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Artist and Patron Relationships: Social Power Dynamics in Renaissance Italy

Katherine E. Siegler
Missouri State University, Siegler715@live.missouristate.edu

ARTIST AND PATRON RELATIONSHIPS: SOCIAL POWER DYNAMICS IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

A Master's Thesis

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By

Katherine E. Siegler

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ABSTRACT

In historical discourse, one of the main discussions that can be found is in relation to determining who holds power in social and political environments. The world of art in Renaissance Italy is a place where such power dynamics were of great importance. My thesis examines social power dynamics in the artist-patron relationship in Renaissance Italy in order to discern who held power in these complex bonds and how such relationships influenced and impacted Renaissance society at large. This work is divided into two units. The first unit provides examples and arguments that maintain that the patron was the main influence in this dynamic. The second section argues the contrary; here I will explore circumstances wherein the artist executes power over their patron. The conclusion of my thesis explores the possibility of the existence of a middle ground, wherein power in the artist patron relationship during the Renaissance was flexible and shifted between both parties depending on the circumstance.

KEYWORDS: Renaissance, art, patron, artist, power, Italy, social influence, political influence

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Approved:

Jessica Elliott, Ph.D., Thesis Committee Chair

Julia Troche, Ph.D., Committee Member

Austra Reinis, Ph.D., Committee Member

Julie Masterson, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College

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Introduction of Subject

> Master Martino, painter, son of the late Bartolomeo, hired out to paint all four vaults of the New Room of the Palace of the Lord Priors, down to the moldings at the end of the said vaults, in good and suitable colors, with as many figures as are painted in the other four vaults of the chapel of the palace, and like them in workmanship, manner, and form, and all expenses for colors and everything else being master Martino's, except the plaster and the scaffoldings, which are to be at the cost of the city of Siena, and not of the said master Martino, and with the condition that he does not have to put gold on the panels, but instead of gold can put tin, and for all this he is to have from the city of Siena forty-four Sienese gold florins. And he promised to have done the whole work and have it finished by the end of February next [February 1408].[1]

The record above comes from a notarized contract between the government of Siena and the artist Martino di Bartolomeo. The agreement—penned in 1407—commissions the artist to paint the ceiling of one of the rooms in the Palazzo Pubblico, the town hall of Siena. This document represents one of the social interactions that defined the Italian Renaissance: that of the artist and their patron. The contract above contains all of the information historians associate with a traditional interaction between an artist and their patron. The document outlines the agreement reached between the two parties and discloses a timeline for completion, the medium to be used/images to be depicted, and the compensation the artist (Bartolomeo) was to receive following the completion of the project.

[1] "1407, June 18. Assignment of the painting of the New Room (of the City Hall of Siena)," in *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson, trans. Creighton Gilbert (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 21.

Historians who study this period utilize these interactions to help create a cohesive picture of how professional society operated during the Renaissance era. A significant amount of discussion among these scholars lies in determining which party (artist or patron) held authority/dominance in these encounters. According to historians such as Mary Hollingsworth, Bram Kempers, and Martin Wackernagel, power in these interactions belonged to the patron as they appear to exert financial and creative control over the artist under their employ. However, scholars such as Paul McLean and Martin Warnke provide a valid argument that power could be held by the artist as these individuals could control how a patron was perceived by the rest of Renaissance society. Both of these arguments can be affirmed through the use of various primary source materials from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, including written correspondence between artists and patrons, surviving legal documents such as contracts and financial records, and information provided by the chroniclers Giorgio Vasari and the anonymous author known as the "Anonimo Gaddiano."

In dialogue with the work of these scholars alongside primary source documentation from the Italian Renaissance period, this thesis intends to show how the artist-patron relationship influenced Florentine social norms and how these changes were adapted by other territories in the Italian Peninsula during this period. Furthermore, this thesis will explore the division of power in the artist-patron relationship in order to discern whether power was held in absolute by one party or whether there were circumstances wherein power was balanced between the two entities.

Political and Economic Context

The artist-patron relationship that is classified as a product of the Italian Renaissance was

heavily influenced by political turmoil (both within and between the Italian city-states and other European powers) in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. The root of this unease originates in the eleventh century with the Investiture Controversy (1046-1216) between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Initially taking advantage of the chaos between the two parties, several cities in the Italian Peninsula—including Florence, Padua, Perugia, and Siena—successfully declared their independence and established their own governments.[2] This independence also allowed for the Italian city-states to develop their own economies (largely based on trade), resulting in the rise of the merchant class. By the early thirteenth century, as noted by historians John Najemy and Mary Hollingsworth, political shifts and civil unrest began to occur throughout the Italian Peninsula.

According to Hollingsworth, this unrest was the result of the growing power of the merchant class and guilds who challenged the established feudal authority: the Italian aristocracy.[3] In his book, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575* (2006) Najemy affirms the observation presented by Hollingsworth. Najemy writes that in the "cities of northern and central Italy, the *popolo* [that is, the community of merchants, artisans and other professionals], organized in guilds and neighborhood military associations and imbued notions of citizenship and the common good absorbed from ancient Rome, launched the first politically effective and ideologically sustained challenge to an elite class, a challenge that succeeded, not in displacing the elite, but in transforming it."[4] Utilizing their financial superiority to gain political positions

[2] Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1994), 12; John Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 2-3.

[3] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 13.

[4] Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 2.

and momentum, the merchant class successfully redefined the concept of power in the century before the Renaissance began.

The repercussions of the years of civil unrest in the Italian peninsula significantly influenced the political, economic, and social life of Italian city-states. Perhaps the region most impacted by these changes was the Republic of Florence. Here, the struggle for political dominance between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papal States divided the region into two factions: "the mainly aristocratic supporters of the Holy Roman Empire (Ghibellines) and the predominantly mercantile supporters of the Papacy (Guelfs)."[5] Despite the resolution of the original controversy in 1122 at the Concordat of Worms, the struggle for power in Florence among the Ghibellines and Guelfs persisted. The civil war that ensued between the two parties lasted until the mid-thirteenth century (ca. 1250) when the merchant class (Guelfs) overthrew the aristocracy and established a representative style government. The removal of the Ghibellines from prominence in favor of the Guelfs led to significant changes in the political (and subsequent social) sphere of Florence.

In order to firmly establish their control over Florence, the Guelfs had to redefine the concept of power in the Florentine political sphere. The alterations made by these individuals are best summarized by Hollingworth. Following the expulsion of the Ghibellines, power in Florence was no longer determined by aristocratic inheritance and succession. Rather, an individual's power was directly related to their mercantile wealth and their guild association, both of which became a perquisite for holding political office in Renaissance Florence.[6] These changes allowed for a select number of banking and merchant families (such as the Medici, Tornabuoni, Strozzi, and Capponi) to possess control of the region until the sixteenth century.

[5] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 13.
[6] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 13.

However, after the merchant class overthrew the aristocracy, power and influence now had to be earned and displayed. Since wealth became the primary measure of success and power, the societal elite began to commission large public works in order to show their power and influence in society.[7] This means that the mercantile and banking families who now had control over the Italian Peninsula became some of the most powerful and influential patrons in the Renaissance art world.

Therefore, these families played a key role in the professionalization of the occupation of artist in the Renaissance art world. According to historian Martin Warnke, this new group of social elites could not rely upon the clergy to "meet their artistic needs," as their predecessors had.[8] Instead, these new elite families drew upon the skills of craftsmen among the laity. The creation of the guild system in the fourteenth century also assisted in this development, as these groups imposed codes of conduct and supervised the training of learning artists.[9] This led to significant advances in the techniques and methods used by artists in the fifteenth century. The prominence of families such as the Medici and guilds such as the *Arte del Cambio* also contributed to the important role commissioned public and private works played in power dynamics in Renaissance art through the late sixteenth century.

Terminology

Patron. During the Renaissance period, there were numerous consumers who purchased the products created by artists and craftsmen. However, the patron differs from the more

[7] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 36.

[8] Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3.

[9] Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power, and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Allen Lane, 1992), 302.

traditional customer that a craftsman might encounter. According to art historian H.W. Jansen, the conventional customer was "steady"; they valued consistency and typically returned to the same craftsmen because they knew they would receive the same product they had in the past.[10] This consistent stream of income was one of the ways artists and craftsmen maintained their livelihood outside of private patronage. Unlike the traditional customer encountered by an artist/craftsman, the patron was distinctive as they were fickle in their desires and decision making.[11] Additionally, Hollingsworth notes that the ability to commission custom works was restricted to the financial and political elite of the period.[12] This means that while such interactions had the ability to be more profitable for the artist, these private dealings also took more time to complete as the artist had to subscribe to the specific desires of one individual/group. With this information in mind, the best definition for the term patron as it relates to this thesis is given by historian D.S. Chambers. Chambers defines the patron as "those persons responsible, individually or collectively, for commissioning and paying for works produced by artists."[13] Furthermore, the terms client and patron will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis and both terms will follow the assigned patron definition discussed above.

Artist. Unlike the patron who evolved from the traditional customer, the attributes that define the artist remain consistent throughout this discussion of the Italian Renaissance. As described by D.S. Chambers, an artist is recognized to be an artisan or skilled craftsman who often developed their abilities under the tutelage of a master in his workshop, before pursuing

[10] H.W. Jansen, "The Birth of 'Artistic License': The Dissatisfied Patron in the Early Renaissance," in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 345.

[11] H.W. Jansen, "The Birth of 'Artistic License,'" 345.

[12] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 2.

[13] D.S. Chambers, introduction to *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1970), xxiv.

work as an individual.[14] Furthermore, artists are understood to be the "designers and producers of works of an acceptable or superior standard in the various techniques of painting, sculpture, and architecture."[15] These skilled individuals were those sought out by patrons during the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries for custom commissions.

Power. While there is little argument that power dynamics exist within society, the term is still difficult to define as it is a theoretical phenomenon that is the result of the construction of society. Providing an absolute definition is further complicated by the numerous theories that have been presented by sociologists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, John Thibaut and Harold Kelley, and Richard Emerson which all focus on different aspects and influences upon a society. The hinderance created by these multiple approaches is discussed in the article "The Power Concept in Sociology: A Theoretical Assessment (1988)," by sociologists Stephen McNamee and Michael Glasser. McNamee and Glasser attribute this difficulty to what theorists "allow" into their definition and analysis of power in society. The article argues that "some theorists allow only for intended power while others allow for unintended consequences; some allow only for actual power while others consider potential power as well; and some theorists consider individual power while others focus on collective power."[16]Although the different facets and forms of power are of importance when studying this phenomenon, the application of so many variables make the term difficult to define in absolute.

Since a generalized definition of power cannot be applied, the use of the term in this work merits specific clarification. Therefore, the term "power" as it is utilized in this thesis will be drawn from concepts and analysis presented by sociologist Alicia Cast. In her essay "Power

[14] Chambers, Introduction, xxv.
[15] Chambers, Introduction, xxiv.
[16] Stephen McNamee and Michael Glasser, "The Power Concept in Sociology: A Theoretical Assessment," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 15, no. 1 (1988): 80.

and the Ability to Define the Situation" (2003), Cast argues that the phenomenon of power is closely related to an individual's identity and their ability to control a given situation. According to Cast's study, by controlling the situational means the individual works to "define the self as a particular type of person, thereby confirming important identities," which was done by controlling "what symbolic interactionists refer to…as the *definition of the situation*."[17] Based on Cast's observations, the concept of power is closely associated with social interaction and the definition of the self.

Under Cast's theory, the individual who controls how a social interaction plays out, affirms something about their identity while simultaneously exerting dominance over the other parties involved in the exchange. When I apply Cast's initial theory to the concept of power in the artist-patron relationship in the Italian Renaissance, the patron is seen as the one *defining the situation*, as they controlled both the financial gain of the artist and initiated the commission process. An example of this can be seen in the interaction between the Ghirlandaio brothers (Domenico and Davide) and the Franciscan order at Palco. In the surviving contract, we see the Franciscan order possessing the ability to define the situation as argued by Cast. The contract provides specific details that the Ghirlandaio brothers were legally bound to uphold— such as the size of the final altarpiece, the materials to be used and the images to be depicted—in order to receive the salary being offered.[18] Under these conditions, the artist existed in the role of dependent as they relied upon the commission of patrons to sustain their livelihoods. Therefore, in this scenario, the patron both defines the situation and reaffirms their identity as a member of

[17] Alicia D. Cast, "Power and the Ability to Define the Situation," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2003): 185.

[18] "Contract of Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio with the Franciscan Friars of Palco, 20 August 1490," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 15.

the upper echelon of society.

However, Cast's study also reveals a duality to the notion of power in social situations. This dichotomy is presented when she discusses how "even while individuals are trying to influence others, those others are seeking to control the situation so that it reflects their own conception."[19] Power in this instance is dependent upon the individual's ability to resist the influence of the dominant party in favor of their own conceived reality and understanding. Based on these observations it is arguable that power could be found in the hands of the party being influenced. When this aspect of Cast's theory is applied to the artist/patron dynamic, I argue that it is reasonable to claim that if an artist could resist the influence of a patron while simultaneously maintaining a working relationship, then the power dynamic would shift in favor of the artist. An example of this is seen in the correspondence between the artist Titian of Cadore and the Venetian government. In this exchange, we see the artist refuting the traditional influence held by the government by demanding that he be given the role of *sansaria* regardless of other artists who would receive the position before him (per the *spettativa* system).[20] The Council of Ten's approval of Titian's appeal indicates a shift in which party "defined the situation" (and therefore had power) as presented by Cast. By agreeing to Titian's proposal, the artist successfully took control of the interaction by establishing a working relationship with his patron while simultaneously making the situation reflect his conceived reality.

Therefore, maintaining that power is a phenomenon which results from social interaction, this thesis will define the term of power in light of Cast's observations. Thus the term power should be understood as a concept that is dependent upon which party possesses the ability to

[19] Cast, "Power," 185.

[20] "Petition of Titian to the Council of Ten, 1513," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 81-82.

define a social situation. An individual or group defines the situation by utilizing their social, financial, artistic, or political influence to exert sway over the subservient party.

Nonverbal Culture. The theory of nonverbal culture is one of the simplest terms to define for the scope of this work. As a concept, nonverbal culture is first introduced in 1993 by historian Martin Warnke in his work *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*. In a section devoted to outlining life in Italian courts, Warnke observes how a prince's surroundings had to "conform to an international standard that determined both their outward appearance and the political message they were meant to convey."[21] An influential individual in Renaissance society was expected to use commissioned works (such as Triumphal Arches) to display their superior power and social influence. However, the term nonverbal culture is not given a clear definition until a decade later by historian Jill Burke. In her work, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (2004), Burke defines nonverbal culture in the Italian Renaissance as the use of visual arts (that is the commissioning of public works) by influential families to "present the dominant social virtues of family permanence, of neighborhood and civic solidarity, of piety and charity, and of intelligence and learning."[22] While Warnke was the first to technically introduce the concept of nonverbal culture to Renaissance discourse, Burke is the first to provide a clear definition of the actual term. Therefore, in an attempt to remain consistent, this thesis will utilize the definition provided by Burke.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One will build on the work of historians Mary Hollingsworth, Jill Burke, Martin

[21] Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 198.

[22] Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 1 and 189.

Wackernagel, and Bram Kempers to explore the question of who held power in the artist-patron relationship. The chapter will draw on primary source evidence, including correspondence between the artists Andrea Mantegna and Pietro Perugino with the Mantuan court and an exchange between Bartolomeo Gadio and his patron Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the Duke of Milan. Further evidence is found in notarial records of artists' contracts from Florence and in the accounts of the chronicler Giorgio Vasari. These interactions are used to examine the ways that patrons exercised power in their interactions with the artists they commissioned. This chapter will also explore how patrons utilized these commissioned works to exert power and influence in Renaissance society.

Chapter Two builds on the work of historians Paul McLean and Martin Warnke to explore whether it was possible for the artist to be the dominant party in these exchanges. This section will draw upon a variety of primary source material, including interactions between artists such as Benozzo Gozzoli, Domenico Veneziano and Titian of Cadore with their respective patrons. Public records from Florence, Venice and Cortona provide further insight into these complicated relationships. These materials will be used to examine circumstances wherein it was the artist who exercised power through their exchanges and negotiations with the patrons who sought to employ their talents.

The conclusion of this work will expand upon these findings in order to explore whether a balance of power could be found in the artist-patron relationships. The conclusion will also use the work of historian H.W. Jansen to explore circumstances wherein neither party held influence or interactions where both the artist and their patron held a degree of power (as in the case of artistic license). This section of my thesis will utilize surviving correspondence between the artist Matteo de' Pasti and Piero de' Medici; and between sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti and the *Arte del*

Cambio in Florence. Further insight will be provided by mitigation records and court documents from Florence and Milan to explore occasions where power was balanced between artist and patron.

THE CASE FOR THE PATRON IN RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

When discussing who held the power in patron-artist interactions, the general consensus among scholars is that it was the patron who had supreme authority over the artist in their employment. This chapter will build on the studies of historians such as Mary Hollingsworth, Bram Kempers and Martin Wackernagel who observe how patrons utilized financial superiority and social influence to maintain power in the artist-patron dynamic. Utilizing correspondence and legal documents (such as contractual agreements) between well-known artists such as Neri di Bicci, Pietro Perugino and Benozzo Gozzoli and their respective patrons, this chapter will show how the patrons applied these resources to exert power over the artists in their employ and over Renaissance society at large.

The Patron's Financial Power

One of the earliest scholars to claim that power resided in the hands of the patron was Swiss historian Martin Wackernagel. In his work *The World of the Florentine Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshop and Art Market* (1938), Wackernagel argued that "art did not simply originate from artistic initiative…as an end in itself. It did not take in its material value and function by way of supply process (through exhibitions and art dealers).[1] Rather, Wackernagel observed that the creation of art during the Renaissance was rooted in two fundamental factors that existed outside of the artist's control: the act of commission and the influence of the patron. According to Wackernagel's study, these two elements were crucial in the development of not only the art world, but Florentine society at large. Dutch historian Bram Kempers builds upon

[1] Martin Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshop and Art Market*, trans. Alison Luchs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 5-6.

the observations of Wackernagel in his work *Painting, Power, and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance* (1987). Kempers agrees with the theory presented by Wackernagel when he describes how the artist/patron interaction is characterized by "the dominant role of the client who issues a commission," which exists "in marked contrast to a situation in which art is produced for the market or with a view to gain a subsidy," which would afford the artist a degree of influence.[2] Here, Kempers establishes that while there were multiple avenues wherein art was created and subsequently sold, the most common avenue of employment for artisans during this period was private patronage. According to Kempers, in the realm of private patronage there existed four main entities which most often hired artists in the Renaissance: the mendicant orders, the city-state government, merchant families and princely courts.[3] These four groups dominated private patronage during the Renaissance period due to their financial and social prowess.

