

Vasari's *Vite* and Italian artists in sixteenth-century England

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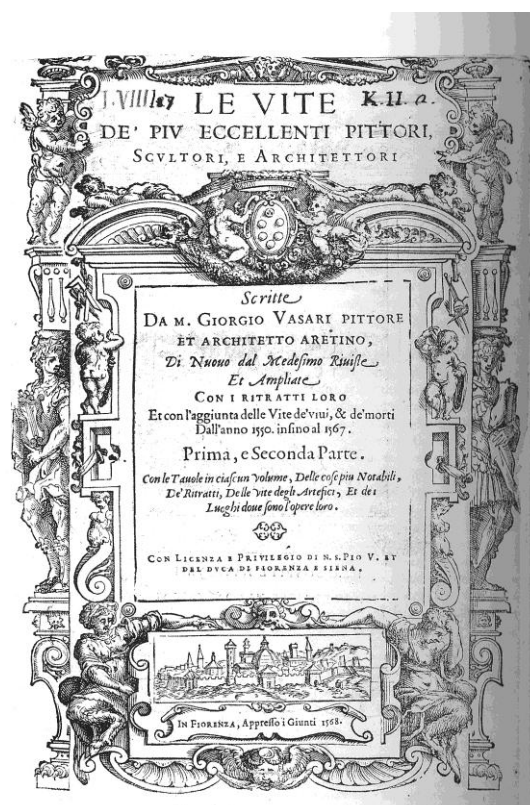


Figure 1 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori* . . . (Florence, 1568).

References to works of art or individuals traveling to England are found in Vasari's lives of Benedetto da Maiano, Pietro Torrigiani, Benedetto da Rovezzano, Girolamo da Treviso, Rosso Fiorentino, Perino del Vaga, Baccio Bandinelli, Bastiano 'Aristotile' da Sangallo, the brothers Davit and Benedetto del Ghirlandaio and their nephew Ridolfo (son of Domenico), Giovan Francesco Penni (il Fattore), as well as in a final, miscellaneous section in the Giuntina edition of 1568 entitled 'Di diversi artefici Italiani' (Of several different Italian artists). (Figure 1) This selection is striking for the density of Tuscan artists who, with the only exception of Girolamo da Treviso, appear to have dominated the flux of artistic exchange between the two countries during the sixteenth century. The exception, however, is no less meaningful since Girolamo's complicated career took him to Venice, Bologna, Rome and Mantua making him a vehicle for the transmission of the highly experimental style that had been incubating in this latter city.

The migration of artists to England, as well as to other European countries, is discussed by Vasari within the general framework of a far-ranging view of the

movement of art through time and space, and serves the ultimate purpose of demonstrating the superiority of central Italian art. Writing about artists who had left their motherland and settled anywhere in Europe was, however, hugely problematic for Vasari who had no direct knowledge of the works produced abroad and was thus unable to discuss them in any detail. *Ekphrasis*, that is the translation of the sensual and visual nature of a work of art into a linguistic formulation, formed the bedrock of the *Vite*, indeed it constitutes the basis of any art history as has repeatedly been argued.¹ Vasari compensated for his inability to resort to rhetorical descriptions of works of art with greater information about the functioning of the art market, weaving geographic notions about the diffusion of central Italian art into a complex fabric of ideas on the political and economic impact of art. Looking closely at the *Vite* it is therefore possible to discern the outlines of an economic and material history of art which can be verified with cross-references from the archives, and which provides us with a valuable interpretative model for the study of the migration of artists in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Furthermore, the analysis of the relevant passages in the *Vite* casts light on the sources of Vasari's information, confirming the increasingly received opinion that it is largely the result of collaborative work.²

The notion that the arts, especially in Florence, contributed to the support and growth of the city and the state at large emerges from the very first chapter in the introduction to the *Vite*, which is divided into three parts headed 'Architecture', 'Sculpture', and 'Painting'. In the 1568 edition this introduction – whose authorship had not been claimed in the 1550 edition – is loudly announced as being by Vasari himself, though it would seem likely that he consulted with Vincenzo Borghini, the Prior of the Foundling Hospital of Florence, who in 1550 had assisted him with the writing of the postscript. In a well-known letter of 24 January 1550 Borghini had provided a list of topics that should be emphasized, which included the usefulness of Vasari's efforts. In fact the political and propagandistic potential of Vasari's undertaking had by then been seized upon by Duke Cosimo and his literary

*This essay develops ideas which were first explored in 'Giorgio Vasari and the progress of Italian art in early sixteenth-century England', in *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Artistic Links between the Early Tudor Courts and Medicean Florence*, Cinzia M. Sicca and Louis A. Waldman eds, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012, 351-93. Unless otherwise stated all references to Vasari's *Vite* are to the Giuntina 1568 edition in the on-line version by the Scuola Normale Superiore (<http://vasari.sns.it/vasari/consultazione/Vasari/indice.html>).

¹ The bibliography on this topic is extensive suffice here to refer to the classic study by Svetlana Alpers, 'Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23 (July-December 1960), 190-215; David Carrier, 'Ekphrasis and Interpretation: Two Modes of Art History Writing', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 27/1 (Winter 1987), 20-31, and Jàs Elsner, 'Art History as Ekphrasis', *Art History*, 33/1 (February 2010), 10-28.

² On this issue see Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995; Charles Hope, 'Can You Trust Vasari?', *The New York Review of Books*, XLII (October 5, 1995), 10-13; Charles Hope, 'Le *Vite* Vasariane: un esempio di autore multiplo', in *L'Autore Multiplo*, Anna Santoni ed., Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2005, 59-74; Marco Ruffini, *Art without an author: Vasari's Lives and Michelangelo's death*, New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011, and most recently Alessandro Nova, "'Vasari' versus Vasari: la duplice attualità delle *Vite*", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LV/1, 2013, 55-71.

advisors who intervened to give a theoretical twist to the *Vite*, turning them into one of the tools through which the Duke could promote the Florentine state.

In this first chapter, entitled 'Of the different kinds of stone that are used by architects for ornamental details, and in sculpture for statues', Vasari described the types of stone used since ancient times and quarried in different regions around the Mediterranean. Likewise he gave a detailed description of the stones available in the area to the northwest of Florence in the mountains of Carrara in the Garfagnana, near to the heights of Luni, where many varieties of marble could be found. In particular he singled out the quarries of Pietrasanta, in which the ancients worked, and drew the marbles used for their statues. This same marble, he noticed, was quarried by the moderns for their statues, not only in Italy, but sent also to France, England, Spain, and Portugal, in other words the countries with which artistic exchange was most lively.³

It is significant that Vasari focused not so much on the marble quarries of Carrara but rather on those of Pietrasanta, a territory conquered by the Florentines in 1484 and returned to them by Pope Leo X in 1513 after brief spells first in the hands of Charles VIII of France, and subsequently of the Republic of Lucca. Even before the promotion they received from Duke Cosimo in terms of protective legislation and technical development, iron-ore mines and the marble quarries found in this area played an important role in the Tuscan economy.⁴ Here the merchants from Florence and Lucca intervened to move, sell, and distribute not only the raw material but also the finished sculptures. It seems likely, in fact, that foreign interest in Tuscan Renaissance sculpture was nurtured by the merchant-venturers through the commercialization on the English and foreign markets of small-scale pieces circulated in marble as well as in bronze, so as to make evident the potentiality of reproduction in different materials. This would then have induced the demand for more such products, larger in scale and more easily and cheaply produced in situ rather than shipped all the way from Italy. The shipment of blocks of marble, as opposed to carved pieces, reduced the risk of damage to finished sculptures.

