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Bartolomeo Ammannati: I Palazzi Grifoni e Giugni; La nuova architettura dei palazzi fiorentini del secondo Cinquecento by Marco Calafati
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Marco Calafati. *Bartolomeo Ammannati: I Palazzi Grifoni e Giugni; La nuova architettura dei palazzi fiorentini del secondo Cinquecento.*

Fondazione Carlo Marchi Studi 28. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011. xxiii + 398 pp. €140. ISBN: 978-88-222-6042-0.

The Florence of Cosimo I de' Medici was alive with new men, courtiers, and bankers not drawn from old noble families and who celebrated their magnificence by erecting grand new family palaces in prominent settings. Two architects helped them fulfill their aspirations, Bartolomeo Ammannati and Bernardo Buontalenti. Ammannati, best known for his work on Villa Giulia and Palazzo Farnese in Rome, received commissions to erect family palaces from the Medicean courtier Ugolino Grifoni and from the Florentine merchant-banker in service to the Vatican, Simone da Firenze. Marco Calafati's impressive new book, issued in time for the 500-year anniversary of Ammannati's birth in 1511, for the first time offers a detailed building history of the two palaces, along with biographies of the patrons.

Although both structures testify to the freshly invigorated architecture of late sixteenth-century architecture in Florence, neither has previously received adequate study, to the point that Palazzo Grifoni was long misattributed to Buontalenti. For the two palaces, Ammannati chose a *maniera antica* plan normally associated with rural or suburban villas, axially oriented through the entrance to a porticoed courtyard leading to a Renaissance garden. Following the model of Jacopo Barozzi il Vignola at Villa Giulia, Ammannati treated the sequence of lateral openings and loggias as a *scaenae frons*, deliberately emphasizing their theatrical potential and terminating with a nymphaeum. Calafati's detailed analysis of room distribution, vistas, and sequences compares the two palaces with Ammannati's other projects and other earlier Florentine palaces. The categorical imperative of absolute symmetry along with reference to earlier traditions marks the façades as well, in particular in the classicizing cornices evocative of fifteenth-century Florentine palaces. Ammannati transformed existing Florentine façade design in Palazzo Grifoni with the introduction of a monumental portal linked to the central window of the first floor above, a grand hierarchy repeated in Palazzo Giugni also visible in the details of the frieze, and in the sculptural enrichments with which Ammannati (also a prominent sculptor) outfitted the two façades. Calafati persuasively demonstrates the significance of these two late sixteenth-century palaces with exhaustive documentation and patient, careful reconstruction of what can be discerned from archival sources and from the buildings in their current states.

Although the scarcity of designs and other documentation for Palazzo Giugni presents problems, Calafati makes full use of what is available in letters and other sources, and, fortunately, Palazzo Giugni is the best preserved of the two structures. Ample documentation renders such a historical reconstruction of the design sequence and Renaissance garden possible for the less-well-preserved Palazzo Grifoni, which Calafati elaborates with painstaking rigor. Unusually, the study does not end with the completion of construction, but continues on to document the fates of the two palaces through the twentieth century. Happily for architectural

historians, the publisher allows the reader to follow Calafati's arguments closely by providing lavish illustrations, ninety-nine within the text complemented by a series of eleven color plates and 158 full- or half-page black-and-white plates.

Equally as interesting as the buildings are the patrons. Ugolino Giugni was a somewhat shady and fawning courtier. With his profound knowledge of protocol, ceremony, and court life he managed to insinuate himself into the good graces especially of Maria Salviati, mother of Cosimo I, and then of Lucrezia de' Medici d'Este and Grand Duke Francesco I. Years of close association with the Medici family gave him the opportunity to accumulate considerable wealth, not always honestly. Simone de Fiorenzuola, on the other hand, born to a family of wealthy notaries, began a career as a merchant, and like many other Florentines who hoped to restore the ancient republic, transferred to Rome as Cosimo imposed a progressively more authoritarian regime on the city. The move turned out to be a wise one for Simone, who joined his maternal uncles and became a banker and merchant serving Pope Paul III, among others. Nonetheless, like Giugni and other newly prosperous Florentines, Simone yearned to erect a decorous and magnificent palace for his family. Calafati documents the astute choice of sites near the church of Santissima Annunziata and along the processional route for major state public celebrations. With this ambitious and fine study, the author sets the stage for further study of how Medicean courtiers and newly prominent men used the city as a stage upon which to erect monumental palaces and thereby cement their status in late sixteenth-century Florence.

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