

# **Stefano Bardini's Photographic Archive:**

**A visual historical document**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

Stefano Bardini (1836-1922) was a polymath figure; art dealer, collector, amateur architect and photographer. As an art dealer he dominated the scene of art collecting for fifty years, from 1875 until 1922, the date of his death. Stefano Bardini is considered as *the* art-dealer who reinvented the idea of mediaeval and Renaissance art in Italy. His work influenced the most important museums and private collections of his time and, in 1883 with the establishment of his showroom in his newly built Palazzo Mozzi Bardini, he created an ultra modern space that combined two important elements: the commercial and the museological. Bardini challenged his clients and their knowledge of art with his enigmatic and fascinating displays. He immortalised these displays in his photographs, using a sophisticated process that combined composition, lighting, perspective, symmetry and frames in a unique manner. This study is based on photographs from the Stefano Bardini photographic archive and is an investigation of the images and their composition as a distinctive language. The thesis will explore the visual language of the photographs as historical documents and investigate the influences of Stefano Bardini's historical and cultural context in order to understand the creative process of his displays and illuminate how the photographic frame reveals his conscious and unconscious intentions. This study's aim is to investigate how Bardini's photographs reflect the original history of his time and how much he created a new historical point of view. Until now these photographs have been used to re-trace the destination of works of art sold by Bardini; this thesis has a different focus as its intention is to unfold the symbolic layers of the images and interpret their meanings with reference to the socio-cultural milieu of Bardini's time. Letters from

the Bardini archive and notebooks provide a more specific context for his innovative displays and show the personality of his clients, their art collecting interests and how photography as a relatively new medium for selling, proved to be a useful tool for the practice of art dealing.

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**Abbreviations:** ASEF = Soprainntendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino, Archivio Storico Eredità Bardini.

## Introduction

Stefano Bardini shifted the photograph from the simple use as document to a more complex artistic and historical witness of his time. All photography is a nexus of time and Bardini's work in particular offers insights into multiple moments and memories. His experiments with photography and his position as both an artist and art dealer means he is a unique and interesting figure to look at in an examination of the power and use of the photograph.

The first part of this introduction will sketch Bardini's early life and describe his place in the art world and wider society in order to get a good understanding of the impact of photography on his work. It will then move on to a section on his photography and introduce his work and their place within wider theories on images, time and history. For Bardini photographs were an effective instrument for his art dealing; they have now also become important historical documents, fundamental to an understanding of the art world during Bardini's time. Furthermore, with these photographs Bardini documented his museological project created in his art displays. The investigation of this thesis focuses on these displays as framed in Bardini's photographs in order to understand his cultural influences, his work as art dealer and his historical period. After this introductory section follows a discussion on photographs as objects in space and time and then a theoretical and methodological section which will outline the analytical tools that this thesis will make use of in order to unpick the complex layers of symbolism and context present in Bardini's photographs. Both these approaches help us with a deeper analysis by focusing the viewer

on the meanings that stand behind the image. Iconography is constantly used by art historians and while Foucault's work is less associated with art and more with historical lineages of social structures, I find him particularly useful in this study of documents and their role of history. In looking at Bardini's documents we are able to appreciate their lineage and their effects simultaneously.

The theoretical tools employed include the study of iconology and iconography, which help to unravel the hidden meaning of these images within Foucault's concept of genealogical and archeological analysis. In order to frame the thesis and offer a clear description of Bardini, the next part of this introduction will analyse Stefano Bardini's photographic self-portrait. Here the author will show how a theoretical approach combined with historical detail and the particularities of Bardini's biography will generate a proper understanding of his role and the context of his work. The importance attributed by Bardini to the role of photography can be seen in the study of his photographic archive, neglected for many years and re-evaluated only in the 1970s. The importance of his photographic archive is shown in the two publications: *The Historical Photographic Archive of Stefano Bardini: Greek Etruscan and Roman Art* 1993, and *L'Archivio Storico Fotografico di Stefano Bardini: Dipinti, disegni, miniature, stampe* 2000. These two publications were the genesis of the current study. In exploring Bardini's photographs of interiors it is clear that this is an under-researched area, an untapped resource that can offer a unique insight into his personality, historical period and cultural influences. This thesis is based on the exploration of a selection of some of the most ambiguous photographs from the Bardini photographic archive. Through detailed analysis of the images it investigates the conscious and unconscious expressions of Bardini. This section will be followed by a description of the development of photography in Italy, and in



Florence, in particular during the nineteenth century. At the end of this introduction the author will set out the topics discussed in the following chapters and how the thesis develops through them and the major aspects that intertwine in the analysis of the photographs selected. The analyses of the photographs in this thesis are not grouped together but each photograph is woven into the narrative.

### Stefano Bardini's biography

Stefano Bardini was born in Pieve Santo near Arezzo the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1836 from a petit bourgeois family.<sup>1</sup> He moved to Florence in 1854 and enrolled in the painting course run by the famous romantic painter Giuseppe Bezzuoli.<sup>2</sup> After his death at the end of 1855, Bezzuoli was succeeded by two of his pupils, Benedetto Servolini (1805-1879) and Enrico Pollastrini (1817-1876), both of whom were deeply engaged with the artistic movement of the *Romanticismo Storico* in Tuscany. In 1855 Bardini took part in the exhibition organised by the Art Academy of Florence where he presented two sketches: *Il Ratto di Proserpina* and *Lucrezia visitata da Tarquino*, obtaining the second prize.<sup>3</sup> His style, which evolved from *Romanticismo Storico* to the *bozzetto storico* (historical sketch) exhibited an increasing affiliation with the new school of painting, that of the *macchiaioli*. Within this milieu, the culture of Romantic historicism seemed itself to belong to the past, and

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<sup>1</sup> Fiorenza Scalia, *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze* (Milano, Electa, 1984), p. 21. Nimeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43. Simone Bargellini *Antiquari di Ieri* (Firenze, Bonechi, 1981), pp. 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Nimeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Alessandro Foresi, *XII Capitoli delle Memorie* (Firenze, Balli, 1886), pp. 201-231. Bargellini, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10 and 18. William Blundell Spence, *The Lyons of Florence* (Florence, Felix Le Monnier, 1847), pp. 94-112. Piero Bargellini, *Il caffè Michelangiolo* (Firenze, Vallecchi, 1944), pp. 103-121. Anita F. Moskowitz, 'Stefano Bardini: the Early Years' in *Studi Trentini Arte* a.92 2013 n.2 pp.267-288.

<sup>3</sup> Nimeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

was largely considered uninteresting and anachronistic – the product of a civilisation seeking to re-establish its identity through the evocation of an antiquated culture, and oblivious to the profound historical transformations taking place in the present. Bardini was not only influenced by the macchiaioli's painting style but also by their early experiments in photography. There was a growing desire to experiment, and to subvert the conventional rules of art. Ideologically, the macchiaioli were affiliated to the revolutionary ideals of the Risorgimento. Technically, they introduced the *stile verista*. Their technique was based on the study of light and chiaroscuro, and they sought to reproduce the correct light in their *macchia* (splashes of colour).<sup>4</sup> The challenge of this task resulted in the introduction of photography as an aid in painting.

When it was impossible to paint directly from nature, a photograph could be used as a substitute, and in fact it would have a special magic of its own. The active years of the *macchiaioli* group coincided with a period of increased activity and rapid technical development in the field of photography.<sup>5</sup>

As the scholar Nancy Jane Gray Troyer explains, photography helped artists to concentrate on the subject and enabled them to understand the language of each individual element and its position in relation to perspective.

The peculiar fascination of the photographic image lies in its ability to focus, both literally and figuratively, upon the world we thought we knew and understood, in ways that show us new relationships among the elements of that world and between the world and ourselves. The artist can react to the

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<sup>4</sup> Nancy Jane Gray Troyer, *Macchiaioli Effects of Modern Color Theory: Photography, and Japanese Prints on a Group of Italian Painters, 1855–1900* (Northwestern University PhD 1973, printed, 1979), pp. 10–13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.14 and 169.

photographic image by accepting its superiority in recording all lighted object within its range of focus with equal detachment and objectivity, and allowed his creative power to be stunted by slavish copying.<sup>6</sup>

In 1856 the young Bardini again participated in the competition hosted by the Art Academy of Florence, this time with the oil sketch *Lorenzo de' Medici che nella congiura dei Pazzi si salva nella sagrestia del Duomo* (no. 3) and he received a mention by the artist Antonio Ciseri who praised Bardini as a 'faithful interpreter of the new research on historical sketches'.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, in Florence artists began to meet outside the academy at the *Caffè Michelangelo*, which was chosen as a place to discuss art without any of the connotations of a society or of a revolutionary group. The *caffè* said to be 'colonised' by artists was open to artists from different regions, art dealers, collectors and national and international artists.

The complex setting of contemporary art which looked to the past to inspire its promotion of nationalistic ideals formed the backdrop of the early part of Bardini's career as a painter.<sup>8</sup> Following his first

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161. Silvio Belloni 'teorie della visione e fondamento delle ricerche unificate di pittura e fotografia nell' Italia dei Macchiaioli' in *I Macchiaioli e la fotografia* ed. Monica Maffioli (Firenze, Alinari, 4 Dicembre 2008 -15 Febbraio 2009), pp. 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> *op. cit.*, Niemeyer Chini, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Ettore Spalletti, *Gli Anni del Caffè Michelangelo* (Roma, De Luca/Milano, Leonard, 1989), p. 11. The Society Promoting the Fine Arts in Turin was established on these premises in 1845; the society had been active since 1842, with some success. The teaching at the academy of art in Florence was still anchored in obsolete methods, especially in relation to painting and architecture. These deeply traditional studies did not favour artists' experimentation with new techniques or ideas, inhibiting creativity and leading ultimately to a collapse in the art market. The academy's teaching was based on plaster copies of ancient and medieval sculpture and Renaissance architectural detail. Art, according to the academicians, had to emulate the past. The continual requests for a more innovative programme of studies were largely ignored. Dissatisfied with this stagnant situation, an increasing number of artists sought to escape from the academy's limitations, resulting in the creation of a new independent association known as the Societa' Promotrice. The aim of this association was to promote new and innovative works of art, especially in painting, and thereby to create a new market addressing the newly emerging bourgeois class. For this reason, new subjects were introduced into paintings – landscapes and scenes of contemporary life, in particular – all of which invited moral interpretation.

successes at the Art Academy, Bardini did not succeed in establishing his artistic career and in 1866 he instead chose to focus on his enthusiastic political idealism and so he left Florence to join the last battle of the Garibaldini, who were then fighting for Italy's independence.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, no more reliable sources regarding Bardini's youth have been found. It is known only that he also visited Rome during these years, where he came into contact with the Castellani brothers, famous collectors of antiquities and jewels. As they were art dealers it is plausible to speculate that they were his mentors, as has indeed been suggested by some researchers.<sup>10</sup> During this time Bardini began establishing himself on the scene and a few years later in the early 1870s the artist Telemaco Signorini (1835-1901) recalls in his memoirs; 'Bardini already well known as an artist and restorer was a frequenter of the *caffè*.'<sup>11</sup> Like his colleagues, Bardini was collecting works of art as models to be painted, but this was also the beginning of his career as an art dealer. Following the examples of the already established Florentine dealers Vincenzo Ciampolini, a Garibaldino who had begun trading in tapestries and weapons after 1866, Bardini began to sell his pieces. Other important colleagues and competitors of Bardini at the time were Angelo Tricca and Demetrio Tolosani.<sup>12</sup> As a result of the increasing success of Bardini's career as a dealer, his life and work from the 1870s onwards is well documented. His correspondence was neatly kept by his secretaries and it is now in two

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<sup>9</sup> Nimeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 43-44. Salvatore Ferrari 'Due pittori garibaldini a Borsone: Stefano Bardini e Alessandro Trotti' in *Studi Trentini Arte* a.92 2013 n.2 pp. 289-302.

<sup>10</sup> Scalia, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-21. Antonella Maganini, 'Alessandro and Augusto Castellani: collecting, museum history, and the antiquities market' in *Castellani and Italian Archaeological Jewellery* eds. Susan Weber Soros and Stephanie Walker (New York, Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 285-298.

<sup>11</sup> Nimeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 50. footnote no. 33.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44. Bernd Roeck *Florence 1900: The Quest of Arcadia* Translated by Stewart Spencer (New Haven CT and London, Yale University Press, 2009), p. 155. Bargellini, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

different archives divided in two periods; from 1883 to 1904 and from 1905 to 1915.<sup>13</sup>

### **The photographs of Stefano Bardini, an introduction.**

Stefano Bardini's photographs of interiors offer a new angle on the study of his personality and career, and on how he was rooted in his time. The following pages will outline the background and aim of this thesis; it discusses the work of Bardini and argues that this investigation is able to offer a unique analysis of Bardini's work and historical context by focusing on photographs which have previously not been studied in any great detail. These images can be studied now as the expression of a personal museological project, which was both modern and challenging at the end of the nineteenth century. On deeper analysis the specific style and content of the photographs challenge the assumed meaning of them as artefacts of that particular historical period. Furthermore these photographs also shine a critical light on our knowledge and perceptions of Bardini's time.

As Georges Didi-Huberman suggests, when we are in front of an image we have to question our knowledge; what we know and understand of that image. Our certainties are challenged and we have to try to understand the meaning of the image through a wide variety of

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<sup>13</sup> ASEF, Stefano Bardini correspondence from 1883-1884. Florence. Servizio di Catalogazione dei Musei Civici Fiorentini contains Stefano Bardini correspondence from 1905-1915. The archive has two folders containing correspondence between the South Kensington Museum and Stefano Bardini in the period from 1884 to 1914. The folders are divided between the first period, 1884-1890, and the second period, 1890-1914. Amongst the letters are several papers showing purchases from Bardini made by the museum.

intersecting fields; through anthropology, history and politics.<sup>14</sup> Bardini's images therefore bear witness not only to the importance of his activity, but also to the complexity of his historical period.

For the last century, the question of memorialisation has been salient in thinking on photography. How do we remember the past? What role do photographs play in mediating history and memory? Like the monument, the photograph is simultaneously an aide-memoire and a testament of loss.<sup>15</sup>

The practice of photography, in vogue with art dealers, collectors and museum curators at that time, was shifted by Bardini from its primary commercial use towards more complex meanings: combining art-historical theories, artistic interpretations and contemporary historical events, they became a depository of the memory of that time. Memory, social memory, can be differentiated into two separate types: autobiographical memory on the one hand and collective memory on the other.<sup>16</sup>

Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective.<sup>17</sup>

Bardini's photographs can be classified as autobiographical memory, which became cultural memory and eventually collective memory, as

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<sup>14</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, 'La condition des images' Entretien avec Frederic Lambert et Francois Niney in *L'Experience des images* Marc Auge, Georges Didi-Huberman, Umberto Eco (Bry-sur-Marne, INA Editions, 2011), pp. 83-84.

<sup>15</sup> Roxana Marcoci, *The Original Copy, Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today* (New York, Museum of Modern Art, Exhibition 1 August – 1 November 2010), p.127.

<sup>16</sup> Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies' in *History and Theory* 41 (Middletown CT, Wesleyan University, 2002), p. 185.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188.

they are now shared, through their study, among a wider community.<sup>18</sup> These photographs have therefore the function of a language that we, the viewer can partake in in order to create a shared experience of the past. Photography, when first invented in the nineteenth century, made a great contribution to the objectification of the past. During its rapid development and increasing usage photography became a new form of document, which accelerated the process of memorialisation. In the same manner as other forms of document such as texts, rites, buildings, and monuments, photographs also objectify culture and become cultural memory.<sup>19</sup> Their physical presence constantly recalls the past and they fill the gap between the time of their creation and the present. Thus as a consequence of their witness, the past does not disappear. Their presence, once objectified reminds us of our history and its evolution; our origins and simultaneously also our future, as the past creates the basis for the future. Barthes investigates the meaning of images with the following questions which prove to be of seminal importance for the analysis of Bardini's photographs in relation to history and memory: how does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there behind?<sup>20</sup> Bardini introduced a specific meaning to his photographs, being both historical and autobiographical and these two main meanings generate the search for an understanding of their limits. How the viewer begins to understand the historical message and Bardini's personal message are inevitably blended together. With his photographs, Bardini generated an extremely important contribution to collective memory. Without the testimony of these photographs, it would never have been possible to re-create the present Bardini museum and his display style would have disappeared. The importance of these displays, as will be demonstrated

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes *Image Music Text* (London Fontana Press, 1977), p. 33.

throughout the thesis, lies not only in the insight they give to the taste and culture of Bardini, but these displays also work as a constant reminder of other historical periods represented by works of art and fragments which are their subject. Hence these photographs reveal how history constantly re-appears under different evocative forms of interpretation. His display was unconventional and extremely innovative for the time and his photographs offer a rewarding and stimulating subject for research in the field of museological display. Bardini's photographs bear witness to history, and the history memorised through them can be seen as commemoration of the past. With these images Bardini not only created his museological projects, but also commemorated himself.

In this thesis a selection of these images will be analysed for the first time through an iconographic interpretation. The photographs selected for this study are those, which are more easily attributable to Bardini and his collaborators. Their style, composition and details include similarities that can be identified as distinctively Bardini's. Bardini was inevitably influenced by his contemporaries and as this thesis will argue, a particularly crucial influence was the art-historical theories of Jacob Burckhardt. The importance of the parallels between his writings and Bardini's images are at the core of the analysis of this thesis. Seen in this light, the photographs will assume an important museological value that connects the past, Renaissance studied by Burckhardt with the works of art photographed in the present by Bardini. In order to unfold the layers of meaning in Bardini's photographs, this study will now move on to looking at theories of photography that suggest different directions and approaches.



## Photography object, time, space, document

This section will explore theories on photography which will be important for framing Bardini's photographs in a theoretical context and show how these theories, once applied to his photographs will reveal the importance of time, space and document. These three aspects are at the core of the study of Bardini's images. Time as an abstraction is captured in photography through the dialogue between the various works of art displayed. The space in the photographs is determined by the sense of perspective and both are the elements that determine the value of the document.

A photograph is both an intentional and an unintentional document in which the photographer's conscious and unconscious description of images can be found. The authorship, purpose and period of the photograph are the three significant elements of this study, which will follow a combination of two major schools of photographic analysis. The first, more conventional school of analysis reads the signification of the content of the image. This is combined with the second, postmodern approach, which focuses on context and history. As a result, this study is an investigation of content, context and representation.

Interpretative elements are integral to the nature of photography; it is the mechanical/documentary/artistic reproduction of reality in which the eye, mind, sensitivity and technical skill of the photographer engage with time, space and light. 'Photography is a way of observing, documenting and firmly fixing a precise moment of time.'<sup>21</sup> As Peter Osborne says, the principal aim of photography is to 'capture' a

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London and New York, Verso, 2013), p.124.

moment of time.<sup>22</sup> Real but ephemeral, time changes its definition in photography. Although an abstract concept, in photography time becomes a real tangible thing: the photograph has materiality and becomes an object.

Yet this supposedly fixed temporal singularity is phantasmatic, since the temporality of the photographic image is always that of a relation between a (constantly shifting) ‘now’ and the photograph ‘then’ a relation sustained, as if atemporal, by the material continuity of the photographic form of question.<sup>23</sup>

Osborne sees the ambiguity of temporality in photography and he underlies its atemporal aspect and the continuous fluctuation between ‘now’ and ‘then’, time in the photograph becomes highlighted as process.

*It is the spatial boundedness of the image that secures the illusion of temporal objectivity* the idea that time itself becomes an ‘object’. A photograph is an *objective illusion* of temporal objectification.<sup>24</sup> (Italics in original text).

In photographs Bardini’s photographs time is captured within the frame. The moment in history is inescapably fixed and the photographic composition shows the combination of iconography and iconology. When we look at a photograph we are confronted with another space. In Bardini’s photographs we are invited into the space primarily through the use of perspective and symmetry, as synonymous for unity.<sup>25</sup> Perspective is the fundamental tool: Ernest Gombrich (1909-2001) called it the ‘eye-witness principle’, that which defines, as Gombrich also suggested, a specific point of view for looking at a

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.125.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> Ludovico Zorzi, *Il teatro e la città* (Torino, Einaudi, 1977), p. 65.

photograph. He goes on to say that a photograph is not a replica of what is seen, but a ‘transformation which has to be re-translated to yield up the required information’.<sup>26</sup> While we are looking at an image, we acknowledge its structure, and as Georges Didi-Huberman indicates, we do it as if we were in front of and inside it. However inaccessible, the photograph imposes its own distance; we are suspended in an impossibly close relationship.<sup>27</sup>

Yet images, visual things, are spaces and places. They appear as paradoxes where spatial coordinates are torn apart, thus they are opened up to multiple uses and also open up within us.<sup>28</sup> It is in the conflict between these two moments that the present arises.<sup>29</sup> Bardini’s photographs produce the same effect, they work to overwhelm in space and time and draw the viewer into their historical narrative. Georges Didi-Huberman mentions Sigmund Freud’s paradigm for understanding the bewilderment that can be caused by images; the disturbing confusion that we experience when we do not know where we are, what is in front of us, or whether the place towards which we are heading might not already be inside us and we are lost and prisoners within it.<sup>30</sup> Bardini’s photographs are charged with a variety

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<sup>26</sup> W. J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 83.

<sup>27</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde* (Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1992), p. 192. Regarder, ce serait prendre acte que l’image est structuré comme un devant-dedans: inaccessible et imposant sa distance, si proche soit elle car c’est la distance d’un contact suspendu, d’un impossible rapport de chair à chair.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194. Les images les choses visuelles sont déjà des lieux: elles n’apparaissent comme des paradoxes en acte ou les coordonnées spatiales se déchirent, s’ouvrant a nous et finissent pour s’ouvrir en nous pour nous ouvrir et en cela même nous incorporer.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107. A ce moment, donc le passé se dialectise dans la préhension d’un future, et de cette dialectique, de ce conflit justement surgit le présent.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183. Freud donnait encore un ultime paradigme pour rendre compte de l’inquiétante étrangeté: c’est la désorientation, expérience dans laquelle nous ne savons plus exactement ce qui est devant nous et ce qui ne l’est pas, ou bien si le lieu verso ou nous dirigerons n’est pas déjà ce dedans quoi nous serions depuis toujours prisonniers.

of historical, political and symbolic meanings that leave the viewer perplexed, and at the same time their cryptic messages captivate the audience. With these images nineteenth-century Italian and European history is evoked through the composition involving both architectural and sculptural fragments. The richness of these images lies in the representation of the intertwining of historical events that occurred in Europe and shows how historical changes provoked intellectual choices that resulted in new forms of collecting art.

The theories of the philosopher Vilem Flusser (1920 1991) provide another way of looking at Bardini's photographs. For Flusser, the advent of the photographic image introduced a new relationship in the visual world: from manual reproduction, such as painting, in which the human being is still at the centre of the creative gesture, to the use of the camera, in which the human being changes his or her function, becoming subservient to the machine. The operator abandons natural gestures and converts his or her creativity from something free to something mechanical.<sup>31</sup> Bardini exemplifies this process; beginning as painter, he then became photographer and his creativity was expressed through the new medium, which offered him a new form in which to express freely his ideas. Flusser states that traditional images pre-exist texts, and thus have no relationship to them; they refer to phenomena, while technical images refer to concepts.<sup>32</sup> Bardini's photographs of interiors as technical images are difficult to decode. Indeed, following Flusser's theories we should not attempt to decode them at all, as their meaning should appear on the surface, like fingerprints; fingers being the cause and the print, the consequence. What we see in technical

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<sup>31</sup> Vilem Flusser, 'Filosofia della fotografia e della liberta' in *Filosofia della fotografia* ed. Maurizio Guerri, Francesco Parisi *et al.*, tr. C. Marazia (Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2013), pp.140 141.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

images is the repetition of cause and effect in a circularity of events.<sup>33</sup> It seems therefore that the historical events that were the causes of Bardini's activity as art dealer and collector are witnessed in his photographs and create a sense of continuity between them.

As technical images, photographs do not carry symbols but can be read as visualisations of the world. If we look in this way at Bardini's photographs we can perceive them as 'windows' into his world and his time. Whether Bardini consciously endowed his photographs with any double or hidden meanings, or whether they were simply unconscious results of his cultural influences is difficult to say. Regardless of intent, according to this approach technical images portray what is seen through the lens of the camera without transforming it but the concepts contained in the image are derived from what is seen.<sup>34</sup> This is a useful way to approach Bardini's work: while he was taking photographs of the displays in his collection he was reflecting his historical period. However, in the creation of his eclectic displays he changed the concepts and perceptions of his own historical period through the disjuncture of chronology in the combination of objects, works of art and fragments. Bardini, by selling Italian fragments of works of art was selling an idea of Italy's past culture and its nineteenth century re-interpretation. As a consequence of his dealing activity, Bardini was constantly changing his displays and the photographs transformed the 'temporary museum' into a permanent one. One must therefore seek to identify and differentiate each of the layers that overlap in these photographs in order to reach a level of 'transparent' viewing wherein every single layer may be clearly investigated. Kendall L. Walton claims that 'photographs are transparent. We see the world

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Flusser, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

through them.<sup>35</sup> He suggests that photographic images not only show reality as it is, but also evoke our knowledge of the subject. Walton's claim has a particular relevance for Bardini's photographs, raising the following crucial questions: what was Bardini attempting to convey by means of his displays? What did he want his clients to see and understand behind the eclectic aesthetic of his composition? How strongly was he influenced by his contemporaries' art-historical studies? How many layers of concepts do his photographs conceal? The answer to these questions will be investigated through the course of this study.

Walton states that 'to be transparent is not necessarily to be invisible. We see photographs themselves when we see through them.'<sup>36</sup> At first glance the photographs taken by Bardini show the viewer a series of fascinating displays of works of art. Stefano Bardini was first and foremost an art dealer, and he created interiors and photographed them with the aim of persuading his clients to acquire pieces from his collection. His most important marketing strategy was probably conferring on his gallery the status of museum rather than art dealer's shop.<sup>37</sup> As a result of inclusion in his collection/museum, his pieces gained an immediate value that in some cases would not otherwise have been recognised. Bardini's collection encompassed a wide variety of fragments dating from the Roman, Medieval and Renaissance periods. He created a new context for these fragments, and thereby assigned to them new roles. Through the photographs the fragments narrate their own historical and aesthetic value. The photographs, showing compositions of fragments are among the most fascinating in Bardini's

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<sup>35</sup> Kendall L. Walton, 'Transparent pictures', in *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature* ed. Scott Walden (Malden USA, Blackwell, 2010), p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Dellef Heikamp, 'Stefano Bardini, l'uomo che non sapeva di marketing: chi era l'antiquario fiorentino di cui si sta per acquisire l'eredità lasciata nel 1962' in *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, 14 (Torino, Allemandi Editore, 1996), pp. 66-67.

archive, not least for the sense of mystery they convey. Various historical periods are framed in these photographs suggested by the presence of fragments, which with their indefinite presence emphasize the power of history, here seen as a wider fresco.

The importance of photography with respect to history is commented on by Geoffrey Batchen when he cites Jean-Claude Lemagny and Andre Rouille in their *A History of Photography: Social and Cultural Perspectives*.<sup>38</sup> Batchen writes that photographs can be understood from two historical perspectives: as history seen through photographs, and as photographs that themselves reflect historical processes. We can look at Bardini's photographs through these two different but related ways. In the first, history is documented in a photograph and offers Bardini's viewers the opportunity to see Florentine history and the history of art collecting. In the second, the photographs are objects in which history is reflected and provide a very different yet equally stimulating method of analysis. According to this interpretation, the photographs are not only historical documents, visual narratives of history, but also reflections of the unconscious process by which history itself shapes photography. The photograph as created object thus reflects rather than depicts the meaning of history. As Simmel states: 'What really matters, in order to conceive the independent significance of objects, is the distance between them and our impression of them.'<sup>39</sup> Bardini's photographs emphasise the value of the objects portrayed, becoming witnesses to the objects' presence. Their existence in his collection conferred them a new life and meaning.

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<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire* (Cambridge MS and London, MIT Press, 1999), pp. 106-107.

<sup>39</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 74.

Photography illustrates identity through images and the ways in which they can change, depending on their position in different contexts. The photograph is a vehicle for transferring the power of images from one place to another.<sup>40</sup> This leads to a very interesting approach to the analysis of Bardini's photographs and their power both as images of history and instruments of historical propaganda.

### Methodology

Using primarily the work of Erwin Panofsky and Michel Foucault this methodology section will outline the theoretical approach of this thesis. The study of the iconography and iconology of these images will reveal their multifaceted aspects; as historical documents, as expressions of taste in art collecting, as art history interpretations, and as objects of an historical period. In this analysis every single object or work of art depicted in a photograph and its historical importance will be treated as if it were a text. These images, which are both texts and visual experience, are equally as important as Bardini's correspondence for the understanding of his work. Bardini's correspondence demonstrates many different aspects of his activities and his relationships with clients and suppliers, but the nature of its language seems to be in marked contrast to the subtle details found in the layers of his photographs.

As Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) suggests, the study of an image can be divided into three phases. The first is to observe the pure form; the world of pure form is called the world of artistic motifs.<sup>41</sup> The second step is to observe the combination of forms, what called *invenzioni*. Once identified, these images offer stories and allegories and this is

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<sup>40</sup> Batchen, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (London, Peregrine Books, 1970), p. 54.



called ‘iconography’.<sup>42</sup> The third and more complex step involves the meaning or content. Panofsky calls this study both ‘compositional method’ and ‘iconographical significance’.<sup>43</sup>

The discovery and interpretation of these ‘symbolical’ values (which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call iconology as opposed to iconography.<sup>44</sup>

As Panofsky states, iconology is a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis.<sup>45</sup> The study of the iconology of an image offers a deep understanding of it. ‘We cannot understand an image unless we grasp the ways in which it shows what cannot be seen.’<sup>46</sup> Bardini’s photographs have to be seen primarily through their iconology; every single element in the composition carries a meaning that combined with other elements can be emphasized or generate a point of reflection that will determine the meaning of the entire photograph.

Michel Foucault’s (1926-1984) method for understanding and interpreting history and its documents provides the second thread to follow in the quest to understand Bardini’s photographs. In his publication *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, first published in 1969, Foucault discusses how each historical period produces documents, and how those documents interact with historical developments.<sup>47</sup> Foucault states that for as long as history has existed documents have been used and scholars have constantly interrogated their meaning.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (first published in French in 1969, London and New York, Routledge, 1972), p. 7.

Foucault concludes that documents were treated as the language of a voice since they reduced to silence its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace.<sup>48</sup> Bardini's photographs are visual documents of his own historical period and over the years they have accumulated a range of different meanings, and have been studied from a variety of perspectives. This study focuses on the extent to which these photographs reflect the truth about Bardini's time and asks how much he changed them to modify history with his displays in creating a new historical point of view. His aesthetic was inspired by nineteenth century Florentine eclecticism, which found its first form of expression in the reconstruction of the past, in mediaeval and Renaissance architecture; and by the idea of reliving the past, a trend introduced to Florence by the new foreign residents, especially the English.

However, Foucault does not begin with documents; rather, he reverses the problem, arguing that it is history that organises documents.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, for history, documents are not inert material, rather history attempts to redefine itself within the documentary material:<sup>50</sup>

History has altered its position in relation to the document: it has taken as its primary task, not the interpretation of the document, nor the attempt to decide whether it is telling the truth or what is its expressive value, but to work on it from within and develop it: history now organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations. The document then, is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done and said, the events of which only the trace remains.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

Foucault explores historical documents in two different ways: the genealogical and the archaeological. Genealogical examination explores documents by meticulously following every detail in chronological order, unravelling their often confused and uneven pattern:

Genealogy is grey, meticulous and patiently documentary. It operates in a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.<sup>52</sup>

As Foucault states, the genealogical method requires patience, knowledge of detail, and a vast accumulation of source material.<sup>53</sup> The second method that Foucault considers is the archaeological. This method of analysis is based on the intersection of historical aspects and fragments that compose a discourse. ‘What link should be made by disparate events or, how can a casual succession be established between them? What continuity or overall significance do they possess?’<sup>54</sup> He suggests a number of questions that are fundamental to this study.

Through this process the photographs became documents. As Foucault says:

Let us say that history in its *traditional* form, undertook to ‘memorise’ the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transform *documents* into *monuments*.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), p. 139. This essay first appeared in ‘Hommage a Jean Hyppolite’.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, 1972 *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

Foucault's explanation of archaeological analysis is useful to the analysis of Bardini's photographs because it does not seek to provide a definition or discourse. In this case, the photographic display is not seen as a clear document. There is no transparency. Indeed, the opacity of the discourse and display merges with the archaeological analysis, which does not attempt to give an interpretation. Furthermore, archaeology does not try to impose continuity on the discourse. Instead it tries to replace the discourse in its specificity and to understand how the rules work. There is no progression in the analysis, and in Bardini's displays this emerges clearly; the 'discourse' is created by the displays. With these criteria the images can be seen in their entirety, and through them one can see the historical complexity to which they bear witness. Archaeological analysis does not try to re-establish discourse; it does not try to find its identity, but accepts the discourse as it is, and in this way is able to grasp its meaning.<sup>56</sup>

In the study of Bardini's photographs these two forms of analysis – the genealogical and the archaeological – are used as complementary modes of engagement. Genealogical analysis is effective for recreating Bardini's historical context, while archaeological analysis offers the opportunity to look at the images with an approach that rests not on chronology, but in the gaps and uneven patterns of the display, an approach that offers a different and perhaps fuller insight into history. As the study progresses Bardini's photographs will show examples of how the discourse of history and the history of art and the theories of photography are can be discussed through these images. Roland Barthes (1915-1980) suggests that it is possible to separate the various processes of connotation as the signification of the photograph is composed of the assorted signs (objects), which connected together,

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.155–156.

form a code. ‘As Barthes states a “historical grammar” of iconographic connotation ought thus to look for its material in painting, theatre, association of ideas, stock metaphors etc. That is to say precisely in culture.’<sup>57</sup> Roland Barthes concept of *punctum* is an important tool for the analysis of the first photograph: Bardini’s portrait. The *punctum* in photography is the detail that is not there or that one wishes were not there. The *punctum* is ‘a certain way an object has of being absent within its very presence.’<sup>58</sup> The *punctum* determines in photography what absence is presence.

### **Stefano Bardini: a photographic portrait.**

The photograph representing the self-portrait of Bardini (**no. 1**) is an introduction to Bardini as a photographer.<sup>59</sup> This self-portrait offers an introduction and interpretation of his personality and the relationships to his own time and historical events. For this reason it is the first photograph to be analysed.

The capacity of photographs to evoke rather than tell, to suggest rather than explain, makes them alluring material for the historian or anthropologist or art historian who would pluck a single picture from a large collection and use it to narrate his or her own stories. But such stories may or may not have anything to do with the original narrative context of the photograph, the intent of its creator, or the ways in which it was used by its original audience.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text* ed. Stephen Heath (London, Fontana Press, 1977), p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 104. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, tr. R. Howard (New York, Hill and Wang, 1981), pp.40 47.

<sup>59</sup> Photograph **no. 2482BR** numbering according to the Fototeca dei Musei Civici Fiorentini - Stefano Bardini Archive.

<sup>60</sup> Martha Sandweiss, quoted in Geoff Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment* (London, Abacus, 2006), p. xiv.

Firstly, the portrait poses a question: who creates the image, the subject or the photographer?<sup>61</sup> The relationship between the two perspectives – that of the viewer and that of the subject portrayed in the photograph – can develop a historical dialogue between what we see and what is alluded to by the presence of other elements and figures in the photograph. The blurred nature of the photograph carries a symbolic meaning.

The act of photographing creates a contact between the photographer, the image and the viewer. Photographs beyond their representational roles, actively participate in building communities and relationships.<sup>62</sup>

With this photograph – a self-portrait – Stefano Bardini declares to the viewer his status as a photographer, symbolised by the presence of the camera next to him. He is portrayed as a modern photographer, as opposed to the simple photographic technicians or fashionable amateur photographers of the time. The camera plays a fundamental role in the composition of this image, becoming the protagonist. In this composition both Bardini and the camera are staring at us as silent witnesses. For while we are looking at the image, the image is looking back at us in a mutual exchange of metaphorical glances. We, the viewer, are suspended between being in front of the space of the photograph and being inside it. This awkward position defines our experience; we are looking at an image that is looking at us,<sup>63</sup> and this

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<sup>61</sup> Olin, *op. cit.*, p. 131. Wendy Ewald: I have heard many times, in many languages, children and adults say, “I want to take a picture” – when what they meant was, I want to be photographed. Who or what is it, I asked myself, that really makes a photograph – the subject or the photographer?

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>63</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde* (Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1992), p.185. Nous sommes bien entre un devant et un dedans, et cette inconfortable posture définit toute notre expérience, quand s’ouvre jusqu’en nous ce qui nous regarde dans ce que nous voyons.

mirroring effect of the gaze creates a rupture.<sup>64</sup> Bardini seems to want to engage in dialogue with the viewer with this composition, questioning the meaning of photography as a documentary medium and historical witness. The photograph is an eye that is independent of both the photographer and the viewer. The photograph can see and immortalise the things that we can see but are not able to understand at first glance.

Just as the painter gestures with his brushes at canvas to describe space, objects, people, and ideas, and lecturers gesture at audiences to describe ideas or connect to their listeners, so photography's gestures function to describe ideas and things and to connect to people.<sup>65</sup>

This exchange of looks between us the viewer, Bardini and the camera creates circularity that suggest that we exist together in the same space, influencing each other's actions.

The hard, fixed look they [people] give us means that they and we exist in the same space. People existing in the same space are of consequence to one another. Our actions therefore, can have consequence on them.<sup>66</sup>

Bardini declares his existence with this portrait and engages in a dialogue with us:

[Sartre] thought that to experience being watched was to experience shame, the shame of being a set, determined object rather than a free subject. Because, however, only the eye of other makes an image of ourselves, we construct ourselves constantly as an object for another. For Sartre, the beheld person who returns the gaze objectifies the original

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20. 'Scission entre ce que nous regard dans ce que nous voyons et ce qui nous regard. Il consiste a vouloir dépasser imaginairesment et ce que nous voyons est ce que nous regard.

<sup>65</sup> Olin, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> Olin, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

observer: he or she become the master of the situation, and defuses the power of the gaze.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, Bardini with this image makes us responsible for what we see and our interpretation of the image. Yet, in terms of temporality, when we are looking at the same historical period through his eyes we see what he sees. In the case of this photograph, Barthes's *punctum* is behind us; we cannot see it. It is evoked both by Bardini's gaze and by the camera next to him. 'A photograph weaves together presence and absence, present and past.'<sup>68</sup>

The iconology of this image is complex. With its lighting, framing and composition, the photograph raises the issue of temporality: the present – Bardini's time – and the future. The perspective divides the space into three elements, the three presences in the photograph: Stefano Bardini, the camera and the blurred figure in the background all have a precise narrative role. The camera is at the centre of the photograph, and at the back stands a blurred figure by the window, suffused by a glaring light. The photograph was taken in Stefano Bardini's palazzo and in the background we can vaguely perceive in the dark a wall decorated with *paliotti* stencils. Bardini often used this decoration as a background for his displays. They were in fashion at the time among Florentine collectors, evoking the precious Renaissance leather hangings found in the palazzi of noble families.

In this photograph Bardini is playing with the ambiguous theme of the double image. He poses important questions; is what the camera sees also what we see? Is the camera in the photograph looking towards us or behind us? Is it looking at something that we cannot see? Who is the

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>68</sup> Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (Philadelphia PA, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), p. 166, footnote no. 4.



mysterious figure in the background? Positioning the camera as a protagonist in the photograph is a declaration of its importance not only as a technical instrument, but also as a silent witness. How important is its role in the image, compared with that of the two figures? Foucault, in analysing Velasquez' *Las Meninas*, notes that in this game of mutual gazes 'we are observing ourselves being observed by the painter, and made visible to his eyes by the same light that enables us to see him.'<sup>69</sup> Similarly when we look at Bardini's self-portrait, we are looking at him while he is looking at us. A parallel can be found between the mirror in Velasquez' painting that shows the figures of King Philip IV and his wife as if they were outside the painting therefore viewers of the entire scene reflected in the mirror, and Bardini's camera that is pointing at us and could be taking a portrait of us. 'Seen or seeing?' is what Foucault questions and we, the viewer fulfil both these roles.<sup>70</sup> The doorway with a figure standing in the middle is the source of light in *Las Meninas* as in Bardini's photograph it is the window with the blurred figure standing in front of it. The light coming from the back is a technique that gives depth to the image, while symbolically the figures and the mirror/camera create an ambiguous game of glances. We look at Bardini while somebody else looks at him from behind, also looking at us.

Certainly, Bardini seems to attribute to the camera the role of protagonist, while he and the blurred figure in the background are complementary to it in the space. Bardini is in the foreground, the camera slightly behind him, and the blurred figure is by the window in the background. In this way the space is articulated through a diagonal axis giving depth to the room.

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<sup>69</sup> Michel Foucault *The Order of Things* (London and New York, Routledge 2002, first French edition, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, *Les Mots et les Choses*), p. 7

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

We, as the viewer are invited into the room. Erwin Panofsky saw perspective as a symbolic form in images; ‘the perspective defines the idea of the image.’ He asserted that ‘perspective and proportions are iconologies of the space and of the human body.’<sup>71</sup> The presence of figures, with their postures and clothes, clearly demonstrates their historical period, and somehow also their psychology, as Giulio Carlo Argan (1909 1992) suggests: ‘The iconology of the portrait is the pose, the dress, the social or psychological meaning which can be illustrated by the figure.’<sup>72</sup>

Bardini with his photographic self-portrait is combining various aspects the autobiographical, the documentary and the historical. Bardini was an amateur photographer as were some of his wealthy contemporaries and they bought the most sophisticated cameras and photographic papers and were beginning to experiment with them. The composition and the use of light reveal a certain pleasure in experimenting with pictorial photography, a technique being widely practised by the end of the nineteenth century. This technique approached photography freely, experimenting with the possibilities of light and shadow, exposure and frame. Its most important difference from documentary photography lay in its intention to create suggestive images, not just documents portraying visible reality.<sup>73</sup>

Around 1900, technological reproduction had reached a standard at which it had not merely begun to take to the totality of traditional artworks as its province, imposing the

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<sup>71</sup> Giulio Carlo Argan, ‘Ideology and iconology’ in *The Language of Images* ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 16.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>73</sup> Elvira Puerto, *Fotografia fra Arte e Storia*, Il ‘Buletino della Società Fotografica Italiana’ (1889 1914) (Napoli, Alfredo Guida Editore, 1996), pp. 56 57. Italo Zannier, *Storia della fotografia Italiana dalle origini agli anni ’50* (Roma, Editrice Quinlan, 1986), pp. 124 128.

most profound changes on the impact of such works; it had even gained a place for itself among artistic modes of procedure.<sup>74</sup>

As Walter Benjamin states in the sentence above, by the end of the nineteenth century photography had shifted away from its merely technical and documentary role, and its techniques had improved and become more sophisticated. Therefore, photography began to be seen as a form of artistic expression. However, this new form of art enabled its own reproduction and, for Benjamin, this is an important issue in the evaluation of photography as art. The endless reproduction of photographs somehow removes their uniqueness. Benjamin considers that reproduction destroys a work of art's *aura*, which is closely related to the spontaneity and non-reproducible effects of things, people or landscapes. Benjamin states: 'What is the aura actually? A strange web of time and space; the unique appearance of a distance, however close to hand.'<sup>75</sup> Since aura is a 'strange web of time and space', it engages in a deep relationship with the viewer. The viewer is invited to enter the space and explore the time, and as Benjamin writes 'Even as it could most vividly discover an instant of 'now', it also had the marvellous capacity to certify a look into the past.'<sup>76</sup>

The photograph needs interpretation by the viewer, as Mary Price states in her book:

It is not accumulated documentation alone that constitutes aura; it is the entire process of 'looking, thinking, discriminating and expressing' that will help the viewer to

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<sup>74</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London, Penguin, 2008), p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'A short history of photography', in *Classic Essays on Photography* ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, Leete's Island Books, 1980), p. 209.

<sup>76</sup> Max Kozloff, *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography Since 1900* (London, Phaidon Press, 2007), p. 15.

follow the language of the secular aura, as in distinction with traditional aura.<sup>77</sup>

The author's understanding of 'secular aura' is that it lives permanently in the image and is a metaphor for the accumulation of information that can be read through the image, even after reproduction. Mary Price asserts that despite Benjamin's idea of the aura as the unique and irreproducible atmosphere of a work of art, photography too has an aura in this sense.

The aura of photography consists in more than a century and a half of recognition, familiarity and incorporation into culture; articles of clothing have as much as that. The aura of photography becomes manifest in figures of speech in which many aspects are assumed. One is the existence of the external world, which is registered by means of the camera and film. The other is the puzzle, mystery, and magic of such registry.<sup>78</sup>

If we look at Bardini's portrait in light of the notion of the secular aura we can see through its various layers and its importance as an historical document.

What do photographs provoke? *Interpretations?* The photograph usually escapes interpretation and decoding, at least if these are understood as the progressive lifting of the veil and as semiotic enclosure.<sup>79</sup>

With this sentence the philosopher Henry Van Lier (1921-2009) affirms that photographs cannot be easily read and understood. To understand a photograph one must apply slow, progressive study through the various layers of the image, establishing its language. The composition

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<sup>77</sup> Mary Price, *The Photograph: A Strange Confined Space* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 175.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Van Lier, *Philosophy of Photography* (Leuven, Lieven Gevaert Research Centre, Leuven University Press, 2007), p. 43.

of this photograph at first evokes Narcissus, who is metaphorically considered the precursor of photography, looking at a reflection of himself in the water.<sup>80</sup> Bardini, with the camera next to him, seems to symbolise this water effect as the camera taking his portrait is itself also in the image.

