulcherrimae civitatis Florentiae topographia accuratissime delineata* (detail). Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, 2614 st. sc.



3 Bernardino Fallani (?), plan of the church and convent of Santi Michele e Gaetano, Florence (detail), 1785. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Patrimonio Ecclesiastico, 486

death.<sup>6</sup> When Niccolò made his final will and testament (9 January 1520), witnessed by eight Carmelite friars from the convent of San Barnaba, he was ill.<sup>7</sup> There are also two previously unmentioned addenda to that will. The first is a codicil from 11 September 1520, witnessed by four other Carmelite friars from San Barnaba. It contains some modifications by Niccolò about the dowry of his wife Nannina, due to the death of his brother Raffaello, thus demonstrating that he was still alive at the time.<sup>8</sup> The second addition of 19 August 1523 is an authentication by Giovanni Corsidoni, proconsul of the Arte dei Giudici e Notai. It testifies to the legality of both the will and the codicil, and confirms that Bartolomeo di Giovanni di Vittorio Rossi is a legal

Florentine notary.<sup>9</sup> Executed to secure the validity of the will and circumvent any future problems, it implies that Niccolò has just died. This addendum, unlike the codicil, does not state that Niccolò is alive, and its brevity has a sense of finality, as though closing the book on Niccolò's will in anticipation of the estate being settled according to the testator's wishes. It thus supplies a credible new *terminus ante quem* for his demise and a three-year extension to his life, making it more likely that Niccolò, even in poor health, was involved in the *Resurrection's* iconography. Niccolò had been responsible for other substantial projects, including the campaign to enlarge the manor house at Villa Le Rose (1512–1514), which Niccolò's father, Tommaso di Bernardo

guarding some of the offices he held; see also Gemma Miani, s. v. Antinori, Niccolò, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, III, Rome 1961, pp. 463f.

<sup>6</sup> Giancarlo Gentilini, "La *Resurrezione Antinori* di Giovanni della Robbia: genesi e fortuna, memorie e significati", in: *Da Brooklyn al Bargello* (note 2), pp. 30–57; Stefano Calonaci/Claudia Tripodi, "La lunetta Antinori a Villa Le Rose: mecenatismo, ricchezza e devozione nel Rinascimento", *ibidem*, pp. 14–29: 27.

<sup>7</sup> ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, 18277, fol. 1r–13r, notary Bartolomeo del fu Giovanni di Vittorio Rossi ("Bartholomeus olim Iohannis Vettori Rossi"). Previously, the will was given as fol. 1–12 with a mistaken no-

tary, Giovan Vittorio de' Rossi (Calonaci/Tripodi [note 6], pp. 19, 28, notes II, 12).

<sup>8</sup> ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, 18277, fol. 13v–14r, notary Bartolomeo di Giovanni di Vittorio Rossi ("Bart. Johannis Vettori Rossi").

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 14r, notary Giovanni Corsidoni ("Johanes de Corsidonus"). Next to this authentication are the red wax remnants of Corsidoni's large seal. According to Francesco Bettarini (e-mail message, 1 September 2021), this authentication represents a rare intervention by the Arte dei Giudici e Notai to confirm the validity of the will; it indicates that in their minds the testament was special.

Antinori (1433–1511), had acquired.<sup>10</sup> Its *pietra serena* cornerstone is inscribed NICHOLO DI TOMASO ANTINORI / MCCCCXII, marking the commencement of the new construction.

By all accounts Niccolò Antinori was a pious man, who left funds in his final will to construct a private chapel or oratory dedicated to the Virgin Mary that was also intended for family burials.<sup>11</sup> He left 400 florins for its construction, but a reading of his testament reveals that the financing was more complicated. He named Baccio d’Agnolo as its architect and donated the interest on 300 florins from credits at the Monte del Comune at a rate of 6 percent, that is, eighteen florins per annum. He stipulated that *cappellani* celebrate in the chapel a daily mass for his soul and an annual great mass on 8 December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, funded by two and a half florins from the income of the silk workshop in Por Santa Maria.<sup>12</sup>

