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“tailleurs de massonnerie antique italiens”

Italian Sculpture and Sculptors at the French Court, between Charles VIII and François I

Premise

This paper synthesizes in a very abbreviated form the results of my fellowships at the Italian Academy of the Columbia University but also the achievements of my work during these last five years in the context of a national project (Prin) followed by the Università degli Studi of Perugia (2006-2008) and of a collaboration with Dr. Flaminia Bardati. This last partnership brought to a first contribution about the activity of Girolamo Paciarotto and the Giusti brothers presented at the international meeting “Sculpture française du XVI^e siècle” held at the INHA, Paris, and at the Conseil général de l’Aube, Troyes from 1st to 3rd October 2009. A more extended study about the same group of artists, co-signed with Flaminia Bardati, will be published in “Studiolo”, the review of the Academie de France in Rome (Villa Medici).

The subject of my project is the activity of Italian sculptors in France during the reigns of Charles VIII (1484-1498), of Louis XII (1498-1515) and part of that of Francis I, from his ascent to the throne in 1515 to 1525, the date of the Battle of Pavia and of the definitive loss of Italian possessions for the French Crown. In this paper I intend to outline the context of my research, to present the most important tools of historical criticism I have availed myself and to indicate the type of analysis I have privileged in the past two years, since that is I begun working on this topic.

These more general considerations on context and method are conceived as a necessary premise to the discussion of a case study: the achievement of the tomb of the Dukes of Orléans, the main argument of my lecture. I’m convinced indeed that such a commission exemplifies best the complex cultural mechanisms of relations between French patrons and Italian artists around the turn of the 16th century.

In view of the need to provide such preliminary remarks to my specific argument, I have decided to divide this paper in four sections:

In the first section I’ll introduce a note on criticism and scholarly literature. In particular I shall like to discuss two complex models of analysis relevant to my argument. First there is the problem of periodization of the history of French society between Middle Ages and Renaissance. And this

problem is intricately connected, on the other hand, with the debate on the influence of Italy on this development - a question lively discussed in France between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century and still partly considered in recent publications as puzzling.

In the second section I would like to offer an *excursus* intent to focus on some significant aspects of the Italian campaigns, between 1494 and 1525, of Charles VIII, Louis XII and Francis I. I will refer to events that conditioned the cultural relations between France and Italy and try also to reconstruct the main chronology of their artistic interchanges. It is not my aim to be exhaustive in this attempt, but only to underline dates and events of particular relevance for the cultural dialogue between two countries with territorial demarcations in a constant flux - and it should be stressed that this state of affairs requires to consider any contact of that sort between France and Italy from many different and often unconventional perspectives.

The third point concerns the presence of Italian artists in France between 1494 and the Twenties and includes information about the import of works from Italy and about those artistic enterprises that are evidently fashioned according to an Italianized taste. A catalogue of similar works and projects proves that contacts between Italy and France have become, during this period, more diffused; in addition, it helps understand the high level of cultural dialogue and the importance of the above-mentioned artistic commissions. There emerges a context in permanent development, strictly tied to the various strategies of self-legitimation pursued by the Valois-Orléans monarchy and conditioned by the image the three Kings desired to promote of themselves.

The fourth section concerns the reaction of the intellectual *milieu* to the presence of Italians and of Italian Art in France and to the relations of various men-of-letters to Italians Sculpture and Sculptors. I will briefly examine also the collaborations between artists of both origins. An early interest for Art from the Peninsula is typical for courtiers and servants of the French Crown and their relevant comments reveal an awareness of its intrinsic political and cultural value. I shall therefore exemplify the direct engagement of French poets with Italian artists and their influence on complex iconographic programs.

I. Historicizing an era: between the Middle Ages and the École de Fontainebleau

“Passing from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century room, you were struck by the presence of bold new features ... The monuments appear more impressive in their volume, materials, and the personages they represent. Everything in this century of regeneration signals the first époque of the Renaissance in art”¹

These words were addressed to Napoleon Bonaparte in March 1801 by Alexandre Lenoir, the founder of the Musée des Monuments français where the artistic relics of the *Ancien régime* that could be saved from the systematically destructive revolutionary fury were collected and preserved². Among the period rooms that composed this museum, Lenoir had assigned a privileged space to the Quattrocento. Here, however, were displayed not only works from the second half of that century but also from the first quarter of the 16th: in the middle was placed the tomb of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, a documented work by Antonio and Giovanni Giusti, two stonemasons from Fiesole that had moved to France only at the beginning of the Cinquecento. Interestingly, an embarrassing silence covered the Italian origin of these artists since it was left unmentioned in the various catalogues of the museum compiled by Lenoir³.