The photograph has three layers denotive of Bardini's life in Florence. The first historical quotation that one can see in the image is provided by the blurred effect saturating the image in glaring light coming from the window. One can see how the self portrait of Bardini in his study of light is connected with one of his first paintings dating from 1858, *Lorenzo de' Medici che nella congiura dei Pazzi si salva nella sagrestia del Duomo* as mentioned in his biography (no. 2).<sup>81</sup> The oil painting, which has a sketchy style, shares the same characteristics as the photograph. It has the style of a painting with fresh, quick brushstrokes. There is a strong chiaroscuro contrast with light coming from a window and a door, and perspective is built through the shapes created by the figures. By suggesting similarities with his own painting style, Bardini evokes the past through his personal background as an artist, and the present and future through his new approach to photography. It is the relationship between these historical moments that opens up further investigation into the historical period in which Bardini lived in Florence. The second moment, his present, is represented by Bardini himself, sitting in his palazzo next to the camera in affirmation of his new status as art dealer/photographer. The third layer is the future and is represented by the glaring light and the ambiguous blurred figure standing at and looking from the back. The camera in the middle of the photograph functions as connection between these three historical

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<sup>80</sup> Price, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>81</sup> Valerie Niemeyer Chini, *Stefano Bardini e Wilhelm Bode; Mercanti e connoisseurs fra Ottocento e Novecento* (Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa, 2009), p. 43.

moments. The camera itself symbolises both the future and the past by recording the memory. These three moments can be explained following Walter Benjamin's discussion of Klee's *Angelus Novus*:<sup>82</sup>

*There is picture by Klee called Angelus Novus. It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned towards the past. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appear before us, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at its feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has caught his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows towards the sky. What we call progress is this storm.<sup>83</sup> (in italics in the original text except for 'us', 'he' and 'this').*

This angel witnesses dramatic historical events, but is powerless and incapable of movement. A parallel with the image of the angel can be drawn with Bardini and the camera next to him. Both are focused on something behind us, the viewers. What is the camera immortalising and Bardini looking at? Perhaps it is the present and the past, two separate moments that saw the city of Florence undergo fundamental historical changes that heavily altered its original pattern and character?

In 1862-1870, when Florence was the capital of Italy, the city underwent major re-development, including the demolition of large sections, in order to bring it up to the standard of other European

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<sup>82</sup> The author thanks Professor Mahnaz Yousefzadeh of New York University, who suggested Walter Benjamin's 'Angel of History' as a tool for analysis during an informal conversation.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Lowy *Fire Alarm: reading Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* Thesis IX, tr. Chris Turner (first published as *Walter Benjamin, Avvertissement d'incendie* Press Universitaires de France, Paris 2001, Verso London- New York, 2005), pp. 60-62.

capitals. The medieval walls that surrounded the city were pulled down, new bridges and new buildings were constructed, and its distinctive architectural aspects – including a wealth of buildings from the medieval and Renaissance periods – were gradually lost. The city was littered with fragments, and it seems that Bardini and the camera are looking at the amassing of the fragments produced by these events. The second episode that changed Florence was the demolition and rebuilding of the old city centre and the ghetto. This project began in 1881 and lasted until 1894.<sup>84</sup> Once again the city was literally fragmented and Bardini accumulated these architectural fragments, which became the core of his art collection.

Klee's Angel sees catastrophic events and the consequent devastation of places that produce fragments that are piling up in front of his feet, he prefers to tarry at the ruins of the past in order to 'awaken the dead', to make whole what has been shattered. To this corresponds the redemptive function of historical reflection, the saving power of remembrance.<sup>85</sup>

The camera in photography declares its documentary purpose as the guardian of memory, just as Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history' is the icon that embodies historical events and political tensions, silently and powerlessly witnessing the catastrophic effects of the destruction of war and the transformation of human destiny. Both the camera and the angel bear witness to the past but also see the present, the fragments from the destruction in front of them. The future in this photograph is

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<sup>84</sup> Carlo Cresti and Luigi Zangheri, *Architetti e ingegneri nella Toscana dell' Ottocento* (Firenze, Uniedit, 1978), p. LX. The reclamation of the Old Town of Florence from 1882 has many complex aspects due to the multitude of architectonic projects. Florence's administration wanted the total erasure of the medieval area, including the market and the ghetto, which were considered disease-ridden places where hygienic conditions posed a danger to the inhabitants. However, the decision in favour of massive demolition was mainly driven by economic interests linked to the reconstruction of the city.

<sup>85</sup> Ronald Beiner, 'Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history' in *Political Theory* (Vol. 12 No. 3 1984, pp. 423–434), p. 425.

seen in the blurred figure being overwhelmed by light and hit by a ‘storm’ – the same storm that paralyses the wings of the angel.

An interpretation of this photograph can be seen as if Bardini with this image suggested that Florence, after the demolitions headed towards an uncertain future. This begs the question - how can Bardini be seen, or how did he want to be seen – as destroyer or saviour of the city’s memory? The construction of a new, united Italy positioned Florence as the new capital, reborn from its fragmented history. Florence became the symbol of the newly united nation. The first tangible results of these events needed to be represented by monuments and important buildings. In the photograph Bardini refers to destruction, the blurred effect is the wind that brings the so-called progress, which saw the city of Florence changing forever. With his collection of fragments, Bardini among others saved the memory of the city, but on the other hand by selling them he contributed to the large dispersion of its original identity.

### **The photographic archive of Stefano Bardini**

Bardini created a substantial photographic archive. The archive consists of some 6,000 negatives documenting the works of art in his possession and the interiors of his palazzi. Bardini’s photographic archive illustrates the link between art history, the history of collecting, the history of photography, and their evolution from the late 1880s until 1922. His archive contains photographs of works of art of artistic value.<sup>86</sup> Previous research on these photographs has focused mainly on

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<sup>86</sup> Cristina Poggi, ‘The photographs of Stefano Bardini’, in *The Historical Photographic Archive of Stefano Bardini; Greek Etruscan and Roman Art*, ed. Gabriella Capecci (Firenze, Bruschi, 1993), p. XV.



the use of the images to trace the provenance and location of the immense number and variety of works of art that passed through Bardini's hands and were dispersed throughout collections and museums all over the world.<sup>87</sup> But as this thesis will demonstrate, this collection can tell a much larger story than the fate of specific pieces of art. It is a rich collection full of information, clues and intimations about not just the work and life of Bardini but the history of Florence. It is also a collection whose purpose and effect is useful in understanding several theoretical approaches to photography and time.

Previous researchers have used photographs of works of art from the Bardini archives primarily to examine individual works, but also useful for comparative purposes.<sup>88</sup> These photographs, which comprise the whole photographic archive, were found only in 1970 in the attic of, palazzo Mozzi Bardini. This shows how little interest his successors paid to this documentation.<sup>89</sup> The photographs had the purpose of gathering together visual documents that delivered political and historical messages to be seen by others. As Tagg says, 'like the state, the camera is never neutral.'<sup>90</sup>

Bardini was well aware of the power of images, as we will see in the next chapter this can be evidenced by the notes taken by his agents in their *taccuini* (notebooks), who were constantly showing to clients photographs of Bardini's collection. His displays were the most persuasive 'language' for selling, allowing him to trade not only in

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. XV XVII.

<sup>88</sup> Costanza Caraffa, 'From "photo libraries" to "photo archives": on the epistemological potential of art-historical photo collections' in *Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History* ed. Costanza Caraffa (Berlin & Munchen, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011), p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Guia Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'Oro* (Firenze, Noèdzioni, 2009), p. 56.

<sup>90</sup> Batchen, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

works of art but also in pieces of art history and his own museological ideas.

The meanings of photographs are not determined by, or confined to, the pictures themselves, for meaning is continually being reproduced within the contexts in which these pictures appear.<sup>91</sup>

The contexts in which photographs are taken have a fundamental role in shaping their meaning. In Bardini's case, the chief context was Florence. However his photographs reflect three significant historical Italian periods: medieval, Renaissance, and the contemporary incarnation of the city of Florence in the nineteenth century, when the rediscovery of its medieval and early modern past reached its peak. Furthermore, Italy had just become a united nation, of which Florence was the capital from 1865 until 1870. Bardini's archive shows just how important historical continuity was to its creator; the unity of past, present and future.

The history of a photographic archive, and of its individual photographs, cannot be understood without reference to its historical period and its purpose. However, Batchen, quoting Tagg, argues that photographs do not have a coherent or unified history of their own, other than as a selective documentation of their various uses. In short, the meaning of a photograph changes according to its context:

The meanings of any individual photograph continue to be entirely determined by its relationship to other, more powerful, social practices. And as an apparatus of visual representation, photography remains before all else a tool for transporting ideology from one site to another.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

This is an extremely important consideration with which to begin the analysis of Bardini's photographic archive. The photographic archive does not have to be considered as a passive instrument for the study of a specific period. On the contrary, its value consists in its relationship with current studies, playing an active role and raising significant questions. How much can we understand of the historical, political and art-historical message of these photographs?

First, the archive has to be examined in its entirety. The first responsibility of any archive is to help us to understand the past, but it also hides the past. The archive defines history, but it can be reviewed and reinterpreted constantly. In their article 'Archives record and power: the making of modern memory', Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook provide a useful approach for the investigation and use of archives and the understanding of their power and possibilities of interpretation. The authors raise the following questions; what is the significance of an archive? If archives are guardians of the truth, records of historical fact, what is the truth about archives themselves?<sup>93</sup> Power is one of the elements that emerge strongly in Bardini's photographic archive. Photography is used here as an instrument of power, immortalising Bardini's selection of works of art, and the creation of his interiors was a way of celebrating his own activity. At the same time he was also unconsciously creating images of history, filtered by his eye and experience. The archive preserves images of memory – a memory that was personal and is now collective. So archives can have multiple purposes and outcomes, intentional ones regarding power and politics and unintentional ones where they host history and memory.

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<sup>93</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, 'Archives record and power: the making of modern memory' in *Archival Science* (Kluwer Academic Publishers Printed in Netherlands, 2002), pp. 1–19.

In the first inventory written soon after Bardini's death it was mentioned the existence of a darkroom in his palazzo and that he was in possession of several sophisticated photographic instruments, up to date with the most recent equipment employed by professional photographers of the day.<sup>94</sup> The documents recording the acquisition of this equipment are dated from the beginning of the 1880s. During the 1880s a significant change in photographic technique occurred. The use of colloid and contact printing with albumen paper was gradually substituted by the use of silver bromo-gelatine plates, which simplified the preparation of the plates and guaranteed a better result. The negatives were much more light-sensitive and allowed a shorter exposure time. This was the technique used to produce Bardini's photographs.<sup>95</sup>

Further results of the detailed research undertaken by Cristina Poggi reveal the importance attributed by Bardini to the subject of photography. Over the years of his activity he acquired several cameras and lenses, including the most sophisticated available at the time. The majority of his suppliers were from France, Germany and Italy. Some wide-angle lenses found on the list of his equipment were rare, and were specifically employed for photographing interiors.

Bardini was in possession of two folding or travelling cameras, a camera for 24x30cm plates and another for 30x40 cm. plates, both without lenses, several frames for plates, basins of porcelain and of laminated wood, glass jars for chemical products, a scale photo-sensitive paper, a case for printing by electric light or bromograph, and two printing presses. In 1907 he purchased a Busch Pantoscope n.6 for

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<sup>94</sup> Cristina Poggi, 'The photographs of Stefano Bardini', in *The Historical Photographic Archive of Stefano Bardini; Greek Etruscan and Roman Art*, ed. Gabriella Capecchi (Firenze, Bruschi, 1993), pXXII footnote no. 2 Galleria Bardini. Inventario Generale 1923, pp. 277-278.

<sup>95</sup> Poggi, *op. cit.*, p. XV.

50x70 cm. formats with a 37 cm. focus. Another identified as a Berthiot 'bull's eye' for 40x50 cm. formats and a wide angle Hypergon lens made by Goerz, an exceptional instrument both for the width and for the field, from 135 to 140 degrees, important for the wide-angle lenses and the diminished luminosity at the margins of the image. Bardini also bought two Busch lenses, an aplanatic wide-angle lens and another Pantoscope lens. In 1908 he acquired a Eurygraphe, a telephoto lens for 50x60 c. formats with a 25cm. focus, bought from the Berthiot firm even if he had ordered the pamphlet on telesystems from the firm Optische Anstalt G. P. Goerz of Berlin. Bardini was also acquiring materials in Italy. From the firm of Mannelli he was buying plates of various formats, more specifically in 1905 he bought around 90 plates, 37 of these plates were 30x40 cm format. Furthermore he had several other suppliers: in 1907 documents shows that he bought from the firm Cappelli some plates of orthochromatic, extra rapid, anti aura versions in 30x40 cm. format. The firm Luminosa from Serravalle Scrivia near Genova and the firm Maison Lumiere in Monplaisir (Lyon) supplied some dozen non-isochromatic plates. It is important to mention that the orthochromatic plates were extremely important for the photographs of paintings, contributing to the tone of colours. Bardini in his frequents trips to Paris bought from the firm H. Mackenstein, manufacturer of cameras, the Lumière plates.<sup>96</sup>

Bardini's purchase of platinum and carbon papers for printing negatives is notable, as they were well known for the beautiful effects they produced, especially in photographs of monuments and interiors and were indeed the best papers available at the time.<sup>97</sup> This strongly indicates his concern with creating aesthetically interesting photographs.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. XIX XXI.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XXII.

## Nineteenth-century development of photography in Italy and Florence.

In Italy, after the unification of the country, photography becomes the symbol of the progress of the bourgeoisie and an affirmation of progress and evolution.<sup>98</sup>

The use of photography in Italy followed approximately the same path as in other European countries. It developed from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, transforming rapidly from an instrument for documentation to an artistic technique. The first Italian daguerreotypes appeared around 1839-1840, but unfortunately these are now lost.<sup>99</sup> The *Gazzetta Privilegiata* of Milan was the first magazine in Italy to publish the news of Daguerre's discovery, followed by reports in Venice and Bologna.<sup>100</sup> The passion for the daguerreotype was initially spread by amateur French enthusiasts, who travelled around Europe advertising their technique in local magazines.<sup>101</sup>

As early as 1851, the idea of creating a visual photographic archive of art and architecture occurred in France in an initiative introduced by the Comité des Monuments Historiques, while in England the Antiquarian Photographic Club did the same, conducting a survey of national heritage through photography.<sup>102</sup> In 1859 at the *Salon*, Baudelaire referred to photography as a dangerous method that might

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<sup>98</sup> Marina Miraglia, 'Note per una storia della fotografia Italiana (1839-1911)' in *Storia dell' arte Italiana, Parte terza: Situazioni e Momenti Indagini, Volume secondo Grafica e immagine II Illustrazione Fotografia* (Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1981), pp. 454-455.

<sup>99</sup> Italo Zannier, *Storia della fotografia Italiana dalle origini agli anni '50* (Roma, Editrice Quinlan, 1986), pp. 22-26.

<sup>100</sup> Roberto Cassanelli, 'Da modello a documento. Ruoli e funzioni della fotografia nell' Accademia di Brera nel XIX secolo' in *Brera 1899, un progetto di fototeca pubblica per Milano: Il ricetto fotografico di Brera* ed. Marina Miraglia and Matteo Ceriana (Milano, Electa, Exhibition Catalogue 17 February-30 April 2000), p. 49.

<sup>101</sup> Zannier, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Roxana Marcoci, *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today* (New York, Museum of Modern Art, Exhibition 1 August-1 November 2010), p. 13.

damage the arts, insisting that it should be restricted to being a documentary medium.<sup>103</sup> The debate, which had begun in 1840, continued until 1870. Painters like Jules-Claude Ziegler insisted that as an imitative art, photography could only have a place alongside lithography and engraving.<sup>104</sup>

An important figure who strongly supported the use of photography and its relation to works of art was Pietro Estense Selvatico (1803-1880); he was an intellectual who played an important role in the evolution of Italian art-historical studies. He was in touch with international culture: in France; his contacts included Rio (1797-1874) and Montalembert (1810-1870) while in Germany they included Rumhor (1785-1843) along with Leo von Klenze (1784-1864) in Munich and the group of painters belonging to the Nazarene movement.<sup>105</sup> He taught for many years at Venice University, and in 1867 he founded a school for the training of young craftsmen in Padua, where he added the study of photography to the discipline of drawing. Selvatico was an enthusiastic supporter of the early development of photography, with its potential both as a creative medium and in a documentary capacity. In 1870, he promoted a new museological project: a collection of photographs dedicated to Italy's historical and artistic heritage.<sup>106</sup> As

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<sup>103</sup> Ettore Spalletti, 'La documentazione figurative dell' opera d'arte, la critica e l'editoria nell'epoca moderna (1750-1930)' in *Storia dell'Arte Italiana L'artista e il pubblico* Vol. II (Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1979), p. 456 footnote no. 5. C. Baudelaire, *Salon 1859, II: Le public moderne et la photographie*, pp. 1035-36 (from *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, Paris 1961).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Franco Bernabei, *Pietro Selvatico nella critica e nella storia delle arti figurative dell'Ottocento* (Vicenza, Pozza Editore, 1974), p. 15. Massimo Ferretti, Alessandro Conti *et al.* 'La documentazione dell' arte' in *Gli Alinari fotografi a Firenze 1852-1920* ed. Wladimiro Settimelli and Filippo Zevi (Firenze, Alinari Edizioni, 1985), p. 116.

<sup>106</sup> Silvia Paoli 'Culture artistique et photographie: Les Academies des Beaux Arts et la diffusion de calotype' in *Eloge du négatif – Les debuts de la photographie sur papier en Italie (1846-1862)* eds. Anne Cartier-Bresson, Maria Francesca Bonetti *et al.* (exhibition catalogue, Petit Palais Musée des Beaux-Arts e la Ville de Paris, 18 Février – 2 Mai 2010/MNA, Florence Museo Nazionale Alinari della fotografia, 10 Settembre – 24 Octobre 2010), p. 48.

Selvatico preceded Bardini and other collectors and scholars in his the use of photography as a documentary and artistic medium this project was extremely important in paving the way for the work of Bardini and his contemporaries.

In Florence, the mutual involvement of photography and art began in the early 1850s, when the Alinari and Brogi families became the most important photographers of works of art in Italy. The Alinari brothers began their photographic business in 1852; Leopoldo, Giuseppe, Romualdo and Giacomo Brogi established their firm a few years later, in 1856. Leopoldo Alinari (1832-1865), after some experience as a printmaker, began his activity as a photographer.<sup>107</sup> Over the years his company passed from father to son, remaining active and in the same family until the first two decades of the twentieth century, and establishing its supremacy in Italy.<sup>108</sup> The Alinari family specialised in photographs of works of art and monuments.<sup>109</sup> In 1858 Atto Vannucci mentioned them in the *Rivista di Firenze e bullettino delle arti del disegno* as ‘excellent in the art of photography’.<sup>110</sup> When Florence became Italy’s capital city, the work of the Alinari family increased dramatically as photography became even more important as an instrument and symbol of unification between the regions. There was an urgent need to catalogue every work of art and monument in each region, and this work was primarily assigned to the Alinari family.<sup>111</sup> In Bardini’s photographs we can see the same attitude and the same political

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<sup>107</sup> Wladimiro Settimelli ‘La famiglia Alinari e la fotografia Italiana dell’Ottocento’ *Gli Alinari fotografi a Firenze 1852-1920* ed. Wladimiro Settimelli and Filippo Zevi (Firenze, Alinari, 1985), pp. 13-33.

<sup>108</sup> Zannier, *op. cit.*, p. 31. Puorto, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-23; Fernando Tempesti, *Aspetti della fotografia Toscana dell’Ottocento* (Firenze, Alinari/IDEA, 1976), pp. 9-10.

<sup>109</sup> Ferretti, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-125.

<sup>110</sup> Zannier, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*



implications. His photographs document works of art from all over Italy, and in promoting Italian art they also promote Italian history.

The Alinari family played an especially important role in the cultural life of Florence, intensively promoting the diffusion of photography and art photography by organising drawing and photography competitions, and travelling around Italy and even abroad in order to catalogue artworks and architecture. They built up an immense photographic archive documenting their travels, and printed books on Italian art, divided by region.

The Brogi family was in competition with the Alinari family. Giacomo Brogi (1822–1881), who was fascinated by exotic travel, initially went to Egypt and Palestine, elite destinations at the time. The Brogi family were equally successful as the Alinari family, and in 1879 they also opened an *atelier* in Naples.<sup>112</sup> In 1887 – at the time when Bardini was probably creating his photographic studio in his palazzo – the first Italian photographic exhibition was organised in Florence. This was followed by the creation of the Società Fotografica Italiana (SFI), the Italian photographic society, in 1889. The aim of this organisation was to support photography and create a space in which to show photographers' work, contributing to the increase in popularity of the medium.<sup>113</sup>

Photography as both a simple medium for copying art and a new technical medium for creating art was an important issue all over the world. In an article published in the *Bullettino* in 1892 the writer Mario Foresi clearly championed photography as an artistic medium, saying that the talent and sensitivity of the photographer guided the creation

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<sup>112</sup> Zannier, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>113</sup> Puorto, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Zannier, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–109.

of the image as he chose how to frame and light it. He went on to say that photography's mechanical aspect was of fundamental importance for the improvement of technique in the hands of the photographer.<sup>114</sup> Opinions about the role of photography had changed; in France some thirty years earlier, photography had already been the subject of a similar discussion when a publication in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* had hailed photography's important new technical role, describing its potential to influence the arts, or even to become another creative method like painting. Was photography a substitute for painting? Was it spoiling the technique of painters, or did it help them in the study of detail? This debate generated an interesting new form of photographic expression called the pictorial photograph, in which a painter/photographer with good knowledge of technique was able to play with lighting, framing and subjects, creating suggestive pictorial effects. Photography was more detailed, and the possibility of using different angles offered a wide variety of compositions with an attentive study of chiaroscuro.<sup>115</sup> In Italy more so than in other countries, the use of Renaissance perspective influenced photography, becoming a cultural symbol.<sup>116</sup> In the nineteenth century, images of Italian landscapes were shown and sold all over Europe, portraying monuments and archaeological sites. Thus through photography the new fashion for Italian tourism intensified.<sup>117</sup>

The success of the Alinari family brought attention to the Florentine photographic school, which focused on the creation of clear images. Its attention to symmetry, perspective and the frontal view of works of art

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<sup>114</sup> Puorto, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>115</sup> Miraglia, *op. cit.*, pp. 444-446.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.440 Leonardo da Vinci was the first painter to mention the *camera oscura* and its use. During the Renaissance the *camera oscura* was the essential technical instrument for the selection of the real world in order to create future linear perspectives.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.

established new rules and signifiers for photographers involved with works of art and monuments.<sup>118</sup> The Alinari family became an example to follow and their photographs, although very personal, were often copied. People in other regions were slow and hesitant about innovation. They were conservative and entrenched habits meant they rejected innovative change in favour of stability. Indeed the work of photographers of the period is surprisingly full of similarities in terms of technical aspects.<sup>119</sup>

In Bardini's archive there are documents indicating that he purchased books reproducing works of art from the Alinari brothers.<sup>120</sup> In his correspondence archive, one letter from the Alinari brothers dated 1911 shows that the Alinari family returned some negatives of works of art belonging to Bardini, suggesting that Bardini was in constant exchange during his career with these important photographers. Cristina Poggi of the Bardini Florentine photographic archive writes that this is only the tip of the iceberg, and Bardini must have had a continuous relationship with this firm during the years of his activity.<sup>121</sup>

### **Introduction to chapters**

Chapter One of this study will investigate Burckhardt's theories of history and the history of art combined with elements of Foucault's method of historical analysis. Burckhardt's theories on the 'duty of art' and classification by genre, and Foucault's theories provide one of the modes of analysis for an exploration of Bardini's photographs.

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 461.

<sup>119</sup> Marina Miraglia, *Filippo Rocci e la Fotografia Pittorica: Ritratto di un gentiluomo con camera* (Roma, Calcografia, 11 Dicembre - 7 Febbraio 1988), pp. 16-17.

<sup>120</sup> Fototeca dei Musei Civici Fiorentini - Stefano Bardini Archive Year 1911 folder A.

<sup>121</sup> Poggi, *op. cit.*, p. XVI.

In Chapter Two the thesis will examine Bardini's photographs of sculptures. Here Bardini appears to take a free interpretation of fragments, modifying their shape, size and purpose through the use of the camera. His contemporary, the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) theorised on how, to photograph a sculpture in a way that avoids altering its original meaning the photograph has to be taken from the same viewpoint from which the sculptor intended his work to be seen. This chapter will evidence how Bardini and Wölfflin practices diverged and the impact their different approaches had to the outcome of their work.

Chapter Three offers insights into Bardini's life in Florence and his relationship with the international and local intellectual milieu that gravitated to the city at this time. It discusses the burgeoning interest in house-museums and their relationship with nineteenth century museological displays. Through the creation of his palazzo, Stefano Bardini brought together these practices together in an expression of nineteenth-century eclecticism. It also discusses the parallel between Bardini's photographs and Corinto Corinti's *cartoline* and how these two different ways of cataloguing fragments tell the history of Florence, filtered through their eclectic eye.

Finally this thesis concludes leaving several interesting aspects to be explored. How Bardini's photographic display evolved over the years, as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth century with its new cultural influences. The photographic archive offers many more images that can be analysed following new century's art history interpretations. Furthermore, Bardini showed with his photographs how the boundaries between the photograph as historical document

and the photograph as artistic expression could easily be broken. Therefore this study will lead to a deeper investigation into Bardini's photographic expression and how, with this medium he documented the tumultuous history of art collecting of his time and its impact and evolution in Florence.

## Chapter One

### Jacob Burckhardt and his impact on Wilhelm von Bode and Stefano Bardini

This chapter will investigate the intellectual interactions between Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) and Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929), and between Bode and the art dealer Stefano Bardini (1836–1922). Their relationships evolved around their intertwined research interests and activity in the art world. Crucially, the three men shared a passion for the study of Italian and Renaissance art. Jacob Burckhardt's studies pioneered a new interpretation of Renaissance culture and influenced the work of both Bode and Bardini.

For the analysis of Bardini's photographs, this study will examine three of Burckhardt's texts; his historical volume *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* published in 1860, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* published in 1867 (as part of the fourth section of Franz Kugler's book *Geschichte der Baukunst*)<sup>122</sup> in two versions;<sup>123</sup> and lastly, a collection of Burckhardt's final work, published posthumously in *L'Arte Italiana del Rinascimento Volume IV I Collezionisti* in 1995.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Jacob Burckhardt *L'arte Italiana del Rinascimento L'Architettura* eds. Maurizio Ghelardi and Susanne Muller (Venezia, Marsilio, 1991), p. IX. After Kugler's death, Paul Heyse (Burckhardt's mentor and professor) and the publisher Ebner asked Burckhardt for assistance in concluding the four volumes of research begun by Kugler on Gothic art and the architecture of the Italian and European Renaissance.

<sup>123</sup> The English version was edited by Peter Murray in 1985, and the Italian text was edited by Maurizio Ghelardi and Susanne Muller in 1991: Jacob Burckhardt *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* ed. Peter Murray (London, Sacker & Warburg, 1985)

<sup>124</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *L'Arte Italiana del Rinascimento Volume IV I Collezionisti* eds. Maurizio Ghelardi and Susanne Muller (Venezia, Marsilio, 1995).

This chapter will interrogate the content and meaning of two photographs from the Bardini archive, they will be analysed in terms of two important themes: Burckhardt's studies and the historical evolution of Florence from 1865 until the 1890s. The chapter will initially focus on the time Burckhardt spent in Florence and his studies there in Renaissance art. It will also look at his theories on the 'duty of the work of art,' something which later found a visual representation in Bardini's photographs. There was a close relationship between Burckhardt and Bode and between Bode and Bardini. In Bardini's photographs it is possible to see the influence of Burckhardt, channelled through Bode; this thread of influence is one of the main topics of analysis in this thesis. A photograph of madonne bas-reliefs is analysed to demonstrate this thesis' re-evaluation of these works of art in nineteenth century collections. The combination of Burckhardt's studies and Bardini's displays lead us to an investigation of the importance of the Madonna as a cult figure and an examination of the artistic expression of her through history. Wilhelm von Bode was one of Bardini's major clients and their professional relationship and friendship, which lasted 50 years, had a significant influence on both men's careers. This relationship will be studied in some detail as it gives an insight into a possible theoretical basis for Bardini's compositions.

In a following section the author will look at some notes taken by Bardini's agent around Europe and examine how Bardini's personal marketing and psychological research helped to establish his relationship with his clients. The theories of Pierre Bourdieu on the differences in the tastes of different social classes offer a useful tool for understanding how Bardini studied his own clients' tastes. This section will be followed by an analysis of a photograph of the landing

on the main staircase at Palazzo Mozzi Bardini. The photograph shows an assembly of sculptures, furniture, architectural fragments, paliotti, coats of arms and Renaissance bronzes from Bardini's collection. This assembly constitutes the representation of Bardini's clients' tastes that was determined mainly by two very important historical aspects that occurred in Florence during the 30-year period from 1865 until the 1890s. One was the creation of the Bargello as a national heritage museum and the other was the destruction of some parts of the old city of Florence. The interest generated among collectors by the former was complemented by the availability of architectural fragments and other pieces produced by the latter. Therefore the importance of these historical events is fundamental for an understanding of what Bardini was unconsciously displaying within the frame of this photograph, and the photographs themselves become an important instrument of research.

Fundamental to an understanding of how Bode and Bardini followed Burckhardt's theories and visually translated them in their displays is an insight into Burckhardt's theories of Renaissance culture.<sup>125</sup> Burckhardt's publication on Italian Renaissance can be read in the light of these theories.

[Burckhardt] described images and monuments as 'witnesses of past stages of the development of the human spirit', objects 'through which it is possible to read the structures of thought and representation at a given time'.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Lionel Gossman, 'Jacob Burckhardt as art historian' in *Oxford Art Journal* (vol.11 no. 1 1988, pp. 22-32) 'He [Burckhardt] pioneered a cross-sectional, synchronic mode of historical analysis in place of the traditional narrative or diachronic mode, producing a picture rather than a story. [...] By looking for the relations among the manifestations of a culture instead of establishing a sequence of events and inquiring into the causes, Burckhardt read cultures in the same way that he read works of art. He did not write the history of artists in the style of Vasari, he instead wrote the art history.'

<sup>126</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing* (London, Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 11.



In his Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein, Bode celebrated the Renaissance period while Bardini created a palazzo and interior displays in which historical periods became intertwined as a result of his theatrical historical representation of the history of art. Burckhardt had an unconventional way of investigating the history of art. For him, works of art were responsible not merely for describing, through their morphology, the intertwining threads of existing cultural influences, but also for reinterpreting their own time and context. This is an approach whose influence can clearly be traced in Bardini's displays.

### **Jacob Burckhardt and Italy**

In Italy, Burckhardt's art-historical studies had been well known since 1865. Their presence can be evidence in Giuseppe della Vedova's *L'Archivio Storico*, where he made some initial comments on Burckhardt's *The Cicerone*, which at the time was available only in German and French. In 1876, the last version of Burckhardt's *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* appeared in Italian, translated by Diego Valbusa; it was published in English in 1878.<sup>127</sup> Burckhardt's studies in Italian culture and the history of art were also familiar to the philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), who, without mentioning Burckhardt by name, often made use of *The Cicerone* to describe the art of southern Italy in his magazine *Napoli Nobilissima*, first published in Italy in 1892. In the following years, Croce came into conflict with Burckhardt on two different points: the notion of the Renaissance as a historical period, and Burckhardt's theory of historical context.<sup>128</sup> Just

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<sup>127</sup> Claudio Cesa, 'Momenti della Fortuna di Jacob Burckhardt in Italia' in *Jacob Burckhardt: Storia della cultura, Storia dell'arte* eds. Maurizio Ghelardi and Max Seidel (Venezia, Marsilio, 2002), pp. 42-54.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

as their debate centred on two separate points it is useful for any analysis of Burckhardt to include these key distinctions, between his view of the Renaissance, as a historical and political period, and his understanding of the Renaissance as reflected in the works of art of the period.<sup>129</sup>

At the time, Florence was considered the focal point for Renaissance studies and also the representation of the emergence of European civilisation, mirroring the way Renaissance humanists had seen the study of the classics as the re-birth of their culture. Intellectuals of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century found in Florentine Renaissance culture the starting point for a new era in European history.<sup>130</sup> Florence was chosen as a centre for research into history of art because the emergence of the Renaissance was considered the starting point of modern history. This was as evidenced by the city's magnificent art collections, archives and libraries, all of which therefore required careful study.<sup>131</sup> The entire city was seen as a gallery of important architectural works, and each one had its name, date and author.<sup>132</sup> The continuous exchange between Italy and Germany also bears witness to the foundation of a German centre of historical studies. The first stone in that foundation was laid in Rome in 1821 with the Archaeological Institute, born from the initiative of a private scholar with the intention of following Johann Joachim Winckelmann's (1717-1768) research.<sup>133</sup> Historical

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* p.46.

<sup>130</sup> Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e Rivoluzioni: Movimenti Culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo* (Bari, Laterza, 1975), p. 19.

<sup>131</sup> Arnold Esch, 'L'esordio degli istituti di ricerca Tedeschi in Italia' in *Storia dell'Arte e politica culturale attorno al 1900* (Convegno Internazionale Firenze 21-24 maggio 1997), ed. Max Seidel (Venezia, Marsilio, 1999), pp. 223-248.

<sup>132</sup> Francesco M. Cataluccio, *La memoria degli Uffizi* (Palermo, Sellerio, 2013), p. 21; see p.138 footnote no. 12. The original quote is from Giorgio Mangnelli, *Firenze matematica fiabesca* (1982) in Giorgio Mangnelli, *La Favola pitagorica, luoghi italiani* (Milano, Adelphi, 2005), p. 32.

<sup>133</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Historie de l'Art dans l'Antiquite* (Paris, Librairie Generale Francaise, La Phototeque, 2005), pp. 11-21.

institutes from all over Europe were founded in Rome; the Austrians founded their institute in 1881, while a group of German historians gathered in 1883 with the idea of creating an historical institute, however they did not receive any support from their government until 1888, the date of its foundation. The study of history thus preceded that of art history, a discipline that was relatively new at the time.<sup>134</sup>

In Florence, the idea of an art history research institute originated with a small group of connoisseurs gathered around Karl Eduard von Liphart (1807-1891), who had been living in Florence since 1862.<sup>135</sup> The institute was founded in 1897 and Bode played a very active role in its foundation, becoming a member of its committee in 1898.<sup>136</sup> One of the main reasons for the creation of research institutes in Italy in the period 1870-1914 may have been the trend for positivism, which considered scientific and humanist research a sign of German cultural progress.<sup>137</sup> After the unification of Germany and the formation of the new Empire, Germany made use of culture as an instrument of political propaganda. In the same period in Italy, similar projects were organised, resulting in various episodes of cultural exchange between the two countries. In short, the cultures of Germany and Italy were intertwining.<sup>138</sup> Bardini began collecting and dealing in works of art during the 1870s, at a time when Burckhardt had become widely known in Italy. However, it is almost certain that Bardini's knowledge of Burckhardt's work came through Wilhelm Bode, who might be

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<sup>134</sup> Arnold Esch, 'L'esordio degli istituti di ricerca Tedeschi in Italia' in *Storia dell'Arte e politica culturale attorno al 1900* (Convegno Internazionale Firenze 21-24 maggio 1997) ed. Max Seidel (Venezia, Marsilio Editore, 1999), p. 228. The four German historians promoters of the historical institute in Rome were Heinrich von Sybel, Georg Waitz, Wilhelm Wattenbach and Julius Weizsäcker.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>136</sup> Max Seidel, *Arte Italiana del Medioevo e del Rinascimento* (Venezia, Marsilio Editore, 2003), pp. 821-823.

<sup>137</sup> Esch, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223-248.

regarded as the link between the two. Bode's memoirs mentioned that he met Bardini in 1872 or 1875.<sup>139</sup>

Jacob Burckhardt visited Florence several times between 1838 and 1881. His study of Renaissance art was shaped by the major changes that occurred in Florence during this period of almost fifty years.<sup>140</sup> He attributed a special significance to Florence as the place where the Renaissance had originated and modern European history had been born. In his project on the Renaissance he sought to embrace various aspects of history and the history of art in order to explain how the Renaissance period was reflected in art and created a circularity between history, culture and art.

In 1838 Italy was still divided into many small states. The distinct medieval and Renaissance districts of Florence were still intact, and Burckhardt immediately realised the importance of the medieval structure of the city. Burckhardt saw in the city the overlapping of different historical periods, and their styles offered him the opportunity to pursue his chief research subject: the regeneration of the Renaissance in the Gothic style.<sup>141</sup> For Burckhardt, the rise of the medieval period was at least partly responsible for shaping the beginning of the Renaissance, contributing to the development of artists as individuals producing their own works of art according to their own unique skill sets. This period witnessed the disappearance of the medieval *botteghe*, whose artists remained anonymous, and their

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<sup>139</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 50, footnote no. 37. Bode gives two different dates: one in his memoirs, 1875; and the other in Bardini's obituary, 1872. Their correspondence dates from 1875.

<sup>140</sup> Maurizio Ghelardi, 'Jacob Burckhardt a Firenze' in *Cultura tedesca a Firenze, scrittrici e artiste tra Otto e Novecento* (Atti del Convegno Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Villa Romana Florenz, Firenze, 24 25 maggio 2002) eds. Maria Chiara Mocali and Claudia Vitale (Firenze, Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 2005), p.51.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

replacement with *scuole*, which featured a leading artist and his pupils as followers. This new system encouraged artistic productivity and diversity, enabling artists to develop more fully their personal styles over time.<sup>142</sup> Art in Renaissance Italy did not reflect the historical events of this period of decadence; on the contrary, all of the tensions and struggles generated by this period provided the perfect inspiration for a new form of art.

The genesis of Burckhardt's reflections came from his mentor, Franz Kugler (1808–1858).<sup>143</sup> For Burckhardt the Renaissance reinterpretation of classical patterns of art expressed a new morphology combining the new and the old. Architecture and sculpture of the Renaissance, inspired by the classical antiquity models evolved into new forms. These new forms became a quotation of the past combining with new creative inspirations. Therefore this 'chain of quotation' generated a monumental aspect in architecture and in sculpture; examples of buildings and sculptures found in the city of Florence generated a strong connection between past and present.<sup>144</sup>

The close relationship between the monumental aspect of Florence and its culture is one of the themes that most fascinated Burckhardt.<sup>145</sup> One could say that Stefano Bardini had the same fascination in the creation of his displays. He created monumental interiors evoking Florence as both a medieval and Renaissance city. Each one of the works of art displayed represented a link with the city and its culture.

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<sup>142</sup> Maurizio Ghelardi, *La Scoperta del Rinascimento: l'Età di Raffaello* (Torino, Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1991), p. 43.

<sup>143</sup> Ghelardi, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp. 29–51. For a detailed description of the relationship between Franz Kugler (1808–1858), his university professor, and Jacob Burckhardt. After Kugler's death, Burckhardt was asked to complete some of his studies on the Renaissance and to provide his theories with a wider application.

<sup>144</sup> Ghelardi, *op. cit.*, 1991, pp. XVI–XVII

<sup>145</sup> Ghelardi, 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

These pieces from various provenances and purposes were seen primarily as being of their original historical period; however, placed in a new context they changed their meaning, becoming part of a new context: a nineteenth century interpretation. It is in the lavish setting of Bardini's palazzo that works of art from different Italian provenances become symbols of the influence of the Florentine Renaissance in Italian arts.

After a long visit to Rome, Burckhardt returned to Florence in 1881. Although his notes from this period do not include any particular personal reflections on the buildings and works of art described and he seems to have been more interested in cataloguing works of art, it was during this visit that he found the stimulus for his first studies on Florentine architecture.<sup>146</sup> In the process of analysing the city's architecture, he considered decorative details one by one in order to create a map of the various styles employed in churches of the period.<sup>147</sup> His notes include an observation of fundamental importance for the interpretation of Bardini's photographs. Burckhardt argued that the style of a period or artist could only be explained in opposition to other periods, schools, artists and paintings.<sup>148</sup> Bardini in his photographs followed the same logic. Placing pieces from different origins close to each other generated a contrast that evidenced their unique identity. Each piece became a fragment of its own history, evoking, in the absence of the whole, an historical link between different moments of the past. It was in Renaissance Florence that the antique form found both a new expression and a new interpretation.<sup>149</sup> The nineteenth century revival emulated the Renaissance tradition and was inspired by antiquity, mediaeval and Renaissance styles, blending

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<sup>146</sup> Ghelardi, 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56 footnote no. 31.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

them with a contemporary interpretation. Burckhardt asserted that form and content had always had a deep relationship in Italian culture. According to him Italians were aware that the reproduction of antique forms generated new forms, and that a copy could be both autonomous and more beautiful than the original.<sup>150</sup>

Bardini appears to have followed Burckhardt's theories in order to express a double message in his photographs. The works of art, fragments or objects are seen both in their original historical period and according to its new, nineteenth-century function, created by the photograph of the display. In short, placing the individual work of art, fragment or object in relation to another form, with a different provenance, evolved a new interpretative style. As with Burckhardt, Bardini's re-evaluation of the Renaissance had the purpose of combining the meanings of antique and modern historical traditions of keeping the former alive in the latter.

When Burckhardt travelled to Florence in 1875, it was in the company of Bode. This time Burckhardt's impression of the city must have been completely different from that of previous years. Italy had been united in 1865, with Florence becoming its capital that same year. Since that time, major changes had been wrought in the city's architectural landscape.<sup>151</sup> During his visit in 1875, Burckhardt appears to have spent less time in the city and more time focused on gathering photographs of works of art. It seems that Florence, with its new townscape, could not possibly offer the scholar the same inspiration as before.

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>151</sup> G. Carocci, *Nel Centro di Firenze*, in 'Arte e Storia', XIX, 1900, nn. 16-17, p. 115. R. Conti, *Difendiamo Firenze*, in 'Il Marzocco', 19 agosto 1900. Eugenio Pucci, *Com'era Firenze Cento Anni fa'* (Firenze, Bonechi Editore, 1969), pp. 3, 11 and 13. Edoardo Detti, *Firenze scomparsa* (Firenze, Vallecchi Editore, 1970), pp. 33-79.

In 1867, Burekhardt had been asked to take part in the project of commissioning a new façade for the *Duomo* (The Basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore). He refused the position, but visited the work in progress during his last trip to Florence in 1881.<sup>152</sup> The project for the new façade of Santa Maria del Fiore was complex and tormented; it sparked endless discussions that lasted almost fifty years: the first project for the façade began in 1822 and the difficult choice of who was to be the architect in charge of the project was not made until 1864. The architect Emilio De Fabris (1808-1883) won the commission and the work, begun in 1872, was finished in 1887.<sup>153</sup> The ideological and the spiritual revival was a constant presence in Florence and the project of Santa Maria del Fiore exemplifies this historical aspect with its gothic inspired design. In this case the gothic style was chosen due to its spiritual symbolism, evoking more clearly its religious meaning.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ghelardi, 2005, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>153</sup> Costanza Travaglini, 'La Facciata di Santa Maria del Fiore: Dialogo ottocentesco tra preesistente e progetto storicistico' in *Il Neogotico nel XIX e XX secolo*, ed. Rossana Bossaglia (Atti del Convegno "Il Neogotico in Europa nei secoli XIX e XX" vol.II, Pavia 25-28 settembre 1985, Mazzotta), pp. 317-326. Mauro Cozzi 'Il dibattito e i progetti ottocenteschi per S. Maria del Fiore nonche delle mattaccinate che il popolo e il comune hanno fatto per raggiungere il fine desiderato di una facciata' and also 'Da Giudici a Giudicati' in *Il Duomo di Firenze 1822-1887: l'avventura della facciata* ed. Carlo Cresti (Firenze, Il Bossolo, 1987), pp. 126-128 and pp. 31-52. Timothy Verdon, 'Tutta di Marmi e con figure intagliate: La facciata di Santa Maria del Fiore' in *Alla riscoperta di Piazza del Duomo in Firenze: La facciata di Santa Maria del Fiore* ed. Timothy Verdon (Firenze, Centro Di, 1996), pp. 7-32. Emilio Bacciotti, *Firenze Illustrata nella sua Storia, Famiglie, Monumenti, Arti e Scienze* vol. III (Firenze, 1887 Ristampa dell'originale Roma, 1977), pp. 65-76. Giovanni Poggi, *Il Duomo di Firenze: Documenti sulla Decorazione della Chiesa e del Campanile tratti dall'archivio dell'Opera* (Berlino, Bruno Cassirer Editore, 1909), pp. XVII-LXI. Virgilio Crispolti, *Il Duomo di Firenze: S. Maria del Fiore* (Torino, Roberto Berruti e C., 1938), pp. 25-30. Virgilio Crispolti, *Santa Maria del Fiore alla luce dei documenti* (Firenze, Vallecchi, 1937), pp. 451-518. Carlo Cresti, *Architetti e Ingegneri nella Toscana dell'Ottocento* (Firenze, UNIEDIT, 1978), pp. LIV LXIV. Maria Sframeli, 'Dalla Città al Museo Nascita della Sezione di Firenze Antica al Museo di S Marco' in *Il Centro di Firenze Restituito* (Firenze, Aberto Bruschi Editore, 1989), pp. 15-19.

<sup>154</sup> Cresti, op. cit., 1987 p. 18.



Over the course of the years 1865 - 1895, another major project was undertaken which destroyed Florence's old medieval town and changed the city dramatically.<sup>155</sup> The architectural and cultural references in Florence were still the medieval and Renaissance periods, and as a result every new architectural project was a remake of the past. As with other mediaeval Tuscan cities, Florence was somehow becoming the mirror of itself; architects, sculptors and decorators worked in competition with the past in the attempt to create a new image of the city.<sup>156</sup> Although his interests as an art dealer were his priority, Bardini strongly supported the amelioration of the Bargello collection, especially when he persuaded the Carran brothers to bequeath their collection of French enamel to the museum.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, the creation of his personal museum, which he later bequeathed to the city of Florence, had the aim of paying tribute to the city and its history.

### **Jacob Burckhardt and the Italian Renaissance**

Jacob Burckhardt's interest in the Italian Renaissance was initially inspired by William Roscoe (1753-1831) whose *The Life of Lorenzo de Medici*, published in 1796, contained entire sections dedicated to art. Roscoe's artistic and cultural response to the Renaissance focused on re-evaluating the myth created by Vasari that Florence was the only

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<sup>155</sup> Cresti, 1978, *op. cit.*, pp. LIV-LXIV. Sframeli, 1989, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-19. Edoardo Detti, *Firenze scomparsa* (Firenze, Vallecchi Editore, 1970), pp. 83-92.

<sup>156</sup> David Rossi, 'L'Invenzione dello Spazio Medioevale' in *Falsi d'Autore* ed. Gianni Mazzoni (Siena 8 giugno - 3 ottobre 2004), p. 37.

