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The Medici Example: How Power Creates Art and Art Creates Power

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The Medicean Example: How Power Creates Art and Art Creates Power

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ABSTRACT

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This project looks at two members of Florence's Medici family, Cosimo il Vecchio (1389-1464) and Duke Cosimo I (1519-1574), in an attempt to assess how they used the patronage of art to facilitate their rule. By looking at their individual political representations through art, the specifics of their propagandist works and what form these pieces of art came, it is possible to analyze their respective rules. This analysis allows for a clearer understanding of how these two men, each in very different positions, found art as an ally for their political endeavors. While they were in power only one hundred years apart, they present uniquely different strategies for the purpose of creating and maintaining their power through the patronage of art.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Renaissance was a time of extreme shifts in political power and moreover shifts in the methods by which power was employed. Generally understood to have begun in 1300, the Renaissance in its determinable form spans the next three centuries. While the period is commonly associated with the Italian peninsula, the Renaissance occurred across the continent of Europe in many different forms. Artistic expression and individual development graduated to new levels during the period, seeing artists and scholars developing and creating to a degree little seen before. In specific, the artistic commissions of the Renaissance offer an invaluable avenue through which to assess the period in its entirety but, more so, the leadership and politics as that existed throughout this period. This project looks at leaders of Florence and their uses of power, specifically how they interacted with the concept and practice of commissioning pieces of art, and how exactly they used that to their advantage.

The Medici of Florence offer a prime example of what it means to use power to create art and how that art can further create power. Medici power, from its outset, was somewhat of a perfect storm. A determined family, well-funded thanks to their banking success, found themselves in a position to facilitate a shift in society that would create a powerful position for them. In looking at Cosimo il Vecchio, the first of the Medici to make their name known on a grander scale, and Duke Cosimo I, the second duke of Florence and first Duke of Tuscany, as defining figures of the Medici family's use of patronage, it is possible to argue certain trends in each Medici's respective rule. Both Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo I project their identity, and the identity they wish to be perceived in a different manner through vastly different pieces of art. These projected identities will be assessed by analyzing a number of pieces of art and architecture that were commissioned by each leader during their tenure. The content depicted as

well as the location of the pieces offer a valuable avenue by which the leaders' outward projection can be assessed. Churches, paintings, palaces, altars and tapestries and the mediums by which Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo I projected themselves to Florence and so these same mediums will serve as resources throughout this study. The way they presented themselves can be deemed a number of different things, though an appropriate definition of the aspects discussed in this study may be the term "persona." These two men curated the outward aspects of their personality through art to formulate an appealing and applicable persona.

The conditions in which Cosimo il Vecchio led in Florence were quite different to those of Duke Cosimo. The former was "ruling" Florentine society as a noble elite, manipulating the systems of the republic in which he lived, and using the upper class to his advantage. The latter was an official ruler who held the title of duke for decades before abdicating to his son. Consequently, Duke Cosimo was able to use patronage without the same limitations as his ancestor, Cosimo il Vecchio. The fifteenth century saw Cosimo il Vecchio invest in a number of projects, those standing out most as projections of his patronage ideology being San Marco, the Palazzo Medici, the Magi Chapel inside the Palazzo Medici, and Donatello's bronze *David.* In comparison, Duke Cosimo commissioned a number of portraits that represent a variety of different sides of the ruler, as well as investing in the interior decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio and the eventual building of new government buildings, to be known as the Uffizi. The number of religious projects commissioned by Cosimo il Vecchio creates a pious image, in turn creating an outward perception of stability and trust, applicable to his lack of official title and constant instability in power. By contrast, Duke Cosimo carefully formulates and perpetuates an aristocratic image over the course of his reign, though his artistic beginnings are somewhat more modest than his later years in power.

Cosimo il Vecchio was one of the earliest of a powerful line of Medici, with many to follow who would rule Florence unofficially, and eventually officially, with a number of exiles peppered throughout and countless tests to their security. The main Medici line began with Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici in the fourteenth century, who had a money-lending business that eventually led to the Medici bank. Cosimo il Vecchio's beginnings of power were rooted in the success of his father's bank, however it was Cosimo's own hand at business and, moreover, manipulation, that truly pushed the family onward. Historians often consider why the Medici were not so easily ousted. Gene Brucker notes, "with some exceptions, the Florentine aristocracy accepted the Medici regime; it was a stabilizing force, which protected and secured its economic and social preeminence."[1] This point stands to be a common one throughout years of historical discussion, as Florence ended up in a situation with an almost imminent Medici presence. Following their exile in 1433 and again in 1494, the Medici returned stronger than they were before.

While the Medici encountered a number of tests to their rule and attempts to oust them, they waived little, coming back to power again and again for centuries after Cosimo il Vecchio's time. Staying in a generally consistent position of power was no easy task, hence the necessary and effective use of the patronage of the arts. Gene Brucker believes that the "triumph of the Medici faction over its opponents was partly the result of Cosimo's superior financial resources,"[2] which offers the conclusion that without his wealth, and thus without his ability to commission art, Cosimo may have found himself in a very different position. Commissioning certain works often aligned with other conditions of Medici society, with religious commissions

[1] Gene Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 257.
[2] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 159.

of the fifteenth century mirroring prominent church movements such as the Council of Florence, which was a response to many of the actions of the Ottoman Empire. Riccardo Fubini explains that the Medici, specifically Cosimo il Vecchio, "used the return of Pope Eugene IV to formally consecrate their newly established regime."[3] Fubini addresses Cosimo's rise to power, questioning how it is "possible that Cosimo de Medici managed to implement a system of governance that led...to the quasi-seigneury of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and that this quasi-seigneury was reinstated after a brief interval, eventually leading to a princely regime."[4] While this question presents a variety of possible answers, this thesis will attempt to address specifically the continuity of the Medici dynasty by looking at artistic patronage both in respect to Cosimo il Vecchio's beginnings of unstable power and Duke Cosimo's later consolidation of power.

In order to address the patronage of both Cosimos, it is necessary to address the environment in which they were commissioning certain works. In *The Government of Florence under the Medici (1434-1494),* Nicholai Rubinstein addresses what he believes to be a large gap in thorough scholarship on Medici rule, offering that there are a few specialized reviews of this topic but that none adequately address the years leading up to 1494, with most studies addressing the years after 1494. Rubinstein specifically looks into how the Medici after 1434, under Cosimo il Vecchio at first, manipulated the governmental structure of Florence all while seeming to stay within the technical framework of the constitution. Rubinstein believes that in 1433 people were hoping to consolidate an existing regime, while 1434 saw the establishment of a new one.[5] This

[3] Riccardo Fubini and Sarah-Louise Raillard, "Cosimo De' Medici's Regime: His Rise to Power (1434)," *Revue Française De Science Politique* (English Edition) 64, no. 6 (2014): 81, accessed December 11, https://www.jstor.org/stable/revfranscipoleng.64.6.81.
[4] Fubini and Raillard, "Cosimo De' Medici's Regime: His Rise to Power (1434)," 81.
[5] Nicolai Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence Under the Medici (1434-1494)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 2.

shift in government undoubtedly, and possibly inadvertently, offered a little more flexibility for the Medici in their manipulations.

While the Medici were successful in creating a foundation for their power, that is not to say they were without fear of crumbling at any moment. There was a constant concern that an ousted faction would attempt to overthrow the Medici, as Rinaldo degli Albizzi attempted in 1440, and as such there were actions taken from 1434 in order to avoid this test of their control.[6] The *Balia* was a ruling committee composed of patricians and representatives that was supposed to represent the republican values of Florence. This committee ousted those most threatening to the Medici, employing terms of no less than five years for those in government and extending the terms of those exiled,[7] so that those in favor of the Medici would stay where they were and those opposed would be kept away. Rubinstein speaks of the limitations of the Medici to utilize repressive measures in their acquisition of power in the fifteenth century. These limits were a consequence of Florence's governmental structure; however, the very same governmental structure was what allowed the Medici to manipulate the system and facilitate opportunities for power. In being unable to employ repressive methods, harsh parameters were forced on Cosimo's actions, and he was able to bend those limitations as a strategic patron of the arts.

Rubinstein's book, though thorough and immeasurably useful, lacks approachability and even more so a cultural component. Another historian, Philip Jones, has offered opinions that contradict those of Rubinstein, presenting that the Medici were no less than Italian despots.[8] It is likely that the reality of their rule was somewhere in between. Considering the above-mentioned opinion of Rubinstein on the tactical methods employed by the Medici as not directly outright

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[6] Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence Under the Medici (1434-1494),* 20.
[7] Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence Under the Medici (1434-1494),* 21.
[8] Robert Black and John E. Law, eds. *The Medici: Citizens and Masters* (Cambridge, MA: Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2015), 5.

expressions of repressive measures, it is important to note that the Medici ruling tactics still did much to subvert and undermine the republican values of Florence. Alongside Rubenstein, Jones' opinions may hold some weight when considering another statement he made in his *Economia e società nell'Italia medievale. La leggenda della borghesia.* His belief was that, while the Medici were not what he believes to be "notably popular by party affiliation or ruling style," they nonetheless "rehabilitated, and contracted marriages among magnates, further closed the ruling class, and governed by alliance with clans and families."[9] The opinions of Rubinstein and Jones seem to suggest that they actually shared the same perception of the early Medici family in its most base form, but when built upon they stray from one another in the extremity of their conclusions.

Specific conditions of Medici rule when Cosimo il Vecchio first began his patronage of the arts is vital in understanding why he may have made certain choices and even more so telling in how those choices were received by the Florentine population and his peers. Beyond these beginnings, it is important to note who Cosimo was to Florentine society throughout his time in power. Alison Brown believes that Cosimo was more than one person or another to Florence at any given time, but rather a fluid mixture of people that he likely believed Florence needed most. Brown states that Cosimo was first praised as a sort of Roman republican statesman, whose greatest virtues were considered to be practical and patriotic, while he was later seen as an Aristotelian philosopher-ruler and then even a generous Augustan ruler.[10] The different types of rulers that Brown believes Cosimo to have embodied speaks to the point that Cosimo's environment was ever changing and, as he changed with it, one of the things he was able to be

[9] Black and Law, eds. *The Medici: Citizens or Masters*, 5.
[10] Alison M. Brown, "The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo De' Medici, Pater Patriae," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 24, no. 3/4 (1961): 188, accessed December 29, https://www.jstor.org/stable/750795.

consistent in was the commissioning of works of art. The simple fact that there seems to be no constant determination among historians of why and how exactly Coismo il Vecchio came to be who he was, and how he stayed where he was, is indicative of the instability of his position in its very essence.

While each Medici to follow Cosimo would patronize the arts in some way or another, he was the first in the family to begin investing extortionate amounts of money in the patronage of art. A. D. Fraser Jenkins speaks of Cosimo's patronage specifically in respect to the theory of magnificence surrounding Cosimo, which refers to his commitment to and grandeur in commissioning works of art. Jenkins notes that Cosimo was "alone in Italy in spending very large sums of money on serious building projects."[11] The sheer amount of Cosimo's spending was, in its own right, an initial point that separated him from the rest of Florentine society, showing that he not only had money but was willing to use it. The extent of this spending is detailed by Gene Brucker who notes that "seven years after Cosimo's death, his grandson Lorenzo stated that the Medici had spent over 600,000 florins for public purposes since 1434."[12] This immense sum was likely spent mostly by Cosimo and his son, Piero, who acted with similar intentions to his father in patronizing art. It is important to note that at this point, post-600,000 florins, the Medici are still by no means official rulers of Florence or even close. Nonetheless, this sum in its own right shows exactly how much of a hand the Medici had in every move that happened in Florence in the fifteenth century, title or naught, investing in the very essence of the city. When choosing how exactly to spend these sums of money Cosimo was tactical, but not all too careful, making some investments that people viewed as reaching too far beyond his position.