Wackernagel discusses the importance of these factors in the early pages of his work. Here, he observes that the development of the process of commission was important as it demonstrates a demand for the artist to fulfill.[4] Correspondingly, Wackernagel also highlights the importance of the patron in these interactions. Wackernagel maintains that the patron "had to be present and active in order to set artistic ingenuity in motion and make the work of art materially possible."[5] Based on the observations provided here, it becomes clear that the Renaissance art world was dependent upon the concept of supply and demand. When operating under this theory, I observe that the artist appears to be in a superior role as their talent and works are in high

[2] Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power, and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Allen Lane, 1992), 5.
[3] Kempers, *Power, and Patronage*, 304.
[4] Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist*, 5.
[5] Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist*, 5.

demand. Furthermore, the talent of the artist could be considered a commodity as only a select group of individuals were able to complete the works desired by the commissioning patrons.

However, this was not the case in Renaissance society. Since the patron was the individual (or group) providing the demand for the skills the artist supplied, this puts them in a superior role in this social dynamic as the artist was financially dependent upon the patron in these interactions. By applying Wackernagel's theory that financial superiority influenced these social interactions to the surviving records of the artist Neri di Bicci and the Abbot of San Pancrazio, I show the impact financial superiority held in these interactions. In 1455, di Bicci was contracted to complete a fresco for the cloister of the Vallombrosian monastery (Figure 1.1). What is interesting about the interaction between di Bicci and the monastery is that each party's records of the arrangement survive in the form of financial records and contractual agreements. Di Bicci's record of the contract reads as follows:

> 1 March 1455
>
> I record that on the above day I Neri di Bicci, painter, undertook to paint for the said Abbot Benedetto, Abbot of San Pancrazio, Florence, a small arch in the cloister of the said house, in which I must do a San Giovanni Gualberto [founder of the Vallombrosian order] with ten other saints and blessed monks of their Order, and at the foot an abbot kneeling, which figures must appear in a circular chapel. The sky is to be azure and starry, and the eyes cut out, and all must be adorned and rendered as well as I can possibly do it, all at my expense for gold, azure, chalk and every other colour needed.
>
> 149 *lire* paid on 18 August 1455.[6]

Here, we see many of the basic components that were normally attributed to a contract between

[6] "Neri di Bicci's Record of the Contract," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 11.

an artist and their patron: the type of image to be completed, the materials to be used and the amount of payment that was given. However, the financial records kept by the monastery show numerous instances wherein di Bicci relied upon the financial support of the monastery during the year he worked on the commissioned fresco. The accounts of the monastery from 1455 to 1456 show twelve recorded instances wherein di Bicci received funds for the materials needed to complete the work.[7] An excerpt of the financial transactions between di Bicci and the monastery is recorded below:

> Record of our expenditure in having the painting done of San Giovanni Gualberto and other saints and brothers of our Order which Neri di Bicci is painting in our cloister.
>
> (Signed) I Neri di Bicci, painter, am in agreement with Abbot Benedetto of San Pancrazio to do the whole of the said work for 149 *lire* on this day 1 March 1455.
>
> On 6 March 1455 Neri began to mix the chalk and had cash from me, Abbott, for sand.
>
> On the said day Neri also had a load of grain which Domenico measured, at the price of 20 *soldi* a bushel.
>
> On 26 March 1455 Neri di Bicci had, he said for buying azure and pieces of gold,
>
> 2 large florins.
>
> On 2 April 1455, for azure still needed for the vaulting, Neri had from me 8 *grossi* in cash 2 *lire* 4 *soldi*…[8]
>
> On 20 June 1455 he needed gold for the said work 117 *s* [*soldi*] 6 *d* [*denari*]…
>
> On 24 July 1456 the said Benedetto, sacristan, paid the remainder 18 *l* [*lire*]. [9]

[7] "Monastic Record of Payments to Neri di Bicci, 1455-6," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 12-13.

[8] In the Renaissance period, many Italian states used both gold and silver coinage which fluctuated based on the local price of gold. In Renaissance Florence, the *florin* equated to approximately 3.53 grams of gold. The *lira*, *soldi* and *denari* were used in the exchange of silver during this period at a rate of 1 *lira* equaling 20 *soldi* or 240 *denari*. Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1994), xi.

[9] "Monastic Record of Payments to Neri di Bicci, 1455-6," 12-13.

Figure 1.1 *San Giovanni Gualberto and Followers* (1455), a fresco by Neri di Bicci for the Abbot of the church of San Pancrazio in Florence. [10]

Both of the surviving accounts clearly demonstrate how the patron utilized their financial status to maintain superiority in these interactions. This is seen in the financial records of the

[10] Neri di Bicci, *San Giovanni Gualberto and Followers (Saint John Gualberto Enthroned Among Vallombrosian Saints)*, 1455, Fresco, Santa Trinita, Florence Italy, https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.14500423?seq=1.

monastery as di Bicci regularly seeks out the monastery for various needs throughout his time completing the fresco. Correspondingly, the financial influence of the patron is also seen in di Bicci's record of the contract as it shows that all of the materials required for the work were to come out of the initial sum given to the artist. This is of interest as it would be more common for the artist to receive some type of stipend for materials that would be provided by the patron. In the case of di Bicci and the Abbot of San Pancrazio it appears as though the artist was expected to use his own wages (the agreed upon 149 *lire*) to purchase the materials needed to complete the work. Based upon what we can infer from the surviving documentation, it is clear that di Bicci was expected to complete the commissioned cloister fresco for no more than 149 *lire*. Historians can assume that di Bicci completed the project under budget and was then given the remaining 18 *lire* as personal profit. However, it is unclear if the only compensation di Bicci received was the 18 *lire* or if the monastery reimbursed him the full 149 *lire* as agreed in the contract.

Alongside the more traditional (and more well-known) interactions wherein the patron commissioned a specific artist for one project, historians must also consider how this dynamic worked in the case of an artist being hired to exclusively serve the court of a patron. In these circumstances, an artist (usually through either competition or recommendation) was appointed as the court painter by his patron. I argue that such interactions are an example of a patron establishing and maintaining financial power as the artist became totally reliant and subservient to the patron he served. This dynamic is best explained by historian Martin Warnke in his work *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (1993) where he examines the implications of an artist accepting such a position. According to Warnke, when an artist accepted a position in the court of his patron, he became the responsibility of his patron in exchange for an

oath of loyalty.[11] Under the terms of such an agreement, the expenses of the artist (including housing, clothing, food, and healthcare) were all covered by the patron.[12] Additionally, many artists received an annual salary while serving the court in this capacity. One example I found which clearly depicts an artist being offered a position at court can be seen in the correspondence between Ludovico Gonzaga (Marquis of Mantua) and the artist Andrea Mantegna. In one such letter, which dates to the spring of 1458, Gonzaga writes to Mantegna reminding the artist that the position is open and that Gonzaga awaits Mantegna's response/arrival:

> To the painter Andrea Mantegna
>
> Our most esteemed friend
>
> Messer Luca Tagliapietra has returned to us and has described on your behalf how great is your desire, and how you persevere in your original intention, to enter our service. It pleases us greatly to know this and we received it gladly; and so that you may know at once our good will towards you we advise you that our own intention is to reserve for you in good faith everything which we have promised you in our letter at other times, and still more; that is to say, 15 ducats a month, the provision of rooms where you can live with your family, enough food each year to feed six, and enough firewood for your use…And because Maestro Luca tells us you would dearly like to wait another six months in order to finish the work for the Reverend protonotary of Verona and dispatch the rest of your business, we are very content, and if these six months are not enough for you, take seven or eight, so that you can finish everything you have begun and come here with your mind at rest. Two or three months are not going to make any difference to us provided that we have the certainty from you that when the time comes you will not fail to enter our service, and if you come next January you would still be in good time…We wanted to write you this letter to assure you that we have the same disposition towards you as always, waiting to hear from you the precise time when you can move to us with your household…Farewell.
>
> Mantua, 15 April 1458[13]

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[11] Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 124.

[12] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 124-130.

[13] "Letter of Ludovico Gonzaga to Andrea Mantegna, 15 April 1458," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 116-118.

The correspondence above shows Gonzaga writing Mantegna and discussing the various advantages of accepting the position of court painter of Mantua. Record of this interaction is important as it reaffirms the observations made by Warnke in his discussion of the life of the artist at court. Based on this interaction, upon Mantegna's acceptance of the position proposed by the Marquis he was to receive not only financial support for himself, but his entire household. While the response of Mantegna does not survive, historians know that he accepted the position offered by Gonzaga. According to further correspondence and the biography penned by chronicler Giorgio Vasari, Mantegna spent almost twenty years (from 1459 to 1477) employed in this capacity. Of Mantegna's time in Mantua Vasari writes:

> While in Mantua Andrea [Mantegna] had served Ludovico Gonzaga, the marquis, a lord who always valued him and favoured his talent. He painted for his lord a small panel in the chapel of the castle of Mantua containing some scenes with figures of no great size, but very beautiful [Figure 1.2]. In the same place there are a number of figures foreshortened from below, which are much admired, because, although the drapery is crude and slight and the manner somewhat dry, the whole is executed with great skill and diligence.
>
> For the same marquis Andrea painted the Triumph of Caesar in the palace of S. Sebastiano at Mantua, and this is the best thing which he ever did…And, in a word, the entire work could not be made more beautiful or improved, and if the marquis valued Andrea before, his affection and esteem were greatly increased. What is more, Andrea became so famous that his renown reached Pope Innocent VIII., who, having heard of his excellence in painting and his other good qualities with which he was marvelously endowed, sent for him and for several others to adorn with paintings the walls of the Belvedere, which was just finished.[14]

At first glance the position of court painter poses significant benefit to the artist: he received a living wage, housing and food for his entire household, and various other accommodations. However, accepting such a position held several consequences for the artist in question.

[14] Giorgio Vasari, "Andrea Mantegna," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 105-106.

Figure 1.2 *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1462-1470), the center panel of a larger work known as *The Triptych* completed by painter Andrea Mantegna for Ludovico Gonzaga.[15]

Historian Alison Cole discusses some of these penalties in her work *Italian Renaissance Courts: Art, Pleasure, and Power* (2016). Cole notes that while the position of court artist offered numerous luxuries, as discussed by Warnke, the artist also accepted a level of uncertainty

[15] Andrea Mantegna, *Adoration of the Magi*, ca. 1462-1470, tempera on panel, 77 x 75 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/community.14491062.

regarding their future. According to Cole, "the court artist's career was often dependent on one individual, and therefore dogged by insecurity."[16] Since the court artist was bound by an oath of loyalty to their patron, they were unable to accept commissions outside of the court without the permission of the patron they served.

Warnke also comments on this manifestation of the artist/patron dynamic. According to Warnke, the court artist was paid "not for services rendered, but for his readiness to serve whenever he was required to."[17] Unlike other employees of the court system, the artist had no daily tasks to complete. Rather, Warnke highlights that the position of court artist came with, "the expectation that his [that is the artists'] services would be available when required and that he would perform his task 'to the best of his ability, as a diligent and loyal subject.'"[18] My analysis of the financial records and contractual agreement between Neri di Bicci and the Abbot of San Pancrazio supports the argument as outlined by Warnke and later by Cole. These documents reaffirm that in these interactions the patron is the main force of authority due to the financial power he holds over the artist. Furthermore, in applying Warnke's observations to the letter of Ludovico Gonzaga and Mantegna, I argue that the execution of financial power as a means of control is applicable to court patronage in addition to private commissions. In these exchanges, the artist placed his financial security in the hands of the patron he chose to serve. This means that in both of these circumstances, the artist's ability to support himself was directly related to pleasing the individual/group he served. As a result of this dependence, the patron was able to create and maintain power over the artist not just financially, but creatively as well.

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[16] Alison Cole, *Italian Renaissance Courts: Art, Pleasure, and Power*, (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 76.

[17] Warnke, *The Court Artist,* 134.

[18] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 134.

The Patron's Reputation

Aside from having significant financial investment in commissioned works, Kempers also notes that the honor and reputation of the client was impacted based upon the quality of the work produced by the artist. When reflecting upon the client/artist relationship in the context of the competitive atmosphere of Renaissance Florence, Kempers maintains that "a client's honor and that of painters working for him became intertwined."[19] This concept is further investigated in the works of Hollingsworth, McLean and Warnke. All three historians look at patronage through a sociological context in order to discern the greater impact patronage had upon Renaissance society. For McLean, the practice of obtaining and seeking patronage provides insight into the process of networking in Florentine culture. On the other hand, Hollingsworth and Warnke focus on exploring the connection between art, reputation and social standing. Based on the studies provided by these historians, I argue that the commissioning of works served multiple purposes for the patron as it afforded them the ability to convey nonverbal messages of power and influence to both the local populace and visiting emissaries.

A large section of Warnke's work reflects the idea presented by Kempers. However, Warnke places his focus on the broader connections between art and reputation in the Renaissance period. According to Warnke, princes used art and architecture to convey political messages and standards.[20] The argument presented by Warnke is indicative of a link between the reputation of the patron and the work produced by the artist as argued by Kempers. Based on Warnke's observations, art and architecture during the Renaissance period held multiple connotations. An example provided by Warnke is the use of the Triumphal Arch. According to

[19] Kempers, *Power, and Patronage*, 168.
[20] Warnke, *The Court Artist,* 198-199.

Warnke, the arches were used to "impress visiting potentates and diplomats."[21] The intention behind the commissioning of such arches was to convey the military success and prestige of the patron to visiting diplomats. At the same time, such works provided a different meaning to the residents of the city. From the perspective of the commonality, the Triumphal Arch symbolized that the patron/ruler was both a protector of the city and one who supported the arts.

Renaissance historian Jill Burke also discusses the multiple connotations behind commissioned works in her monograph *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (2004). Placing her focus on two influential Florentine families of the Renaissance period (the Nasi and del Pugliese), Burke investigates how nonverbal culture (particularly the commissioning of public works by patrons) influenced the formation of a patron's social identity and status.[22] When speaking on this theory in reference to the del Pugliese family, Burke places her focus on the commissions of Piero del Pugliese (d. 1498). According to Burke, Pugliese utilized various commissions to symbolically present himself to the public. Of particular interest is the piece *The Apparition of the Virgin to Saint Bernard* (ca. 1487) (Figure 1.3), which Pugliese had commissioned by the artist Filippo Lippi. The work was commissioned to serve as the centerpiece of the chapel of the monastery church of Campora, located just outside of Porta Romana.[23] The creation of the chapel was funded by the Pugliese family as an act to display piety, which was a common practice among the social elite of the Renaissance period. Although the chapel and church were both destroyed in 1529 during a siege of German invaders, the centerpiece survived.[24] This work is significant due to what it was

[21] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 199.
[22] Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 1.
[23] Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 139.
[24] Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 141.

intended to reveal about Piero del Pugliese's character. According to Burke, the commissioning of this centerpiece (not to mention the chapel) depicted Pugliese as both "a pious officeholder and benefactor."[25] The work thus demonstrates the duality of commissioned public works that Warnke and Burke argue was significant to patrons in Renaissance society.

Figure 1.3. *The Apparition of the Virgin to Saint Bernard* (ca. 1487), by Lippi[26]

[25] Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 191.

[26] Filippino Lippi, *The Apparition of the Virgin to Saint Bernard*, ca. 1487, oil and tempera on wood, 210 x 195 cm, Badia Church, Florence, accessed May 20, 2021, http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/Badia_Fiorentina.html.

The information provided by Warnke and Burke reaffirm my argument that the commissioning of works by a patron often served a dual purpose. On a local level, the commissioning of a building such as a church or other public space showed that the patron was not only charitable, but also that he cared for the success and wellbeing of the city. Additionally, (as in the case of Renaissance Florence) the creation of such works made the city appear lavish which impressed visiting foreign diplomats.[27] If we apply Burke's theory of nonverbal culture here, it becomes clear that should a commissioned work not embody the prestige and power the patron attempted to convey, the patron (not the artist) was at the risk of becoming the object of satire and enduring public embarrassment.

In *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: from 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (2004) Hollingsworth devotes a significant section of her book to the exploration of the Florentine art world. A portion of this segment builds on the observations made by Warnke and Burke as she discusses the relationship between the reputation of the client and the artwork produced. Hollingsworth maintains that "it was the patron, and not the artist, who was seen by his contemporaries as the creator of his project and this gave him the strongest possible motive for controlling its final appearance."[28] Hollingsworth uses this observation as the launching point for her study of art in Florence during the Renaissance period. The author goes on to explain how art, particularly the commissioning of art by the wealthy, served as a powerful propaganda tool for the ambitious elite of Florentine society.[29] Such displays of wealth were one of the ways in which such individuals demonstrated the power and influence they held.

Furthermore, Hollingsworth notes that Florentine society during the fifteenth and

[27] Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 36.
[28] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance* Italy, 1-2.
[29] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 2.

sixteenth centuries was a culture where wealth was the primary measurement of success.[30] Therefore, it was the spending of this wealth on public and private works that served as a sign of achievement.[31] The observations presented by Hollingsworth here are of interest when I place them in the context of Burke's theory of nonverbal culture. Upon my application of Burke's theory to Hollingsworth's insight, it becomes clear that the patron received the majority of the repercussions/backlash of a poorly completed commission. According to Hollingsworth, while the artist might be subjected to a loss of payment and valuable time for not completing a project to the standards of their patron, the consequences faced by the client were often more severe. Since Renaissance society recognized the patron as the creator of a commissioned piece, they would have been the ones subjected to the societal repercussions of a poorly received work. This is an important thing to note as the artist held the ability to move between multiple patrons, meaning that once a work was finished the artist was not contractually bound to remain in the city of the patron that hired him.

Unlike the artist, a patron was bound to the city wherein he resided as the status and power of a patron was closely intertwined with the city. Examples of this include the Medici family of Florence and the Sforza family of Milan. In both of these instances, the reputation and prestige of the family was closely tied to how the commonwealth perceived them. When Burke's theory of nonverbal culture is applied in these circumstances, it stands to reason that the selection of an artist for a commissioned piece was not only about power, but (to a degree) controlling how society perceived the patron. Hollingsworth speaks to this when discussing the importance of choice in creating commissioned works. The author notes that a patron's choice of artist "determined the style of the decoration and the language that gave visual expression to his self-

[30] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 36.
[31] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 36.

image."[32] Based upon the observations presented by Hollingsworth, Burke and Warnke, Renaissance society was heavily influenced by appearances and how the elite were perceived. This indicates that selecting the right artist was a crucial aspect of the commissioning process. Furthermore, this careful process would cement the tie between a patron's reputation and the outcome of the completed work as mentioned in the study provided by Kempers.