Similar marketing techniques were widespread and not exclusive to the Florentines, as transpires from the lives of other artists; in the 1550 *Torrentiniana* edition, for instance, Vasari wrote of Simon Bianco, a Florentine sculptor who had moved to Venice, where he had a continuous production of works, such as marble busts that were sent to France by some Venetian merchants.⁵ The Milanese

³ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 1:16; my revision based on the translation in Gerald Baldwin Brown and Louisa S. Maclehoose, *Vasari on Technique*, Mineola, NY: Dover, 1960, 45–47.

⁴ See Piero Ginori Conti, *Le magone della vena del ferro di Pisa e di Pietrasanta sotto la gestione di Piero de Medici e comp. (1489–1492)*, Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1939; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les maîtres du marbre: Carrare 1300–1600*, Paris: SEVPEN, 1969; Giorgio Spini, ed., *Potere centrale e strutture periferiche nella Toscana del '500*, Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1980; and Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009, 386–87, 404–5, 523–24.

⁵ Vasari talks of marble heads (*teste di marmo*) after the antique (*Le Vite*, 3: 625) but the surviving works in the Louvre, at the Chateau de Compiègne, Copenhagen and Stockholm are all busts. Bronze heads by Simone Bianco survive in Rome, Boston and Vienna. See Peter Meller, 'Marmi e bronzi di Simone Bianco', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 21/2, 1977, 199–210; Irene

Tommaso della Porta, an excellent carver in marble, who counterfeited ancient marble heads sold as antiques, had made twelve very precious life-size heads of emperors, which, after having been retained by Pope Julius III for several months, were acquired for quite a high price by some merchants and sent to Spain.⁶

The mechanism by which Tuscan sculptors reached England, and foreign shores more generally, is clearly described in the life of Pietro Torrigiani, in which Vasari was unequivocal about the fact that Torrigiani was brought to England by Florentine merchants for whom he had previously made small-scale sculptures in either marble or bronze, and was similarly taken from England to Spain.⁷ Other artists had gone abroad in similar fashion, and for all of them Vasari used an almost identical turn of phrase. Sometimes he was very precise, mentioning specific names of merchants and agents; on other occasions his sources were vaguer, either due to distance in time and space or simply because the information he was relying on had been provided orally. Of Girolamo Della Robbia, for instance, he wrote that he was brought to France by some Florentine merchants ('da alcuni mercatanti fiorentini fu condotto in Francia'). It is highly likely that Della Robbia's move to France in 1517 was sponsored by the company of Del Tovaglia and Gualterotti which had branches in Lyons and Bordeaux; and it was indeed in Bordeaux that on 13 March 1520 Girolamo signed a notarial act in which he entrusted Pietro Del Tovaglia with his earnings and appointed him his legal representative, a practice which is documented also for Tuscan artists in England and Spain.⁸ In France Della Robbia 'made several works for the king at the Château de Madrid, not far from Paris'. This

Favaretto, 'Simone Bianco: uno scultore del XVI secolo di fronte all'antico', *Quaderni Ticinesi*, X, 1985, 405-422; Michel Hochmann, *Venise et Rome 1500-1600: deux écoles de peinture et leurs échanges*, Paris: Droz, 2004, 143-144 (with transcripts of payments for a bronze figure of doge Antonio Grimani), and Pietro Cannata, *Sculture in bronzo*. Museo Nazionale del palazzo di Venezia, Rome: Gangemi Editore S.p.A., 2011, 197-198.

⁶ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 6:208.

⁷ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 4: 123-128.

⁸ The document has been published by François Gebelin, 'Girolamo Della Robbia à Bordeaux en 1520', *Bulletin de l'histoire de l'art français*, LXIV, 1938, 126-132. The Del Tovaglia emerged in the fifteenth century when Piero (ca. 1424-1487) became the Florentine agent and diplomatic representative of the Marquis of Mantua and a close ally of Lorenzo de' Medici. Between 1470 and 1479 Piero purchased property near Poggio a Caiano, in the parish of Santa Maria a Montici, which was renovated or rebuilt by his son Angelo according to drawings that might have been provided by Giuliano da Sangallo, see Beverly Louise Brown, 'Leonardo and the tale of three villas: Poggio a Caiano, the Villa Tovaglia in Florence and Poggio Reale in Mantua', in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500*, edited by Giancarlo Carfagnini, 3 vols. ,Florence: Leo Olschki, 1983, 3:1053-62. Francesco Del Tovaglia was in the Lyons branch of the Medici bank where he was in charge of the sales of silks and apparently ran this business as a separate department (Raymond De Roover, *The Rise and Fall of the Medici Bank*, Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 1999, 295, 299, 368). In the sixteenth century, despite the fall of the Medici bank, the family was still very active in the same towns where they had operated with the Medici in the previous century that is in Naples, Lyons, and Barcelona. In Florence they held high administrative and political positions and were strong supporters of the Medici until the second Republic. Under the rule of Duke Cosimo Giuliano di Bernardo Del Tovaglia (1507-1559) became treasurer during the war with Siena but his management of the finances came under scrutiny and he was eventually accused of embezzlement, found guilty and hung together with his deputy Francesco Sacchetti.

palace, Vasari continued, 'was decorated with many figures [in fact, portrait medallions in high relief] and various ornaments made of a stone that is similar to the gypsum excavated in Volterra, but far better than that for though it hardens properly, it is soft when one models it'.⁹ Vasari's comment on the material employed by Girolamo is one of the very few to be found in the lives of artists active abroad; it signals a peculiar awareness of one of the principal difficulties faced by sculptors modelling outside of Florence with clays that could vary greatly in composition from the ones they were used to. The peculiarity of this remark suggests that it must have come from direct conversations with Girolamo who, following the death of his brother Luca Bartolomeo, returned to Florence in 1548, and then again between 1552 and 1553 with intention to settle there, but was forced to change his mind once he realized that due to the war with Siena no patronage would be forthcoming from the Duke.¹⁰

Painters too moved across Europe supported by merchants: Giovannantonio da Verelli, known as Il Sodoma, was brought to Siena by some merchants who were agents of the Spannocchi firm.¹¹ It is evident, therefore, that the migration of artists—be they painters or sculptors—could occur only with the backing of merchant-bankers who provided the financial means to undertake such costly and difficult trips, guaranteed a certain amount of work, and in many cases even provided housing in their own company lodgings.