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[11] A. D. Fraser Jenkins, "Cosimo De' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 162, accessed December 29, https://www.jstor.org/stable/750894.

[12] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 121.

Beyond the depths of the governmental conditions of the fifteenth century, historians have spent many years assessing whether or not Cosimo had a definable theme within his body of works or a specific method that structured his patronage, and if so, what those commonalities afforded him in his attempts to facilitate a more compliant Florence. Dale Kent is one of the principal historians to address Cosimo's style of patronage, utilizing the term "oeuvre" to delineate what she believes to be his definable body of works. Jenkins, a much earlier historian in the field, set up a baseline of understanding for the concept of oeuvre, noting that it was an innovation in its scale and its geographical distribution.[13] Kent's assessment adds depth to the earlier opinions of Jenkins, as Kent not only explores the idea that the oeuvre of course consisted of a noteworthy scale and geographic distribution, but moreover what form those qualities came in. Kent explores how Cosimo il Vecchio was more than a big spender, and actually a very intentional patron. Kent goes further in depth than Jenkins when discussing Cosimo's oeuvre, looking at his entire body of works in the context of his political and personal life, in the hopes of adding a richer significance to these commissions as well as hoping to suggest one theme of intention among most all of them.

Kent presents an expansive interaction with Cosimo il Vecchio's commissions in a manner that had not been attempted prior. She offers that a "major theme of Medici patronage in all its senses is the expression of familial and dynastic solidarity."[14] While this consideration is not necessarily new or by any means original to Kent, it is important to note as a point of reference from which to begin all assessments of Medici patronage. This argument allows a lens

[13] Jenkins. "Cosimo De' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence," 164.
[14] Dale Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 9.

through which to see the family's patronage as a whole, thus allowing different generations to be comparable to one another in a clearer regard.

Kent speaks on Cosimo's public representation, offering that he was a "master of self-presentation…[who] carefully crafted and maintained a coherent *persona* to which he owed much of the power and prestige he enjoyed in Florence without formal title."[15] This opinion further solidifies the grounds from which a case can be built as an assessment of Cosimo's use of patronage to facilitate his success. Kent goes on to say that this authority came from the fact that he was "what Florence wanted; a man of shrewd and balanced judgement, a spokesman for their values who could overcome republican indecisiveness… and negotiate strongly on diplomatic and military issues."[16] While this is an interesting opinion and certainly a valid one, it is possible to suggest that Cosimo's place in Florence had more depth than simply what the Florentines wanted. It is arguable that Florentines knew what they wanted no more than Cosimo was in a position to tell them, and so the middle ground of communication found between the two was that of Cosimo's investment in patronage and thus, projection onto Florentine society. Rather than simply being the man Florence wanted, he seems to have slowly and strategically manipulated what Florence wanted, so that his Cosimo's actions eventually culminated in a Medici dynasty.

Cosimo shows a certain inclination toward the commissioning of religious buildings, suggesting that religion may be one of his foremost interests. Kent details this by discussing how the religious works he commissioned "reinforced [his] image as a patron able to promote not only the secular ambitions, but also the spiritual welfare of his Florentine supporters."[17] Kent is

[15] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre,* 16.
[16] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre,* 16.
[17] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre*, 161.

generally of the opinion that Cosimo was mostly commissioning works because he was a pious man, and for little more reason than that. Realistically, it is likely that piety played a part in the reasoning behind Cosimo's commissions and where piety was not considered, strategy offered the rest of the reason. Few men of nobility and power do things solely for piety, nevermind those who have political ambitions and the willingness to manipulate people and their government institutions.

While Cosimo il Vecchio found himself entering Florentine society on uncertain ground, Duke Cosimo had quite the different experience. Although the Duke was too on the thinnest of ice, he was afforded the luxury of having been appointed to the position, no matter how unpopular the appointment may have been. Alessandro de Medici's assassination offered the Duke a turbulent entry into society but nevertheless a prime opportunity to become the certainty in an uncertain time. The year of his ascension, 1537, and a handful of the years to follow did not offer much from Cosimo in the realm of grand statements and large commissions; however, the 1540s presented a very different ruler.

The years preceding Cosimo's ascension were pivotal in the creation of the position he would inherit. In 1532, the Medici returned to power in Florence and, in turn, saw the abolition of the city's republican structures, creating a hereditary principality for the Medici.[18] This return to power was paired with an alliance with Charles V, further supporting the idea that if the Medici had allies outside Florence, they would be much more secure inside Florence. Reinstatement of the Medici family meant Alessandro was appointed as the first duke of Florence and thus, Cosimo became the second. This succession afforded Cosimo a unique opportunity to have and hold power over Florence. Henk Th. van Veen discusses the extent of

[18] Nicholas Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty* (Cambridge, MA: Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2013), 2.

Cosimo's reach while in power, offering that he not only reduced the influence of the Florentine patricate while solidifying his new bureaucracy but also entirely solidified his grip on the Florentine state. He did so by ending conflicts that were not serving anyone, assuming control of local militias, and by building a network of fortifications.[19] Nicholas Baker mentions, at the beginning of his work, *The Fruit of Liberty,* historian Albertini's observations about the Medici eventually come to be head of a principality. Baker presents Albertini's claim that the development of the absolutist state was representative of "a clear break with republican tradition, describing it as the substitution of what he called a Counter Reformation mentality for the Renaissance one."[20] This break with republican tradition facilitated what the Medici had always sought, outright rule of Florence.

This outright rule was first achieved by Alessandro de Medici, who was appointed in 1531 to rule when the Medici first retook Florence. However, upon being assassinated in 1537, Alessandro left Cosimo with his position to fill and unstable ground to stand on. This created ample conditions for Cosimo's uncertain start, though this did not deter Cosimo from acting in a manner that he believed would serve him best, creating and manipulating a public image through the use of patronage. Cosimo's patronage is most certainly not constant throughout his time in power, with the beginnings of his reign and the end showing very different works and intentions with said works. These differences in intention and shifts in his application of patronage will be addressed throughout this study and are at the cause of pivotal movements within Cosimo's career.

[19] Henk Th. van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), *2.*
[20] Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty,* 6.

The most vital points of discussion for Cosimo's changing political position align with his ascension to power in 1537, allowing for a clear point of reference from which to begin assessing his works of patronage. This ascension to power was followed closely by his marriage in 1539 and the shortly after, his taking residency in Palazzo Vecchio, which was originally the town hall, in 1540. These few movements in his early years compare little to those that come later. The year 1543 saw Cosimo buy back fortresses at Florence and Livorno, meaning that his friend and ally of sorts, Charles V, would no longer have a foothold on Cosimo's Tuscan territory.[21] The latter 1540's saw Cosimo form his Pratica Segreta and begin his Legge Polverina in Florence, while outside Florence in 1548 he was granted the territory of Elba. In 1555, Siena, under the French, surrendered to Cosimo, who was acting on Charles V's instruction. By 1557 Siena was on perpetual loan to Cosimo and by 1559 he was duke of Siena. In the same year a new pope, Pius IV, came into power and was in favor of Cosimo, further facilitating Cosimo's insatiable appetite for conquest. Before abdicating in 1564, Cosimo established the Order of the Knights of St. Stephen in Pisa in 1561, and by 1565 the new duke, his son Francesco, had married.[22] All of these significant moments in the chronology of Cosimo I's rule contextualize and add value to the pieces of art commissioned by the duke over the years. Neither his power or his patronage can exist separately, nor should they, with one adding to the other and both explaining one another.

Historians have often considered how effectively and intentionally Cosimo utilized the practice commissioning of art, with Kurt Forster offering, "Cosimo may have been the first of his

[21] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 2.
[22] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture*, 3-4.

family to recognize fully the value of art as an instrument of statecraft."[23] While such a claim has some footing, some of the Medici who preceded the duke, such as Cosimo il Vecchio, had also strategically used art as a valuable tool to dictate their rule as well. Forster's claim may be better suited to this situation with an edit - it may be more likely that Duke Cosimo was potentially the first in his family to use art as an instrument of statecraft *directly*. Forster goes on to say that as "Cosimo and his circle monopolized [Florentine art], the less these artists were capable of moves beyond ideological control… [which] can also be seen as Cosimo's grip on one of the Florentine traditions which remained fairly intact through the city's struggle for survival in the early 1530s."[24] This power play by Cosimo was a strategic one which was exemplified through his body of patronage as a whole and is most clear in specific works he commissioned.

The duke's namesake, Cosimo il Vecchio, was most certainly aware of the forces at play when commissioning works of art, however, the elder Cosimo was not quite able to manipulate and monopolize the market in the same outright manner as the Duke. Duke Cosimo uses patronage to solidify his ducal power, allowing him to use his time strategically presenting an idea of himself in the way he deemed most useful. Oppositely, Cosimo il Vecchio utilized patronage as a means to create the conditions necessary to facilitate his power, which did not yet exist in the same manner Duke Cosimo came to know. While their methodologies were similar, and their goals similar, their avenues to achieve were somewhat different. This speaks to the fact that there was a constant battle between who these Medici rulers were versus who they wanted to

[23] Kurt W. Forster, "Metaphors of Rule. Political Ideology and History in the Portraits of Cosimo I De' Medici," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes* in Florenz 15, no. 1 (1971): 65, accessed january 3, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27652262.
[24] Forster, "Metaphors of Rule. Political Ideology and History in the Portraits of Cosimo I De' Medici," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 15, no. 1 (1971): 66.

seem to be, and that within these considerations came the limitations of politics, society and everything in between.

Duke Cosimo I interacted with the patronage of art in a notably different manner to that of his elder. While both Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo enjoyed the financial freedoms of being a Medici, Cosimo I, more so than Cosimo il Vecchio, enjoyed the freedoms of power as well. Cosimo I came to his ducal position in 1537 and so he began the long journey of curating his outward identity. While there is no comprehensive work on Duke Cosimo's patronage comparable to Kent's work on Cosimo il Vecchio, there are a number of smaller works that can be compiled to achieve a somewhat encompassing understanding of his patronage. Henk Th. van Veen is of the opinion that Cosimo used his official commissions to specific propagandist ends and more so, believes that Cosimo's cultural policy, to include patronage, was indicative of shifts in tenor in the Florentine state. These shifts are mirrored in his commissions, according to van Veen, though there is no gradual shift but rather a stark difference. The Duke begins to portray in his commissions "royal, dynastic and territorial imagery"[25] when he is limited in his power in his earlier years and at the hand of Charles V. Upon annexing Siena in 1559, there is a clear shift in his commissioned imagery toward a more "republican, florentinist decorum,"[26] given that he had gained more individual security. This shift is noteworthy for a number of reasons, namely that Cosimo seems to have finally found his own footing as ruler of Florence and, more so, that he was no longer interested in simply perpetuating the general power inadvertently of Charles V but rather a power specifically associated with him and his actions in Florence.