The choice to display the royal tomb in this room proves how difficult it was to define this era from the point of view of chronology. And this can be evinced also from the expressions employed by Lenoir in his address to the First Consul: the art of the “early Renaissance” is described through a juxtaposition to the period that precedes it. Besides this judgment, Lenoir does not seem to have for it independent words of appreciation. Thus the obvious difficulty in determining the exact chronological extension of this age led to a relative scholarly neglect of it, that has persisted to the present day. Suffice it to mention the two most important publications concerning the Art of Renaissance France: that by Anthony Blunt⁴ and that by Henri Zerner⁵. For both scholars the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII are a mere preamble to the flourishing of Fontainebleau – with the exception, perhaps, of architecture. And also the recent exhibition of the Petit Palais, that testified to a renovated and growing interest in the study of the period, reaffirmed its transitional character

¹ *Inventaire général* 1883-1897, I, 1883, p. 231 (translated by A. McClellan).

² On Lenoir and his Museum see FOUCART 1969; POULOT 1986, MCCLELLAN 1994, pp. 155-194; CARTER 2011. On the iconographical fortune of the Museum see VANUXEM 1971.

³ For the catalogues of the Musée des monuments français see LENOIR 1793; LENOIR 1796; LENOIR 1798; LENOIR 1800-1806. See also COURAJOD 1878-1887.

⁴ BLUNT 1953.

⁵ ZERNER 1996.

beginning from the title *France 1500. Entre Moyen Age et Renaissance* – a heading which, as in the words of Lenoir, implies the difficulty to resolve the problem of chronological categories⁶.

Moreover, the art historical study of the era from 1484 to the third decade of the Cinquecento has been a source of an endless dispute that divided French criticism of the Renaissance around the turn of the 20th century in “italianists” and “francophiles”⁷. While artists like the Giusti, Girolamo Paciarotto, and (in a measure) even Guido Mazzoni - all active in France during these times - have been relatively neglected in Italy between 19th and 20th century, especially since they are almost absent from Italian literary sources and have mainly worked abroad, in France these same artists came to stand in the crossfire of two differently coloured ideologies, mainly based on Gallic modern nationalism. The representatives of both contrasting positions were important historians and museum curators: Anatole de Montaiglon (1824-1895)⁸ and Louis Courajod (1841-1896)⁹ belonged to the “italianists”; André Michel (1853-1925)¹⁰, Paul Vitry (1872-1941)¹¹ and Maurice Roy (1899-1985)¹² were the most eminent “francophiles”. The debate continued until fairly recently, having unexpected consequences even on contemporaries studies¹³.

This “critical” heritage imposes a re-interpretation of the period through a parallel reading of historical and, on the other side, art-historical events. Such a reading aims at contextualizing the single episodes in which Italian artists and craftsmen in the service of French patrons were involved, according to degrees that could of course greatly vary. To succeed to our aim we will often have to resort to literary sources referred to the royal court of France and to the royal *entourage*.

By doing so we avoid the constraints imposed by periodization and by the concern to detect mutual influences between the two contrasting poles of “Gothic-tradition” and “Renaissance-modernity”. Furthermore, we can concentrate on the most interesting aspects of this period in the light of the use of images in Time, according to the political and social value that was attributed to them. And this is certainly a more pertinent approach from the point of view of historiography.

⁶ *France 1500* 2010. See also *Renaissance en France* 2009.

⁷ LAFABRIE 2001; *Un combat pour la sculpture* 2003.

⁸ MONTAIGLON 1875; MONTAIGLON 1876a; MONTAIGLON 1876b.

⁹ COURAJOD 1899-1903.

¹⁰ MICHEL 1909-1911; MICHEL 1912-1913.

¹¹ VITRY 1901.

¹² ROY 1929-1934.

¹³ See recently Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, *La fascination italienne: mythe et réalité*, in *France 1500* 2010, pp. 358-381. See also *Le beau XVIe* 2009.

II.

Conquering the Past: French Crown and Italian wars

In 1484 Charles VIII inherited a state in which peace reigned. The despotic rule of Louis XI had guaranteed to the new sovereign the definitive borders of a Kingdom that had survived triumphantly the Hundred Years War and defied the secessionist tendencies of the Duchy of Burgundy. Moreover, Louis had succeeded in consolidating the powers of the Crown by suppressing feudal resistance to the centralization of power in the hands of the King. As far as the internal affairs of the Kingdom were concerned, this was a totally new situation: modern France was thus handed over to Charles VIII and his successors. It is in such a *status quo* that the French Crown turned its aims towards the Italian Peninsula. The uninterrupted duration of the Italian wars over the brief period of three decades, from the last years of the reign of Charles VIII to the ascent to the throne of Francis I, seems to imply that these military expeditions conformed to a unitary design aimed at conquering Italy. But as a matter of fact such an interpretation is entirely misleading¹⁴.

In reality, albeit these expeditions followed upon another in short intervals as if they were consequential, they were conceived according to different premises, had varying objectives and belong to distinct political settings. This is true also for the aggressive foreign policies of the three monarchs, which affected significantly the history of the arts and of the letters in France between the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries.

The military expedition of Charles VIII originated from his claims over the Kingdom of Naples that the young sovereign had inherited from his paternal grandmother, Mary of Anjou. These claims were opposed by the House of Aragon.