<sup>157</sup> Fiorenza Scalia, *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze* (Milano, Electa, 1984), p. 21. Nimeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

centre of Renaissance art.<sup>158</sup> Around 1828–1829, Stendhal, the French realist writer wrote a guidebook entitled *Promenades dans Rome* as a result of his visits to Rome; the book invites the reader to follow in his footsteps, visiting the city in order to understand and learn about its historical periods as seen through its monuments and works of art. Burckhardt followed Stendhal with the creation in 1855 of *The Cicerone*, a detailed guidebook accompanied by personal observations on Italian culture and art. Burckhardt visited Florence again in 1848, but it was during his lengthy visit in 1853 that he found his main inspiration for *The Cicerone*, published in 1855. His notes reflect his method of examining works of art and architecture within a comparative system in order to understand their subtle differences and similarities. During those four months in Florence, he began to develop comparisons between the Italian Gothic style, the German style and the Renaissance style. In examining these distinct yet intertwining artistic disciplines, Burckhardt addressed the relationship between art, life and history. He also came to regard each work of art as a cosmos gathering together three different value systems: the expressive, the formal and the technical. The Renaissance, according to Burckhardt, emerged in Florence through a variety of morphological processes which re-elaborated classical civilisation.<sup>159</sup>

Burckhardt's influential attempt to find a consistent parallelism between history and the history of art was based principally on the

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<sup>158</sup> Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), p.164. One of the earliest historians of the early nineteenth century to attempt to describe the culture of the Renaissance was Roscoe. His works deserve to be mentioned in any of history of Renaissance studies not only for the stimulus on the Italian studies but also for the direction it gave to many later interpretations. Roscoe conceived the whole cultural revival of the Renaissance through the study of the Medici family as indeed the product of the family's intelligent direction and the liberal patronage. Ghelardi, 1991, *op. cit.*, pp.104–105.

<sup>159</sup> Ghelardi, 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

idea that works of art provided a permanent visual record of historical periods; periods which were otherwise in the process of vanishing.<sup>160</sup> For Burckhardt, historical knowledge offered a means of understanding the changing state of art, which was moving forward in parallel with history and, vice versa; art offered an insight into history. In the development of Italian Renaissance art Burckhardt saw a struggle for power between the Italian states and the violent impositions of religion. This, he believed, was reflected to a greater or lesser degree in the period's art, whose beauty conceals political tensions.<sup>161</sup>

A parallel with the Renaissance political tensions examined by Burckhardt, in which the affirmation of state power can be seen in works of art, can be found in Bardini's photographs. The fragments employed by Bardini in his displays evoke the historical episodes of the nineteenth century, culminating with the *Risorgimento*. Thus the fragments assume a new power, and the role of art becomes one of commemoration. The analysis of Bardini's photographs from an historical-political perspective shows how contemporary historical events determined the dispersion of many works of art and the

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<sup>160</sup> Wilhelm Schlink, 'Le "role" de l'historien de l'art' in *Relire Burckhardt* ed. Maurizio Ghelardi, Marie Jeanne Heger-Etienvre, *et. al.* (Paris, Louvre Conference 25 Novembre 1996 – 16 Dicembre 1997), p. 27. L'une des convictions essentielles de l'anthropologie burckhardtienne est en effet de croire que l'imagination artistique de l'homme est restée la même par-delà les siècles en ce qui concerne ses capacités et richesse. Seul condition garantie la compréhensibilité universelle et la valeur intemporelle des arts plastiques. En manifestant sa parenté avec la notre, l'imagination du sculpteur grec éveille en nous l'attrait pour la sculpture classique, comme celle de l'architecture médiévale orient notre compréhension de la cathédrale gothique.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. Pour lui la connaissance historique et le jugement artistique vont de pair dans l'instruction des ses étudiants: ils permettent d'expliquer quelles sont les conditions historiques et culturelles qui favorisent son art prospère. Et quelles sont les obstacles qui précipitent son déclin. Vue sous cet angle l'histoire de l'art ne connaît que deux modèles: les époques marquées par l'esprit d'un peuple libre, eclectique et confiant en lui-même qui donna naissance à des grandes réalisations; les époques durant lesquelles l'art fut dégradé en simple instrument de la religion et de la politique.

destruction of architecturally important buildings. With the fragments produced by these events displayed in the photographs, Bardini created an historical language through which the works of art fulfil their 'duty' (in Burckhardt's terms). With his photographs Bardini was also creating historical documents, and this can be understood as an encounter between Foucault's genealogical and archaeological methods and Burckhardt's theories. Bardini assembled fragmented pieces in an attempt to recreate the whole of a historical period as well as his contemporary vision of it – exactly as Burckhardt suggested. Burckhardt, Bardini and Foucault are working with fragments; Burckhardt's fragments are historical information and their impression on Italian works of art. He combined his personal Italian experiences with art history texts. As a result his work presents a deep but fragmented aspect, as we will see especially in *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* and in *The Collectors*. The same can be said of Bardini's displays, which although including some uneven final result, are generally coherent and also similar to Burckhardt's work. Foucault's work on genealogy and archaeology as methods of understanding history elucidate Burckhardt and Bardini's approaches to history of art, both as written and as visual material. Burckhardt's discussion of customs and distinctions in social class helps the reader gain a clearer idea of Renaissance life. Although no images are provided, the palazzi, costumes, objects and works of art are vividly described in a way that is almost photographic. Detailed descriptions of objects, furniture, buildings and clothes re-create the Renaissance atmosphere as a suggestion of his imagination, conferring a portrait of a time.

It is evident from some descriptions, for example of male and female clothing or wall-hanging fabrics for domestic interiors, that aesthetic

sensibility was prominent in daily life during the Renaissance. In all sorts of everyday objects and tools, use and function merged with aesthetics to create effective symbols of the owner's power.

We read in the novelists of soft elastic beds, of costly carpets and bedroom furniture, of which we hear nothing in other countries. We often hear especially of the abundance and beauty of the linen. We note with admiration the thousand ways in which art ennobles luxury, not only adorning massive sideboards or light brackets with noble vases, clothing the walls with the moveable splendour of tapestry...<sup>162</sup>

Burckhardt's study takes a detailed approach to every aspect of Italian Renaissance culture, referring every so often to contemporary literature in order to illuminate the complexities of history. In 1878, Burckhardt republished his book on Renaissance architecture under the title *History of Architecture Revisited and Expanded by Jacob Burckhardt and Wilhelm Lübke*. The book, previously published in 1867, maintained the same structure. At this time what Burckhardt really wanted was to create a new independent book showing only photographs.<sup>163</sup> Unfortunately this project never came to fruition due to publishing problems.<sup>164</sup> It was only in 1893 when Burckhardt retired, that he began to work again on this same publication: *Geschichte der Renaissance*. These three publications are important as they show how Burckhardt gradually developed a project that after many years converged into the most interesting aspects of his studies; the relationship between artistic expression and time, synchrony and diachrony, form and genre. From the historical cultural point of view

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<sup>162</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York, New York Modern Library, 2002), p. 260.

<sup>163</sup> Ghelardi, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. XXIII. The complete title in German is *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien in Geschichte der neueren Baukunst von Jacob Burckhardt und Wilhelm Lübke, zweite durchgesehene und vermehrte Auflage. Erster Band. Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien von JB zweite vom Verfasser selbst durchgesehene und vermehrte Auflage.*

<sup>164</sup> Ghelardi, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. XXIV footnote no. 36. pp.345-346 See the original introduction to the 1878 version translated in Italian.

these aspects can be seen as connections between tradition and innovation.<sup>165</sup>

The scholar Susanne Muller employs the word ‘autopsy’ to define Burckhardt’s practice in studying works of art.<sup>166</sup> This definition nicely illustrates Burckhardt’s study method: looking at fragmented historical and artistic information in the attempt to compose the whole. This definition of Burckhardt’s writing can also be useful for examining Bardini’s photographs. *The Architecture of Italian Renaissance* shows how the essential meaning of architecture in the Renaissance related to the Church and other patrons’ powerful positions in society. *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* also includes a fascinating analysis of the Church as the most powerful institution of the Italian Renaissance, due in part to the iconological significance of its architecture.<sup>167</sup> The first important point is that Renaissance architecture derives from classical forms, and must therefore impose its own stylistic nuances on the forms it has borrowed for its expression. In the introduction Peter Murray defines this publication not as a book but a combination of information and notes.<sup>168</sup>

In fact, as one can see, the content of this study is not arranged chronologically or in a narrative style. It is rather a detailed list of considerations regarding the architecture and decorative arts of the Renaissance, in which comparisons between regions and artists, uses of material and sources of inspiration, play the most important role. In

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<sup>165</sup> Ghelardi, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. XXV.

<sup>166</sup> Susanne Muller, ‘Jacob Burckhardt e la storiografia artistica’ in *Jacob Burckhardt Storia della cultura, Storia dell’arte*, eds. Maurizio Ghelardi and Max Seidel (Venice, Marsilio, 2002), p. 108.

<sup>167</sup> Max Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, pp. 830, and 857 footnote no. 72. Jacob Burckhardt, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

<sup>168</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* ed. Peter Murray (London, Secker & Warburg, 1985), p. XIV.

the course of Burckhardt's text, therefore, the architectural elements of buildings and decorative works themselves become fragments, as each is isolated from its context and analysed separately. By means of this approach, Burckhardt confers a sense of objectification on every single element, whether architectural or decorative. His detailed descriptions allow the reader to visualise each of the elements under examination, while his comparisons between them offer a broader perspective on Renaissance art. Stefano Bardini's photographs chart the same process, with the absence of words, and achieve the same aim as Burckhardt: to transform works of art into fragments whose comparison can more clearly illuminate Renaissance history and art. Burckhardt considered the ways in which certain forms of decoration were adopted by Renaissance architects in order to show something different from their original purpose. This was not just a means of 'quoting' history but also a transformation of the past, re-elaborated in the present as a symbol of a renewed power.

### **Jacob Burckhardt - *The Collectors***

*The Collectors* is an invaluable instrument for this study, as it is in this text that Burckhardt shows how the practices of Italian Renaissance collectors began, and how connections with the northern culture of painting determined both the tastes of Italian collectors and the practices of their contemporary painters. Burckhardt also takes a great interest in how every single element of everyday life, as reflected in interiors, became an object for collection, and how nineteenth-century collectors followed this example. So, as we will see in chapter three of the current study, nineteenth-century collectors transformed their practice from taking an interest in antiquarianism to focusing their

entire lives and home interiors and the re-appropriation of items from the past.

Burckhardt wrote *The Collectors* in 1893, as part of his collection of studies of Renaissance Italian art, shortly after retiring from university teaching. As a retired professor, Burckhardt welcomed the opportunity to dedicate his time to writing about his passions, without feeling it incumbent upon himself to publish the results. It was only in 1896, near the end of his life, that he considered publishing these written notes. Correspondence with his sister and his friend, Robert Gruninger, reveals his indecision as to whether to publish *The Collectors*.<sup>169</sup> This essay was the last of a collection of works that included ‘La Pala d’Altare’, ‘Il Ritratto’, and ‘La Scultura’.<sup>170</sup> Burckhardt initially expressed the desire for these essays to be published; the second time around, however, he changed his mind, mandating that the essays be kept in the Basel public library for the use of scholars, as he considered it an incomplete work.<sup>171</sup> Finally, in 1898, a year after Burckhardt’s death, *The Collectors* was published by his colleague Hans Trog, without any alterations, and it was reprinted in 1929 by Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) as part of Burckhardt’s *Gesamtausgabe*. Today *The Collectors* is only available in Italian translation in its 1995 edition and no earlier versions exist apart from the German language ones.<sup>172</sup>

*The Collectors* provides an insight into the activity of Renaissance collectors, with some references to their nineteenth-century

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<sup>169</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *L’Arte Italiana del Rinascimento: I Collezionisti*, vol. IV, eds. Maurizio Ghelardi and Susanne Muller (Venezia, Marsilio 1995), pp. XI–XIII.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. IX. The collection of the four essays, as defined by the scholar Maurizio Ghelardi, were posthumously published as four separate books.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIII. footnote no. 14.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIV.



counterparts.<sup>173</sup> Burckhardt describes Renaissance collectors and the main impulses that guided their acquisitions. Firstly, he argues, they were fascinated by the increasing fashion for collecting the work of contemporary artists, and commissioned various works of art as a result. Secondly, and of particular importance, the discovery during the Renaissance period of antiquities in Rome led to a profound interest in ancient art among humanist scholars.<sup>174</sup>

The key themes of Burckhardt's study include the tension generated by the distinction between Italian and northern painting, and the relationship between collectors and artists. The humanist engagement with antiquity resulted in an increased interest in sculpture, especially under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici.<sup>175</sup> In *The Collectors*, Burckhardt explains the origins of the first private collections in Italy and tells us about the most significant patrons of the Renaissance era. He argues that the morphological characteristics of contemporary works of art reflect the period's reinterpretation of antiquity and its patterns. Burckhardt refers to the structure of works of art directly inspired by antiquity, which he found re-fashioned in the new forms created during the Renaissance. For Burckhardt, this was the fullest expression of the cultural history of the Renaissance, wherein the continuous quotation of antiquity created a link between the two historical periods. Accompanying the increasing focus in Renaissance Florence on the city's classical heritage was an increasing tendency to re-interpret classical models according to the needs and fashions of the time. Antiquity, viewed through the interpretative filter of the Renaissance, was still at the core of collectors' interests in the

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<sup>173</sup> The word "collectors" is translated by the author from "*collezionisti*" in the Italian version of the book by Maurizio Ghelardi and Susanne Muller, which is itself translated from the original German.

<sup>174</sup> Burckhardt, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. XIV.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67.

nineteenth century, and helped to shape their style: a combination of Renaissance, classical and nineteenth-century tastes, in line with the emergence of the eclectic style.

Burckhardt's analysis focuses on the mutual relationship between the function of works of art and the demands of collectors. In this respect, he not only traces the evolution of the most important Italian Renaissance collectors and the function of their collections, but also focuses his attention on the 'duty' principle – the function of works of art in relation to collectors and collections – and the relationship between art history and collecting.<sup>176</sup> This is a very important issue, because the criteria employed by Renaissance collectors, and their methods of 'utilising' works of art, can also be seen to shape the formation of nineteenth-century collections. Works of art, according to Burckhardt, had a 'duty' to evoke and thus forge links with the past, while at the same time blending with their contemporary settings.

The two most important questions raised by Burckhardt in the field of art history are the following: how does a work of art evolve in time, and how does it fit into its historical context?<sup>9</sup> This question is applicable to every historical period, and is of fundamental importance to the understanding and re-interpretation of Renaissance art in nineteenth-century collections, just as it was to Burckhardt's understanding of the art of the period.

Burckhardt sought to cover the entire field of art collecting while bringing to the foreground Vasari and Borghini (1515-1589) in his section on Florence. Burckhardt claims that the earliest forms of collecting in Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth-century

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. X.

involved sculptures and paintings for devotional purposes. In detailing the various components of Renaissance collections, Burckhardt also shows an interest in oriental carpets, saying:

Until not long ago wonderful carpets were left ignored in church sacristies and in the *guardaroba* of noble families. Afterwards, [these carpets] entered triumphantly into museum collections and were in great demand with collectors, who bought them at incredible prices considering that they were anonymous works. In private collections, it is customary to display tapestries together with antique furniture with the intention of creating set-pieces evoking a typically Renaissance nostalgia: a feeling of faded nobility.<sup>177</sup>

Burckhardt mentions carpets and tapestries in the same breath, and his description seems to refer to both. Later in *The Collectors*, Burckhardt describes the importance to Renaissance collectors of musical instruments with decorations and shapes inspired by Greek, Flemish and Florentine examples, especially in Florence and Venice, where classical music was increasingly fashionable. The presence of these musical instruments in the Renaissance paintings which contemporary collectors were acquiring caused these musical instruments themselves to become collectible items.<sup>178</sup>

Interestingly, the practice of displaying ancient and contemporary sculptures together was already in place during the Renaissance. In the sculptural displays, therefore, as well as in the insertion into garden walls of fragments of ancient sculpture – columns, statues and

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189. Fino a poco tempo fa, i tappeti piu' incantevoli giacevano ignorati nelle grandi sacrestie delle chiese, nelle guardaroba delle corti e in fondi nobiliari privati; in seguito, hanno fatto il loro ingresso trionfale nei grandi musei e son ancora acquistati da amatori a prezzi che non hanno eguali per altre opere non autografe. Nei fondi privati, si usa accostare un grande arazzo ad altri mobili antichi, si' da formare una sorta di trofeo che cerca di evocare la nostalgia di un supposto spirito rinascimentale per una nobilta' tramontata (Author's translation).

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

sarcophagi Bardini was adopting the humanist practice of visually quoting antiquity, which for nineteenth-century collectors also meant quoting the Renaissance.<sup>179</sup>

### Jacob Burckhardt and Wilhelm von Bode

In 1875 Wilhelm von Bode, already promoted to the role of assistant curator of Berlin's Gemäldegalerie and Skulpturensammlung, met Jacob Burckhardt in Rome. Burckhardt had only very recently – in 1874 – begun teaching a course in the history of art.<sup>180</sup> Together they visited the Vatican Pinacoteca and the Galleria Borghese.<sup>181</sup> In the same year (1875), Bode started editing Burckhardt's art guide *The Cicerone*. Bode accepted the commission, and signed a contract with the publisher Seeman in 1874.<sup>182</sup> He began working on the fourth edition of the book, followed by the fifth and sixth editions in 1879 and 1884 respectively. Furthermore, Burckhardt gave to Bode the responsibility of completing the text, and requested that he should feel free to add more information according to new developments in the field; therefore for Bode, editing *The Cicerone* was also a process of interpretation.<sup>183</sup>

It was between the years 1887 and 1889 that Bode and Burckhardt engaged in their most intense exchange of correspondence regarding methods of studying art history. In 1889 Burckhardt suggested to Bode

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>180</sup> Schlink, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Edward P. Alexander *Museum Masters* (Nashville Tennessee, American Association for State and Local History, 1983), pp.207–237. Jeremy Warren, 'Bode and the British' in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* (38, Bd Beiheft 'Kennerschaft': Kolloquium zum 150sten Geburtstag von Wilhelm von Bode, 1996), pp. 121–142.

<sup>181</sup> Schlink, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>182</sup> Max Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 843.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 844.

that he should use the method of display by ‘duty and genres’.<sup>184</sup> In the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum the display on the upper floor presented a period-based history of the applied arts, combined with paintings and sculpture.<sup>185</sup> These displays had the principal aim of pleasing the viewer in order to suggest possible different associations, although they were also clearly presenting a portrait of the time through the selection and presentation of the works of art on display, in accordance with Burckhardt’s historical project.<sup>186</sup> The use of symmetry in the displays had the purpose of focusing the attention of the viewer, while the presence of furniture and craft objects were considered equally important to that of paintings and sculptures. Quattrocento and cinquecento everyday objects and crafts entered museums and private collections, acquiring importance as part of the fabric of the culture of the their time.<sup>187</sup>

Bode and Burckhardt’s professional relationship was primarily based on solving methodological problems relating to art history. For instance, Bode asked Burckhardt for advice on how to improve the connoisseurship method popularised by Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), which Bode found excessively empirical.<sup>188</sup> Despite some reluctance, Burckhardt decided to translate his written theories into a method of display that reflected his understanding of art’s dual role as both a narrative of history and an agent in history’s systematisation. According to Burckhardt’s perspective, a work of art can narrate the evolution of history.<sup>189</sup> Both the details and the larger significance of a

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<sup>184</sup> Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 836.

<sup>185</sup> Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 144, footnote no. 6.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145–147.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 821. Jaynie Anderson, *I taccuini trascritti di Giovanni Morelli* (Milano, Motta, 2000), pp. 7–33.

<sup>189</sup> Karl Löwith, *Jacob Burckhardt* (first published in German in 1984, Roma, Laterza, 1991), p. 175.

historical period are revealed only to the person who is able to make it his or her own. Thus the same subject offers a multiplicity of interpretations and historical facts, each carrying its own meaning and significance.<sup>190</sup> As Karl Löwith (1897-1973) suggests, Burckhardt does not proceed in a conventional way in his examination of history and the history of art. For him, the historical significance of art lies not simply in its relationship with a particular period; indeed, the phenomenon of historical importance has its own value, without requiring chronological investigation.<sup>191</sup> In the lateral chapels, Bode displayed church furniture, *pale d'altare*, bas-reliefs and sculpture. Sepulchral sculpture, one of the most important forms of art in Renaissance churches, was displayed together with fragments.

Burckhardt's main interest was in historical and cultural research and we can clearly see his influence in both Bode and Bardini's displays. Burckhardt focused on the relationship between synchrony and diachrony, which explains how a morphological method in a historical and cultural context may clarify the link between time and form, tradition and innovation, character and narrative.<sup>192</sup> Although he created a pattern to follow, Burckhardt always felt free to divert from these categories of interpretation. His work is presented in ironic tone by Hayden White in *Metahistory* as a 'non-narrative' historiography.<sup>193</sup> For Burckhardt, history should be read as a document that keeps a record of historical events with causes and effects, instead of as an art history book.

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Ghelardi, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. XXVI.

<sup>193</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 8.

Burckhardt, however, saw nothing developing; for him, things coalesced to form a fabric of greater or lesser brilliance and intensity, greater or lesser freedom or oppression, more or less movement. From time to time the conditions conspired with genius to produce a brilliant spectacle of creativity, in which even politics and religion took the aspect of ‘arts’.<sup>194</sup>

With his studies on the Renaissance, Burckhardt traced a fresco of the period, presenting it not as a fixed time with a beginning and an end, but as a transition.<sup>195</sup>

Burckhardt’s main regret was that he failed to produce a study focused on the *Aufgabe*, or ‘duty’, of art. His aim was to explain the connection between the history of art and the history of culture.<sup>196</sup> However in Bardini’s photographs, this aspect clearly emerges: through associations between objects and works of art, he was able to re-create a historical period and its culture. Bardini used craft, works of art, fragments and furniture as if they were colours and the space a canvas. He ‘painted’ his interior display with a clear intention of reproducing historical events, either contemporary or referring to the past. The final result, although uneven, delivered historical context and information in the same way as Burckhardt did. Burckhardt’s writings on painting clearly reveal his point of view, and arguably his perspective can be extended to cover the other arts. A work of art contains within it a wider historical picture, representing important connections between periods. This aspect is one of the most important in the study of Burckhardt’s texts, and is also fundamental for reading Bardini’s photographs. The continuity of history can be seen through works of art, where references to the past and its reinterpretation are

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p.230.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>196</sup> Ghelardi, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. XXVI.

blended with the time of its creation as a result of constant historical quotation.

Burckhardt and Bode's correspondence may thus offer insight into Bode's Renaissance museum in Berlin.<sup>197</sup> Burckhardt's theories certainly provide a useful interpretive filter for the museum's buildings and displays, since both the architectural projects and the displays visually commemorate a particular understanding of art and history. In 1870, the propaganda of the newly born German state relied on the effective example of the Florentine Renaissance for cultural and civic reference. This period was chosen as a social and artistic symbol that was apparently meaningful for all social classes – the bourgeoisie as well as the ruling class of Prussia.<sup>198</sup> Bode celebrated the glory of Renaissance Florence by building the new museum in emulation of the style of one of the city's important buildings: San Salvatore al Monte delle Croci, a church with a cupola and a central plan. The influence of Burckhardt's theories is manifest throughout Bode's Renaissance museum, from the construction of the building itself to the display of its interiors. *The Cicerone* records that the church was termed *la bella villanella* ('the pretty country wench') by Michelangelo. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that in emulating the design of the building he wished to pay tribute to both Burckhardt and Michelangelo at the same time.<sup>199</sup> In so doing, Bode co-opted Renaissance humanist iconology – in particular, the cult of the individual and the glorification of religion, both of which Burckhardt had discussed in his various studies.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 821. Some parts of the correspondence were translated into Italian by Max Seidel, and one can sense the intense intellectual exchange between the two scholars and the admiration and esteem that Bode felt for Burckhardt.

<sup>198</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>199</sup> Max Seidel, 2003, *op.cit.*, p. 824.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 822-824.



The Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums-Verein, now known as the Bode Museum, contained a majestic collection of northern and Italian Renaissance art.<sup>201</sup> Wilhelm Bode, Burckhardt's follower, pupil and collaborator, was certainly celebrating the importance of the newborn German state with his creation of this museum in Berlin, which opened in 1904. The ideals and values of Renaissance civilisation were adopted as instruments of power and linked with the contemporary to show the continuity of German history. In this period, museum collections focused on the relationship between ideology and display.<sup>202</sup> This is a concept is also fundamental to Bardini's palazzo and his art collection. Stefano Bardini's displays were designed to create a museological project that, while having an aesthetic purpose also carried a hidden political and ideological message. The displays showed how Bardini interpreted Italian history and how he linked the past with the present. His Risorgimento ideals, which had played an important role in his youth, seem to be the thread that he followed. This can be seen in the comparative displays of works of art of the same genres but from different Italian regions. The most important aim of Italian unification had been to create a nation by establishing a dialogue between the various regions, which spoke different dialects and had completely different customs and traditions, in Bardini's displays all these aspects were seen in their artistic expressions. Differing from regional museums that exhibited works from a particular region, Bardini collected works from different regions, assembling them together to represent the unification of the country. By displaying works of art by genres, Bardini compared different techniques and materials in a didactic way. But he was also creating a

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<sup>201</sup> Edward P. Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-214.

<sup>202</sup> Malcolm Baker, 'Bode and museum display: the arrangement of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum and the South Kensington response' in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* (38, Bd, 'Kennerschaft'. Kolloquium zum 150sten Geburtstag von Wilhelm von Bode 1996, pp. 143-153), p. 143.

dialogue between works of art from different regions. His clients could see in his displays how Italian history of art had developed and how the battles for the unification of the country had generated a destruction of the architectural heritage which here was symbolized by fragments.

In *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*, Burckhardt analysed the design of the Duomo, inspired by the Pantheon, as a link with antiquity. Brunelleschi's design for Florence cathedral resulted in a building with a central plan and a great dome. In Burckhardt's words:

The centralised building is the last in the realm of absolute architectural forms as the Greek temple is the first. Its possibilities are still far from exhausted; although intervening periods may occur, like the greater part of the nineteenth century, which was to repeat once again the lesson of the thirteenth. This great task will constantly recur and the experiments of the Renaissance will stand in their own right as indispensable preliminary stages.<sup>203</sup>

In designing his museum, Bode sought to give visual form to Burckhardt's theories.<sup>204</sup> In June 1875, Bode received Burckhardt's permission to read the latter's manuscript on Renaissance sculpture. In these notes, entitled *Sculptur und Malerei der Renaissance*, Burckhardt sought only to clarify for himself his ideas on Renaissance sculpture.<sup>205</sup> After reading the whole manuscript voraciously in a single night, Bode expressed to Burckhardt in subsequent letters the value of his thoughts on Renaissance sculpture and the importance of publishing the document. However, the manuscript only appeared several years

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<sup>203</sup> Burckhardt, 1985, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>204</sup> Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 831.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 838.

later, in 1932, when it was edited by Burckhardt's pupil Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945).<sup>206</sup>

Burckhardt's interest in Renaissance sculpture culminated with the study of the Florentine sculptor Luca Della Robbia, whose art he had also discussed in *The Cicerone*. Burckhardt expressed great admiration for Della Robbia's works, comparing them with the perfection of Greek sculpture. In creating the interior displays of his Renaissance museum, Bode seems to have paid another tribute to Burckhardt, with a room entirely dedicated to Luca Della Robbia.<sup>207</sup> Bode displayed various bas-relief madonne, again suggesting the influence of Burckhardt's comparative method. As mentioned in *The Collectors*, Burckhardt considered madonne sculpture a very important form of Renaissance art, especially that of Florence, and argued that looking at different examples of the same theme was the correct way to understand the development of Renaissance sculpture.<sup>208</sup>

Using a comparative method Bordini displayed an entire wall covered with bas-reliefs of madonne, bearing witness to the rise of a new form of collecting that emulated Renaissance collections, as mentioned by Burckhardt in his notes for *The Collectors*. In those notes Burckhardt traces the evolution of the works of votive madonne. From their original domestic devotional purpose and minimal artistic value, the madonne took on an increased aesthetic significance, becoming artistic products. This was in part due to the evolution of artists' *botteghe*, which initially produced the madonne for devotional use and then gradually developed more sophisticated pieces that became sought-

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 839.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 840.

<sup>208</sup> Burckhardt, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. XI–XIII.

after collectable items for daughters' dowries.<sup>209</sup> Noble families accumulated devotional paintings and bas-reliefs and displayed them together, passing them down from father to son, so that they came to constitute a collection testifying to the family's evolution of taste, from the initial simple commemorative pieces without any artistic intentions to the more complex and sophisticated commissions by important artists of the time. This aspect was fundamental at the time as the sign of a family's power.<sup>210</sup> However, Burckhardt distinguished between two forms of collections: those inherited through families, and those created by passionate and powerful patrons as a representation of their status and wealth.

### **Madonne bas- reliefs photograph**

The analysis begins with photograph **no. 3**, the madonne bas-reliefs.<sup>211</sup> This simple photograph with its apparently casual display is actually of fundamental importance for understanding preferences in collecting from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, and for comparing contemporary scholarly work with Bardini's artistic choices. The photograph of the madonne therefore has important historical, artistic, aesthetic, conceptual and museological implications. It offers an analysis of Burckhardt's writings on the collecting practices associated with madonne in the Renaissance period, the importance of the cult of the Madonna through history and the cultural conditions that aroused new interest in this art form during the nineteenth century. The description of Bardini's madonne bas-relief photograph will begin from the display, using Barthes' methodology for the analysis of

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>211</sup> Photograph no. **6415BR**, numbered according Fototeca dei Musei Civici Fiorentini - Stefano Bardini Archive.

photographs.<sup>212</sup> The madonne are the elements of a lexicon, and their composition constitutes the syntax of the photograph.<sup>213</sup> Bardini displayed all of the madonne together, completely covering an entire wall, and arranged by size with the largest at the top and the smallest at the bottom. The majority of the madonne bas-reliefs in circulation were created in the workshops of famous Florentine artists such as Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello and Jacopo della Quercia.<sup>214</sup> In the Bargello museum and in Bardini's collection, one can see several examples of these. Bardini, instead of dividing the madonne by schools or artists, grouped works with the same pose next to one another, creating the effect of a pattern. While there are only a few bas-reliefs on the wall which represent episodes in the life of Christ, Bardini's

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<sup>212</sup> Barthes, 1977, *op. cit.*, p. 21: 'Connotation, the second meaning of the photographic message proper, is realized at the different levels of the production of the photograph (choice, technical treatment, framing, lay-out) and represents, finally, a coding of the photographic analogue.'

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>214</sup> Enrica Neri Lausanna Lucia Faedo, *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze* (Milano, Electa, 1986), p. 256, 188 Tav. 228, in this photograph have been identified three bas-reliefs catalogued in a book of sculptures held in Bardini's museum. The scholar Neri Losanna reports that the first bas-relief, *Nativita* (indicated by a red outline in the photograph), has been attributed to a follower of Donatello (*cerchia* di Donatello), as the restoration revealed several layers of colour which are unlikely to be original. After the restoration, the bas-relief was shown to have a delicate and detailed sculptural aspect, even though the artist's sculptural technique was unrefined, p.286, 294 Tav.336. The second Madonna and child bas-relief is attributed to a Tuscan school from the second half of the sixteenth century. A similar piece in *stucco policromo* can be found in the Berlin museum, and according to the scholar Schottmuller may be attributable to Pierino da Vinci. It seems possible that the bas-relief is the result of a *koiné* between the Tuscan and Roman styles, and could have been realised soon after the middle of the fifteenth century, p.288, 299 Tav. 343, the third example is a bas-relief in its original frame attributed to a Florentine school of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and represents the Madonna with child and Saint Giovannino.<sup>214</sup> Various hypotheses have been put forward concerning the origins of this bas-relief. Certainly, the posture of the Madonna evokes the position of the Madonna of Michelangelo's *Tondo Doni*, and may be dated to 1507. The work was executed in an attempt to emulate the famous posture created by Michelangelo, with the purpose of being sold as a devotional piece. These three pieces, despite their individual characteristics, were created for the same function: devotional rather than artistic.

choice of composition seems to create a continuity in the story of Christ: from childhood to crucifixion and deposition. At the base of the wall there is a long church pew, and on either side are two Renaissance stools. On the left of the photograph is a *dantesca* chair between two Renaissance *cassoni*. This photograph, with its static appearance, offers diverse interpretations from historical, artistic and sociological directions, blending the *quattrocento* with nineteenth-century culture.

In this image one can see how Bardini suggested three main themes. Firstly, he introduced the historical importance of the study of the earliest of Renaissance collections, as Burckhardt does in his book. Secondly, he offered the opportunity to study the technical and artistic characteristics of individual pieces in comparison with each other; the evolution of techniques over time, and the sources of inspiration determining the artistic taste of each period. Thirdly, his composition illustrated the importance attributed by nineteenth-century collectors to these particular pieces. Nineteenth-century collectors and museums engaged in this form of collecting quoting from Renaissance collections as a study of the technical aspects which were inevitably linked with contemporary culture and the re-evaluation of the role of the Madonna. The photograph was designed with a comparative aim in mind; mixing well-executed madonne with others by anonymous or unknown artists. Some of the madonne on display in this image were created from moulds taken from the original, fine marble bas-reliefs, and then reproduced in more humble and inexpensive materials such as plaster, wood, papier mâché and terracotta. Indeed, the copies were not usually expected to have the same definition or subtle beauty as the original work, having only the function of devotional objects.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Burckhardt, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 8. John Pope Hennessy, *La Scultura Rinascimentale* (Torino, Allemandi, 1986), p.113.

The image of the Madonna in art tended to convey her moral rather than her aesthetic qualities, while the shape of her body beneath the blue mantle corresponded to the contemporary templates for femininity.<sup>216</sup>

The iconography of the Madonna is traditionally attributed to St Luke, who gives precise descriptions of her features. Before St Augustine and St Ambrose there were no portraits of the Madonna. The so-called virgins of St Luke, often portrayed in bas-reliefs and frescoes, have regular features and sometime appear dark or fair or with indefinite skin colour. It is around the fourteenth century that the Madonna begins to show a less static expression and gradually becomes more human, and the relationship with the child becomes more spontaneous and tender. Her beauty becomes the symbol of her sweetness, suffering and endurance. From Luca Della Robbia and Raphael onwards, the Madonna and child's expressions and postures most intensely combine her psychological and aesthetic aspects.<sup>217</sup>

In Italy the image of the Madonna grew out of inspiration from the classical period.<sup>218</sup> The study of the Madonna and her iconography in Florentine art offers an excursus on Florentine madonne from the

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<sup>216</sup> Mario Ferrigni, *Madonne Fiorentine* (Milano, Ulrico Hoepli, 1912), pp. II and XXVI.

<sup>217</sup> Ornella Casazza, *La vita della Madonna nell'arte* (Firenze, Nardini Editore, 1984), pp. 161–162. Author's translation.

<sup>218</sup> Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London, Allen Lane, 2009), p. 363.

twelfth century to the sixteenth century.<sup>219</sup> This historical excursus on the representation of the madonne in art is important for the study of Bardini's photograph. In this image one can see how, over history the Madonna was represented and how, during Bardini's time its re-evaluation in religious rituals and in art collecting were intertwined.

In his book *Florentine Sculpture of the Renaissance*, published in German in 1902 and in English in 1908, Bode seems to refer to Bardini's collection of madonne when he says that in the last decade, Italian art dealers gathered from villas and private chapels in the surroundings of Florence a number of madonne reliefs made of plaster and evoking the most well known examples by famous artists.<sup>220</sup> In the nineteenth century the most sought-after madonne were by Donatello and Luca Della Robbia, echoing the trend of the Renaissance. The revival in the popularity of these artists meant that the originals were copied many

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<sup>219</sup> Ferrigni, *op. cit.*, pp.12-17. The figure of the *Madonna* did not originally exist in Christian thought; she was invented by the Council of Ephesus in 413 as Maria of Nazareth. The image of the Madonna was created for the purpose of worshipping Christ's mother. As the city of Ephesus was at that time noted for its beautiful female priests, including those serving at the Temple of Diana, we may infer that the Madonna's representation derived from a combination of two figures: the Madonna of pagan origins, and her Byzantine counterpart as portrayed by Egyptian and Persian artists. In Ephesus, depictions of the Madonna appear to have been inspired by the various models present there: Diana and Venus, Mary of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene. The strength of Diana and the beauty of Venus were transformed by the Christian imagination into a new kind of aesthetic: tempered by the remorse of Mary Magdalene, these pagan models came to express not only beauty but serenity, compassion and pain. Originating in Asia, the image evolved over nine centuries, extending its influence from Egypt to Greece and thence to Italy. On arrival in Florence, the Madonna was reinterpreted as a real woman, both serene and beautiful. For Christians, the Madonna has a double meaning, as both mother and virgin; correspondingly, her presentation in art has consistently been both that of a woman and a symbol of religious devotion. Author's translation. John McGuckin, 'The early cult of Mary and inter-religious contexts in the fifth-century Church' in *The Origins of the Cult of Virgin Mary* ed. Chris Maunder (London, Burns and Oates, 2008), pp. 1-22.

<sup>220</sup> Wilhelm von Bode, *Florentine Sculptors of the Renaissance*, tr. Jessie Haynes (London, Methuen, 1908), p. 48.



times in plaster, marble and bronze.<sup>221</sup> In both historical periods: the cinquecento and the novecento, collectors wanted to have pieces by famous artist in their art collections.

The proliferation of madonne on the exterior of churches and chapels began in 1200, when the preacher and martyr San Pietro da Verona urged the people of Florence to ask the Madonna for protection. As a result, displaying her image outside houses and shops and in other public places was considered extremely propitious.<sup>222</sup> Shrines containing sculptures of the madonne and child increased in number on the outside of buildings and on street corners. They were propagated by artisans and shopkeepers involved with the Franciscan religious order. At sunset, members of this mendicant order would gather around images of the Madonna to pray and sing. Franciscan friars also recommended that shrines, paintings, frescoes and bas-reliefs be used inside the home for private devotion; this was considered the first step towards a religious education.<sup>223</sup>

For Florentine quattrocento artists the Madonna was depicted with her shape hidden by a blue mantle, whose colour – which signified spirituality at that time – attributed to her body an inviolable sanctity. However, her features and expression were inspired by those of real women.<sup>224</sup> The role of women in fifteenth-century Italy changed as their presence in society became ever more significant. Florence witnessed the increasing involvement of women in the social and cultural life of the city; they were no longer perceived merely as models for idealised portraits, but as real, vital individuals.

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<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>222</sup> Giancarlo Gentilini, *I Della Robbia* (Milano, Cantini, 1992), pp. 33–34.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> Paul Hills, *The Renaissance Image Unveiled: From Madonna to Venus* (Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland, 2010), pp. 9–27.

Representations of the Madonna changed accordingly.<sup>225</sup> The most significant depictions of the Madonna with child are to be found in quattrocento sculpture, as this medium offered the greatest scope for immediacy and realism.<sup>226</sup>

Donatello was highly valued in the nineteenth century and became one of the most studied sculptors of his period, with a large number of moulds from Donatello's repertoire circulating in Florence.<sup>227</sup> Burckhardt, inspired by Vasari, studied Donatello in all his technical aspects and underlined his importance in the context of Renaissance sculpture.<sup>228</sup> Bode heeded Burckhardt's lesson, enriching the Berlin museum with a large number of quattrocento sculptures by Donatello, and his followers, in plaster and terracotta, most of them purchased through Bardini.<sup>229</sup> Bode, for example purchased from Bardini a very important piece, a Madonna with child called *Madonna Pazzi*; a marble bas-relief from 1422 which he acquired in 1886.<sup>230</sup> In Florence the Donatello Society, founded in 1880 by the eclectic artist Cosimo Conti (1825-1896), had the purpose to encourage the study of quattrocento sculptures and decorative arts. Donatello's revival was also encouraged by the magazine *Ricordi d'Architettura*, which often published, in folio format, images of Donatello's decorative bas-reliefs and sculptures.<sup>231</sup>

The cult of the Madonna also spread widely in England and in Germany during this period. Victorian puritans translated the

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<sup>225</sup> Ferrigni, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>226</sup> Gentilini, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>227</sup> Giancarlo Gentilini, 'Donatello fra Sette e Ottocento' in *Omaggio a Donatello 1386-1986* Giancarlo Gentilini and Paola Barocchi (Firenze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello/Associazione Amici del Bargello 19 dicembre 1985 - 30 maggio 1986), p. 38. Vasari, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-326.

<sup>228</sup> Gentilini, 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Niemeyer Chini *op. cit.*, p.153.

<sup>231</sup> Gentilini, 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

idealisation of the Madonna figure into the image of the bourgeois woman, a reassuring model of femininity who embodied domestic and familial ideals. At the same time as gaining influence as a moral representation, the Madonna's image also guided English fashion, especially the hairstyles of Pre-Raphaelite women. Whilst in German and English society the Madonna acquired a diverse and nuanced symbolic meaning, in France she was more straightforwardly identified with Marianne, the active and pugnacious female figure symbolising the strength and freedom of the country.<sup>232</sup>

Two main episodes were responsible for the re-evaluation of the Madonna. The first was the Catholic Church's formal acceptance of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and of the Marian Apparitions at Lourdes in 1858.<sup>233</sup> Reports of the Madonna's appearance at Lourdes enlarged her cult and drew worshippers' attention to the phenomenon of the miracle, whilst also promoting a travel-based form of worship. Travelling on pilgrimages came back into fashion as a new way of practising religion in the nineteenth century, and played a significant role in the dispersal of Madonna images. In 1891, a papal encyclical entitled *Octobri Mense* sought to contain the excesses of Madonna devotion, particularly as practised through the rosary. The Pope subsequently dedicated another nine encyclicals and seven apostolic writings to the Madonna. The cult of the Madonna was also becoming more prominent in literature. On a visit to Lourdes in 1891, Zola was shocked by the number of worshippers that flocked to the site and urged scholars to examine this aspect of Christian faith as an important cultural phenomenon.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Emma Fattorini, *Il culto mariano tra ottocento e novecento simboli e devozione* (Milano, Franco Angeli, 1999), p. 53.

<sup>233</sup> Joelle Mellon, *The Virgin Mary in the Perception of Women* (Jefferson NC and London, McFarland & Co., 2008), pp. 74-76.

<sup>234</sup> Fattorini, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

The second important contributing factor was the increasing interest in all aspects of the medieval period, from history to art and religion. The Madonna embodied all of these disciplines in symbolic form, according to heroic/sentimental representations of the middle ages.<sup>235</sup> In Germany, members of the Nazarene movement reinterpreted Christian iconography in their paintings, finding inspiration in the art of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. The figure of the Madonna was interpreted with a romantic inflection. There was a profound correlation between the cult of the Madonna and romantic culture. The Nazarenes painted idealised madonne with clear references to Italian paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, generating a new interest in the madonne of that period, first in painted incarnation and then also in sculpture.<sup>236</sup> In the last decade of the nineteenth century Bardini was working intensively with Bode to provide an artistic repertoire, which included madonne for Germany's new museums.<sup>237</sup>

As can be seen in the photograph of the madonne, Bardini organised his collection by genre, offering viewers the opportunity to compare various artists and the techniques and materials of the *botteghe* to which they belonged. In *The Collectors*, Burckhardt shifted his emphasis from madonne as sculptures and bas-reliefs to those appearing in painted form as sacred images.<sup>238</sup> The same tendency can be seen in Bardini's displays, which combine sacred sculptures and paintings with other works of art from the same period, underlining the similarities between Renaissance and nineteenth-century collectors. Beneath the madonne in Bardini's photograph are marriage *cassoni*, examples of another art form highly sought after by nineteenth-

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>237</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-118.

<sup>238</sup> Burckhardt, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-14.

century collectors.<sup>239</sup> Bardini gathered a vast collection of Renaissance *cassoni*: during his art-dealing period it seems that his collection included some two hundred *cassoni*, as documented by the art historian Paul Schubring.<sup>240</sup>

### Wilhelm von Bode and Stefano Bardini

The relationship between Bode and Bardini was the key for the success of Bardini's career as art dealer, and the constant intellectual exchange on their own connoisseurship was fruitful for both of them. Together, Bode and Bardini stimulated the interest of the art world in works of art previously considered *minori* or out of fashion, and worked to improve the study of art and collecting.<sup>241</sup> Furthermore, although Bardini and Burckhardt never met, it seems plausible to

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<sup>239</sup> Ellen Callmann, 'William Blundell Spence and the Transformation of Renaissance Cassoni' in *The Burlington Magazine*, (vol. 141, no. 115, June 1999, pp. 338-348), p. 338. William Blundell Spence (1814-1900) was a keen collector of Renaissance *cassoni*, and was probably responsible for their popularity as collectible items. Graham Hughes, *Renaissance Cassoni, Masterpieces of Early Italian Art: Painted Marriage Chests 1400-1550* (Polegate, Starcity Publishing and London, Art Book International, 1997), pp. 214-219.

Nineteenth century collectors took an interest in *cassoni*. Giovanni Pietro Campana (1808-1880) inherited from his family an immense collection of art, which included *cassoni*. In 1857 he went to prison, and his collection was confiscated and sold. The entire collection was eventually spread across the world: some of his sculptures were sold to the Kensington Museum, several of his paintings went to Russia, and half a dozen *cassoni* panels ended up in France. A few years later, Bernard Berenson traced the whole collection. The *cassoni* are now held at the French Renaissance National Museum in the chateau d'Ecouen, north of Paris. Among the other English collectors passionate about *cassoni* was Sir John Charles Robinson (1824-1913), who purchased one outstanding *cassoni* in Florence for the South Kensington Museum. This panel, tentatively attributed to the son of Lorenzo Ghiberti, originally belonged to the Campana collection. Lord Lindsay (1812-1880), who lived intermittently in Florence, also gathered an interesting collection of *cassoni*. Robert Holford (1808-1892), Lindsay's brother-in-law, added to Lindsay's collection some *cassoni* purchased by Holford's wife. *Cassoni* were also to be found in the collections of Lord Ashburnham and Sir Joseph Robinson Bt.

<sup>240</sup> Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

suggest that Bardini's connection with Bode would have made him aware of Burckhardt.