This was, for instance, the case with Giovan Francesco Penni, il Fattore, who moved to Naples and, as Vasari wrote, lived in the house of Tommaso Cambi, a prominent Florentine merchant, banker and administrator of Alfonso d'Avalos.¹² This is a reliable piece of information which Vasari got first hand since in August 1545, after having finished painting the small loggia for Pietro da Toledo, he remained in Naples and begun work in the house of Tommaso Cambi, whom Vasari describes in his autobiography as his very good friend ('mio amicissimo').¹³

⁹ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 3:57. On the Chateau de Madrid see Monique Chatenet, *Le Chateau de Madrid au Bois de Boulogne. Sa place dans les rapports franco-italien autour de 1530*, Paris: Editions A. & J. Picard, 1984.

¹⁰ '[...] Girolamo di nuovo si trovò solo e senza nessuno de'suoi; per che, risolutosi di tornare a godersi nella patria le ricchezze che si aveva con fatica e sudore guadagnate, et anco lasciare in quella qualche memoria, si acconciava a vivere in Fiorenza l'anno 1553, quando fu quasi forzato a mutar pensiero [...]', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 3:58. For the letters of attorney signed by Girolamo before his travels to Florence see Chatenet, *Le Chateau de Madrid au Bois de Boulogne*, 20.

¹¹ '[...] condotto a Siena da alcuni mercanti agenti degli Spannocchi'; Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5:381.

¹² 'si tratteneva [. . .] con Tommaso Cambi mercante fiorentino'; Vasari, *Le Vite*, 4:334.

¹³ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 6: 386. In the life of Bartolomeo da Bagnacavallo Cambi is described as an amateur of antique sculpture as well as painting, and as the patron of Girolamo da Cotignola (Vasari, *Le Vite*, 4:500). Vasari claims to have frescoed the four walls of a sala in Cambi's house, representing Time, the Seasons and Dream on a terrace but nothing survives of such work except perhaps for some drawings; see Liana De Girolamo Cheney, *The Homes of Giorgio Vasari*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2006, 62-63. Upon his return to Rome, in 1545, Vasari made some unspecified paintings which were sent to Cambi in Naples, Vasari, *Le Vite*, 6: 386.



Figure 2 Pietro Torrigiani, *St. Jerome*, polychrome terra-cotta, 160 x 126 x 224 cm., ca. 1525, Seville, Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla.

Archival evidence discovered by Alan Darr in the Florence State Archive shows that at the inception of his stay in England, Torrigiani received a monthly salary from two Florentine merchant companies, those of Girolamo Frescobaldi and of Migiotto and Bernardo Bardi;¹⁴ furthermore, for two months in January and February 1515 (modern style, 1516) the sculptor lodged with his two servants in the house of Bernardo Bardi.¹⁵ On the grounds of this evidence it would appear reasonable to assume that the removal of Torrigiani to Spain at some point after 1519 took place with the assistance of the same merchants who had organized his move to England. This hypothesis is supported by matching archival evidence. Talking of Torrigiani's works in Spain Vasari says generically that these were quite numerous, much appreciated and scattered in various places; he then singled out a large scale terracotta Crucifix, the most beautiful in the whole of Spain, and in the monastery of St Jerome, just outside Seville, a statue of the penitent St Jerome accompanied by the lion. It is at this point that Vasari adds a most revealing comment: the saint's features were in fact the portrait of an old provisioner of the

¹⁴ Alan Phipps Darr, 'New Documents for Pietro Torrigiani and Other Early Cinquecento Florentine Sculptors Active in Italy and England', in *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana*, ed. Monika Cämmerer, Munich: Bruckmann, 1992, 108–38, esp. 134, doc. 14I, he actually received his accumulated salary in March and April 1514 (modern style, 1515) and in May and June 1515.

¹⁵ Alan Phipps Darr, 'New Documents for Pietro Torrigiani', 134, doc. 14K, with payments for board and lodging.

Botti, a family of Florentine merchants who had settled in Seville in 1519.¹⁶ (Figure 2) This life-size polychrome terracotta sculpture survives in the Museum of Fine Arts of Seville to where it came from the Monasterio de San Jerónimo de Buena Vista. The statue was severely damaged and underwent extensive restoration in the last quarter of the twentieth century; however the lion which must have sat by the size of the kneeling saint, as in the derivative polychrome wood sculpture in the Real Monasterio de Guadalupe in Cáceres, is missing altogether.¹⁷ The modelling of the whole figure is extraordinarily realistic as is the face which, though vaguely reminiscent of Michelangelo's marble Moses (1515), is evidently based on direct observation of a specific face. (Figure 3) What matters here is the fact that Vasari was very well informed, and not just by a mere traveller to Seville but by someone who had inside knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the making of this astounding piece.



Figure 3 Pietro Torrigiani, *St. Jerome*, detail, polychrome terra-cotta, 160 x 126 x 224 cm., ca. 1525, Seville, Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla.

It is again the *Vite* that reveals the source of Vasari's information: the lives of Raphael and of Daniele da Volterra contain extensive praise for the brothers Matteo and Simone Botti described as patrons of the arts, supporters of painters and owners of important pieces such as Raphael's *La Velata*. (Figure 4) Matteo is said to be a 'gentilissimo mercante fiorentino', whilst Simone is called 'amicissimo' and 'the best and greatest friend that one can hold dear after a long time'.¹⁸ Indeed Vasari had

¹⁶ 'essendo condotto d'Inghilterra in Ispagna, vi fece molte opere che sono sparse in diversi luoghi e sono molto stimate; ma in fra l'altre fece un Crocifisso di terra, che è la più mirabile cose che sia in tutta la Spagna; e fuori della città di Siviglia, in un monasterio de' frati di San Girolamo, fece un altro Crocifisso et un San Girolamo in penitenza col suo liono –nella figura del qual Santo ritrasse un vecchio dispensiero de' Botti, mercanti fiorentini in Ispagna [...]', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 4: 127.

¹⁷ See A. Kiznar, M.V. Muñoz, F. de la Paz, M. A. Respaldira and M. Vega, 'XRF analysis of two terracotta polychrome sculptures by Pietro Torrigiano', *X-Ray Spectrometry*, 38, 2009, 169-174 (published online in Wiley Interscience 26 January 2009, DOI10.1002/xrs.1135).