Sociologist Paul McLean builds further on the arguments outlined by Hollingsworth and Kempers in his work *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (2007). McLean's work relies upon letters from the Renaissance period (fourteenth through sixteenth centuries) between patrons and those seeking patronage in order to explore the link between patronage and social mobility in Florentine society. According to McLean, networking, "particularly in the form of patronage, was essential to the development of Renaissance art, but it was also essential to the process of social climbing and the operations of the Renaissance church, the Renaissance state, and the Renaissance economy."[33] In this observation, McLean implies that creating the right relationships and bonds was a crucial part of the society of Renaissance Florence. While I agree with McLean's initial reflections that this is especially true in the case of the artist who relied upon creating the right relationships to attain social and financial stability, I argue that the concept is also applicable to the patron due to the close connection patronage and honor held during this period.

The observation presented by McLean above becomes of particular importance when I applied it to the discussion of Renaissance Florence during. When McLean's observations are viewed in light of the discourse of scholars such as Hollingsworth and Kempers, it becomes clear

[32] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 38.

[33] Paul McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 5.

why other Italian cities and countries would look to Florentine society when creating their own societal norms for social interaction. For example, according to Kempers, Florence played a key role in the development of Renaissance society as the city became the focal point of the artworld due to the innovations of artists such as Masaccio and the rise of the merchant families.[34] Additionally, Hollingsworth mentions that Florence became "the prime centre of early Renaissance humanism," under the leadership of individuals such as Coluccio Salutati (d. 1406).[35] Therefore, the importance of Florentine society becomes not the number of artists, patrons or guilds, but how these groups interacted with one another. Thus, Florentine society becomes the focal point to which all other Italian societies would look for acceptable behavior and interactions within the art world and society at large.

McLean devotes an entire chapter to exploring the sociological connection between patronage and the concept of honor in the Renaissance. In this section, the author utilizes an excerpt from a letter between Ciaio di Pagolo dalla Scarperia and his patron, Averardo de' Medici. Although McLean does not quote the entire letter, the excerpt he provides displays the conceptualized link between a patron's honor and the work of the artist as mentioned by Kempers. In the letter, written in April of 1430, Ciaio writes:

> I am certain, for as long as you will be alive, never will I neglect to do what is satisfying to you. Moreover, I am stirred to say that I would hold dear your honor more than my own profit.[36]

[34] Kempers, *Power, and Patronage*, 1 and 3.
[35] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 15.
[36] "Ciaio di Pagolo dalla Scarperia to Averardo de' Medici, April 30, 1430," in *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 59.

Based upon the language used by Ciaio in this letter McLean concludes that honor was an essential part of both political and private life.[37] In both cases, honor and reputation are connected as both were essential in obtaining/maintaining social status and mobility. As seen in the excerpt between Ciaio and Averardo de' Medici, the artist-patron relationship was heavily influenced by this concept as the artist was (seemingly) more concerned with protecting the honor and reputation of his patron over his own status.

Support for Kempers concept can be seen in Cole's discussion of the connection that developed between the court artist and their patron. Cole observes that because the works produced by the artist were intertwined with the identity of their patron, "he [the artist] was often assumed to share the same political ideology."[38] Despite the hyperbolic, almost performative, nature of Ciacio's comments, the text shows the outcome of aligning oneself with an individual. McLean notes that in entering an artist-patron relationship, both individuals commit to "an identity-defining relationship with another."[39] Based on these observations and the tone of the text it becomes apparent that, to a certain degree, the artist acted as a sort of protector/representative of the patron who commissioned him. However, Cole observes that when serving a patron in such a capacity, the artist put himself at great risk. Such interactions are important when studying Renaissance society as the act of seeking/providing patronage illustrates changes of the self.

The Patron Exerting Creative Power

The financial superiority of the patron class and the importance of reputation are both key

[37] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 60.
[38] Cole, *Italian Renaissance Courts: Art, Pleasure, and Power*, 76-77.
[39] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 226.

arguments for the patron as the dominant party in the artist/client relationship in the Renaissance. During this period, social and financial dominance was accompanied by the power of selection and opinion in the commissioning of works. Hollingsworth notes that throughout the fifteenth century the patron was the "initiator of the architecture, sculpture and painting of the period, and that he played a significant part in determining both form and content."[40] The ability of the patron to have active input in the commissioning of works is directly tied to their financial and social standing in society. The most common indication of the power of choice on the part of the patron is seen in the ability to choose the artist and have extensive voice in the creation of the commissioned work. The authority of the client in these interactions manifests itself throughout the primary source material.

I found the application of such influence in the Renaissance art world in a surviving contract between Sienese artist Matteo di Giovanni and two German patrons. This contract is of particular interest to historians as it holds specific design instructions being dictated to the artist from the patron. The contract between the two parties reads:

> Anno Domini 1478, November 30. Antonio de Spezia and Peter Paul of Germany, bakers, inhabitants of the city of Siena, in the street of the Maidens, administrators, as the affirm, elected and deputed for the purpose mentioned below by the Society of St. Barbara [patron saint of Germans] which meets in the Church of San Domenico in Siena, for the purpose of renting the meeting room and for the work on the painting in their own personal names ordered and commissioned Matteo di Giovanni, painter of Siena, here present, to make and paint with his own hand an altarpiece for the chapel of San Domenico, with such figures, height and width, and agreements, manners, and arrangements and lengths of time noted below, and described in the common language. [The text changes here from Latin to Italian.]
>
> First, the said panel is to be as rich and as big, and as large in each dimension, as the panel that Jacopo di Mariano Borghesi had made, at the altar of the third of the new chapels on the right in San Domenico aforesaid, as one goes

[40] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 1.

> to the high altar. With this addition, that the lunette[41] above the said altarpiece must be at least one-quarter higher than the one the said Jacopo had made. Item, in the middle of the aforementioned panel the figure of St. Barbara is to be painted, sitting in a golden chair and dressed in a robe of crimson brocade. Item, on one side of St. Barbara, that is on the right, should be painted the picture of St. Catherine the German [sic; St. Catherine of Alexandria is represented] and on the left of the figure of St. Mary Magdalene. Item, in the lunette of the said panel there should be and is to be represented the story of the Three Magi, who come from three different roads, and at the end of the three roads these Magi meet together, and go to offer at the Nativity, with the understanding that the Nativity is to be represented with the Virgin Mary, and her Son, Joseph, the ox and the ass, the way it is customary to do this Nativity.[42]

According to H.W. Janson, the editor of the collection, the contract between Giovanni and his patrons is significant because of the specific design instructions incorporated into the contract itself.[43] While it was common for contracts to contain specifics on aspects such as size, material and a timeline of completion, few surviving contracts outline how the work was to be completed with such specificity. I argue that this phenomenon can also be observed in the correspondence of the Marchioness of Mantua Isabella d'Este and the artist Perugino. In 1502 d'Este commissioned a work from Perugino entitled *The Battle of Love and Chastity* (1505) for her studio in the palace of Mantua (Figure 1.4). While d'Este was an avid supporter of the arts and had attempted to commission works from numerous artists including Leonardo da Vinci and Giovanni Bellini, the interaction between d'Este and Perugino is of interest as the notarized contract also outlines the work commissioned in specific detail.

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[41] A *lunette* is a half-moon architectural shaped space that forms when a horizontal cornice transects a round-headed arch. Such spaces are often filled with sculpture, masonry or painting.

[42] "Matteo di Giovanni Receives Elaborate Instructions," in *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson, trans. Creighton Gilbert (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 38-40.

[43] Creighton Gilbert, trans., *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 38.

Figure 1.4 *The Battle of Love and Chastity* (1505) by Perugino for Isabella d'Este.[44]

The contract for the work reads:

> Drawn up at Florence in the parish of Saint Maria in Campo in the below-mentioned house, in the presence of Bernardo Antonio di Castiglione, Florentine citizen, and Fra Ambrogio, Prior of the Order of Jesuati, near Florence, witnesses. Lord Francesco de' Malatesta of Mantua, procurator of the Marchioness of Mantua, in the best manner he was able, commissioned from Master Perugino, painter, there present, the undertaking on his own behalf and that of his heirs to

[44] Pietro Perugino, *The Battle of Love and Chastity*, 1505, oil on canvas, 160 x 191 cm, Department of Paintings, Louvre Museum, https://www.worldhistory.org/image/12762/battle-between-love--chastity-by-perugino/.

make a painting on canvas, 2 ½ *braccia* high and 3 *braccia* wide,[45] and the said Pietro, the contractor, is obliged to paint on it a certain work of Lasciviousness and Modesty (in conflict) with these and many other embellishments, transmitted in this instruction to the said Pietro by the said Marchioness of Mantua, the copy of which is as follows:

Our poetic invention, which we greatly want to see painted by you, is a battle of Chastity against Lasciviousness, that is to say, Pallas and Diana fighting vigorously against Venus and Cupid. And Pallas should seem almost to have vanquished Cupid, having broken his golden arrow and cast his silver bow underfoot; with one hand she is holding him by the bandage which the blind boy has before his eyes, and with the other she is lifting her lance and about to kill him. By comparison Diana must seem to be having a closer fight with Venus for victory. Venus has been struck by Diana's arrow only on the surface of the body, on her crown and garland, or on a veil she may have around her; and part of Diana's raiment will have been singed by the torch of Venus, but nowhere else will either of them have been wounded. Beyond these four deities, the most chaste nymphs in the trains of Pallas and Diana, in whatever attitudes and ways you please, have to fight fiercely with a lascivious crowd of fauns, satyrs and several thousand cupids; and these cupids must be much smaller than the first [the god Cupid], and not bearing gold bows and silver arrows, but bows and arrows of some baser material such as wood or iron or what you please…

I am sending you all these details in a small drawing, so that with both the written description and the drawing you will be able to consider my wishes in this matter…

Master Pietro promised Lord Francesco to devote himself with his skill to achieving the said picture over a period from now until the end of next June, without any exception of law or deed; Lord Francesco promised, in the said names, to pay for the making of the said work a hundred gold florins, in large gold florins, to the said Lord [sic] Pietro, with the agreement that of the said sum twenty gold florins, in large gold florins, should be given at present to the said Lord Pietro, painter; which the said Lord Pietro in the presence of me, the notary, and of the witnesses written above, acknowledged he had received of the said Lord Francesco, and the remainder the said Lord Francesco promised to pay to the said Lord Pietro when the said Lord Pietro completes the said work to perfection and shall give it to Lord Francesco Malatesta of Mantua.[46]

The survival of the interactions between Matteo di Giovanni, Perugino and their respective

[45] The *braccio* (plural *braccia*) is a unit of measure that was used in Italy during the Renaissance period which was based on the length of one's arm. This means the measurement varied between eighteen and twenty-eight inches.

[46] "Instructions of Isabella d'Este to Perugino, 19 January 1503," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 135-138.

associates is enlightening as they reaffirm the dominance of the patron in these interactions. In both instances, the patrons ensure that they remain in power throughout the commission process by including the specifics of their pieces in the notarized contracts. In doing so, the patrons ensure that Giovanni and Perugino will not stray from the commissioned design as doing so would place them in breach of contract, resulting in numerous consequences including loss of payment.

However, contracts with this amount of detail are rarely seen in these interactions. According to historian Creighton Gilbert, although providing instructions to the artist was common practice, such orders were often given to the artist by their patron in a separate correspondence and not placed in the contracts themselves.[47] Based upon my research, the best example of a customary contract between artist and patron can be seen in the records of the agreement between the Franciscan friars of Palco and the Ghirlandaio brothers.
The contract, which dates to August of 1490, was for the creation of an altarpiece which was to be completed within a twelve-month period. The notarized agreement reads:

> Be it noted and known by whoever shall read the present writing that today friar Francescho di Mariotto del Vernaccia allocated a painted altarpiece to Masters Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio, painters, in the following form: the picture to be about 4 *braccia* wide and 3 *braccia* high; the main panel of the said picture we must make of our own wood, and the said friar Francescho must pay for all the other wood; and in the said panel they must make in the center a Madonna with the child at her neck, surrounded by four saints, St Francis, St Bonaventura, St Anthony of Padua and St Bernardino…all the rest of the frame and column and frieze has to be done at the expense of said friar Francescho, panel and predella inclusive, and he must give for our agreed price 35 gold ducats, and we must deliver the said picture to Florence within the next year.

[47] Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400-1500*, 38.

This contract illustrates Gilbert's observations regarding what would, generally, be included in a contract between an artist and their patron. In this agreement, historians can clearly see the size and medium of the work, a brief description of the image to be depicted, a timeline for completion and a sum of compensation. The study of general contracts (such as the agreement between the Ghirlandaio brothers and the Friars of Palco) are important to this work, as they help establish a baseline for how normal interactions proceeded during this period. However, documents such as the correspondence between Matteo Giovanni and the German bakers are even more valuable when examined alongside the interaction between Perugino and Isabella d'Este. The survival of these contracts is key to the study of social power dynamics as they provide us with significant insight into how patrons used creative control to exert power in these relationships. Since the instructions were written into the contracts, which were considered legal documents, they were better stored and preserved in official archives (in case the need for litigation arose). On the other hand, instructions received by artists in a separate document (as in the case of the Ghirlandaio brothers) are less likely to have survived as such instructions were not part of the legally binding agreement.

Additionally, the correspondence discussed above—particularly that of Isabella d'Este and Perugino—provides further support for Kempers' conclusion that the artist had little say in the specifics of a commissioned piece. According to Kempers, in the Renaissance art world the "images to be represented would essentially be devised not by himself [the artist], but by clients and their advisors."[48] This is reflected in the continued correspondence between Isabella d'Este and Perugino. Throughout the process of completing the commissioned piece discussed above (*The Battle of Love and Chastity* [1505]), Perugino encountered several issues when working on

[48] Kempers, *Power, and Patronage*, 168.

the commissioned piece, focusing mainly on the proportions of the figures in relation to the rest of the scenery being depicted.[49] However, d'Este was hesitant to allow any alterations to be made from the original design, which led to the completion of the work being delayed to 1505 instead of 1503 as stated in the contract. A consequence of the continued delay led to Perugino being placed under continuous observation by representatives from the court of the Marchioness.

During his time completing the work commissioned by d'Este, Perugino was placed under the watch of both Paride Ceresara (a court poet) and Agostino Strozzi the Abbot of Fiesole. This is seen in the surviving correspondence between d'Este and Ceresara and later Agostino Strozzi. The Marchioness expresses her frustrations in a short note to Ceresara that was penned in November of 1504. The letter reads:

> Lord Paride Ceresara
>
> Messer Paride- we do not know who finds the slowness of these painters [in this case Perugino] more wearisome, we who fail to have our *camerino* finished, or you who have to devise new schemes every day, which then, because of the bizarre ways of these painters, are neither done as soon nor drawn in entirety as we would have wished; and for this reason we have decided to try our new painters in order to finish it in our lifetime.[50]

However, the supervision of Ceresara was not enough to please the Marchioness. In 1505, d'Este reached out to Strozzi after Perugino still had not delivered the commissioned work. After hearing that Perugino was venturing away from the specific design order by d'Este, the

[49] "Letter of Perugino to Isabella d'Este, 10 December 1503," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 138; "Letter of Perugino to Isabella d'Este, 24 January 1504," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 139.

[50] "Letter of Isabella d'Este to Paride Ceresara, 10 November 1504," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 140.

Marchioness implores the Abbot to check in on the progress being made by Perugino and to ensure that he does not diverge from the original design.[51] The response of the Abbot reads:

> My most illustrious and excellent Lady
>
> If Your Excellency's expectation and the hope I have raised in my letters to have your picture by Perugino next Easter should not be fulfilled, you will understand that my utmost solicitude and diligence have not been lacking. But the behavior of this man [Perugino], unknown to me formerly, I fear will make me seem a liar to Your illustrious Ladyship…His wife and household either do not know where he has gone or are unwilling to tell me…I do not know what more to say or promise to Your Ladyship: not a day passes without my sending one of us to find out about him, and while he was working on the picture not a week passed without my going to see him at least once. As soon as he returns…I shall be on him, and I will not fail you in all the diligence of which I am capable so that Your Illustrious Ladyship may be well served…
> I shall not fail with all my strength to labour that you shall be well served.[52]

In this series of letters historians observe how patrons used connections to ensure that a work was completed to their satisfaction. In the case of Isabella d'Este and Perugino, the surviving records indicate that the artist was carefully monitored by numerous members/servants of the Mantuan court in order to ensure that the commissioned piece was finished properly. The records of these interactions are important in affirming the observation made by Kempers as it shows that any issues or discrepancies that arose during the execution of the commissioned piece were the business of the patron with little weight being given to the opinions of the artist.

The patron and advisors as the creators of an artwork is exemplified in the discourse provided by Hollingsworth when she discusses the patron's right to be heavily involved in

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[51] "Letter of Isabella d'Este to Agostino Strozzi, Abbot of Fiesole, 19 February 1505," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 140.

[52] "Letter of Agostino Strozzi to Isabella d'Este, 22 February 1505," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 141-142.

commissioned works. Hollingsworth references the *Coronation of the Virgin* (1447) by Filippo Lippi (Figure 1.5) which was heavily influenced in design and execution by the patron who commissioned the piece, Francesco di Antonio Maringhi. While modern scholars credit the *Coronation of the Virgin* (1447) to Lippi, in Renaissance society credit would have been given to the client who chartered the piece. Hollingsworth gives credibility to this observation by taking a closer look at the individuals depicted in the work. Of particular interest to Hollingsworth's study is the praying figure in the bottom right corner. According to her observations, the "praying figure indicated by the angel holding a scroll that reads 'He carried out the work', is a portrait of Maringhi, not Lippi."[53] The presence of the patron in this piece is significant as it is an indication of ownership and claim.

Figure 1.5 *Coronation of the Virgin* (1447), altarpiece (78 ¾" x 188") completed by Filippo Lippi for the Chaplain of the Church of San Ambrogio, Francesco di Antonio Maringhi.[54]

[53] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 38.

[54] Filippo Lippi, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1447, Paint, 78 ¾ x 118 in, Uffizi Gallery Repository, Florence, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/community.11663099.