In his role as assistant curator of the Berlin museums, Bode accompanied the chief curator Meyer on a visit to Bardini in 1872. Bardini had not long previously given up work as painter to become an art dealer. During the visit, it appears that Bardini could not immediately tell who was the assistant and who the curator out of the visiting pair; this was apparently due to Bode's authoritative manner.<sup>242</sup> Wilhelm Bode, in his obituary of Bardini, writes that he had met Bardini in Florence for the first time in 1872, in Palazzo Canigiani, in a small room. 'When I visited [Bardini] for the first time, he had a humble abode with a few antiques, furniture and weapons.'<sup>243</sup> (Although Niemeyer Chini writes that she found in Bode's memoirs a note stating that he did not meet Bardini until 1875.)<sup>244</sup>

Bardini became an important reference point for Bode, the scholar and museum curator; and for Bardini, Bode offered intellectual stimulation and an invaluable connection with contemporary German art-historical studies and new clients, as well as being an important client himself. From 1887 to 1890 Bode and Burckhardt intensified their intellectual relationship, and it was during this period that Bode increased the number of purchases for his museum, several of which were made through Bardini.<sup>245</sup> Due to the sheer ambition of the

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<sup>242</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>243</sup> Wilhelm von Bode, *L'Antiquario* (Anno X gennaio – febbraio 1923) pp. 1–2. The obituary of Bardini written by Bode, translated into Italian and published a year after Bardini's death, offers a vivid description of Bardini's sensitivity to the understanding of art, despite his selfish, uncompromising temperament. Bode showed his sincere recognition of this in the work they did together.

<sup>244</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 50, footnote no. 37. Bode gives two different dates: one in his memoirs, 1875; and the other in Bardini's obituary, 1872. Their correspondence dates from 1875.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

acquisitions, the negotiations between the two men over these purchases, made by Bode on behalf of the Berlin museums, were delicate and complex and involved various political and administrative figures. Bardini repeatedly offered Bode a large number of masterpieces originating mainly from the collections of noble Florentine families. The relationship between Bode and Bardini sat within a larger political and legal framework. The Italian government attempted over several years to prevent the export of works of art. The introduction of a tax on exported works of art was first mooted and discussed in 1887, but went no further than a proposition. In 1892-1893, the same law received further discussion, but was once again not approved. The new tax was only applied in 1903, but with extremely severe measures. Bardini declared that the Uffizi would no longer give its permission for the export of any kind of works of art.<sup>246</sup> During these years, Italy's relationship with other European countries was extremely vexed, as the latter continued to exploit the country's heritage, taking advantage of its chaotic political situation. From 1875 onwards, for instance, despite a formal prohibition issued by the director of the Berlin museums, Bode continued to acquire works of art from Italy.<sup>247</sup> The Bode-Bardini correspondence shows that both parties, dealer and museum curator alike, trod a fine line between legal and illegal activity.<sup>248</sup>

The most important acquisitions from Bardini on behalf of the Berlin museums took place between 1880 and 1900.<sup>249</sup> The cultural propaganda that had begun in Berlin was spreading rapidly across the nation, circulating within and among provincial institutions and

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110. Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le Collezioni di Elia Volpi* (Firenze, Centro Di, 1994), pp. 98-100.

<sup>247</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-115.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215-267.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-175. In these pages are reproduced photographs and details about the works of art purchased by Bode through Bardini.

resulting in a significant increase in the number of private collectors in Germany. These were both public functionaries such as Adolph von Beckearth and Friedrich Lippmann, director of the Kupferstichkabinett, and bourgeois bankers and industrialists such as Oscar Hainauer, Julius Wernher and James and Eduard Simon.<sup>250</sup> The fashion for the Renaissance style became popular amongst these wealthy German tycoons. Collecting works of art was not their only interest; they also followed the contemporary trend for commissioning architects to build them private houses inspired by the Renaissance, with interiors in the same style. Once again, Bardini and Bode played an important role in the creation of these new collections, and Bode assumed the role of advisor and intermediary.<sup>251</sup>

As well as paintings and sculptures, Bode purchased from Bardini a significant quantity of Renaissance ceramics. Valerie Niemeyer Chini has analysed the correspondence between Bode and Bardini, showing how the two men were interconnected in thought and business during the fifty years of their professional relationship. In the example of the two brief exchanges below we can also see the importance they both attributed to photography, and the extent to which Bode complimented Bardini on the sophisticated quality of his photographs.

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.* p. 95.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95–100.



[Bode:] I have ordered my publisher to send you a copy of my book regarding Early Italian maioliche. I hope you will be pleased with it as several of the finer pieces have passed through your hands and I am grateful for the many photographs you have given me and which have been very useful for my book.<sup>252</sup>

[Bardini:] Your Excellency, [...] I have received your book about maioliche which you have been so kind as to send me; all the more since it is the first time that I have seen a really well made work concerning maioliche. Unfortunately I am unable to read the descriptive section but the illustrations are so good that they describe themselves.<sup>253</sup>

Bode's collection of ceramics, created with Bardini's help, was built up in parallel with those of the English artists and collectors who had begun pursuing the same passion some years earlier. The Victorian painter-collector Henry Wallis (1830- 1916) developed an interest in majolica and became the advisor to the British and South Kensington Museums, contributing to the creation of their outstanding majolica collections. He wrote extensively on ceramics, and shared his interest with Bode.<sup>254</sup> Their correspondence totals some seventy-five letters, as reported in an article by Timothy Wilson entitled 'A Victorian artist as ceramic collector'.<sup>255</sup> From 1880 onwards, Wallis created collections of majolica from the Mediterranean and Islamic worlds. Although his

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232 . XVC [430] 10 Settembre 1912 ASCF Archivio Bardini, fasc. 1912, corrispondenza B, foglio 10 [i] Lettera: W. Bode, Berlino Charlottenburg.a S. Bardini Firenze (in Italian, translation by the author): Bode ho dato ordine al mio editore di mandare un'esemplare del mio libro sopra le Majoliche Primitive della Toscana. Spero che le fara' piacere, molti pezzi dei piu' fini sono stati nelle sue mani e le sono grato per le tante fotografie regalatemi con cui ho potuto fare il mio libro.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232. Bardini-Bode correspondence, Bardini's reply XCVI [433] 26 Novembre 1912 Za, SMB-PK Nachlass W. v. Bode Schriftwechsel Bardini vol.4 fasc. 10. Lettera: S. Bardini, Firenze Piazza dei Mozzi 1, a [W. Bode] Berlino, tr. by Niemayer Chini. Sua Eccellenza [Bardini]... ho ricevuto la sua opera sopra le maioliche che ha avuto la gentilezza di darmi e la ringrazio tanto piu' che e' la prima volta che vedo l'opera sulle maioliche veramente riuscita bene; disgraziatamente non posso leggere la parte descrittiva ma le illustrazioni son cosi ben fatte che si descrivono da se stesse.

<sup>254</sup> Timothy Wilson, 'A Victorian artist as ceramic-collector' in *Journal of the History of Collections* (vol. 14 no. 2, 2002, pp. 231-269), p. 233.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 251-258.

initial focus was on Islamic pottery, in around 1890 his interest shifted to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Mediterranean pottery.<sup>256</sup> Bardini was linked to Wallis; when the latter visited Bardini's showroom in 1902, he found his wares overpriced and suitable only for a new clientele of American millionaires.<sup>257</sup>

The V&A Archive holds a considerable volume of correspondence between Henry Wallis and the South Kensington Museum, gathered in several folders and dating from 1890 to 1910.<sup>258</sup> The second folder contains a minute dated 12 July 1904, written by Mr Skinner (1861–1911), the keeper of the Department of Architecture and Sculpture at the V&A from 1909.<sup>259</sup> He refers to the collection of Italian majolica and to certain vases offered to the museum by Wallis, comparing Wallis' prices with those offered during Bardini's sale at Christie's in 1902. He then goes on:

It is important that this collection should not be lost as it is comprised of examples of the earliest types of Italian maiolica which are not represented in the museum. If Mr Wallis' specimens of pottery are acquired, our collection will then show the development of Italian maiolica from the most primitive forms to the splendid achievements of Maestro Giorgio da Gubbio.

It was around this time that Bardini gained great success as a dealer with the organisation of several auctions. After his first sale in Paris in 1885, which was dedicated to medals, Bardini organised the auction of

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<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.140–141.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>258</sup> V&A Archive The correspondence of Henry Wallis in the is divided into six folders: Part I, 1880–1891; Part II, 1892–1896; Part III, 1897–1901; Part IV, 1902–1905; Part V, 1896–1905; and Part VI, 1905 ?

<sup>259</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 262. footnote no. 22.

a selection of Renaissance objects at Christie's in London in 1899.<sup>260</sup> This was followed by two more auctions: one in 1902, also at Christie's in London,<sup>261</sup> and a last one in 1918 in New York, only a few years before his death.<sup>262</sup>

From 1902 onwards, Italy's new tax on exports necessitated a dramatic change in Bardini's dealing activity and his commercial relationship with Bode. This change in political climate ultimately brought about Bardini's decline. Laws to put a stop to the dispersion of Italy's heritage were enacted between 1860 and 1900, but it was a slow process, and the massive export of works of art in the meantime had led to the dispersal of some of the most important Italian masterpieces. The scholar De Benedictis of the University of Florence has examined Bardini's activity and explains very clearly how Bardini and his colleagues at the time were allowed to export works of art abroad. As mentioned above, this advantageous condition lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Italian government, having become aware of the haemorrhaging of artworks, imposed severe controls on the export of works of art. Nevertheless, Bardini somehow always managed to successfully export artworks. The legal context to art exports is extremely important, because it illustrates the

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<sup>260</sup> Bardini auction, *Catalogue of a Choice Collection of Pictures, Antiquities, Works of Art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance from the Collection of Signor Stephano [sic!] Bardini of Firenze* (London, Christie, Manson & Woods 5-7 June 1899). There is also a French edition.

<sup>261</sup> Bardini auction, *Catalogue of a Choice of Collection of Pictures and Other works of Art, Chiefly Italian, of Mediaeval and Renaissance Times, the Property of Signor Stephano [sic!] Bardini of Firenze* (London, Christie, Manson & Woods 26-30 May 1902). There is also a French edition.

<sup>262</sup> Bardini auction, H. Townsend, *De Luxe Illustrated Catalogue of Beautiful Treasures and Antiquities Illustrating the Golden Age of Italian Art Belonging by the Famous Expert and Antiquarian Signor Stefano Bardini of Firenze, Italy* (New York, American Art Association/Anderson Galleries, 23-27 April 1918).

historical complexity of the period and clearly shows how Italy dealt with such large losses of heritage.<sup>263</sup>

Bardini and Bode remained in contact in their various, intertwining capacities as art dealer, client and advisor. It is fascinating to see how over the years their professional relationship was transformed from Bardini as art dealer and Bode as client/museum curator into a more complex, multifaceted relationship. Like Bode's museum, Bardini's palazzo can usefully be interpreted in the light of this relationship. Both of them commemorate contemporary history while at the same time evoking the past just as Burekhardt had envisaged. Bode and Bardini both attributed equal importance to the iconology of architecture as to the displaying of works of art. The project of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum had a long gestation, from 1896 to 1904; meanwhile, Bardini acquired palazzo Mozzi along with its church and convent in 1881, and completed the building's transformation in 1883, the year in which his showroom opened. It is interesting to note that in 1883, the same year that Bardini opened his showroom, Victoria, the wife of the German crown prince, promoted the 'suggestion of ensemble' for the future Renaissance museum of Berlin, with the idea of displaying various works of art, furniture, sculpture, tapestries and fifteenth-century ceilings together. These ideas were published in 1883 in a catalogue dedicated to the exhibition of primitives from private collections in Berlin, which was reprinted on the occasion of the opening of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum.<sup>264</sup> The idea of a pictorial display, as compared to the more conventional chronological arrangement, represented an important change for Germany's museums.

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<sup>263</sup> Cristina De Benedictis, 'La collezione di dipinti di Stefano Bardini o il ratto d'Europa' in Scalia, *op. cit.*, 1984 pp. 99-114.

<sup>264</sup> Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 831, and p. 858 footnote no. 82.

The continuous cultural and commercial exchanges between Bode and Bardini, started in the 1875 and continued until Bardini's death in 1922. The scholar Niemeyer Chini argues that Bardini was a significant influence on the creation of Bode's Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum. In a comparison between Bardini's photographs of his show-room and Bode's of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, one can see that Bardini began creating displays where he blended paintings, sculptures and furniture with the evocative scenographic effect of a Renaissance palazzo as early as 1894, Bode's photographs of display of paintings, sculptures, carpets and objects of 1898 shows a similar composition to that of Bardini.<sup>265</sup> On the face of it, it would appear that Bardini's displays, as depicted in his photographs, pre-date Bode's however the boundaries are somewhat blurred. At the same time as this was happening in Berlin, Bardini's interior displays in Florence were also demonstrating particular aesthetic and pictorial characteristics. Just as in the German catalogue, he recreated the atmosphere of the Renaissance period with just a few 'brushstrokes', using the assemblage of works of art of different genres and thereby obtaining an evocative effect. When arranging his own displays in the 'basilica' of his museum, Bode followed the principle of division by genre, duty, content and material suggested by Burckhardt.<sup>266</sup>

### **Note book of Bardini's clients**

In the Bardini archive in Florence in a box of miscellaneous papers, the author found a notebook written by one of Bardini's agent in

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<sup>265</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, pp.125-127.

<sup>266</sup> Seidel, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 832.

Europe, a certain C. F. Walker.<sup>267</sup> This notebook or *taccuino* entitled *Appunti di Londra* (London Notes) is, the author believes a very important find because it mentions the photographs that Bardini was showing to his clients. It is divided into three sections: London, Brussels and Paris and appears to have been written around 1892. The notes enable us to identify some of Bardini's clients, both amateurs and collectors. The clients were mainly bankers, wealthy professionals and captains of industry who followed the fashion for collecting. Sometimes their purchases were based on a thorough knowledge of art, and sometimes they only served the purpose of displaying their owner's wealth. Bardini would give extremely clear instructions to his agents, asking them to determine the personality, habits, financial possibilities, behaviour and understanding of art of each of his potential clients. This enabled him to suggest the most appropriate works of art for individual clients. *Appunti di Londra* reveals the clarity with which every client was portrayed in just a few short notes. The first section of the notebook, entitled *Amatori di Londra*, is dedicated to London's private collectors.<sup>268</sup> The agent visited them in their homes or in their offices, and showed them photographs of the works of art available in Bardini's collection. Bardini's photographs, therefore, had a principal role in the process of his dealing abroad. From the accompanying notes, one can see how the photographs assumed the role of the primary 'language' of collecting. Interestingly, the part of the notebook dedicated to London focuses mainly on private collectors, while in Paris and Brussels the agent primarily visited museum directors and curators.<sup>269</sup> It seems that in London Bardini was dealing directly with museum curators himself, as we have seen in the

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<sup>267</sup> ASEF, *Appunti di Londra*, written by C. F. Walker around 1892. The complete transcript of the *taccuino* can be found in Appendix A. This notebook was found by the author in a box in the archive with no catalogue reference or label.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

correspondence with the South Kensington museum and left his agents to make contact with a circle of private collectors. In contrast, in Paris he dealt directly with his private collector clients such as the couple Jacquemart André. Here he also had a little shop at n.11 rue St. Simon, where he exhibited works of art from his collection to show to his clients.<sup>270</sup> In Brussels his agents contacted museum curators directly and in the *taccuini* there is no mention of private collectors in that city.

As an example, here the agent refers to visits to some London private collectors:

**Leyland, 49 Princes Gate SW**

This person is a wealthy collector of Italian paintings of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as of ancient bronzes. He is extremely wealthy – the owner of a large number of busts, from Liverpool. Of a bizarre disposition, he needs to be managed carefully – to one who shows him a painting that is to his liking, he will say that the price is exorbitant and that there is no point in discussing it, but this is only in order to obtain the painting at a greatly discounted price. If on the other hand he does not like the picture, he will say so at once and there will be no point in trying to persuade him otherwise. One of the great advantages you have with this collector is that he entirely trusts his own judgment and never asks the opinion of others when buying an *objet d'art*. The only way to see him is to go to his house at 8.30 in the morning on any day of the week except Sunday and Monday. It will be useless to try to see him at any other time of the day. Present yourself as

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<sup>270</sup> Marilena Tamassia 'Stefano Bardini Antiquario a Firenze' in Tamassia, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

coming from Signor Bardini, of whom I have spoken to him a great deal.<sup>271</sup>

### **Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, 142 Piccadilly**

Collector of old master paintings of the French and Flemish schools — he also used to collect the Italian schools but appears to have changed his mind. I sent him photographs by post but he replied that there was nothing that interested him. I think, however, that it would be a good idea to send him some photographs to look at each time an agent of Sig. Bardini goes to London. However, this agent would do well, in passing through Paris, to visit Sig. Louis Mohl, secretary to Gustave de Rothschild, on the rue Monceau, and obtain from him an introduction to Baron Ferdinand. When I was there, the said Mohl gave me a note for the secretary of Baron Rothschild, informing me that the latter would then send me clients from the same family, which I had not been able to obtain with my introduction to Baron Alfred, since the latter's secretary did not know of Bardini.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, Leyland 49 Princes Gate SW — Questi è un amatore di quadri della scuola italiana del trecento quattrocento e cinquecento come pure bronzi antichi. È ricchissimo — possessore di una grande quantità di busti venuti da Liverpool. Di carattere bizzarro ha bisogno di essere molto coltivato — a colui che gli mostrerà un quadro se di suo genio dirà che il prezzo è favoloso che è inutile parlarne ma questo è sole allo scopo di potere ottenere il quadro con una forte diminuzione. Se però il quadro non gli piace lo dirà subito e sarebbe inutile in questo caso tentare di persuaderlo del contrario. Uno dei grandi vantaggi che si hanno con questo amatore è che si fida pienamente di se stesso e non si domanda mai l'opinione degli altri. Per comprarne un oggetto d'arte. L'unica maniera per poterlo vedere è andare a casa sua la mattina alle 8.30 qualunque giorno della settimana fuori che il lunedì e la domenica. Sarebbe inutile tentare di vederlo in altre ore del giorno. Presentarsi a nome del signore Bardini di cui gli ho parlato molto.'

<sup>272</sup> Rothschild Baron Ferdinand 142 Piccadilly Amatore di quadri antichi scuola francese e fiamminga — È stato amatore della scuola Italiana ma sembra avere cambiato idea. Io gli mandai fotografie per posta ma rispose che non c'era niente che lo interessasse. Credo che sarebbe bene però che ogni qualvolta un incaricato del Signor Bardini andasse a Londra di mandargli le fotografie a vedere. Sarebbe bene però che l'incaricato passando per Parigi andasse a vedere il Sig. Louis Mohl segretario del Gustave de Rothschild — Rue Monceau e si facesse dare un biglietto per il Barone Ferdinando. Quando fui il detto Mohl mi diede un biglietto per il segretario del Barone Rothschild dicendomi che questi mi avrebbe poi mandato degli altri clienti della stessa famiglia ciò che non potei ottenere essendo introdotto che presso il Barone Alfredo Perché il segretario del Barone Alfredo non conosceva quello del Bardini. Translated by the author.



### **At Baron Alfred de Rothschild in London:**

With an introduction from Sig. Mohl I went to see this collector, who found nothing that interested him among the photographs I had. He does not buy Italian stuff but only good-quality Louis XIV, XV objects such as furniture, clocks and porcelain; paintings of the French school such as Watteau and Greuze; and good Flemish school paintings. To see him, seek out his secretary.<sup>273</sup>

### **Paris, Conservateur de la bibliotheque de l'union des Art Decoratifs:**

This person appreciated the photographs; however, he says that he cannot make any purchases until 1892, due to a lack of money.<sup>274</sup>

These detailed descriptions of potential clients supplied by his agent proved to be essential tools of Bardini's dealing activity. His agent reported carefully on the temperament, the taste and the wealth of the collectors visited as well as a description of the interiors of their houses and this allowed Bardini to create a map of his clients' tastes and favourite works of art. This marketing technique where the psychology of the client was studied carefully, allowed Bardini to send his agent back to his clients once he had the pieces that they wanted. The study of the psychology of clients and their taste was unusual for an art dealer of the nineteenth-century and photography was becoming a very important tool for the business.

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, Rothschild Bart. Alfredo con un biglietto di raccomandazione del Sig. Mohl sono andato da questo amatore il quale non ha trovato niente che lo interessasse fra le fotografie che avevo. Egli non compra roba Italiana ma buoni oggetti Luigi XIV XV come mobili Pendole porcellane Quadri della scuola francese come Watteau Greuze e dei bei fiamminghi. Per vederlo cercare del suo segretario. Translation by the author.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, Conservateur de la bibliotheque de l'union des Art Decoratifs: 'Questi ha ammirato molto le fotografie ma dice che fino all'anno 1892 non può comprare non avendo fondi. Translation by the author.

This approach of Bardini's is interesting to analyse in terms French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) theories on the creation of distinction between classes. Bourdieu focuses his attention on two cultural forms: museums and photography.<sup>275</sup> Both, he argues, are accessible to different social classes, and individuals inevitably use the medium of photography in a way that corresponds to their particular class and cultural background. When applying Bourdieu's theories to Bardini's oeuvre, it appears that photographs from Bardini's archive were addressed to different clients with different understandings of art. Some of Bardini's displays were created to impress new collectors in search of self-empowerment through their art collections. Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* discusses how the educational system and the family environment determine individuals' cultural preferences.<sup>276</sup>

But the apprehension and appreciation of the work also depend on the beholder's intention, which is itself a function of the conventional norms governing the relation to the work of art in a certain historical and social situation and also of the beholder's capacity to conform to those norms, his artistic training.<sup>277</sup>

In this sentence Bourdieu suggests three important elements that contribute to the understanding of works of art and their use by the owner: first, the function of the work of art; second, its relation to a historical and social situation, whether contemporary or in the past; and third, the beholder's capacity to conform to certain norms in relation to his or her artistic knowledge and background.

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<sup>275</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London, Routledge, 1992), pp. 130-131.

<sup>276</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (this translation first published in 1984, London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 15-16.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

These elements identified by Bourdieu can help to illuminate aspects of Bardini's displays and their effect on his clients. The displays were effective in both commercial and cultural terms, and created important cultural references for private collections of his time. An example can be found in the collection of the Parisian couple N elie and Edouard Jacquemart Andr e. N elie Jacquemart, a female portrait artist from a modest bourgeois background, married the wealthy banker Edouard Andr e in 1881.<sup>278</sup> As his social status required, Edouard was a collector of contemporary French paintings and eighteenth-century furniture.<sup>279</sup> Once married, he shared his collecting passion with N elie, who ambitiously introduced to his *h tel particulier* the new Renaissance taste that was in fashion at the time, as a declaration of her newly achieved intellectual and social status. Her taste for the Renaissance revival initially came from French and German influences of wealthy friends in Paris. However, Wilhelm von Bode played an important role in shaping her taste for the Renaissance; he was one of the couple's art advisors.<sup>280</sup> It seems possible that the couple Jacquemart Andr e met Stefano Bardini in Florence during one of their frequent Italian journeys at the end of 1882 and their correspondence dates between 1884 and 1890.<sup>281</sup> The relationship between the Jacquemart-Andr es and Bardini was intense and they purchased almost fifty pieces from the art dealer including a variety of sculptures, paintings, bas-reliefs

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<sup>278</sup> Nicolas Sainte Fare Garnot, 'N elie Jacquemart Andre e Stefano Bardini, un legame particolare' in *Il Rinascimento da Firenze a Parigi Andata e ritorno*, ed. Marilena Tamassia (Firenze, Polistampa, 2013), pp. 26 and 44 footnote no. 3. Everett Fahy, 'I clienti' in *L'Archivio Storico Fotografico di Stefano Bardini: Dipinti, disegni, miniature, stampe* (Firenze, Bruschi, 2000), pp. 15-22.

<sup>279</sup> Giovanna Damiani, 'Eduard e N elie e il sogno di una casa del Rinascimento Italiano' in Tamassia, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>280</sup> Marilena Tamassia 'Stefano Bardini Antiquario a Firenze' in Tamassia, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>281</sup> Cecilia Martelli, 'La collezione Jacquemart-Andre': I due protagonisti e l'allestimento del museo' in *Due collezionisti alla scoperta dell'Italia: Dipinti e sculture del museo Jacquemart -Andre di Parigi* eds. Andrea Di Lorenzo, Nicolas Fare Garnot *et.al.* (Cinisello Balsamo, Silvana Editoriale, 2002), footnote no. 24.

and furniture.<sup>282</sup> It seems that the first work of art they acquired from Bardini was the Flight into Egypt by Botticelli along with a sculpture of a woman's head, a *pastiche* inspired by Botticelli, in 1887. The relationship with Bardini was maintained by Nélie Jacquemart-André who, despite her trust in the dealer, always wanted to have a certificate of authenticity for every piece she acquired.<sup>283</sup> Between 1889 and 1891 the Jacquemart-Andrés bought from Bardini various pieces; the lute player from a XVI century Florentine school, a tapestry with the Lorena coat of arms, an *Ecce Homo* by Mantegna along with a Madonna and child by Alessandro Baldovinetti. The most famous among their purchases was the Saint George with dragon by Paolo Uccello bought in Bardini's Christie's London auction in 1899.<sup>284</sup>

Although they also acquired pieces from other art dealers, the couple became one of Bardini's most important clients during the height of his success, greatly contributing to this success and his increased sophistication as an art dealer.<sup>285</sup> Their relationship with Bardini intensified during the development of their Renaissance rooms project, which took six years to complete starting in 1892.<sup>286</sup> The correspondence between Nélie and Bardini was in French, an important sign of the new status acquired by Bardini during these years; his relationship with Nélie was a visible affirmation of status for both of them.<sup>287</sup> Nélie's creation of her collection with the help of one of the most important art dealers of the time made her a recognised art collector in that international milieu, while through the use of French the language of culture Bardini was upgrading himself to the role

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.* p. 57.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>286</sup> Sainte Fare Garnot, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-45.

of intellectual and connoisseur. Furthermore, he was affirming the power of his taste internationally by ‘autographing’ the collection.

Nélie was seduced by Bardini’s style and decided to follow his interpretation of the Renaissance period, creating three rooms with different displays, all evocative of his taste. One room was dedicated to Renaissance paintings; another, called the *libreria*, gathered art objects; and the third and most impressive was the sculpture room. It was an emulation of Bardini’s sculpture room in Florence, with identical displays and even the same colour on the walls.<sup>288</sup> Bardini was deeply involved in the realisation of this project, becoming not only the art dealer and advisor but also the interior decorator. He made serious architectural changes to the spaces, cutting and adjusting works of art such as Renaissance ceilings and other decorative elements for the benefit of the display. The end result of the entire collection was a combination of two different tastes belonging to two people who shared the same passion for collecting, and it clearly demonstrated the combination of their personal cultural backgrounds.<sup>289</sup> The Jacquemart-André art collection was a blending of two elements: Edouard had a passion for eighteenth-century French art and furniture, while Nélie was asserting her newly acquired status as a wealthy bourgeois by introducing the new fashion for Italian Renaissance art into her husband’s collection.

Bardini’s first concern was the addition of economic value; his second was with the enhancement of historical value. ‘...the mechanically unfolding events of reality possess an infinite variety of

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<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35–43.

values beyond their objective substance...'<sup>290</sup> Georg Simmel (1858-1918) provides here an apt description of Bardini's artistic process: on the one hand, he showed the objective substance of the works of art he photographed and thereby immortalised them; on the other hand, he placed them within a new context by means of a display that put them in touch with other objects. He offered the viewer the chance to interpret art objects in new and unique ways, and suggested different uses and displays for the items he photographed. Meanwhile, the photographs became objects themselves, contributing thereby to the economic value of the pieces in Bardini's collection, and increasing viewers' desire to possess them.

### **Stefano Bardini and the representation of his clients' taste**

We will now look at the photograph entitled: 'view of the secondary stair case leading to the first floor'. (no. 4)<sup>291</sup> The analysis of this photograph begins with Bardini's work as an art dealer and collector. The image represents what might be an entrance hall or lobby in the palazzo, undated.

Symbolically this photograph is the introduction to Bardini's world. From this entrance we are led along an imaginary path through his collection and the archive of his photographs. The image will conduct the viewer from realistic to more abstract spaces. At the time it was

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<sup>290</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 62.

<sup>291</sup> This photograph does not belong to the same Bardini's archive as the others photographs in this study, but to the Stefano Bardini Museum. Galleria Bardini, veduta della scalinata secondaria per salire al primo piano. Direzione Galleria e Museo di Palazzo Mozzi Bardini in Niemeyer Chini, op. cit., p. 198 photograph no. 96.

taken, this photograph had the purpose of representing an ideal collection of Renaissance items displayed in an environment evoking a Renaissance palazzo. In contemporary analysis the rich composition, consisting of several layers, demonstrates the encounter between Foucault's historical genealogical method and Burckhardt's study of Renaissance collectors. The photograph is composed from Bardini's nineteenth-century perspective, influenced by the historical events that determined the collectors' taste. My analysis will trace four aspects: how works of art were displayed, the historical situation in Italy after unification, the Bargello's transformation into a museum and representation of the past, and the major changes to the old town of Florence.

The three Renaissance stone doorframes confer grandeur on the collection, and together constitute an invitation to the viewer to enter and explore the space. Weapons, shields and coats of arms are displayed on the two sidewalls. The passion for collecting weapons had begun in England in the middle of the eighteenth-century and gradually extended to Italy and other countries. By the end of the nineteenth-century, Bardini's collection was still small, but it included some very important pieces, according to the study of the scholar Lionello Giorgio Bocca.<sup>292</sup>

The imposing coat of arms on the central wall constitutes an invitation to collectors. Renaissance coats of arms were hugely in demand among collectors, who saw them as a means of identification with their former

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<sup>292</sup> Lionello Giorgio Bocca, *Museo Bardini: Le Armi* (Firenze, Centro Di, 1984), pp. 40-46.

owners, the ancestral nobility.<sup>293</sup> The central wall presents two sculptures of madonne with child on either side, with a background of two *paliotti* and between them a *lapide*. From a present day perspective, in combining madonne, *paliotti* and *lapide*, it appears that Bardini unconsciously called to mind the abolition of religious orders and the consequent dispersion of their artefacts. Against the two walls on either side of the central door stand an unmatched pair of Renaissance chairs, and next to each is a pedestal supporting a stone bust. Both walls reveal Bardini's care in fashioning symmetrical displays, and in using the camera's perspective to frame a 'quotation' from Renaissance architecture. The works of art displayed here, although complete in themselves, become fragments insofar as they were originally created for a specific place and a specific position, as well as a specific function, none of which are fulfilled here.

Bardini allows his visitors a glimpse in perspective, through the Renaissance marble doorway into the next room, which contains display cases that appear to be filled with Renaissance bronzes. Renaissance bronzes were greatly sought after by nineteenth-century collectors. Medals and bronzes were the most important Renaissance objects collected during that time and this was due to their direct references to the images of antiquity and their use of materials that offered both tactile pleasure and the opportunity to analyse the skill of their makers.<sup>294</sup> Bardini had a passion for bronzes or *bronzetti*. In his memoirs, Bode remembered noticing on his first meeting with Bardini

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<sup>293</sup> Francesca Fumi Cambi Gado, *Stemmi* (Firenze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 1993), p. 26. In the middle ages, in addition to proudly displaying their own coats of arms, [noble families] were particularly eager to display coats of arms or figures that were emblematically connected to themselves, with the goal of alluding to prestigious roles they had previously played in other governments or to show the favour accorded by powerful families in recognition of their special merit or bonds of friendship.

<sup>294</sup> Mara Visona, 'Il gusto internazionale per i bronzetti' in *I bronzetti e gli oggetti d'uso in bronzo* ed. Antonella Nesi (Firenze, Centro Di, 2009), p. 10.



the latter's good taste in the selection of certain pieces.<sup>295</sup> In 1907, Bode published his monumental work *Die Italienischen Bronzestatuetten der Renaissance*, which dramatically changed the approach to the study of these pieces, especially those originating in Renaissance Padua.<sup>296</sup> Most of the bronze pieces in Bardini's collection were from Veneto and Ravenna, the two most important regions in Italy for the production of bronzes.<sup>297</sup> The comments in Bardini's notebook written by his agent Mr Walker in 1892 show how *bronzetti* were sought after by European collectors:

Paris, Martin Leroy, 60 rue de Lisbonne A wealthy person who has just received a substantial inheritance. He examined the photographs, seemed interested in the seated woman and Riccio's statuette, and asked Mr. Bardini to send him some photographs with prices. Furthermore, this person is a very useful means of gaining an introduction to the Rothschilds in London.<sup>298</sup>

This photograph thus offers a fascinating study of the combination of contemporary history – that is, Bardini's present – with Renaissance history and its reinterpretation. Conceptually speaking, a fragment taken from its original context takes on a powerful evocative capacity as a celebration of a specific aspect of the past – yet it holds a double meaning. On the one hand, the fragment evokes the past; on the other, it evinces historical change with its new function and setting in the present. The grand Florentine palazzi are 'quoted' in Bardini's use of doors, sculptures and furniture, and sacred art is represented by the

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<sup>295</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 50 footnote 37.

<sup>296</sup> Tommaso Rago, 'I bronzetti veneti' in *I bronzetti e gli oggetti d'uso in bronzo* ed. Antonella Nesi (Firenze, Centro Di, 2009), pp. 31–32.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>298</sup> ASEF, *Appunti di Londra*, written by C. F. Walker around 1892. Paris amateurs Martin Leroy, 60 rue de Lisbonne, Ricchissimo ha avuto una forte eredita' da poco tempo. Ha esaminato le fotografie ed ha mostrato il desiderio di vedere la donna seduta e la statuette di Riccio mi ha pregato di chiedere al Sig. Bardini di inviargli le fotografie con i prezzi. Questi e' utilissimo per avere delle introduzioni presso i Rothschild di Londra.

Madonna-with-child sculptures and the two *paliotti*. The photograph evokes different historical contexts – which are nonetheless inevitably intertwined. The first historical event of significance to the creation of Bardini's collection and his clients' museums was the abolition of the existing religious order following Napoleon's establishment of a new state, the 'Kingdom of Italy' or Regno d'Italia. A new law, introduced between 1860 and 1861 and first applied to the religious institutions of Umbria, Marche and the Neapolitan area, was subsequently extended to the entire territory of Italy in 1866. This law forced religious orders to sell their assets to assuage the difficult economic conditions in which the new state had found itself. Buildings, convents and churches were often recycled for more 'useful' purposes, such as military barracks, schools and other public functions.<sup>299</sup> Churches, together with their furnishings, works of art and craft and religious icons, were abandoned, and their private use was forbidden. The new state was readily renouncing its heritage in favour of a local administrative structure in order to bring Italy's culture, economy and religion under regional control.<sup>300</sup> However, local administration was often corrupt, and in particular the consequences for the artistic patrimony held by ecclesiastical orders and institutions were diverse and usually negative. The only positive project undertaken by the new state in this regard was to create regional museums with the intention of preserving the culture and art of each region in order to maintain its separate identity.<sup>301</sup> Such acts of preservation were a crucial concern of the newly born united state, which co-opted Italian history and

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<sup>299</sup> Antonella Gioli, *Monumenti e oggetti d'arte nel Regno d'Italia* (Roma, Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Ufficio Centrale per i Beni Archivistici, 1997), pp. 85–108. Antonio Paolucci, 'Exportations: Sales and Laws of Tutelage' in *Le Stanze dei Tesori: Collezionisti e Antiquari a Firenze tra Ottocento e Novecento* ed. Lucia Mannini (Firenze, Polistampa 13 ottobre 2011–15 aprile 2012), pp. 18–20.

<sup>300</sup> Gioli, op. cit., pp. 48–49.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–135.

heritage as a tangible confirmation of the intellectual strength of the new country and its *risorgimento* ideals.

In 1862, the Minister of Public Instruction, Francesco De Sanctis, assigned the responsibility for preserving cultural heritage to the most important art historians in contemporary Italy: Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891) and Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897).<sup>302</sup> The sad condition of the studies of history of art in Italy at the time is expressed by the latter in the following sentence.

Scholars in our country no longer have the enthusiasm of those of the past who felt in the greatness of our art, the greatness of our country and studies of history of art were neglected. The best writers of the Italian language wrote and still write in a foreign language.<sup>303</sup>

They travelled widely, visiting churches and convents in Marche and Umbria with the project of cataloguing everything with care – from important masterpieces to simple craft objects.<sup>304</sup> In practice, however, this project was impeded by an attitude of certain indifference, particularly from members of ecclesiastical orders and this effectively left Italy's cultural heritage in a continual state of haemorrhage. There were three main reasons for this loss, all of which were

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<sup>302</sup> Anna Chiara Tommasi, *Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle conoscitore e conservatore* (Convegno Internazionale di studi Legnano 28 novembre 1997 – Verona 29 novembre 1997, Marsilio, 1998), p. 18. Walter Curzi, 'Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle servitore dello stato'. 'La gestione della tutela e gli interventi in materiali di restauro' in Tommasi, *op. cit.*, p. 52. Bernardina Sani, 'Conservazione e restauro del patrimonio artistico senese' in Tommasi, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36. Andrea Emiliani, 'Giovan Battista Cavalcaselle politico' in Tommasi, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-390. Donata Levi, 'Fortuna di Morelli: Appunti sui rapporti fra storiografia artistica tedesca ed inglese' in *G. Morelli Studi e ricerche* (Bergamo, Accademia di Carrara 4 giugno - 31 Luglio 1987), pp. 19-54.

<sup>303</sup> Donata Levi, *Cavalcaselle il pioniere della conservazione dell'Arte Italiana* (Torino, Einaudi, 1988), p. 8. Da noi è mancato l'entusiasmo degli studiosi di un tempo che nella grandezza dell'arte sentivano la grandezza dell'unità di patria, gli studi giacquero nell'abbandono. I migliori autori in lingua italiana scrissero e scrivono in lingua straniera.

<sup>304</sup> Gioli, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

interconnected. The first was theft, often committed by members of religious institutions themselves, under pressure exerted by Italian and foreign art dealers. Bardini was amongst the art dealers who purchased unscrupulously from religious institutions, the most striking example is found on the altars that he used as window frames for his palazzo, acquired from the church of San Lorenzo in Pistoia. The second was the careless management of works of art by ecclesiastical orders. The third was generated by private patrons who wished to have back works of art which had previously been donated to the Church in order to commemorate their own power and generosity.<sup>305</sup>

But for Bardini, Florence the city-museum, appeared in a different light. When he began his activity as art dealer in the early 1870s, he voraciously acquired fragments and works of art salvaged from the gradual destruction of the city, and from the impoverishment of noble families forced to sell their art collections. Because of the complexity of the historic/economic conditions prevailing in Italy in the nineteenth-century, the *fedecommesso* a law regarding family inheritance of property and works of art was abolished in 1865, causing the loss of many artworks.<sup>306</sup> The Italian government, which had become aware of this on-going loss by the end of the nineteenth-century, changed the law and imposed restrictions on the export of works of art from Italy. This new condition forced Italian art dealers into a changed market from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> Adolfo Venturi, 'Vita Artistica Italiana' in *Rivista D'Italia* (1897), pp. 209-211. Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le collezioni di Elia Volpi* (Firenze, Centro Di, 1993), p. 85.

<sup>307</sup> Scalia, 1984, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-43.

While Morelli and Cavalcaselle were recording with lists and sketches a catalogue of Italy's artistic heritage in order to preserve it, Bardini was making a photographic record of his inventory in order to sell and disperse it. Bardini's collection included a wide range of ecclesiastical works of art and crafts. In displaying these fragments, Bardini not only sought to sell works of art, but was also promoting Italy's cultural heritage. His clients purchased not merely works of art per se, but a commemoration of Italian history. The most striking example of this can be found in the Jacquemart-André collection, in their sculpture room.<sup>308</sup> The couple wanted to create a space similar to Bardini's sculpture room in Florence. The display of this room is composed of fragments of bas-reliefs, columns, basins and other decorative elements. Every single element in this display is in perfect symmetry with another element, similar in shape and size. In this room there was the commemoration of the past in emulation of Bardini's display.

In his collection were two types of fragments. One type consisted of architectural fragments such as windows or columns which had been rescued from demolished and neglected buildings while the other type consisted of integral elements such as church sculpture, pews and *paliotti* which became fragments, being removed from their original context and thus losing their identity. He presented these fragments in new surroundings in order to win them appreciation, either for their integrity or as revelatory pieces of a lost heritage. From the collector's point of view, moreover, the symmetrical display of similar artefacts offers the opportunity for comparative study and investigation. In the photograph discussed above (no. 4), one can clearly see Bardini's intention to tantalise his clients with a wide range of artefacts. The identification with Renaissance enlightenment was seen as a renewed

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<sup>308</sup> Sainte Fare Garnot, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-45.

assertion of the political and intellectual ideals pursued during the nineteenth century. The Bargello museum became the symbol of medieval and Renaissance Florence. There are clear references to the Bargello, which located sculpture and *arti minori* at the core of its collection, while simultaneously arranging the space in a manner that encourages viewers to think of a Renaissance palazzo. The historical link between the medieval and Renaissance periods is visually described, and the display also suggests museological research. This was a clear reference to the San Marco museum which had been created as a repository for the fragments rescued from the demolition of the old city centre. In Bardini's photographs one can see a dual and contradictory historical representation; the commemorative museological aspect with images evoking the Bargello and the painful historical events reminiscent of the fragments gathered in the San Marco museum. This evocation of the Bargello represents the conscious while the San Marco evocation represents the unconscious.<sup>309</sup> With the creation of the Bargello one can witness the evolution of an Italian symbolic museum, where arts and crafts from the glorious humanist period are gathered, The San Marco museum, on the other hand, was created in an emergency situation, in order to rescue from destruction significant architectural elements and sculptures from the ruins of the old city centre. Therefore the two museums deliver two completely different sets of information with regard to nineteenth century Florence.

In 1887, Bardini (together with the experts William Blundell Spence, Friederich Stibbert, Gaetano Bianchi, Corinto Corinti, Luigi Carrand and others) was part of the committee for the medieval and the

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<sup>309</sup> Maria Sframeli, 'Dalla Città al Museo: Nascita della Sezione di "Firenze Antica" al Museo di San Marco' in *Il Centro Storico Restituito* ed. Maria Sframeli (Firenze, Bruschi, 1989), pp. 15-25.

Donatello centenary exhibitions in Florence, and the Bargello was undoubtedly one of the inspirations for Bardini's eclectic collections and interiors.<sup>310</sup> The choice of works for the Bargello collection clearly expressed the new political ideals of post-Risorgimento Italy. The sculpture and craftwork displayed there emphasised the importance of Florence over centuries of Italian culture, encouraging a new approach that identified arts and crafts positively with Italy's history and literature. Bardini began to construct his collection in emulation of the Bargello, which had become the symbol of the new Florence. However, he diverged from the example of the Bargello in that the latter was a permanent collection whereas Bardini's was in constant flux as he sold his Italian pieces to powerful overseas clients eager to possess Italian treasure. For his clients, art was both a way of identifying with the past and a means of displaying their power by constructing museums whose collections evoked Florentine history and linked it with their own. In this way, Bardini transformed Italy's disastrous loss of heritage into his own fortune.<sup>311</sup>

The genesis of the Bargello museum was a fascinating and complex process, shaped both by the political changes that occurred in Italy after the Risorgimento, and by the English and French cultural influences represented by the creation of two significant museums, the South Kensington Museum in London and the Cluny Museum in Paris. These two examples produced in nineteenth-century Florence an interesting re-evaluation of the medieval period. However, the Bargello became the symbol of Italian and Florentine national heritage., With its rich history, it came to be seen by Florentine and Italian people as iconic of the medieval period. The building had been

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<sup>310</sup> Francesca Baldry, *John Temple Leader e il Castello di Vincigliata: un episodio di restauro e collezionismo nella Firenze dell'Ottocento* (Firenze, Olscki, 1997), p. 68.

<sup>311</sup> Antonio Paolucci, *Galleria di Palazzo Mozzi Bardini: Statuaria Lapidea dagli Etruschi al Barocco* (Firenze, Sillabe, 1999), p. 4.

created in three stages: starting as the project of maestro Arnolfo di Lapo ('Il Tedesco') in 1250, it underwent a second period of construction from 1255 onwards, followed by a final, third stage in the fourteenth century that included the construction of the building's courtyard and windows, probably by Angiolo Gaddi. The building was originally created as offices for court officials and magistrates, but was transformed into a prison around 1294.<sup>312</sup> Later, under the *granduca* Pietro Leopoldo, the torture equipment contained in the Bargello was destroyed as a way of signalling a move away from what, in the nineteenth-century was viewed as the atrocities and primitivism of the medieval period. It was decided in 1860 that the building would no longer function as a prison, and the architect Francesco Mazzei received the commission of recreating the original structure of the Bargello.<sup>313</sup> The process its transformation, along with renewed interest, began after the publication of Montanari and Maselli's edition of *Le Vite* between 1832 and 1833. The text reported that the Bargello's chapel had been used as a kitchen cupboard while the palazzo was a prison, and that a filthy wall painted in white was probably hiding a painting by Giotto.<sup>314</sup> The fresco discovered beneath the paint was almost certainly the portrait of Dante described by Boccaccio and reported by Pelli in his *Life of Dante*.<sup>315</sup> In 1846, Le Monnier's new edition of *Le Vite* mentioned the discovery of the fresco without however remarking on the resistance to its removal raised by foreign intellectuals.<sup>316</sup> This detail was only added a few years later, in the 1878 edition. If the discovery was widely acclaimed by scholars and artists in

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<sup>312</sup> Paola Barocchi, 'La scoperta del ritratto di Dante nel Palazzo del Podestà: dantismo letterario e figurativo' in *Studi e ricerche di collezionismo e museografia Firenze 1820-1920* (Pisa, Scuola Normale, Quaderni del seminario di storia della critica d'arte, 1985), p. 369.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*



Europe, its restoration was heavily criticised. Nevertheless, the discovery of the fresco, coinciding with Dante's centenary in 1865, had a considerable impact on the re-evaluation of medieval culture in Florence, and can be considered the first step towards the major project of refurbishing the Palazzo del Bargello and recreating it as a museum.

In the years between 1857 and 1865, restoration work on the Bargello was on-going. An initial project was established to remove the fresco and display it in the *tribuna* at the Uffizi, but after much resistance – a great deal of which came from foreign artists living in Florence – it was decided that the fresco would stay in the chapel, and that the chapel would be properly restored. The planned restoration was completed in 1842. This new and important discovery was widely reviewed in various Italian and foreign magazines; even the scholar Giovanni Rosini (1776–1855) commemorated the event in his 1840 publication *Storia della Pittura Italiana*.<sup>317</sup> However, during the refurbishment of the medieval building several changes were made in an attempt to recreate the original. This can be considered in two ways: first as a continuation of the overlapping historical periods that, especially in Florence, had occurred since the Roman era, and secondly as the beginning of the medieval and Renaissance revival.