¹⁸ 'Stette Daniello [Daniele Ricciarelli] tutta quella state in Firenze, dove l'accomodò Giorgio [Vasari] in una casa di Simon Botti suo amicissimo', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5:546; '[...] d'una sua donna, la quale Raffaello

produced two great paintings for the Botti: the first—a large-size Virgin and Child with St Joseph—in 1548 for Francesco Botti who took it to Spain, and the second—a huge Crucifixion—in the late 1550s for the altar owned by Matteo and Simone in the Carmine, Florence.¹⁹

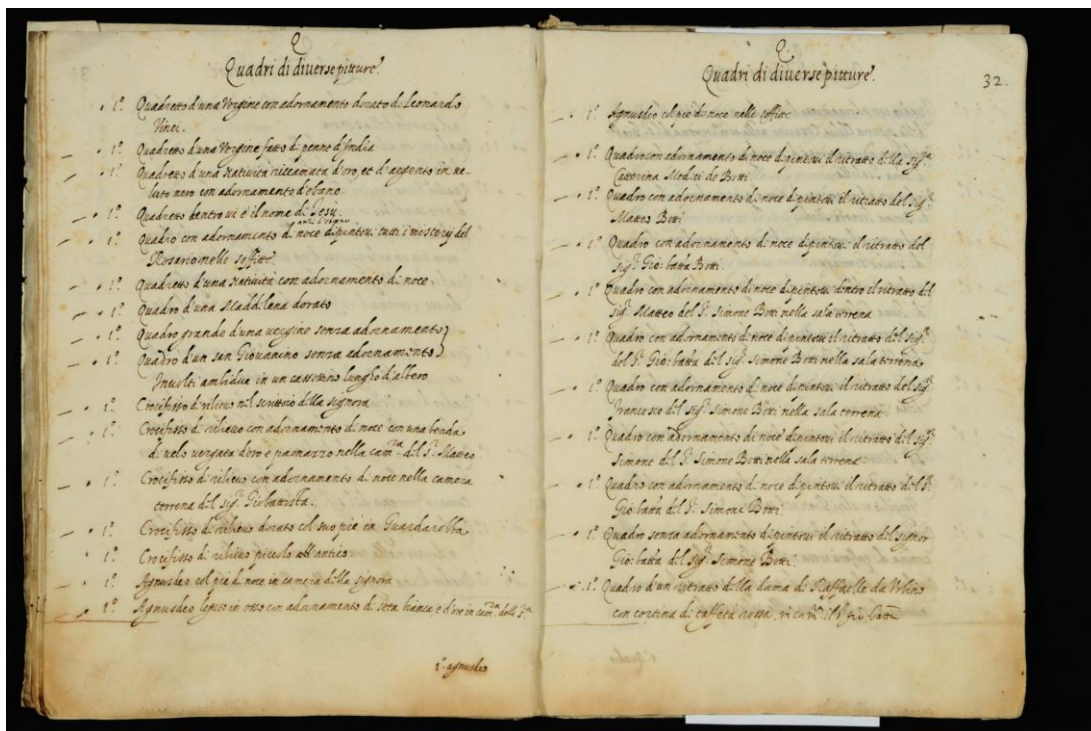


Figure 4 Two leaves from the general inventory of Giovanbattista Botti's possessions, 1588, pen and brown ink on paper, ASFi, Miscellanea Medicea 29, inserto 1, ff. 31 verso-32 recto.

The Botti, who originally came from Cremona, settled in Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century but nothing is known of their activities until 16 July 1481 when Simone di Matteo Botti formed a limited partnership with the company of Neri di Gino Capponi in Pisa; from 1509 to 1516 Simone Botti operated

amò sino alla morte, e di quella fece un ritratto bellissimo che pareva viva viva, il quale è oggi in Fiorenza appresso il gentilissimo Matteo Botti mercante fiorentino, amico e familiare d'ogni persona virtuosa e massimamente dei pittori, tenuta da lui come reliquia per l'amore che egli porta all'arte e particolarmente a Raffaello; nè meno di lui stima l'opere dell'arte nostra e gli artefici il fratello suo Simon Botti, che oltre lo esser tenuto da tutti noi per uno de' più amorevoli che facciano beneficio agli uomini di queste professioni, è da me particolare tenuto e stimato il migliore e maggiore amico che si possa per lunga esperienza aver caro, oltre al giudizio buono che egli ha e mostra nelle cose dell'arte', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 4:190-191. On the Botti collection and its acquisition by Cosimo II from Matteo di Simone Botti in 1615 see Paola Barocchi, 'Sulla collezione Botti', *Prospettiva*, 93/94, 1999, 126-130.

¹⁹ 'E nella Chiesa del Carmine di Fiorenza fu posta, quasi ne' medesimi giorni, una tavola di mia mano nella cappella di Matteo e Simon Botti, miei amicissimi, nella quale è Cristo crucifisso, la Nostra Donna, San Giovanni e la Madalena che piangono', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 6:405. The painting has been recently restored, see *La Crocifissione di Giorgio Vasari nella Chiesa di Santa Maria del Carmine a Firenze: studi e restauro*, Daniele Rapino ed., Florence: Polistampa, 2012.

in partnership with Giuliano and Niccolò Capponi in Pisa.²⁰ Meanwhile he had married Maddalena Riccardi and had five sons—Francesco, Matteo, Simone, Jacopo, Giovambattista—and three daughters, all of whom were married into leading Florentine families (Tosinghi, Strozzi and Medici). In 1519 Jacopo di Simone moved to Cadiz where he established a new company with branches in Seville, Grenada and Valladolid, and working in partnership with branches established by his three brothers in Lyon, Venice and Rome.²¹ The Botti were also partners with other companies (Affaitati, Cavalcanti and Bardi, Del Tovaglia, Girolami, Mannelli and Cavalcanti, Nasi) and thus maintained regular contacts with Antwerp, Paris and London. The move to Cadiz and Seville occurred in the aftermath of the Atlantic expeditions of Cortés and Pizarro and was evidently aimed at taking control of the trade coming from the New World, in fact the Botti are known to have handled over 150 different kinds of products from around the world.²²

Vasari's references to Torrigiani in Spain and to the Botti, who did business in association with the Bardi and Cavalcanti, hint at a group of merchant-bankers operating on a continental scale.²³ Torrigiani himself did not envisage his activities as restricted only to England as is shown by a document recently discovered by Louis Waldman. Dated 31 August 1519 this is a contract by which Torrigiani hired another Florentine sculptor of repute, Benedetto da Rovezzano, who agreed to work for him during the next four and a half years in a range of countries, namely Italy, France, Flanders, England, Spain or Germany.²⁴ The contract was agreed by the two sculptors with two notaries as witnesses, and apparently with no merchant acting as guarantor. It seems unlikely that Torrigiani on his own would have been able to secure jobs in all the countries mentioned in the contract, instead the geographical range envisaged must have coincided with his backers' sphere of activities.