The appearance of a patron in a work they commissioned was a common practice during the Renaissance period. Prominent members of the Medici family can be seen in the *Cavalcade of the Magi* (ca. 1459) by Benozzo Gozzoli. Another example of this is seen in the *Angel Appearing to Zacharias* (1490) (Figure 1.6), completed by the artist Domenico Ghirlandaio for his patron Giovanni Tornabuoni. The work was commissioned by Tornabuoni in 1485 and is one in a series of frescoes Tornabuoni commissioned for the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence.

Figure 1.6 *Angel Appearing to Zacharias* (1490) by Domenico Ghirlandaio for Giovanni Tornabuoni.[55]

[55] Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Angel Appearing to Zacharias*, 1490, Fresco, 330 x 450 cm, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, https://www.artbible.info/art/large/585.html.

What is significant about the *Angel Appearing to Zacharias* is not the figures in the focal point of the image (Zacharias and the Angel) but the individuals that appear in groups surrounding the angel and saint. According to Chambers, Tornabuoni appears in this image as the oldest gentleman in red on the left side of the platform.[56] Even Vasari mentions the figures present in the fresco in his biography of Ghirlandaio. Vasari notes how Ghirlandaio, "introduced a goodly number of Florentine citizens, who were then members of the Government, and especially all the members of the Tornabuoni family, both young and old."[57] By inserting themselves into the works they commissioned, Maringhi and other patrons established themselves not only as contributors of the piece, but creators of the work. In doing so artists such as Lippi and Ghirlandaio become little more than a tool that was used to complete the work, by Renaissance standards.

A key thing Hollingsworth observes is the recognition, or lack thereof, of the artisan commissioned to create the designated work. Throughout her exploration of Florentine art during this period Hollingsworth reiterates that it was not the artist that mattered, but the patron. Hollingsworth applies this notion to her discussion of the *Coronation of the Virgin* (1447) by Filippo Lippi. While modern art enthusiasts credit the artist for the creation and excellence of their work, this praise was reserved for the client during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Hollingsworth's theory is further confirmed by my study of the *Cavalcade of the Magi* (ca. 1459) by Benozzo Gozzoli and the *Angel Appearing to Zacharias* (1490) by Domenico Ghirlandaio. In all of these works, the inclusion of the patron in the commissioned piece and the subsequent exclusion of the artist was present. Hollingsworth argues that this was the societal norm of the

[56] D.S. Chambers, *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1970),172.

[57] Giorgio Vasari, "Domenico Ghirlandajo," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 74.

period, observing how a work "celebrated the financial, political and social prestige of its patron, not the artistic talents of its craftsman."[58] Despite being the proverbial expert in these interactions, the models presented by Kempers and Hollingsworth present a reality in which knowledge and skill is forfeit in favor of the desires of the patron. Such practices provide a powerful statement to those examining social power dynamics in the Renaissance: power and prestige belong to the patron, not the artist.

The demonstration of the patron's power in choice is further seen by historians throughout the Renaissance period as clients would often take competitive bids from prospective artists. In my research, I identified an example of this practice c in a surviving letter from Bartolomeo Gadio to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the Duke of Milan (d. 1476). Historian Evelyn Welch speculates that Gadio's position at the Sforza court was akin to that of a modern construction foreman. Gadio oversaw the completion of architectural works commissioned by the Sforza estate, organized supplies and delegated responsibilities.[59] Furthermore, surviving correspondence indicates that Gadio was also charged with accepting and sorting competitive bids from various artists on behalf of the Duke of Milan. Gadio then approached the duke with the best options as reflected in the following message:

> On St. John's Day I had a letter from your illustrious highness about the painting of the vault of that chapel of the Castle of Milan in which you said, among other things, that some painters had been to see you, among whom were some who wanted to take on the job of this painting for 200 ducats, some for 150, and some for 100, and since in the aforementioned letter you excellency instructed me to have all those painters come to me, and decide which would offer the best conditions for this work, I have had them come and others as well. Among these the master Johanne Pietro da Corte, Melchior da Lampugnano, Stefano de Fidela, Gottardo de Scotti, and Pietro da Marchesi, as a team, offered to paint it for 175

[58] Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 38.

[59] Evelyn Samuels Welch, "The Process of Sforza Patronage," *Renaissance Studies* 3 no. 4 (December 1989): 371.

> ducats, and, as another team, master Bonifazio Bembo da Cremona, Xanetto de Bugatti, and Vincenzio de Foppa offered to paint it for 160. Finally, the above-mentioned masters Johanne Pietro and associates offered to paint it for 150, doing it according to one of the drawings I am sending your excellency…And since I found none willing to do it at a better price than they, I decided on them, if your illustrious lordship pleases, and if you are agreeable to this decision let me know, and decide which drawing of the two pleases you more.[60]

The letter between Gadio and the Duke of Milan provides insight into the connection between financial power and the power of choice. Not only is the Duke of Milan in a financial position to be ordering the commission of works, but the patron is also so well known that numerous artists are interested and willing to compete for the opportunity to complete such a work. This is similar to the pattern Warnke observed regarding how artists submitted themselves to competition in order to become court painters.

However, my study of surviving guild records from the period indicates that such competition existed outside of the court sphere. One example can be seen in the records of the *Arte della Lana* [the Wool Guild] of Florence. The announcement was delivered in August of 1418 and calls for artists to submit designs for the *cupola* of the Santa Maria del Fiore.[61] The declaration of competition reads as follows:

> 19 August 1418
>
> The *Operaii* [sic] [members of the *Opera*, the committee that oversaw project completion] have resolved that it shall be publicly proclaimed throughout the city of Florence, in the accustomed place, that whoever (and of whatever condition) is willing to make a model or drawing for the vault of the great cupola of the said church, and for the construction of the scaffolding or anything else or any other furnishing which pertains to the construction, assembly and perfecting of the said

[60] "The Duke of Milan gets Competitive Bids for Frescoes," in *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson, trans. Creighton Gilbert (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 124-125.

[61] *Cupola* is an architectural term used to denote the dome-like structures on the top of a building.

> cupola or vault, may do so and ought to have done so by the end of next September. During the same period, should he wish to discuss anything with the said *Operaii* he will be well and graciously heard. Whoever may make such a drawing or model or discuss the matter according to how he will subsequently do it, is hereby notified that he will be paid 200 gold ducats; and moreover, that whoever shall work or undertake anything concerning the said matter, will be rewarded for his work at the discretion of the said *Operaii* of the said work, even if his work should not be accepted. And they resolved it must be thus observed.[62]

This announcement is of interest to this study as it shows that competition among artists for work extended beyond the court sphere of influence and was a common practice in the Renaissance period. The existence of such competitions is essential in understanding the social power dynamics as such events were another way in which patrons exercised control in the artist/client relationship. Not only does the patron control the financial aspect of this interaction but I argue that the existence of competition further places the patron in a superior role. By electing to have a competition for designs instead of approaching the artist individually, we see that the patron maintains power in this interaction by forcing the artists to approach them. In doing so, the artist is in a subservient position as he is placed in a space where he must use valuable time and effort in creating a design with no guarantee that his work will be selected.

Furthermore, both the letter from Gadio and the announcement of the *Arte della Lana* provide examples of an individual or group acting on behalf of a client/patron. In the case of the fresco bids, we can see that Gadio accepted bids and designs for the fresco on behalf of his patron. A similar situation can be seen in the announcement of the *Arte della Lana* as it is a council [*Opera*] making such decisions on behalf of the entire guild. The intermediaries in these interactions (Gadio and the *Opera*) hold a degree of influence as well, considering this

[62] "Announcement of the Competition, 19-20 August 1418," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 39-40.

individual/group is essentially in control of who the patron interacts with. In the letter between Gadio and the Duke of Milan, Gadio mentions that "those painters who, your excellency said, offered to paint it for a hundred ducats are not to be found, and in fact they all say they never spoke of a hundred ducats."[63] While Gadio was likely being truthful, there is also the possibility that he avoided such parties in favor of others whom he deemed more qualified. Despite this modicum of influence, the Duke of Milan maintains power by having the final decision on which artist/group would be selected to complete the work. In the case of the Wool Guild, the elected members of the *Opera* hold the same influence as Gadio as they are the ones responsible for vetting and selecting the designs submitted by artists for the cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore. While the church leaders had the final say on which design was selected, the *Opera* controlled which designs the church could choose from, similar to how Gadio influenced the Duke of Milan.

Further discussion of the impact of the patron's influence during the creation of a commissioned work can be seen throughout surviving correspondence. One of the most influential patron families during the Renaissance period was the Medici family. Throughout the Italian Renaissance, the powerful Florentine banking family commissioned works from renowned artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli. Obtaining the favor of this influential family could prove quite beneficial to a craftsman. However, displeasing a Medici patron could have significant repercussions upon the artist. A letter from the artist Benozzo Gozzoli (d. 1497) to Piero de' Medici in 1459 illustrates the potential cost of angering this influential family. Gozzoli had been hired by the Florentine family to paint a series of frescoes in the Medici family chapel. Known as the *Cavalcade of the Three Magi* (1459) (Figure 1.7),

[63] "The Duke of Milan gets Competitive Bids for Frescoes," 125.

Gozzoli received backlash from his patron for diverging from the commissioned design. The letter penned by Gozzoli to his patron reads:

Figure 1.7 *Angels in Adoration* (left and right panels) part of the cycle of frescoes known as *Cavalcade of the Magi* (ca. 1459) by Benozzo Gozzoli. Located in the apse of the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence.[64]

> This morning I had a letter from Your Magnificence [Piero de' Medici] …and I learnt that it seems to you the seraphs I have done are out of place. On one side I did one among some clouds, and of this you hardly see anything except tips of the wings; it is so hidden and covered by the clouds that it does not deform the picture at all but rather adds beauty, and it is beside the column. I did another on the side

[64] Benozzo Gozzoli, *Angels in Adoration: Cavalcade of the Magi*, ca. 1459, Fresco, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence, http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/chapel_of_the_magi.html#.

> of the altar, but concealed in the same manner. Robert Martelli[65] saw them and said they were not worth worrying about. Nevertheless I will do as you command, two little clouds will take them away. I would have come to talk to you but I began putting on the azure this morning and could not leave it. The heat is great and the plaster gets spoilt in a second. I think I will have done with this scaffolding by next week, and I think you would like to have a look before I take it down…God knows I have no thoughts heavier than this, and am continually on the lookout for ways in which I can satisfy you at least in all good faith. Nothing more occurs to me. I commend myself to Your Magnificence.
>
> Your servant
> Benozzo di Lese, painter in Florence[66]

While the original letter sent to Gozzoli from Piero de' Medici no longer survives, we can still infer a great deal from the response of the artist. The letter from Gozzoli tells scholars two important things: first that Gozzoli assumed the will and approval of his patron by altering the design and second that this action had repercussions. The message is apologetic in its language and tone, indicating that the Gozzoli was reprimanded in the original letter. This is a crucial bit of information as the repentant attitude of the letter provides evidence that Gozzoli feared the consequences of his actions.

Correspondingly, the letter reaffirms the understanding of scholars like Hollingsworth and Kempers that the insight of the artist was of little concern to patrons. Even making a small alteration (in this case the two small cherubs added by Gozzoli) violated perceived social norms understood in the art world during this period. The interaction between Gozzoli and the Medici family is of further significance due to the large role Florence played in the development of court

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[65] The Martelli family was another Florentine banking family that had close political ties with the Medici family. During the time of Gozzoli's employment, Piero de' Medici was away from Florence. Therefore, Roberto Martelli served as the intermediary between the two parties during this period. Roger Crum, "Roberto Martelli, the Council of Florence, and the Medici Palace Chapel," *Zeitschrift fur Kunstgeschichte* 59 (1996): 404-405.

[66] "Letter of Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero de' Medici, 10 July 1459," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 95-96.

life and Renaissance society at large. Since Florence was considered the frontrunner of the Renaissance art world and the Medici family were the leaders of Florentine society—and thus of the patronage system at large—the decisions made in this series of letters likely played a key role in how future disputes would be settled. Therefore, it is likely that other courts and patrons would have looked to Florence (and by extension the Medici family) for insight on how to best deal with a circumstance such as an artist altering the design commissioned or not completing the work.

However, even when a commissioned work was completed to the exact specifications outlined by the patron, there was no guarantee that the client would be pleased with the final outcome. While records of such instances are rare, the issue seems to have been prevalent enough that most artists' contracts contained clauses allowing the patron to reject the completed work should it not be to their liking.[67] I have identified an example of a patron invoking this clause in 1434, when the council of the Cathedral of Siena rejected a set of bronze reliefs they contracted the sculptor Donatello to create. Donatello completed the commission as outlined by his client; however, the work was rejected by the Cathedral for reasons unknown. H.W. Janson speculates that the patron rejected the completed work due to aesthetic disagreement rather than personal conflict, as the client later hired Donatello again.[68] According to administrative records from the Cathedral of Siena, a meeting of the council was called in August of 1434 to settle the matter and determine the payment owed to Donatello for completing the work. The proceedings state that:

> The aforesaid administrator and counselors…being duly assembled etc., there appeared before them Pagno di Lapo, assistant of Donato di Niccolo of

[67] Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400-1500*, 38.
[68] Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400*-1500, 27.

> Florence [Donatello], and requested on behalf of the said Donato the settling of the accounts of the money that the said Donato has had from the said Administration and of the jobs he has done for the said Administration, which settling is reasonable and owing. [The first item is to balance his advances received, 738 pounds 11 shillings, against work delivered, for 720 pounds.]
>
> And since Donato, after this is subtracted, remains obligated to the extent of 18 pounds, 11 shillings, and considering that the said Donato made a little door for the said font also of gilt bronze, which did not turn out the way the administrator and counselors liked, and wishing to be reasonable with the said Donato and not make him suffer all the damage...they formally decided that the said Chamberlain should pay from the money of the Administration without prejudice 38 pounds 11 shillings, in which sum should be included the said 18 pounds 11 shillings owed by Donato to the Administration as the balance of the sum mentioned, and that the said door be freely made over to the said Donato.[69]

The discussion and agreement reached by this council in this meeting provides interesting insight into social power dynamics of the Renaissance period. This interaction shows the power the council had in matters of patronage, as they served as the voice of the client regarding this commission. The presence of a council in this matter resembles the responsibilities attributed to an *Opera*. According to historian John Najemy, these work committees were responsible for "spending funds assigned to them, keeping accounts, and selecting, hiring, and paying builders, sculptors, woodworks, painters, and other artisans."[70] Both parties appear to serve as the intermediary between the patron and the artist in employment. The council described in the church records is emblematic of an *Opera* as the group is keeping accounts and seeing to the payment of artisans as Najemy describes.

However, the relationship between the council and the client (the Church of Siena) begets further investigation. The council could be composed of church officials seeking to oversee the

[69] "Deliberations of the Administrator and Counselors of the Cathedral of Siena, August 18, 1434," in *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson, trans. Creighton Gilbert (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 27.

[70] John Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200-1575*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 317.

project; however, this seems unlikely as Najemy and Hollingsworth both note that such groups were mainly composed of guild members and members of the laity.[71] If the council was operating in the manner associated with the *Opera*, the explanation that makes more sense is that this council was a group of wealthy individuals who were funding the creation of the Church's adornments. This would mean that the council was made up of influential financial supporters of the church, who had an equal stake in determining the design of the work. Historian Jill Burke notes that it was common practice for wealthy patronage families (such as the Medici, Nasi and del Pugliese) to finance such projects throughout the Renaissance period.[72] One of the most prominent examples of this is the Basilica di Santo Spirito in Florence, which was commissioned in 1420 and funded by wealthy Florentine families such as the Anchioni, Medici and Della Stufa.[73] What is interesting about the Santo Spirito is that it was members of these prominent families (that financially supported the church) who were often placed on the *Opera*. According to Najemy, the *Operai* who oversaw the building of the new chapels was composed of "members of the Rondinelli, Della Stufa, Guasconi, Dietisalvi-Neroni, and Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici," with the Medici representatives often serving more than one term in this position.[74] Based on the insight provided by both Najemy and Burke, the most plausible explanation is that the council referred to in the Donatello source was an *Opera* which was composed of members of the laity selected by church officials.

The notoriety of Donatello is what distinguishes this interaction from others during the period. While Donatello received some compensation for the time and labor he put into the work, such actions might have been the result of his reputation rather than the social norm of the time.

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[71] Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 317; Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy*, 22.
[72] Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 63.
[73] Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 328-329.
[74] Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 329.

The editor of the collection of sources from which the Donatello piece originates notes that there might be a correlation between the two factors. According to this commentary, it is possible that Donatello was only paid in order to prevent him from "raising difficulties."[75] The observations mentioned by the editor raises the question of whether the fame and notoriety of the artist played a role in the outcome of such proceedings. If this is the case, well-known artists such as Donatello would have been the exception and not the rule.

Conclusion

Despite being reliant upon the talent of the artist to fulfill the commissioned works, patrons ensured that their influence and opinion was not ignored in the Renaissance period, as it was their reputation being judged by Renaissance society at large. Patrons established themselves as the dominant party in these interactions in two ways: financially and creatively. Historians Martin Wackernagel, Mary Hollingsworth and Martin Warnke examine how patrons used these means to exert control over artists in both private commissions and in life at court.

Utilizing the insights provided by Hollingsworth and Warnke, I argue in this chapter that patrons used the execution of financial and creative power as a means of control in both court patronage and private commissions. This is clearly seen in the commissioning of the artist Neri di Bicci by the church of San Pancrazio (private) and in the letter from the Marquis of Mantua to the artist Mantegna (courtly). In both of these exchanges, the artist placed his financial security in the hands of the patron he chose to serve. Therefore, in both of these circumstances, the artist's ability to support himself was directly related to pleasing the individual/group he served, placing him in a role of subservience.

[75] Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400*-1500, 27.

Regarding the patrons' use of creative power to control the artist under their employ, this chapter draws upon the commentary of historians Creighton Gilbert and D.S. Chambers alongside Hollingsworth and Bram Kempers. The observations provided by these scholars provide necessary context which explains why clients had the right to exert creative control over a commissioned piece. Examples of patrons exerting creative power can be seen in the correspondence between the artists Pietro Perugino and Matteo di Giovanni and their respective patrons. In both of these exchanges, the patron (Isabella d'Este and two German bakers respectively) provided detailed instructions regarding how they wished the commissioned piece to look. Failing to complete the work to the specifications outlined by their patron could have serious consequences for the artist in question. This is apparent in the correspondence between d' Este to Paride Ceresara (and later in a response from the Abbot of Fiesole), where she implores them to keep watch over Perugino to ensure that he did not deviate from her artistic vision in the commission of *The Battle of Love and Chastity* (1505).