[25] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 5.
[26] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 5.

Van Veen goes on to say that the scale and symbolism of Cosimo's commissioned projects was designed to "equate the Duke's advent with the creation of a dynastic Tuscan state."[27] The use of art to clearly delineate the *before* and the *after* in the coming of Duke Cosimo was intentional and impressive. He wanted "to show that he was an absolute Prince and arbiter of the government, and to discourage those who thought… that there was a distinction between the government of the City and that of the Medici family."[28] Welcome or unwelcome, this merging of ideology regarding the Medici and the city as one inseparable entity was an integral aspect of the Duke's patronage and thus his success.

Nicholas Baker shares van Veen's opinions on Cosimo's position in the city, stating that Cosimo asserted more forcefully than Alessandro his position as prince of the city and territory. He goes on to say that Cosimo's confidence ended the "political ambiguity of Alessandro's reign" as well as providing an objective point of political stability[29] from which there could be forward motion in Cosimo's Florence. Baker places significant focus on the fact that Cosimo was not deemed Duke of Florence for years after his ascension to power, and instead argues that he usurped the title, even though it was eventually conferred.[30] The specifics of Cosimo's rule had obviously never hindered his confidence, though there is certainly a clear delineation between his works before finding true security and after, which is noted above by van Veen.

Another voice in this conversation is Janet Cox-Rearick, also a historian of Cosimo I, however she leans toward discussing the symbols and ideological makings of Cosimo's patronage. Cox-Rearick believed that there was an overt and personalized political imagery in

[27] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 10.
[28] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 14.
[29] Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty,* 191.
[30] Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty,* 191.

Cosimo's art, which she believed to be for the purpose of supporting his absolute rule, developed from the modes of thinking and image-making of two earlier Medici periods. The first of these is the republican era of Cosimo il Vecchio and his sons, during which the imagery was "covert, often being subsumed into the subtle conceits of Lairentian art and poetry," which she believes was expressed directly only in *imprese*, or devices.[31] The second period she references as influential on Cosimo I's patronage is that of the decade after Medici restoration, which elevated the family as Giovanni became Pope Leo X. Cox-Rearick believes that this second period of influence affected Cosimo's art in that the period saw a "triumphant return of the Medici and their establishment of a Roman power base during Leo's papacy." This led to the use of cosmic and dynastic imagery in monumental art according to Cox-Rearick, which allowed for Medicean "metaphors of rule" to become bolder and more intentional.[32] Cox-Rearick shares a similar perspective on the significant difference Cosimo's art present compared to that of his predecessors but goes a few steps farther to delineate where exactly that difference came from and how exactly it is presented.

Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo I found themselves in a position of power that required much maintenance, the mechanics of the maintenance is what sets them apart. Some security afforded to these men at distinct points in their rule may have been achieved by things such as their religiosity and social implementations, and more so how these factors manifest in their patronage. Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo I implement their patronage in ways that either reflect their own values in their truest form, or the values they deemed most appealing to onlookers. As a result, it is possible to argue that there are certain definable aspects of these

[31] Janet Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the Two Cosimos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 6.
[32] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the Two Cosimos*, 6.

leaders' artistic patronage, that were consistent with their time in power and their intentions with, and for, said power. In respect to Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo I, the consistencies seen in their respective eras contrast with one another, showing how they uniquely pursued security, though they only lived about one hundred years apart.

While a number of studies seek to assess these two Medici separately in their patronage, looking at what it said about them as individuals, this study hopes to build a bridge between the two. To do so, this work will compare the commissions of both Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo. In comparing the works of these extremely different leaders, it is possible to draw conclusions about the conditions of Florence during their time as a leader, as well as more specific conclusions as power shifted throughout their periods in office. Furthermore, it becomes clear how there may be some degree of influence from the former to the latter Cosimo, just as it is also evident that some influences cannot carry across generations as conditions abruptly change.

CHAPTER 2. COSIMO IL VECCHIO

Cosimo de Medici's impact on Florence was somewhat subverted, though extremely important, and was the beginning of a long line of Medici who would make their mark on the city. While Cosimo was never an absolute ruler of Florence, he manipulated the government to facilitate a power that other citizens could not even fathom access to. Cosimo's period of influence began in 1434, following his return from exile.[33] In many ways, Cosimo's exile facilitated his rise to power. The Strozzi and Albizzi families wanted to be rid of him and Rinaldo degli Albizzi created an environment that would facilitate Cosimo's exile. Following Cosimo's return from exile, the family of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, as well as the Guasconi family and most all the Peruzzi family were also exiled.[34] The power Cosimo held by simply being a prominent banker was not so easily knocked, as the long line of Medici proves. Cosimo's thirty-year tenure following his return from exile was flavored with community investment, politics and a particular focus on the arts. While he commissioned a number of works of art and architecture, a few stand to characterize his power and create his outward persona. The churches of San Marco and San Lorenzo, as well as Cosimo's city palace, the Palazzo Medici, are some of his most influential architectural commissions. He had a clear impact on the Palazzo Medici's Magi Chapel and most likely also commissioned Donatello's *David*. These works speak to Cosimo's position in Florence and the avenues by which he facilitated it.

Cosimo's beginnings were entirely different to the later successes of the family, and the process was by no means simple. Dale Kent states that the succession of "two more generations of Medici to Cosimo's authority over the republic has been seen as a confirmation of Medici

[33] Though Cosimo was supposed to be exiled for ten years, he spent little more than a year actually in exile.
[34] Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence Under the Medici*, 2.

"princely ambitions."[35] While this is a plausible sequence of events, David Peterson discusses how it is easy to assume that the "combination of papal and princely power achieved by the Medici in the early sixteenth century was a goal they had pursued deliberately from the outset." He goes on to say that the reality of the Medici family's rise was "neither linear nor so simple as hindsight might suggest."[36] Over the course of twenty years, Cosimo poked and prodded the city of Florence, manipulating small elections, office appointments and social constructs, eventually breaking into his success only to die in 1464 and then see the family exiled again in 1494. While his efforts were not in vain, Cosimo was not around to see them to true fruition, in the form of a Medici duchy in the sixteenth century.

The reality of the Medici family's rise to success was more complicated than it was anything else, and involved a certain depth. Their success relied heavily on the traditions held by Florence, even though it manipulated these very traditions. These traditions were determined and orchestrated by Florence's government, namely the *parlamento*. Medicean manipulation of this *parlamento* and other government structures created a system of corruption within the appointment of government offices and positions of power. The corruption worked with the Medici goals, though it happened over time and through many small manipulations, rather than all at once. Gian Maria Varanini argues that the *parlamento* was what ratified Medici power, with the most pivotal years that allowed for their continuity being 1434, as Cosimo returned from exile, 1458, and 1466, which was a short two years after Cosimo's death. Varanini goes on to

[35] Kent, "Patriarchal Ideals, Patronage Practices, and the Authority of Cosimo "il vecchio," *The Medici: Citizens and Masters,* 35.
[36] Peterson, "The Albizzi, the Early Medici, and the Florentine Church, 1375-1460," in *The Medici: Citizens or Masters,* 171.

state that these assemblies, of the *parlamento,* could not be dispensed because the "institutional machinery and… the communal tradition, insisted that sovereignty had a popular basis."[37]

A commitment to the arts by Cosimo il Vecchio would create a somewhat dynastic theme to follow, with countless future Medici following in his footsteps, namely the man for whom he is namesake, Duke Cosimo I. Pieces and places that stand to characterize Cosimo il Vecchios's time in power and his use of patronage to further his political power are San Marco in Florence, the Palazzo Medici, the frescoes of the Magi Chapel and Donatello's *David*, which found its home in the Palazzo Medici courtyard. Cosimo's patronage of these projects offer insight into who he wanted to be perceived as, as well as who he truly was. Close observation of some of the most prominent pieces of his patronage of the arts suggest an accessible identity for *Il Vecchio*, with a clear current of religious themes and some vanity peppered throughout.

Cosimo's early years in his return from exile saw the beginnings of his societal investment. In 1437, he commissioned Michelozzo to reconstruct the church and convent at San Marco, following an appeal from the Dominican friars who were residing there.[38] Alongside this investment, Cosimo also invested in San Lorenzo, which would come to house the Old Sacristy in which generations of Medici are buried. Just a stone's throw away from the Palazzo Medici, these investments not only facilitated the beginnings of a pious image for Cosimo but more than that, began the creation of a Medici Florence. Dale Kent notes that the "scale of the Medici renovations at San Marco and San Lorenzo effectively transformed the original structures, and the fame of these building projects was firmly attached to the Medici name from their

[37] Gian Maria Varanini, "Medicean Florence and Beyond: Legitimacy of Power and Urban Traditions," in *The Medici: Citizens and Masters,* Robert Black and John E. Law, eds., (Cambridge, MA: Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2015), 28.
[38] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre,* 149.

inception.[39] Cosimo went beyond the expected chapel decorations that many families took part in and commissioned entire churches, like San Marco and San Lorenzo, dwarfing the commissions of families like the Strozzi. Cosimo was writing his name across these churches and they were his; this meant that anyone who chose to have a family chapel in them would be doing so under Cosimo, not alongside him. This placed Cosimo in an interesting position, between the Florentine people and their god, a sort of medium. These initial structural representations of Medici power would set the tone for their later commissions, namely that of their family home.

The Palazzo Medici exemplifies Cosimo's intentions for his own image in Florence, and the avenues through which he saw that image achieved. Having been built from a clean slate and not from a previous build, the Palazzo Medici took its first step toward being notably different from other buildings and the Medici being different from other families. Built over the course of forty years, from 1444-1484, the Palazzo Medici was a project throughout many of Cosimo's most influential years in Florence. Consequently, the Palazzo Medici is a sort of visual representation of the entire journey of Cosimo's time in power. While the Palazzo suggests itself to be just that, a palace, it was more of a glorified apartment block. There were people who thought Cosimo's actions too grand for his station, and that he was reaching somewhat too far beyond his means of reasonable expression. Kent notes, "Cosimo's friend's apologias for the magnificence of his palace were much less confident than for his charitable building of churches."[40] This very consideration adds weight to the value of religious commissions, as they came with somewhat of an excuse for ostentatiousness.

[39] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre*, 131.
[40] Kent, *Cosimo I de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre,* 219.

Cosimo's urban palace offered tangible clarity to how exactly Cosimo would move in his challenge to the Florentine government. Cosimo was testing the waters, separating himself from his church commissions of earlier years and seeing how far he could extend his reach as a simple member of the *signoria.* The Palazzo project spoke directly to his wishes for his own power within Florence and intentions with such power, speaking to grandeur and, moreover, immovability. Kent offers that "if their palace was the most obviously "political" of Medici patronage statements, it speaks most clearly to the politics of patronage."[41] The very size of the palace speaks to Cosimo's position, and his lack of security therein. His need to create such a demanding point of reference for the Medici family name in the heart of Florence suggests that, although he could not control the city outright, he wanted to remind people every day who truly held the power. Rather than using patronage in a more modest way, Cosimo wished to offer that he was present and active in Florentine society, thus being immodest in his patronage.