In the *Vite* Vasari singled out the types of sculptural works that enjoyed the widest currency in Europe at the time and that could not be supplied like any other luxury good but instead required the presence of skilled sculptors. Royal as well as aristocratic patrons demanded portrait busts and dynastic monuments, forms that both had strong Florentine connotations. The portrait bust in particular had been revived in Florence since the fifteenth century, and at the hands of Donatello,

²⁰ Archivio di Stato Firenze (henceforth ASFi), Mercanzia, 10831, fol. 85.

²¹ The date is given in a letter dated 4 October 1562 and written by Giovambattista Botti to the widow of his recently deceased brother Iacopo ('El señor Jacome Botti, mi hermano, que en gloria sea, fue a Calis el ano 1519 con los dineros de todos nos otros hermanos, para tratar por todos juntos en comun y tanto participava l'uno como l'otro'; ASFi, Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia, 730, ff. 30r-30v).

²² ASFi, Libri di commercio e di famiglia, 710-733; see also Françoise Point-Waquet, 'Les Botti. Fortunes et culture d'une famille florentine (1550-1621)', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes*, 90/2, 1978, 689-713; Angela Orlandi, 'Mercanti Toscani nell'Andalusia del Cinquecento', *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos*, 26, 1999, 365-382; Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, 156.

²³ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 2:54.

²⁴ ASFi, Notarile Antecosimiano, 12467 (Pierfrancesco Maccari 1518-19), ff. 331r-331v reproduced as Document A.1 by Louis A. Waldman, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano in England and After: New Research on the Artist, His Collaborators and His Family', in *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance*, Sicca and Waldman eds, 79-123.

Antonio Rossellino, Desiderio da Settignano, Mino da Fiesole, and Andrea del Verrocchio—to name but a few—it had reached levels of realism, as well as sophistication, that made it a veritable challenge to the achievements of the ancients. The liveliness of Quattrocento busts, whether in polychrome terra-cotta, bronze, or marble (sometimes partly gilded), made this type of object highly desirable and even preferable whenever painted portraiture could not offer a suitable alternative. The lifelike quality of the best portrait busts (as indeed of any form of portraiture) was predicated on direct observation, and Vasari testified to the fact that sculptors at that time travelled to meet their sitters.

This, for instance, had been the case with Benedetto da Maiano: having gone to Faenza to make a marble ark of Saint Savinus, was not allowed to leave the Romagna region until he had also made a portrait bust of Galeotto Roberto Malatesta, who in 1475 had been knighted by the Holy Roman emperor Frederick III. In these same years Benedetto, whose skills were associated with the almost contemporary busts of Pietro Mellini (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) and Filippo Strozzi (Musée du Louvre, Paris), had also made a remarkable portrait bust of Ambrogio Spannocchi (the most important Siennese merchant-banker of the fifteenth century, with close ties to the papacy, the Medici, and the Aragonese dukes of Calabria), complementing the twelve busts of emperors on the facade of Spannocchi's palace in Siena. The success of the Spannocchi bust seems to have been the basis for the commission of a bust of Henry VII of England, which Benedetto sculpted from a drawing of the king's physiognomy supplied by unnamed Florentine merchants. Vasari reported that after Benedetto's death, the model of this bust was found in his house, together with the one of Malatesta.²⁵ It is generally believed that the bust never reached England, but this episode certainly represents an important precedent that paved the way for the success of Pietro Torrigiani in England.

Torrighiani's earliest works in England were in fact polychrome terra-cotta busts of Henry VII; of Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry VII, on the occasion of her proposed marriage in 1507/8 to the nephew of Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands (the future emperor Charles V); of the young king Henry VIII; and of John Fisher, bishop of Rochester (the latter two are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Modelled between 1507 and 1511, the busts of the two kings and of Bishop Fisher are remarkably consistent in size and general conception, conveying a vivid sense of life and movement accentuated in all three cases by the manner in which the face is turned to one side, with the eyes glancing slightly downward. The striking naturalism of the faces—which was observed earlier for the St Jerome in Seville—does not detract from the overall sense of decorum and monumentality, and is accompanied by a heightened attention to the garments worn by the sitters, veritable status symbols. The sculptor, following a well-established tradition in Tuscan portrait sculpture, is not satisfied with a generalized outline of drapery but instead pursues a careful definition of the various layers of clothing as well as of the different textures. Torrigiani focused his efforts on capturing the royal presence by

²⁵ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 3:528.

means of a particularly imperious and quizzical expression in his portrait of Henry VII and a sense of alertness and whim in that of the young Henry VIII. Fisher had to project different moral qualities, and he is indeed portrayed as a solid and pensive individual, the embodiment of religious-inspired wisdom.

The obvious success of these portrait busts led in 1511 to Torrigiani's first commission for a royal tomb, that of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. The surviving contract, dated November 1511, shows that 'Leonard fristobald [Frescobaldi] and John Cawalcant [Cavalcanti] merchautes of florence' posted a bond of 'fyve hundred poundes sterlinges' in guarantee of Torrigiani's completion of the work; it also indicates that the sculptor designed and carved a timber model of the Lady Margaret tomb chest (employing distinctive Italian Renaissance decorative motifs), and that he executed the realistic gilt-bronze portrait, and the subtle drapery. The traditional medieval collaborative process enforced by the patrons of this commission resulted, however, in an unbalanced composition in which the two-dimensional design of the effigy and Gothic tabernacle by the London painter Maynard Vewick clashed with the classicizing tomb chest. The awkward relationship between painter and sculptor was compounded by the difficulties Torrigiani encountered in recruiting skilled English craftsmen; he was forced to travel to Flanders where in January 1514 he hired in Bruges a fine gilder named Francolas and it was only in 1515-16 that he managed to hire another gilder, presumably English, named Nicholas. None of these events transpires from Vasari's text since he evidently lacked this kind of information which could have only been provided by people who had followed closely the early years of Torrigiani's activity in England.²⁶

Vasari's *Vite*, as well as Michelangelo's correspondence, reveal that dynastic monuments were prized commissions that aroused the fiercest competition among the leading Tuscan sculptors. It would appear that this type of work for foreign patrons commanded very high remunerations on account of the complexity of the design, the high number of figures involved, and the preciousness of the materials employed. Carrara marble was often combined with coloured stones, ranging from the black marble quarried in Belgium and England to serpentine and porphyry quarried in North Africa, as well as an increasing number of bronze elements. While lay and religious patrons in Italy still favoured wall tombs that departed only to some extent from the model of the so-called humanist tomb developed in Florence during the Quattrocento, for foreign aristocrats and rulers the structure of the