Furthermore, since power and social influence in fifteenth-century Italy was based upon an individual's ability to publicly display their wealth, I argue in this chapter that the commissioning of public works by a patron served multiple purposes. The insights provided by historians Paul McLean, Jill Burke and Bram Kempers are used in this section of the chapter to show how patrons utilized these commissions to display their political power and social agendas to Renaissance society at large. A prime example of this is the work *The Apparition of the Virgin to Saint Bernard* (ca. 1487), which was completed by the artist Filippo Lippi for Piero del Pugliese. According to Burke, the work was used to show the pious character and generosity Pugliese wished to be displayed to the local populace.[76] The piece also displayed the social

[76] Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 191.

influence held by the del Pugliese family to both visiting diplomats and other powerful Florentine families.

Based upon the evidence provided both by modern scholars and the primary source material, my analysis in this chapter clearly shows that patrons had motivations (both social and political) and means to seek active control in the artist-patron relationship. Patrons demonstrated this control in multiple ways, including exerting financial and creative authority over the artists under their employ. This was done in order to ensure that the commissioned piece was completed to the specifications outlined by the patron as it was their reputation and influence that was tied to the completed work.

THE CASE FOR THE ARTIST IN RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

Having firmly established the case of power in the hands of the patron, the focus of this work will now shift to examining the opposite. As discussed in the previous chapter, historians such as Mary Hollingsworth, Bram Kempers and Martin Warnke maintain that the patron held absolute power in these interactions. However, by applying social historian Paul McLean's theory of networking and patronage to correspondence between individuals such as the artist Domenico Veneziano and his patron Piero de' Medici, I will show that artists during Italian Renaissance utilized the art of letter writing to build relationships that would advance and maintain their place in society. Furthermore, surviving correspondence between artists such as Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni Bon, Lorenzo Ghiberti and their respective clients contain further instances where sway was held by the artist. This shift in power is seen in both contractual agreements (in the case of Bon and Ghiberti) and in written correspondence (as seen in the case of Mantegna and Veneziano). Therefore, in this chapter I will demonstrate that, at times, power in the artist-patron relationship belonged to the artist who fulfilled the commission as ordered by the patron.

The Artist as a Representative of the City/Patron

In the previous chapter, I discussed at length what I perceived to be a phenomenon wherein there existed certain instances where an individual or group acted as an intermediary between the patron and the artist creating the work. In these circumstances the intermediary served as the voice of the patron and had the job of ensuring the commissioned work was completed to their standard. Examples of this included: Robert Martelli, who served in the place

of Piero de Medici against the artist Benozzo di Lese, and Agostino Strozzi (the Abbot of Fiesole), who was responsible for overseeing the artist Perugino as he completed a work commissioned by Isabella d'Este. In these instances, these individuals acted on behalf of the patron which was perceived to be an extension of the patron's influence.

However, evidence suggests that an artist could serve in this position of power in his own right as well. In his writings on the artist during the Renaissance period, Warnke mentions that the artist could serve as a powerful envoy for his city-state. Warnke observes that "the reliance that the towns placed on artists in cultivating court connections is clear from the common practice of including artists in missions to the courts or employing them as envoys."[1] Warnke's observation provided by Warnke is interesting for two reasons. First, the phrasing used by Warnke indicates that cities, to a degree, *relied* upon the artist to cement and advance their place in the larger Renaissance society. This is intriguing, as the use of the artist as a representative supports Warnke's previous observation that Italian cities sought to adopt and mimic patterns of court life.[2] Second, the excerpt from Warnke also indicates that the act of using the success of artists for the betterment of the city was a common practice during this period. Warnke goes on to provide several instances wherein well-known artists were sent as emissaries on behalf of a city-state or patron during key events. In his work, Warnke references three separate occasions where an artist acted in this capacity: Leonardo da Vinci in 1480, Michelangelo Buonarotti in 1505 and Luca Signorelli in 1512. In each of these instances, the artist was sent as an emissary of either an individual patron or of a city-state. However, aside from briefly mentioning the client the artist was representing and the location where they were sent, Warnke provides little other

[1] Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*, (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 78.

[2] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 78.

information on this matter. Thankfully, the writings of Vasari, the chronicler known as "Anonimo Gaddiano," and other surviving records provide further information and context for these events. Regarding the artist Leonardo da Vinci, Warnke only speaks of how he and Atalante Migliorotti (his student and a talented musician) were dispatched to the Sforza court in Milan around 1480 to "deliver a gift."[3] Based upon an excerpt from the writings of the "Anonimo Gaddiano," the "gift" being delivered to the Sforza court was the musical talents of the two artists. The anonymous chronicler writes :

> He [da Vinci] was an eloquent speaker and a fine player of the *lira [da braccio]* and was the teacher for this [instrument] of Atalante Migliorotti…He was sent, together with Atalante, by Lorenzo il Magnifico [de' Medici] to the Duke of Milan [Ludovico]…for he was unique in playing this instrument.[4]

While the "Anonimo Gaddiano" only briefly mentions da Vinci's time at the Milanese court, it is important to note that this account of events supports Warnke's claim that da Vinci was sent as a representative of the Medici court. In his biography of da Vinci, Vasari corroborates the events as described by the "Anonimo Gaddiano." When speaking on da Vinci's time in the Milanese court, he pens how da Vinci was sent to Milan:

> To play the lyre, in which that prince [Sforza] greatly delighted. Lionardo [sic] took his own instrument, made by himself in silver, and shaped like a horse's head, a curious and novel idea to render the harmonies more loud and sonorous, so that he surpassed all the musicians who had assembled there. Besides this he was the best reciter of improvised rhymes of his time. The duke, captivated by

[3] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 78.

[4] William F. Prizer, "Music at the Court of the Sforza: The Birth and Death of a Musical Center," *Música Disciplina* 43 (1989): 189; for the original Italian text, see source cited in Prizer, note 136.

> Lionardo's conversation and genius, conceived an extraordinary affection for him.[5]

What is interesting about this interaction is the way in which the Medici family *relied* upon da Vinci and Migliorotti to make a positive impression at the court of the Sforza family. Musicologist and historian William F. Prizer notes in his article "Music at the Court of the Sforza: The Birth and Death of a Musical Center," that the Sforza family was one of the preeminent patrons of music in the latter half of the fifteenth century.[6] The Milanese court would remain one of the top patrons of music in Renaissance Italy until the fall of Sforza rule to the French in 1499. Knowing that music was prized in the Milanese court, it makes sense that the Medici family would send two of the best musicians in their court to perform for the new duke, Ludovico Sforza. In doing so, the Medici family sought to gain favor with the new head of the Milanese government. However, by sending third-party representatives instead of a member of the family, the Medici became reliant upon the will and word of da Vinci and Migliorotti to make a positive impression upon the Sforza court.

In the case of Michelangelo, Warnke mentions that he was sent to Rome "with the title of 'ambassador of the Republic'" on behalf of Florence in 1505.[7] Vasari's biography on Michelangelo provides the necessary context behind why the artist was chosen as the emissary for this particular event. According to Vasari, Michelangelo was called to Rome by Pope Julius II following the death of Pope Alexander VI. Vasari writes that:

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[5] Giorgio Vasari, "Lionardo da Vinci," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 160-161.

[6] William F. Prizer, "Music at the Court of the Sforza: The Birth and Death of a Musical Center," *Música Disciplina* 43 (1989), 141.

[7] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 78.

> The *Pietà* [Figure 2.1], the colossal statue and the cartoon gave Michelagnolo [sic] such a name that when, in 1503 [actually 1505], Julius II succeeded Alexander VI, he sent for the artist, who was then about twenty-nine, to make his tomb, paying him one hundred crowns for the journey…Of this work, during Julius's life and after his death, Michelagnolo did four complete statues and sketched eight.[8]

Here, it is seen that Michelangelo was called directly to Rome by the pope due, in part, to his success and reputation in the Renaissance art world. By appointing the artist as an ambassador of Florence prior to his departure in 1505, the *Signoria* (that is, the leaders of the Republic of Florence) tied the success of Michelangelo as an artist to the city, creating an important link between the two entities. This link serves as an indication that the city leaders of Florence understood the benefit of being in good standing with the papacy. By creating this connection, the Signoria of Florence knowingly gave Michelangelo the power to define how the papacy saw the Republic of Florence.

Correspondingly, the city-state of Cortona (located in the province of Arezzo) dispatched a group of representatives to Florence in 1512. According to Warnke, the group of emissaries were sent on behalf of the town to "pay its respects to the Medici's [who had been in exile since 1494] after their return to Florence."[9] Included in the company was the renowned (but elderly) artist Luca Signorelli who is placed in the group by documents from the Cortona Historical Archive. One of these documents, "Luca Signorelli sent from Cortona to Florence to Congratulate the Medici on Their Return (1512)," places Signorelli alongside other ambassadors from Cortona including "Messer Silvio Passerini [Cardinal of Cortona], Messer Gilio and Jacopo

[8] Giorgio Vasari, "Michelagnolo Buonarotti," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 4, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 119-120.

[9] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 78.

Vagnucci [Bishops of Reimi]."[10] Additionally, other surviving financial documents show that the city government reimbursed Signorelli for travel expenses upon his return to the region.[11]

Figure 2.1 *Pietà* (1499), commissioned for the tomb of French Cardinal Jean Villiers de La Grolais by Michelangelo Buonarotti.[12]

[10] "Luca Signorelli Sent from Cortona to Florence to Congratulate the Medici on Their Return (1512)," Italian Renaissance Document Site, accessed September 2, 2021, http://archive.casanovaumbria.eu/doc/220/393/; Maud Cruttwell, *Luca Signorelli*, ed. G.C. Williamson (London: George Bell & Sons, 1899), 125.

[11] "Luca Signorelli Repaid for His Expenses for Going from Cortona to Florence to Congratulate the Medici (1512)," Italian Renaissance Document Site, accessed September 2, 2021, http://archive.casanovaumbria.eu/doc/221/.

[12] Michelangelo, *Pietà*, 1499, marble, 174 X 195 cm, Basilica di San Pietro, Vatican, https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/g/ghirland/domenico/7panel/11pala1.html.

What is important to note about the inclusion of these individuals is that each one had a professional tie to the Medici family. In Signorelli's case, the artist had previously completed two works for the family *The School of Pan* (ca. 1484) and *Madonna and Child* (1490) (Figure 2.2), prior to their term in exile.[13] These connections would have been of importance when the government of Cortona was considering whom to send as emissaries. Having preexisting connections to the Medici family made these individuals ideal ambassadors of the city-state. In both of these circumstances, historians see how city-states sought to emulate court life (as argued by Warnke) by utilizing artists as emissaries. This can be seen in how the cities of Florence and Cortona sent artists with well-known talent and ties to the city as emissaries/diplomats. The act of using artisans in this manner mimics how courts, like the Florentine court under the rule of the Medici family (as seen in the use of da Vinci and Migliorotti), operated under similar circumstances.

While Warnke looks at these interactions from the perspective of one who places the power in the hands of the city, the opposite could be true. Instead of viewing the artist as a tool to be utilized by the city-state, I propose that the circumstances discussed by Warnke indicate the reverse. In the exchanges between Michelangelo and Florence and Signorelli and Cortona discussed above, it is not the city (acting as the patron) in a position of dominance over the artist. Rather, these interactions indicate power was held by the artists who were asked to be emissaries on behalf of the city. In these circumstances, the cities are reliant upon the talent and appeal of the artist in order to advance themselves in Renaissance society. What is key to note about these interactions is that the artists chosen often had preexisting connections to the individual whom the city-state was attempting to impress. An example of this is seen above when the artist

[13] Giorgio Vasari, "Luca Signorelli," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 147.

Signorelli is chosen to act as a diplomat for the city-state of Cortona when the Medici family returned to power in Florence. Signorelli was likely chosen as part of this assembly of emissaries as he had completed several commissions for the Medici family prior to their exile.

Figure 2.2 *Madonna and Child* (ca. 1490), completed by the artist Luca Signorelli for the Medici family prior to their exile from Florence in 1494.[14]

[14] Luca Signorelli, *Madonna and Child*, ca. 1490, oil on wood, 170 X 115 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/madonna-with-child.

However, the circumstances described here by Warnke should not be confused with the role of Bartolomeo Gadio in the Sforza court as discussed in the previous chapter. The most important difference between the artists discussed above and Gadio is seen in which individual (artist or patron) held sway in these interactions. While Gadio served as a representative of the Sforza court—similar to Signorelli and Michelangelo—the power bestowed upon him was an extension of the power given to his patron (the Duke of Milan). This differs from the power being wielded by Signorelli and Michelangelo in the interactions discussed above. The artists in these interactions obtained power based upon *their* achievements and connections, instead of their power being an extension of the influence of their patron (as in the case of Gadio).

The exchanges wherein the artist acted as an emissary or diplomat on behalf of the city alters which party was in power. Instead of the patron (in this case the city) being in control, the artist gains influence as they possess the ability to define the situation. The cities of Cortona and Florence relied upon the connections and reputations of these artists to create a positive connection to other influential groups/people in Renaissance society (such as the Medici family and the papacy). In these interactions, the artist possessed the ability to refuse the position of diplomat/emissary. This refusal could be detrimental to the reputation/connection the city was attempting to create/present to the rest of Renaissance society. Therefore, since Gadio's position was that of one who served the court, every decision he was allowed to make was expected to be done in the best interest of the patron he served. However, artists who were asked to serve as diplomats on behalf of a city-state or local government were not utilizing the power of their patron in their decision-making. Rather, these individuals utilized their power and connections as artists to present the city in a positive manner, making the patron reliant upon the decisions of the artist.

The Artist Displaying Power in Contractual Agreements and Other Arrangements

Outside of instances where a patron relied upon the reputation and connections of an artist to aid in their progression in Renaissance society, it is difficult to find circumstances wherein the artist held power over their patron. Since clients held financial influence in these interactions, it is challenging to see how artists could obtain and maintain power in these exchanges. However, according to contractual agreements and other surviving correspondence, there existed certain circumstances where the artist took control from the patron. This transition of power can be seen in the contract of Lorenzo Ghiberti and the Salt Office of Venice and in the correspondence of Mantegna and the Marquis of Mantua.

Displays of Power by the Artist in Contractual Agreements. This shift in power is seen in the negotiation process of commissioned works and is exemplified in interactions between artists like Giovanni Bon with the Salt Office of Venice and Lorenzo Ghiberti and the *Arte del Cambio* in Florence. In these records, we see how the artist navigated the world of private patronage for their benefit. An example of one such instance can be seen between the artist Giovanni Bon and the Salt Office of Venice. In this contract from 1438, Bon agrees that he and his son (Bartolomeo) will create the *Porta della Carta* (Figure 2.3) if the patron agrees to certain demands. The agreement reads as follows:

> 10 November 1438
>
> The above are under agreement with Missier Tommaso Malipiero and his fellow 'Provveditori'[sic][15] of the Salt Office at the Rialto for the price of 1700 gold ducats, with the conditions and details written below, as appeared in a written deed in his hand. I Giovanni Bon, stone-cutter of the parish of San Marzilian, and my son Bartolomeo, notify to you, the magnificent Signori Provveditori of Salt, acting in the name of the most illustrious Doge and Signoria of Venice, the

[15] The *Provveditore* (plural *Provveditori)* was a title given to local district governors in the Republic of Venice during the Renaissance.

agreements and conditions that we want you to observe towards us…First you, the aforesaid magnificent Signori, must give and consign to us the stone for the frame of the said door, that is two pilasters, the lintel and the threshold above and below. As well as that you must provide the stone from Rovigno for the bases of the said doorway…and also you must provide in similar manner all the marble for carving the figures that will be required for said door.[16]

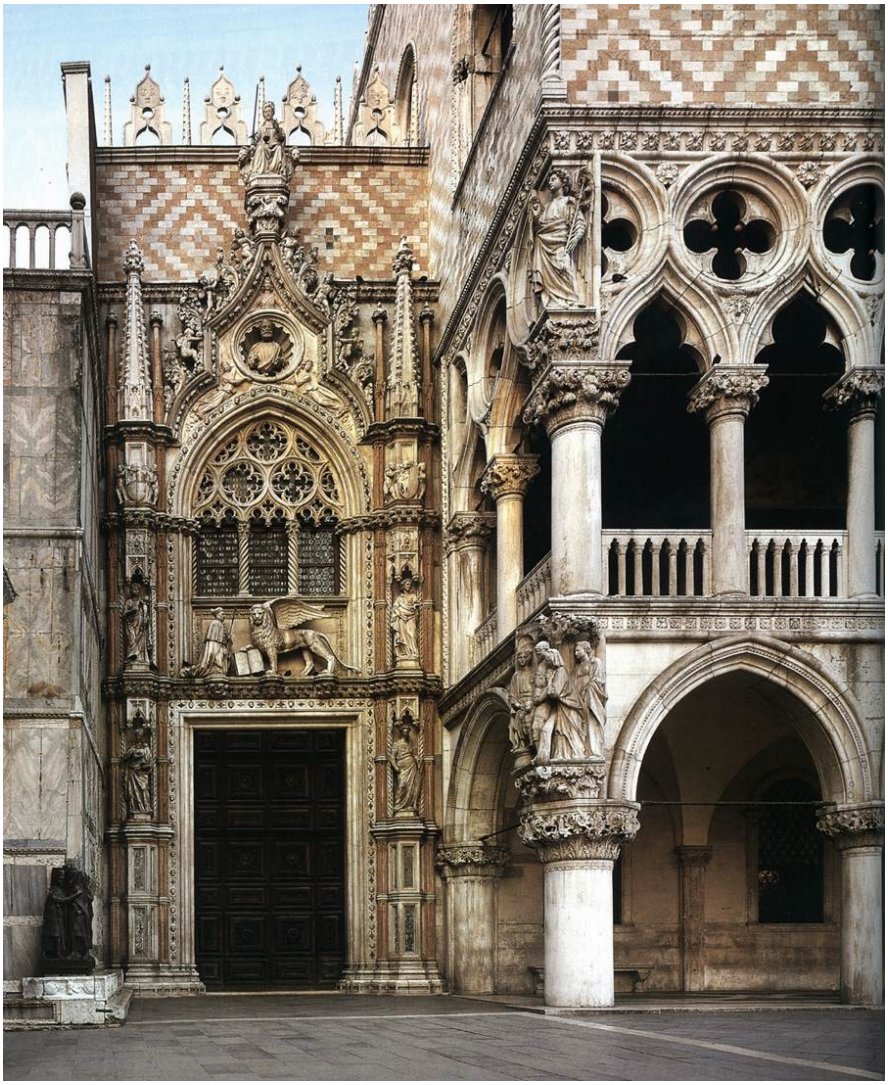

Figure 2.3 The *Porta della Carta* (1442), completed by Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon for the Salt Office of Venice.[17]

[16] "Contract of Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon with the Salt Office to Construct the Porta della Carta, Venice, 10 November 1438," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 66-68.