The Bargello was transformed into a permanent museum entirely dedicated to medieval life, including arts and crafts.<sup>318</sup> A commission of experts and a group of private collectors supported the project. Marco Guastalla, a private collector of coins, medals, ceramics and

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<sup>317</sup> Giovanni Rosini was a Tuscan scholar who published various books in support of the Tuscan culture and language.

<sup>318</sup> Giovanna Gaeta Bertela, 'Il restauro del Palazzo del Podestà' in *Studi e ricerche di Collezionismo e museografia Firenze 1820–1920* (Pisa, Scuola Normale, Quaderni del seminario di storia della critica d'arte, 1985), p. 182.

metalwork, strongly supported this new initiative in Florence, with an eye to the success of similar institutions in London and Paris. The project began with the classification of all of the objects, craftworks and works of art already owned by the Bargello, with the ultimate aim of absorbing all of the works of art of the same period spread across various museums over the city: the Uffizi, Palazzo Vecchio, Palazzo Pitti and La Specola. An important national exhibition was organised in Florence in 1862, following the example of the Manchester exhibition in 1857.<sup>319</sup> This had a crucial role in the transformation of the Bargello. Guastalla saw in the event a suitable moment for re-evaluating unknown and underrated medieval craftworks held by private collectors and in churches, and to stop their constant dispersion abroad.<sup>320</sup> Despite the attention to such works in other European countries, Italians themselves displayed a distinct lack of interest in the study of quattrocento and Renaissance Italy. Therefore Guastalla's project had the primary aim of rekindling interest in these minor arts and crafts in order to sensitise public opinion to Italy's heritage, to prevent the loss of the most important pieces, and to reconfirm the importance of Italian art within its cultural context. At this time Bardini was still a young artist, having just finished his studies at the city's academy of art, and was seeking to make his way in the art world. It is therefore important to note that the re-evaluation of medieval crafts – of which Bardini was a keen connoisseur from the 1870s onwards – began some twenty years prior to the start of his career as art dealer.

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<sup>319</sup> Paola Barocchi and Giovanna Gaeta Bertela, 'Ipotesi per un un museo nel Palazzo del Podesta' tra il 1858 e il 1865' in *Studi e ricerche di Collezionismo e museografia Firenze 1820–1920* (Pisa, Scuola Normale, Quaderni del seminario, di storia della critica d'arte, 1985), p. 216.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

The stated purpose of Florence's 1861 exhibition was the study of life in the Middle Ages, with a particular focus on everyday habits and behaviour. As a result, painting and sculpture received less attention than objects in day-to-day use, such as jewels, porcelain, bronzes, glass and leather. Despite his efforts, Guastalla's project was not considered a success. It was criticised for under-estimating the importance of the study of crafts as a way of learning about an historical period. Indeed, the exhibition was organised without attention to chronological order, and most of its works of art were by famous artists, leading to the widespread belief that its principal aim was actually dealing. The works in leather, porcelain and glass displayed in this exhibition, along with the jewels, fabrics, coins and medals, were undervalued by Italians.<sup>321</sup>

It is very interesting to note that the display in this exhibition did not resemble a museological project, but rather the creation of interiors, with no attention paid to the pieces that were already part of the permanent collection. Along with weapons and armour there were quite a few pieces of furniture: *cassoni* and *stipi*. The bronze sculptures were mostly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and were by famous artists such as Giambologna, Tacca and Cellini. The majority had previously been held in private collections.<sup>322</sup> After the exhibition of 21 September 1861, Guastalla insisted that the museum represent the medieval period in all its aspects, but again his suggestions met with no response.<sup>323</sup> The idea of recreating the museum in the style of London's South Kensington Museum, where works of art of various provenances and style were gathered together for a primarily didactic purpose, was not considered suitable for the Bargello project

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<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223-229.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

especially if such a re-creation would involve removing works from the Uffizi that were representative of the Medici lifestyle and their cultural influence. The Cluny Museum in Paris was considered more suitable as a model for a historical museum, displaying works of art and artefacts from the same period as the building itself.<sup>324</sup>

As soon as the Bargello project was approved, research began to determine the right works to collect. The idea was not to buy anything, but instead to gather works from governmental and religious institutions in Florence and the surrounding area, as well as from private collections. The project was divided into five main categories: first, sculpture and different genres of objects; second, paintings and mosaics; third, enamel and chiselled works; fourth, tapestries; and fifth, architectural fragments.<sup>325</sup> Two extra categories were added at a later stage: the sixth was weaponry, in the knowledge that the Palazzo Vecchio held a wide collection of weapons; and the seventh was furniture. In the latter category, insufficient items were available in other government institutions, so they had to be purchased. Overall, however, thorough research into all of Florence's public institutions identified a sizeable number of high-quality works. As all these items came from public institutions in Florence and Tuscany, the Bargello was able to represent medieval Florentine history very faithfully. In order to cater to collectors' preferences, which since the 1860s had focused on medieval art, Bardini created in his collection a room imitating the courtyard of the Bargello which can be seen in photograph no. 5.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 369-373.

<sup>326</sup> Niemayer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 197. Photographs from Direzione Galleria e Museo di Palazzo Mozzi Bardini. Galleria Bardini, scorcio della scalinata principale verso il primo piano. Galleria Bardini. Scorcio della scalinata principale con le pareti ornate di stemmi che rievocano il cortile del Museo Nazionale del Bargello.

The Bargello was considered one of the highlights of Florence by foreign visitors.

... palazzo of the *Potesta'* or the Bargello, which is now the National Museum. It is one of the most beautiful, characteristic and important buildings of the town.<sup>327</sup>

Returning to Bardini's photograph of the staircase, we can see displayed a collection of coats of arms, tracing the history of the Bargello and its consequent transformation into a museum. Thus Bardini did not create a new style of collecting, but rather followed a trend that was already in existence. Bardini not only supplied his clients with an intellectual reference to the Bargello, but also showed them the evolution of Italian and more specifically, Florentine culture. To emulate the Bargello was inevitably to create an historical connection between the culture and art of the middle ages and their revival (and consequent re-interpretation) in the nineteenth-century. Therefore Bardini established a context for his works of art with an evocative display that created a dialogue between the art and the viewer. In Bardini's showroom, the displays emulating those of the Bargello which referred to the importance of Italian heritage, were certainly the more immediate and convincing. They conveyed to the viewer the impression that while he was looking at Bardini's wall, he could have been looking at a display in the Bargello,. Bardini had on display coats of arms and various bas-relief fragments from unknown provenances and in this way he was creating a convincing context in order to sell them. Bardini's pieces in that context acquired a psychological value that otherwise would not have been recognised.

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<sup>327</sup> E. Grifi, *Saunterings in Florence* (Florence, Bemporad & Figlio, 1899), pp. 228-243. Grant Allen, *Historical guides Florence* (London, Grant Richards, 1897), pp. 205-222.

Florence's original pattern had been dramatically changed when it became the Italian capital in 1865, this was done in an attempt to emulate other European capitals. Several parts of the city included within the medieval walls were destroyed, leaving only the most important medieval and Renaissance buildings as an exaltation of Medici Florence.<sup>328</sup> It was in 1882, however, that the project of rearranging Florence's old city began to be taken seriously. Indeed, the projects multiplied, and with speculation as to the profits that might be made thereby came to involve a wide range of actors, professional and non-professional. The only interest that these people had in common with regard to these projects was the money that could be made from the drastic demolition and re-building of the areas of the old market and the ghetto. These two parts of the city were considered breeding grounds for disease and thus a threat to public health. Most of the projects aimed to change the medieval layout entirely, favouring boulevards instead of small, narrow streets. On 12 July 1882, a new law for the expropriation of houses in the old town and the ghetto was passed. In 1890, this seemingly endless story reached an end, with 1,778 buildings demolished and 5,822 people displaced.

The destruction of the old city centre, and the creation of new monuments and palaces clearly inspired by the past, marked the

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<sup>328</sup> Franco Borsi, *La Capitale a Firenze e l'Opera di G. Poggi* (Firenze, Colombo, 1970), pp. 9-15. The architect Giuseppe Poggi (1811-1901), heir to neoclassical architectural culture, was faced with the difficult task of overlaying the already complex structure of the city with new architecture. Florence had already been elected the capital of the arts in Italy with the legacy of the Medici. The Renaissance city was superimposed upon the medieval one, but in unstructured ways. The Florentine architecture that counted was that of the fifteenth century. There was a disturbing and overlapping violence with the *antirinascimento* city during the mannerist period. In the Baroque period, although they built various residences, Florentine architects did not create anything of significance, the only representative building being Palazzo Pitti. Carlo Cresti, *Architetti e Ingegneri nella Toscana dell'Ottocento* (Firenze, UNIEDIT, 1978), p. LIV. Giuseppe Poggi, *Sui lavori per l'ingrandimento di Firenze* (Firenze, Tipografia G. Barbera, 1882), pp. 239-240.

beginning of a new period in Florence's history, but also represented the loss of its original medieval and Renaissance layout. The old town of Florence was left with some of its major historical examples geographically scattered and isolated within their new context and which made the area appear somehow mutilated. The vivid description by the nineteenth-century art historian Guido Carocci (1851–1916) bears witness to the major changes undergone by the city:<sup>329</sup>

The Florence of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are now scattered, chopped, mixed among the modern houses, the old streets no longer have 'uniformity' or harmony in their appearance.<sup>330</sup>

Bardini's photographs might be seen as the negative, in photographic terms, of this situation, as the fragments gathered in his displays recall the old Florence. Guido Carocci strongly supported the creation of the San Marco Museum, where decorative fragments of the old town were gathered and which can be seen as another source of inspiration for Bardini's display and collection.

From all this destruction have been saved a few fragments that will interest art history, a small memory of lost beauty and opulence, secured now as in a charnel house in the old convent of San Marco, which is a museum of memories and fragments of medieval Florence.<sup>331</sup>

Carocci's melancholy descriptions of the demolition of several parts of Florence are mirrored in Bardini's photographs. Carocci described his regret at Florence being torn to pieces, and how this fragmentation

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<sup>329</sup> Gabriella di Canio, *Arte e Storia: Guido Carocci e la Tutela del Patrimonio Artistico in Toscana* (Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie, 1991), pp. 29-43. Guido Carocci was the director of the San Marco Museum, an art historian who largely wrote about Florence and its surrounding areas in detailed studies of buildings and their original purpose. He was very active in propaganda against the destruction of the old town of Florence.

<sup>330</sup> Guido Carocci, *Firenze scomparsa* (Firenze, Galletti e Cocci tipografi editori, 1897), p. 27.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

unbalanced the city; medieval Florence and the new post-Risorgimento city combining unevenly to leave only vague traces of its history. ‘Destroy the old in order to build a new identity’ became the manifesto for Italy’s new patriotic history. The restrictive laws implemented in 1866–1867 by the Guardiasigilli Siccardi nationalised religious patrimonies, while the new economic and juridical demands associated with the progression of modernity contributed to the dispersion of family wealth. The resulting loss of Italy’s cultural heritage was also lamented by the art historian Adolfo Venturi, an enemy of Bardini who more than once sought to restrict the latter’s dealing activity.<sup>332</sup> In an article written for the *Rivista d’Italia* in 1897, entitled ‘Vita Artistica Italiana,’ Venturi described the importance of Italy’s cultural heritage, and attributed this terrible loss to a system which, he claimed, supported various illegal sales practices, allowing foreigners to come to Italy and buy coveted art works with no difficulties or restrictions.<sup>333</sup>

Inevitably influenced by his historical period, Bardini sometimes changed the original purpose of a work of art by giving it a new meaning and purpose in its new, nineteenth-century setting. Such works of art thus overlap two historical periods, their original context and their nineteenth-century recreation. This was mainly because nineteenth-century Florence witnessed an increasing tendency towards eclecticism, originating in part in the desire of contemporary artists to attain the same skill as their ancestors; inevitably, while copying earlier work, they could not resist adding certain personal touches. The reconstruction of parts of Florence, which privileged the Renaissance style, also had a part to play in the movement towards eclecticism. In order to pay tribute to the past, architects, painters and

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<sup>332</sup> Niemeyer Chini, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>333</sup> Venturi, 1897, *op. cit.*, pp. 215 and 218.



craftsmen active in Florence at this time sought to emulate earlier styles and again, the process of copying was also one of reinterpretation.<sup>334</sup> For Bardini, the pleasure of giving new life to fragments extrapolated from their original context assumed the significance of *reinvenzioni antiquariali*. The *reinvenzioni* were pieces mainly created by him out of the spare parts of sculpture of various provenances, in a clear attempt to emulate the architecture of the past, and we will see some examples of this in chapter two.

Jacob Burckhardt, Wilhelm von Bode and Stefano Bardini in their own three different ways made important contributions to the study of art history in the nineteenth-century and to the re-interpretation of the medieval and Renaissance art of Italy. The studies of Burckhardt played a fundamental role in the establishment of Bode's Berlin museum and at the same time appear to have given to Bardini an intellectual basis for the creation of his displays of interiors. While he astutely used references to Burckhardt to flatter the cultural pretensions of his clients, Bardini's photographs now prove useful tools for the study of a modern and innovative museological concept, which, through the use of division by genre as opposed to the chronological displays in fashion at the time, reveals important reflections on the 'duty of art' theories expressed by Burckhardt.

Furthermore in this chapter an examination of Bardini's *taccuini* shows how he studied carefully the personalities and circumstances of his clients in order to satisfy their requirements while at the same time influencing their taste, as illustrated by the extreme example of the Jacquemart-André collection in Paris. The chapter also examined the

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<sup>334</sup> Stefano della Torre and Valeria Pracchi, 'The Neo-Renaissance in Nineteenth Century Italy: The Search of Self-representation in City Architecture' in *Reviving the Renaissance* ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 181-184.

contemporary events in Florence showing how and the evolution of the Bargello from medieval prison into a museum representing Florentine and Italian heritage also played an important role in shaping Bardini's and his clients' tastes.

## Chapter Two

**The photographs of Bardini's sculpture displays: contrasting Bardini's portrayal of sculpture with the photographic theories of his contemporaries.**

This chapter will focus mainly on Bardini's displays of sculptures and fragments and how his manner of photographing them contrasted with the theories of his contemporary, the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945). Wölfflin stated that sculpture, especially Renaissance sculpture, should be photographed in a way that maintained the original intention of the artist when he created the work of art. In contrast, Stefano Bardini's photographs of sculpture privileged their aesthetic aspect, transforming their original meaning. His photographs re-interpreted sculptures, blending his personal cultural experiences with his historical cultural influences; as a result his photographs of sculpture revealed a new narrative. Bardini, while creating a new meaning for these sculptures offered the opportunity to see them in a different light, making them more approachable to collectors, not just as works of art but also as interior decorative objects.

The first experimental forays into photography's relationship with works of art were conducted by Talbot, Bayard and Daguerre in England and France around the middle of the nineteenth century. The sculptures employed for these experiments were usually plaster copies of statues from antiquity, which were in wide circulation at that time as collectors' items. Members of the bourgeoisie sought to emulate the example of museums by institutionalising their collections as important repositories of art, which were often open to the public.

During this period, the main objective of art photography was to experiment with new photographic techniques and the effects of chiaroscuro; however, this experimentation brought about crucial developments in the study and understanding of works of art. Photography was not only capable of exploring the possibilities of its own medium, but also became a valuable witness to its historical period. These first experiments did not seek to access the inner meanings of the sculptures they depicted; nonetheless, such meanings were revealed unconsciously in the photographers' compositional choices. The photographs reflect the particular significance attributed in the period to certain works of art over others, and thus offer useful insight into the evolution of the study of art.<sup>335</sup>

Photograph **no. 6**, a composition of head sculptures, the first image to be analysed in this chapter, can be looked at in two different ways. From one point of view we can see the influence of Bardini's artistic background as a romantic painter, and from the other we see a visual representation of Burckardt's studies on the importance of the connection between antiquity and the Renaissance. Furthermore, this photograph illustrates the re-evaluation of head sculptures in the nineteenth-century and how Bardini used photography to offer a different interpretation of them in a manner that was in complete contrast with Wölfflin's theories. The following section, will study two photographs of the same sculpture, a mannerist *mascherone*. In the first photograph (**no. 7**), Bardini experiments with an abstract use of photography, focusing on light and space, while in the second

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<sup>335</sup> Julia Ballerini, 'Recasting Ancestry' in *The Object as Subject* ed. Anna W. Lowenthal (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 41-58. Helene Pinet, 'La Sculpture, la Photographie et la critique' in *Sculpteur Photographier* ed. Michel Frizot et Dominique Paini (Actes du Colloque organisé au Louvre 22-23 Décembre 1991 Paris, Marval, 1993), p. 85.

photograph (no. 8) he ironically quotes the historical origins of the *mascherone* from Roman grotesques and their historical evolution. Finally a fourth photograph (no. 9) is analysed in this section, depicting the main entrance of palazzo Mozzi Bardini around 1894. In this image, composed of fragments, Bardini created a composition based on the attentive study of perspective and symmetry. Here we can trace parallels between Bardini's work and Burckhardt's fragmented writing in *The Architecture of Italian Renaissance*; both display and writing explore the importance of tombs and lapides as symbols of power. An exploration of these photographs guides us to the conclusion that Bardini's work was in fact in contrast with Wölfflin's theories. The eclecticism of Bardini's photographs shifted from the aesthetic aspect of the first three photographs to the composition of fragments of the fourth photograph which seems to reflect the fragmented nature Buckhard's writing.

Heinrich Wölfflin succeeded Burckhardt in his teaching post at the University of Basel, and part of his research focused on photographic reproduction of sculpture.<sup>336</sup> In his *Comment photographier les sculptures*, Heinrich Wölfflin's particular concern was to explore how perceptions of sculpture might differ from those originally intended by the artist. How different lighting conditions, or various view-points in terms of angle or location, could have the effect of modifying the perceived size of the object.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Comment photographier les sculptures 1896,1897,1915* tr. Jean-Claude Chirrollet (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>337</sup>Wölfflin, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 and 61. Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Comment photographier les sculptures', in *Pygmalion Photograph: La sculpture devant la camera 1844-1936* eds. Rainer Michael Mason, Helene Pinet *et. al.* (Geneva, Musee d'art et d'histoire, Cabinet des estampes, 1985), pp. 127-135.

Wölfflin and Bardini's approach to the photography of works of art are completely different. Wölfflin's concern is that of the art historian. He views it as photography's responsibility to reproduce faithfully the meaning intended by the sculptor who created the piece; his concern being that of the art historian who uses photography for study. In contrast with this, Bardini's use of photography is not encumbered with a duty of faithful reproduction. His photographs deliberately modify the shapes and meanings of sculptures and his research on photographing sculpture argues in favour of the creative aspect of interpretation. Jean-René Gaborit seems to pinpoint Bardini's intentions when he says that photography influences the art historian through its ability to choose the frame in which to photograph a work of art. As Gaborit observes, a well-chosen frame isolating a particular detail of a work of art can create an entirely different and new work of art, from which it can prove difficult, or indeed impossible to extrapolate the rest of the original work. At other times, however, the photograph of a fragment may be seen as simply one detail of an entire work, and photographing a mutilated piece in a certain way can empower it to suggest the entire work, even if the remainder is missing.<sup>338</sup> Bardini photographed fragments with the intention of giving them a new definition: that of works of art. This new definition sometimes conferred a monumental aspect; at other times, the opposite was true.

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<sup>338</sup> Jean-René Gaborit, 'Le miroir trompeur' in *Sculpteur photographe, photographie-sculpture: actes du colloque au Louvre* ed. Michel Frizot and Dominique Paini (Paris, Marval, 22-23 November 1991), p. 27. Le photograph influence aussi l'historien d'art par le choix du cadrage. Et il faut noter ici un curieux phénomène: devant la photographie bien cadrée du détail d'un tableau, on hésite parfois à admettre qu'il s'agit d'un détail et non d'un tableau complet. Devant la photographie intégrale d'une œuvre mutilée ou incomplète, un certain type de cadrage suggère au contraire qu'il s'agit du détail d'une figure complète [...] la vision photographique permet de nier la mutilation et de compléter mentalement la figure incomplète.

In these photographs Bardini took pleasure in creating images in which the historical narrative is visible and at the same time is blended with photographic experimentation. The relationship between sculpture and photography had evolved in various ways since the first experiments in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the early experimental stages of the technique, sculpture was an important subject for photographers; its immobility meant that it offered the opportunity to study the effects of chiaroscuro, and to experiment with various camera angles. Frequently, photographs delivered a different point of view on a sculpture from that originally intended. Light and size, for example, were inevitably transformed by the camera.

These experiments gradually brought about another development of fundamental importance for the study of art history: the capacity to alter the perception of a work of art by photographing it. Bardini played around with the frames, light and point of view of the camera. Changing from the original point of view to a new photographic one inevitably led to a distortion of the work's original meaning and of the intention of the artist.

### **Photograph of composition of head sculptures.**

In photograph no. 6 Bardini seems to quote the compositions of head sculptures that romantic painters used to copy for the purpose of studying various periods of art and schools.<sup>339</sup> For the Romantic painter, the study of historical context through literature was essential, and the careful examination of the architecture, objects, sculpture, costumes and weapons of a given period was equally important as a

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<sup>339</sup> Photograph no. 108626, numbering according to the Servizio di catalogazione dei Musei Civici Fiorentini - Stefano Bardini Archive.

means of ensuring that these items were reproduced faithfully in paintings.<sup>340</sup> The Romantic artists' interests lay in the visualisation of medieval and Renaissance historical events as patriotic symbols of the Risorgimento. Carlo Sisi remarks:

The close relationship between the arts and literature in the Romantic period provided artists with a wide-ranging repertoire of styles, techniques and subjects. Given the multiplicity of choices, this relationship manifested itself in various forms. The artist had diverse opportunities to 'draw on this repertoire' by experimenting with techniques and compositions borrowed from literary sources. Thus the ways in which artists depicted their subjects' distinctive qualities, including clothes and other details, offered unusual historical references.<sup>341</sup>

In an article entitled 'Modern Italian Painting' published in 1840, Giuseppe Mazzini highlighted the importance in Italy of the arts as a propaganda vehicle for the ideals of freedom. In order to achieve unification, he felt it would be necessary to connect the country's many cultural fragments by means of a single 'language', while at the same time recognising the unique characteristics of each region and portraying them as a source of strength in the pursuit of unity.<sup>342</sup> Bardini's work can be seen in this context as part of this larger project.

Photograph no. 6 is composed of architectural and sculptural fragments. In terms of Bardini the art dealer, it is important to mention that this photograph shows the serious interest that contemporary art collectors had in Renaissance sculpture, whose

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<sup>340</sup> Sandra Pinto, *Romanticismo Storico* (Firenze, La Meridiana di Palazzo Pitti, Centro Di, dicembre 1973 - febbraio 1974), p. 154.

<sup>341</sup> Carlo Sisi, *L'Ottocento in Italia e le arti sorelle* (Milano, Electa, 2005), p. 110. Author's translation.

<sup>342</sup> Laura Lombardi 'Mazzini, i macchiaioli e la guerra di liberazione' in *Romantici Macchiaioli: Giuseppe Mazzini e la grande pittura europea* ed. Fernando Mazzocca (Milano, Skira Catalogue Exhibition Genova, Palazzo Ducale 21 ottobre 2005- 12 febbraio 2006), pp. 161-163.



various styles and materials included a genre prominent within Bardini's collection and photographs: *teste all'antica*, Renaissance bas-reliefs representing the heads of powerful emperors. The head sculptures or bas-reliefs were originally inspired by ancient coins, and during the Renaissance they were used to decorate the exteriors and interiors of palazzi and were often situated above doors.<sup>343</sup> Stefano Bardini had a variety of these pieces in his collection. Although considered less important than sacred representations, in the nineteenth-century they became a new focus of collecting due to their historical link between antiquity and the Renaissance, and to the skilled technique of their sculptors. These pieces were relatively easy to acquire in the nineteenth century because they were often the first pieces to be sold by impoverished noble families, who attributed little importance to this particular genre.<sup>344</sup>

The background in this photograph has been decorated with stencils reproducing the patterns of leather hangings, this has been done in order to emphasise the value of the pieces and the importance of their context, and to create a visually lavish background. Bardini displays the fragments in symmetrical order. On the left, we see a Gothic *tortile* column with a marble lion on top; in the middle, a marble base holding a fragment depicting the head of a bearded divinity. The latter is a Rimini-type copy of an original in marble dating from 460 450

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<sup>343</sup> Bacci, *op. cit.*, p. 52. The passion for collecting these bas-reliefs began in the north of Italy among the Sforza, Gonzaga and D'Este families, all keen collectors of coins. Owing to their depictions of the heads of famous emperors, the *teste all'antica* were soon adopted as symbols of power, and were used to decorate the exteriors of palaces and tombs. The commissioning of bas-reliefs representing ancient emperors generated a new form of art: Renaissance patrons emulated these copies with representations of themselves, reinforcing their displays of power. Author's translation.

<sup>344</sup> Bacci, *op. cit.*, pp. 21 97.

BC.<sup>345</sup> Pieces from antiquity in Bardini's collection were supposedly from Rome, as the scholar Mario Scalini mentions:

The political and historical moment was favorable to all undertakings of appropriation and accumulation, particularly in light of the acquisition of the Lazio and Rome territory by the new Italian state. Under the kingdom of Savoy, the papal rules, which since the breach of Porta Pia had protected antiquity collections and antiquity findings expired.<sup>346</sup>

On the other side of the display there is another fragment of a column, dating from the thirteenth century. On top of the column is a Madonna-and-child sculpture, which appears to be made of wood. At the centre of the composition Bardini displays a terracotta portrait of a youth, surrounded by a modern wooden frame. Bardini always displayed such sculptures within a garland or frame – often in wood – and this was stylistically similar to their original surroundings. In so doing, he sought to restore to the sculptures the appearance of originality, and thereby to increase their value.<sup>347</sup> Along with the ancient head fragment underneath it, this sculpture was presented at Bardini's New York auction in 1918. It possibly originated from the Della Robbia workshop.<sup>348</sup> The sculpture seems to have been created as an independent object, but its round base suggests that it was once framed, and its shape and lack of *invetriatura* indicate that it was

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<sup>345</sup> Gabriella Capecci, *The Historical Archive of Stefano Bardini: Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art* (Firenze, Bruschi, 1993), pp. 35 and 65.

<sup>346</sup> Mario Scalini, *Augusta Fragmenta* (Milano, Silvana Editoriale, Exhibition Catalogue Aosta 20 giugno – 26 ottobre 2008), pp. 40–42.

<sup>347</sup> Francesca Maria Bacci, 'Ritratti di Imperatori nella scultura Italiana del Quattrocento' in *Ritratti di Imperatori e profili all'antica* ed. Antonella Nesi (Firenze, Centro Di, 2012), p. 140.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144 and 155 footnote no. 84. Stefano Bardini *The Stefano Bardini Collection 1918*, cat. no. 316. (Archivio Bardini auction catalogue note). The catalogue gives the measurements of the diameter of the *medaglione* (38cm) and of the frame (46cm); the work was attributed to Andrea Della Robbia, and it was sold for \$450 by the agent W.W. Seaman.

created for display in a sheltered space.<sup>349</sup> The fragments in this display trace a historical progression from antiquity to the Gothic and Renaissance periods, echoing Burckhardt's *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*.

The Renaissance would not have been the process of worldwide significance which it is, if its elements could be so easily separated from one another. We must insist upon it, as one of the chief propositions of this book, that it was not the revival of antiquity alone, but its union with the genius of Italian people, which achieved the conquest of the western world.<sup>350</sup>

The display of these fragments is not presented in chronological order, as it normally would be for didactic museological purposes. The antique head for instance, is positioned at the centre of the display. Individually these four sculptures seem to maintain intact their historical identity, and to reveal their original purpose. However, together they participate in a wider context: the evolution of sculptural technique and materials, and the historical continuity from antiquity to the Renaissance. However these works of art, being fragments, have been displaced from their context and therefore have lost their identity. It is this absence of historical continuity that very effectively suggests their historical period. As the French phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) said about language: the unsaid, the silences, the approximations and the lack of precision of words themselves are what make communication effective. The same can be said of photographic language: *l'esthétique du manqué*. The art of photography has to be considered a manifestation of absence requiring

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<sup>349</sup> Bacci, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>350</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* tr. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York, New York Modern Library, 2002), p. 121.

a presence.<sup>351</sup> The photograph simultaneously demonstrates two different approaches to art: Burckhardt's theories, and Bardini's personal interpretation of sculpture. The four sculptures – the lion, the head of a youth, the Madonna with child, and the antique head – were originally created to be displayed at different heights. Bardini photographed them in unconventional positions, conferring on them the role of decorative objects belonging in domestic interiors.

If statues lack their original pedestals this will affect the perception of their height in relation to the surrounding space. Wölfflin observed that this mistake was often made by museums, whose displays did not always respect the original positions of the sculpture. Some sculptures were created to be viewed from various angles, whereas others were intended to be seen from one side only.<sup>352</sup> Therefore, the issue of placement requires an understanding of the purpose the artist intended for his sculpture. Wölfflin insisted on the importance of viewpoint and the use of light in relation to sculpture, arguing that the history of light and shade had yet to be written.

In the case of sculpture in particular, the optimal distance, appropriate height of the lens in relation to the work of art being photographed, the exact angle of the shot, but equally the quality and direction of lighting (natural or artificial) are decisive for the perception of the aesthetic significance which the sculptor wished to transmit to his contemporaries, as well as to posterity.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Jean-Paul Curnier, *Montrer l'invisible: Ecrits sur l'image* (Arles, Editions, Jacqueline Chambon, 2009), pp. 17-18.

<sup>352</sup> Bacci, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>353</sup> Wölfflin, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Dans le cas de la sculpture en ronde-bosse, en particulier, la distance optimale, la hauteur adéquate de l'objectif par rapport à l'oeuvre, l'angle de la prise de vue exact, mais également la qualité et la direction de l'éclairage (naturel ou artificiel), sont déterminants pour la juste perception de la signification esthétique que le sculpteur a voulu transmettre à ses contemporains, ainsi qu'à la postérité.

There was a considerable difference between the light used in high Renaissance and that employed in quattrocento painting and sculpture. During the high Renaissance, light was used in painting and correspondingly in sculpture with more subtle contrasts than in quattrocento art.<sup>354</sup> Wölfflin suggested that the same criteria should be applied in photographs taken of works from the two periods. He went on to examine the parallels between photographs of paintings and of sculpture, starting with the technique of bas-relief, which indeed resembles painting more than sculpture. Wölfflin mentioned that Bode considered that even the minimum repositioning of a sculpture from its original position could spoil the co-ordination of its lines.<sup>355</sup> He gave the example of a photograph by Alinari of a bas-relief of a Verrocchio Madonna.<sup>356</sup> In the photograph, the light comes from above, offering a very clear view of the ensemble. Wölfflin compared this photograph with an original drawing of the Madonna's head, in which the light falls from the left; as a result, the overall effect is entirely different, with shadow subordinate to shape throughout.

... in Alinari's photographs the lighting is from above right. A part of the forehead and one cheek are in the dark, from where emerges the eyelid, the only part which is lit... The whole presents a clear and altogether pleasant effect. And yet one must question whether it actually corresponds to the original intention...<sup>357</sup>

This is a very clear and well-documented example of Wölfflin's concern that sculpture be viewed and interpreted correctly. His

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<sup>354</sup> Bacci, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>355</sup> Wölfflin, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 2008, p. 59. [...] dans la photographie de Alinari la lumière vient d'en haut à la droite. Une partie du front et une joue sont dans l'obscurité, d'où émerge la paupière, seule clareté... L'ensemble présente une vue claire et tout à fait agréable. Et pourtant là aussi, il faut se demander si elle correspond réellement à l'intention originelle.

priority in examining the relationship between photography and sculpture was that of an art historian. He sought to use photography as a means of rectifying the interpretation of works of art and considered any approach, which modified the aspect and thus the subject of a photograph of a sculpture to be incorrect, as it failed in its duty to observe the artist's intentions for the work.<sup>358</sup>

Bardini's photograph, although contemporary with the theories expounded by Wölfflin, offered an entirely different exploration of the photographic medium, and consequently a very different interpretation of sculpture. The 'eye' of the art dealer, and his artistic priorities, conferred on his photographs of works of art new interpretations of their meaning. Bardini played with composition, light and frame in order to optimise the aesthetic effects of his photographs, rather than providing a faithful version of the object or objects depicted. His photographs were intended primarily to increase the selling power of the works of art he had in his ownership; he was careful to choose points of view which minimised the appearance of faults and breakages, showing each artwork from the best angle.<sup>359</sup> Presented in this style that allowed for free interpretation, these photographs are a visual testament to Bardini's own analysis of art. Moreover, their iconography unconsciously reflects the cultural influences at work in Bardini's time. He and his collaborators were skilful photographers; indeed, their photographs often possess an artistic quality, with a 'pictorial' touch particularly evident in their use of light. As Barthes says, photography can transform subject into object, even a museum object.<sup>360</sup> In a very modern way, Bardini's

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> Capecchi, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>360</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* tr. Richard Howard (first edition in French by Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1980. New York, Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 13.

photographs became objects and his archive became the virtual museum that contained them.

The art critic Jean-Francois Chevrier sees photography not only as an important method of faithfully reproducing images, but also as an interpretative instrument: photography can offer a new ‘eye’ for exploring sculptural shapes.<sup>361</sup> In turn, sculpture is not just the protagonist of the image; rather, sculpture’s role is transformed by the image given to it by the photographer. The photograph of the work of art becomes a work of art in itself, even though it cannot precisely be classified as an object.<sup>362</sup> As Chevrier observes, even if photographs are considered objects in their own right, they do not have the same physical substance and weight as other objects. Their ‘weight’ can only be found in the power of the image.<sup>363</sup> Some of Bardini’s photographs seem to foreshadow these late twentieth-century concerns. The fragments in photograph **no. 6** still evoke their individual historical periods, but they have also assumed new roles as a result of their new context and positioning. They have become new works of art. The sculpted youth’s head, for example, was clearly created to be displayed above a door, but the viewer’s perspective is entirely different when the sculpture is positioned at the height at which Bardini displayed it.

The history of the relationship between photography and sculpture has two main aspects. First, photography offers the opportunity to reproduce sculpture and *bas-relief* with a certain precision; secondly, sculpture is photogenic, which means that it allows one to create good photographs.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> J. F. Chevrier is a contemporary art critic and professor of aesthetics at the École Nationale Supérieure de Paris.

<sup>362</sup> Barthes, 1982, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>363</sup> Jean-Francois Chevrier, ‘L’image, l’objet’, in *Sculpter photographier, photographie-sculpture: actes du colloques au Louvre* eds. Michel Frizot and Dominique Paini (Paris, Marval, 22–23 November 1991), p. 104.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

This sentence abridges the two main points that will be treated in this second part of the analysis of Bardini's photographs: photography as a faithful tool for reproducing sculpture; and photography as a creative medium that changes the original meaning, shape and purpose of a sculpture, generating a new image that can itself become a work of art. In the next three photographs, Bardini showed that, by freely photographing the same sculpture twice and creating two different contexts, he was able to completely change its meaning, altering it from a sculpture that showed its historical origins into an abstract object.

### **Photographs of *mascherone*: a double interpretation.**

The two photographs (nos. 7 and 8) in question have the same object as their main 'protagonist': the figure of a head in the style of the high Renaissance, known as a *mascherone*.<sup>365</sup> These two images demonstrate Bardini's continued research on light and display. These photographs are particularly interesting in that they show us how the same sculpture – the Mannerist *mascherone* – can be transformed by its display, its frame, and the photographer's use of chiaroscuro, into two different objects with different stories and different sets of historical references. The *mascherone* dates from the middle of the sixteenth century, and is sculpted from marble with traces of gold.<sup>366</sup> There is a similar example in the Santa Giulia Museum in Brescia and we can fairly confidently trace the provenance of this piece to Brescia as

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<sup>365</sup>Photographs nos. 607BR and 409BR, numbering according to the Servizio di catalogazione dei Musei Civici Fiorentini – Stefano Bardini Archive.

<sup>366</sup>Elena Ragni Lucchesi, *Santa Giulia: L'eta' Veneta* (Milano, Electa, 1998), p. 76.



well.<sup>367</sup> The *mascherone* is sculpted from Botticino marble, sourced locally from a quarry on the outskirts of Brescia. Bardini was in contact with other dealers and private clients all over Italy. In *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze – Le Sculture*, the *mascherone* is described as being of marble with gold traces, and as having an unknown provenance. Its decoration is inspired by *candelabre* frequently used in Italy in the second part of the sixteenth century.<sup>368</sup> During the Mannerist era, images inspired by grotesques and *candelabre* were common in painting and sculpture as intellectual quotations from the past. Crucially, however, the appropriation of these classical models involved an element of reconstruction, particularly in sculpture, where their decorative function was conjugated with more useful structures such as fountains or architectural pedestals. The transformation of these decorative elements on a larger scale, and with increasingly emphasised expressions, has been understood by critics to reflect the decadence of Mannerism. Its monstrous forms have been interpreted as a symbol of the nightmare caused by the religious crises during the second part of the Renaissance. On the other hand, however, these exaggerated monsters cast a playful light on the Mannerists' appropriated images. In the architecture of the Renaissance, they were not intended to frighten; on the contrary, they were full of irony, enticing viewers to contemplate the allegorical meaning of each monster.<sup>369</sup>

In the two photographs considered here, Bardini brings a great subtlety to his examination of the *mascherone*, exploring its potential as a fragment to offer more than one reading, while at the same time

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<sup>367</sup> The author would like to thank the art dealer Antonella Longo-Turri in Milan, who pointed out to her that a very similar *mascherone* in Botticino marble is in the Santa Giulia Museum in Brescia.

<sup>368</sup> Enrica Neri Lusanna and Lucia Faedo, *Il Museo Bardini a Firenze: Le Sculture* (Milano, Electa, 1986), p. 291, photograph 357 and description.

<sup>369</sup> Carlo Cresti and Matteo Cosimo Cresti, *Mostri e altri prodigi di fantasia nelle architetture del manierismo e del modernismo* (Firenze, Pontecorboli, 1998), p. 7.

alluding to its origins. He seems to have taken great pleasure in photographing this head. In photograph **no. 8** he confers on the *mascherone* a sense of theatricality, using light and composition to highlight the man's features and expression, thus alluding to the style of Mannerism. Bardini's composition can be seen in parallel to the moral decline of Mannerism, often symbolised by monsters. Bardini's photograph suggests that the *mascherone* with his desperate expression is the victim of nineteenth century Florentine decline. In his photographs, Stefano Bardini reveals his dual role; the astute art dealer and the museum curator whose aim it is to rescue Italian heritage. As in the Renaissance and Mannerist periods, the monster always shows two faces: one beautiful and the other ugly, the good and the bad, representing opposing feelings. Its purpose as decorative architectural element was to constantly question the decorative role and to investigate architectural practice in an endless mirroring of aesthetic questions.<sup>370</sup>

Photograph **no. 7** meanwhile, can be seen as a humorous interpretation of influences of grotesques on high Renaissance art. It seems that Bardini with the composition of this photograph alluded to the reinterpretation of grotesques through the lens of the Renaissance in nineteenth-century decoration, while simultaneously also ironically quoting the grotesques. Bardini contributed with this photograph to a new form of interpretation of grotesque. It is interesting to consider the origins of grotesques and how they were reinterpreted in other historical periods. In the medieval period, the heritage of antiquity can be seen in various forms of artistic expression. It is difficult to determine precisely when medieval artists looked to antiquity for their decorative models, and which examples they copied while creating

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<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

their own grotesques. More importantly, antiquity exerted a sustained influence on the period's art, generating in the fourteenth century a new interest in classical forms, something which contributed significantly to the development of Renaissance culture. Grotesque motifs are common in the decorative sculpture of the quattrocento, since ancient fragments were increasingly visible in sarcophagi, chimneypieces and tombs. The paintings of the Domus Aurea had just been discovered (ca. 1480) and fascinatingly, Renaissance humanists began to create a new decorative language combining classical and medieval motifs.<sup>371</sup> This vocabulary, at first purely decorative, was used on the frames of paintings, and in vertical elements of architecture such as pilasters and architraves. However, it gradually assumed a symbolic meaning which varied according to the context in which was inserted, from the religious to the philosophical. Quattrocento artists made important variations to the grotesques that inspired them, expanding the original *candelabre* pattern with more elaborate foliage and monster figures.<sup>372</sup> These images often alluded to medieval sculpture or heraldic symbols in order to commemorate the artist's patron and to create an eclectic effect; the artist's choice of motif demonstrated their knowledge of traditional forms, which they transformed into a personal language with a new, authentic iconography.<sup>373</sup> If the quattrocento grotesques represented a new language created by the convergence of different styles and periods, then cinquecento humanists adopted the motif initially as a tribute to their historical heritage. The artists used colour and shape with greater freedom in this period and the multifaceted potential of the grotesque was widely explored, its use extending from painting and architecture

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<sup>371</sup> Alessandra Zamperini, *Les Grotesques* tr. Odile Menegaux (first published in Italy in 2007, Paris, Citadelles & Mazenod, 2007), 'Domus Aurea', pp. 29-31 and 38. *Ibid.*, 'Renaissance interpretation' pp. 121-134.

<sup>372</sup> Zamperini, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-106.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-112.

to ceramics, wallpaper and jewellery. In Raphael's studio and in his work in the Vatican, the motif was widely used and explored to its maximum extent, translated as part of a complete re-appropriation of the past.<sup>374</sup>

During the nineteenth-century, the term 'grotesque' took on a wider meaning; it was used in literature and psychoanalysis, for example, to refer to imaginative stories with intricate and elaborate visual descriptions, while in visual art during this period, the representation of grotesques was transformed. It is interesting to note their shift from influencer to influenced. Stefano Bardini's creation of this three dimensional grotesque seems to underline his historical shift between the interpretation of High-Renaissance grotesques and their transformation into the nineteenth-century works of art. The most interesting classical grotesques were executed in grisaille emulating sculpture and bas-relief. Bardini did the opposite and created a grotesque quotation using sculpture in a witty manner. Furthermore, with the use of column fragments, Bardini is re-composing different shapes freely and in anticipation of his future eclectic style found in his *reinvenzioni antiquariali*. Photographs 6, 7 and 8 show how these sculpture fragments combine with each other, creating an entirely new sculpture, or *reinvenzione antiquariale*. They anticipate the aesthetic changes that occurred at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth-century.

Photograph no. 8 presents a clear composition: a dark background and a white floor, which together provide a theatrical definition of the space; a stage. The light is bright, and falls evenly from the right-hand side, giving the *mascherone's* face a theatrically intense expression of

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-134.

pain. Indeed, the *mascherone* is actually seen here as a theatrical mask. This head was almost certainly created as part of a larger sculptural composition; alone, its facial expression seems to represent its horror at becoming the protagonist of the scene. The *mascherone*, positioned against a dark background on top of two fragments of columns, lends the photograph a dramatic aspect which is heightened by the use of chiaroscuro. As a result, the *mascherone* is transformed into an important and unique sculpture, losing its original function as a decorative element, normally situated at high level on the façade of a Renaissance palazzo beneath the cornice.

In the nineteenth-century in particular, architects were looking back to the trecento and quattrocento for exemplary models of proportion and composition; gradually they began to construct a new interpretation of architecture based on the combination of earlier forms. In Florence, more than in other Italian cities, this new architectural programme flourished. The clearest example is the façade of Santa Croce, like the Duomo, a nineteenth-century reconstruction, in which the shapes characteristic of these two periods are intertwined.<sup>375</sup> The ideals of the Risorgimento seem to have been reflected in its architecture, where the combination of styles, especially those of the medieval and Renaissance periods came to represent the evolution of a new country, visually symbolised by its most significant historical periods. Fragments of the past assumed political connotations in Bardini's day. This language was neither Roman nor Gothic nor Renaissance in character, but was instead the result of their amalgamation; a combination of forms from the past reinterpreted and displayed with a newly decorative function.<sup>376</sup> The *mascherone*'s function appears to

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<sup>375</sup> Gabriele Morolli, 'Gli armonici innesti della modernità' in *Viaggio in Toscana* ed. Maurizio Bossi and Max Seidel (Venezia, Marsilio, 1988), p. 210.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

have changed, as it had become an essentially decorative object; yet how can one understand the history of this object if there is no record of it? Conceptually speaking, a fragment is a celebration of a specific aspect of the past, with a double meaning. On the one hand, the fragment evokes the past; on the other, it evinces historical change with its new function and setting in the present.

The broken statue reformulates its being and offers us a new aesthetic unity.<sup>377</sup> This sentence describes perfectly what Bardini shows the viewer in these photographs. Fragments take on their own meaning, which is different to that of unspoiled pieces, and their brokenness challenges our understanding even as they allude to their historical past. Every single fragment comprises a moment in history, which would not be visible in an intact piece. Interestingly, Professor Robert Ginsberg says that once a sculptural ruin is removed from its original context and placed in a museum or private collection, it assumes the role of art, whereas if it is left on its original site it is not perceived as a work of art but simply as a ruin.

The sculptural ruin, though it too may have been caused by nature, changes state in the art-domain yet does not leave for the new territory under the co-dominion of nature and artifice. The sculptural ruin, once it is removed to the museum, public square, or private house, is art. If it remains on site, it is more likely to be experienced as non-art, though it may be aesthetically endowed like the architectural ruin.<sup>378</sup>

The traces of gold in the *mascherone* raise the question of its uncertain provenance and function, while the absence of information about its past transforms it into something new, conferring on that absence a

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<sup>377</sup> Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2004), p. 222.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

power that is both compelling while at the same time unconvincing. The context of the fragments endows them with the authority to speak of the past. As Ginsberg points out, the change of context from original to new brings about a subtle difference: display becomes the new geography, which confers on the piece a new role. Bardini's photographs represent a moment of historical transition because they bear witness to that specific moment and that specific period. The fragments they depict, lacking description or information, construct a new kind of vocabulary. In the display and composition of Bardini's photographs, they are reborn as different objects, and can therefore be reclassified and re-introduced into history, thereby creating new information and, in the dialogue with other fragments also a new vocabulary related to their new display and use.