Completed posthumously under the supervision of his son Alessandro (1481–1557), the chapel was attached to the north side of the Romanesque church of San Michele Bertelde, where it is barely visible on the Bonsignori map of 1584 to the left of the church (Fig. 2). Sited diagonally opposite Palazzo Antinori, its construction involved Baccio d’Agnolo, whose *bottega*, like that of the Ghirlandaio family, was for a period of time located nearby.<sup>13</sup> In 1592, the church was transferred to the Theatine order, rededicated to Saint Cajetan (Gaetano dei conti di Thiene); it is now known as Santi Michele e Gaetano. In 1634, the Antinori Chapel was demolished to make way for a larger church, after which a new family chapel in an analogous position was constructed (Fig. 3). Together with a few other elements from the earlier church of San Michele Bertelde, the funeral monument of Alessandro di Niccolò was transferred to the new Antinori Chapel (Fig. 4).<sup>14</sup>

### The Donor Portrait

The half-length, life-size portrait of Niccolò Antinori—kneeling in perpetual prayer to the proper right of the blessing risen Christ—is witness to the central miracle of the Christian faith. In an unconventional manner, he is larger than the other figures and appears to be inside the tomb of Christ, with the sleeves of his robe resting on the entablature of the sarcophagus. In accordance



4 Florence, Santi Michele e Gaetano, Antinori Chapel

with his political functions, he wears the crimson *cappo* and *cioppa* with ermine-bordered sleeves of the *priori*, thus indicating his high office.<sup>15</sup> Because the Della Robbia glaze could not produce red, the areas intended as red are brown, but were once painted over to compensate for the defect; today only traces of that red pigment remain. Conservation treatment in 2015 revealed that the textile of Niccolò’s garment had a difficult-to-achieve pattern simulating watery silk moiré, a luxury fabric central to the Antinori business.<sup>16</sup> Although no other portrait of Niccolò is known, the kneeling figure in the *Resurrection* is unanimously considered to portray him because his coiffure is in a style fashionable at the time. Gentilini has suggested that the vivid, highly individualized

<sup>10</sup> See Calonaci/Tripodi (note 6), pp. 19–23. The renovation coincided with the marriage of Alessandro Antinori and Giovanna di Lorenzo Tornabuoni in 1512. Niccolò made two early testaments, on 16 March 1514 and May 1515; see ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, 18276, fol. 75r–87v, 103r–112v (Calonaci/Tripodi, p. 28, note 11).

<sup>11</sup> ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, 18277, fol. 3v–4r. Another copy is in the Archivio Antinori, Florence, sc. 3 (Calonaci/Tripodi [note 6], p. 28, note 12).

<sup>12</sup> ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, 18277, fol. 3v–4r.

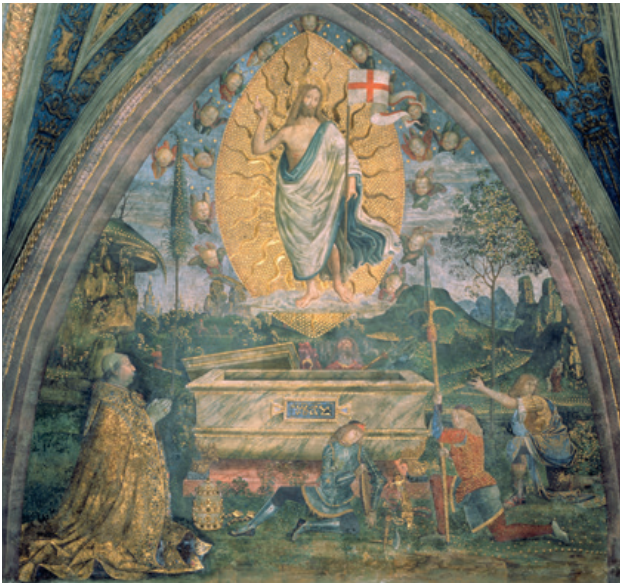
<sup>13</sup> See Lucia Aquino, “I Ghirlandaio, Baccio d’Agnolo e le loro botteghe

‘in sulla Piazza di San Michele Berteldi’”, in: *Invisibile agli occhi: atti della giornata di studio in ricordo di Lisa Venturini*, Florence 2005, ed. by Nicoletta Baldini, Florence 2007, pp. 64–76.

<sup>14</sup> See Ezio Chini, *La chiesa e il convento dei Santi Michele e Gaetano a Firenze*, Florence 1984.

<sup>15</sup> See Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore et al. 2002, pp. 82–85, 101–104, 174.