[17] Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon, *Porta della Carta*, 1442, Istrian stone, marble, gilding and paint, Palazzo Ducale, Venice, https://www.wga.hu/framese.html?/html/g/ghirland/domenico/7panel/11pala1.html.

While contracts of this nature were common during the Renaissance period, the one between Bon and the Salt Office of Venice is of particular interest as it is the artist who is making demands. Under normal circumstances, as seen in the contract of Matteo di Giovanni and his patrons as discussed in the previous chapter, it was the patron who decided the materials to be used, the timeline of completion and the amount of payment the artist was to receive.
This makes the contract discussed above significant to historical study as it shows a clear case wherein the artist obtains power by controlling the negotiations. Historians know that the patron in question (the Salt Office) accepted the terms outlined by Bon as record of the members of the Salt Office agreeing to the terms of the contract proposed by Bon still survives. Although the full response is not included, the following excerpt survives:

> 10 November 1438
>
> The respected and generous lords missier Tommaso Malipiero, missier Antonio Marcello, Missier Paolo Valaresso and Missier Marco, 'Provveditori' of Salt at the Rialto, confirm the above-written deed commissioning the work from Maistro Zuane [Giovanni] Bon, stone-cutter, and his son Bartolomeo, on the above-written conditions.[18]

The survival of the response by the Provveditori of the Salt Office is important as it shows what would be perceived as a powerful patron conceding to the demands of the artist. While it is possible that further negotiation between Bon and the Salt Office was excluded from the collection used in this study or no longer survives, the point that remains is that in this instance, the artist obtained and maintained power of the negotiations for the commissioned piece. Furthermore, the survival of the commissioned piece in modernity (completed ca. 1442)

[18] "Contract of Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon," 69.

indicates that the commissioned work was finished, and the contract fulfilled.

Similar inferences can be drawn when examining the contract between the sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti and the *Arte del Cambio* in 1418. In the surviving documents, the artist was commissioned by the guild to create the statue of Saint Matthew (Figure 2.4) for the façade of the Or'San Michele in Florence. The quest for an artist to fulfill the commission on behalf of the guild began following a declaration from the commune of Florence in 1406, after numerous guilds failed to present completed statues as previously ordered by the government. The proclamation issued by the City Council of Florence reads as follows:

> Resolution of April 20, 1406
>
> For the completion of the decorations of the oratory of San Michele in Orto: they [the City Council of Florence] resolve…that whatever guild among the guilds of the city of Florence that has a place in the wall or columns of the oratory or palace of the Garden of San Michele on the exterior, is required and must within the next ten years from now have made, in the place assigned to it, one figure or sculptured marble figure, large and honorable, of that saint whose feast is celebrated by it each year. And that whatever such place in which, beyond the said time, the said figure or image was not placed, completed, and perfected, is understood to be taken from that guild, and priors of the guilds [City Council] can and shall assign any such place whatsoever to any other guild that does not have a place.[19]

To simplify, any Florentine guild who failed to present a completed statue of their patron saint for the facade of the oratory by the end of a ten-year grace period faced the possibility of losing their space to another guild. This penalty was especially concerning to the major and middle guilds of Florence (who were initially awarded the designated spaces) as defaulting their space to

[19] "The City Council of Florence Legislates Sculpture," in *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson, trans. Creighton Gilbert (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 107.

a lesser guild could significantly damage the guild's reputation.[20]

Figure 2.4 Statue of *St. Matthew and Tabernacle* (ca. 1422) by Lorenzo Ghiberti for the *Arte del Cambio*.[21]

[20] Creighton Gilbert, trans., *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 107.

[21] Lorenzo Ghiberti, *St. Matthew and Tabernacle*, ca. 1422, bronze, 270 cm, Museo di Orsanmichele, Florence, https://www.wga.hu/index1.html.

The information in the declaration of the City Council provides vital context for the contract between Ghiberti and the *Arte del Cambio*. Furthermore, the contract drafted in 1418 holds subtle information that allows historians to infer that Ghiberti held a degree of power in the execution of this project. The agreement between Ghiberti and the guild reads:

> 26 August 1418
> Be it manifest to whoever shall see or read the present writing that the noble Niccolò di Ser Frescho Borghi, Averardo di Francesco de' Medici, Giovanni di Barduccio di Chierichinio, Giovanni di messer Luigi Guicciardini (consuls of the said Guild of Money-changers of the city of Florence), and the wise Niccolò di Giovanni del Bellacio, Niccolò d'Agnolo Serralgi, Giovanni di Micho Capponi, Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici (four enrolled members and *operaii* of the said guild), together hold the *balia* concerning the matters written below… Being assembled together in the House of the said Guild, they drew up the following contract for the niche and new figure of St Matthew, which they want to be made of brass and bronze in the niche newly acquired by the said Guild…And with the said Lorenzo [Ghiberti] they signed the following clauses of agreement:
>
> First, the said Lorenzo di Bartoluccio [Bartolo] promises and agrees by a solemn undertaking with the said consuls and four Guildsmen to do the said figure of St Matthew in fine bronze at least as large as the present figure of St John the Baptist of the Guild of Merchants [sic], or larger if it seems better, at Lorenzo's discretion.[22]

Initially, the contract above reflects the standard form and practice of such agreements during the Renaissance period. The piece outlines the commissioning party, the selection of the artist and provides a general description of how the patron envisions the final product. However, what is interesting about this contract in particular is the brief mentioning of power in the hands of the artist. When discussing the size of the statue being commissioned, the party writing the contract agrees that the artist (Ghiberti) has the right to determine the size of the commissioned piece.

[22] "Contract of Lorenzo Ghiberti with the Money-changers Guild ('Arte del Cambio') to make the Statue of St Matthew, 26 August 1418," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 42-43.

The presence of this clause diverges from established standards typically found in contracts during this period.

An example of a standard contract is the agreement between the Ghirlandaio brothers (Domenico and Davide) and the friars of Palco (also seen in chapter one). The notarized contract from 1490 provided the specifications for the creation of an altarpiece—known as the *Madonna in Glory with Saints* (ca. 1496) (Figure 2.5)—for the Tournabuoni Chapel of Santa Maria Novella. The final agreement between the Ghirlandaio brothers and the friars reads as follows:

> Be it noted and known by whoever shall read the present writing that today friar Francescho di Mariotto del Vernaccia allocated a painted altarpiece to Masters Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio, painters, in the following form: the picture to be about 4 *braccia* wide and 3 *braccia* high; the main panel of the said picture we must make of our own wood, and the said friar Francescho must pay for all the other wood; and in the said panel the must make in the center a Madonna with the child at her neck, surrounded by four saints, St Francis, St Bonaventura, St Anthony of Padua and St Bernardino…all the rest of the frame and column and frieze has to be done at the expense of said friar Francescho, panel and predella inclusive, and he must give for our agreed price 35 gold ducats, and we must deliver the said picture to Florence within the next year.[23]

The agreement between the Ghirlandaio brothers and friars of Palco reflects a normalized contractual agreement between an artist and their patron. Here, we see how the patron clearly outlines the general design of the work, a timeline for completion and *specific* measurements for the size of the completed work. Therefore, the presence of artist/patron interactions where the artist exerts a degree of power is of significant interest to this study. Clauses allowing the artist to make changes to the commissioned work (the contract of Ghiberti and the *Arte del Cambio*),

[23] "Contract of Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio with the Franciscan Friars of Palco, 20 August 1490," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 15.

alongside surviving documentation of an artist making demands (Bon and the Salt Office) are important to this study as the existence of such documentation reveal situations wherein the patron is willingly giving autonomy and influence to the artist in question.

Figure 2.5 *Madonna in Glory with Saints* (ca. 1496), altarpiece commissioned by the friars of Palco and completed by Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio.[24]

[24] Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio, *Madonna in Glory with Saints*, ca. 1496, tempura on wood, 221 X 198 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, https://www.wga.hu/framese.html?/html/g/ghirland/domenico/7panel/11pala1.html.

Displays of Power by the Artist in Other Interactions. The agreements between Giovanni Bon, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and their respective patrons explicitly display the artist having power over their patron. However, this does not mean that Bon and Ghiberti were the only artists to hold such influence during this period. I argue that there are cases wherein the power of the artist can be seen in the subtext of surviving correspondence. An example of this can be seen in the letter from the Marquis of Mantua (Ludovico Gonzaga) to the artist Andrea Mantegna as discussed in chapter one.

In the message dating to 1458, Gonzaga can be seen going to extensive measures in order to secure Mantegna as the court artist of Mantua. This interaction is of interest to this study due to the tone Gonzaga (the patron) uses and the offer that is being made to ensure that Mantegna accepts the position. Based upon my observations of the text, the tone being utilized by Gonzaga in this correspondence is that of an individual who is desperate to secure the acquisition of a highly talented and popular artist for the court of Mantua. This is clearly displayed in the language utilized by the Marquis in the aforementioned letter. A prime example of this tone is seen towards the end of the work when Gonzaga writes:

> We deeply beg that by that time without fail you will want to come, as we hope. Have no doubt that if our offer seems little to you and if you are not content and inform us, we shall seek in every way to satisfy your desire, because as we have written to you on other occasions, if you come as we hope and bear yourself in this manner, we shall make certain that you will find this arrangement seems only the least of the rewards you will receive from us.[25]

This excerpt is significant as it blatantly shows the lengths the Marquis was willing to go to in

[25] Letter of Ludovico Gonzaga to Andre Mantegna, 15 April 1458," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 118.

order to secure Mantegna's employment. By employing phrases such as: "we deeply beg" and "we shall seek in every way to satisfy your desire" Gonzaga presents an image of one who is eager to please Mantegna.[26] Additionally, the letter contains numerous references to previous correspondence and offers made to the artist on behalf of the Mantuan court. These references are important because they indicate not only that the Marquis and the artist had been in contact previously, but that there was likely a negotiation process that occurred between the two parties.

When investigating the offer made to Mantegna by the Mantuan court, historian D.S. Chambers remarks that the terms offered by the Marquis were exceedingly "generous."[27] Gonzaga offered the artist an annual salary of 180 ducats in addition to other amenities including food and lodging for his entire family.[28] The observation made by Chambers on this matter is reaffirmed by Warnke in his discussion of the compensation given to court artists during this period. Based upon his research, Warnke notes that Mantegna made significantly more per year than the two court artists who followed him. According to Warnke, Mantegna's successor Lorenzo Costa made "only 120 ducats, and…Giulio Romano, a mere sixty."[29] Furthermore, Mantegna's salary was three times that of the court artist of Ferrara, Cosmé Tura.[30] The annual salary and other comforts being offered to Mantegna provide a compelling example of an artist having power in the subtext of a conversation/agreement. It is clear that the Marquis was eager to have Mantegna serve as the artist for the court. This is displayed not only in the offer being made, but in the tone Gonzaga uses when addressing the artist. Furthermore, historians know from the biography of Mantegna by Vasari that Gonzaga, the marquis, favored the style and

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[26] "Letter of Ludovico Gonzaga to Andre Mantegna," 118.

[27] D.S. Chambers, *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, (London: Macmillan, 1970), 117.

[28] Chambers, *Patrons and Artists,* 117.

[29] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 137.

[30] Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 137.

work of the artist.[31] When the Marquis' favor of Mantegna is considered alongside the tone of this correspondence, it becomes clear that Gonzaga (the patron) was in the subservient position in this interaction.

Under normal circumstances, it was the artist who petitioned the patron for employment, not the contrary. An example of this is seen in the interaction between the artist Alvise Vivarini and the Venetian government. Correspondence from 1488 shows Vivarini petitioning the government for their patronage regarding the adornment of the Hall of the Greater Council in the Doge's Palace. The petition Vivarini presented to the Doge and Signoria reads:

> Most Serene Prince and Excellent Signoria
>
> I, Alvise Vivarini of Murano, being a most faithful servant of Your Serenity and of this most illustrious state, have long been desirous of showing an example of my work in painting, so that your Sublimity may see and know from experience that the continuous study and diligence to which I have applied myself has not been vain in success, but in honour and praise of this famous city. As a devoted son, I offer myself without any reward or payment for my personal labour in making a picture to surpass myself; that is, to paint it in the Hall of the Greater Council in the manner in which the two Bellini brothers are working at present. Nor do I at present demand for the painting of the said work anything more than the canvas and expenses of colours and the expenses of assistants to help me as the Bellini have. When I have truly perfected the work, I will then remit it freely to the judgement and pleasure of your Serenity, that from your benignity you may deign to provide me with some just, honest and suitable reward which in your wisdom you decide the work to merit.[32]

Here, we can see that it is the artist (Vivarini) who initiates the conversation about patronage to the Venetian government. In this correspondence the artist is presenting himself as subservient to

[31] Giorgio Vasari, "Andrea Mantegna," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 105.

[32] "Petition of Alvise Vivarini to the Doge and the Signoria, 28 July 1488," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 80-81.

the patron in question, which reflected the social norm of the Renaissance period as those with financial/political means were assumed to be the dominant force in society. However, by actively seeking and propositioning Mantegna, Gonzaga is giving control of the interaction to the artist. While the response of Mantegna is unknown, historians know that Mantegna eventually accepted the position and would serve in this capacity for almost two decades, indicating that Gonzaga's pleas were successful.

Reinterpreting McLean's Theory

Briefly mentioned in the section above was a discussion of how common it was for the artist to initiate contact with their desired patron for the commission process. This is exemplified in the correspondence between the artist Alvise Vivarini and the Venetian government. When this exchange is viewed through the lens of historians such as Martin Wackernagel—who argued that the artist was bound by the act of commission and the desires of the patron—it would be logical to conclude that Vivarini was in the subservient position. [33] This interpretation is based on Vivarini actively seeking a contract with the local government for a painting for the Hall of the Greater Council in the Doge's Palace. However, when I apply McLean's theory of networking and patronage is applied to this interaction, it becomes clear that Vivarini (and artists throughout the Renaissance) could have been using the art of letter writing to obtain commissions that would sustain their livelihoods.

In his work *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (2007), McLean argues that networking was the foundation of Florentine society during the Renaissance and set the precedent for social interaction and advancement in

[33] Martin Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshop and Art Market*, trans. Alison Luchs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 5.

Renaissance Europe.[34] This would mean that knowing *what* to say in these interactions was not enough to secure social mobility and financial stability during this period; it was also important to know *how* to say it. The act of seeking patronage would have been based on the writer's ability to phrase their request it in a way that provided them with the greatest chance of success.

However, while McLean's theory mainly argues that it was the patron that held power (as it was the artist who often sought their employment via these letters), perhaps this is not the case. When McLean's theory is applied to circumstances where it is the artist contacting a perspective patron I argue that power in these interactions belonged to the individual writing the letter, not the recipient. Correspondingly, McLean notes that the agency of achieving patronage "lies in the use of sanctioned practices to position oneself, for others, in a nexus of meaningful cognitive, moral, and aesthetic frameworks or sensibilities."[35] This means that the artist in question must have had knowledge not only of proper social decorum but also knowledge of how to appeal to the vanity of a patron while simultaneously presenting themselves as the ideal candidate for the position in question.

Appealing to the Vanity of a Patron through Displays of Subservience. One surviving example of such interactions can be seen in the correspondence of Piero de' Medici (d. 1469) and the artist Domenico Veneziano, who sought his patronage. The Medici family was one of the most powerful families in Florentine society during the Renaissance period and was well-known for investing in the arts, particularly during the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent (r.1469-1492). Since Medici patronage was highly sought during this era, it comes as no surprise that numerous artists would pen letters seeking support. However, when I apply McLean's theory to this

[34] Paul McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 6.

[35] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 90.

interaction and place the focus on the phrasing of these letters, power is placed in the hands of the artist, not the patron. This shift in power can be seen in the correspondence between the artist Domenico Veneziano and Piero de' Medici. In the message, penned in April of 1438, Veneziano is seen petitioning for the opportunity to be assigned the commissioned altarpiece of San Marco. The letter reads:

> Esteemed and noble sir
>
> After the usual commendation. By the Grace of God I am well, and I hope this finds you well and happy. Many, many times I have asked for news of you and have never heard anything, except when I asked Manno Donati, who told me you were in Ferrara and in very good health. I have been very much comforted by this, and having found out where you are, I am now writing to you as my consolation and duty. God knows that my humble position does not warrant my writing to your gentle lordship at all, but only the perfect and sincere love which I bear towards you and to all your family emboldens me to the point of writing, considering how much I am beholden and obliged to you.
>
> I have heard just now what Cosimo has decided to have made, a painted altarpiece, and he wants a magnificent work. I am very glad about this, and should be even more glad if I might paint it myself, through your mediation. And should this happen, I hope to God that I should produce something wonderful for you, equal to good masters like Fra Filippo [Lippi] and Fra Giovanni [Angelico], who have much work to do…But though it may be that my very sincere inclination to do you service makes me presumptuous in offering myself, even should I do less well than anyone else, I want to be obliged to seize any opportunity of merit and to make every effort needful to do everyone honour. And if the work is so big that Cosimo decides to give it to more than one master, I beg you, so far as it is possible for a servant to beg his lord, that it will please you to turn your noble mind to bestowing favour upon me and help to arrange that I should have some part in the work…I beg you to do all that is possible; I promise that my work will bring you honour. Nothing else occurs to me at present, except that if I can do anything for you here, order me as your servant.[36]

The important aspect to be noted in the interaction above is how the artist intentionally plays to

[36] "Letter of Domenico Veneziano to Piero de' Medici, 1 April 1438," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 92-93.

the identity the patron attempts to present to society. This is a key idea that is highlighted in the works of McLean and historian Jill Burke. In her book, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (2004), Burke observes how patrons used commissioned works to present their identity to Renaissance society.[37] This is seen in Burke's examination of the works commissioned by the patron Piero del Pugliese, as discussed in chapter one. To summarize, Burke notes how Pugliese utilized works (such as the chapel of the church of Campora) to present himself in a positive light to the rest of Renaissance society. The discussion provided by Burke strengthens the argument presented by McLean that the identity of the patron in Renaissance society was reliant upon how society perceived them. Therefore, the patron sought to control this perception via the commissioning of public works. This relates closely to the formulaic art of letter writing as discussed by McLean, which I argue allowed artists to take advantage of a patron's desire to control how society perceived them.