Cosimo's Palazzo was achieved with the help of his architect, Michelozzo, who, having studied under Brunelleschi, translated his training into aspects of the Palazzo. The courtyard was modelled on Brunelleschian design of the Ospedale degli Innocenti. Considering the Ospedale offers an accessible point of reference from which to view the Palazzo Medici. This allows, in its most basic form, the ability to see the continuity in architectural themes but moreover it shows that the Medici we're fully claiming their existence as integral to Florence. As the Silk Guild of the city commissioned the Ospedale, so the Medici commissioned their very own city palace. The nine arches of the facade of the Ospedale demands attention and interest from the viewer. The dimensions are strategically executed for this purpose, with the distance between each column equaling the back wall and that same distance equaling the height of the columns. Both

[41] Kent, *Cosimo I de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre,* 102.

the arches and the columns lean toward a classical style, with small circular reliefs between each arch. These aspects sit below a series of windows, each of which is directly centered over an arch.

The Palazzo Medici presents a very similar viewing experience, though it is much more lavish given that it is a private home. The courtyard is structured with a covered walkway and an open center, with arches and columns surrounding the walkway and separating the central space. The courtyard includes circular reliefs above the arches and below a level of windows, however the windows are not centered and seem to be little considered, suggesting the courtyard is the most important aspect. The arches are rounded, and the tops of the columns decorated, speaking to classic influences, and the decor above the arches is interesting in that it is designed to look three dimensional when, in fact, it is two dimensional. This investment in such specifics speaks to the money put into the Palazzo and likely the belief of Cosimo that this courtyard may eventually play host to people to any number of important guests in years to come.

Within the walls of the Palazzo exist examples of more intentional patronage of Cosimo's influence, one such example comes in the form of the decoration of the Magi Chapel. While the commission of the decoration of the Magi Chapel is actually executed by Cosimo's son, Piero, it nonetheless happens during Cosimo's lifetime and no doubt under his guidance. The Medici gained their right to have a private family chapel through a papal bull by Pope Martin V, a luxury which not many Florentine families saw at this time. The very existence of this private chapel is the first of many reasons that this structure speaks to fifteenth century Medici patronage in such a specific manner. The chapel itself was used when the Medici hosted guests and diplomats and, as such, the content therein was more than vitally important in the reception and possibly persuasion of whomever the Medici were trying to communicate with. To show those

who visited, whether they be allies or enemies, that they were a family who had their own palazzo in the center of Florence with a private chapel was a statement in its own right. To further send the clarity of their power home, the Medici have frescoes adorning the entirety of the chapel depicting some of the most noteworthy biblical moments and have included themselves in those moments.

The Magi chapel is adorned with frescoes by none other than Benozzo Gozzoli, completed around 1459.[42] Among the frescoes is Gozzoli's *Journey of the Magi*, which includes portraits of the Medici. The background, middleground and foreground do not necessarily follow a trend of accurate proportions, with the use of a very high horizon line squeezing a lot of content into a smaller space. While this makes for complex viewing, Gozzoli utilizes the space to the best of his ability. The background depicts a rather small amount of blue sky that includes different different types of birds, with a structure on the hill that is likely supposed to represent Jerusalem, given the context of the painting. The scene is set among a number of different styles of terrain and foliage. A road weaves back and forth across the scene, with a procession of both humans and horses on the biblical journey of the Magi, coming forward to the foreground of the painting.

At the front of the procession, and the foremost part of the painting, viewers see a number of prominent Renaissance figures as well as a collection of biblical characters. On the left side of the painting, Piero de Medici, the commissioner, is depicted on a white horse, close to the front of the procession. A step behind Piero, astride a donkey, is his father, Cosimo il Vecchio. Piero's sons Giuliano and Lorenzo show face in the painting, right next to the artist's self-portrait on the left-hand side of the work. In including these prominent Renaissance figures in his fresco,

[42] Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance,* 305.

Gozzoli speaks to their importance in society, no doubt at the request of the Medici. To further send this point home, the entire procession is filled with Medici friends and supporters, delineating who exactly makes up the noble and dictating class of Florence, and who is relevant to the Medici.

Cosimo's placement in this fresco is unique not because it showcases anything in particular about him, but rather that it seems to be the first known portrait of him. This is likely a result of the lack of popularity of portraiture in the fifteenth century, however there are certainly other people commissioning portraits. This causes for pause when considering why he may not have created portraits like other people did, namely his later relative, Duke Cosimo I. Cosimo il Vecchio seems to have been most invested in letting the pieces he commissioned speak for themselves, removing the necessity of portraits and direct representations. More so, it is likely that his limited station made him consider the realities of getting a portrait and what they could look like for his claims that he was a normal citizen. Oppositely, as this study later mentions, Duke Cosimo I would rely heavily on portraiture both to create and solidify his power. Cosimo il Vecchio is most notably different from the later Cosimo in this regard.

Portraiture is a powerful tool for patrons and the inclusion of the family members in a well-known biblical story is a sure-fire way to utilize propagandist paintings and this is one of the parallels seen in Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi.* Fabriano completed this work in 1423 for Palla Stozzi's to place the family chapel in the sacristy of Santa Trinita.[43] The altarpiece depicts a procession across the frame, and too uses a high horizon line, though there is not nearly as much productive use of space as in Gozzoli's work. Fabriano quite suddenly brings the procession from the background to the front of the frame, however the interaction in the

[43] Carl Brandon Strehlke, "Lorenzo Monaco and Gentile Da Fabriano." *The Burlington Magazine* 148, no. 1243 (2006): 680, accessed March 11, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20074585.

foreground of this work is noteworthy for a number of reasons. The Holy family is being met by the three men, all of whom have gold leaf surrounding their heads. By employing techniques of metal leaf in the painting, Fabriano was able to denote those figures seen as most important. Members of the Strozzi family are seen a step back in the procession, however different from Gozzoli's work, there are not nearly as many Strozzi depicted as there are Medici in the *Journey of the Magi.*

Fabriano's *Adoration* is undoubtedly an inspiration for the Gozzoli Journey, however the Medici stray far enough in comparison that they are showing how different they are to the Strozzi. While Gozzoli's later work addresses only the journey of the magi, Fabriano utilized his piece to explore both the journey and the adoration. The main difference between these two paintings is their intended setting and as such, their audience. The Strozzi's commission was for their private family chapel and would likely only have been seen by family members. Although the Medici also commissioned their work for a family chapel, the chapel was for a notably different purpose. The chapel played host to countless foreign officials and rulers, offering the Medici a platform from which to present themselves as more than a simply noble family. The similarities in these paintings speak to the differences between the two families; the Strozzi have been ousted, the Medici have come to the forefront of Florentine society, weaving themselves into the fabric of Florence in a more intentional, more strategic manner than the Strozzi who came before.

Given that the Gozzoli frescoes come to entirely encompass the walls of the chapel, it is clear just how much of an impact these works could have. The *Journey of the Magi* stands to be the most talked about painting in the Magi chapel, however each wall is adorned with frescoes. The other frescoes in the chapel detail different parts of the procession of the Magi, showing the

three kings alongside imagery of people, animals and a variety of landscapes. The chapel transports visitors to a world in which only the Medici exist, there is no Florence, there is no republic, simply the Medici. The chapel allows them to exist both in the flesh, in front of the visitors, and immortalized across the walls. Aligning themselves with biblical figures allowed for the Medici to facilitate a positive and somewhat undeniable existence, which was further solidified in the physically tangible expressions of their power that came in the form of brick and mortar. The Medici were stealing the very republic of Florence, if one can even do such a thing, through each commission and manipulated election. They were doing their best to not only outdo but also outdate the Strozzi and anyone who came before, making clear that Florence was no longer what it used to be and, moreover, Florence was now the Medici's.

The commissioning of these frescoes in the Magi Chapel was said to be for the purpose of commemorating the attempt at unifying Eastern and Western churches, however in the 1960's this theory was rejected by historian Ernst Gombrich. Gombrich believed this was a romanticized, tourism oriented and incorrect interpretation.[44] Roger Crum believes the original theory to be worth reconsideration, though it is likely that the reality of the reason for this commission lies between the two. Crum believes that there to be important evidence in some of Gozzoli's overlooked documents that suggests strong references to the Council of Florence. The Council of Florence, which was held between 1431 and 1449, was the body that executed this attempted reunification of the churches, hence why its representation would suggest such connotations. Another consideration Crum notes is that the church unification attempt did not end fully in failure and, as such, was worth commemorating in that regard. Lastly, Crum presents the consideration that the political unity within the Medici party in the 1450s would have meant

[44] Roger J. Crum, "Roberto Martelli, the Council of Florence, and the Medici Palace Chapel," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 59, no. 3 (1996): 403, accessed January 27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1482837.

that the reference to the attempted unification of the churches was potentially iconographically desirable, as it no doubt would have furthered their political and social position.[45]

The consideration of why these paintings were commissioned is important in understanding each move the Medici made to create and facilitate their image. As previously mentioned, the chapel was used for the most politicized purposes, affording it the title of propagandist piece just as much as it was a chapel. To subscribe to the opinion that the frescoes are in commemoration of the unification of the churches allows for the conclusion that, while the Medici created their own space to fill, they just as much utilized the changes in their environment to facilitate their success. Roger Crum mentions George Holmes' opinion that the "extensive cavalcade in Gozzoli's frescoes might be understood as a reference to the journey of the Council delegates as a whole," specifically the fact that Cosimo de' Medici is said to have supplied horses to the Council to keep it afloat by transporting its delegates from Ferrara to Florence.[46] This speaks to a somewhat subverted intention within these frescoes, being that it is a way to present the Medici as timeless characters in Florence, both past and future, more than simply a commemoration of religious activity. Given that the frescoes align with pivotal religious happenings of the past, as well as those occurring in their present, they afforded the family yet another opportunity to present themselves in a positive and ever-pious light. This chapel reflects much of what Medici patronage, both public and private, intended to be.

Beyond the frescoes, Fra Filippo Lippi's *Adoration in the Forest,* also known as the *Mystical Nativity*, decorated the altar in the Magi Chapel from 1459. Lippi depicts a unique version of the biblical adoration of the baby Jesus. The painting depicts a handful of figures

[45] Crum, "Roberto Martelli, the Council of Florence, and the Medici Palace Chapel," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 59, no. 3 (1996): 404, accessed January 27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1482837.
[46] Crum, "Roberto Martelli, the Council of Florence, and the Medici Palace Chapel," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 59, no. 3 (1996): 406, accessed January 27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1482837.

present at the birth of Jesus, such as his mother Mary, God and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Interestingly, Lippi presents a young John the Baptist, probably five or six years old, which is much more an age difference with Jesus than is commonly understood. He stands with a staff and a billowing ribbon of what looks to be parchment with the Latin phrase "Behold the Lamb of God." Moreover, there is a saint behind John the Baptist, Saint Romuald distinguishable by his long white beard and furrowed brow. The addition of Saint Romuald is both unusual and offersstrategic on Lippi's part. Romuald was not present at the birth of Jesus in any commonly known depictions of the story, however he is the founder of the Camaldolese monks, with whom the Medici are said to have had connections. All of the figures present form somewhat of a circle in this painting, with Mary on the side, then Jesus at the bottom, leading up to the left side of the painting with young John the Baptist, above him Saint Romuald and then over to the right God and the Holy Spirit, which brings the circular connection back to Mary. The circular layout of the figures offers an intentional way for viewers to interact with the painting, suggesting a continuity and unity among the figures as well as the necessity that they all exist together rather than as individual components.