<sup>16</sup> Lisa Bruno/Sara Levin/Nick Pedemonti, “La Resurrezione di Cristo di Giovanni della Robbia: la conservazione di un monumentale rilievo del Rinascimento”, in: *Da Brooklyn al Bargello* (note 2), pp. 82–97: 92, ill. on p. 91.



5 Pinturicchio, *Resurrection with portrait of Pope Alexander VI*. Rome, Vatican Palace, Borgia Apartments, Sala dei Misteri

likeness may have been created from a life or death mask;<sup>17</sup> alternatively, Giovanni della Robbia may have based the three-quarter visage on a study from life in another medium.

It is significant that this donor portrait is unique in the oeuvre of the Della Robbia family. There are, however, examples of large-scale donor portraits in quattrocento Florentine paintings that create precedents for it. Masaccio's kneeling donors in his *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella (1427/28), the main church in the Antinori's new neighborhood, established the prototype. Other works portraying Florentine merchants closer in time to the *Resurrection* – which would have been on the Antinori's radar due to competition, rivalry, and friendship – include several paintings in family chapels. Among them are two pairs by Domenico Ghirlandaio: Francesco Sassetti and Nera Corsi in the frescoes flanking the altarpiece in the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinita (1483–1486)<sup>18</sup> and Giovanni Tornabuoni and Francesca

Pitti in the Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella (1485–1490), facing the back of its altarpiece depicting the *Resurrection*.<sup>19</sup> Giovanni della Robbia quoted the fleeing soldier of that painting in the figure at the left of the *Antinori Resurrection*.<sup>20</sup> Another example is Filippino Lippi's Nerli Altarpiece (ca. 1488–1493), which hangs in the family chapel in Santo Spirito, diagonally across from the Antinori Chapel. It contains portraits of Jacopo de' Nerli – Florentine diplomat, *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, and anti-Savonarolan partisan – and Giovanna di Neri di Gino Capponi.<sup>21</sup> However, a particularly important precedent for the *Antinori Resurrection* is Pinturicchio's portrayal of Pope Alexander VI in his frescoed *Resurrection* (1494) in the Borgia Apartments (Fig. 5). Here, the praying pope, like Antinori, kneels in adoration before Christ rising from the tomb, albeit in front of the sarcophagus and removed from Christ.

What renders the donor portrait in the *Antinori Resurrection* unique, and also religiously profound, is Niccolò's position seemingly inside the tomb. Whether he was meant to kneel behind the sarcophagus rather than inside it will never be known, but the ambiguity creates a visual double entendre that was surely intentional. It underscores that Niccolò placed his hopes for eternal life on the Resurrection.

#### Antinori Patronage at San Jacopo di Ripoli

During the last decades of his life, Niccolò Antinori followed in his father's footsteps as a major benefactor of the convent of San Jacopo di Ripoli, the oldest female Dominican convent in Florence, financing between 1504 and 1508 the renovation of its church and other buildings.<sup>22</sup> Niccolò's daughter Caterina (d. 1526), who suffered from a mental illness, lived there without assuming the habit even after being widowed. Supported by her father while alive and in his will through a legacy, she was interred in its cemetery.<sup>23</sup>

Among the works of art that the Antinori commissioned to embellish the church were two lunette-shaped glazed terracotta reliefs of circa 1510 by Giovanni della Robbia and his brother Marco, who had assumed the Dominican habit as Fra Mattia.<sup>24</sup> While the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (Fig. 6) is attributed by both Marquand and Gentilini to Giovanni alone, Gentilini, unlike Marquand, believes that the *Noli me tangere* (Fig. 7) involved both

<sup>17</sup> Gentilini (note 6), p. 47.

<sup>18</sup> See Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan*, New Haven, Conn., et al. 2000, pp. 93–101.

<sup>19</sup> Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, inv. 75. See *ibidem*, pp. 67–90; Takuma Ito, "Domenico Ghirlandaio's Santa Maria Novella Altarpiece: A Reconstruction", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LVI (2014), pp. 171–191, fig. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Gentilini (note 6), pp. 42f. The Antinori surely suggested this reference, because the families were linked by marriage since 1512 (see note 10).

<sup>21</sup> See Daniele Rapino, *La Pala Nerli di Filippino Lippi in Santo Spirito: studi e restauro*, Florence 2013, pp. 13–27; also Patrizia Zambrano/Jonathan Katz Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, Milan 2004, pp. 256–261, 459–468, 590f. The families were also connected by their political sympathies (Niccolò's father was one of the examiners of Savonarola in 1497).