Charles' descent to the Peninsula began on September 3rd, 1494. It was favorably viewed by the Italian courts, also because the King had proposed, in the years that preceded it, to undertake a crusade¹⁵. It was a veritable "grand tour": according to the contemporary reports of Robert Gauguin and Andre de la Vigne he visited Torino, Asti, Vigevano, Pavia, Piacenza, Lucca, Pisa, Firenze, Siena, Viterbo, Roma. It was a pacific trip. The itinerary was chosen in compliance with political and

¹⁴ See for example DENIS 1979; SCHELLER 1985; SCHELLER 2004. More in general LEMONNIER 1982.

¹⁵ For Charles VIII and his biography the most important reference is still LABANDE-MAILFERT 1975.

diplomatic criteria and not by military exigencies¹⁶. The territory dominated by the ‘Aragonesi’ was conquered within only two weeks, between the 8th and the 22nd February 1495, and culminated in a triumphal entry in the capital. The following April 1st, Venice, Milan, the Pope, Emperor Maximilian I and the King of Spain signed a treaty of alliance - the so-called League of Venice - against France. It forced Charles to withdraw. On May 24th 1495, the King abandons his new dominions through Frosinone and Rome. On June 20th he reaches Pisa. Up to that point and in view of the King’s retreat the League does not take any action. But it is provoked by the conquest of Novara by Louis d’Orléans on June 9th. The outcome of the war is decided on July 6th in the battle of Fornovo: although its uncertain outcome, it meant the end of Valois domination of Italy. The next day Naples witness a revolt that leads to the return of Ferdinand in the city and by the end of the summer of 1497 the Kingdom is completely restored to the Aragonese dynasty.

Charles dies on April 7th 1498 of the consequences of a trivial accident and he leaves no male heirs behind him. He is succeeded by his cousin Louis d’Orléans (who assumes the name of Louis XII)¹⁷. He in turn marries in 1499 Charles’ widow, Anne of Brittany. Since he is, however, an heir of a different branch of the royal family, Louis can claim no direct, dynastic rights on the succession to the Kingdom of Naples although he has obtained from Charles the title of King of Naples, Sicily and Jerusalem. Through his grandmother, Valentina Visconti, he descends however from the first Dukes of Milan and this gives him the right to challenge the dynasty of the Sforza and the authority of Ludovico il Moro.

Therefore, already on July 18th 1499, the King invades Lombardy; and the following July 29th he concludes after a complex diplomatic activity an alliance against Milan, formed by Venice, Spain, Portugal, England, Hungary, the Swiss cantons and Emperor Maximilian. On September 2nd Ludovico il Moro flies, whereas Genoa has already been subjected by the French Crown. It is the beginning of a domination which – apart from brief intervals (Moro’s expedition in 1500, the rebellion in Genoa in 1507) – will last uninterrupted until 1513. The conquest of the Neapolitan territories was, on the contrary, more ephemeral. And this is a clear proof that the foreign policy of Louis was as a matter of fact prevalently interested in maintaining the *status quo* in the North of the Peninsula. His expedition began on 25th May 1501 and was undertaken in alliance with the Spanish Crown in view of a division, between France and Spain, of the southern Italian regions: within a

¹⁶ BORSOOK 1961; SEGUIN 1961; CLOULAS 1998.

¹⁷ For Louis XII and his biography see QUILLIET 1986.

couple of months the resistance of Frederic IV had vanquished. However, the treaty with Spain broke and therefore the French saw themselves chased out of the territories that had just been conquered, only the summer following the victory of the allied forces. The 31st March 1504 Louis XII renounced his claims to the southern territories forever.

During the French dominion, which lasted a decade, Lombardy became a laboratory for experimenting new forms of government: the King succeeded in creating a new Franco-Italian ruling class, capable of administrating according to the instructions emanating from the court¹⁸. Between 1509 and 1511 French possessions in Northern Italy increase as to include a large part of Emilia and extend towards the Veneto. But again an international alliance determines the end of French occupation. This time the Pope, Spain, Venice and the Swiss cantons sign the Holy League on October 5th, 1511. Henry VIII of England adheres somehow later to this alliance. The battle of Ravenna, on the April 11th 1512, decides the outcome of the war between the two enemies. In this battle Gaston de Foix is being killed and this determines the complete withdrawal of the French forces from Italy, that ends with the battle of Novara and the Franco-Spanish treaty of November 16th 1513.

Louis dies two years later, January 1st 1515. His successor is François Valois-Angouleme, a descendant of the noble house of Angoulême married to Claude de France, the older daughter of his predecessor and of Anne of Brittany. In the very year of his ascent to the throne, François undertakes a new military campaign aimed at conquering Lombardy and Liguria and succeeds in defeating the Swiss, who controlled these regions, in Marignano on September 15th. Thus a new era of French occupation began for these territories and it would last up to 1525 and François' defeat at Pavia.

III.