This altarpiece further drives home the point that the Magi chapel was more than a chapel. Given that the frescoes of the Magi chapel are the setting in which this uniquely portable altarpiece is placed, it is worthwhile to consider how they may have interacted with one another. Visitors would see not only a private family chapel in the republic city of Florence, but moreover clear placement of the Medici among some of the most vital stories to be told in their religion. In commissioning the stories of the Adoration and the Nativity, the Medici grasp onto some of the most pivotal moments of Catholicism. The depictions of certain figures, particular associations and the altarpiece's very placement among Gozzoli's frescoes feed into the fact that the Medici

were acutely aware and intentionally working with the concept of religion as a player in their success. Moreover, shortly after this altarpiece's execution, the Medici would again be exiled, offering a somewhat final look into the Medici regime before it became a ducal regime. Upon their exile again in 1494, the altarpiece was moved from the Magi Chapel and thus denotes a clear end of their pre-ducal regime.

Beyond the Magi Chapel, the Palazzo Medici includes a number of other works that can offer insight into Cosimo de Medici's tenure at the forefront of Florentine society. Donatello's bronze *David* is said to have been commissioned by Cosimo and, although there is no concrete proof of who exactly commissioned it, there is an abundance of scholarship to suggest that it was, in fact, a Medici commission.[47] A number of factors contribute to the assumption that the Medici family commissioned the statue, namely the statue's residence in the old Medici palace courtyard from at least 1469 onward. Though there are no earlier recordings of the statue in the courtyard, it is plausible to assume it was there in the years prior. Upon the Medici's exile in 1494, the statue was moved to the Palazzo della Signoria and then on to a number of other locations before it found itself in its current resting place, the Museo Nazionale del Bargello.

Donatello's bronze depiction of David was one of the earlier freestanding cast sculptures of the Renaissance period, likely completed around the 1440s, speaking to the very essence of the creative and innovative qualities of the Renaissance, and thus, the Medici family. Donatello's mid-fifteenth century work shows a young figure, standing in a relaxed position with one hand on his hip and the other on the hilt of his sword. His foot sits on the head of Goliath, depicting a clear victory for David. Some historians suggest this sculpture may have been dated earlier than the 1440s, namely Horst Janson. Janson believes that the bronze *David* was made between the

[47] John T. Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David. Florentine History and Civic Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 69. Many thanks to Dr. Brian Maxson for providing this citation.

years 1423 and 1428 for the Signoria.[48] This interestingly places this representation of David before even the Medici exile in 1434. Christine Sperling agrees with Janson that this bronze *David* was from the earlier years of Donatello's career but is of the opinion that it was not made for the Signoria but rather for the Medici.[49] While, in the 1420s, Cosimo de' Medici was not in the same position as later years, he was nonetheless a factor in Florentine government. This consideration by Sperling and even Janson's claims reinforce the assumption that this was, in fact, a Medici commission.

To this point, Sperling discusses a previously unpublished inscription that accompanied the bronze *David*. The translated inscription reads "The victor is whoever defends the fatherland. God crushes the wrath of an enormous foe. Behold! a boy overcame a great tyrant. Conquer, o citizens!/Kingdoms fall through luxury, cities rise through virtues. Behold the neck of pride severed by the hand of humility."[50] Such a statement attached to a popular and well-known figure speaks to the Florentine population, suggesting that citizens must rule and kingdoms must fall. It is likely that this association, with a Medici statue in Medici Florence was intended to suggest that the republic was the kingdom falling through luxury and that the Medici exemplified the city that would rise through virtues. The Medici use the concept of virtue as an aspect of their propagandist tactics in the hopes of convincing the Florentine people that they exemplify virtue.

This *David* differs from other representations of David, most notably in another piece executed by Donatello. In 1408 Donatello was commissioned to create a representation of David for one of the buttresses on the cathedral in Florence. Although the statue never made it to its

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[48] Christine M.Sperling, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and the Demands of Medici Politics," *The Burlington Magazine* 134, no. 1069 (1992): 222, accessed March 29, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/885118.
[49] Sperling, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and the Demands of Medici Politics," *The Burlington Magazine* 134, no. 1069 (1992): 222, accessed March 29, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/885118.
[50] Sperling, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and the Demands of Medici Politics," *The Burlington Magazine* 134, no. 1069 (1992): 219, accessed March 29, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/885118.

intended resting place, it still offers a valuable look at the artist's earlier years in a non-Medici Florence. The twenty-one year old created a sculpture depicting David in an entirely different way to the bronze cast he would create thirty years later. This early fifteenth century sculpture shows David in a casual stance, following his slaying of Goliath. As seen in Donatello's later work, this *David* too shows the character in a casual, *contrapposto* stance. Donatello's earlier *David* presents Goliath with a stone in his head, from David's sling, while Donatello's later *David* presents the figure with a sword and the severed head of Goliath, offering different depictions of the same downfall, which may be a reflection of the time they were created or for whom.

This marble *David* is like some of its later editions in that it speaks to an association with antiquity. Donatello dressed this depiction of the figure in long, classical robes and adorned him with a young face and curly hair; these features are common in antiquity and representations of antiquity. In another *David,* almost a century later, Michelangelo presents the character in the very same manner. Donatello's earlier *David*, looking to be inspired by antiquity, differs greatly from his later work that shows the young, barely clothed figure who holds a sword and a stone, foot on Goliath's head rather than beside it. Edward Olszewski details how the marble *David*, too, was accompanied by an inscription when installed in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1416. It read, "To those who bravely fight for the 'patria,' the gods will lend aid even against the most terrible foes." Olszewski believes that the inscription "extended to the Florentines the promise of divinely assisted triumph."[51] This inscription parallels that of Donatello's later bronze *David* which also discussed success over a great foe. While the foe referred to was *literally* Goliath, it is likely these sorts of inscriptions, and those who commanded their creation, were for the purpose

[51] Edward J. Olszewski, "Prophecy and Prolepsis in Donatello's Marble "David"," *Artibus Et Historiae* 18, no. 36 (1997): 70. Accessed March 29, 2021. doi:10.2307/1483599.

of encouraging the everyday people to fight against those they do not approve of. While the Medici were subversively telling people to fight, they most certainly wanted to see fight against the republican traditions limiting their station and little else. The differences between and the likenesses of these two depictions of the same figure by the same artist offer insight into how exactly the Medici utilized their patronage to manipulate and create a specific Medicean narrative in Florence.

The Medici used this common representation of a well-known figure to appeal to their audience, speaking to their proximity to and knowledge of the stories that mean so much to the city. Furthermore, David can be seen as the very epitome of the Florentine republic, which the Medici wanted to perpetuate even if they were the ones taking away the republic. The concept of David speaks to the triumphing of "good" over "evil," and it is reasonable to believe that the Medici believed that they were what was good for Florence. This narrative sat well with the Medici as they tried to tighten their grasp on Florence, wishing to be seen as the glue that holds the city together more than any other family.

As the Medici created and manipulated their image, so they found comfort in the consistencies that came along with that. Such consistencies were their ability to commission art however they pleased, alongside their work of manipulating elections and even more so, manipulating the way people thought of them. The way the Medici, specifically Cosimo il Vecchio, constructed the family identity was almost untouchable. Even after their fall in 1494, the Medici had certainly not lost all allies and came back stronger in 1531 with Duke Alessandro. Cosimo's investment in arts and architecture allowed the family a base from which to grow, utilizing popular biblical associations in their family home and chapel, as well as investing in more local conceptions of religion, such as the order of Dominican friars at San

Marco. The layering of strategy with which Cosimo acted was vital in his and his son's success, he could not plainly present his intentions, though he had the funds to do so, and so he utilized a pattern of slow and steady growth. This growth is most obviously seen in the arts, as they align with the political movements of the time. Without his ability to commission art, Cosimo's Florence may have been an entirely different place.

While Cosimo de Medici was by no means a ruler of Florence throughout his lifetime, he certainly held power behind the scenes. His slow and calculated manipulation of the Florentine government and elections coincided well with his investment in the community. Churches such as San Marco and San Lorenzo, as well as the families Magi Chapel, spoke to Cosimo's piety, while the Palazzo Medici and the *David* indicated how Cosimo reflected on his relationship with Florence. The factors of Il Vecchio's patronage would vary greatly from the later Cosimo, Duke Cosimo I.

CHAPTER 3. DUKE COSIMO I

Cosimo I de Medici became the second duke of Florence in 1537 and then later acquired the title of first Duke of Tuscany in 1569. This shift in position entirely changed the Medici family's relationship with Italy from that point forward. Cosimo was not a descendant of the same line of Medici as his predecessor, Alessandro de Medici, who was from the senior branch of the Medici. While he was one of many in the long line of Medici, he was the first to do countless things for the family. His positions as duke of Tuscany and Florence offered certainty and stability to back the efforts the Medici had been making for years. The duchy brought the Medici family legitimacy in a new format, providing them a platform from which to build their already intense hold on the city of Florence. Duke Cosimo I took somewhat of a new approach to the city, and its people, which was definable by way of assessing both public and private works that he patronized. The works in question range from private home decoration at the Palazzo Vecchio, as well as public governmental offices, such as the Uffizi as well as portraits of Cosimo. An article by Felicia Else states, "Duke Cosimo required that art serve the goal of refashioning the Medici family, the city of Florence, and his territorial holdings with the trappings of ancient imperial power-all on a tight budget."[52] This speaks to the necessity of art in order for Cosimo to achieve monumental ideological changes within the city and its people.

Having come to power at a mere seventeen years of age, Cosimo had much work to do in order to solidify his rule over Florence and eventually all of Tuscany. If his age was not enough of a factor, his reason for ascending further adds to the instability. Cosimo was elected to replace Alessando shortly after he was brutally murdered in early 1537. Alessandro had only held office

[52] Felicia Else, "Bartolomeo Ammannati: Moving Stones, Managing Waterways, and Building an Empire for Duke Cosimo I De' Medici," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 42, no. 2 (2011): 393.

for seven years prior and was the last of the line of Medici descending from Cosimo il Vecchio, with his death creating a tipping point that could have easily found the Medici out of Florentine favor just as quickly as they came into it, given that there would be no more of the old Medici. Furthermore, given that Cosimo would be Florence's third ruler and second Duke in a decade, he found himself in a complex position. His youth combined with the conditions of his ascension and the ever-turbulent relationship that the Medici had with Florence prompted Cosimo I to make some moves that would solidify his rule both ideologically and literally.

Carolyn Springer writes, "With the help of Giorgio Vasari as media strategist, Cosimo consolidated his authority by propagating idealized images of himself that obscured the precarious nature of the transition and dramatized the counter-myth of Medici continuity."[53] This commitment to his image distracted people in the most productive way giving them very little chance to question the change of hands. Massive feats such as the patronization of the interior of the Palazzo Vecchio and the building of the Uffizi may seem to dwarf painting and individual, free-standing sculptures, but these smaller works, too, speak volumes about Cosimo's reign. Personal commissions, rather than public buildings, offer further insight into who Cosimo perceived himself to be as a man and a ruler, to a degree detailing in what manner he wished to see himself immortalized.