²⁶ On Torrigiani see Arthur Higgins, 'On the work of Florentine sculptors in England in the early part of the sixteenth century; with special reference to the tombs of Cardinal Wolsey and King Henry VIII', *Archaeological Journal*, 51, 1894, 129-370; R. F. Scott, 'On the Contracts for the Tomb of the Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, mother of King Henry VII, and Foundress of the Colleges of Christ and St. John in Cambridge; with some illustrative documents', *Archaeologia*, 66, 1915, 365-376; A. P. Darr, *Pietro Torrigiani and His Sculpture for the Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Abbey*, Ph.D. dissertation (New York University, 1980); Phillip Lindley, "'Una Grande Opera al mio Re": gilt-bronze effigies in England from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance', *Journal of the British Archeological Association*, 142, 1990, 112-130; Phillip Lindley, *Gothic to Renaissance*, Stamford: Watkins, 1995, 54-57; A. P. Darr, 'Pietro Torrigiani and His Sculptures in Henrician England: Sources and Influences', in *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance*, Sicca and Waldman eds, 49-73.

monument tended to be freestanding, multilayered, and complex, combining narrative reliefs illustrating the deeds of the deceased with figures in the round of saints and Virtues. Torrigiani showed his capacity to adapt to these requirements in his second English royal tomb. The surviving contract, dated 26 October 1512, shows that the sculptor had succeeded in affirming his role as both designer and carver. The tomb itself demonstrates Torrigiani's skill in blending Italian Renaissance features with the northern tradition of funerary monuments: the tomb chest is more akin to a sarcophagus, and its sides feature touchstone bay leaf wreaths enclosing gilt-bronze tondi with pairs of saints, while seated angels and nude putti hold the royal arms.



Figure 5 Pietro Torrigiani, Tomb of Dr. John Yonge, polychrome terracotta over alabaster sarcophagus, 1516, London, Public Record Office, Rolls Chapel.

The costliness of the materials traditionally employed by Italian sculptors priced them out of a market which was not that of grandees. Torrigiani must have been worried by this state of affairs, fearing perhaps that lacking a permanent royal appointment he would not be able to secure commissions. The terra-cotta funerary monument for Dr John Yonge (London, Public Record Office) of ca. 1515 is a successful development of a type of monument that preserved the aesthetic qualities of humanist decorum at a sustainable price.²⁷ (Figure 5)

Vasari testified to the extraordinary scale of monuments for foreign rulers by citing the one for a king of Portugal designed by Jacopo Sansovino (but never

²⁷ On the tomb see Phillip Lindley and Carol Galvin, 'The Tomb of Dr John Yonge in the Public Record Office: Pietro Torrigiani's methods and models', in Lindley, *Gothic to Renaissance*, 188-206.

executed). Jacopo had succeeded in winning the commission through the agency of Giovanni Bartolini and his firm of merchant-bankers, but also because he was the pupil of Andrea Contucci (Andrea Sansovino), who had already worked for the king of Portugal and left at least one drawing of this monument.²⁸ Jacopo's wooden maquette of the monument was remarkable and full of 'histories' (narrative reliefs) and figures, all in wax and made largely by Tribolo.²⁹ Another celebrated wooden maquette with wax figures was prepared by Baccio Bandinelli for the tomb of Henry VIII. According to Vasari, despite the extreme beauty of its design, the model did not secure the commission to Bandinelli; instead, it was given to Benedetto da Rovezzano, who cast the monument in bronze.³⁰

Here Vasari gave a considerably compressed version of the story, although he must have known quite well its true unfolding, given that he had direct knowledge of some of the characters involved in the whole complex affair. In his life of Michelangelo, Vasari claimed to have gathered many recollections of his times directly from the elderly sculptor in the form of oral communications.³¹ Given that Michelangelo had badly wanted the commission of the English tomb, and that Vasari also knew Bandinelli and many members of the Medici family, especially Ottaviano, it seems likely that he would be aware that Bandinelli's model had been commissioned by Giovanni Cavalcanti—the senior partner in the Cavalcanti and Bardi firm active in London—at the request of Leo X. The pope seized the opportunity created by Torrigiani's departure for Spain to impose Bandinelli, his favourite sculptor.³²

The story is picked up in the life of Benedetto da Rovezzano, though without attempting any cross-referencing; Benedetto is said to have been taken to England to work for the king for whom he is said to have made many works in marble as well as in bronze, including his funerary monument. The way in which Benedetto's story is presented would therefore appear to fall into a different category from that of Torrigiani's, that is the royal appointment which carried the lure of high rewards and courtly status. In fact Vasari stresses the liberality of the King of England which

²⁸ The drawing, which was in the hands of Padre Sebastiano Resta in the eighteenth century, is untraced. Another drawing is in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, 142A) and comes from Vasari's Book of Drawings. See Janez Höfler, 'New Light on Andrea Sansovino's Journey to Portugal', *The Burlington Magazine*, 134, April 1992, 234–38. It should be noted that the powerful Florentine merchant community in Lisbon included the Bardi, who were also present in London.

²⁹ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5:200.

³⁰ For the story of the commission, see Cinzia M. Sicca, 'Pawns of International Finance and Politics: Florentine Sculptors at the Court of Henry VIII', *Renaissance Studies*, 20/1 (Feb. 2006), 1–34. For the reconstruction of the monument, see Giancarlo Gentilini and Tommaso Mozzati, '“142 Life-size Figures...with the King on Horseback”: Baccio Bandinelli's Mausoleum for Henry VIII', in *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance*, Sicca and Waldman eds, 201–231.

³¹ 'molti ricordi di cose aveva avuto dalla voce sua il Vasari, come da artefice più vecchio e di giudizio'. Vasari, *Le Vite*, 6:83.

³² For this interpretation, see Margaret Mitchell, 'Works of Art from Rome for Henry VIII: A Study of Anglo-Papal Relations as Reflected in Papal Gifts to the English King', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 34, 1971, 178–203.

ensured that the sculptor earned well and could make considerable investments back home, as confirmed by archival evidence surviving in Florence.³³

Modern scholarly research has shown the inaccuracy of Vasari's version of Benedetto's story, for though his removal to England was certainly connected with royal works, namely the high altar for Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey, he had been hired by Torrigiani together with other artists and not exclusively for work in England. Pier Francesco Maccari was the notary who between the end of August and the end of October 1519 drafted contracts for Benedetto da Rovezzano, Antonio di Piero di Lorenzo da Settignano, and Giovanni Ludovico di Bernardino di maestro Jacopo 'olim de Verona, habitator Florentie' (formerly of Verona, [now] dwelling in Florence).³⁴ Giovanni Ludovico I believe should be identified with the 'Lodovico scultore fiorentino' mentioned by Vasari in the very last section of the 1568 edition of the *Vite*, headed 'Diversi'. This sculptor was reported to have made notable works in England and in Bari but since Vasari had been unable to find neither records of him in Florence nor any surviving relative to quiz he simply mentioned his name.³⁵ A different notary, ser Antonio Dainelli da Bagnano, drew the contract with the young painter Antonio Toto (also called Toto del Nunziata) about whom more will follow later.³⁶