Translating new honors: Rex Francorum, King of Naples, Duke of Milan

All these complex events account for a series of circumstances and relations that explain the development of French royal patronage of art - and of sculpture and Italian sculptors in particular - within the period under examination. Charles' stay in the Peninsula, for instance, is, according to all

¹⁸ ROVETTA 2003; MESCHINI 2006.

contemporary accounts, a “discovery trip”: in the course of his itinerary, the King stops to visit the castle of Vigevano, the Certosa of Pavia, the ‘tempietto’ of Matteo Civitali in Lucca, the Duomo and the Camposanto in Pisa, Santa Maria del Fiore and Palazzo Medici in Florence¹⁹. If on the one hand these visits obey to devotional duties or political opportunism, on the other it is evident that the route of the King in Italy included some of the country’s most important artistic treasures, rendered as it is accessible to the monarch by those republics and those rulers that assumed a benevolent attitude to his regards. And they amount at some sort of “cultural initiation” that is reflected in the large ephemeral decorations set up in every different place to welcome Charles, expecting him to become, according to varying political calculations, one of the potentates of the Peninsula²⁰. Charles was fully conscious of the symbolic value of this ‘periplus’: and his consciousness is testified by the fact that he is known to have particularly liked this trip from Andre de la Vignes celebratory poem, *Le Vergier d’honneur*, and from other contemporary sources (in Naples, for example, he was particularly fond of Castel Capuano, the Royal Palace, the church of Monteoliveto, the gardens of the city). Coherently he systematically “appropriated” for himself, after the conquest, the spaces that had been connected with the exercise of power by the Aragonese dynasty²¹.

In the light of this esteem in which the King held all things Italian, it is particularly important to remind of the famous document that was published in 1851 by Anatole de Montaiglon and that refers to those craftsmen the King took with him to France on leaving the city, namely: 22 “hommes de mestier” from different cities of the Peninsula “pour édifier et faire ouvraiges a son devis et plaisir, à la mode dytallie”²². It is a highly significant list: particularly because the sudden death of the King (only three years after he had returned to France) and the complete rearrangement of his preferred residence, the Castle of Amboise²³ whose first renewal was undertaken on his behalf after 1495, have left no other trace of his most important artistic commissions. Not only artists (including the sculptors Guido Mazzoni from Modena and Girolamo Paciarotto from Fiesole) followed the King back to France but also a “deviseur de batiments”, fra’ Giocondo, a specialized in planning gardens, Pasello da Mercogliano, a goldsmith, a cabinet maker, a certain “Maistre silvestre ... faiseur d’abillemens de dames à lytalienne”, a taylor, Jean Armenaris, and, finally, a certain “Jeroime nigre,

¹⁹ CLOULAS 1998.

²⁰ BORSOOK 1961. For the same use of public ceremonies in Italy to honor Louis XII see GIORDANO 1998; GIORDANO 2003. See also TERRASSOUN DE FOGUÈRES 2001. More in general GIESEY 1987.

²¹ BARDATI 2008.

²² MONTAIGLON 1851-1852.

²³ For the works commissioned by Charles VIII for Amboise see LALANNE 1852-1853; GRANDMAISON 1912; LESUEUR, 1929.

qui garde les papegaulx”. This is not a discriminating action of artistic patronage but the importation of a whole ‘way of life’ to France. As far as the sculptors are concerned, very little is known about them and they appear to have prevalently worked together with the architects. It is true: Mazzoni’s salary was – according to the *état de gages* of Charles - the highest among those conferred to the Italian artists and craftsmen that came to France; but no source informs that his employ was independent.

Royal patronage changes, however, radically after the triumphal return of Louis XII from his first Italian campaign in October 1499. And Anne, Duchess of Brittany and new Queen of France, has from the beginning an important role in this. Her circle had already distinguished itself during the preceding reign for an intense intellectual activity²⁴. Various reasons lie behind this change and in some extent they can be easily reconstructed. Louis – whom his contemporaries called ‘le roi routier’ for his parsimonious administration of the financial resources of the Kingdom – obtained through the conquest of the Milanese territory a permanent success. The government he installed in Milan was preceded by the Viceroy Charles d’Amboise and included a Lombard Parliament structured according to the model of the *cours royales*. Moreover, the King had conquered Genoa, a very relevant mercantile harbour, by the way the most important centre in the Mediterranean for the exportation of statuary marble thanks to its proximity to the quarries of the Apuane Alps²⁵. Nevertheless his succession appears problematic since he could not count upon a direct descendant. But on October 13th 1499, the Duchess gives birth to a girl in good health after a series of ill-fated pregnancies that had devastated her matrimony to Charles VIII. It was a good omen for future succession.

In the light of such a context, the royal couple’s commission for white, black and red marbles, that were either to be quarried in Carrara or acquired from the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, appears consequential²⁶. They were destined for the realization of three important sepulchral monuments that were to form part of a unitary dynastic celebration. It was a project largely facilitated by the recent control by the French of the port of Genoa. Various archives in Italy contain documents relating this commission. It marked the beginning of the execution of three tombs, that for Charles VIII in Saint Denis²⁷, the tomb for the Dukes of Brittany in the *église des*

²⁴ Recently see BROWN 2007; L’ESTRANGE 2007.