In 1537, the year Cosimo came into his ducal position, Bronzino painted *Cosimo I de' Medici as Orpheus,* a work that has no semblance of likeness to the portraits that would be executed just a decade later, presenting Cosimo in armor. Bronzino's 1537 portrait painted Cosimo entirely nude with somewhat of a flushed face, making him look both young and strong, as if he is in his prime. He holds a musical instrument which aligns with the imagery of the

[53] Carolyn Springer, "Cosimo I De' Medici (1519–74)," *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 133.

famed musician of antiquity whom he portrays. It is said that Orpheus was "credited with talent, wisdom, and magical abilities."[54] Early in his ducal reign, Cosimo likely didn't know who he was or who he needed to be, portraying himself as a rounded individual, famed in history, facilitates an approachable yet clear image that he is different but still human. It is also likely, in his first year having not yet solidified his ruling image, that he wished to create a portrait not too political but still noteworthy. In many regards, time is all a ruler has, and a short decade in Cosimo's life saw a dramatic shift in the way he presented himself. This early portrait contrasts dramatically to later portraits, with the portraits Cosimo commissioned in the earlier years of his career creating a foundation from which to build the latter of his career.

A few years later Bronzino put brush to canvas again in his 1545 *Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici in Armor*, which depicts an armor-clad Cosimo. The armor is not quite as impressive as that of later representations, such as a bust executed by Cellini that is mentioned later in this study. This presentation of the duke exemplifies the different degrees of contention seen throughout Cosimo's career, as he is much more combative in this work compared to earlier. These differences are a reflection of the social and political climate in which he lives. Cosimo stands in front of a fabric background, with his hand gingerly placed over his helmet in front of him. This portrait looks to be clearly posed, not arguing a point of a moment frozen in time, as Cellini's busts suggest, but rather the calm and composure of a strong ruler. Though Cosimo also looks to the distance over his right shoulder in Bronzino's portrait, as he does in later works as well, he has a much softer expression than in these later representations. Cosimo is relaxed and pensive, suggesting comfort within his rule.

[54] Robert B. Simon, "Bronzino's "Cosimo I De' Medici as Orpheus"," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 81, no. 348 (1985): 18, accessed February 21, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3795339.

Numerous copies of this image of Cosimo in armor exist, varying in size, though still holding true to the presentations seen in the original. It is assumed that they were mostly all created in Bronzino's workshop, with maybe one other replica being by Bronzino's hand. This project could arguably be one of the most substantial in Cosimo's public statecraft career. Carolyn Springer assesses the focal part of this work, the armor. She notes that the armor had been attributed to the Innsbruck armorer Jörg Seusenhofer, suggesting that this was likely a gift from Ferdinand of Austria to mark Cosimo's ascension to the ducal title.[55] This commission speaks to a sort of marriage eternalized in his appointment to duke and his relationship with the Habsburgs. Copies of a painting of the young ruler could be given as gifts to those Cosimo wished to keep in his good graces. Springer offers that when "Cosimo distributed countless replicas as diplomatic gifts, he simultaneously conferred a favour, acknowledged a debt, and advertised an alliance that remained critical to his advancement."[56] The strategery goes beyond simply alliances and money, Cosimo was presenting himself in the form he saw most valuable to his alliance, including designated nods to royal affiliations he engaged in, making his rise to power almost inevitable. Commissioning works such as these was just one step toward creating and immortalizing Cosimo's power.

Depicted in the earlier years of his career by Cellini, a bronze bust completed between the years 1546 and 1547 presents Cosimo in detailed armor, which looks to be of Roman inspiration. His gaze is set on the distance, and his facial expression taught. Cosimo looks to be waiting, anticipating something, possibly another test to his rule. This depiction does not stand alone in his patronized commissions, with countless works of classical inspiration peppering his life and

[55] Springer, "Cosimo I De' Medici (1519–74)," *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance*, 135
[56] Springer, "Cosimo I De' Medici (1519–74)," *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance*, 135.

career. The year 1547 saw Cosimo form the Pratica Segreta, an inner council of sorts, and the year after saw the Legge Polverina come into play. The former was by no means a constitutional entity and thus, very difficult to control. The latter offered a means by which severe punishments were prescribed for challenging his rule.[57] Cellini's bust in armor saw completion right before these actions took place, likely a precursor to Cosimo's tightening of grip on the city.

Yet another immortalized version of Cosimo in armor speaks to his strength and power. Although it is thematically similar to representations seen in years past, this 1547 work is a stark departure from the Bronzino painting almost a decade prior which depicts Cosimo in Habsburg armor, likely an attempt to please his friends, whereas 1547 Cosimo has the power to create his own identity rather than donning that of another powerful European ruler. Another bust, said to be by Cellini also, depicts Cosimo in a similar manner. Executed in Greek marble, this second bust was completed a few years after the bronze depiction. Almost an exact copy, this piece poses the question of what necessitated the copy, whether it be Cellini's commitment to Cosimo as his patron, or simply Cosimo's interest in further creating standardized images of himself in an imposing manner, so as to create a public association of him with a depiction of a powerful man. These busts have somewhat of an Augustinian air about them, not the first of many associations to the Roman Emperor that will show up throughout Cosimo's patronage.

Given that both the busts by Cellini and the portrait by Bronzino were completed around the same time, it is worthwhile to consider how they compare. While both suggest that Cosimo is a secure, strong and level-headed ruler, even in his earliest years, they also advance an argument for extremely different aspects of his personality in respect to the changing conditions of his rule. Cellini's work presents viewers with a marble Cosimo that looks nothing short of as tough as the

[57] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 2.

medium he is chiseled into; a stern face lends the duke a side to be afraid of. Oppositely, Bronzino's portrait creates an approachable but confident young man, seen in color and as such, looking much more human. It is likely that Cosimo wanted to be both people, the powerful ruler Cellini presents him to be, as well as the regular man Bronzino creates.

Bronzino's active role in the immortalization of Cosimo I was not limited to the above-mentioned stately depictions of the duke. In 1552 Bronzino painted another depiction of Cosimo, this time in a more personal manner. The title, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, adds further clarity to this painting's lack of clear "official" intentions, given that it does not denote Cosimo by name. Janet Cox-Rearick and Mary Westerman Bulgarella argue that this unnamed gentleman is in fact Cosimo I.[58] Nonetheless, while this painting is of the very same duke Bronzino painted years prior, viewers see an entirely different side of him. The duke is depicted in a traditional aristocratic outfit, nothing like the armor of previous portraits, and sits among a plain background with one small sculpture sitting beside him on a table. His hands are relaxed, and he looks casually over his right shoulder, suggesting that he is somewhere comfortable such as his home. This depiction is much more personal and private, which can potentially be attributed to Cosimo's age and the changing conditions of his rule. Given that the beginning of Cosimo's rule offered many uncertainties and even more instabilities, it is sensible that the earlier portraits by Bronzino when Cosimo was only a decade into his rule depicted a strong leader. This private portrait, having come fifteen years into Cosimo's rule, shows a level of security and possibly the shedding of some of the vanity of youth.

[58] Janet Cox-Rearick and Mary Westerman Bulgarella, "Public and Private Portraits of Cosimo De' Medici and Eleonora Di Toledo: Bronzino's Paintings of His Ducal Patrons in Ottawa and Turin," *Artibus Et Historiae* 25, no. 49 (2004): 104, accessed February 15, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1483750.

While portraits are an invaluable avenue through which rulers can be seen and heard, nothing compares to the creation or recreation of a ruling palace. One of the biggest projects that can be argued as a defining aspect of Duke Cosimo I's concept of his own patronage, and where it was best invested, is that of the Palazzo Vecchio. Duke Cosimo I moved to the Palazzo Vecchio shortly after rising to power, in 1540. The walls of the Palazzo Vecchio alone offered Cosimo a canvas on which to begin the creation of his public identity. This identity would speak to both who he was, as a new ruler, as well as who he needed to be, to be successful and maintain his power. Depictions of Cosimo in a godly manner are scattered throughout the Palazzo and, more indirectly, religious imagery perpetuates the argument that Cosimo had strong opinions of himself, likening himself to those beyond our realm of comprehension.

A notable project within the Palazzo Vecchio that Duke Cosimo I undertook was the commissioning of twenty tapestries in the Salone dei Duecento. These tapestries detailed the life of Joseph, addressing the three most significant periods of his story.[59] An article by Graham Smith states that these tapestries were based on the designs of Bronzino, Pontormo and Salviati, between 1545 and 1553, woven in the Netherlands and detailing the life of Joseph. Felicia Else's article goes on to say that the tapestries unequally focus on different aspects of the life of Joseph, focusing more on the triumph of Joseph in Egypt and especially his renewed relationship with

[59] The entire collection of the tapestries are titled as follows: *Dream of the Sheaves of Corn, Joseph Interpreting the Dream of the Sun, Moon and Stars, Sale of Joseph and the Lament of Jacob, Temptation of Joseph/Joseph Accused by the Wife of Potiphar, Joseph Fleeing from the Wife of Potiphar, Joseph in Prison, Banquet of the Pharaoh, Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream of the Fat and Lean Kine, Distribution of Grain to Joseph's Brothers, Taking of Simeon, Joseph Receiving Benjamin, Joseph Entertains his Brethren, Discovery of Joseph's Cup in the Sack of Benjamin, Joseph Takes Benjamin as his servant and Judah Begs for the Release of Benjamin, Joseph Reveals Himself to his Brothers, Joseph Pardons his Brethren, Reunion of Joseph and Jacob in Egypt, Pharoah Presents the Land of Goshen to Jacob and his Family, Jacob Blesses the Sons of Joseph and the Burial of the Bones of Joseph.*

his family. It is possible that this was a projection of Cosimo I's ideas about his own family and career.[60]

The story of Joseph centers around his misfortune for being his father's favorite, of twelve, sons. Joseph received a colored cloak from the father as a gift, and eleven other sons were bitter and jealous, plotting against Joseph. They sold him into slavery which brought him to Egypt where he became a steward to Potiphar, one of the Pharaoh's officials. When Potiphar's wife unsuccessfully tried to seduce Joseph, he was imprisoned for the allegations. His misfortune took a turn when the Pharaoh gave him an important position, as he could interpret the Pharaoh's dream. When a famine came to the area, Joseph's brother came to him, unbeknownst to them, to plead for food. Joseph concluded they had reformed and were no longer the people who sold him into slavery and forgave him. This tale speaks to Joseph's perseverance and forgiveness, as well as his ability to help those in need, no matter who they are. Such qualities were valuable for someone in power, and it is likely no coincidence that Cosimo believed this story to be an important one to tell. Joseph's modest, but secure, rise to favor and eventually power, were probably the qualities that drew Cosimo to the tale and, as such, the enormous tapestries that would come to depict the story of Joseph in the Palazzo Vecchio.

Out of twenty tapestries, twelve of the wider tapestries are bordered with allusions to Cosimo's personal astrological alignment. Janet Cox-Rearick believes that Cosimo's cosmic imagery is used to enhance the theme of Medici return and renewal in the Joseph tapestry series with Capricorn heads marking an allusion to the commissioner. She writes that Cosimo shared his Capricorn astrological sign with Augustus[61], his longtime idol, and Charles V, a major

[60] Graham Smith, "Cosimo I and the Joseph Tapestries for the Palazzo Vecchio," in *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme, New Series / Nouvelle Série,* 6, no. 3 (1982): 185.
[61] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art,* 257.

political player in Cosimo's time.[62] Furthermore, Cox-Rearick notes how in the tapestries themselves, namely *Joseph Fleeing Potiphar's Wife,* Joseph is actually likened to Cosimo himself. Including such subtle aspects of himself in every detail of these tapestries, Cosimo shows that he is not separate from the story but woven into it in every way he can be. The small nod to Augustus, in the form of Cosimo's own astrological imagery, came at a relatively early point in Cosimo's career. Inspiration from Augustus would also show face in portraits of the duke and even more clearly in his building of the new government offices to be known as the Uffizi.