In photograph no. 7 the references to the Renaissance seem more obvious: the *mascherone* figure was inspired by classical decorative motifs of grotesques. Displayed and lit differently, it assumes a more joyful expression than in the previous photograph. The plant pot on the top of the figure's head has a certain irony; it seems to integrate the head into the vertical pattern characteristic of grotesques, which interlink plants and the faces of monsters in a continuous drawing. The chosen pedestals show floral and shell decorations – not an arbitrary choice, as these two decorative patterns were common in the *candelabre*. The second style of grotesque (dating from the twentieth year of the first century BC) is a useful example of the inspiration for this photograph. Here, the evolving pattern of the grotesque manifests itself chiefly through an increasing verticality: the column is gradually replaced by the *candelabre*, which is interlinked with the figures of animals, monsters and other anthropomorphic creatures along with shells, flowers and plants; and the space is geometrically divided into

square or rectangular grilles. In this still life therefore, the *mascherone* does not appear in the role of protagonist, but instead as part of a whole composition. Bardini is imitating the grisaille effect using natural light to create a soft chiaroscuro. The wall in the background with rectangular divisions seems to repeat the drawing style found on the original grotesques, where the geometrical pattern behind the figures appears. It is fascinating to see how the composition of this photograph, which quotes grotesque motifs, recreates the three different forms of the grotesque. First, the archetypal antique form, with a ‘grisaille effect:’ the painting technique of grisaille was originally used to imitate sculpture, but the photograph does the opposite, using sculpture to re-evolve painting. Second, the Mannerist quotation, with its integration of sculptural and architectural elements; and finally there is the nineteenth-century interpretation, which combines spare fragments to generate eclectic assemblages. Just as, in the same period, the inspiration of antiquity was felt in various other decorative fields, such as ceramics with the Ceramiche Cantagalli or wood carving of which the Coppede studio may be the best example, producing all kinds of furniture with motifs of antiquity, it is possible to read in Bardini’s photograph the combination of all these elements.<sup>379</sup>

Bardini’s photographs show different historical periods, integrated in his contemporary history and Nietzsche’s classification of historical periods offers a useful tool to analyse the *mascherone* photograph. As Stephen Bann observes in his essay *Clio in Part: On Antiquarianism and the Historical Fragment*, Nietzsche was concerned not merely with the rhetorical strategies of the historian, but with different ways of integrating the experience of the past into the texture of contemporary

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<sup>379</sup> Zamperini, *op. cit.*, p. 277.



life.<sup>380</sup> Nietzsche distinguished three kinds of history: monumental, antiquarian and critical.<sup>381</sup> With these two photographs Bardini looks at history in these three different ways. The *mascherone* displayed as a quotation from the Roman period evokes a glorious past and becomes monumental history; Bardini pays tribute to Roman history by creating an evocative image of it. In collecting this piece he positions himself as an antiquarian historian. Lastly, the photograph is a narrative of critical history: the fragments are results of overlapping historical events, and as such they bear witness to the evolution of history.

### **Photograph (no. 9) of the main entrance of Palazzo Mozzi Bardini**

Following the thread of Burckhardt's writing in parallel with Bardini's photograph we can see in this photograph how the *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*, which presents a fragmented pattern, and Bardini's photographic display share a common language. Both Burckhardt's fragmented notes and Bardini's artistic and architectural fragments reveal history. Burckhardt's main intention was to offer a conscious, introspective meditation on the expression of architecture in the Renaissance. As Murray observes, Burckhardt read all of the primary sources available at the time in order to write the book;<sup>382</sup> however, those sources were inevitably filtered through his idealisation of the Renaissance. Both Burckhardt and Bardini construct parallel 'languages' in which, respectively, written words evoke images; and images conjure up written descriptions. Burckhardt pays particular attention to the Renaissance tomb and its relation to the reputation of

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<sup>380</sup> Stephen Bann, 'Clio in Part: On Antiquarianism and the Historical Fragment' in *Perspecta* (vol. 23, 1987, pp. 24-37), p. 26.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote no. 4 on Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Use and Abuse of History*.

<sup>382</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*, tr. James Palmer, ed. Peter Murray (London, Secker & Warburg, 1985), p. XV.

the person – now deceased – who had commissioned it, explaining that such fame can only be translated by means of art. In a similar way Bardini displayed fragments of tombs anonymously, as a celebration of a period rather than a person. In this image one can clearly see a visual representation of Burckhardt’s ‘duty of the work of art’, whether commemorative – celebrating a person or event – or as an object used for a designated purpose in its Renaissance context. While associating disparate elements in his display of sculptures, tombs, *lapides* and columns, Bardini created the kind of historical, fragmented dialogue that Burckhardt considered more effective than chronological reconstruction for the understanding of history. It is in this lack of chronology that Burckhardt’s theories emerge. A work of art should not be seen and displayed in chronological order because it is shaped by historical influences which can repeat themselves over time – not necessarily as a consequence of previous episodes, but as an independent crossing-over or echoing of themes. Lowith suggests that for Burckhardt, the history of art through time is an instrument that helps the viewer to see the complex phenomenon of beauty and the wider phenomenon of history.<sup>383</sup>

Photograph no. 9 shows the main entrance of palazzo Mozzi Bardini. Here we can see how the display of sculptures and bas-reliefs seems to refer to Burckhardt’s *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* as it follows the evolution of proto-Renaissance and Gothic styles in Italian architecture region by region and offers the most representative examples from every city, along with a discussion of Renaissance theorists and the influence of antiquity. Burckhardt took into consideration churches, monasteries and other religious buildings.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>384</sup> Photograph no. 6031BR numbered according to the Servizio di catalogazione dei Musei Civici Fiorentini – Stefano Bardini Archive.

Here the use of perspective is the most striking aspect and the display of sculptures and bas-reliefs at different heights is once again in contrast with Wölfflin's theories. However, the final result is harmonic, each piece here is interpreted and extrapolated from its context and becomes part of an architectural whole.

In the *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* Burckhardt went on to pursue a lengthy analysis of the meaning of tombs in relation to the importance of the individuals commissioning them:

The monumental tomb of the Renaissance, incomparably the most important task of decorative art combined with sculpture, originated essentially under the cult of fame. The desire of the individual for an imperishable name and the zeal of a city or corporation to honour its celebrated members, both needed to support the arts.<sup>385</sup>

Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) in *De re aedificatoria* considers the important social value of tombs and the relationship between the living and the dead and the educational function of tombs and funerary monuments, raising a political issue, the issue of representation of power.<sup>386</sup> Stefano Bardini, aware of the importance of historical tombs, displayed several in prominent positions in his showroom, as we can see in the photograph **no. 9**. Furthermore, in Florence perspective assumed a symbolic value as it was associated with the political pattern represented in the city.<sup>387</sup> Bardini in this photograph asserts the importance of his collection establishing through the use of perspective a hierarchical scale with a theatrical interpretation. This composition uses perspective and symmetry to create a hierarchical arrangement wherein each piece is attributed its

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<sup>385</sup> Burckhardt, 1985, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>386</sup> Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e Rivoluzioni: Movimenti Culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo* (Bari, Laterza, 1975), p. 184.

<sup>387</sup> Ludovico Zorzi, *Il teatro e la città* (Torino, Giulio Einaudi, 1977), pp. 64-65.

own role. Perspective, in particular, produces an enfilade of spaces, culminating in the central and most important sculpture of Pope Boniface III which had come from the old façade of the Duomo and which had been in Bardini's collection in 1891. The walls are crowded with *lesene*, columns, tombs, bas-reliefs and coats of arms, all displayed symmetrically to enable the viewer to interrogate the similarities and differences between the works of art. In his essay: 'Historical Text and Historical Object: The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny' Stephen Bann writes:

... the strategy of Du Sommerard's Musée de Cluny, in which the object from the past becomes the basis for an integrative forming of historical totalities... Each object gave access to the milieu and the living historical characters with whom he had once been identified, through a process that was ultimately grounded in the myth of the resurrection of the past ...<sup>388</sup>

Looking at Bardini's photographs and considering his work in the context of his contemporaries, it is clear that Bardini, while he was documenting his interior displays and the works of art in his collection, took pleasure in the use of sophisticated photographic techniques, using photography not only as a documentary tool but also exploring its creative possibilities. Bardini demonstrates with these photographs how his interpretation of works of art is dominated by his creativity, compared with Wölfflin's philological approach to the photography of sculpture which purely for the purpose of the study of art.

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<sup>388</sup> Stephen Bann, 'Historical Text and Historical Object: The Poetics of the Musée de Cluny' in *History of Theory* (vol. 17, no. 3 Oct. 1978, pp. 251-266), pp. 258-259.

## Chapter Three

### **The International milieu in Florence, their palazzi ‘house-museums’ and the creation of the Stefano Bardini palazzo.**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an outline of Florentine society in relation to Stefano Bardini from the middle of the nineteenth century until the first two decades of the twentieth century: including his acquaintances, their art collections, and their houses that became house-museums. This chapter will also examine how the boundary between museums and the display of collections in private houses was blurred, generating different interpretations of the medieval and Renaissance revival, from eclecticism to philological reconstruction.

The analysis of the photograph representing a suggestion of an interior will show how Bardini simultaneously sought the attention of both private collectors and museum curators. From this image, rich in historical quotation and mainly focusing on *paliotti*, the study leads on to a more detailed analysis of these *paliotti* and their use through history. The following section is dedicated to the creation of palazzo Mozzi Bardini, a site imbued with history, which became both Bardini’s trademark and a representation of the emerging eclecticism of nineteenth century Florence.

Following this historical description of the creation of palazzo Mozzi Bardini, the matter of reproductions and fakes is analysed in order to see how, in nineteenth-century studies and specifically in Bardini’s work, it had become an important issue. The architect Corinto Corinti and Stefano Bardini cooperated in the project of the Bardini palazzo

and looking at their works, Bardini's photographs and Corinti's drawings, the *cartoline*, one can see a parallel between their two different ways of cataloguing fragments and exploring history of art through them. The final section will look at the diverse ways Florentine palazzi were created by some of the more significant of Bardini's English acquaintances. It will also look at the relationship between Bardini and two of his Florentine friends and colleagues in order to contextualise the complexity of Bardini's time in Florence. This will lead to further studies related to his business and private relationships.

In the late nineteenth century, Italy and especially Florence became the favoured destination of travellers and intellectuals from all over the world. It was a place of freedom for many international visitors, offering them an opportunity to make a fresh start while at the same time recreating the lives of their medieval and Renaissance ancestors. In Italy, Germany and France in particular, scholars and intellectuals sought to identify their countries' cultural identities with those of the medieval and Renaissance periods in order to promote new ideals for their nations and foster a sense of belonging to a historical period generally considered to be the beginning of a new civilisation.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a strong interest in Italian art was generated by several historical publications about

Italian civilisation during the Renaissance.<sup>389</sup> However, the process of reclaiming Italian Gothic, medieval and Renaissance styles inevitably entailed re-interpretation, contributing substantially to changes in artistic and architectural taste, which in turn generated completely new Renaissance and Gothic inspired forms. A number of English and Americans chose to live in the city and on the hills around Florence. The city offered the opportunity to live surrounded by art and to become part of an art scene that at various times, and in its various guises, gathered together the most interesting scholars, collectors, art dealers and curators from Europe and America.<sup>390</sup> In the newcomers' attempts to retrace the past of their newly acquired Florentine houses, every single historical object and piece of furniture became a work of art. The study of medieval and Renaissance art was so intense that amateurs and scholars alike identified with the people of those periods. Past and present were endlessly intertwined. Collectors therefore linked themselves to their new homes through their art collections. This was the first time in the history of collecting that both

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<sup>389</sup> Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992). In the introduction, Fraser suggests that the Renaissance was an invention of the nineteenth century: 'Jules Michelet is normally invoked as the first to have attempted to formulate the modern idea of the Renaissance in his 1855 introduction to the volume on the sixteenth century, *Histoire de France*. In 1860, Jacob Burckhardt focussed on the Italian Renaissance in his book, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*. In England, William Roscoe's publication of *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* in 1795 and Vernon Lee's *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* in 1895, marked a tremendous growth of interest in Italian Renaissance History and Art in England. James J. Sheehan, *The German Renaissance in America: The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century* (Acts of an International Conference Florence, Villa i Tatti 9 11 June 1999), p. 48. Von August Buck and Cesare Vasoli, *Il Rinascimento nell' Ottocento in Italia e Germania* (Annali dell' Istituto Storico Italo Germanico di Trento (Bologna, Mulino/Berlin, Dunker & Humblot, 1987), pp. 10 15. Francis Haskell, 'Prefazione' and Giovanna De Lorenzi 'Testimonianze Bibliografiche di Collezionismo a Firenze' in *L'Idea di Firenze* eds. Maurizio Bossi and Lucia Tonini (Firenze, Centro Di, 1986), pp. 9 11 and pp.143 146. Marcello Fantoni, 'Introduzione' and Luigi Mascilli Migliorini 'Rinascimento Fiorentino e crisi della coscienza Europea' in *Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze* ed. Marcello Fantoni ( Washington DC, Georgetown University/ Fiesole, Bulzoni, 1997), pp. 13 21 and pp. 23 33.

<sup>390</sup> Francesca Baldry, 'Abitare e collezionare: note sul collezionismo fiorentino tra la fine dell'ottocento e gli inizi del novecento' in *Herbert Percy Horne e Firenze* ed. Elisabetta Nardinocchi (Firenze, Edizioni della Meridiana, 2005), p. 103.

objects intended for special occasions and those meant for everyday use became works of art. The collectors lived through their collections, and their collections lived alongside them.<sup>391</sup> Private houses, with their art collections and furniture displays, began to imitate museums, and the new phenomenon of the house-museum was created. In this new way of living with art, the personality and cultural background of the owner would dominate his aesthetic and artistic choices. In the attempt to please both categories – museum curators and private collectors – Bardini's photographs are sometimes ambiguous, and their iconography can be seen to reflect the taste and needs of both audiences. The same can be said for other photographs of the time that show various interiors recreated in Florence; in addition there exist exhibition catalogues and contemporary magazines that testify to this tendency.<sup>392</sup>

The international élite had been flocking to Florence since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Here, the privacy of overseas visitors and settlers was secure and society was formed of a mixture of nationalities: a third of the city's inhabitants were Italian, a third English, and the rest French, German, Russian and Polish.<sup>393</sup> Florentine culture thus received very different influences from the different communities that populated the city during the nineteenth century. The Russians, for example, participated fully in Italian social life – its feasts and traditions. One of the most important examples of

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<sup>391</sup> Baldry, *op. cit.*, 2005 p. 106.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107 footnote n.17. *Catalogo dell'Esposizione in occasione del centenario di Dante nelle sale della Reale Accademia di Belle Arti Firenze* (Firenze, A. Bettini, 1865) *Catalogo dell'Esposizione Italiana agraria industriale e artistica tenuta in Firenze nel 1861* (Firenze, Barbera, 1861) *Esposizione d'arte antica nel refettorio dell'ex convento di Santa Croce e nel Cappellone dei Pazzi in Firenze* (Tipografia dell'arte della Stampa, 1880) C. Boito, *Il Castello Medievale: Ricordo dell'Esposizione di Torino 1884* (Milano, Treves, 1884), footnote no. 18

<sup>393</sup> Marcello Vannucci, *L'Avventura degli stranieri in Toscana* (Aosta, Musemecci, 1981), p. 14.



Russian presence in Florence was the Demidoff family, who actively contributed and influenced the political and cultural life of the city.<sup>394</sup> The German community tended not to mix with Italians; instead they lead separate lives devoted to the study of the arts.

The spread of Burckhardt's theories and the creation of the Kunsthistorisches Institut revolutionised approaches to the study of the arts in Italy and in Europe.<sup>395</sup> Regardless of approaches to Florence and Florentines, all the foreign communities had a considerable effect on the city's native cultural pattern. The English community was probably the oldest and the largest in Florence. English collectors and travellers had been accustomed to taking the Grand Tour on the continent and Florence was one of their main destinations.<sup>396</sup> The English rediscovered Italy in the years between 1820 and 1848, after the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire.<sup>397</sup> Napoleon travelled only to conquer, and this had imposed a period of pause on the Grand Tour travellers. Once balance in Europe had been re-established by the Congress of Vienna, English travellers started to return to Italy.<sup>398</sup> The beauty of the city of Florence, its picturesque surroundings, its wonderful libraries and the access it offered to the arts, along with lower living costs than elsewhere in Europe, all encouraged the influx of visitors. The presence of the English in the city was so numerous that those native to Florence assumed every new visitor to be English.

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<sup>394</sup> Julia Glusakova, 'Il ruolo dei Demidoff nello sviluppo dei rapporti culturali tra l'Italia e la Russia'. Tat'jana Trosina, 'I Demidoff collezionisti e mecenati nella prima metà del XIX secolo: dalle carte dell'archivio di Ekaterinburg'. Oleg Neverov, 'Le sculture antiche nella collezione Demidoff' in *I Demidoff a Firenze e in Toscana* ed. Lucia Tonini (Firenze, Olschki, 1996), pp. 17-32 and 145-164.

<sup>395</sup> Vannucci, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>396</sup> Mary Webster, *Firenze e L'Inghilterra: rapporti artistici e culturali dal XVI al XX secolo* (Firenze Palazzo Pitti, Centro Di luglio-settembre 1971) Introduzione.

<sup>397</sup> Marcello Fantoni, 'Renaissance republics and principalities in Anglo American historiography' in *Gli anglo-americani a Firenze: Idea e costruzione del Rinascimento* ed. Marcello Fantoni (Roma, Bulzoni, 2000), p. 37.

<sup>398</sup> Giuliana Artom Treves, *Anglo Fiorentini di Cento Anni Fa* (first published in 1953, Firenze, Sansoni, 1982), p. 3.

‘Some English have arrived,’ as Giuliana Artom Treves reports in her book.<sup>399</sup>

However, life in Florence or with Florentine culture was not always peaceful. The city’s overseas visitors included a vocal group of protestors against the destruction of the old city of Florence. In an article in *The Times* in December 1898, the English writer Vernon Lee discussed her role as member of a new-born organisation for safeguarding Florence’s artistic and cultural heritage. The organisation in question had become an important institution in the city and was supported by various other international individuals. In 1898 a committee of Florentine intellectuals, together with foreign members such as John Temple Leader, Frederick Stibbert, Adolf von Hildebrand and Robert Davison, took part in a protest against the ongoing damage being inflicted on the original structure of the city.<sup>400</sup> The need to save Florence and preserve its history became the most pressing issue of the time. Bardini’s relationship to these events was ambivalent: on the one hand, the destruction of the old town was a source of fragments and works of art for collection and sale; on the other hand, he was a member of the committee for the creation and exhibition of the Museo Bargello collection.

While researching Florentine history, foreigners especially the English as new inhabitants, introduced to Florence their revised ideas of the city, its artistic traditions and its history. This generated a new way of collecting art, which was in accordance with Romantic ideals. The influence of the English in Florence was at first felt in the re-creation of the palazzi in which they lived and created their art

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<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>400</sup> Daniela Lamberini, ‘Herbert Percy Horne: architetto restauratore e membro dell’associazione per la difesa di Firenze antica’ in *Herbert Percy Horne e Firenze* ed. Elisabetta Nardinocchi (Firenze, Edizioni della Meridiana, 2005), p. 56.

collections. Therefore there is a constant intertwining between the inspirations behind the various private houses, palazzi and museums. The ‘call’ to the genius loci began from a cultural-archaeological rather than an architectural point of view, characteristic of the early medieval revival. The English began by rescuing derelict palazzi and architectural fragments in order to re-establish contact with the past and to relive history following the example of Lenoir and Du Sommerard.<sup>401</sup>

When Stefano Bardini appeared on the Florentine scene these practices had already been widely adopted and he was thus following the fashion set by his predecessors, the first English visitors, to create art collections and display them in their private palazzi. While these early collectors came from the Romantic tradition, Bardini some thirty years later added a new form of eclecticism to the reinterpretation of the medieval and Renaissance period. He blended together the examples of the new European and Italian museums, German art-historical studies and contemporary Florentine history, which was inevitably represented by fragments. The Romantic attraction to the art and architecture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was intensified by the availability of authentic art objects from these periods in every Italian region; with Tuscany, and particularly Florence being extremely rich. The desire to create and the desire to reproduce intersected so that nineteenth century artists sought to produce new versions of the original medieval and Renaissance art forms. As the city and region with the greatest number of examples of medieval and Renaissance art, Florence and Tuscany became symbolic of Italian culture as a whole from these periods.<sup>402</sup> However,

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<sup>401</sup>Renato Bordone, *Lo Specchio di Shalott: L'invenzione del Medioevo nella cultura dell'ottocento* (Napoli, Liguori, 1993), p. 49. Bann, 1978, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-266.

<sup>402</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 59.

symbolising Italian culture through copies of original artworks and buildings generated an interesting point of discussion. Was Florence a ‘fake city’ imitating its past or was it the representation of a new Italian identity, where copies/fakes had become blended with originals representing a new culture? How was the humanist Italian identity perceived and what was its impact on the creation of a new country?

Stefano Bardini, as a sensitive interpreter of his time and unconsciously, a very modern art collector, blended in his collection originals and copies. In his workshop, Bardini employed a large number of skilful artisans capable of restoring and reproducing works of art precisely according to the wishes of their clients. The artist-writer Riccardo Nobile (1859–1939) wrote an exhaustive book on this subject.<sup>403</sup> *The Gentle Art of Faking: the History and Methods of Producing Imitations and Spurious Works of Art from the Earliest Times up to the Present Day* was published in 1922 and provided an interesting historical disquisition on forgery, including an analysis of the techniques of falsification adopted in different historical periods.<sup>404</sup> In chapter XV ‘imitations and fakers’ he says:

We now enter in the department of the curio dealer’s silent helpers, the manifold activities assembled under the broad if not indefinite name of restorer...That the restorer should be

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<sup>403</sup> Giancarlo Gentilini, ‘Donatello fra Sette e Ottocento’ in *Omaggio a Donatello 1386–1986* (Firenze Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Associazione Amici del Bargello 19 dicembre 1985–30 maggio 1986), pp. 442–443. Riccardo Nobile was a wealthy, cosmopolitan, eclectic amateur artist with a deep knowledge of French impressionist painting, a musician, sculptor and sophisticated connoisseur of Renaissance art, and a frequent advisor to Pierpont Morgan. Antonio Maraini *Riccardo Nobile* (Firenze Societa’ Leonardo da Vinci, catalogo mostra 24 marzo - 4 aprile 1940 Firenze Tipografia Ariani), pp. 1–20. Riccardo Nobile was a painter with origins from macchiaioli, acquainted with Giovanni Fattori (1825–1908), Telemaco Signorini (1825–1901) and pupil of Antonio Ciseri (1821–1891). Nobile had a strong interest in writing about art, he wrote his two books in Italian and translated them in English as they were addressed to the International art clientele gravitating around Florence.

<sup>404</sup> Riccardo Nobile, *The Gentle Art of Faking: The History of the Methods of Producing Imitations and Spurious Works of Art from the Earliest Times up to the Present Day* (London, Seely Service & Co., 1922).

called the curio dealer's silent partner is quite correct as true definition.<sup>405</sup>

According to Nobili, reproducing works of art was a common practice in all art historical periods and reached its peak in Florence at that time. The skill of Florentine craftsmen, who had inherited techniques from their medieval and Renaissance predecessors, was seen by new buyers as an incredible opportunity to relive the past by reproducing historical masterpieces.<sup>406</sup> However, Nobili, even if he understood the historical reasons for reproducing fakery, deplored the practice of faking, especially when it was used to deceive naïve clients who, in search of fascinating pieces, totally relied on the art dealer's judgment. Detailed descriptions of actual faking processes show how this practice was widely performed in Italy ever since Greek and Roman art was first collected.<sup>407</sup> As a result, copies of medieval and Renaissance art, sculpture, ceramics, painting and furniture became immensely fashionable; often commissioned by collectors, scholars and even old Florentine families for use in their interiors. Indeed, many noble Florentine families were selling off their original works and substituting them with copies.

However, it was also during this period that the debate about counterfeit versus original art became extremely important. While the word 'fake' has a very negative connotation, implying condemnation for the alteration or suppression of an original, in reality fakes and counterfeits often have interesting and diverse origins; not only in the abstract sense but also in historical and social terms. It is worth investigating the reasons for the existence of a fake, as this can offer

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<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>406</sup> Giancarlo Gentilini, 'Arti applicate, tradizione artistica fiorentina e committenti starnieri' in *L'Idea di Firenze* eds. Maurizio Bossi and Lucia Tonini (Firenze, Centro Di, Atti del Convegno, 17, 18, 19 dicembre 1986), p.155.

<sup>407</sup> Nobili, 1922, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-180.

great insight into both the fake and the original work. After all, the copy may reflect its own historical context, making it a work of art in itself.<sup>408</sup> Nobili cited the opinion of a curator of the Victoria and Albert Museum:

[...] who at the time used to pay due tribute to the art of good imitators and fakers, who had succeeded in deceiving the vigilant eye of the guardian of the museums, by stating that imitations are really too good to be mistaken for antiques, much better, indeed, than some of the examples of the art they would falsify.<sup>409</sup>

Umberto Eco, in his essay 'Fakes and Forgeries' analyses how works of art can be viewed both as originals or copies, depending on their historical time and their purpose.<sup>410</sup> Eco says that some works of art are difficult to reproduce because of the materials they are made of or their way of being created; these pieces illustrate the concept of *authorial authenticity*.<sup>411</sup> This aspect was important for nineteenth century collectors as well in the creation of museum collections. However, this was also a period where to relive and compete with the skill of quattrocento and cinquecento artists was part of the process of learning and doing of art. In fact, this aspect authorised collectors and museums to display originals and copies with a comparative study between periods, or even - especially in private collections - with an aesthetic purpose. Eco makes a distinction between the perception of the identity of one piece when it is unique and when it has been copied, and discusses the importance of the original when compared to the copy. These trains of thought open up interesting questions such as: how much does the identity of the original change once it has

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<sup>408</sup> Roberto delle Donne, 'I Falsi nel Medioevo' in *Quaderni Medievali* (no. 23, 1987), pp. 159-174.

<sup>409</sup> Nobili, 1922, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>410</sup> Umberto Eco, 'Fakes and Forgeries' in *The Limits of Interpretation* ed. Umberto Eco (Bloomington and Indianapolis Indiana, University Press, 1994), pp. 174-202.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

been copied and does this effect the value placed on the piece by its owner? Frequently this was for purely aesthetic reasons. Symmetry was an important issue in art displays; to have a double of a sculpture or a chair was more important than having a single piece. The value placed on symmetry indicates that it was the whole display that was the ultimate work of art, rather than any individual pieces.

Frequently, in the practice of collectors, the temporal priority becomes more important than the presence of irreproducible features. Thus in statuary, where it is sometimes possible to cast a copy which possesses all the features of the original, temporal priority plays a crucial role, even though the original may have lost some of its features (for instance the nose is broken) while the copy is exactly as the original originally was. In such cases one says that artistic fetishism prevails over aesthetic taste.<sup>412</sup>

Stefano Bardini often re-created missing pieces of sculptures and bas-reliefs in his restorations in order to reassure uncertain clients who desired an original in pristine condition. Eco brings to our attention the example of the Parthenon in Athens and its American copy in Nashville. The Nashville version was re-created following the exact criteria of the original Parthenon; therefore it could be considered original. However, it is not the material or craftsmanship that determines authenticity but rather the date of creation, and this is one criterion that the Nashville Parthenon cannot fulfil. Therefore the Parthenon in Athens is considered more “authentic” and more “beautiful” than the American one.<sup>413</sup> Eco also asserts that the only original works of art in history are classical antiquities, since after that, copies and restorations alter the original.<sup>414</sup> Therefore in history of art, the words fake and copy have blurred in their definitions. It would seem that Bardini and his contemporaries accepted, and worked, according to this the same principle.

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<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Every period romanticises the past, and in many cases copying works of art is a way of paying homage to what has gone before.<sup>415</sup> The nineteenth century was certainly one of the moments of history in which the past was most greatly revered. Forgeries created for the purpose of veneration have to be understood on their own terms. In the case of personal commissions, it is obvious that copies were made for the sake of art itself and for the pleasure of art. Even more interestingly, these copies inevitably embody the spirit of their own time, thus accruing two different meanings: one based on inspiration from the past and the other based on contemporary interpretation. Furthermore, the copy is not always faithful to the original; during the nineteenth century, for example, many copies had their own manner of interpreting their subjects:

The explanation of this apparent contradiction lies in the fact that the conception which any period has of any previous one is never objective but is always tinged by its own particular ideas; every period sees the past and its art with different eyes. When a forger who is also something of an artist imitates a past style, his work is, so to speak, more classic or Gothic or Renaissance than the original itself could be. Then in a certain way the forgery is for a while more genuine than the original itself.<sup>416</sup>

When the first English travellers acquired palazzi in Florence, they transformed them according to their needs. Every Florentine house or palazzo had its own character and the new owners or inhabitants sought to recreate the lives of their Florentine predecessors while adding to this historical continuity their new tastes and new

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<sup>415</sup> Hans Tietze, 'The psychology and aesthetics of forgery in art' in *Metropolitan Museum Studies* (vol. 5 no. 1, 1934, pp. 1-19), p. 3.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.



interpretations of the past, for which they themselves hoped to be recognised by posterity.

The interior represents the private universe, it gathers what is distant and past. The sitting room is the stage of the world [...]. The interior is the place of art. The real inhabitant of it is the collector. He is in charge of the transfiguration of things [...] and confers on them an aesthetic value – the love of the amateur for his work – rather than a functional value. The collector is transported by the dream not only of a distant and past world, but also of a better world, in which humans do not need useful things, things are freed from their duties. The interior is not just a universe but also a private space. Living means leaving traces.<sup>417</sup>

The process of reinterpreting medieval and Renaissance architecture and decoration is clearly visible in the refurbishment of buildings and the commissioning of furniture and frescoes emulating the past. The arrival of the English and a little while later, the Americans, as new buyers of art constituted an extremely significant step in the evolution of the arts in Florence. This is evident from both the art collections of the time and the creation of new furniture and craft items, especially those owned or commissioned by English and American collectors.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>417</sup>Baldry, 2005, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–106 and p.122 footnote no. 14. The quotation is from Walter Benjamin, 'Louis Philippe oder der interieur' in *Schriften* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), pp. 414–416, quoted in Mario Praz, *La filosofia dell'arredamento: i mutamenti nel gusto della decorazione interna attraverso i secoli dell'antica Roma ai nostri tempi* (first published in 1964, Milano, Editori Associati, 1993), pp. 24–26. Author's translation. L'interno rappresenta l'universo del privato. Egli vi aduna ciò che è distante e passato. Il suo salotto è un palco del mondo [...]. L'interno è il luogo di rifugio dell'arte. Il vero abitante dell'interno è il collezionista. Egli s'incarica della trasfigurazione delle cose [...] e conferisce loro un valore di amatore del luogo e del loro valore d'uso. Il collezionista non solo si trasporta in sogno in un mondo distante o passato, ma anche in pari tempo in un mondo migliore, in cui gli uomini non sono provvisti delle cose delle quali abbisognano più che nel mondo d'ogni giorno, ma le cose sono libere dalla servitù d'essere utili. L'interno non è soltanto l'universo, ma anche l'astuccio privato. Abitare significa lasciare tracce.

<sup>418</sup> Bordone, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58. Gentilini, 1986, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–176.

### Photograph of a suggestion of a house museum interior

The parallel between house-museums and museum displays is clearly shown in photograph **no. 10**, the image seems to have been created to please all categories of viewers – private collectors, scholars and museum curators – suggesting the possibility of blending works of art and furniture.<sup>419</sup> The result lies somewhere between a museological display and the interior of a private palazzo. Analysis of this photograph reveals both the process of recreating an interior and its museological relevance.

The first detail worth noting is the care evidently taken by Bardini to frame the objects symmetrically. The long bench in the middle of the composition is a fifteenth-century church *portaceri*, a storage container for large church candles, with decorated ecclesiastic leather cushions displayed along the top. The back wall is stencilled in a *paliotti di cuoio* pattern accompanied by Renaissance-style flower decorations. Here it seems that Bardini was imitating Mantegna's artistic choices in the Ducal Palace in Mantua in the *Camera degli Sposi*, the frescoed walls of which were decorated with a *trompe l'oeil* imitating hangings of gilded leather.<sup>420</sup> This gives an indication of how precious leather hangings were considered at that time. Indeed, they tended only to be used on very special occasions.<sup>421</sup> Bardini not only collected actual examples of *paliotti* and *corami*. In order to emphasise their historical and artistic link with paintings and wealthy lavish interiors, he decorated some of the rooms of his gallery with stencils reproducing perfectly the patterns

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<sup>419</sup> Photograph **no. 6335BR** numbered according Fototeca dei Musei Civici Fiorentini- Stefano Bardini Archive.

<sup>420</sup> Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este (1471–1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 214.

<sup>421</sup> Guia Rossignoli, *I Cuoì D'Oro* (Firenze, Noèdizioni, 2009), p. 27. Isabella d'Este (1474–1539) reported in 1516 a preference for the gilded leather produced in Rome rather than in Ferrara.

of *paliotti* in their characteristically bright colours. During the refurbishment of the museum, several examples of this technique were found, and some were entirely reproduced in various shades, from blue and electric blue to red and green, similar to the copies of the originals in the collection.<sup>422</sup>

In this photograph display, Bardini emphasised the value of *paliotti* and *corami di cuoio*. Two empty golden frames enclose one portion of the stencil, and underneath is hung an original church *corame*. The framing of the *corame* separates it from its original function; transforming it into a decorative panel. Two children's heads are depicted symmetrically atop two *mensole*, and each head is topped by a shield. In the centre there is a polychrome wooden sculpture of Saint George and the dragon, probably German and dating from the fifteenth century, on either side of the sculpture hang two empty gilt frames. This kind of composition was extremely modern for its time.<sup>423</sup> The empty picture frames actually 'frame' the stencilled *paliotti* wall decoration as if it were a valuable work of art, an unusual technique of presentation at the time. Bardini showed how the *paliotti* could have been re interpreted and re used. This photograph is a good example for understanding Foucauldian genealogy. By taking a moment to look at the history of a type of artwork, tracing back from Bardini's use of it we can locate Bardini as an actor placed in the middle of a long process of development and various adaptations. He is playing around with ideas that have already shifted and changed, illustrating that arts and crafts have no fixed meaning.

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<sup>422</sup> The writer was present as voluntary assistant in 2008 during the restoration of the museum and witnessed these discoveries.

<sup>423</sup> The author thanks Antonella Longo Turri for help with the identification of the pieces in this photograph.

The use of *paliotti di cuoio*, *corami* and cushions began in Islamic Spain in the eighth century. Following the Islamic invasion, Spain became the centre of diverse artistic encounters between the Christian and the Islamic worlds. Such cultural meetings, including influences originating in Egyptian, Byzantine, Mesopotamian, central Asian and Indian culture, and subsequently assimilated to the Islamic world, produced a new figurative language.<sup>424</sup> One of the first examples of these leather hangings, perhaps part of a tapestry decorated in gold and dating from the eighth or ninth century, was discovered in the Mithraic Temple in London, and is today lodged in the Guildhall Museum. Further information about the manufacture of leather hangings was found in the writings of the twelfth-century monk Teofilo, who described the process of decorating hangings with gold.<sup>425</sup> Until the thirteenth century, most of the wall hangings in circulation were produced in Spain. The leather books that arrived in Naples in 1480 featured similar gold decorations; their route to Italy was probably through Spain. During the fifteenth century, Spain exported the technique to the rest of Europe and the Spanish colonies. As a result, the use of *corami* with golden decorations spread to the Italian and French courts, and in the following century new techniques for their manufacture were developed in Holland and Belgium. Antwerp became one of the most important sites of their production. Over the course of time the process of manufacturing *paliotti* evolved and this evolution culminated in some significant changes around 1628, which resulted in a new kind of *paliotti* with reliefs. This new style employed decorative elements such as plants, flowers and animals. Changes were also made to manufacturing techniques; by 1658, the pieces of leather were not sewn together, but rather glued in the attempt to create the effect of wallpaper. The images themselves were also changing, with an

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<sup>424</sup> Rossignoli, *op.cit.*, p. 23 and p.38. footnote no. 8.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24 and p.38 footnote no.12.

increasing emphasis on figurative subjects. *Paliotti* manufactured in Venice became very important – to the extent that in 1790 they were imported by Spain. From around 1530, and during the following two centuries, Venice imported leather from Persia, and exported the finished hangings to the Palazzo del Tè in Mantua. The leather exported from Constantinople to Venice was then often reimported back to Constantinople, so refined were Venetian manufacturing techniques.<sup>426</sup>

Although *paliotti* were made in various Italian regions, Venice became the centre of *paliotti* production in Italy. The leather hangings, initially found in churches, were gradually adopted by private wealthy households. They were not only hung on interior walls, but also used as decorations on headboards. In Florence, the inventories of Cosimo I and Eleonora of Toledo clearly refer to the use of *paliotti* along with tapestries and fabrics in the decoration of their houses. The inventories describe bright, contrasting colours such as green, red, blue and gold.<sup>427</sup> Leather hangings were adopted in England during the eighteenth century, most of which were decorated in Chinese designs featuring figures in Oriental-style costume. The last manufacturers of *paliotti* were found in England during the 1890s, and the themes of their decorations were clearly inspired by the Art Nouveau movement. From England, the manufacture of *paliotti* spread to Scandinavia. During the eighteenth century, however, the invention of wallpaper led to a decline in the use of leather hangings, which gradually went out of fashion.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>426</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>427</sup> Atilio Schiapparelli, *La casa fiorentina e i suoi arredi nei secoli XIV e XV* (first published in 1908, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1983), p. 229. Rossignoli, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

It was during the nineteenth century that interest in leather hangings peaked again among collectors and museums around Europe; and in Florence some of the most interesting examples can be found in Stibbert's and Bardini's collections. The reawakening of interest in collecting leather hangings generated a new surge in their production between 1830 and 1850; the images created then tending to emulate the most famous motifs of the Renaissance period. In the Vatican, the use of *paliotti* was sparse: according to some inventories, they were restricted to more formal or reception rooms in palazzi, while bedrooms and more intimate settings were still decorated with silk fabrics, fringed damask and golden embroideries.<sup>429</sup>

Stefano Bardini's collection of *corami* and *paliotti* includes a vast number of pieces, many of which he sold. His correspondence with Bode is the most valuable source of information on this matter. In 1884, Bode ordered from Bardini 28–30 metres of printed leather; and in 1886 he mentioned the acquisition of some ten pieces of leather for the crafts museum. In 1882, Bode described the purchase of two baroque leathers hangings from Bardini, among other objects. A letter from Bardini to the painter Banti, one of the *macchiaioli* and a member of the *Caffè Michelangelo* group, seems to also refer to an exchange of leather pieces.<sup>430</sup>

Rossignoli examines seven pieces in particular: three are *paliotti d'altare* used in churches as altar decorations, with sizes varying between 1.3 and 1.7 metres by 1 metre; and the remaining four are leather hangings for interiors, between 1.8 and 2.6 metres wide and 2 and 2.7 metres long. Rossignoli also considers some painted cushions in punched leather. Most of the latter are decorated with flower and plant motifs,

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<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> Rossignoli, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58.

except for those with religious purposes, on which are depicted, in a central position, the heads of saints. One of the most important aspects of Bardini's photographic archive lies in his habit of taking photographs of works of art before and after their restoration. This process was extremely important as Bardini could see the evolution of works of art, and follow how the technique of restoring over the years evolved. Very little information is available on the *corami* collected by Bardini. Neglected after Bardini's death, they were found in the attic of the museum in 1975, and the only documentation is photographic.<sup>431</sup> This section shows how dominant was the role of foreign collectors in Florence, how their passion for living with art transformed art collecting into a new lifestyle. With photograph no. 10 Bardini shows us a way of displaying art and crafts which creates a bridge between the museological displays and domestic interior decoration.

### **Palazzo Mozzi Bardini**

After his death, Bardini bequeathed his palazzo to the city of Florence, to be used as a museum representative of the international mediaeval and Renaissance revival of his period.<sup>432</sup> However, Bardini's project was completely misunderstood by Florentines who fundamentally changed the entire display, adding other works of art from other museums to create the Museo Civico of Florence. The journalist Ferdinando Paolieri wrote a disparaging article about Bardini's palazzo in 1925:

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<sup>431</sup> Antonella Nesi, 'La collezione di arte applicata di Stefano Bardini' in Guia Rossignoli, *I Cuoi D'Oro* (Firenze, Noèdizioni, 2009), pp. 9-17.

<sup>432</sup> Scalia, 1984, *op. cit.*, p.83 footnote no. 2 Stefano Bardini two days before his death complete his will with the hope that the bequeathing the city of Florence Palazzo Mozzi with the hope that it would have been kept with the same display he created during his lifetime.

[...]instead, up until the last days of the great art dealer, the palazzo in Piazza de' Mozzi was referred as a shop, where the objects on display cried out against the walls painted with detestable turquoise stencils to attract the attention of Americans and the English, where the Byzantine pulpit hangs in the corner of the courtyard, against a sky blue background that set your teeth on edge.<sup>433</sup>

The project to recreate Bardini's original museum as a representation of his time began in 2000, finally opening in 2009.

When he built his new property, the palazzo Mozzi Bardini, Stefano Bardini clearly drew inspiration from Renaissance palazzi. His most important marketing strategy was probably conferring on his gallery the status of a museum rather than of an art dealer's shop.<sup>434</sup> Bardini's dealing strategy was sophisticated and emulating the creation of new European museums was an important marketing tool. The idea of creating a show room in an historical site and with a museological concept proved to be extremely effective. The building is steeped in history and can be seen as a casket, a treasure box whose exterior decoration hints at the nature of its contents. Here the past, the present and the future are condensed. As Gaston Bachelard observes in his book *The Poetics of Space*, 'the casket is a memory of what is immemorial.'<sup>435</sup> This phrase seems to evoke the importance of the container of historical objects – in this case a museum, which keeps

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<sup>433</sup> Ferdinando Paolieri, 'Il Nuovo Museo Civico della Città di Firenze' in *La rivista dei Comuni d'Italia*, 1925, 5-6, pp. 43-47. Invece, fino agli ultimi giorni del grande antiquario, il palazzo di Piazza de' Mozzi rimase atteggiato a bottega, dove gli oggetti strillavano contro pareti affrescate con detestabili stampiglie turchine per richiamare sopra di sé ad una copertura del cortile, contro uno sfondo bleu cielo che faceva alleghire i denti.

<sup>434</sup> Dellef Heikamp, 'Stefano Bardini, l'uomo che non sapeva di marketing: chi era l'antiquario fiorentino di cui si sta per acquisire l'eredità lasciata nel 1962' in *Il Giornale dell'Arte* (Torino, Allemandi, 1996), pp. 66-67. Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: the Quest of Arcadia* first German edition, Beck, Munich Verlag, 2004 New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 155-156. l'attenzione degli Americani e degli Inglesi, dove il pulpito bizantino penzolava, in fondo.

<sup>435</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (first published in French in 1958, New York Orion Press, 1964), p. 84.



alive the memory of the past and the present in order to deliver a message to the future.

In the medieval and Renaissance periods the people of Florence used buildings to represent their power and influence. The city, as such, has always served as a stage where buildings follow a specific scheme.<sup>436</sup> Through the use of perspective, they are located in positions determined by their degree of importance. Bardini, with the creation of his palazzo continued the historical Florentine tradition. He acquired the medieval palazzo, the medieval church and the convent annexe in 1881 when the last descendant of the Mozzi family died.<sup>437</sup> The Mozzi family had established the church in the thirteenth century, at the peak of its power. They were a wealthy family who had served as papal treasurers for several generations. They had rivalled the Bardi family for economic supremacy, and the church had been the site of important historical events. San Gregorio della Pace was built between 1273 and 1279 on land belonging to the Mozzi family by order of Pope Gregory X in order to celebrate the peace between the Guelfi and Ghibellini factions. Subsequently it passed into the hands of the powerful Bardi family, rivals of the Mozzi, and in the fifteenth century it was given to the *Chierici Regolari Ministri degli Infermi*. In 1775 this religious order was suppressed and the Mozzi family repossessed its properties, but the building later became neglected and fell into disrepair. By then the San Gregorio church had been deconsecrated and was used as a hat-manufacturing workshop until it was eventually sold in 1881. According to tradition the Mozzi family

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<sup>436</sup> Zorzi, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>437</sup> Scalia, 1984, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-27.

were also important collectors, and Bardini probably bought some pieces from their collection.<sup>438</sup>

When Bardini came into possession of palazzo Mozzi, he retained most of the building as it was, only slightly altering the upper part of the original. The roof was a kind of architectural *divertissement* to which he added a castellation, underlining the medieval origins of the building. Then he concentrated on the refurbishment of the church and convent that were to become his showroom. It was a challenging project, which gave Bardini the chance to make his new building comparable to the one standing opposite, the palazzo Torrigiani where one of the most important private art collections of the time was displayed.<sup>439</sup>

His project, elaborated in collaboration with the eclectic architect Corinto Corinti (1841-1930), was inspired by the Renaissance palazzo.<sup>440</sup> But this was a palazzo with a nineteenth-century re-interpretation, as we can see in Corinti's projects for the facade in photograph nos.11 and 12.<sup>441</sup> Corinto Corinti was one of the first architects to adopt this new style, the pastiche, in his work,

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<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86 footnote no. 65. The date '1883' was traced in the fresh plaster over a door to the cellar, and on a pilaster of the façade, beneath the cornice. Fiorenza Scalia *San Niccolò Oltrarno: la chiesa, una famiglia di antiquari* (Comune di Firenze, Assessorato all Cultura, 1982), pp. 199-208. Emilio Bacciotti, *Firenze Illustrata nella Sua Storia, Famiglie, Monumenti, Arti e Scienze: Le Piazze* vol. IV (Roma, Mulitgrafica Editrice, 1997, ristampa dell' originale Firenze 1887), pp. 175-177. Bacciotti gives a detailed description of piazza Mozzi, its history and the description of the original medieaval Palazzo Mozzi as it was in 1887, then called Palazzo Carolat and which was acquired by Bardini with the old church of San Gregorio della Pace.

<sup>439</sup> For a description of the Torrigiani collection see Susan and Joanna Horner, *Walks in Florence* (London, Strahan & Co., 1873), pp. 253-261.