²⁵ For documents concerning the important role of Genoa in the marble market see ALIZERI, 1870-1880. For the marble market in an European perspective KLAPISCH ZUBER 1969; *Le vie del marmo* 1992; BRESC-BAUTIER, 2007.

²⁶ MONTAIGLON 1876b; see recently JESTAZ 1988.

²⁷ VERDON 1978; VERDON 1990.

Carmes of Nantes²⁸ and that for the Dauphins from the Queen's first marriage, destined for the basilica of Saint Martin in Tours²⁹. The commission to provide the necessary marble was assigned to Girolamo Paciarotto and the personal cashier of Anne, Guillaume de Beaune from Tours. They were acting, according to the documents "sumptibus et expensis D(ominae) Annae de Britannia".

Clearly the Duchess was able to impose herself as an intermediary between the artistic *milieu* that her first husband had favored on the one side and the commissions assigned by her new one: in fact, whereas the tombs in Nantes and Tours had been carried out by Paciarotto (in collaboration with the most prominent French sculptor of the times living in Val-de-Loire, Michel Colombe) that of Charles VIII – commissioned by Louis – was assigned to Guido Mazzoni. And it should be noted that the geographical distance between these monuments corresponded to well-calculated policy of self-representation. In fact, whereas the French Parliament was established in the capital, the court had no fixed residence and travelled along the country according to the preferences or the necessities of the monarch³⁰.

If the basilica of Saint Denis near Paris had been chosen already in the 10th century to host the tombs of the Kings of France³¹, the decision to dedicate a sepulchral monument to the Dukes of Brittany in Nantes, the capital of the Duchy, was a symbolic act: it meant to denote that this independent (and often recalcitrant) fief had finally become an integral part of the Kingdom. On the other hand the decision to erect a tomb for the Dauphins in Tours can be explained by the particular devotion of the French Kings for the basilica of Saint Martin which they attended to before undertaking a military expedition³². Moreover, it was a choice partly determined by the predilection of the royal couple for the Touraine region where the castles of Amboise and Blois were located.

These three monuments depend undoubtedly from Northern prototypes, namely the tombs in Saint Denis and the sepulcher of Louis XI in Notre-Dame de Clery in the Loiret³³. Nevertheless, they all integrate Italian elements in the architectural design, the decoration which includes grotesques and, last but not least, in the prominence of sculpture and in particular the employ of costly marble imported from the Apuane Alps. This material was difficult to provide (via Marseille or via Rouen)

²⁸ JESTAZ 1988; BURK 2007; MARKSCHIES 2007.

²⁹ REYMOND 1895. See recently the brief notice Geneviève Bresc-Butier, no. 61, in *France 1500* 2010, p. 155.

³⁰ KNECHT 2008.

³¹ ERLANDE-BRANDEBURG 1975; ERLANDE-BRANDEBURG 2005. See also *Tombeaux royaux et princiers* 2006.

³² LELONG 1986.

³³ CASSAGNES BROUQUET 2007.

but evoked beyond doubt the new classicizing taste. And we should bear in mind that - for the first time in French history - Louis required, after the fall of 1499, the addition of all the titles he had assumed in Italy to his designation as *Rex Francorum* in the diplomatic correspondence³⁴.

Another commission by Louis is consistent with these tendencies. In 1502 he assigned the marble tomb for his ancestors, the Dukes of Orleans, to Tuscan and Genoese sculptors under highly significant circumstances. It was dispatched from Italy and installed in the Church of the Céléstins³⁵. But this will be the argument of our lecture. Moreover, already in 1507 (after the end of the revolt in Genoa) the King was portrayed by Guido Mazzoni in a large equestrian monument made of stone and placed over the main entrance of his beloved castle of Blois³⁶.

This classicizing imaginary was taken up in many an official ceremony, in ephemeral decorations and in the collection of books or the production of illuminated manuscripts for the King. But it is in the monumental commissions that it found its most direct and public expression.

And it is useful even to remember that, from Charles VIII on, French Kings had acquired the title of *Imperator Orientis*, sold in 1494 by Andrea Paleologo³⁷: many studies dedicated to the representations of royal authority in France during the first quarter of the Cinquecento agree in affirming that, after this achievement, the monarchs used to claim for themselves insignia and honors referred to the imperial dignity thus rivaling directly with the House of Habsburg.

In this perspective it is even more significant that Louis was the first, among the European monarchs, to employ to such a large extent Italian sculptors and a deliberately classical *repertoire*, as has been already pointed out by Erwin Panofsky³⁸. This direct confrontation with the Peninsular culture made him aware of the extraordinary symbolical value of white marble and to the antiquarian taste of Italian Renaissance more in general. And it convinced him to appropriate himself of precisely these forms in order to express his new and ampler sovereignty.