The extent of the tapestry collection, at the very least, offers a glimpse into the story of Joseph and the simple fact that they were placed in Cosimo's newly renovated palazzo speaks to their importance as a piece of his propaganda. Almost nothing was solely for the purpose of visual enjoyment, especially such a huge representation of a biblical story. The emphasis on the story of Joseph speaks to a degree of Cosimo's piety, or at least the piety he wished people to believe he possessed, but more so these tapestries argue a point about Cosimo's image of himself. There are parallels to be drawn between Joseph's trials and Cosimo's rise to power. Joseph goes through hard times as that he is rejected by most of his family and sold into slavery, all because of jealousy. Joseph nonetheless earns back his favor from the Pharaoh and eventually leads a pleasant life again, even forgiving those who wronged him most.

Each tapestry serves its purpose in the telling of Joseph's story, however some more than others serve in the telling of Cosimo's story. One such tapestry is that of *Joseph Fleeing from the Wife of Potiphar,* which was designed by a regular artist of Cosimo's, Bronzino. This work is, of course, two dimensional, though the scene is presented among a decorated frame which would

[62] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art,* 274.

suggest to the viewers that they are looking through a structure, upon the scene, rather than simply looking at a depiction of the scene. Beyond this frame viewers see Joseph rushing away from the naked wife of Potiphar, whose arm is outstretched as if she hoped to stop him from leaving the bedroom. While this tapestry's content does little to speak directly about Joseph's, and therefore Cosimo's rise to power, it works to facilitate a favorable image of Joseph. This favorable image is a result of the clear self-control and moral direction that Joseph exhibits in this scenario, given that he is rushing away from a woman who wishes to bed him, for the purpose of being an honest person and not falling out of favor with the Pharaoh. Although Cosimo is not known to be fleeing from women in his daily life, it is likely he believed such a dramatic depiction of this moment in Joseph's story would reflect on him in a manner that suggested he shared Joseph's strong morals. Graham Smith argues that perhaps this specific tapestry was used to "reassure Florentines that Alessandro de' Medici's unbridled libertinism was a thing of the past,"[63] given that Alessando had a less than favorable reputation regarding his moral compass. By further widening the gap between himself and his predecessor in every regard, even morally, Cosimo was able to continue to add security and credibility to his position.

While Cosimo's life cannot literally compare to Joseph's trials as a slave and so forth, it is likely he wished to see in himself the honesty and determination that Joseph represents. Graham Smith argues that there are various circumstantial relationships between Joseph and Cosimo, which may have been used to suggest a more direct parallel between the two. He goes on to say that the two were both members of junior branches of their family as well as that Joseph's "miraculous rise to the position of viceroy to Pharaoh prefigures rather nicely Cosimo's

[63] Graham Smith, "Cosimo I and the Joseph Tapestries for the Palazzo Vecchio," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme, New Series / Nouvelle Série,* 6, no. 3 (1982): 191, accessed January 1, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43444366.

own meteoric rise to the position of *capo* and then Duke of Florence." Smith's final comparison between Joseph and Cosimo is that Joseph's "triumph over exile may have suggested comparisons with the Medic family's various returns to power in the city of Florence."[64] Cosimo came to power in a categorically turbulent way, but nonetheless hoped to find security in his power and keep it. It is likely that he wished to be likened to Joseph to be seen as someone who achieves their goals by honest means, eventually getting the praise and prosperity that is deserving of a good man. The Joseph tapestries propose a sort of inevitability about Cosimo and Medici rule in general, suggesting that what is meant to be will be, just as Joseph encountered many disruptions but eventually got to where he was going in the end. Cosimo wished to do everything possible to create and maintain credibility and legitimacy as the duke of Florence, using positive biblical associations was one method of doing so.

Countless frescoes decorating the Palazzo Vecchio were by the hand of none other than Giorgio Vasari, who left Rome in 1554 at the request of Cosimo, in order to decorate much of the Palazzo Vecchio.[65] Vasari painted *Cosimo I de' Medici surrounded by his Architects, Engineers and Sculptors* in the Sala di Cosimo I in 1555, in the form of a tondo.[66] Cosimo's architects, engineers and sculptures surround him in a manner that suggests that they are meeting to discuss planning his future projects or patronage. The figures are dressed in casual clothing, with Cosimo's outfit denoting something of a different status compared to the other figures, though nothing quite as significant as that of the *Apotheosis*. His outfit purports that he is

[64] Smith, "Cosimo I and the Joseph Tapestries for the Palazzo Vecchio," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme, New Series / Nouvelle Série,* 6, no. 3 (1982): 189, accessed January 1, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43444366.
[65] W. Chandler Kirwin, "Vasari's Tondo of 'Cosimo I with His Architects, Engineers and Sculptors' in the Palazzo Vecchio. Typology and Re-Identification of Portraits," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 15, no. 1 (1971): 105, accessed January 4, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27652263.
[66] Tondo refers to a circular work of art that was popular during the Renaissance.

someone of the ruling class, fitting his ducal position, but he still suggests an air of accessibility. In their hands the other men hold a variety of different objects such as scrolls and books, as well as small scale models of buildings. Vasari uses this tondo in a manner that suggests Cosimo was not only overlord, looking down from below, but also standing among the people, having conversations with them. It is important to note, for comparative purposes, that Vasari also executed portraits of Cosimo Vecchio and Lorenzo the Magnificent in the Palazzo Vecchio in a very similar manner to that of Duke Cosimo, surrounded by the respective creatives of their career. They differ in that they do not include the same references to antiquity as Duke Cosimo's tondo, making clear the intentional differentiation among the elder and the ducal Medici.

W. Chandler Kirwin writes that the tondo includes the same general motif and propagandist theme of relief panel *Liberalitas* which exists at the Arch of Constantine in Rome, arguing that antiquity is used as a method of furthering the propagandist intentions of the fresco.[67] *Liberalitas* depicts a similar figure representation across the frame of the relief, with one man surrounded with others, some of whom are looking to him for some kind of guidance or discussion. Duke Cosimo, in frescos such as the two previously mentioned, purports that he is a notably different ruler to those before him, and therefore he uses different and much more forward methods of self-representation in art. This continuity in the frescoes' stylistic layout, even with the exception of different thematic occurrences within, speaks to the uniformity in ruler artistic presentation, no matter their generation, as well as speaking to the particular sorts of visuals that facilitated a solid ruling position.

[67] Kirwin, "Vasari's Tondo of 'Cosimo I with His Architects Engineers and Sculptors' in the Palazzo Vecchio. Typology and Re-Identification of Portraits," *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 15, no. 1 (1971): 106, accessed January 4, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27652263.

Vasari worked to further facilitate Cosimo's image through his art by employing his skills to create another tondo on the Sala Grande, also known as the Salone dei Cinquecento. The ceiling includes a tondo called the *Apotheosis of Cosimo I*. Completed in 1565, this fresco depicts Cosimo in heaven, surrounded by angels and numerous shields that embody all of Florence's guild institutions. This tondo places Cosimo at the center of the painting, similar to the layout of the above mentioned tondo. Rather than seeing a more intimate, conversational setting, the viewer sees a very clear, and almost heavenly delineation of characters.Vasari's strategically placed light emanates from exactly where Cosimo sits, at the center of the painting. There are countless allusions to Cosimo's time as duke in this tondo, suggesting that it was to be seen as a comprehensive ducal resume of sorts. The tondo is described by Vasari as "la chiave e la conclusione della storie… in questa sala" (the key and the conclusion of the histories in this room)[68] speak to this specific piece's significance in the forming of Cosimo's image.

Directly behind Cosimo, Vasari places two angels holding objects that embody Cosimo's reign, the cross of the Pisan naval order of St. Stephen which Cosimo himself founded in 1561, as well as the chair of a military order known as the Order of the Golden Fleece and possibly the most important item of all, the ducal crown of Florence and Siena. These offerings add to the significance of the painting as it is not so much a piece of visual appeal but rather an argument about who Cosimo was and where he stood in respect to the city over which he ruled. Furthermore, the tondo includes Flora, the personification of Florence's fertility and prosperity. Florence crowns Cosimo with an oak wreath, a nod to the crowning of Roman Emperor Augustus,[69] who came to power in 27 BC, and rightfully so, Cox-Rearick believes that Cosimo's

[68] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art*, 281.
[69] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art*, 281.

Augustinian imagery reaches its climax in this tondo.[70] If there was any question of who Cosimo saw himself to be, this painting answers.

His central position in the painting speaks to his own idea of his place in Florence, with Cosimo in the place of Fiorenza, substituting the duke for the city of Florence itself. Janet Cox-Rearick notes that a tondo with Florence at the center would have made more sense, recalling the Florentia medals of earlier Medici art. This intentional departure from what would be most expected from Cosimo, based on the theme of the painting in its earliest stages "Fiorenza in gloria coi suoi segni" (Florence in glory with its symbols),[71] speaks to how different a ruler Cosimo intended to be. As the first duke of Tuscany and the second of Florence, it is likely that he knew that what had been done did not create ducal success and stability, and as such he must do things differently. Such suggestive placement of Cosimo in this painting about Florence is argued in an article by Henk van Veen as an aspect of Cosimo's propagandist patronage. While the personification of Florence is still included in the painting, she is seen crowning Duke Cosimo rather than being the center of the painting herself, this suggests a narrative that Florence may have been indebted to him or even that the city should worship him, for all that he has done during his time as duke. Van Veen offers that Cosimo was eager to affirm his regime as being an integral part of Florence's history, slowly securing his rule in the city through the use of artistic patronage.[72]

The rich allusions included in this painting, both to Medici imagery and Cosimo's own astrological affiliations,[73] are an aspect of Cosimo's propagandist method that many of his

[70] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art,* 281.
[71] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art,* 281.
[72] Henk Th. Van Veen, "Republicanism in the Visual Propaganda of Cosimo I De' Medici," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 200, accessed January 4, https://www.jstor.org/stable/751424.
[73] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art,* 281.

commissions facilitated. Pieces of suggesting himself to be overlord of all, even above that of Florence as an entirety, were intentional and clear, significantly differing from the methods of the duke's ancestor, Cosimo il Vecchio. The two Cosimo's most notably differ in that, unlike Cosimo il Vecchio, Duke Cosimo had a certain umbrella of security, being that he was the duke and not simply a popular banker. He thus has the means and the grounds on which to act in a more aggressive manner when it came to the creation and determination of his public image, especially by way of commissioning art.

Commissions of portraiture and artistic decoration throughout Duke Cosimo's reign serve, in numerous different ways, to delineate his increasingly aristocratic image. This image becomes more clear and secure with each year that passes, culminating in his commissioning of the Uffizi, which suggests that he was no longer projecting an image but rather a reality. Cosimo invested in the Uffizi building with the intention of creating a singular complex within which all governmental offices could be held. The Uffizi, begun in 1560 and completed in 1581, came to fruition almost twenty years after the frescoes of the Palazzo Vecchio, and with this passing of time it is clear to see how some of the changing aspects of the Duke's patronage come into play. Beginning with hundreds of Florentine buildings being leveled, along with the widening of a road, Cosimo wanted a clean slate for his government building. This building would stand as a sort of mirror of his method of rule, entirely new and uniquely him. The facade of the Uffizi was built to face the Arno river, with the rest of the building spanning into the Florentine street.