The agreements of Benedetto da Rovezzano, Antonio di Piero and Giovanni Ludovico differed only in so far as the latter was contracted to follow Torrigiani anywhere in Italy, France, Flanders, England or Germany but not Spain. Toto's agreement, perhaps due to a different notary, simply stated that he contracted to follow Torrigiani anywhere in the world (in quacumque mundi parte ubi voluerit dictus magister Petrus). Toto was also to work for others, as he should be ordered by Torrigiani; his room and board were to be paid for by Torrigiani, except when he was off working for others. All were contracted for four and a half years of service, their travel expenses from Florence and back again were to be covered by Torrigiani who also undertook to pay for their board and lodgings once abroad. There were salary differences reflecting the ranking of the sculptors: Benedetto, who at the time was one of the leading Florentine sculptors, was to be paid monthly 10 gold florins plus another 4 paid to his wife in Florence, Antonio di Piero's salary was set at 3 florins per month, Giovanni Lodovico was paid twice as much. Being a minor Toto was paid less, namely 60 scudi a year (equivalent to a monthly salary of 5 scudi), a third of which Torrigiani was to hold in trust for him until the term of his

³³ See Waldman at note 24 above.

³⁴ Waldman wrongly transcribes the name as Giovanni d'Alvise di Bernardino (Waldman, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano in England', 87 and fails to mention that the contracts for Antonio di Piero and Giovanni Ludovico (respectively ASFi, Notarile Antecosimiano, 12467 (Pierfrancesco Maccari 1518-19), ff. 361v-362r, and 381v) had been published by Darr, 'New Documents for Pietro Torrigiani', Document 18, 136, and Document 20, 137.

³⁵ 'E perchè de' nostri maestri italiani vivi siàno alla fine, dirò solo che avendo sentito non minore un Lodovico scultore fiorentino, quale in Inghilterra et in Bari ha fatto, secondo che m'è detto, cose notabili, per non aver trovato qua né parenti né cognome, né visto l'opere sue, non posso come vorrei farne altra memoria che questa del nominarlo'; Vasari, *Le Vite*, 6:223.

³⁶ ASFi, Notarile Antecosimiano, 5960 (ser Antonio Dainelli da Bagnano, 1515-1520), f. 254r-254v, see Darr, 'New Documents for Pietro Torrigiani', Document 19A, 137.

employment was up. So far no further contracts have surfaced in Florence Archive but, as suggested by Waldman, it might be possible that Giovanni di Benedetto da Maiano's journey to England was somehow connected with the 1519 recruitment of artists by Torrigiani. That he was not content with the four mentioned above is proved by a contract discovered by Supino in 1914 in the Bologna Archives. At the end of summer 1519 Torrigiani had gone to Bologna where he hired Zaccaria Zacchi, a terra-cotta sculptor from Volterra, whom he contracted to go to England for four years in exchange for his travel costs, miscellaneous expenses, and a salary of 60 ducats a year. The lack of English documentation about Zacchi suggests that, unlike the others, the sculptor went back to Bologna at the end of the statutory four years.³⁷

Toto, who remained in England as Anthony Toto, holding the office of Serjeant Painter under Henry VIII and Edward VI until his death in 1554, had trained in the workshop of Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, one of the largest and liveliest in Florence.³⁸ Vasari reports that Ridolfo's pupils were taught to work in a variety of media and in a wide range of genres so as to be able to produce portraits as well as banners; the output of the workshop was such that 'in the space of a few years and at great profit Ridolfo sent a large number of these works to England, Germany, and Spain'.³⁹ In this case the use of the locution 'he sent' (*ne mandò*) appears to imply an active participation by Ridolfo in the sale of these paintings beyond the Alps, but Vasari managed to avoid saying who precisely was behind this trade.

In the life of Bastiano 'Aristotile' da Sangallo, Vasari reported this artist's production of oil paintings depicting the Virgin and Child, some the product of his own invention, others copies after celebrated paintings by masters such as Raphael. He produced many works, Vasari wrote, that were sent to England (*furono mandati in Inghilterra*), but he did not specify who were the agents or intermediaries organizing this trade.⁴⁰ The impersonal form '*furono mandati in Inghilterra*' occurs again in relation to the paintings of Bachiacca (born Francesco d'Ubertino Verdi), praised by Vasari for his skill and accuracy, especially in small-scale works such as the ones he contributed to the celebrated furnishings for the bedroom of Pierfrancesco Borgherini and Margherita Acciaiuoli, as well as for those in the antechamber of Giovan Maria Benintendi.⁴¹

³⁷ Iginio Benvenuto Supino, *Le sculture delle porte di S. Petronio in Bologna*, Florence: Istituto Micrografico Italiano, 1914, 62.

³⁸ On Toto see Susan Foister, 'Holbein, Antonio Toto, and the Market for Italian Painting in Early Tudor England', in *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance*, Sicca and Waldman eds, 281-306.

³⁹ '[Ridolfo] tenne sempre in bottega molti giovani a dipignere; il che fu cagione, per concorrenza l'uno dell'altro, che assai ne riuscirono bonissimi maestri, alcuni in fare ritratti di naturale, altri in lavorare a fresco et altri a tempera, et in dipignere speditamente drappi. A costoro facendo Ridolfo lavorare quadri, tavole e tele, in pochi anni ne mandò con suo molto utile una infinità in Inghilterra, nell'Allemagna et in Ispagna'; Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5:444.

⁴⁰ On Aristotile da Sangallo, see Adriano Ghisetti Giavarina, *Aristotile da Sangallo: Architettura, scenografia e pittura tra Roma e Firenze nella prima metà del Cinquecento; ipotesi di attribuzione dei disegni raccolti agli Uffizi*, Rome: Multigrafica, 1990.

⁴¹ Vasari's life of Bachiacca is found inside that of his master, Aristotele da Sangallo. On Bachiacca, see Robert G. La France, 'Bacchiacca's Formula for Success', in *The Art Market in Italy: 15th-17th Centuries*,

In two instances the paintings and panels sent abroad as part of a speculative enterprise by Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio arose interest and a demand for the authors to move abroad, thus Baccio Gotti was taken to France to work for François I, and Toto del Nunziata to England to work for the King. The impersonal form 'furono condotti' is replaced by the more specific 'con alcuni mercanti fiorentini condottosi in Inghilterra' in the life of Perin del Vaga, where Vasari returns to the topic of Toto del Nunziata.⁴² To my knowledge only in one instance Vasari was able to associate the specific name of a merchant to a painting taken to England, and that is in the life of Rosso Fiorentino. After having mentioned the *Moses defending the daughters of Jethro* (Florence, Uffizi) for Giovanni Bandini, Vasari adds 'Likewise he painted another one for Giovanni Cavalcanti, who brought it to England, showing the time when Jacob is given water by the women at the well. This work was deemed divine because of the extreme grace he employed in painting the naked male bodies and the women adorned with veils, tresses, and refined garments'.⁴³