Only in the second half of the first decade of the Cinquecento the Catholic Kings availed themselves of the marble quarries of Carrara and employed Domenico Fancelli and Indaco, two Florentine sculptors, for the execution of the tomb of the Infante Don Juan and of the tombs in the Capilla

³⁴ For the use of titles linked to the Italian conquest by Charles VIII and Louis XIII cfr. SCHELLER 1983; *Louis XII, images d'un roi* 1988; HOCHNER 2006; LE FUR 2001.

³⁵ TSCHUDI 1885.

³⁶ DAUDIN 1973.

³⁷ SCHELLER 1978; SCHELLER 1981-1982. See more recently HOCHNER 2006.

³⁸ PANOFSKY 1964.

Real in Granada³⁹. And of a much later date is the ‘italomania’ of Henry VIII: Pietro Torrigiano, Benedetto da Rovezzano and Giuliano II da Maiano were all called to London only in the second decade of the 16th century in order to carry out - among other commissions - the tombs for the monarch and for his father, Henry VII⁴⁰. This particular cultural attitude of the French Crown at the beginning of the Cinquecento is furthermore confirmed by the highly innovative stance that Louis assumed with regard to other European monarchs, both in terms of etiquette and the official representation of his prerogatives. Most exemplary are, in this regards, his encounters with Philip of Austria (in the fall of 1501) and with Ferdinand of Aragon (in the summer of 1507). In both these cases Louis assumed unusual, magnificent manners that impressed his guests and contemporary commentators, who acknowledged in these ceremonies the behavior of “le plus grand prince du monde”⁴¹.

The last, important royal commission assigned to Italian sculptors at the beginning of 16th century was the funerary monument for Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, intended to be erected in the Basilique of Saint Denis⁴². In this case too the chronology of the execution of the tomb speaks for itself. François I waited a year after the death of the precedent sovereign before launching himself into commissioning this new work and in 1516 approved the project by Antonio and Giovanni Giusti. Even if it was installed only in 1531, under completely different historical circumstances, the tomb of Louis XII had been thus conceived from the beginning as a memorial to the glory of the dead King and as a celebration of the new conquest of Italy by the French, following the battle of Marignano.

This message is transmitted by the original structure of the sepulcher that incorporates, on the first level of the basement, imposing reliefs representing the most prestigious victories of the French Army under the leadership of Louis XII (Agnadello and Ravenna, for example): in the intents of the new King these events were to be understood as “symbols” of his own, recent victory in 1515.

These conclusions are strengthened by the fact that the entire structure of the tomb integrates elements inspired by Italian prototypes: the unforeseen duplication of the sovereigns’ effigies, represented both as *priants* and as *gisants*⁴³, looks inspired by Leonardo’s designs for the mausoleum

³⁹ See recently LENAGHAN 1995.

⁴⁰ See recently *Henrici-Medici, Artistic Links between the Early Tudor Court and Medicean Florence*, international Meeting (Florence, Villa I Tatti, 19-21 september 2007), papers in printing.

⁴¹ LE FUR 2001.

⁴² The last important contribution about the tomb are HOCHSTETLER, 1972; HOCHSTETLER, 1973.

⁴³ ZERNER 1993.

of Giangiacomo Trivulzio, one of the generals of the French army in Lombardy at the first decade of 16th century. As is well known, this project was never brought to a conclusion: but the artist produced a great amount of preparatory drawings and provided Trivulzio with a very detailed estimate⁴⁴. And we should not forget that Da Vinci had very close relationships with the French nomenclature in Lombardy after 1499 and that he died in 1519 at Amboise, in Touraine, after having spent two years in one of the castles of the King.

Milan indeed appears, during the first quarter of the Cinquecento as a laboratory of innovative formulas for the French monarchy: the direct contact between a new ruling class composed by foreigners, the Lombard aristocrats and the local artistic *milieu* - all promoted Louis XII's and François I's ambitions of representation of royal power. So, while humanists were at work in Milan focusing on the celebration of the "two Galliae" and of their union⁴⁵, French and Lombard patronage concentrated on the same universe of painters, sculptors and men-of-letters, encouraging thus the creation of a common, noble language⁴⁶.

It is the case of Cristoforo Solari: in 1502 the sculptor sent to France many marble medallions with heads of Roman Emperors, perhaps to fulfill a request by the Marechal de Gié⁴⁷. Even Lorenzo da Muzzano executed in 1508 a bust of Louis XII as a Caesar for the Amboise family⁴⁸; and Bramantino, employed both by the French governors and the Italian politicians, worked for the Comte de Ligny and for Giangiacomo Trivulzio⁴⁹. The latter was celebrated by the laureate poet Gian Michele Nagonio in many eulogistic panegyrics written during the first decade of the 16th century: and, at the same time, Nagonio dedicated to the majesty of Louis XII a tedious poem transcribed in a very rich illuminated manuscript, today at the Bibliothèque nationale de France⁵⁰.