The building employs the use of *piano nobile* windows on the second floor which delineates that floor as the more important floor, compared to the one below that houses the courtyard and covered walkways. Below these windows, Cosimo's ground floor designs were with the intention of recreating the Forum of Augustus, the Roman Emperor. The Forum of

Augustus was dedicated in 2 B.C. and was a physical representation of the security and validity of his rule, following his succession from his assassinated father, Julius Caesar. T. J. Luce explained that the forum "expresses forcibly how the emperor wanted his countrymen to view the sweet of Roman history and his place in it."[74] The forum itself was a grand stone structure raised by a number of steps, with columns around the exterior and an open central area. Inside the forum was a Roman "Hall of Fame" according to Luce, with stations and commemorative inscriptions known as *elogia.*[75] The open plan of this centuries old forum is mimicked in Cosimo's Uffizi, given that it has a long rectangular courtyard that is surrounded by imposing walls on all sides.

Van Veen notes that the Uffizi was intended to symbolize the general welfare of the Florentine state, "of which Cosimo's regime was the self-proclaimed champion."[76] It is possible to suggest that Cosimo wished to use the Uffizi as a physical representation of his merging of the Italy before his time and the Italy he had come to create. His grand design based on Augustus' forum was a nod to the ancients, and the days gone by in Italian history, however it was coupled with the modern *piano nobile* windows, speaking to the value of modern Florence. This building floor layover and method of denoting the prominence of a certain floor in this regard is arguably a nod to the new Tuscan identity that Cosimo was leading the territory toward. Beyond the physical structure of the Uffizi, its location and layout further stand to suggest that Cosimo was not simply constructing a building but also making a statement. Being that the Uffizi is down the street from his Palazzo, and on the lots of many leveled buildings, it speaks to a new and

[74] T. J. Luce, "Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum," in *Augustus*, by Edmondson Jonathan, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 400.
[75] T. J. Luce, "Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum," in *Augustus*, by Edmondson Jonathan, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 399.
[76] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture*, 84.

unwavering Florence. The end of the courtyard looks out onto the Arno river, framing it as a sort of decoration and practicality.

Furthermore, Cosimo's plans for the Uffizi included a sculpture collection that, although not realized until long after the building's beginnings, shows exactly which ruler's handbook Cosimo found himself looking to for reference. The original plans included sculptures in the twenty-six niches along the lower level, with these plans not being realized before Cosimo's death in 1574. Augustus had used his sculpture collection in the forum as a sort of "Hall of Fame" for those who had had the most impact on the empire he presided over. Similarly, Cosimo planned to include the most influential and decorated men of Florentine history. Beyond this, the building also includes a handful of sculptures in its exterior decoration. While the interior statues were not realized until after Cosimo's death, the statues that did make it to completion within the Uffizi speak volumes.

On the facade exists a depiction of *Equitas and Rigor* by Danti. This representation of equity and rigor on this significant government building suggests that they hoped to balance the administration of justice and the rule of law in Florence.[77] While many things needed to change to facilitate Cosimo's rise to power and maintenance of it, there were a few factors that were not entirely reinvented and simply needed to be reinforced. Whether each ruler has the same idea of what equity and justice look like is up for debate, but nonetheless most all rulers hoped to at least convey to their people that they would be equitable and just. To further drive home Cosimo's place in this balance of equity and justice, Danti placed a sculpture of Cosimo above the coat of arms and between the two figures of *Equitas* and *Rigor*, presenting Cosimo as the crowning jewel of Florentine governance. This intentional placement suggests that equity and justice may

[77] Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture,* 84

not have been truly achieved before Cosimo and could certainly not be achieved without Cosimo.

Cosimo's Uffizi project differs greatly from his Palazzo Vecchio remodel in both intention and execution. While the Uffizi was a visually striking, public building, the interior of the Palazzo was for the Duke's own viewing primarily, as well as hosted foreign dignitaries. As a result, the purposes of each project's patronage varied quite a bit. The Uffizi offered a platform from which Cosimo could give the people of Florence an accessible, and constant, indication of his power. Consequently, the Uffizi, more than any other commission of Duke Cosimo's, is arguably the defining architectural representation of who he was as a duke as well as who he wanted to be. Creating a singular location to centralize ducal power afforded the Uffizi a reputation in more ways than one, given that Duke Cosimo employed one of his most patronized artists, Vasari, with the opportunity to execute the project. Roger Crum argues that Duke Cosimo did not simply see the creation of the Uffizi as a functional undertaking but rather as a symbolic monument, "communicating the stability and efficacy of his personal rule."[78] This claim is overtly evident in respect to the above descriptions about the sculptural decoration and the architectural layover. Regardless of Cosimo's policy, he was aware that the people of Florence needed a positive, and prominent, representation of his rule and who he was in respect to them. The Uffizi placed the Duke in the streets, among the rest of Florence, but still looking through his *piano nobile* windows, past sculptures of himself, down the street toward his Palazzo.

Cosimo's political position was most notably different from that of Cosimo il Vecchio and as such, so was his method of patronizing the arts. Cosimo found himself in power at a

[78] Roger J. Crum, "Cosmos, the World of Cosimo": The Iconography of the Uffizi Façade," *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 2 (1989): 237, accessed January 7, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3051196.

young age and quickly took to solidifying that power. Through his redecoration of the Palazzo Vecchio Florentines saw his abilities to adapt and change, creating new from old. The portraiture of Bronzino and busts by Cellini creates again a different side of Cosimo. Viewers see not one version but rather a few, he is strong in some representations by Bronzino, especially those that were created to be copied as gifts. However, in another portrait by Bronzino one can see a calm and approachable man, with a softened expression. Cellini's bust is much like the former, suggesting a leader and a ruler, one to be feared rather than loved. The conditions and complications of Cosimo's rule can be seen in these changing representations in portraiture.

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

Cosimo il Vecchio's base form presents a man in power who is constantly working to maintain his hold on the city. Every move, however small or large, is setting up for the bigger picture of long-term Medici success. Cosimo invested in his community, his church and himself. He consolidated his name with that of the Catholic Church when he funded San Marco and San Lorenzo. He then spoke to his own vanity, and also insecurity, when he built an enormous city palace. His later relative, Duke Cosimo, had security handed to him and, consequently, spent his years consolidating power rather than creating it. Cosimo I de' Medici found himself out of his depth early on in his career, becoming the duke of Florence and eventually Tuscany. Throughout his time as duke, and the commissioning of numerous works of art, sculpture and architecture, Duke Cosimo was able to create, develop and solidify his position in Florence. His method is notably different from that of the previous Cosimo, Cosimo il Vecchio, who was involved in Florentine society and politics one hundred years prior. Duke Cosimo used the arts to facilitate the idea of an infinitely powerful duke. He imbeds himself in Florentine society, with small-scale and most certainly large-scale productions. While his methods somewhat change over time, he is unwavering in his appreciation for and representation of himself as the Roman Emperor Augustus. In representing himself in such a way, he makes a notable shift away from the ideologies of the earlier Medici, who often were more subtle in their use of imagery and likeness, both a consequence of their position and their disposition.

Cosimo il Vecchio's Palazzo Medici parallels somewhat quite dramatically with the later monumental build of Cosimo I's Uffizi. While the Palazzo Medici was a family home and more so, a city palace, it could not quite compare to the grandeur of intention with which Cosimo I built the Uffizi to consolidate the government offices. As the Palazzo Medici enjoyed some of

the more subdued methods of patronage, Cosimo I's Uffizi did not have those limitations or expectations. The Uffizi presents associations with none other than the Roman Emperor Augustus, as well as clear indications of the absolute power for which it stood. Cosimo il Vecchio found himself limited by his station, however not beyond movement of some kind.

The Uffizi stretches beyond both of these methods of self-representation, as Cosimo I removes himself (almost entirely) from the decorative equation. Rather than using allusions or portraits to further his ruling identity, Cosimo simply lets the building speak for itself. The Uffizi stands beside Cosimo, rather than as Cosimo, suggesting that he has found his way to full security in his rule and in himself. Cosimo is represented in a small manner in this building, above the statues of Equitas and Rigor, a slight nod to the fact that he is still there, and still the reason the Florentines see what they see and get what they get. His power seemed no longer in question with the creation of such a grand structure, and as such Cosimo felt it only necessary to remind the Florentines that he was the reason why, offering them the equity and justice they experienced.

As Cosimo il Vecchio decorated his Palazzo Medici courtyard and Magi Chapel with many biblical associations, so Cosimo I decorated his Palazzo Vecchio with much the same. The interior decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio is of a much different vein to these earlier portraits, with the Joseph Tapestry series speaking to not only Cosimo's varied interest in art but also his capability of representing himself in a number of different manners, even that of a biblical figure who was the epitome of morality. In a more direct manner, Cosimo placed himself on the walls of Florence, specifically in tondos, creating an image for himself that was stronger than the simple moral qualities presented in the tapestries. The *Apotheosis* epitomizes a shift in Cosimo's ideology, going from taking power, or using another's power, like Charles V, to creating his own

power, as he projects himself as the embodiment of Florentine security, with the personification of Florence itself at Cosimo's service. Another tondo, of Cosimo among his artists and sculptures, shows him as an intellectual, one who speaks and works with the creatives of the society. In just a handful of tapestries and tondos, Cosimo was able to brand himself as pious, loyal, powerful, unchallengeable and intellectual. This differs slightly from Cosimo il Vecchio's mostly religious representations that lacked the same level of vanity. He did not alternate himself for the personification of the city of Florence, like the Duke, nor did he place himself in paintings among his artists and scholars. This feigned modesty is most certainly a cause of Cosimo il Vecchio's different position, though still important to note.

Cosimo il Vecchio's lone portrait exists in Gozzoli's *Journey of the Magi*, while Duke Cosimo commissions countless portraits. In the portraiture of Bronzino and busts by Cellini, viewers saw different sides of Duke Cosimo. Not one version existed but rather a few, he is shown to be strong in some representations by Bronzino, especially those that were created to be copied as gifts. However in another portrait by Bronzino one can see a calm and approachable man, with a softened expression. Cellini's bust reverts back to the former, suggesting a leader and a ruler, one to be feared rather than loved. This variety in portrait representation is a start difference from what was used to decorate the Palazzo Vecchio. Within the Palazzo Cosimo placed himself among other powerful stories and settings, using those around him to facilitate a point about himself. In the tapestries, the biblical characters showed the viewers who Cosimo was, in the tondos the other figures facilitated the understanding of who he was. In these portraits, he stands alone with only his dress and expression at his service to suggest a certain type of man to the viewer.

The above-mentioned works of art and architecture offer valuable insight into not only the conditions of Florence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but also the ways in which those in power manipulated the conditions of their society. Cosimo il Vecchio and Duke Cosimo I offer examples of how exactly the Medici dominates Florence, throughout numerous disruptions and successes. Their styles of manipulation differed greatly based on need and their personal investments showed true in many of their commissions. While the assessments in this study are not comprehensive, they offer the beginnings of a conversation that goes deeper than simply art or power.

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