According to his examinations, McLean notes how in certain correspondence (as in the case of the letter penned by Veneziano to Piero de' Medici) the patron was "constructed as a twofold paragon in this culture of patronage: a person who exercises his own will to get what he wants (a perfectly independent self); and yet a person so readily attuned to the needs of others that he needs no encouragement to help them (a perfectly independent self)."[38] If this twofold nature was what the patron desired to achieve—and the artist was aware of this desire—then I argue that the artist would seek to appeal to this ideal in two ways. First by presenting himself as subservient to his patron, the artist would encourage the part of the patron that was "readily attuned to the needs of others."[39] Second, the artist would present himself as the individual best

[37] Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 1.
[38] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 208.
[39] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 208.

equipped to make this image achievable, thus allowing the patron to present himself to Renaissance society as one who exercised his will to obtain what he wished.[40] This can be seen in the letter penned by Veneziano and in correspondence throughout the Italian Peninsula.

One of the best examples I found of an artist trying to appeal to both aspects of, in McLean's words, a patron's "twofold" Titian of Cadore's supplication to the Venetian government in 1513. Similar to the petition written by Vivarini in 1488, Titian is seen appealing to the government for the opportunity to contribute to the adornment of the Hall of the Greater Council in the Doge's Palace (a large battle scene known as *The Battle of Spoleto* [Figure 2.6]). Titian's supplication was read before the Council of Ten (one of the government bodies in the Venetian government) in May of 1513. The petition reads:

> To the most Illustrious Council of Ten
> Most Serene Prince and Excellent Signori, I, Titian of Cadore, your devoted servant, set myself to learn the art of painting from childhood onwards, not so much from desire of gain as to be seen to acquire some small of fame, and be numbered among those who at the present time profess that art. And although in the past and even now I have been urgently sought by His Holiness the Pope [Leo X] and other Signori, I am anxious as a faithful servant of Your Sublimity to leave some memorial in this famous city. Therefore I have decided, all being agreeable, to undertake to come and paint in the [Hall of the] Greater Council, and to devote all my mind and soul to this for as long as I live. I shall begin, if it pleases Your Sublimity, with the canvas of the Battle scene on the side towards the Piazza, which is the most difficult, and nobody yet has wanted to attempt such a task. I should be willing to accept for my work any payment that might be thought convenient, or less, but because as I have said above I value only my honour and way of life, as Your Sublimity's pleasure [I beg to ask for] the first *sansaria* for life that shall be vacant in the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, irrespective of other expectations…In return for which I promise to do the work named above, and with such speed and excellence as will satisfy you, to who I beg to be humbly recommended.
>
> A vote was taken as shown below.
> Heads of the Council of Ten: Ser Girolamo Contarini

[40] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 208.

Petition Accepted.

Michele da Lezze
Giovanni Venier
For 10
Against 6 [41]

Titian's appeal to the Venetian government is comparable to the correspondence between Veneziano and Piero de' Medici. In both encounters the artist appeals to the vanity of his perspective patron without devaluing himself as an accomplished artist.

Figure 2.6 *The Battle of Spoleto* (c. 1570), an etching by Giulio Fontana after the image by Titian of Cadore. The original painting was destroyed by a fire in 1577.[42]

[41] "Petition of Titian to the Council of Ten, 1513," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 81-82.

[42] Giulio Fontana, *The Battle of Spoleto*, ca. 1570, etching on paper, 42 X 55.5 cm, British Museum, London, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1897-1117-205.

When McLean's theory is applied to these interactions, both Titian and Veneziano can be seen appealing to part of the twofold nature of their respective patrons by presenting themselves as subservient. This is displayed in the language Veneziano used in his letter which insinuates that he is in a "humble position" and might come off as "presumptuous" for asking the assistance of his patron.[43] In Titian's supplication, the artist utilizes similar language in order to appeal to the nature of the patron that was "attuned to the needs of others."[44] He accomplishes this by presenting himself as a "devoted servant" of the government who is "anxious…to leave some memorial of this famous city."[45] The use of this subservient tone and language would have allowed the patrons of Veneziano and Titian to assume the position of power as the artist is campaigning for their approval. Having presented themselves in this manner, the artists go on to provide evidence as to why they are the ideal candidate to complete commissioned pieces (the altarpiece of San Marco for Veneziano and the battle fresco for Titian). In these instances, the artists' ability to sway/manipulate their prospective patrons is indicative of a shift in the power dynamics of Renaissance art.

The Artist Presenting Themselves as a Valuable Asset to their Patron. In addition to displaying an image of subservience to his patron, the artist must also provide compelling reason as to *why* commissioning his services will be beneficial to the image/nature the patron seeks to present to society. Veneziano does this masterfully in his correspondence with Piero de' Medici when he writes, "I hope to God that I should produce something wonderful for you, equal to good masters like Fra Filippo [Lippi] and Fra Giovanni [Angelico], who have much work to do…But though it may be that my very sincere inclination to do you service makes me

[43] "Letter of Domenico Veneziano to Piero de' Medici," 92.
[44] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 208.
[45] "Petition of Titian," 82.

presumptuous in offering myself, even should I do less well than anyone else, I want to be obliged to seize any opportunity of merit and to make every effort needful to do everyone honour."[46] Here, the artist presents his worth to Medici by placing himself in league with other well-known artists of the period that the family already sponsors. In doing so, Veneziano takes control of the interaction by making himself a valuable asset to the Medici family while maintaining a subservient tone that appeals to the twofold nature argued by McLean. When McLean's theory is applied in this manner, I argue that it becomes possible that the artist held power in these interactions by allowing the patron to *assume* they held the authority in these exchanges.

Despite being in his early career as an artist, Titian also presents himself as an invaluable resource to the Venetian government. His petition to the Venetian government accomplishes this in two ways: first by hinting at the artist's acclaim/ability and later with the promise of a speedy completion. First, Titian displays his value by hinting at his previous successes. This can be seen when he writes, "Although in the past and even now I have been urgently sought by His Holiness the Pope and other Signori."[47] In mentioning his popularity among other patrons in the Italian peninsula Titian markets himself as a valuable asset to the Venetian government. Titian adds further value to his services as an artist with the promise of completing the work "with such speed and excellence as will satisfy you."[48] Since the adornment of the Hall had been underway since the end of the fifteenth century, the promise of a swift completion timeline made Titian an ideal candidate for employment. By presenting a dual image of himself (that of one in need and of one who is invaluable to the cause), Titian successfully appealed to the twofold nature

[46] "Letter of Domenico Veneziano to Piero de' Medici," 92-93.
[47] "Petition of Titian," 82.
[48] "Petition of Titian," 82.

McLean describes existed in patrons of the Renaissance period. This allowed Titian to successfully obtain and maintain power throughout his correspondence with the Venetian government.

Perhaps the most significant aspect about this interaction is how Titian utilizes this exchange to secure an opportunity to advance himself in Renaissance society. This is seen in the closing lines of Titian's supplication where he asks the government to grant him, "the first *sansaria* for life that shall be vacant in the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi*, irrespective of other expectations."[49] The *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* was the location of the German merchant association in Venice.[50] This association, alongside the Salt Office of Venice, was one of the parties responsible for funding the adornment of the Hall of the Greater Council. Yet, the critical thing to note about Titian's request is not the organization he sought a position in, but the position of *sansaria* itself. Historian Charles Hope discusses the implications and importance behind this position in his essay "Titian's Role as Official Painter to the Venetian Republic" (1980). Hope describes these positions as "sinecures, entitling the holder [the artist] to act as a broker at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi; they were worth about 120 ducats a year and were tenable for life."[51] Akin to the position of court artist as discussed by Warnke, artists who held one these positions were assured financial security in exchange for minimal exertion.

Furthermore, historian Tom Nichols notes in his monograph, *Titian: And the End of the Venetian Renaissance* (2013), that the position of *sansaria* afforded the individual leadership and

[49] "Petition of Titian," 82.
[50] Chambers, *Patrons and Artists*, 78.
[51] Charles Hope, "Titian's Role as Official Painter to the Venetian Republic," in *Tiziano e Venezia: Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Venezia*, ed. Massimo Gemin and Giannantonio Paladini, (Vicenza: Neri Poza, 1980), 302.

authority over local tradition.[52] This would explain commentary made by Vasari in his discussion of Titian's tenure in Venice. According to Vasari, the office of "la Senseria [sic]," was "obliged to paint the portraits of the doges for…the portrait [to be] placed in a public position in the palace of S. Marco."[53] This detail further supports my argument that artists held the power to influence society's perception of powerful political figures. However, the key phrase to note in Titian's request is how he seeks to be given the *sansaria* position, "irrespective of other expectations."[54] The specificity used by the artist here is important when considered alongside the social context of the period.

Hope speaks to the significance of this demand when he discusses the process of obtaining a *sansaria*. Hope writes that although the position of *sansaria* was "tenable for life" the Venetian government only awarded thirty of these stations.[55] This means that such positions were highly sought out by artists of the period. Since the number of artists interested in the position of *sansaria* outweighed the quantity of positions available, the Venetian government created a wait-list system.[56] This allowed for the government to keep track of which artisan would receive the next open *sansaria*. The establishment of this system afforded the patron (the Venetian government) a great deal of power as they controlled not only the number of available *sanserie*, but which artists were given *spettative*.

Historians know that Titian's supplication was approved by the Council of Ten due to

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[52] Tom Nichols, *Titian: And the End of the Venetian Renaissance* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 30.

[53] Giorgio Vasari, "Titian of Cadore," in *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 4, ed. William Gaunt (New York and London: Everyman's Library, 1963), 201.

[54] Petition of Titian," 82.

[55] Hope, "Titian's Role," 302.

[56] Artists on this waitlist were issued what is known as a *spettativa* (pl. *spettative*), which was an agreement issued by the Venetian government to the artist in question that guaranteed them the next available *sansaria* position: Hope, "Titian's Role," 302.

evidence present in a later correspondence. In this interaction, Titan is seen writing a petition to the Venetian Doge Leonardo Loredan (r. 1501-1521) regarding the commissioning of a series of canvases. The correspondence dates to January of 1516 and reads:

> Most serene Prince
>
> I Titian, servant of Your Serenity, have heard that you have decided to commission the painting of canvases for the [Hall of the] Great Council. I want you to see a canvas of this type and artistry by my hand, which I began two years ago; and it is not the most difficult and laborious in the whole Hall…On completion of this painting I would ask for my payment only half of the sum which was promised to Perugino some years ago [referencing a verbal agreement between Perugino and the Salt Office in 1494]…and that at this time I should have my expectation on the *sansaria* in the *Fondacho dei Tedeschi* as was resolved in your most illustrious Council of Ten on 28 November 1514.[57]

The approval of Titian's appeal in 1514 by the Council of Ten caused a shift in the preestablished power dynamic. The Venetian government (the patron) previously held power as they controlled the system by which artists received a *sansaria* position. In demanding that he surpass other artists for the next available position, Titian leveraged the desires of the patron (in this case the completion of the Hall of the Greater Council) to significantly improve his place in Renaissance society. While the Council of Ten later revoked this ruling in 1516, I argue that Titian's ability to convince the Venetian government to promise him the position in the first place is indicative of a shift in the traditional power dynamic. By getting the Council to promise Titian the next available *sansaria* position "irrespective of other expectations," Titian displays significant influence as he would surpass other artists who were previously guaranteed the

[57] "Petition of Titian to Doge Leonardo Loredan, 18 January 1516," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 83.

position via the *spettative* system.[58]

Conclusion

Although the artist is often presented as the subservient party in the artist-patron relationship by scholars, this is not entirely true. Where patrons evoked their superior financial and political status to obtain and maintain power in these exchanges, the artist relied upon his skills and reputation to shift the power dynamic in his favor. Utilizing the reflections and theories presented by historians Paul McLean and Martin Warnke, I explore how the artist applied these abilities to their advantage in the Renaissance art world.

Building on the observations presented by historian Martin Warnke in his work *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (1993), I argued that not only did cities in the Italian Peninsula seek to replicate patterns seen in court life, but that in certain situations these governments relied upon the reputation and connections of the artist. This is seen in how the cities of Florence and Cortona sent artists (Michelangelo and Luca Signorelli respectively) as emissaries to outside courts because of their connections and reputation. Michelangelo was dispatched to Rome as an emissary of Florence in 1505 following the election of Pope Julius II, who admired Michelangelo's previous work the *Pietà*. Similarly, Signorelli was included in a delegation sent to Florence by the city of Cortona in 1512 following the return of the Medici family from exile. Signorelli was likely included in the group of delegates due to his association with the Medici family in the years prior to their removal in 1494. Both of these exchanges replicate the Medici court of Florence, who dispatched Leonardo da Vinci to the Milanese court on behalf of their estate in 1480 due to his talents as a musician. In both of these exchanges, the

[58] "Petition of Titian," 82.

city tied themselves to the success of the artist in order to foster important relationships with other influential entities throughout the Italian Peninsula. This means that, to a certain degree, the patron (in this case the city) was subservient to the artist as they relied upon the artists' reputation and connections to establish positive relations.

However, agreeing to act as an emissary was not the only manner in which an artist could exert power over their patron. The primary source material provides multiple exchanges wherein the artist is seen as the dominant force in the relationship. Historians Creighton Gilbert and D.S. Chambers offer insight into how power in these interactions shifted from the patron to the artist. I have shown that examples of this shift in power can be seen in several types of exchanges, including personal correspondence and contractual agreements. The contract between the artist Giovanni Bon and the Salt Office of Venice is one interaction where the artist exerts power over his patron. In this document, the artist is seen controlling the situation as he is the one making demands of his patron. Surviving correspondence from the Marquis of Mantua (Ludovico Gonzaga) to the artist Andrea Mantegna provides an example of an artist possessing power outside of official records. In this letter, Gonzaga offers Mantegna a generous annual salary and promises other benefits should the artist agree to serve as the court painter of Mantua. By initiating this interaction, the Marquis allows for Mantegna to dictate the terms of his employment. This places the patron in the subservient position as Gonzaga must appease the artist's requests in order to secure his employment.

The final section of this chapter sought to apply McLean's theory that letter writing was a formulaic art, which was developed and utilized by those seeking the patronage of the elites. In the final pages of his work, McLean notes that when an individual wrote a letter seeking patronage he was "undoubtedly aiming to achieve some concrete improvement in the

circumstance of his life."[59] I sought to use this theory to argue that the artist possessed the knowledge and ability to utilize such practices to their benefit. This can be seen when McLean's theory is applied to correspondence between artists such as Titian of Cadore and Domenico Veneziano and their respective patrons. In these interactions, scholars can see how the artist appeals to the two-fold nature of their patron as proposed by McLean by presenting themselves as humble and subservient, while simultaneously marketing themselves as an invaluable asset. The use of this method allows for a subtle (but significant) shift in power as it is the artist who now holds the ability to define the situation.

Considering the evidence provided by modern scholars Warnke and McLean (alongside insights provided by Gilbert and Chambers) and the primary source material, my analysis of this chapter affirms that artist in the Italian Renaissance had the ability to control interactions in the artist-patron relationship. Unlike the patron who relied upon their financial superiority to exert control of these situations, the artist utilized their artistic talents and understanding of social dynamics to obtain power in these exchanges. Artists applied these abilities to both secure their livelihoods and advance themselves in Renaissance society.

Therefore, given the observations presented in this chapter, perhaps historians should change their understanding of the concept of power in the social context during the Renaissance period. Instead of viewing power as an absolute, immovable force in these relationships (wherein one party always has control over the other), it might benefit scholars to explore these interactions with the understanding that power is a flexible force. When put into practice, power in a social context becomes dependent not solely upon the will/influence of the artist/patron but the circumstances of each individual situation/relationship.

[59] McLean, *The Art of the Network*, 225.

CONCLUSION

Prior to giving my final analysis on the matter of power dynamics in these complex interactions and relationships, we must explore the possibility that there were circumstances wherein neither party held power. A discussion of this possibility is included in the section below. Litigation and arbitration records from Florence and Milan will be used to show instances where power was delegated to an outside party when no other resolution could be reached. Correspondingly, a discussion on the development and implementation of the concept of artistic license will also be included. Building upon the works of H.W. Jansen and Bram Kempers, this section will utilize correspondence (such as the letter of Matteo de' Pasti to his Medici patron) and contractual agreements (as in the case of Ghiberti and the *Arte del Cambio*) to show instances where both the artist and the patron held a degree of power in the relationship via the implied understanding of artistic license.

Cases of Litigation and Arbitration

The use of litigation and arbitration by artists and patrons in the Italian Renaissance was often threatened but rarely used. This is due in part to the strict and often obsessively detailed contracts between the two parties. Additionally, historian D.S. Chambers notes that despite the stringent nature of these agreements, an artist could "generally depend on a patron's patience and deference to their waywardness or pressure of work," instead of being penalized for breach of contract.[1] However, while power rarely left the artist-patron dynamic, governmental records exist which indicate that there were occasions when an artist, or their patron, sought legal action. In

[1] D.S. Chambers, *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, (London: Macmillan, 1970), 201.

these circumstances, I argue that power was removed from the traditional dynamic and placed in the hands of a third-party group or candidate.

An example of power being delegated to a neutral third party can be seen in the records of the Rucellai family of Florence. The family commissioned the carver Giovanni del Ticcia to complete a set of reliefs for the Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Ticcia subcontracted the work, with the approval of the family representative, to the artist Andrea di Lazzaro should he be unable to complete it.[2] Upon Ticcia's death, Lazzaro took over the project as planned. However, the Rucellai family was not pleased with the completed work and refused to pay the artist. This led to the two parties appointing arbitrators to resolve the conflict. The record of these proceedings from 1453 reads as follows:

> In the name of God, February 5, 1453. To those to whom this writing may come, be it known that Giovanni del Ticcia, stonecarver, assigned to Andrea di Lazzaro, carver, to carve and make four little narrative scenes, with figures, buildings, foliage, and other decorations…with the agreement of myself, Fra Andrea Rucellai, as the spokesman of the Rucellai family. And since the said Giovanni del Ticcia said to me, Fra Andrea Rucellai, that the said Andrea di Lazzaro would do these scenes for us to our satisfaction, they were assigned with my concurrence. Now the said Giovanni di Ticcia is dead, and I Fra Andrea Rucellai and Andrea di Lazzaro who has carved the scenes are in disagreement about the price of the scenes. So we transfer all argument and questions and the price to be paid for the marble scenes and all the decoration to Giuliano di Nofri and Bartolo d'Antonio, stonecarvers, both agreeing. And I Fra Andrea Rucellai promise to abide by what will be decided, and likewise Andrea di Lazzaro promises to abide by it… [Both sign and add confirmation of the agreement.]
>
> The above scenes were evaluated on February 26, by agreement of the said Giuliano and Bartolo, at the following sums, by the following masters:
>
> Antonio di Matteo, stonecarver, resident in the Proconsolo [street] estimated them at 25 pounds each.
>
> Desiderio di Bartolomeo estimated them at 22 pounds each.