<sup>440</sup> Andrea Muzzi, Giancarlo Gentilini, *et. al. Eclettismo a Firenze L'Attività di Corinto Corinti i Progetti del Palazzo delle Poste e Telegrafi* (Quaderni del centro di documentazione e informazione, Comune di Firenze Assessorato alla Cultura, 1985), pp. 176-177.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, photograph on plate no. 2 cat. 50 and p.177, fig. no. 15, cat. 51. Two projects of the facade of Palazzo Mozzi Bardini.

exemplified by the successful refurbishment of the Castello di Acquabella.<sup>442</sup> It is clear therefore that in this project, Bardini was doing something important: he was both reinterpreting history and creating a new version of it. His palazzo reflects the emergence in nineteenth-century Florence of an eclecticism that was soon to gain currency within the city.

The influence of Bardini as art dealer can be seen in the architectural fragments of varying provenance which are set into the façade of the palazzo, transforming it into an unusual and even unique building that offers considerable insight into his reconstruction of an eclectic vision of the Renaissance (photograph no. 13.)<sup>443</sup> The windows of the façade of the palazzo are made from recovered *edicole* of altars, probably from the Duomo of Fiesole or from San Lorenzo in Pistoia; while the coat of arm at the centre of the main entrance belongs to the noble family Cattani Diacceto, and comes from the Duomo of Fiesole.<sup>444</sup> By incorporating fragments as decorative elements into his palazzo's façade, Bardini was simultaneously making an explicit reference to history and underscoring his own historical period. Furthermore, in rescuing a variety of architectural and sculptural fragments from antiquity, the middle ages and the Renaissance, Bardini showed that each individual fragment, however banal in appearance, was an important part of the attempt to re-create the complex puzzle of history, as elucidated in Burckhardt's theories.

The building came to celebrate Bardini's glorious career as an art dealer and asserted his powerful role in relation to the city of Florence. This was an explicit message to his international clientele,

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<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-71.

<sup>443</sup> Scalia, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 20

<sup>444</sup> Muzzi, Gentilini, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.

who considered Bardini the *principe degli antiquari*. Bardini's palazzo and collection was seen as a unique work of art, and his clients often showed their appreciation, as witnessed in his correspondence. For example, a letter from the director of the South Kensington Museum dated 1886 introduces Lord Leighton to Bardini and compliments the latter on his collection:<sup>445</sup>

1 October 1886 South Kensington Museum Dear Mr Bardini, F. Leighton, Director of the Academy of Arts in London, is in Italy now and I have personally asked him to come to your showroom and have a look at your beautiful collection. I hope [word missing] you will be able to show him round.<sup>446</sup>

Another Bardini enthusiast was John Temple Leader, who in a letter dated 1899 expressed his compliments on the magnificence of Bardini's collection and for the setting 'that suits it so well,' underscoring once again how Bardini's displays chimed perfectly with the tastes of international clients.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> The South Kensington Museum was one of the most prestigious of Bardini's clients; however, it is also worth noting that Bardini was introduced by the director of the South Kensington Museum to Lord Frederic Leighton, who acted as a buyer on behalf of the museum every time he visited Florence, and who eventually became one of Bardini's clients himself.

<sup>446</sup> ASCF, Bardini State Archive Florence, year 1887 folder correspondence S. The following is the whole text, with some fragments missing: 1 Ottobre 1886 South Kensington Museum Pregiato.mo Sig Bardini F. Leighton Presidente dell'Accademia delle Belle Arti a Londra è in questo momento in Italia ed io l'ho pregato di passare da lei a vedere la sua bella roba. Io spero che potrebbe[...] mostrargliela. Senza dubbio il C[...] avrebbe scritto per dire che noi altri al K non potremmo comprare... Non so se posso fare un viaggio in Italia perché son tanto occupato dagli affari del mio ufficio e dopo un assenza di un mese. The correspondence between Bardini and Leighton continued during subsequent years; however, the letters are not always clearly written, and it is difficult to be sure what exactly Leighton bought from Bardini for his own collection. It seems that he purchased a gilded frame, some antique fabrics, a *tabernacolo* and a balustrade. In Leighton's own archive, there is no record of the purchases he made from Bardini during these years. It seems likely that Leighton selected and bought works of art directly from Bardini's showroom every time he visited Florence.

<sup>447</sup> ASCF Bardini State Archive Florence, year 1886 folder correspondence folder R/T. The letter is in Italian [...] la sua bellissima collezione con tutte le cose che

The palazzo was created as a complete work of art; the façade reflected his understanding of, and approach to, the Renaissance, suggesting not only a concern for the past, but also the desire to reinterpret historical fragments by placing them within a new context. The meaning of the palazzo is, in this respect, indivisible from the late nineteenth-century historical tradition of re-interpreting the Renaissance. In a city like Florence, especially during the rise of humanism, architecture played a crucial political as well as symbolic role. The architect was an intellectual capable of translating his political and cultural power into tangible form in the fabric of the city.<sup>448</sup>

Furthermore, a second aspect of the palazzo, which was very important from the perspective of collectors, was how well it corresponded with the contemporary conception of a museum. In nineteenth-century cities the museum was often considered the most important building. As Bruno Foucart says:

In nineteenth century towns, museums are often the most imposing buildings. They are thought to have the equivalent symbolic value of modern-day cathedrals. Private palaces deprived of their kings and dissolved religious houses provided so many opportunities for accommodation that it would have seemed pointless from the outset to build purpose-built 'envelopes'. Germany and England took the initiative. But this new way of displaying works of art taken from palaces and churches would be the new way forward. It defines the character of the museum where the content is made sacred by the building that houses it. The building

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contiene in un locale che così bene le accoglie perche' fatto espressamente.

<sup>448</sup> Giulio Carlo Argan, *The Renaissance City* (London, Studio Vista, 1969), p. 9. The humanist city was the first to take a conscious view of the city as the heart of an organized society and as the visible expression of the functions of that society. It was in fact the first time since the decline of the classical world with the rise of the new artistic culture, that a theory or science of the city was created.

acquires further consecration through the nobility of the objects. Their new function as museums would give a sense of perpetuity to palaces and deconsecrated churches. The newly purpose-built museums will conserve this new quality.<sup>449</sup>

The plan of the palazzo's ground floor demonstrates the complexity of the architectural project. Bardini built a structure to connect the convent's garden to the church; the result of this was a highly articulated space that gave him the opportunity to create separate spaces for interpretation with reference to different historical periods. The main entrance opened onto the sculpture room with a perfect perspective, leading the gaze to the room's central works of art; the theatrical, eclectic display was very powerful, (as discussed in chapter two and illustrated in photograph **no. 8**). A majestic staircase, with antique carpets hanging on the walls, took the visitors to the *piano nobile*, where three impressive rooms were illuminated by the oversized windows. It seems that Bardini thought carefully about the idea of constructing a palazzo that stood in a dialectical relationship with the works of art it contained. Bardini's interiors were like canvasses on which he sought to paint a story. This theatrical quality in the display of works of art was typical of nineteenth-century artistic tastes. During this period, an obsessive recreation of the past with every single detail interpreted through the eyes and imagery of the

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<sup>449</sup> Bruno Foucart, 'Les musées du XIX siècle temples palais basilques' in Chantal Georget *La Jeunesse des musées de France au XIX siècle* (Paris, Editions de la reunion des Musees Nationaux, 1994), pp. 122-123.

present conferred on *fin-de-siècle* interiors an extravagant mixture of styles.<sup>450</sup> Stefano Bardini, in his galleria, embodied the nature of museums such as the Bargello, San Marco and the house-museums of Florence, blending it with his artistic studies ranging from Romanticism to the new patriotic movement of the *macchiaioli*. His very abstract and theatrical taste was such that he became known as the '*scenografo*' (stage designer). The main skill of a *scenografo* is the ability to absorb all available information, both visual and intellectual, and turn it into something else: a new, unique visual message.

The fascination with his palazzo is clearly described in a particularly detailed description in a French tourist guide of the time, Marcotti's *Guide-Souvenir de Florence*:

The Mozzi Bardini palazzo contains the collections of the art dealer Bardini: the façade's architectural decoration is remarkable for the use antique pieces: the window frames originally came from the church of San Lorenzo in Pistoia. We are not admitted inside without the permission of the owner. It is worth a visit because, apart from the high standard of works of art, the display of the museum in the

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<sup>450</sup> Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 4. The nineteenth century mania of collecting was not merely a public concern: domestic collections flourished and remodelled interior spaces into aesthetic and historic museums themselves. Baldry, 1997, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-30. Daniela Lamberini, 'Residenti Anglo-Americani e Genus Loci: Ricostruzioni e Restauri delle dimore Fiorentine'. Susanne E. L. Probst, 'La Fortuna del Museo 'Inglese' a Firenze: Il Museo Stibbert' in *Gli Anglo-Americani a Firenze* ed. Luigi Fantoni (Roma, Bulzoni, 2000), pp. 125-142, pp. 223-234. Harold Acton, 'Memorie di un Ambiente' and Claudio Paolini, 'L'Elaborazione dell' interno abitato: dall 'Idea pittorica e letteraria alle dimore reali' in *L'Idea di Firenze* eds. Maurizio Bossi and Lucia Tonini (Firenze, Atti del convegno 17, 18, 19, dicembre 1986, Centro Di, 1989), pp. 21-25, pp. 177-185.

rooms on the ground floor and the first floor reveals an impressive artistic touch, conferring a fairy-tale effect.<sup>451</sup>

The palazzo was a unique venture in many ways and indeed Bardini's influences were many. One influence was Jacob von Falke (1825–1879), a historian and expert on Renaissance interiors employed by numerous German museums, published his book *Art in the House* in 1879, in which he sought in particular to provide examples of original interiors, and describe their nature.<sup>452</sup> There are some parallels with Bardini's choices of interior decoration and the examples presented by von Falke in his book. *Art in the House* met with great success, and was translated into English. The book was a comprehensive study of interior decoration from the middle ages onwards. Von Falke made many observations on the use of colour, clearly voicing a strong preference for painted walls to emphasise the overall effect of a room. In his chapter on medieval decoration, he openly states his approval of and preference for the colour blue overlaid with bright gold decorations.<sup>453</sup>

He writes:

Artistic harmony depends upon two things: colour and form. In both, there must be unity, which is to say, a union and blending together of many dissimilar things. [...] Colour has far more importance in the decorative appointments of a house than form, colour makes the first strongest impression; it gives the general tone; it may be used if not to conceal

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<sup>451</sup> J. Marcotti, *Guide–Souvenir de Florence* (Florence, G. Barbera Editeur, 1892), p. 233. Palais Mozzi Bardini renferme les collections de l'antiquaire Bardini: la décoration architecturale de la façade est remarquable par la mise en œuvre d'anciennes pièces: les encadrements des fenêtres ne sont que de les auxquels jadis a l'église San Lorenzo a Pistoia. On n'est pas admis à l'intérieur sans la permission du propriétaire; elle vaut la peine qu'on tache de l'obtenir parce que en dehors des objets que le commerce de antiquités apporte et emporte et que l'on y trouve toujours en grand nombre et de premier choix. L'aménagement du Musée dans plusieurs salles au rez de chaussée et aux étages supérieurs est d'une grande richesse artistique et d'un effet féérique.

<sup>452</sup> Rosanna Pavoni, *Reviving the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 59–60.

<sup>453</sup> Jacob von Falke, *Art in the House* (translated from the third German edition, Boston, Cambridge MS, L. Prang and Co., 1879), p. 64.



faults and incongruities of form, at least to divert attention from them.<sup>454</sup>

Colour was particularly important to Bardini, who drew on a repertoire of shades of blue to cover his entire gallery, perhaps influenced by Von Falke's writings. A judicious use of colour was important in the recreation of interiors, especially when walls were not decorated with frescoes and therefore demanded chromatic diversity and nuance. The use of the colour blue became Bardini's trademark, and was famously adopted by two of his best-known clients, Nélie Jacquemart-André and Isabella Stuart Gardner. Jacquemart-André created her 'Renaissance room' in emulation of the sculpture room in Bardini's gallery and with the collaboration of Bardini himself, adopted one of the shades of 'Bardini blue'. Isabella Stuart Gardner asked Berenson to fetch from Bardini a sample of his famous blue to copy for the decoration of her own museum; the transaction is evidenced in a letter held in the Isabella Stuart Gardner archive in Boston.<sup>455</sup> The present curator of the Stefano Bardini Museum, Antonella Nesi suggests that Bardini blue may have been influenced by Russian palaces in Italy, especially the Roman house of Count Stroganoff (1829 1910), a sophisticated Renaissance art collector who decorated the interiors of his palace at the beginning of the 1880s. The watercolour paintings of these interiors by Fedor Petrovic Reiman (1842 1920) show that the colours of the walls were intense red and green, covered with *paliotti di cuoio*, and matched the dominant colours of the important Renaissance ceilings a practice followed by Bardini with shades of blue in his collection.<sup>456</sup> However Bardini's background as a painter can be seen in his use of the colour blue; this being the most important colour in painting, the

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid., pp. 175 and 199.

<sup>455</sup> See Appendix B, p. 231.

<sup>456</sup> Antonella Nesi, 'La collezione di arte applicata di Stefano Bardini, la sfortunata vicenda dei cuoi non più amati e del blu non capito' in Guia Rossignoli, *Cuoi d'oro* (Firenze, Noe'dizioni 2009), pp. 12 13.

most precious and the most sophisticated in its evocation of antiquity, of Roman and Renaissance painting.

**The Parallel between Corinti's drawings, the *Cartoline* and Stefano Bardini's photographs with elements of Cosmati.**

Photograph no. 14 is analysed by looking at the intertwining of two different criteria of study: Burckhardt's thoughts on Cosmati style and Corinto Corinti's drawings in the *Cartoline* photograph no. 15.<sup>457</sup> Both these forms of study, the written and the drawn, are summed up by Bardini in the new contemporary medium that suits him perfectly: photography.<sup>458</sup> However, Bardini's displays also reflected the historical process of the Cosmati family, who were able to create fascinating new works of art by using small fragments from older buildings. Bardini's *reinvenzione antiquariale* also offer an example of the re-use of fragments in a new historical context. It is possible to construct a parallel between the creation of churches during the time of the Cosmati family as a form of religious propaganda and power display, and the nineteenth-century creation of museums as a newfound symbol of power. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, new Christian churches were constructed from materials and architectural elements taken from the ruins of pagan structures and the debris left behind; and in an equivalent process, Bardini recycled architectural fragments from pagan and religious institutions to build his own palazzo. The display in the photograph gives an example of the pleasure taken by Bardini in creating a symmetrical composition, eclectic in its use of

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<sup>457</sup> Photograph no. 5206BR numbering according to Fototeca dei Musei Civici Fiorentini- Stefano Bardini Archive. Omero Corinti, 'Firenze antica nei disegni di Corinto Corinti' in *L'Universo* (Firenze, LVI, 1976), pp. 1081-1143. Cartolina no. 72.

shapes and materials, which ‘quotes’ Italian history from the Roman period to the middle ages. At the base of this wall-mounted composition, with its detailed study of geometry, is a *cosmatesco* mosaic. The display is a temporary *reinvenzione antiquariale*, in which Bardini suggests a new form of interior decoration using pieces taken from exterior architecture. The fragments here have various Italian provenances, and each was originally created with a precise purpose. The base of this imaginary building is a long strip of *cosmatesco* mosaic, which was probably originally part of a church altar or partition between two sections of a church. On either side of the composition two angels are displayed symmetrically. Here the attempt is to recreate an imaginary building with a revival of a medieval sensibility. The entire composition becomes a new imaginary cathedral like the cathedrals built by the Cosmati from ancient fragments. Bardini plays with shapes and decorative styles, displaying the *formelle* by genre in accordance with Burckhardt’s theories. *Formelle* are small, square architectural elements placed outside buildings for decoration or as a symbol of activities. The first row is composed of *formelle* depicting flowers and vegetables, the second row displays *formelle* diagonally, as their images of human figures and animals suggest. Midway between the two rows, a majestic sculpture probably from the same period has been used to determine the shape of the pattern. There are rectangular *formelle* on both sides, mainly showing family coats of arms or symbols of Florentine activities in the medieval period.

Constructing the display following a comparative method was essential for Bardini, as it was in Burckhardt who encourages the reader to compare works in a stimulating and varied journey through Italian Renaissance art. The same can be said of Bardini’s photographic display, whose apparently incongruous arrangements offer the viewer

the opportunity to investigate the execution and stylistic qualities of various works of art.<sup>459</sup> Burckhardt dedicated the second part of his study in *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* to the decorative aspects of the interiors and exteriors of Renaissance buildings. Renaissance decorative architecture shows the strong influence of Roman antiquity. As Burckhardt himself observed, the Cosmati family and their use of decoration were considered the precursors of Renaissance architecture.<sup>460</sup> The centre of the activity for the Cosmati family was Rome. In the ruins of this ancient city, this family of architects and artisans found precious materials, especially porphyry, marble of various colours, and the decorative stone known as *verde antico*, which they cut into pieces to form the *tessere* of their mosaics. Next to antiquity, the Cosmati family's greatest influence came from the Siculo-Campanian school of Byzantine art in the south of Italy and Palermo, with points of contact in Terracina, Gaeta, Montecassino, Capua, Amalfi and Salerno.<sup>461</sup> Throughout the Italian peninsula, as well as in Sicily, the influence of Byzantine aesthetics is evident in the local art. The Cosmati were not just decorators, but also – and indeed primarily – architects, according to Adolfo Venturi.<sup>462</sup> The most important masterpieces of Roman art were discovered in Rome between the twelfth century and the third quarter of the thirteenth century. This medieval period also experienced intense influences from various external powers, including The Byzantine Empire and the

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<sup>459</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *L'Arte Italiana del Rinascimento Architettura*, ed. Maurizio Ghelardi (Venezia, Saggi Marsilio, 1991), p. 240. Burckhardt, 1985, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>460</sup> Burckhardt, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>461</sup> Edward Hutton, *The Cosmati* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 7.

<sup>462</sup> Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte Italiana: vol. III L'Arte Romanica* (Milano, Ulrico Hoepli, 1904), p. 794.

Islamic world.<sup>463</sup> The Cosmati family therefore worked in the context of a whirlwind of rich strands of artistic traditions.

In the nineteenth century, Florentine buildings were decorated with copies of *cosmateschi* mosaics, which became part of a new political and cultural language based on references to historical styles. The importance and value of the work of the Cosmati family had already received scholarly attention by the end of the nineteenth century. Adolfo Venturi dedicated a section of his book on the history of art to the *cosmateschi* or *marmorari Romani*, underlining the importance of their technique, which involved using fragments of older Roman buildings to build and decorate new ones, usually churches.<sup>464</sup> Along with fragments of other pagan monuments, pieces of stone originating in classical art with Arabic and Byzantine influences were particularly inspiring to the Cosmati family, and were used as their chief materials. Geometric shapes were often combined with sculptures of flowers and animals, including snakes and eagles and other birds. Venturi described the work of the Cosmati family extensively using a chronological point of view and focusing on the most significant Italian buildings in which the work could be seen.<sup>465</sup> During the time

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<sup>463</sup> Paloma Panjares-Ayuela, *Cosmatesque Ornament* (London, Thames & Hudson, 2002), pp. 22, 31, 51–52 and 57–58. The Cosmati began producing works in Rome during the eleventh century, a time of considerable religious upheaval that witnessed the rise and fall of several popes. Rome was the centre of Italy's religious life before 1305, when Pope Clement V transferred the papal residence to Avignon. The most noteworthy popes who sought to build their religious power in Rome were Pascal II (1099–1118), Honorious II (1124–1130), Innocent III (1198–1216) and Honorious III (1216–1227). During this time, therefore, ecclesiastical production was the main artistic interest in Rome, and the Cosmati were closely involved with such projects. The buildings and ruins of ancient Rome were their favourite subjects. They worked as decorators, builders, sculptors and architects, and found their inspiration in the city's ruins, from which they also recycled fragments. The work of the Cosmati was often decorative in scope, adding variations or new structures such as towers, cloisters, atriums and porches to pre-existing buildings.

<sup>464</sup> Venturi, 1904, *op.cit.*, p. 794. Mario Scalini *Statuaria Lapidea dagli Etruschi al Barocco* (Firenze, Sillabe, 1999), pp.16–20.

<sup>465</sup> Venturi, 1904, p. 794.

of the Cosmati family, a series of laws implemented in Rome prohibited the destruction of the city's classical remains. Despite repeated imperial vetoes, however, temples and other buildings were broken down and demolished, bronze statues were melted, and marble and brass objects stolen. Many of the city's abandoned great mansions met the same fate.<sup>466</sup> Once again, Bardini's image — despite its appealing composition — in fact mirrors the large-scale destruction of Italian historical sites.

Corinto Corinti's drawings and Stefano Bardini's photograph left behind a poetic, essential and unconsciously realistic trace of Florence and the Italian *fin de siècle*. Corinti's activity as an architect also included his co-operation with the magazine *Ricordi d'Architettura*, which played a significant role during the period 1870–1900 in Florence. The magazine was created by a group of architects — Roster, Mazzantini, Boccini, Corinti and Micheli — who tirelessly catalogued and published countless images of ancient and contemporary buildings and their architectural details. In addition, the magazine published the details of new architectural projects for the reconstruction of suburban areas of the city where new houses and public structures were being built. In central areas the new constructions were primarily monuments.<sup>467</sup> The images published in the magazine *Ricordi* are extremely important aids to understanding how the structure of the city changed during the nineteenth century. This magazine also ran national architectural competitions, and comparisons with contemporary publications from other regions can provide further useful insights into Tuscany's architectural evolution. They show, for instance, the intensity of the development of the taste

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<sup>466</sup>Paloma Panjares-Ayuela, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>467</sup>Carlo Cresti and Luigi Zangheri, *Architetti e Ingegneri nella Toscana dell'Ottocento* (Firenze, Uniedit, 1978), pp. LX–LXIV.

for pastiche. The new architectural pastiches represented Italy's search for a new identity, as well as an attempt to foster tastes that could testify to the unity of the country.<sup>468</sup>

Between 1889 and 1895, Corinti was chief inspector for the documentation of the destruction of Florence's old city. He made several drawings documenting the sites that would soon be transformed, adding architectural detail and historical references from the Roman, medieval and Renaissance periods. In his old age, between 1926 and 1928, he created one hundred cards on the basis of his earlier notes and drawings (*cartolina* no. 75). The cards were originally 30 x 50 cms. in size, and were then reduced for the purpose of sale. They reported in detail on the fragmentation of Florence, and both their texts and their illustrations supply important information about the old city centre.<sup>469</sup>

At the same time as Corinti was producing his cartoline, Bardini was enriching his collection with the fragments depicted in his photographs, mostly from the destruction of Florence. There is no apparent relation between Corinti's work, which is full of information and historical detail, and Bardini's photographs, which provide no explanation, but instead very powerful images. However, both works share the goal of saving the memory of a city and a country which were losing their heritage. Roman, medieval and Renaissance remains emerged from the excavations of Florence during its drastic demolition. Stefano Bardini and Corinto Corinti had in common the desire to recreate a visual language of spaces, buildings and works of art from what they saw and found. Bardini with his photographic

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<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> Omero Corinti, 'Firenze Antica nei disegni di Corinto Corinti' in *L'Universo* (no. LVI 1976, pp. 1081-1143), pp. 1081-1082. *Cartolina* n. 72.

technique, and Corinti both with his drawings from original sites and also with photographs, behaved as historians, art historians and architects, interpreting what they saw into a personal style. As Foucault says:

In any case, though it is true that the historian, for the Greeks, was indeed the individual who *sees* and who recounts from the starting-point of his sight, it has not been so in our culture. [...] The Classical age gives history a quite different meaning: that of undertaking a meticulous examination of things themselves for the first time, and then transcribing what it has gathered in smooth, neutralized and faithful words.<sup>470</sup>

Corinti proceeded to look at things from different historical periods, reproducing them in drawings and without omitting any original detail in order to transcribe them faithfully, although sometimes making the addition of an imaginary reconstruction. Thus his work can be seen as that of an historian and archaeologist, drawing and recreating monuments, palazzi and architectural fragments with precision; adding detailed descriptions to each element depicted in the *cartoline*. As a result the *cartoline* offer a rich source of information on the history of the architecture of Florence and of the techniques and materials used in construction.

It seems that the *cartoline* were created in accordance with the historical system of classification that Foucault recognises as that adopted in the Classical age for the classification of nature:

Until the mid-seventeenth century, the historian's task was to establish the great compilation of documents and signs of everything, throughout the world, that might form a mark, as

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<sup>470</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (first published in France in 1966, London & New York, Routledge, 2002), p. 142.



it were. It was the historian's responsibility to restore to language all the words that had been buried.<sup>471</sup>

While producing this work, Corinti felt a responsibility to leave a faithful record of the past. However, the themes of the *cartoline* drawings embody the same kind of deconstruction as was being presented in the city itself. Buildings, whether Roman, medieval or Renaissance, are first presented in their entirety, and beside them are given details of previous or subsequent structures, with studies and descriptions of fragments of floors, windows, coats of arms and decorative items. As a result the drawings present an ensemble of fragments from various epochs.

These studies seem to have something in common with Bardini's photographs and displays. It is important to say that while Corinti was in charge of the research on which the *cartoline* are based, Bardini bought most of his fragments from important demolished sites, and they constituted a significant part of his collection. Corinti's drawings and writings seem more realistic, while Bardini, with his use of the camera without words, emphasises primarily the aesthetic aspect of his displays, revealing a more 'psychological' side, both of the photographer and of the objects, even though the latter are inanimate. It is pertinent here to recall Nadar's remark that the theory of photography can be learnt in an hour and its techniques in a day, but what cannot be learnt are a sense of light, a grasp of the moral intelligence of the sitter, and the psychological side of photography.<sup>472</sup> This final aspect was perhaps the art form in which Bardini excelled.

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<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>472</sup> Julian Barnes, *Levels of Life* (London, Jonathan Cape, 2013), p. 17.

Both Corinti and Bardini created images with hidden structures, composed of both drawings of fragments and of fragments themselves, in order to make their meaning comprehensible. As Foucault asserts:

Structure also makes possible the description of what one sees, and this in two ways, which are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive. [...] Forms and arrangements, on the other hand, must be described by other methods: either by identification with geometrical figures, or by analogies that must all be of the utmost clarity.<sup>473</sup>

One could argue that Bardini did not create a structure for the understanding of his image. In fact, the structure of his photograph relied solely on symmetry. Yet these two methods of classification: drawings and photographing fragments with their differences not only replicate what the two men saw and gathered in Florence, but also enable the viewer to better understand history. Was Bardini, with his photographs, unconsciously depicting his historical period? Did he do this to a greater extent than Corinti, with his clearly explained drawings? Corinti's drawings, while delivering important historical information, seem to be relegated to the role of documents. Bardini's photographs, embracing the double features of historical document and artistic ambition, can be seen as artistic images. Fragments in the work of Cosmati, Corinti and Bardini take on a variety of uses and meanings. Their use during the nineteenth century in the creation of art collections and buildings is shown in the next section through the interpretation of mediaeval and Renaissance palazzi.

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<sup>473</sup> Foucault, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

## Stefano Bardini's English acquaintances and their palazzi in Florence

The English art collectors and dealers connected to Bardini who created the most significant palazzi and are seen to prefigure Bardini's style were: the artist and art dealer William Blundell Spence (1814-1900), the collectors John Temple Leader (1810-1903) and Frederick Stibbert (1836-1906) and the architect and scholar Herbert Percy Horne (1864-1916).

William Blundell Spence, in his guidebook *The Lions of Florence*, recommended reading Vasari in order to gain knowledge and understanding of artists of the Renaissance period and their work. However, his own interest in the books was ultimately pragmatic; for him, reading Vasari was primarily of use for dealing purposes.<sup>474</sup> *Le Vite* by Vasari was one of the first book-length studies to explore Renaissance art. In 1857, seven years after its first English translation, the publisher John Murray, together with the collector Austin Henry Layard (1817-1894) and the director of the National Gallery, Charles Eastlake, (1836-1906) promoted a new version. This version included corrections and greater detail than the previous edition.<sup>475</sup> William Blundell Spence came to Florence as an art student and, like Bardini, studied with the Romantic artist Giuseppe Bezzuoli.<sup>476</sup> Blundell Spence also subsequently took up a career as an art dealer.<sup>477</sup> In 1856 he opened an art gallery in the Palazzo Giugni on the via degli Alfani, and in 1860 he moved to another historic house in the hills that surround

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<sup>474</sup> Donata Levi, 'Mercanti, conoscitori, amateurs nella Firenze di meta' ottocento: Spence, Cavalcaselle e Ruskin' in *L'Idea di Firenze* eds. Maurizio Bossi and Lucia Tonini, (Firenze, Centro Di, 1986), p. 106.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>476</sup> Blundell Spence, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10 and p.18.

<sup>477</sup> Roeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153.

Florence, the Villa Medici in Fiesole. In his correspondence with his son Mino, Blundell Spence details the effort he put into furnishing the house in order to preserve its historical traditions. Indeed, the result was a veritable museum of Medici iconography.

The gravel approach is magnificent, gravelled and vased, the summerhouse done in mosaics as in front of the Medici arms bust of Cosimo. Villino lovely: it has a grand iron gate and is all furnished with pictures. [...] I have had the doors and windows shuttered, and the green room painted to match the furniture, it looks very well, I had all the doors stripped in the passage upstairs, they are of fine stone which had been plastered over, and now it is much better. I have taken up the carpet in the small room where the large picture was and put it in the passage upstairs and all is becoming splendid – we have lots of visitors.<sup>478</sup>

Two small paintings of Blundell Spence's interiors show Renaissance *cassoni* displayed as everyday furniture with paintings of various genres hanging on the walls above.<sup>479</sup> Blundell Spence created the villa as a showroom for his art-dealing activities. Among his clients were William Richard Drake (1817-1890), Charles Eastlake, Henry Layard, and the majolica scholar Charles Fortnum (1820-1899). In his diary, Blundell Spence also mentions that the Queen of Württemberg, the Russian Emperor, Prince Napoleon, the Duke of Bassano and the royal family of Portugal had all come to visit his villa, and left enthusiastic comments. He accompanied Queen Victoria around Florence, and acted as an advisor on her purchases of art objects and paintings.<sup>480</sup> It seems possible that Blundell Spence was a model for Stefano Bardini.

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<sup>478</sup> Donata Levi, 'William Blundell Spence a Firenze', *Studi e ricerche di collezionismo e museografia 1820-1920* (Pisa, Scuola Normale Quaderni del seminario di Storia della critica d'arte, 1985), pp. 85-149.

<sup>479</sup> Ellen Callman, 'William Blundell Spence and the Transformation of Renaissance Cassoni,' in the *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 141 no. 1155, June 1999, (pp. 338-348), p. 339.

<sup>480</sup> Baldry, 2005, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

They both began their career as painters, influenced by *Romanticismo Storico*, and they both moved from being artists to the more profitable career of art dealer. These two roles were often linked at that time, as the figures of art dealer and connoisseur were just beginning to appear. In Italy, both before and during Bardini's time, the roles of art dealer, connoisseur and art historian were not clearly defined.

Another striking example of architectural historicism can be seen in the famous reconstruction of the Castello di Vincigliata. The owner, the diplomat, writer and art collector John Temple Leader, was born into a wealthy English family.<sup>481</sup> He dedicated himself to a political career until 1844, when he made radical changes to his life. He left both politics and England and went to live on the continent. After a few years on the Côte d'Azur he moved to Florence where he spent most of the remainder of his life. Passionate about the study of heraldry and history, in 1855 Temple Leader bought the ruins of the medieval castle.<sup>482</sup> He followed his medieval dream obsessively and recreated the castle according to romantic perceptions of the medieval period. The site itself was abandoned and derelict, having been destroyed five centuries previously by the English mercenary leader John Hawkwood.<sup>483</sup> John Temple Leader and his eccentric re-creation of the Castello di Vincigliata, aroused the interest of Henry James who in *Italian Hours* termed Temple Leader's restoration 'a triumph of aesthetic culture'. He went on to describe the castle as 'simply an elegant museum of archaic images, mainly but most amusingly counterfeit, perched on a spur of the Apennines'. Based on his visits to

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<sup>481</sup> Baldry, 1997, *op. cit.*, This study presents comprehensive research on the cultural background of Leader and the refurbishment of his castle, along with a detailed historical description of nineteenth-century Florentine life.

<sup>482</sup> Artom Treves. *Op. cit.*, 1982, p. 88.

<sup>483</sup> Giancarlo Gentilini, 'Arti applicate, tradizione artistica Fiorentina e committenti stranieri' in *L'Idea di Firenze* eds. Maurizio Bossi and Lucia Tonini (Firenze, Centro Di, 1986), p. 162.

the castle, James wrote a thorough and vivid description of it, contributing greatly to the process of documenting the whole restoration as carried out by Temple Leader. James noted that the imaginative reconstruction of the castle appeared to have been influenced profoundly by the tales of Walter Scott.<sup>484</sup>

Temple Leader's re-creation of the medieval period began with the aim of conserving the past. For instance, he paid to save the frescoes entitled *Storie di San Bernardo degli Uberti* at the ex-monastery of San Martino. With the help of the Florentine restorer Gaetano Bianchi (1819-1892), Temple Leader subsequently installed these works in his own castle. The relocation of works of art from their original setting to another raises the important issue of the purpose and meaning of a work of art: the loss of meaning followed by the acquisition of a new meaning, and its new life once inserted within a new context. This phenomenon has often been called the 'fetishism of the fragment'; its advocates have played an important role in rescuing works of art, although the value of their restorations is open to question, as they make use of techniques which were not always suitable.<sup>485</sup> Vincigliata represented the apotheosis of this trend; here the most skilful Florentine craftsmen, of whom there were a great number during this period, recreated and restored an incredible mixture of medieval and Renaissance objects including furniture, frescoes, ceramics and *tabernacoli*.<sup>486</sup>

In sculpture, for instance, it was possible to find fakes manufactured according to the examples of Gothic or Renaissance art, such as a delicate Madonna claimed to be

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<sup>484</sup> Henry James, *Italian Hours* (first published in 1909, New York, Penguin, 1992), pp. 250-251.

<sup>485</sup> Cristina Giannini, 'Accenni sulle influenze straniere in alcuni episodi di restauro fiorentino' in *L'idea di Firenze* eds. Maurizio Bossi and Lucia Tonini (Firenze, Centro Di, 1986), p. 140.

<sup>486</sup> Gentilini, 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

the last work of Bastianini; copies of famous works such as the urn of Saint Zanobi by Ghiberti, reproduced in bronze by Emilio Ercolani; and modern tabernacles and gargoyles by David Giustini using Renaissance techniques. These also included a bust by Dante Soldini, and copies such as the smaller version of a cupid from the façade of the Duomo sculpted a few years earlier by Passaglia. Among the examples of counterfeit furniture were admired neo-Mannerist pieces by Frullini; neo-Gothic works in iron by Contri; majolica works and *robbiane* by Ginori and Cantagalli; windows in the *grottesco* style by Ulisse de Matteis; and several other pieces representing the new Florentine arts and crafts movement.<sup>487</sup>

In the re-creation of his castle Temple Leader had carefully introduced medieval elements, partly faithful to the past and partly completely imaginary.

An important collector who created a very unusual house-museum in Florence was Frederick Stibbert, who shared various collecting interests with Bardini. They both began their collections in the 1870s;

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<sup>487</sup>*Ibid.*, In scultura, ad esempio si potevano trovare falsificazioni, alcune anche dichiarate, come una delicata Madonna che si vantava ultima opera del Bastianini, copie di lavori celebri come, l'urna di S. Zanobi del Ghiberti riprodotta in bronzo da Emilio Ercolani, manufatti esemplati in modo puntuale sull'arte gotica o dal Rinascimento, come i tabernacoli e i doccioni di David Giustini, 'opere moderne' variamente sensibili all'insegnamento rinascimentale, come busti di Dante Soldini, ma anche copie di quest'ultima categoria, come la riduzione del Rosignoli di una cuspide della facciata del Duomo scolpito pochi anni prima dal Passaglia. E nell'arredo si sarebbero ammirati i mobili neo manieristici del Frullini, i ferri battuti neogotici del Contri, le maioliche istoriate e le robbiane di Ginori e Cantagalli, le vetrate a grottesca di Ulisse de Matteis, e molte alter primizie di quel nascente artigianato in stile fiorentino. Nobili, 1922, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-193. Chapter XVI. The artistic qualities of imitators' Nobile give an interesting description of the work of the sculpture of Bastianini and an interesting of the portrait of Girolamo Beninveni sold to the Louvre by the Florentine art dealer Freppa in 1867. Others imitators of Renaissance art are mentioned in the chapter with detailed descriptions of their work. Anita F. Moskovitz, 'The case of Giovanni Bastianini: A fair and balanced view' in *Artibus and Historiae* vol. 25, no. 50 (Cracow, IRSA, 2004, pp. 157-185). Carol Helstosky, 'Giovanni Bastianini, art forgery and the Market in Nineteenth Century Italy' in *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 81, no. 4 (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, December 2009, pp. 793-823). Alexandre Foresi, *Tour Babel ou Objets d'arts faux pris pour vrais et vice versa* (Paris, Pedone Lauriel/Florence, A. Bettini, 1868), pp. 23-37.

however, the content and aesthetic results of their collections were entirely different. Both collections create a powerful theatrical effect through a personal interpretation of art. The creation of a diverse collection became the guiding passion of Frederick Stibbert's life. His collection included 17,000 objects, a library, and at one time a photographic gallery. Weapons and armour were among his chief interests, especially European armour from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Oriental weapons.<sup>488</sup> The display was designed according to a combination of Italian and English romantic styles. Stibbert's tastes had a typically bourgeois grandeur, with attention also paid to historical objects from the East. Among his museological projects was a garden in the romantic style. Its display of plants and architectural elements, including statues, recalls the classic English garden of the end of the eighteenth century. However, this English sensibility – the presence of a pond, for example – is combined with more exotic elements, including an Egyptian pavilion. This is one of the last examples of romantic eclectic gardens in Florence.<sup>489</sup>

In 1874, Stibbert began to develop his project of a house-museum, beginning with his family home, the Villa Montughi. Next, he bought the adjacent property, the Villa Bombicci, connecting the two and extending them, constantly adding new rooms. The architecture of Stibbert's villa, is based on Renaissance style with nineteenth-century influences, includes medieval elements. One façade is entirely covered with coats of arms in emulation of the Bargello; the same practice seen in Bardini's photograph collection. The interiors of Stibbert's house are fascinating, fantastical and imaginative. They recreate various styles without any single archaeological objective. This produces a powerfully

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<sup>488</sup> Henry Russel Robinson, *Il Museo Stibbert a Firenze*, vol. 1 (Firenze, Cassa di Risparmio/Editrice Electa, 1973), pp. 7–9.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*



theatrical effect.<sup>490</sup> The theatricality of both Stibbert's and Bardini's interiors is extremely interesting, resulting as it does from two different kinds of eclecticism. The two sets of interiors also reveal much about their creators' personal backgrounds. Stibbert constructed his collection with complete freedom, and the result shows the influence of his multinational origins and his curiosity about everything in the world. Bardini on the other hand was not completely free as his displays included financial considerations; they had to entice the contemporary art collectors to buy. The objects in Stibbert's and Bardini's collections both reflect their original historical contexts and offer insight into their re-interpretation as part of a collection. Inside Stibbert's house, many of the walls are decorated with leather hangings with floral decorations. Most of the hangings are original, dating from the seventeenth century; they are believed to have been produced in Spain and Germany, but they may have been made in Florence, as the city was also centre of production. Stibbert's walls are almost entirely covered with these leather hangings, thereby creating a collection within a collection. Among the furniture there are several *cassoni nuziali* most of which date from the 1400s, but there are also new ones that he had made for him using fragments.

In the same period, Bardini began working as an art dealer. Stibbert acquired from Bardini a Madonna and child by Antonio Federighi, of which a similar example can be found in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum.<sup>491</sup> However, neither Stibbert nor Bardini left any information about their relationship in their respective archives. At a young age both had held patriotic ideals, and both had fought with Garibaldi as

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<sup>490</sup> Giuseppe Cantelli, *Il Museo Stibbert a Firenze* (Firenze, Cassa di Risparmio/Editrice Electa 1974), pp. 7–10.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.16–19.

volunteers between 1860 and 1866.<sup>492</sup> Both men were fascinated and inspired by the notion of recovering the ancient past, and were voracious in their collection of medieval and Renaissance objects, works of art, furniture, and decorative art items, along with contemporary reproductions. Bardini's collection is more conventional, except in its reinterpretation of a large number of fragments. Stibbert had a wider focus, collecting not only works of art and sculpture but also costumes, weapons, and international art and craft works.<sup>493</sup> Bardini and Stibbert also shared a passion for *paliotti di cuoio* and they both decorated their walls with stencils reproducing the same pattern in a variety of colours. The provenances of their *paliotti* are different: Bardini collected mostly Italian *paliotti*, while Spanish *paliotti* are more conspicuous in Stibbert's collection.<sup>494</sup> Bardini was a keen collector of Renaissance ceramics, while Stibbert's house-museum was decorated chiefly in contemporary majolica; he co-operated for a long time with Ulisse Cantagalli (1839-1901), who was famous for his reproductions of Renaissance, Iznik and Valencian majolica.<sup>495</sup>

Stibbert divided his house into separate rooms, including an Islamic room, a Japanese room, porcelain and malachite rooms, drawing rooms, and many more. Throughout the house objects from antiquity were combined with contemporary reproductions. The painter-decorator Gaetano Bianchi decorated much of Stibbert's house, along with interiors in the Castello di Vincigliata and the Bargello. Bianchi specialised in frescoes emulating Renaissance and early quattrocento

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<sup>492</sup> Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti, 2011, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-19.

<sup>493</sup> Antonella Nesi, S. Di Marco *et al.*, *Con Gli Occhi di... Bardini, Horne, Stibbert: tre musei per tre collezionisti* (Firenze, Mandragora, 2009), pp. 7-27 and 53-76.

<sup>494</sup> The curator Charles Fuchs of Stibbert museum pointed out this difference to me.

<sup>495</sup> Dominique Charles Fuchs, 'Frederick Stibbert and Ulisse Cantagalli: friendship and patronage' in *The Revival of Italian Maiolica: Ginori and Cantagalli* eds. Livia Frescobaldi Malenchini and Olivia Ruccellai (Florence, Polistampa, 2011), pp. 141-152.

works. Stibbert's house became known as a museum during his own lifetime, and according to his guestbook he received several important visitors, among them John Temple Leader and Telemaco Signorini (1835-1901), both acquaintances of Bardini.<sup>496</sup>

Over the years the eclectic emulation of the medieval and Renaissance styles in Italy gradually shifted into philological reconstruction. An example of this change is represented by the philological refurbishment conducted by the architect Herbert Percy Horne. Passionate about quattrocento Italian art, Horne travelled extensively in Italy and wrote a comprehensive biography of Botticelli. He bought palazzo Corsi in Florence, which was built in 1497 and had previously belonged to the Alberti family, and he began a rigorous philological refurbishment, combining his architectural skills with the sophisticated taste of a connoisseur. The interiors housed a magnificent Renaissance art collection, displayed according to the Renaissance pattern.<sup>497</sup> The Renaissance philological reconstruction of palazzo Corsi is paralleled in Attilio Schiapparelli's book, published in Florence in 1908 and entitled *La casa fiorentina e i suoi arredi nei secoli XIV e XV*, it is an account of Florence's various architectural styles of the period. Schiapparelli's main concern was to give clear information in order to avoid mis-interpretations of the past. This publication, at a time when the medieval and Renaissance revival was at its peak, was very important as it sought to emphasise not only how palazzi looked from the outside but also how their interior decorative elements had

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<sup>496</sup> Simona di Marco, 'La famiglia Stibbert' in *Museo Stibbert* ed. Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti (Firenze, Polistampa, 2011), pp. 25-34. Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti, *Frederick Stibbert: Gentiluomo, Collezionista e Sognatore* (Firenze, Museo Stibbert/Polistampa, 2000), p. 31.

<sup>497</sup> Elisabetta Nardocchi, 'Note per una biografia' in *Herbert Percy Horne a Firenze* (Firenze, Edizioni della Meridiana, 2005), pp. 14-16. Giampaolo Trotta, 'Il palagio dei Corsi: nella vigile attesa di una novella età dell'oro' in *Herbert Percy Horne a Firenze* (Firenze, Edizioni della Meridiana, 2005), pp. 127-142.

been created with a particular function in mind. Schiapparelli's book can be seen as a guide for both collectors and architects. It was the outcome of his painstaking research involving as many medieval and Renaissance archives, paintings and diaries as were available at the time. His study offers a description of the various parts of a palazzo and their locations, including fireplaces, wells, painted walls and wooden ceilings. In his book he wished both to recreate the original layouts of medieval and Renaissance Florentine interiors, and to consider architectural and decorative elements in the light of the architects' original intentions. He referred primarily to inventories made by the Medici family in which religious paintings were listed alongside bas-reliefs and sculptures of mythological subjects. During the Renaissance, paintings and especially paintings of religious subjects, were the chief mode of decoration. The style of display adopted by the Medici was for the most part aesthetically determined.<sup>498</sup> Busts were displayed above doorways, and mosaics and sculptures appeared together. In light of this, it seems likely that the Medici style of display influenced Bardini in the creation of his own displays, along with his own extravagant tastes and the influence of his contemporaries. As the Medici were the most affluent family in Florence, their tastes tended to be the model followed by the other wealthy families in the city. In his book, Schiapparelli wished to provide accurate information on, and a likely provenance and use for, every single piece in the Medici inventories in order to preclude misinterpretation. Florence in the nineteenth century mirrored the intricate cultural Italian and European panorama that had stimulated the explosion of a wide variety of studies and forms of interpretation of the past.