In France the promptest reaction to the cultural instances promoted by the Court was certainly the expensive artistic politics supported by Georges d'Amboise, papal legate to the French Court for Alexander VI and uncle of the viceroy of Milan, Charles d'Amboise. The renewal of his residence in Gaillon was indeed projected as the creation of an Italianate '*fantaisie*', by employing the most important Italian artists under the service of the Crown. Antonio Giusti, Paciarotto, but also Pace Gagini and Antonio della Porta, Genoese sculptors that worked several times for France, took part

⁴⁴ CASTELFRANCO 1955.

⁴⁵ SCHELLER 1985.

⁴⁶ JESTAZ 2003.

⁴⁷ Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, nos. 187-189, in *France 1500* 2010, pp. 364-365.

⁴⁸ Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, no. 186, in *France 1500* 2010, pp. 362-363.

⁴⁹ BINAGHI OLIVARI 2003; ROBERTSON 2003.

⁵⁰ HOCHNER 2006.

in this enterprise, between 1502 and 1509, having recourse to different stylistic models and patterns from the North and the Center of the Italian Peninsula⁵¹.

The penetration of this kind of taste, dictated by Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, is testified even by minor artistic commissions, financed by personalities less implicated in the court's life: we think for example to the tomb commissioned from Giovanni Giusti by Jean James for his uncle Thomas, buried in the Cathedral of Saint Samson at Dol. The James family, devoted to François II, the last Duke of Brittany, had conquered some political positions in the local government of that region, far from Paris: nevertheless in 1507, one of its most important members, the bishop of Dol in charge from 1482, was buried in an exquisite sepulcher executed by the Giusti family, in the meanwhile employed by Louis XII and Anne of Brittany⁵².

IV.

Petrifying the future: Court *milieu*, Italian Art and the Royal Epic

An extraordinary testimony of the awareness reached by the French court in artistic matters at the beginning of the Cinquecento is offered by the many letters exchanged between Jean Pérreal, Marguerite d'Autriche, the regent of the Low Countries, and two of her secretaries, Jean Lemaire and Louis Berangier, from 1509 to 1512⁵³.

Marguerite was planning in those years to lay the foundations for a series of lavish tombs in the church of Saint-Nicolas de Tolentin in Brou. They were intended for herself, for her husband, Philibert II Duke of Savoie who had died in 1504, and for his mother, Marguerite de Bourbon⁵⁴.

For this reason, she resorted to Jean Pérreal. A *valet de chambre* to King Louis XII and a very famous artist in the royal *milieu*, Pérreal was the official overseer of the ceremonies organized by the Crown: he had already accompanied the sovereign during his first conquest of Milan in 1499 and he had made a second trip to Italy during the 1509 expedition, the military campaign that was crowned by the victory of Agnadello⁵⁵. Surely, this prestigious position convinced Marguerite to address Pérreal

⁵¹ DEVILLE 1850-1851; CHIROL 1952; BARDATI 2010.

⁵² MURATOVA 2000.

⁵³ The letters were first published in CHARVET 1874.

⁵⁴ For Brou see recently CARPINO 1996; GELFAND 2003; KAVALER 2004; *Brou* 2007.

⁵⁵ For Pérreal see BANCEL 1970. For Pérreal, Louis XII et l'Italie see HOCHSTETLER 1982; FIORIO 1997; Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, Thierry Crépin-Leblond, *Aux sources de la création: des foyers et des artistes*, in *France 1500* 2010, pp. 98-112.

for the construction of the monumental tomb for her husband, as a memory to her unlucky marriage.

Of this epistolary exchange we possess in particular the answers addressed by Pérreal to the Princess and her secretaries: from these letters we can deduce many informations concerning the ‘politics of monuments’ promoted by Louis and Anne and we can understand how it was able to impose itself as a model experience for other European courts.

As a matter of fact, Pérreal constantly reminded Marguerite of the tomb of the Dukes of Brittany in Nantes that had been commissioned by the Queen of France; and he urged the Princess to employ the same *atelier* who had carried out this commission through virtuous collaboration: that is to say Michel Colombe, “deux compagnons tailleurs d’ymagies” and “deux tailleurs de massonerie entique italiens”. Pérreal even encouraged the Princess’ project by proposing her to make use, for the plan of the monument, of the drawings he had made in Italy: “mes portraictures, au moins des choses antiques que j’ay eu es parties d’Italie”. And it is significant that, in Pérreal’s words, the term “antique” – which recurs frequently – is indiscriminately employed as a reference to all prototypes of Italian origin, be they ancient or more recent. Indeed, it should be noted that Pérreal view of Italy (which was largely shared by his compatriots) was very eclectic, roughly corresponding to the present northern-central regions of the country and fashioned by historical, political and commercial considerations linked to the French domination of the Peninsula.

Moreover, Pérreal - whose letters show him to be learned, versed in alchemy and provided with a great knowledge of stone materials that was even uncommon among artists - invited Marguerite to avoid the use of alabaster coming from France and tried to convince her “à faire ladite sepulture de marbre blanc prins à Gênes & de marbre noir prins au Liège, ainsy que la Royne a fait: car sans mentir, ce sera oeuvre perpétuelle & de princesse”, since “alebastre, il ne dure pas la moitié; car marbre peult durer mil ans bel.” His recourse to the concept of Time was surely something appealing for the claim to eternity implicit in every funerary project: but it is also a wonderful explanation of the privileged link between marble and the classical *rêverie* of the French intellectual circle at the beginning of the 16th century.