<sup>22</sup> Pegazzano (note 3), pp. 40–51.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 41f.; Calonaci/Tripodi (note 6), pp. 28f., note 39.

<sup>24</sup> See Mara Visonà/Rita Balleri, "Dagli altari della chiesa di San Jacopo di Ripoli al Conservatorio delle Montalve a La Quiete: le terrecotte in-



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6 Giovanni della Robbia,  
*Incredulity of Saint Thomas*.  
Florence, Villa La Quiete



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7 Giovanni della Robbia and  
Fra Mattia, *Noli me tangere*.  
Florence, Villa La Quiete





8 Giovanni della Robbia, *Madonna and Child, Saint James the Greater, and Saint Dominic*. Florence, San Jacopo di Ripoli

brothers.<sup>25</sup> The lunettes are related to the *Antinori Resurrection* and provide clues about its original location. They once surmounted altarpieces painted by Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio in facing lateral chapels. In the left one was the *Coronation of the Virgin*, now in the Musée du Petit Palais at Avignon; since it includes Saint Thomas Aquinas, the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* must have crowned it.<sup>26</sup> In the right chapel, the *Noli me tangere* was installed over the *Mystical marriage of Saint Catherine and saints* (now in Villa La Quiete in Florence), with Saint Catherine of Alexandria referencing Niccolò's daughter and Saint Nicholas of Bari her father.<sup>27</sup> Both Della Robbia scenes are set in gardens and have white egg-and-dart moldings. The dimensions of the ensembles' original *pietra serena* frames that are still in the church match perfectly the paired reliefs and painted altarpieces.<sup>28</sup> For the tympanum over the church's portal,

vetriate di Giovanni e Marco della Robbia e oltre", in: *Capolavori a Villa La Quiete* (note 3), pp. 77–101.

<sup>25</sup> The *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* measures 130 × 240 cm, the *Noli me tangere* 130 × 245 cm. For the two lunettes, see Marquand (note 2), pp. 23–25; Giancarlo Gentilini, *I Della Robbia: la scultura invetriata nel Rinascimento*, Florence 1992, II, pp. 282, 296, 374, 377.

<sup>26</sup> For an illustration of the altarpiece, see Pegazzano (note 3), p. 36, fig. I. She believes (*ibidem*, p. 40) that rather than Niccolò, the first patron of the painting was his father, who commissioned the lunette with Saint Thomas. Alternatively, the altarpiece could be Niccolò's tribute to his father.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37, fig. 2. Pegazzano believes (p. 40) Niccolò was the patron.

<sup>28</sup> Cristiano Giometti/Donatella Pegazzano, "Novità e precisazioni su-

Giovanni della Robbia produced a glazed terracotta lunette with two-thirds-length figures that can be dated around 1510–1515 (Fig. 8).<sup>29</sup> The figures of the Madonna and Child and two saints are framed by a narrow garland and egg-and-dart moldings, the latter of which harmonizes with those of the interior lunettes.

#### Five Candidates for the Original Location of the *Antinori Resurrection*

While there are five candidates for the original installation of the *Antinori Resurrection*, the generally accepted one is at Villa Le Rose. Previously, it was thought that the relief surmounted either the gateway of the garden courtyard, the entrance to the villa in the garden loggia (Fig. 9), or the door to the garden in the foyer or *androne* inside the villa.<sup>30</sup> All of these

gli apparati decorativi di San Jacopo di Ripoli al tempo delle Montalve", in: *Capolavori a Villa La Quiete* (note 3), pp. 21–33: 28 and 30f., figs. 6, 7; Pegazzano (note 3), p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> It measures 150 × 245 cm. On this work, see Marquand (note 2), pp. 176f.; Gentilini (note 25), II, pp. 282f.

<sup>30</sup> The different opinions are mainly due to the ambiguous description of the relief's former location ("stava già sulla porta del giardino dal lato interno") by Guido Carocci, *Il Comune del Galluzzo: guida-illustrazione storico-artistica*, Florence 1892, p. 114 (see also *idem*, *I dintorni di Firenze* [...], Rome 1968 [facsimile of the ed. 1906/07], II, p. 310). For discussion of the location and this source, see Marietta Cambareri, *Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*, exh. cat. Boston/Washington 2016/17, Boston 2016, p. 57; Calonaci/Tripodi (note 6), pp. 25f.; Gentilini (note 6), p. 34.