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<sup>498</sup> Schiapparelli, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

### Two significant Florentine colleagues of Stefano Bardini

At the same time as Bardini was in contact with these English collectors he also had dealings with interesting Florentine figures. The art dealer Elia Volpi (1858-1938) served as the director of the restorations department of Bardini's showroom for fifteen years.<sup>499</sup> When his professional relationship with Bardini ended, Volpi was determined to become an art dealer on his own account. In 1904 he bought the palazzo Davanzati, a handsome building from the middle of the fourteenth century that had miraculously survived the devastation of the old city of Florence.<sup>500</sup> He completed the refurbishment in 1910, re-creating as far as possible the original architectural structure and interior wall frescoes.<sup>501</sup> Once completed, the palazzo, like Bardini's, became a showroom housing Volpi's art collection; a private museum in a Florentine house.<sup>502</sup> In 1922 Louis Conrad Rosenberg (1890-1983) wrote a book on palazzo Davanzati's wealth of architectural detail. Rosenberg mentioned that Volpi had re-created the original structure of the palazzo and had replaced missing parts such as doors, windows and floors with copies. He also mentioned that the painted walls had needed to be partially restored.<sup>503</sup> In Volpi's case, one can see how his skills as a restorer were employed. As a result the palazzo represents a perfect restoration/reproduction of the original building. Volpi reached the same level of importance as Bardini, Stibbert and Horne within a very short period of time after he began his art dealing activity, making his sales mostly to Americans. His first important sale

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<sup>499</sup>Ferrazza, *op. cit.*, p. 32. and p.85. Roeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>500</sup> Ferrazza, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-28.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-38.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-108.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

was made through Berenson to Isabella Stuart Gardner, who bought a bas-relief by Mino da Fiesole.<sup>504</sup>

Bardini's style had its critics as well as admirers. The most severe critic of Bardini, his palazzo and his activity was Riccardo Nobili. But paradoxically they were also friends as is proved by four letters, dated 1904 and 1907.<sup>505</sup> The letters mention art deals and exchanges. Furthermore, Bardini and Nobili moved in the same circles and both were acquainted with the same group of painters linked with the Macchiaioli: Giovanni Fattori (1825-1908), Telemaco Signorini (1825-1901) and Antonio Ciseri. Another letter from Bardini to an unknown potential client, dated 4 November 1904 states: 'I have sent you the photograph of the marble about which my friend Nobili has spoken to you.'<sup>506</sup>

In 1908 Nobili published a book in English entitled *A Modern Antique: a Florentine Story*. The principal character, Gaspero Bandini is a clear reference to Stefano Bardini.<sup>507</sup> The narrative is set in a fictional version of the palazzo Bardini where a tyrannical art dealer receives antique dealers and nobles desperately trying to sell their art collections and exploits their impoverished circumstances. Being admitted into to this fictional palazzo was an exceptional privilege for only a few important clients, art dealers and collectors. They were kept

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<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>505</sup> Servizio catalogazione dei Musei Civici Fiorentini - Stefano Bardini Archive. Correspondence year 1904 folder S. 1904 30<sup>th</sup>. September Letter from the mayor of Sindaco di San Sepolcro to the artist Riccardo Nobili: regarding the ceiling of the room in the former church of the Osservanti. Correspondence year 1907 folder B. 1907 3<sup>rd</sup>. June Letter from Stefano Bardini asking Passeri Giuseppe to telephone Nobili to ask him whether the prints from Paris have been valued. Correspondence year 1907 folder N. Letter, from Riccardo Nobili to Bardini regarding in a lost address for the collection of a Bronze in Paris.

<sup>506</sup> ASCF Stefano Bardini Archive Part II (1891-1914) 'je vous ai envoyé la photographie du marbre dont mon ami Nobili vous avez parlé'.

<sup>507</sup> Riccardo Nobili, *A Modern Antique: A Florentine Story* (Edinburgh & London, William Blackwood & Sons 1908), pp. 45-65.

waiting for hours, regardless of their importance. In the account of the interiors, as a pure provocation to Bandini/Bardini, all of the walls are described as entirely yellow.<sup>508</sup> Although written with the specific intent of satirising the ruthlessness of the art-dealing scene in Florence at this time, the book also provides a fascinating overview of the cosmopolitan and specifically Florentine art world at the end of the nineteenth century.

Art dealing in Italy gradually became more difficult. In 1903 the Italian government, worried about the loss of Italian heritage, had introduced a law that gave the government priority as purchaser of the most important works of art before they could be sold abroad. In subsequent years application of this law was in a state of continuous and dramatic flux due to the Italian government's lack of money and its constant struggle with art dealers. From 1909 the law was applied more strictly, marking the end of the golden years of art dealers; although they continued their activity thereafter, albeit on a reduced scale.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121–128.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94–100.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this is not meant to be a definitive study of Bardini's photographs; there are many other photographs in his archive, which will become the subject of further study by the author and hopefully other researchers too. Although the photographs are undated, there is a clear evolution in the displays in terms of the theories of later art historians and the development from eclecticism to Art Nouveau during the latter part of his life and the Bardini archive constitutes a rich collection which clearly begs further investigation. The three chapters in this work show how the photographs of Stefano Bardini can be seen and interpreted as useful historical documents and how his aesthetic choices were the result of the intertwining of his historical and cultural influences. The use of a photographic archive for the study of Bardini's work as art dealer and art collector is an innovative process, which suggests a different research path. Stefano Bardini shows, in his images, how he mastered the photographic medium. For him photography had not only a documentary function but was also a means of artistic expression. For example, in the two versions of the mannerist *mascherone*, the different interpretation of the same fragment is an historical document while at the same time, the study of light and composition confers on the image an artistic value. This aspect, widely discussed at the time, seems to have been one of Bardini's main concerns. His photographs raise the thorny question widely debated at the time: is photography an art form in its own right or only a means of recording images? Yet the attempt to create an artistic photograph, with attention to light, symmetry, perspective and frame, raises the issue discussed by his contemporary



art historian Heinrich Wölfflin: that the meaning of sculpture can become distorted if it is photographed from a point of view different from that originally intended by the artist. Seen and analysed from all these different perspectives, these photographs enable and guide research of Stefano Bardini, offering clues and insight into otherwise obscured aspects of the Florentine art scene at the time, the mind and intentions of Bardini himself, and finally the place of photography in the wider context of art.

In analysing the parallel aspects of the studies of Burckhardt and the photographs of Bardini's displays we are offered the possibility of discovering how both interpreted the concept of 'the duty of art.' Burckhardt says that the work of art has the important duty to transmit and link the past with the present. The form of a work of art has two meanings: both the style it refers to and its contemporary interpretation. Bardini's photographs incorporate this same concept; this becomes the narrative of his photographs in which one can see in seemingly random assemblages a clear indication of the overlapping of historical periods. It is in the gaps, the lack of continuity of chronology from one piece to the other that Bardini paints a portrait of historical periods: antiquity, mediaeval and Renaissance, reshaped by 19<sup>th</sup> century taste.

By examining the fragments in his photographs we can see both their original history and purpose and how in his photographs he conferred on these displaced objects a new purpose and meaning which develop through a dialogue with the other fragments that are displayed alongside them. His displays, as they were organized in his showroom and framed in his photographs acquired importance because they were never fixed but only existed for brief moments, as he was selling the

fragments the inventory was ever changing and the photographs remain as the only testament of his ‘temporary museological project.’

The photographs demonstrate the conflict between Bardini’s art dealing activity – which was closely linked with his passion for art collecting – and his showroom. The modernity of his displays for the time, was hardly understood by his contemporary fellow-citizens, but was widely appreciated by his international clientele. These wealthy foreign collectors were drawn to Florence where many acquired palazzi and villas, reconstructing them in a theatrical re-invention of mediaeval and Renaissance revival style. Bardini belonged to the same milieu and the language of these foreign collectors was well understood by him. The constellations of this milieu were the genesis of the fashion for creating house museums where intellectuals and collectors surrounded themselves in a heavily stylised environment and re-lived an idealised but artificial past through their collections.

Looking at Bardini’s images and the wide variety of objects depicted in them, gathered not only in Florence but from all over Italy one can imagine how wide his network was; taking in impoverished noble families and medium and small art dealers from all the Italian provinces. The nature of the Italian art market at the time is a complex and interesting topic that warrants further research.

The Stefano Bardini that emerges from this study is an innovator in his use of photography to record his inventory and his assemblage of fragments to make *reinvenzioni antiquariali*. At the same time he was also an astute businessman and this was perhaps his main motivation; a motivation that unconsciously led him to creative successes. His photography gives us valuable insights into the tumultuous events that

occurred in Florence in his time. They also allow us to interpret his response to the mediaeval and Renaissance past of the city in the language of his contemporaries. What was Bardini attempting to convey by means of his display? What did he want his clients to see and understand behind the eclectic aesthetic of his composition? How strongly was he influenced by his contemporaries' art-historical studies? How many layers of concepts do his photographs conceal? This thesis set out to answer these questions and through the chapters where art theory and 19<sup>th</sup> century Florence unfolds, these questions have been answered. Bardini's influences were clearly multiple, some conscious and others unconscious, but as a figure who straddled two worlds and was forging a path of his own, it is not his influences but rather his innovations that make him *the* art dealer of nineteenth century Florence.

## Photographs



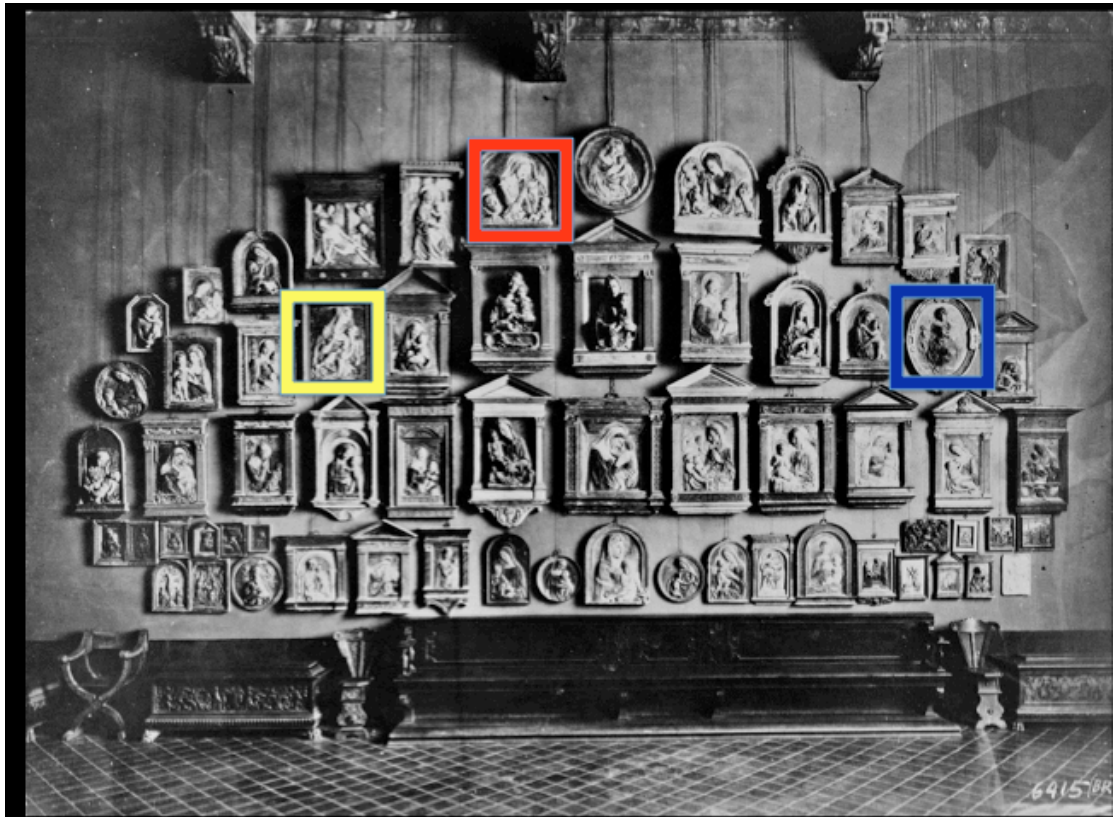
Photograph no. 1 Stefano Bardini self-portrait.



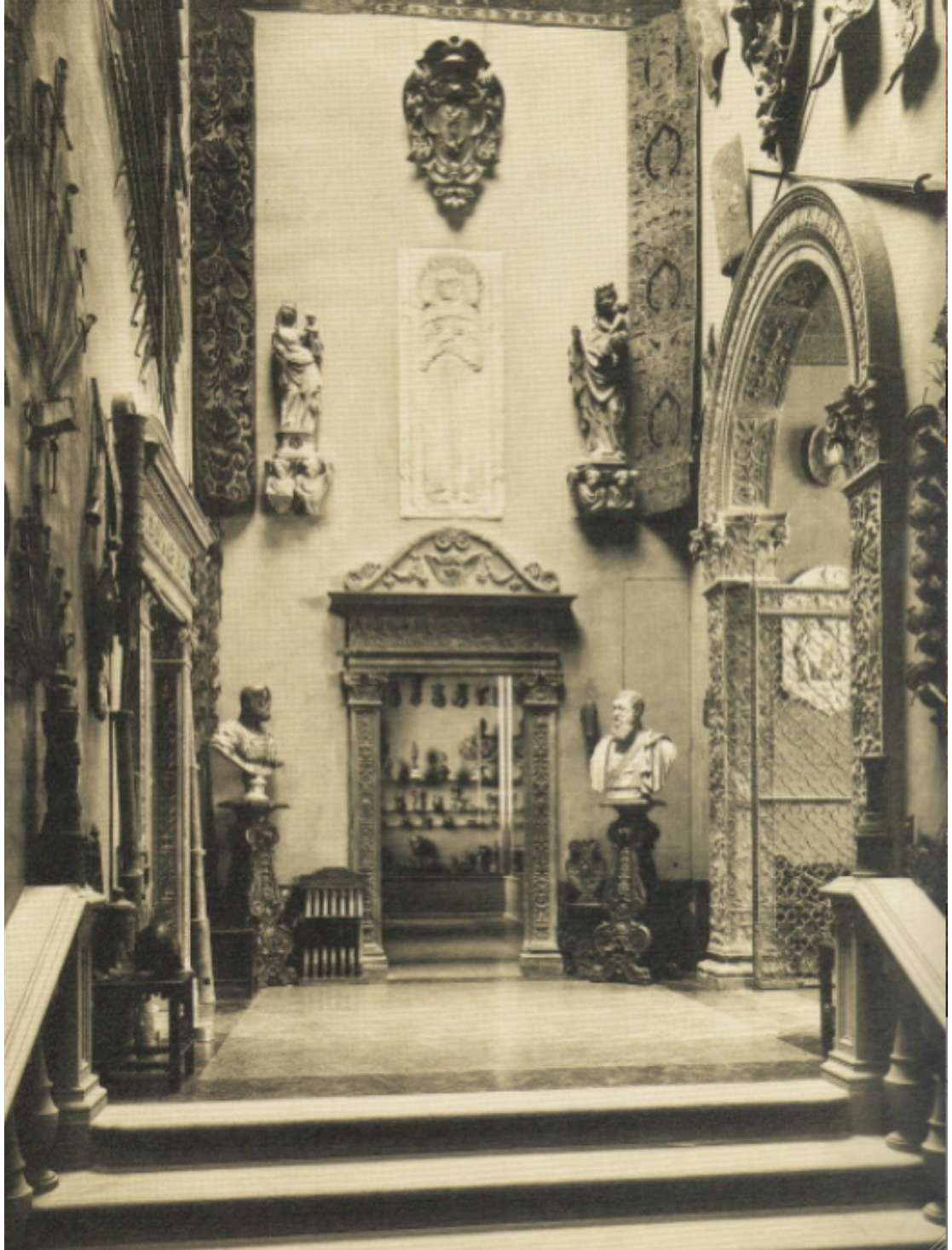


Photograph no. 2 Stefano Bardini historical sketch year 1858, *Lorenzo de' Medici during the conspiracy of Pazzi rescue in Duomo's sacristy*



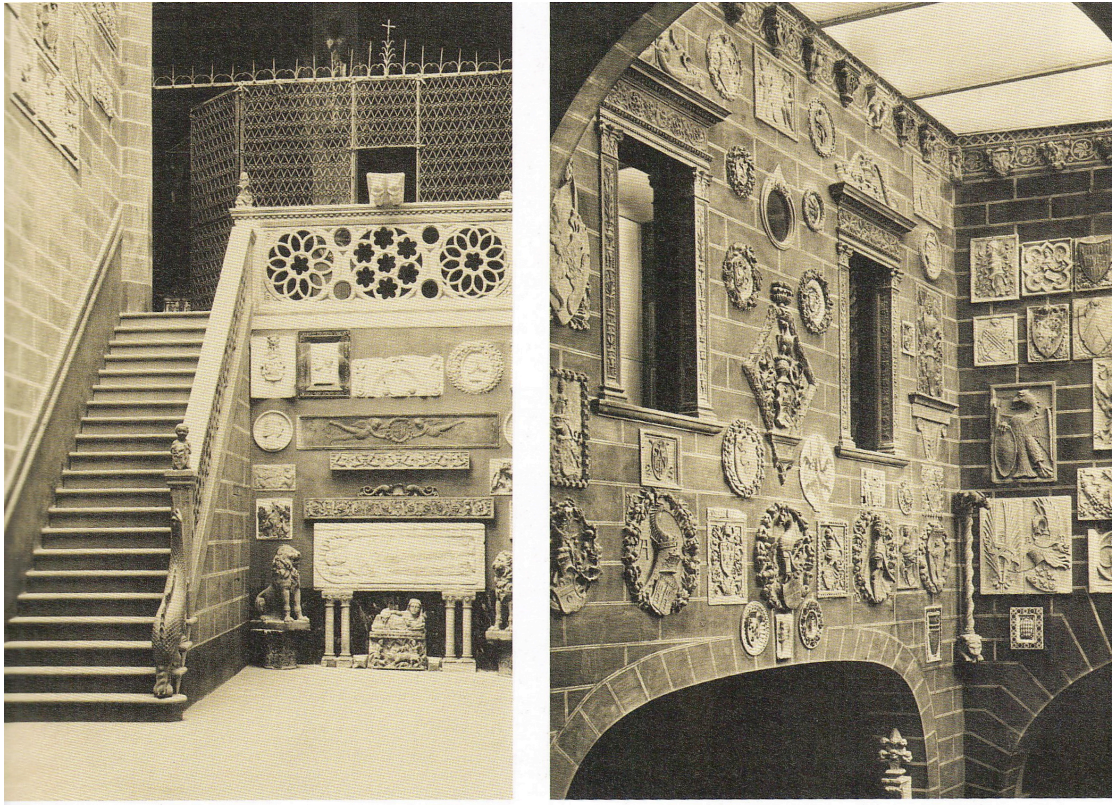


Photograph no. 3 Madonne bas-reliefs.



Photograph no. 4 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini, interior view of the secondary staircase leading to the first floor





Photograph no. 5 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini, interior wall imitating the courtyard of the Bargello





Photograph no. 6 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini interior, display of heads  
sculpture composition





Photograph no. 7 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini *mascherone*, grotesque quotation

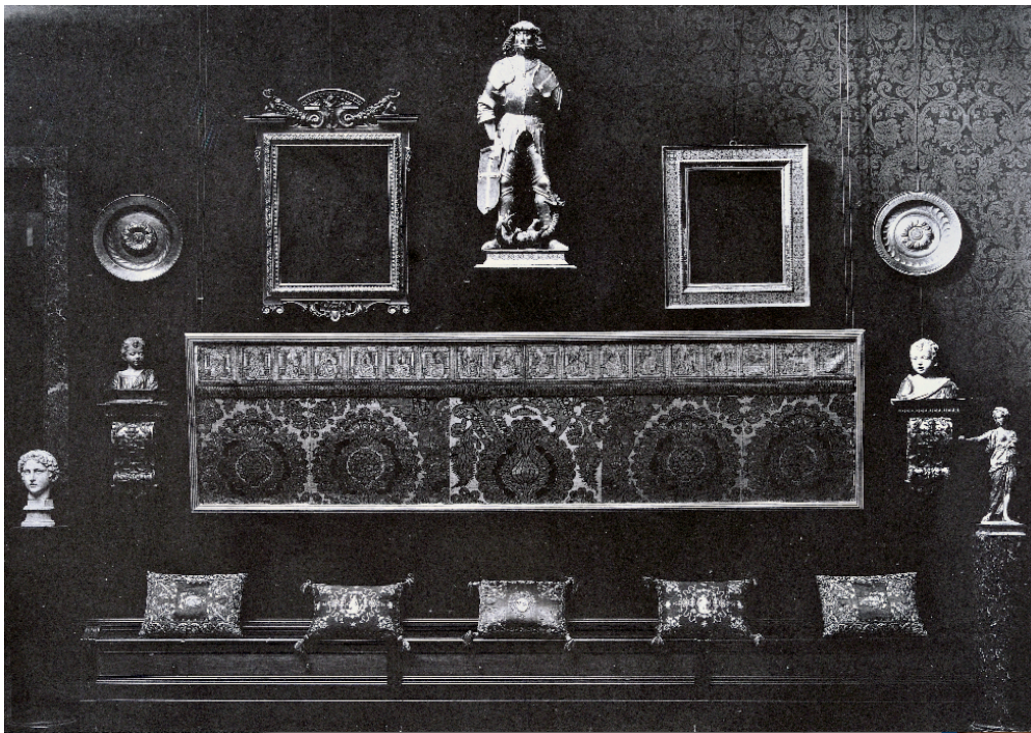




Photograph no. 8 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini *mascherone*, theatrical interpretation

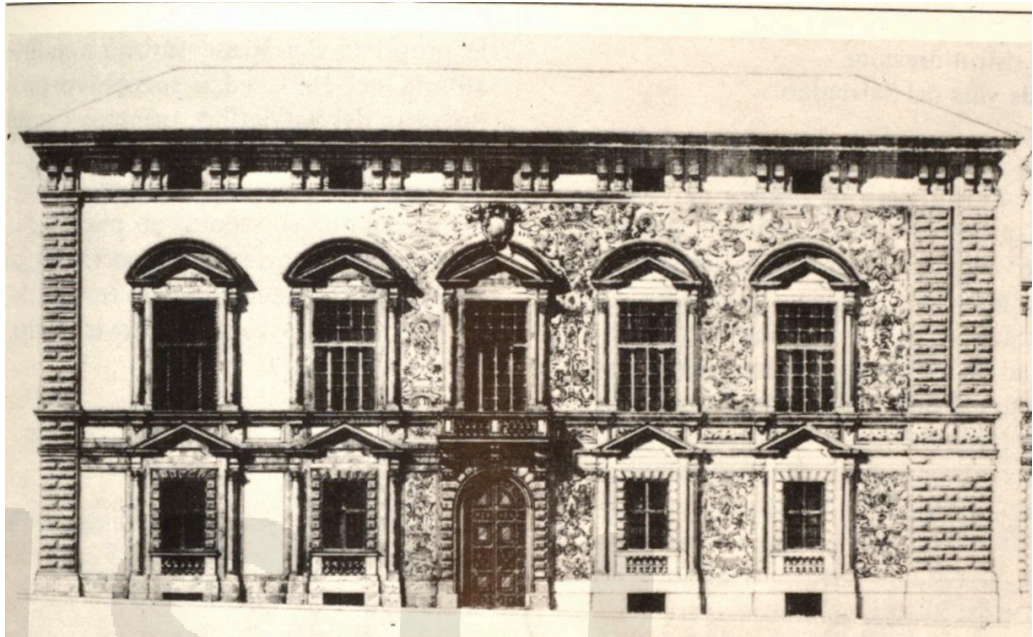


Photograph no. 9 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini, the main entrance

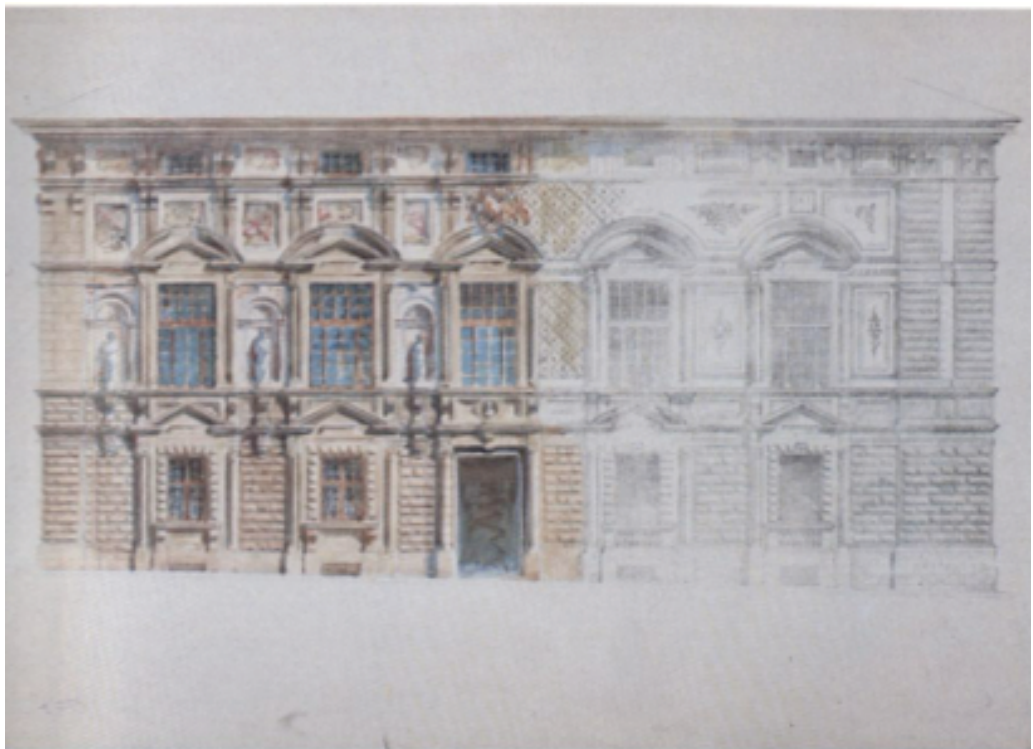


Photograph no. 10 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini, suggestion of a house-museum interior





Photograph no. 11 project for the façade of Palazzo Mozzi Bardini

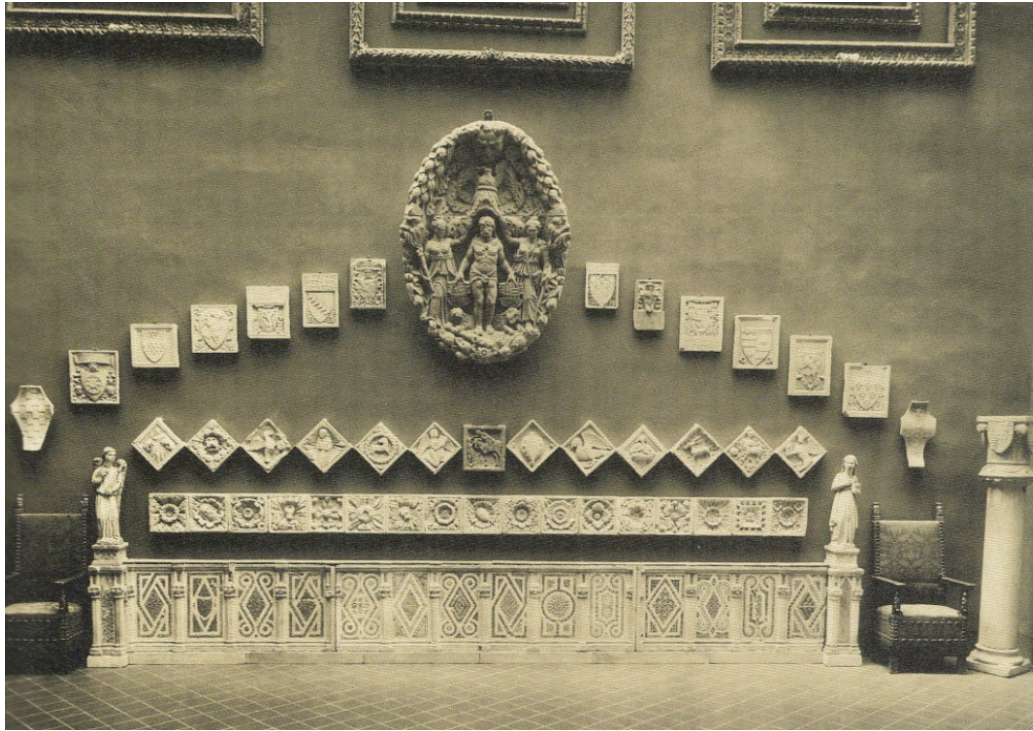


Photograph no. 12 project for the façade of Palazzo Mozzi Bardini



Photograph no. 13 Palazzo Mozzi Bardini façade





Photograph no. 14 'temporary' *reinvenzione antiquariale* with Cosmati fragment



Photograph no. 15 Corinto Corinti *Cartolina* no. 7



## Appendix A

### *London amateurs.*

#### **Leyland, 49 Princes Gate SW.**

This person is a wealthy collector of Italian paintings of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well as ancient bronzes. He is extremely wealthy – the owner of a large number of busts from Liverpool. Of a bizarre disposition, he needs to be managed carefully – to one who shows him a painting that is to his liking, he will say that the price is exorbitant and that there is no point in discussing it, but this is only in order to obtain the painting at a greatly discounted price. If on the other hand he does not like the picture, he will say so at once and there will be no point in trying to persuade him otherwise. One of the great advantages you have with this collector is that is that he entirely trusts his own judgment and never asks the opinion of others when buying an *objet d'art*. The only way to see him is to go to his house at 8.30 in the morning on any day of the week except Sunday and Monday. It will be useless to try to see him at any other time of the day. Present yourself as coming from Signor Bardini, of whom I have spoken to him a great deal.<sup>510</sup>

#### **Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, 142 Piccadilly.**

Collector of old master paintings of the French and Flemish schools - he also used to collect the Italian schools but appears to have changed

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<sup>510</sup> Stefano Bardini, Archive Florence - from the notebook *Appunti di Londra*, written by C. F. Walker in around 1892. 'Leyland 49 Princes Gate SW - Questi e' un amatore di quadri della scuola italiana del trecento quattrocento e cinquecento come pure bronzi antichi. E' ricchissimo- possessore di una grande quantita' di busti venuti da Liverpool. Di carattere bizzarro ha bisogno di essere molto coltivato- a colui che gli mostrera' un quadro se di suo genio dira' che il prezzo e' favoloso che e' inutile parlarne ma questo e' sole allo scopo di potere ottenere il quadro con una forta diminuzione. Se pero' il quadro non gli piace lo dira' subito e sarebbe inutile in questo caso tentare di persuaderlo del contrario. Uno dei grandi vantaggi che si hanno con questo amatore e' che si fida pienamente di se stesso e non si domanda mai l'opinione degli altri. Per comprarne un oggetto d'arte. L'unica maniera per poterlo vedere e' andare a casa sua la mattina alle 8.30 qualunque giorno della settimana fuori che il lunedì e la domenica. Sarebbe inutile tentare di vederlo in altre ore del giorno. Presentarsi a nome del signore Bardini di cui gli ho parlato molto.'

his mind. I sent him photographs by post but he replied that there was nothing that interested him. I think, however, that it would be a good idea to send him some photographs to look at each time an agent of Sig. Bardini goes to London. However, this agent would do well, in passing through Paris, to visit Sig. Louis Mohl, secretary to Gustave de Rothschild, on the rue Monceau, and obtain from him an introduction to Baron Ferdinand. When I was there, the said Mohl gave me a note for the secretary of Baron Rothschild, informing me that the latter would then send me clients from the same family, which I had not been able to obtain with my introduction to Baron Alfred, since the latter's secretary did not know of Bardini.<sup>511</sup>

### **Baron Alfred de Rothschild.**

With an introduction from Sig. Mohl I went to see this collector, who found nothing that interested him among the photographs I had. He does not buy Italian stuff but only good-quality Louis XIV, XV objects such as furniture, clocks and porcelain; paintings of the French school such as Watteau and Greuze; and good Flemish school paintings. To see him, seek out his secretary.<sup>512</sup>

### **Lord Cliveden(?), 7 Carlton Gardens.**

Unpredictable buyer; understands nothing but is very rich. Old master paintings, bronzes, antique furniture. To conduct business you have to

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<sup>511</sup> 'Rothschild Baron Ferdinand 142 Piccadilly. Amatore di quadri antichi scuola francese e fiamminga- E' stato amatore della scuola Italiana ma sembra avere cambiato idea. Io gli mandai fotografie per posta ma rispose che non c'era niente che lo interessasse. Credo che sarebbe bene pero' che ogni qualvolta un incaricato del Signor Bardini andasse a Londra di madargli le fotografie a vedere. Sarebbe bene pero' che l'incaricato passando per Parigi andasse a vedere il Sig Louis Mohl segretario del Gustave de Rothschild - Rue Morceau e si facesse dare un biglietto per il Barone Ferdinando. Quando fui, [da lui] il detto Mohl mi diede un biglietto per il segretario del Barone Rothschild dicendomi che questi mi avrebbe poi mandato degli altri clienti della stessa famiglia cio' che non potei ottenere essendo introdotto che presso il Barone Alfredo Perche' il segretario del Barone Alfredo non conosceva quello del Bardini.'

<sup>512</sup> 'Rothschild Bar. Alfredo. Con un biglietto di raccomandazione del Sig. Mohl sono andato da questo amatore il quale non ha trovato niente che lo interessasse fra le fotografie che avevo. Egli non compra roba Italiana ma buoni oggetti Luigi XIV XV come mobili pendole porcellane quadri della scuola francese come Watteau Greuze e dei bei fiamminghi. Per vederlo cercare del suo segretario.'

be ... [unclear] on the terms of payment. You will surely be paid in the end, but he will make you sweat for it.<sup>513</sup>

**Sir ... Cook c/o Cook, Son & Co.  
St Paul's Churchyard.**

This person is a very important fabric merchant, one of the biggest in England. He has a magnificent collection of old master paintings and is a serious amateur, but only buys through Robinson, such that the sole means of selling him a painting is via Robinson. When I went to see him he said to me, "Show the painting to Robinson and if he thinks it good we can then enter into negotiation."<sup>514</sup>

**Horniman, F., 30 Wormwood Street.**

Important tea merchant; has a very high opinion of himself. Thinks himself a great amateur but understands nothing. Collects a bit of everything.

Mr. Bardini should send him only works without value... with any agent.

If the above-mentioned agent wishes to have an idea as to the tastes of this person, he should visit his museum, the F. Horniman Museum, Forest Hill, London. If one wants to talk to him, one should go and visit him in his office in Wormwood Street any day between 10am and 5pm.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> 'Lord Cliveden 7 Carlton Gardens. Compratore capriccioso non capisce niente ma e' molto ricco. Quadri antichi bronzi mobili antichi. Per farci affari bisogna essere molto..... [parola non chiara] sulle condizioni di pagamento. Il danaro e' sicuro ma certo che ci fara' tirare gli occhi per pagare.'

<sup>514</sup> 'St Paul's Churchyard Questi e' un grandissimo negoziante di stoffe dei piu' forti che abbia l'Inghilterra. Ha una magnifica collezione di quadri e' amatore serio ma non compra che per mezzo di Robinson per cui l'unico mezzo di vendergli il quadro e' per il canale di Robinson. Quando fui a trovarlo non disse queste prime parole Mostrate il quadro al Sig Robinson e se egli lo trovera' buono potremo entrare in trattative.'

<sup>515</sup> 'Horniman F. 30 Wormnwood City-Grande negoziante di te'. Ha una grande opinione di se stesso. Si crede un gran conoscitore ma non capisce nulla. Raccoglie di ogni cosa un poco. L'unica cosa che potrebbe fare il Sig Bardini con questo individuo sarebbe di mandare al proprio appuntamento qualunque scarto che potesse anche il detto rappresentante glielo vendesse in nome proprio. Se il suddetto rappresentante volesse farsi un'idea del gusto di questo signor vada a vedere il suo museo. F. Horniman Museum Forrest Hill London per parlarci andare al suo ufficio in Wormwood St. a tutte le ore dalle 10 alle 5.'

**Colonel North.**

This man is a very wealthy American. He does not like anything in particular, but is happy to pay for something attractive as long it is well known and the sale can be reported in a newspaper, to ensure public recognition of his buying power.<sup>516</sup>

***Paris amateurs.*****Conservateur de la biblioteque de l'union des Art Decoratifs.**

This person appreciated the photographs; however, he says that he cannot make any purchases until the year 1892, due to a lack of money.<sup>517</sup>

**Martin Leroy, 60 rue de Lisbonne, Paris.**

A wealthy person who has just received a substantial inheritance. He examined the photographs, seemed interested in the seated woman and Riccio's statuette, and asked Mr Bardini to send him some photographs with prices. Furthermore, this person is a very useful means of gaining an introduction to the Rothschilds in London.<sup>518</sup>

**M. Darcel, Conservateur du Musées du Cluny Paris**

This person was interested in the Persian and Hispano-Moresco vases [*sic*]. He did not have any money available [my translation], but [if he did] he would buy other works of art, having already items of that kind.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> 'Colonel North. Questi e' un americano ricchissimo che non e' amatore di niente in particolare ma e' pronto sempre a pagare bene una bella cosa purché questa sia conosciuta come autentica lo scopo suo essendo quello di fare del chiasso sui giornali per darsi dell'importanza essendosi arricchito da poco tempo.'

<sup>517</sup> 'Conservateur de la biblioteque de l'union des Art Decoratifs. Questi ha ammirato molto le fotografie ma dice che fino all'anno 1892 non può comprare non avendo fondi.'

<sup>518</sup> 'Ricchissimo ha avuto una forte eredità da poco tempo. Ha esaminato le fotografie ed ha mostrato il desiderio di vedere la donna seduta e la statuette di Riccio mi ha pregato di chiedere al sig. Bardini di inviargli le fotografie con i prezzi. Questi e' utilissimo per avere delle introduzioni presso i Rothschild di Londra.'

<sup>519</sup> 'M. Darcel Conservateur du Musees du Cluny Paris. Ha trovato interesse nei vasi "Persiano" ed Isapano Moresco. Ma non ha... [parola non chiara] disponibile e le sue avvezze comprenderebbe altra cosa avendo articoli di quell genere a sufficienza.'

**Mons. Lafenestre, Conservation du Louvre.**

This person was interested in Pier della Francesca, Mantegna, Baldovinetti, and Sodoma Paolo Vecellio from the photographs I showed him. He says that he will soon come to Florence. The Louvre museum does not have any of the following artists: Sodoma [name unclear], Baldovinetti, Pier della Francesca.<sup>520</sup>

**M. Edmond Sagleot, Conservateurs des Musées du Louvre a Paris.**

I showed him some photographs of the Roman marble (head), and he said that he could not offer me an exact identification, but that he did not think the head could be that of an emperor.<sup>521</sup>

*Amateurs in Brussels.**Amateurs visited***Mr Sonzet, rue de Palais.**

1891. This amateur showed interest in looking at [unclear] 51-91-92, bust of Roman warrior.<sup>522</sup>

**Joseph Destrée photographs sent**

Conservateur Adjoint du Musée Royal d'Antiquité et d'Armurs de Bruxelles.

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<sup>520</sup> 'Questi ha provato interesse per il Pier della Francesca per il Mantegna Baldovinetti Sodoma Paolo Vecellio di cui gli ho mostrato le fotografie dice che presto verra' a Firenze. Musée del Louvre Parigi. In Questo museo non vi e' nulla dei seguenti artisti Sodoma [nome non chiaro] Baldovinetti, Pier della Francesca.'

<sup>521</sup> 'M. Edmond Sagleot Conservateurs des Musees du Louvre a Paris gli ho mostrato le fotografie del marmo romano (testa). Mi ha detto che non saprebbe darmi indicazione alcuna in proposito ma non crede che sia ragione di dire che sia il ritratto di un imperatore.'

<sup>522</sup> The notes here are less detailed, and seem to have been written in a hurry. 'Amatori visitati - Sig Sonzet rue de Palais 1891. Questo amatore ha mostrato il desiderio di vedere i[parola non chiara] 51-91-92 Busto guerriero romano...'

**Mons Fetis.**

When I showed photographs of paintings to this person, he was interested in Baldovinetti, Sodoma, Mantegna, T. Vecellio, but he showed a particular desire to have the photographs...<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> 'Mons. Fetis Conservateur en chef Musee de tableaux anciennes. A questi ho mostrato fotografie dei quadri dei quali lo hanno interessato Baldovinetti, Sodoma, Mantegna, T. Vecellio ma specialmente di questi ha mostrato un gran desiderio di avere le fotografie...!'

## Appendix B

Original sample of Bardini Blue from the archive of Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum Boston.





Original recipe of Bardini Blue from the archive Isabella Stuart  
Gardner Museum Boston.

Receipt for Bardini  
 Blue -  
 1 Kilo. Ultramarine green  
 50 grammes " blue  
 200 " Whiting  
 200 " Gilders whiting  
 dissolved in glue.

According to wish to have  
 a dark or light shade of  
 colour - it is done by  
 modifying amount of  
 Gilders Whiting & Whiting.

A sufficient quantity  
 of glue to be added to  
 keep the colour from  
 rubbing off.



## Letter from the archive of Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum Boston.

Hotel New York Florence Feb. 14 [1902: from envelope]

Dear Mrs. Gardner

Here is the receipt of the Museo Nazionale for a very beautiful oil gloss on their brick pavements -- ditto in Pitti & Uffizzi.

If your red tiles have shown any gray mould (from the cement) on their surface -- you can take that off with a little acid & water before you try the sawdust & oil. And if the oil gets on the glazed tiles & forms a dusty scum on them in the course of years you can take that off also with acid & a brush of course the oil dont hurt the glaze at all.

I think it must take some time to get the beautiful rich gloss & though the man said a year I don't think he was there in 1870 when the floor was laid. It may take longer. But at all events with the oil & sawdust the floor is always improving. Only dont expect to get the rich old meerschaum gloss too quickly.

I saw the peacock blue at Bardini's to day (sic.) & there were two or three shades of it -- some a little lighter than the normal -- the wall texture looked like thick old whitewash with a color in it. A very stupid man took me about who knew nothing.

Hoping that the enclosed may be of help I am

Faithfully

H. C. Mercer

Letter from the archive of Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum Boston.

*Bardini Blue*

April 9, 1930.

Mrs. John C. Breckinridge,  
455 East 87th Street,  
New York City.

Dear Madam:

I have had a sample of the blue paint on our walls put on a piece of board, and when it is dry will send it to you. As the color was put on the walls at different times, it varies somewhat, because the painter did not exactly match it every time. I hope that what I send you will be near enough to the shade you remember to be satisfactory.

The paint mixture is made up with ultra-marine blue as a foundation, adding Prussian blue to make it darker, and a little green.

Very truly yours,

Director.

*Time & sunlight will modify & improve the color. Any green can be used as only a little is needed.*

*Sent April 10*

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

## Article from the archive of Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum Boston

August 1, 1957

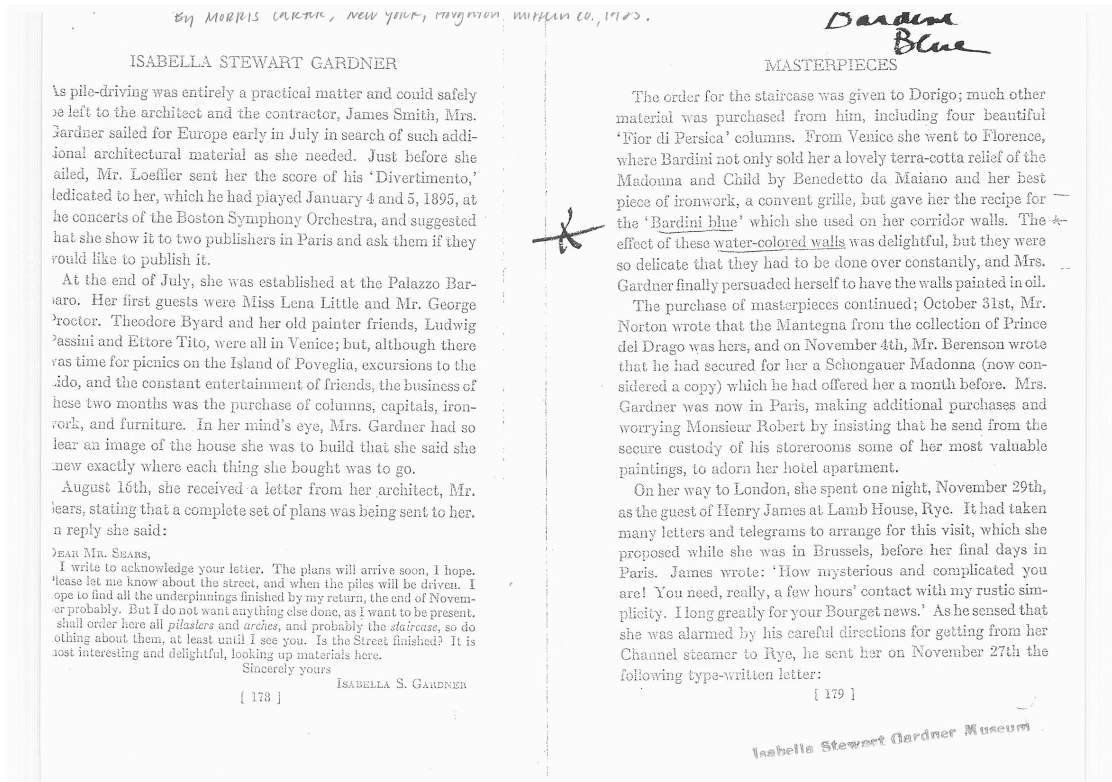
Enclosed is the formula from our files for the blue wall paint. I have to add that such a prescription may produce a wide variety of results depending on variations in the materials and on methods of compounding and applying them.

In one case, where we had to match such a blue, we devised an entirely different mixture and adjusted it by eye.

George L. Stout  
Director

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

## Letter from the archive of Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum Boston



## Letter from the archive of Isabella Stuart Gardner Boston

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Note for Marianne McDermott

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**From:** Susan Sinclair  
**Date:** Fri, Feb 2, 1996 9:22 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Blue wall color  
**To:** Marianne McDermott

Marianne,  
I have one sample in my office which, I believe, is ISG's original one but I am going to check with Valentine and have it analyzed to see if it is water or oil based. The original "Bardini Blue" recipe created water-colored walls that according to Carter "were so delicate that they had to be done over constantly, and Mrs. Gardner finally persuaded herself to have the walls painted in oil." The original formula was applied as fresco. By 1930, Carter was already remarking that as the color was put on the walls at different times, it varied because the painter did not exactly match it every time. I believe Stout may have tried to match the "original" color and John Niland has the most recent version that we have been using.  
Susan

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From: Marianne McDermott on Thu, Feb 1, 1996 3:11 PM  
Subject: Blue wall color  
To: Susan Sinclair

I understand from Ruth that there are in existence on the walls two variations of that deep strong blue that originated with ISG - one is "better liked" than the other. Can you help me identify these two blues? This is for Mona's installation.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

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