[2] Creighton Gilbert, trans., *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 29.

Giovanni di Pierone stonecarver estimated them at 24 pounds each.[3]

This survival of this interaction is significant to this study as it displays an occasion where power was delegated to a party outside of the artist-patron dynamic. In the case of the Rucellai family and the artist Lazzaro, the power to define the situation was reassigned to a group of arbitrators when the two could not reach a resolution on the compensation of the completed work. The arbitrators chosen to look over the commissioned piece were stone carvers, who drew upon their experiences (and insight from famous sculptors such as Antonio Rossellino and Desidero da Settignano) to best determine the value of the sculpture.[4] If historians assume that the Rucellai family abided by the decision of the arbitrators, this document suggests that Lazzaro would have received between twenty and twenty-five pounds. While it is unclear how much Lazzaro was eventually compensated by the Rucellai estate, the important thing to note is that a resolution was reached by deferring power to individuals outside of the original agreement.

The account between the Rucealli family and Andrea Lazzaro displays an ideal scenario wherein a conflict could be resolved via arbitration. However, this was not always the case in the Renaissance art world. Surviving court documents from Florence and Milan provide insight into circumstances where disagreements between artist and patron reached Renaissance legal courts. In Florence, a dispute between the artist Filippo Lippi and his patron Antonio del Barcha was brought before the Tribunal of the Mercanzia in 1451. The record of the dispute is included below:

[3] "A Dispute Over the Price of a Sculpture," in *Italian Art 1400-1500: Sources and Documents*, ed. H.W. Janson, trans. Creighton Gilbert (London/New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), 30.

[4] Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400-1500*, 30.

> Antonio del Barcha of Perugia, at the present time inhabitant of the city of Florence, appeared before the said office and court on account of a petition and demand said to have been presented against him in the said court on the ninth of the present month of September by Fra Filippo di Tomasso of Florence, painter and rector of San Quirico at Legnaia. This is said to contain, in effect, that on 16 February 1450 the said Antonio commissioned the said Fra Filippo to paint a picture, with many figures of male and female saints, all expenses being borne by Fra Filippo, of such quality and condition as has allegedly been truly done, and according to the contract made between the parties. He was to have done it in six months…and having finished it within the same time the said Fra Filippo ought to have had 70 florins. Fra Filippo says that they appeared before the Prior of San Marco with certain agreements which appear in a public instrument. And the said Fra Filippo alleges that the said picture was made according to the quality and manner of the said charter and contract, as he says the said Antonio was notified by a letter before the said court. Fra Filippo declares that Antonio should be condemned to pay the said 70 florins or be made to give him the deposit that he prepared to advance for the said picture, on account of all that is contained in the said petition. Antonio, on the other hand, says that the said Fra Filippo had no intention at all of doing the work, that he should be freed and absolved from the contract, and that moreover a perpetual silence on this matter should be imposed on Fra Filippo; the sentence and declaration should thus be pronounced by our tribunal, and the adversary party be condemned according to the form of the statutes and ordinances of the said body.[5]

We see here that the artist (Lippi) has initiated the litigation process against Barcha after he refused to fulfill the terms outlined in the contractual agreement. Although the original contract no longer survives, historians know from other records that the courts ruled in Lippi's favor and forced Barcha to uphold the terms outlined in the agreement, which required that Lippi be paid the seventy florins owed to him.[6] While the case between Lippi and Barcha reached a resolution quickly, this was not always the case. Some disputes and litigations lasted for several years or even decades.

One example of extended litigation between the artist and their patron is the record of

[5] "Record of the Dispute between Fra Filippo Lippi and Antonio del Barcha, 11 September 1451," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 202-203.

[6] Chambers, *Patrons and Artists*, 202.

Leonardo da Vinci and the Preda brothers against the confraternity of the Conception of Milan. The dispute between the two parties lasted over two decades and revolved around compensation for the altarpiece known as the *Virgin of the Rocks*. The document below is a record of the appeal made by the artists to the Milanese government when the Confraternity refused to properly compensate them.

> Your most faithful servants Giovanni Ambrogio Preda and Leonardo da Vinci, Florentine, previously made a contract with the confraternity of the Conception of [the church of] San Francesco, Milan, to make an altarpiece with figures in relief, all done with fine gold, and a panel of Our Lady painted in oil, and two panels with two large angels similarly painted in oil. The agreement was that they should appoint for the valuation of the said work two members of the said confraternity and Fra Agostino as the third, and the valuation being made, and the said works accounting to more than 800 *lire imperiali* which have gone on expenses, the said confraternity are obliged to satisfy the supplicants [da Vinci and the Preda brothers] with more than the said 800 *lire imperiali* as declared by the above three [judges]. And despite the fact that the said two works are worth 300 ducats in value, as appears in the statement presented to the said confraternity by the said supplicants, the latter have requested the said commissaries to make the said valuation on oath. However they are unwilling to do so with fairness, wanting to value the said painting of Our Lady in oil, done by the said Florentine, at only 25 ducats, whereas it is worth 100 ducats, as appears in the statement of the said supplicants; and the said price of 100 ducats has been offered by persons wanting to buy the said painting of Our Lady…
>
> Having regard to the above, and to the fact that the said members of the Confraternity are not expert in such matters…you will be good enough to arrange without delay either that the said three commissaries value the said two works according to their oath, or that two expert judges are appointed, one for each party, who will have to value the said two works, and according to their judgement the said members of the Confraternity shall have to make satisfaction to the said supplicants. Otherwise, the said Confraternity should leave the painting of Our Lady in oil to the artists, considering the altarpiece with all the work in relief by itself is worth the said 800 *lire imperiali* which he said supplicants have had, and which have gone on expenses as stated above.[7]

[7] "Record of the Appeal of Leonardo da Vinci and Ambrogio Preda concerning the 'Virgin of the Rocks', c. 1504-6," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 207-208.

The correspondence above shows the artist providing their account of the events which led to the ensuing disagreement. According to da Vinci and Preda, the Confraternity refused to properly compensate the artists for the work. This is seen when, according to Preda and da Vinci, the Confraternity claimed part of the altarpiece (the Madonna) was only worth twenty-five ducats when others estimated the piece to be worth one hundred ducats.[8] Similar to the verdict reached by the Tribunal of Florence in the case of Lippi versus Barcha, the Milanese government ruled in favor of da Vinci and the Preda brothers. According to historian D.S. Chambers, a final settlement was reached by a panel of judges in 1506, which declared that the artists were to be compensated 100 *lire*.[9] In both of these circumstances, the court is seen ruling in favor of the artist. However, the discussion of these cases is relevant to the study of power dynamics in the Italian Renaissance as they reveal instances wherein power was held not by the artist or the patron, but by an outside party. By choosing to take legal action against their patron, the artists in these interactions willingly allowed the court system to assume the dominant role in these exchanges. In doing so, da Vinci, the Preda brothers and Lippi placed themselves and their patrons in a position of subservience to the law.

Artistic License

The concept of artistic license is best defined by art historian H.W. Jansen in his essay "The Birth of 'Artistic License': The Dissatisfied Patron in the Early Renaissance" (1981). While he acknowledges that the term can have numerous meanings depending upon the subject matter being discussed, when speaking of art he states that artistic license is defined as "the changes

[8] "Record of the Appeal," 208.
[9] Chambers, *Patrons and Artists*, 207.

made by an artist in executing a commission without prior authorization from his patron, or even against the patron's explicit instructions."[10] As one of the first scholars to apply this concept to art in the Renaissance period, Jansen observes that the idea of artistic license emerges as early as the fourteenth century in the writings of Petrarch. According to Jansen, Petrarch claims (when speaking of *Madonna Enthroned*, completed by Giotto ca. 1310) that the "great master [that is, the artist] does not work to please the multitude; he appeals, rather, to a special limited audience that has the necessary background to appreciate him."[11] This led to a discussion among medieval scholars, such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, who began to notice a shift in how commissioned art was created by artists in the Renaissance period. Instead of following a patron's wishes to the letter, artists began to take liberties with designs submitted by their patrons, claiming to be driven by their "genius" and "inspiration."[12] While this remained a theoretical discussion in the fourteenth century, historians witness artistic license being utilized throughout the fifteenth century.

Jansen's proposal of artistic license in the Renaissance poses an issue in the discussions presented by Hollingsworth (1994) and Warnke (1993). According to these two scholars, the artist had no say in the design of a commissioned piece. Rather, the artist existed to fulfill the desires of their patron and was afforded no artistic freedom. A similar issue arises in the writing of Dutch historian Bram Kempers (1992). While Kempers acknowledges that artistic license did exist in the Renaissance period, he maintains that the concept did not emerge until the sixteenth

[10] H.W. Jansen, "The Birth of 'Artistic License': The Dissatisfied Patron in the Early Renaissance," in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. by Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 344.

[11] Jansen, "The Concept of 'Artistic License,'" 345.

[12] Jansen, "The Concept of 'Artistic License,'" 345.

century and that this freedom was limited to the most highly respected artists of the period.[13] However, I argue that artistic license (as defined by Jansen) existed as early as the fifteenth century.

One instance wherein an artist invokes the right of artistic license is seen in a letter between Matteo de' Pasti and his patron Piero de' Medici. De' Pasti was a well-known manuscript illuminator in the early fifteenth century and was likely working on a piece for the Medici library.[14] In this correspondence, de' Pasti is writing to his patron regarding a new technique he learned during his time in Venice. The letter from 1441 reads as follows:

> Admirable and honoured Sir
>
> By this letter I beg to inform you that since being in Venice I have learnt something which could not be more suited to the work I am doing for you, a technique of using powdered gold like any other colour, and I have already begun to paint the Triumphs in this manner, so that you will never have seen anything like them before. The foliage is all touched up with this powdered gold, and I have embroidered it over the maidens a thousand ways. So I warmly beg you to send me instructions for the other fantasies, so that I can complete them for you; and if you want me to send these to you I will do so: you need only send me the order for what you want me to do and I shall be prompt to obey you in whatever pleases you. And I warmly beg you to forgive me for what I have done, because you know I was forced to do so… And forgive me now for everything; what I am doing now will be worth more one day than all I have done before. So do me this gracious service, deign to let me have a reply, and let me finish it, so that you may see a thing that has never been done like this before, embellished with this powdered gold.
>
> From the least of your servants, Matteo de' Pasti[15]

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[13] Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power, and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Allen Lane, 1992), 168.

[14] Francis Ames-Lewis, "Matteo de' Pasti and the Use of Powdered Gold," *Mitteilugen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 28 (1984): 351.

[15] "Letter of Matteo de' Pasti to Piero de' Medici, 1441," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 94-95.

The technique de' Pasti mentions is explained by art historian Francis Ames-Lewis in his work, "Matteo de' Pasti and the Use of Powdered Gold." According to Ames-Lewis, the technique of powdered gold was a practice utilized by illuminators in Northern Europe that made its way to Venice in the early fifteenth century.[16] The technique allowed the artist to take gold-leaf powder mixed with other pigments and mediums [in the case of parchment the medium is gum arabic] to "produce a sparkly effect, or it can be very finely painted on to produce a shot effect in drapery highlights."[17] However, the interaction depicted here is of significance not because of the technique being utilized, but because it shows an instance wherein an artist altered a commissioned work without the consent of his patron. Although the original images discussed above are now lost, pieces of what historians believe is the manuscript completed by de' Pasti can be found in the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.[18] The survival of the work is important as it would indicate that the patron (in this instance Piero de' Medici) accepted the completed work despite the alterations de' Pasti made. This would have been an indirect acknowledgement of the artist's right to modify a commissioned work should he believe it was for the benefit of his patron's pleasure.

In certain circumstances, the patron can be seen providing the artist with the ability to make modifications to a commissioned work at their discretion. This can be seen in the contract between Lorenzo Ghiberti and the *Arte del Cambio* of Florence, as discussed in chapter two. The contract between the two parties contains a clause which affords Ghiberti the option to change the size of the commissioned statue. The clause in the contract reads:

[16] Ames-Lewis, "Matteo de' Pasti," 352.
[17] Ames-Lewis, "Matteo de' Pasti," 352 and 354.
[18] Ames-Lewis, "Matteo de' Pasti," 351.

> Being assembled together in the House of the said Guild, they drew up the following contract for the niche and new figure of St Matthew, which they want to be made of brass and bronze in the niche newly acquired by the said Guild…And with the said Lorenzo [Ghiberti] they signed the following clauses of agreement:
>
> First, the said Lorenzo di Bartoluccio [Bartolo] promises and agrees by a solemn undertaking with the said consuls and four Guildsmen to do the said figure of St Matthew in fine bronze at least as large as the present figure of St John the Baptist of the Guild of Merchants [sic], or larger if it seems better, at Lorenzo's discretion.[19]

Similar to the correspondence between de' Pasti and Piero de' Medici, Ghiberti can also invoke the right of artistic license when completing the commissioned statue for the Florentine guild. However, this interaction is important because it provides an example of a patron willingly affording the artist the freedom to change the design without fear of repercussions. Although the clause only permits Ghiberti to alter the size of the commissioned work to best fit the assigned space, the presence of such permissions is important to this study. By adding this clause to the notarized contract, the guild is voluntarily deferring to the expertise and experience of the artist they have hired.

Artistic license is seen in numerous documents from fifteenth-century Florence including the exchanges discussed above, which date to 1441 and 1418 respectively. When Jansen's definition of artistic license is applied to these interactions, they directly contradict the argument presented by Kempers. In both of these exchanges, the artist invokes (or is given permission to invoke) artistic license when making an alteration to a commissioned design. These documents show that artistic license existed, to some degree, in the Italian Peninsula during the fifteenth century, meaning that Kempers' timeline could be off by a century or more.

[19] "Contract of Lorenzo Ghiberti with the Money-changers Guild ('Arte del Cambio') to make the Statue of St Matthew, 26 August 1418," in *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. D.S. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1970), 43.

Concluding Thoughts/Analysis

In the preceding chapters, I have sought to present evidence which demonstrates that power could be held by both the patron and the artist in the Renaissance period. In my initial research on the discourse of this topic, the case of power in the hands of the patron was the favored conclusion drawn by scholars. Patrons were motivated by social and political pressure to present themselves in an advantageous light to broader Renaissance society. This is observed in the works of historians like Warnke, Hollingsworth and throughout the primary source material. Given that the reputation and prestige of the patron was closely associated with the commissioning of public works, it makes sense that they would use their financial means to exert control over the artists under their patronage both financially and creatively.

The argument for the patron's power is well-researched and has been thoroughly discussed among Renaissance scholars. However, this means that the influence exerted by artists in these exchanges is overlooked. Therefore, my research and analysis of the primary source texts utilized in the second chapter of this thesis sought to provide a compelling argument that power in this dynamic could have been held by the artist. Although the power exerted by artists during the Renaissance period was not always obviously displayed in these interactions, circumstances exist where these individuals utilized their talent and prestige to exert control over their patrons. This is seen in the correspondence between Giovanni Bon and the Venetian Salt Office and later in the exchange between the Marquis of Mantua and the artist Andrea Mantegna. In both of these circumstances, we see how the artists invokes their talent and experience to place themselves in a position of power over their respective patrons or to negotiate a better offer for their services.

Furthermore, the case of the artist as the entity who dominated these exchanges is further

strengthened when examined in light of Paul McLean's theory of social correspondence. By utilizing his theory that letter writing (particularly letters in which an individual was seeking patronage) was a learned formulaic art in the Renaissance period, the argument that the artist was the individual who held power in these interactions became increasingly stronger. In playing to the patron's vanity and need for social prestige while simultaneously presenting themselves as an asset of value, the artist can be seen holding power in these situations.

The purpose of this thesis was to study these interactions alongside (and in light of) the observations provided by numerous scholars in order to determine which entity held power in this complicated social dynamic. The study revealed that power dynamics in the Renaissance art world (and Renaissance society at large) were dependent upon circumstances that were unique to each situation. This is exemplified by the relationships that the patron Piero de' Medici held with the artists Matteo de' Pasti and Benozzo Gozzoli. In the case of Benozzo Gozzoli (who was hired to paint the frescoes in the Medici family chapel), we see that the artist is in the subservient position. This is reflected in the tone of the letter written by the artist to Medici in 1459. The tone of Gozzoli's letter is indicative of one who is apologetic and fearful of the repercussions of changing the commissioned design—in this case two small cherubs. On the other hand, the correspondence between de' Pasti and Piero de' Medici differs greatly. Instead of one party exerting absolute control, this interaction more accurately resembles one where both parties held a semblance of power via the use of artistic license. In the letter de' Pasti presents a tone of one who is enthusiastic (instead of fearful) about informing his patron about the new style he has implemented to the commissioned work. While the original contract was not available for use in this study, the survival of what historians presume is the completed illuminated manuscript leads scholars to infer that the change either did not greatly impact the commissioned piece, or that

Piero de' Medici afforded the artist a degree of freedom.

A similar circumstance is seen in the documentation between the Venetian government and the artists Vivarini and Titian of Cadore. Here, the correspondence of Vivarini is clearly one where the artist is subservient to the patron he is seeking support from. The direct opposite is observed in the Venetian government's exchanges with Titian of Cadore. Instead of prostrating himself before the Council of Ten, Titian presents himself as an invaluable asset to the government. However, Titian persuades the government that he would only offer his services should he be granted one of the most prestigious positions available to Venetian artists, regardless of other artists with more experience and connections. The interactions between these patrons and the artists under their employ best illustrates how the division of power in the artist-patron relationship was dependent upon individual circumstances.

Since the amount of power held by each individual/group was dependent upon the situation, perhaps it is time for historians to change their understanding of power as it relates to the Renaissance period. Instead of viewing power as an absolute, immovable force in these relationships (wherein one party always has control over the other), perhaps it would be better to explore these interactions with the understanding that power is flexible and fluid. If this concept is put into practice, power in a social context becomes dependent not solely upon the will/influence of the artist/patron but the circumstances of each individual relationship. In doing so, historians would be able to shift their focus from trying to determine *who* is in control to a discussion of what factors influence these parties to *seek* control in these interactions.

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