9 Impruneta,  
Villa Le Rose,  
courtyard loggia  
with entrance  
portal to the villa



10 Impruneta,  
Villa Le Rose,  
view outside the  
garden courtyard wall  
and its gateway  
with the probable site  
of the former chapel

locations would have harmonized with its garden setting, but its religious subject matter seems to preclude those secular positions. The catalogue of the 2017 Bargello exhibition argued that the *Resurrection* was associated with a sacred site, the villa's chapel.<sup>31</sup> No one, however, has specified whether the *Resurrection* may have crowned the chapel's entrance or, more probably, decorated its interior; for both positions there were precedents at San Jacopo di Ripoli (Figs. 6–8). Its size and relatively good

condition would suggest that the *Resurrection* was inside a building and protected during the siege of Florence (1529–1530), when the villa suffered much degradation. The Antinori subsequently restored the villa and later modified it together with its chapel several times.

The earliest known record of the *Resurrection* occurs in an inventory of the villa from 1863. It notes “la lunetta dei Della Robbia nell’androne o galleria d’accesso interno al Parterre del-

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 34f.

la Villa delle Rose".<sup>32</sup> As argued above, this could not have been the original location for such a commemorative religious work. The next citation of the same location is found in a catalogue of 1884,<sup>33</sup> but the *androne* installation was temporary, because in 1892, Guido Carocci recorded it "nella cappella gentilizia annessa alla villa".<sup>34</sup> In 1893, after visiting in 1892, Marquand confirmed that the *Resurrection* was inside the chapel.<sup>35</sup> The probable site of the chapel where Marquand saw the *Resurrection* was outside the garden wall to the right and is today occupied by a residence of uncertain date (Fig. 10). A record of such a structure adjacent to the villa may be preserved on the Capitani di Parte Guelfa map (1580–1595).<sup>36</sup> However, that does not explain why, if the *Resurrection* was commissioned for the chapel, it was moved to the *androne* and then back to the chapel.

There is one, albeit smaller, quattrocento Florentine precedent for placing a *Resurrection* over the entrance to a sacred space, but in a building interior: the polychromed terracotta *Resurrection* of 1442–1445 by Luca della Robbia – Andrea della Robbia's uncle and Giovanni's great-uncle – still *in situ* over the entrance of the Sagrestia delle Messe in the Florentine cathedral.<sup>37</sup> It has also been suggested, but not proven, that the painted terracotta *Resurrection* by Andrea del Verrocchio (ca. 1470–1480) once at the Medici villa of Careggi may have surmounted its chapel entrance.<sup>38</sup> This lack of precedents underscores the question whether at this date a patron would have commissioned a relief as large as the *Antinori Resurrection* for the entrance or interior of a small villa chapel. While chapels in Florentine *palazzi* were beginning to appear in the early Cinquecento, we do not know much about villa chapels during this period, because many villas have been reconfigured. A villa chapel could be situated either within the residence, which was probably more common, or in an adjacent building.<sup>39</sup> Inconclusive clues are found in the inventories of the Medici family,

which usually list this amenity first. The inventories of Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici note chapels at the villas of Cafaggiolo, Trebbio, and Castello. Their language, together with the number of objects listed, suggests that the chapels could have been independent structures.<sup>40</sup>

An alternative for the *Resurrection's* original site is the local parish church near Villa Le Rose: the small Romanesque church of San Lorenzo alle Rose, which is also depicted on the Capitani di Parte Guelfa map.<sup>41</sup> The relief's size and the absence of the church's titular saint immediately rules out placement over its entrance. Since the church was heavily bombed in World War II, it is impossible to determine whether the *Resurrection* might have decorated the interior of the rustic church under the patronage of the Antinori and other families, but it is highly unlikely.