The fact that Vasari singled out the name of Giovanni Cavalcanti, a powerful merchant-banker, is worthy of consideration as it raises questions concerning the reasons for commissioning Rosso's painting in the first instance and for its being taken to England. Vasari noted paintings by several other Florentine artists as having been sold on the English market, but he described the migrations of those works differently from that of Rosso's painting. Elsewhere I have tried to offer an explanation of the iconography and occasion for this commission which I suggested might have been intended as a diplomatic gift; nevertheless I think we can also assume that Cavalcanti intended to use the painting as a means for introducing Rosso into royal circles, hopefully paving the way for a proper royal appointment.⁴⁴

As with the works of sculptors, those by painters were part of the luxury goods marketed by Florentine merchant-bankers. A number of paintings recorded in the London house of the company run by Giovanni Cavalcanti and Pier Francesco de' Bardi are consistent with the subjects and type of works produced by Aristotile da Sangallo, Bachiacca, and Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, and a further link to this circle

ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews Grieco, Modena: Panini, 2003, 237–52; and La France, *Bachiacca: Artist of the Medici Court*, Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2008. On the Borgherini bedchamber, see Allan Braham, 'The Bed of Pierfrancesco Borgherini', *The Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979): 754–65; and, more recently, Antonio Natali, 'La camera fiorentina di Pierfrancesco Borgherini', in *Sebastiano del Piombo e la cappella Borgherini nel contesto della pittura rinascimentale*, ed. Santiago Arroyo Esteban, Bruno Marocchini, and Claudio Seccaroni, Florence: Nardini, 2010, 36–39, 151.

⁴² 'Eravi tra gl'altri uno, il quale gli fu uno sprone che del continuo lo pugneva, il quale fu nominato Toto del Nunziata; il quale, ancor egli aggiugnendo col tempo a paragone con i begli ingegni, parti di Fiorenza, e con alcuni mercanti fiorentini condottosi in Inghilterra, quivi ha fatto tutte l'opere sue, e dal re di quella provincia, il quale ha anco servito nell'architettura e fatto particolarmente il principale palazzo, è stato riconosciuto grandissimamente', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5: 108.

⁴³ 'Similmente un altro ne fece a Giovanni Cavalcanti, che andò in Inghilterra, quando Iacob piglia il bere da quelle donne alla fonte, che fu tenuto divino, atteso che vi erano ignudi e femmine lavorate con somma grazia, alle quali egli di continuo si diletto far pannicini sottili, acconciature di capo con trecce, ed abbigliamenti per il dosso', Vasari, *Le Vite*, 4:477.

⁴⁴ Cinzia M. Sicca, 'Rosso e l'Inghilterra', in *Pontorno e Rosso Atti del Convegno di Empoli e Volterra*, R.P.Ciardi e A.Natali eds, Venice: Marsilio, 1996, 147-56, and Sicca, 'Giorgio Vasari and the progress of Italian art', 377-379.

of artists is of course provided by Antonio Toto, who in 1522 was paid for painting canvas awnings for the loggia of the company's house.⁴⁵ It does appear that the merchants, unnamed by Vasari, who moved works by these artists to England were in fact either Giovanni Cavalcanti and his partner, Pierfrancesco di Piero Bardi, or some of their numerous associates and corresponding partners, such as Pierfrancesco Borgherini, whose bank acted as their correspondent in Rome.

Although Vasari is silent on this, the arrival of Toto in London may also be connected with Cavalcanti. In 1515 Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio and his workshop had played a very important part in the organization of the ephemeral architecture and decorations for the entry of Leo X into Florence on November 30, the pope's first visit to the city since his election to the Holy See. The city had been bursting with activity, having little more than a month to prepare the extraordinary pageants that took place. Toto and Perino del Vaga competed against each other once again as they each contributed a 'figure' seven *braccia* tall for the triumphal arch before the church of Santa Trinita. Toto took also part in the decoration of the Santissima Annunziata, a church consecrated by the pope during his visit.⁴⁶ Cavalcanti, who was one of the pope's Gentlemen of the Bedchamber as well an important international merchant-banker, had seen the city transformed by its artists, and he may well have recommended to Henry VIII that the English king bring over from Florence someone like Toto who could devise the pageants, temporary architecture, and stage sets necessary for a monarch who aspired to visibility on the international stage and who would increasingly host foreign embassies. When the idea of a meeting between the kings of England and France was first conceived in 1515, the requirements of display were immediately at the forefront of concerns as testified by the reports of the Venetian ambassador to his Senate. The meeting between the two kings was postponed but gained new momentum after the birth of the French dauphin on February 25, 1518. The royal encounter, known as the Field of Cloth of Gold, eventually took place in the Vald'Or, between Guines and Ardres, from June 5 to 24, 1520, a year later than originally planned. Its organization required extraordinary effort and ingenuity, comparable to that deployed in Florence in 1515; the meeting at Guines was the most important of the political and diplomatic events in which the English court presented itself on the Continent and therefore required the tried and tested skills of Florentine artists, arguably the most sophisticated and up-to-date when it came to orchestrating modern forms of courtly display.

Due to the nature of Vasari's sources of information many other Tuscan and Italian artists whose names appear in English royal accounts and other types of documents go unmentioned in the *Vite*. Often it is impossible to associate any surviving work to Vincent Volpe, Ellys Carmian, Nicholas Florentine and a host of others whose names are anglicized and wrongly spelled, but it should also be

⁴⁵ Cinzia M. Sicca, 'Consumption and Trade of Art between Italy and England in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century: The London House of the Bardi and Cavalcanti Company', *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2002), 163–201.

⁴⁶ Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5:596. On the pope's entry, see John Shearman, 'The Florentine Entrata of Leo X (1515)', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38, 1975, 136–54; and Ilaria Ciseri, *L'ingresso trionfale di Leone X in Firenze nel 1515*, Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1990, esp. 73–74.

considered that many of these so-called painters were in fact employed in ephemeral and decorative works for feasts and pageants.⁴⁷ Their work was no less important than that of the painters and sculptors who made it in the *Vite*, and in many respects they appear to have fitted better in their new environment. It is remarkable that no great sculptor settled in England, or that no great architect went there. The slow petering out of the flux of Italian artists to England was certainly connected to the changing religious and political circumstances in the two countries, but it must also have been inextricably tied with the decline of the leading merchant companies that appear to have driven the market until the early 1530s.

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⁴⁷ See Erna Auerbach, 'Vincent Volpe, the King's Painter', *The Burlington Magazine* 92, August 1950, 222, 225-227, 229, and Erna Auerbach, *Tudor Artists: A study of painters in the royal service and of portraiture on illuminated documents from the accession of Henry VIII to the death of Elizabeth I*, London: Athlone Press, 1954.