And even if the tombs were later commissioned to Conrat Meit thus excluding the joint project of Pérreal and Colombe, the arguments that had been brought forward by the painter during the initial phase of this project clearly illustrate all the cultural issues discussed in the preceding paragraph. And it is relevant to remember that even the German sculptor that succeeded the two French artists in

the project of the tombs for Brou did not abandon the idea of using the most expensive Carrara marble⁵⁶.

The general reactions of all the contemporary literature to the monumental patronage of Louis XII and François I were anyway based on the same critical premises and on the same criteria of judgment: we think, for example, of the poems dedicated by Publio Fausto Andrelini, Lancino Curzio and Piattino Piatti to the tomb of the Dukes of Orléans - and we shall return to them during our lecture. But even the praises by German and Flemish poets focused on the same monuments confirm the universal “intelligibility” of the political message orchestrated by the French monarchs at the dawn of Cinquecento. This is for instance the case of Jean Second, a poet born in La Haye, who visited Paris in 1532. In this occasion he composed an elegy for the tomb of Louis and Anne: the poem compares on one hand the sepulcher to the marble of Paros and affirms on the other: “Marmora felici multum debentia coelo/...nimirum digiti vos expoliere Latini,/ Talia barbaricae non potuere manus” (Oh Marbles, owing your beauty to the sky...I’m sure you were carved by Latin hands./ A Barbarian isn’t able of such marvelous things)⁵⁷.

Indeed the attention for Classical culture was one of the most prominent qualities of the contemporary French verse and prose production, by the so-called “*école des rhétoriciens*”⁵⁸ - among others of André de la Vigne, Jean Marot and Jean Lemaire de Belges. And it was owing to the constant recourse to mythological figures interpreted in a moral sense that the term ‘*poésie*’ began to be used in France in a more specific and technical way during this period⁵⁹.

The contacts between the literary and the artistic worlds linked to the Crown were indeed very frequent: not only in the perspective of a common courtly life but also in the sense of proper collaborations. The tomb of the Dauphins in Tours, for instance, was carried by the *atelier* of Michel Colombe aided by Girolamo Paciarotto. The richly carved basement of this sepulcher, attributed by the documents to the hand of the sculptor from Fiesole, shows the Labours of Hercules and Samson’s stories on the two longer sides of the ‘*socle*’. We are so confronted with a very new iconography for Northern Europe: and its peculiarity was already underlined by Panofsky in his book of 1964, *Tomb Sculpture*⁶⁰. Nevertheless Panofsky didn’t propose any interpretation for this

⁵⁶ TRITENNE 2007.

⁵⁷ SENECHAL 1993.

⁵⁸ For this moment of the French literature is still useful to read GUY 1910. For the relationship between this kind of literature and visual arts see *Poétiques de la Renaissance* 2001. Seen also BROWN 1985.

⁵⁹ SIMONE 1968.

⁶⁰ PANOFSKY 1964.

choice of subject matter for the sepulcher of the sons of the King, since he was convinced that both Hercules and Samson were but generic allusions to the life of two infants with no personal history. As a matter of fact, however, these two heroes – the invincible warrior of the Classical World and the champion of the Jews – were depicted by courtly literature (in particular by André de la Vigne in his *Louenge des roys de France*, published in 1508⁶¹) as figures of royal sovereignty, closely linked to the monarchy of Louis XII. The dead Dauphins of Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany were represented, through the actions of Hercules and Samson, as the legitimate heirs of the French Crown and as a hopeful vow for the future offspring of the Queen and for her new marriage with Louis d'Orléans: it was no accident that the tomb was commissioned only in 1499 when Anne bore another baby, the Dauphins from her first marriage, Charles-Orland and Charles, being dead in 1495 and 1496.

It is evident that the monument's iconographical program was conceived by a man-of-letters with a perfect knowledge of the courtly imagery promoted by Louis XII and by his wife, perhaps the same De La Vigne who was Anne's personal secretary. But, besides this indeed obvious conclusion, it is even more significant that a similar choice had repercussions even on a formal plan. If we look at the tomb, it becomes clear that, while Paciarotto is able to handle the representation of Hercules' Labors (turning to very famous prototypes from the Florentine Quattrocento, as Antonio Pollaiuolo for example), he appears less at ease with the Samson's episodes (being a subject not so common in Florentine Renaissance): as a consequence Paciarotto choose to address himself to French models deduced from the contemporary tradition of illuminated manuscripts.

This kind of collaboration offers a very iconic paradigm of the dialogue between French and Italian cultures at the beginning of the Cinquecento: presenting itself as the product of a necessary interchange, built up of compromises and mutual appropriations, it shows the parallel and curious development of two different ways to modernity.

⁶¹ DE LA VIGNE 1508.

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