The third candidate derives from Niccolò's last will and his request to be buried in the church of Santo Spirito, presumably in the Antinori Chapel, the first chapel in the left transept. This location can be discounted because Filippo Brunelleschi's design of the chapels features rounded, plastic walls penetrated by stained glass windows that could not have accommodated Giovanni della Robbia's *Resurrection*. Nevertheless, other works the Antinori commissioned for their chapel demonstrate an interest in subjects related to the theme. Its stained glass window features the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, which references Niccolò's father and is an episode that occurred after the Resurrection.<sup>42</sup> The chapel's altarpiece, *The carrying of the cross* by Biagio d'Antonio from the early 1480s, has been replaced by a copy attributed to Antonio del Ceraiolo, but its frame and predella, whose central roundel contains the *Pietà*, are still *in situ*.<sup>43</sup>

The fourth option for the original installation of the *Resurrection* is the tympanum over the entrance to the first Antinori

<sup>32</sup> ASF, Antinori, 35, p. 90, cit. in Calonaci/Tripodi (note 6), pp. 24f.

<sup>33</sup> Camillo Jacopo Cavallucci/Émile Molinier, *Les Della Robbia, leur vie et leur œuvre d'après des documents inédits* [...], Paris 1884, p. 231, no. 164, cites the relief without indicating its subject and assigns it to the school of Della Robbia.

<sup>34</sup> Carocci 1892 (note 30), p. 114.

<sup>35</sup> Allan Marquand, "Hunting Della Robbia Monuments in Italy", in: *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts*, VIII (1893), pp. 83–86: 84; *idem*, *Della Robbias in America*, Princeton/London/Oxford 1912, p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> See *Piante di Popoli e Strade. Capitani di Parte Guelfa, 1580–1595*, ed. by Giuseppe Pansini, Florence 1989, II, pl. 44. Alternatively, the small building to the right of the villa on the map could reflect the reference "with a house for the lord and one for the labour" in the title of 1494–1496, as quoted by Calonaci (note 5), p. 187.

<sup>37</sup> Gentilini (note 25), I, p. 54, ill.

<sup>38</sup> Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 472. See Andrew Butterfield, *The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio*, New Haven, Conn., et al. 1997, pp. 82–86, 213–215, no. II, ill.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. the gateway chapel of the Pazzi villa La Vacchia (in a similar position); see Harold Donaldson Eberlein, *Villas of Florence and Tuscany* [...], Philadelphia/London/New York 1922, pp. 121f., pls. 31–33. For the oratory of Saint John the Baptist at the Strozzi villa of Santuocchio, see Amanda Lillie, "The Patronage of Villa Chapels and Oratories near Florence: A Typology of Private Religion", in: *With and Without the Medici: Studies in Tuscan Art and Patronage 1434–1530*, ed. by Eckart Marchand/Alison Wright, Aldershot et al. 1998, pp. 19–46; *eadem*, *Florentine Villas in the Fifteenth Century: An Architectural and Social History*, Cambridge 2005, p. 112, fig. 62.

<sup>40</sup> See John Shearman, "The Collections of the Younger Branch of the Medici", in: *The Burlington Magazine*, CXVII (1975), pp. 12–27.

<sup>41</sup> See above, note 36.

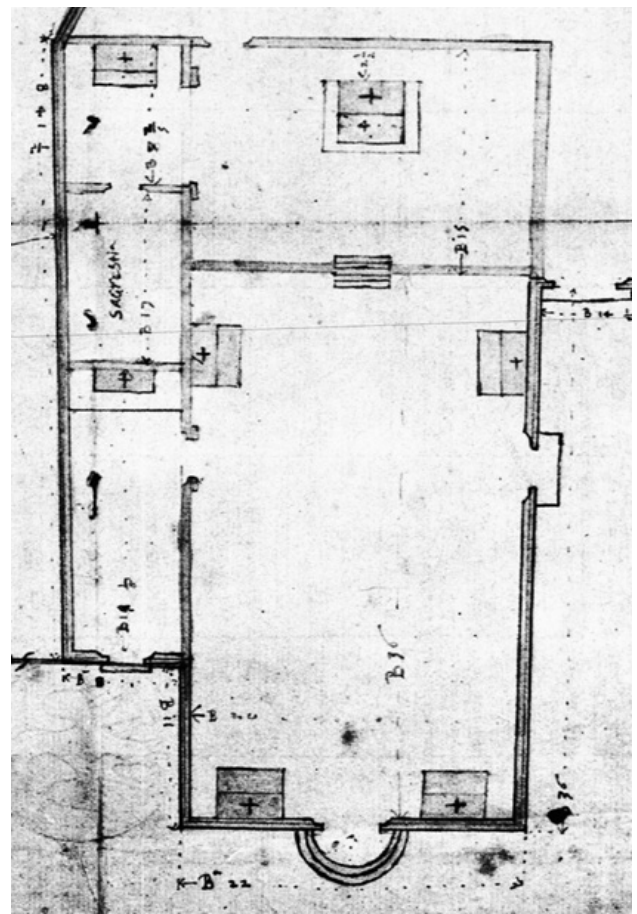
<sup>42</sup> For the window, see *La chiesa e il convento di Santo Spirito a Firenze*, ed. by Cristina Acidini Luchinat/Elena Capretti, Florence 1996, p. 101, fig. 14, pp. 245 and 358, fig. 2, pp. 388f.

<sup>43</sup> It is now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. 296. See *ibidem*, pp. 245, 257, figs. 14, 15. On account of the altarpiece's width of 191 cm, the *Resurrection* could not have crowned it like in the ensembles at San Jacopo di Ripoli.

Chapel abutting San Michele Bertelde and facing the family's palace in Florence, in a similar position to the relief over the portal of San Jacopo di Ripoli (Fig. 8). The chapel's plan, preserved in a drawing of 1592 (Fig. 11), clarifies its spatial relationship to the church. By the Cinquecento, San Michele Bertelde was patronized by the Medici and Antinori, the only families to have chapels attached to it. The larger Antinori Chapel was the more prominent one because it was adjacent to the church's façade; like the church, it had an entrance on the piazza but was also accessible from the sanctuary via a small door at the right. The Medici Chapel was in the rear, with the sacristy sandwiched between the two chapels.

Recently, Xiaoyu Zeng suggested in an MA thesis that the *Antinori Resurrection* was originally placed over the entrance portal on the façade of the chapel.<sup>44</sup> At first blush, this location seems intriguing, yet it must be excluded for two reasons. First, such a public placement of a large portrait of a private citizen would have been unthinkable in Republican Florence, even under Medici control and in a neighborhood where the emblematic Rucellai sails decorated the façade of Santa Maria Novella. The second problem with Zeng's proposal is that she used incorrect calculations and measurements of the *Resurrection* and the first Antinori Chapel. The inscriptions on the 1592 ground plan (Fig. 11) record the dimensions of the first Antinori Chapel as eight by seventeen (or nineteen) *braccia* (the last numeral is smudged). It is unclear whether the larger measurement includes the space containing the altar with its step; seventeen *braccia* works without the altar space and nineteen *braccia* with the altar space. From these measurements, Zeng calculated the widths of the doorframe and tympanum as three *braccia*, equating them with a mistaken 1.375-meter measurement for the width of the *Resurrection*,<sup>45</sup> which instead measures 3.645 meters (approximately six and a quarter *braccia*). The *Resurrection* would not have fit over the entrance.

Using the approximate conversion of one *braccio* equal to 0.583 meter, the front façade's eight *braccia* convert to around 4.664 meters. Allowing for variances in conversion and subtracting the thickness of the external walls, the *Antinori Resurrection* would have fit in the interior of the chapel, immured in the wall above the altar. The rebuilding of the church with a new location for the Antinori Chapel would also explain the *Resurrection's* removal to Villa Le Rose prior to demolition. This transfer might have been considered temporary, but for unknown reasons, perhaps as construction lagged, the relief probably remained in the country. The width of the current chapel



11 Plan of the church of San Michele Bertelde, Florence, and its surroundings (detail), 1592. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Capitani di Parte Guelfa, numeri neri f. 762, unnumbered large foldout folio after fol. 129

is close to that of the first,<sup>46</sup> which like the present structure (Fig. 4) was most probably barrel-vaulted. It would have been the perfect setting for the *Resurrection*, which could have been placed over an altarpiece in an ensemble, like the two Antinori-sponsored ones at San Jacopo di Ripoli, to create a triumphal arch echoing the *Resurrection* theme.

Among the meaningful parallels at the time for such a location in an interior sacred space was Leon Battista Alberti's Ru-

<sup>44</sup> Xiaoyu Zeng, *The Resurrection of Christ and the Stylistic Evolution of Giovanni della Robbia's Polychrome Reliefs*, MA thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 2017, pp. 35–45.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 35–45, especially p. 40.

<sup>46</sup> The interior of the current Antinori Chapel measures roughly 4.267 × 7.62 meters.



12 Giuliano da Sangallo,  
tomb of Francesco Sassetti.  
Florence, Santa Trinita,  
Sassetti Chapel

cellai Sepulcher for Giovanni Rucellai (1467) – modeled after the church of the Anastasis (Resurrection) or Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem – in the family chapel in San Pancrazio. The interior of the inlaid family sepulcher, which is frescoed to simulate marble, also has a fresco of the Resurrection above its sarcophagus.<sup>47</sup> Like the Antinori Chapel, the Rucellai Chapel was in close proximity to the family palace, creating a powerful social and political statement. The analogy between the two family chapels is but another piece of evidence that strengthens the hypothesis that the *Antinori Resurrection* embellished the interior of the demolished Antinori Chapel.

Further evidence in the *Resurrection's* framing garland – which is the subject of a forthcoming study<sup>48</sup> – bolsters the identification of the work's original site. For Renaissance Christians, with the symbolism of its flora and fauna, this garland supplemented the Resurrection theme and symbolized the triumph of life over death and the rewards in paradise for a life well lived; it

also alluded to the secular prosperity of the Antinori. Bookending the garland's base are roundels featuring the Antinori coat of arms with egg-and-dart moldings; they occupy the standard position of heraldry in altarpiece predellas. Together with the lunette shape of the *Resurrection*, they may also refer to tombs *all'antica*, like that of Francesco Sassetti (Fig. 12). Their simplified, easily readable forms underlined the Antinori ownership of the chapel. Moreover, their circular shapes alluded to heaven, and thus to resurrection and salvation, as well as to eternity and everlasting fame.<sup>49</sup>

While an absolute identification of the lunette's intended site is impossible without a commission document or an early description, the data points to an installation in the Antinori Chapel at San Michele Bertelde. There, Niccolò's portrait insured that future generations of Antinori would see themselves through his image as partaking in the promise of salvation via the Resurrection of Christ.<sup>50</sup> Like the Rucellai Sepulcher,

<sup>47</sup> See Anke Naujokat, *Non est hic: Leon Battista Albertis Tempietto in der Cappella Rucellai*, Aachen 2011.

<sup>48</sup> The paper – “The Transformation of Della Robbia Glazed Terracotta Garlands from Luca through Giovanni: The Promise of Immortality and Paradise in a Frame” – was presented on 9 September 2021 at the conference *Modelled, Fired, Transformed: Materiality of Terracotta Sculpture*

1400–1600 at the University of Warsaw and is forthcoming in the conference proceedings.

<sup>49</sup> See Roberta J. M. Olson, *The Florentine Tondo*, Oxford et al. 2000.

<sup>50</sup> For a secular analogy in the *Camera Picta* frescoes by Andrea Mantegna, see Randolph Starn/Loren Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300–1600*, Berkeley et al. 1992, pp. 98f.

the *Resurrection* also reaffirmed Antinori piety, as well as ownership of the chapel and the family's financial and political power. This location for Giovanni della Robbia's *Resurrection* is especially convincing when considering Niccolò's motives for constructing the chapel near his newly acquired palazzo: like Rucellai, he envisioned it as a family burial chapel. Even though his corporeal remains were not there, his spiritual presence as *pater familias* via his portrait in the *Resurrection* would preside over his family for eternity. Because Niccolò is represented seemingly within the sarcophagus – as if simultaneously interred by proxy in the chapel and entombed with Christ – he and his family would enjoy the promise of resurrection.

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#### Abbreviations

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ASF      Archivio di Stato di Firenze

#### Photo Credits

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*Brooklyn Museum, New York: Fig. 1. – Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, Photothek: Fig. 2. – From Chini (note 14): Figs. 3, 11. – Foto Alinari, Florence: Fig. 4 – Scala/Art Resource, New York: Fig. 5. – Sistema Museale dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze: Figs. 6, 7. – Wikimedia Commons: Fig. 8. – Author: Figs. 9, 10. – Bridgeman Images: Fig. 12.*

Umschlagbild | Copertina:

Édouard Manet, Studienblatt mit Kopien nach der *cantoria* von Luca della Robbia | foglio di studi con copie dalla *cantoria* di Luca della Robbia  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay, aufbewahrt im | in deposito al Musée du Louvre, inv. RF 30459r  
(S. 290, Abb. 8 | p. 290, fig. 8)

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