

The Grand Dukes and their inventories: administering possessions and defining value at the Medici court

Francesco Freddolini

Inventories of the property of early modern ruling families often stand out as exceptional when compared to those that come from the lower ranks, which constitute the majority of the archival record. In relation to the mass of inventories compiled in the early modern period, aristocratic inventories represent a very small fraction, and inventories of the ruling families are even less in number. Moreover, the content of inventories produced by ruling families often defines them as extraordinary: a conspicuous presence of high value objects, such as important works of art and magnificent furnishings, as opposed to anonymous paintings summarily described. Given the nature of the objects described, the people involved, and the purpose of these documents, such inventories have always been essential to art historical discourses, and have contributed to defining historiographical categories and hierarchies of value, particularly those pertaining to court society.¹

Focusing on the Medici family during the period of their Duchy and Grand Duchy, this essay explores how the court administration produced typologies of inventories that stand out as exceptions when compared with the textuality, materiality, and functions associated with standard notarial—or more generally legal—inventories.² This case study gives rise to a number of questions. Who

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¹ See, for example, Arthur MacGregor, ed, *The Late King's Goods. Collections, Possessions, and Patronage of Charles I in the light of the Commonwealth Sale Inventories*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; Maria Hayward and Philip Ward, eds, *The Inventory of King Henry VIII: Textiles and Dress*, Turnout: Brepols, 2012; Maria Hayward and Philip Ward, eds, *The Inventory of King Henry VIII. Decorative Arts and Everyday Objects*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2013; and Fernando Checa Cremades, *Los inventarios de Carlos V y la familia imperial/The Inventories of Charles V and the Imperial Family*, 3 vols., Madrid: Fernando Villaverde Ediciones, 2010.

² On the Medici court see Marcello Fantoni, *La Corte del Granduca Forme e simboli del potere mediceo fra Cinque e Seicento*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1994; Hélène Chauvineau, 'La cour des Médicis (1543-1737)', in Jean Boutier, ed, *Florence et la Toscane XIVE-XIXe siècles. Les dynamiques d'un*

produced the Medici inventories, and why? How did the choice of authors impact the language of the inventory and the concepts of value employed therein? Was value ultimately defined through the materiality of objects listed in the document, as was often the case in aristocratic—and even non-aristocratic—inventories; or did the authorship, provenance, and quality of the artworks and furnishings play an important role in articulating the narratives of the list? How were these criteria ascertained? Where and how were these inventories preserved? Were they re-used? Were they ‘living’ documents, in which later authors added observations? Are the Medici inventories similar to other inventories of other ruling families?

In most cases, inventories were compiled to preserve a person’s property after his or her death, often written with a concern to prevent or solve disputes about inheritance, and were habitually drawn up—or at least ratified—by a public official. Inventories of non-princely families, related to dowries, deaths, or divisions of patrimony, were primarily, and necessarily legal documents compiled according to strict guidelines³—for example, within 30 days after the death of the original owner, and following specific rules defining the material value of mobile and immobile possessions.⁴ Such inventories offer a ‘snapshot’ of the material culture of a dwelling in relation to a single and specific moment in the life of the owner(s)—both the deceased and the potential, often competing, heirs—and the trajectory of the things contained therein.⁵

The members of the highest echelons of society, however, required different standards. As we will see, the documents penned to take care of the belongings of princes and rulers had different functions, and were not necessarily connected to disputed inheritances, or required to preserve patrimony intact.⁶ Distinctive functions entailed different authorships for such inventories, implied different

État italien, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004, 287-301; and Robert Burr Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital 1530-1630*, New York: ACLS Humanities Ebook, 2008.

³ On the production of inventories in early modern Florence see Cinzia Maria Sicca, ‘Da Notaio a Maestro di Casa: la ‘confezione’ degli inventari a Firenze durante il Principato’, in Cinzia Maria Sicca, ed, *Inventari e cataloghi. Collezionismo e stili di vita negli stati italiani di antico regime*, Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2014, 15-34. On inventories as a category of evidence in art historiography see Guido Rebecchini, ‘Evidence: Inventories’, in Gail Feigenbaum with Francesco Freddolini, eds, *Display of Art in the Roman Palace 1550-1750*, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2014, 27-28.

⁴ Fanuccio Fanucci, *Tractatus the Inventario Haeredis ac eius Beneficio*, Naples: Apud Lazarum Scorigium, 1623, 16.

⁵ On this issue see Francesco Freddolini and Anne Helmreich, ‘Inventories, Catalogues and Art Historiography: Exploring Lists against the Grain’, in this special section of the *Journal of Art Historiography*.

⁶ For insightful considerations on the conventions in early modern Italy, and especially in seventeenth-century Rome, see Luigi Spezzaferro, ‘Problemi del collezionismo a Roma nel XVII secolo’, in Olivier Bonfait, Michel Hochmann, Luigi Spezzaferro, and Bruno Toscano, eds, *Geografia del Collezionismo. Italia e Francia tra il XVI e il XVIII secolo*, Rome: École Française de Rome, 2001, 14-19.

audiences, and generated a dissimilar material existence and social life.⁷ Most significantly, death, and the resulting division of possessions, was not the most recurrent reason that princely and ruling families might compile an inventory. Instead, inventories of rulers were often taken to address conspicuous amounts of things, ranging from everyday objects to priceless works of art. This practical need to track objects generated texts that intercepted them during ever itinerant trajectories among complex systems of palaces, villas, and other residences.⁸ In some cases, objects were caught upon entering the prince's properties, or registered as they were given away, replacing their material absence with a descriptive text. Many court inventories thus became living texts—with annotations layered over time to register objects' destinations at different times. As we shall see, these texts could also carefully record provenance, and/or construct value in terms of artistic quality.

Inventories at court: motivations, circumstances, and authorships

On 7 September 1637 Ferdinando II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, issued a *Motu Proprio*—an edict—that required a group of his court officials to compile a new inventory of the grand-ducal possessions stored in the *guardaroba*.⁹ The latter term indicates the physical storage space for all the movable goods belonging to the family, the office administering those goods, as well as the court officials in charge of this task.¹⁰ The head of the *guardaroba* was the *guardaroba maggiore*, and all the courtiers holding this post were members of the aristocracy, well versed in the arts as well as patrons in their own right. This post required enormous responsibility: the *guardaroba maggiore* was required to understand the role of furnishings within the palaces and villas, and to have a clear vision of how the display in the palace

⁷ On notions of social life of things see especially Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', and Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in Arjun Appadurai, ed, *The social life of Things*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 3-59, 64-91.

⁸ On the incessant mobility of objects among the system of properties in the early modern period see Barbara Furlotti, 'Display in Motion', in Feigenbaum with Freddolini, *Display of Art in the Roman Palace*, 146-156.

⁹ Florence, Archivio di Stato [henceforth ASF], Guardaroba Medicea, 521, fol. 1v.

¹⁰ On the Guardaroba Medicea see Maria Grazia Vaccari, *La Guardaroba Medicea dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze*, Florence: Regione Toscana-Giunta Regionale, 1997; Mark Rosen, 'A new chronology of the construction and restoration of the Medici Guardaroba in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 53: 2/3, 2009, 285-308; Valentina Zucchi, 'The Medici Guardaroba in the Florentine Ducal Residences, c. 1550-1650', in Susan Bracken, Andrea M. Galdy, and Adriana Turpin, eds, *Collecting and the Princely Apartment*, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, 1-22; and Sicca, 'Da Notaio a Maestro di Casa', 24. On the Guardaroba in early modern Roman palaces see Barbara Furlotti, 'Evidence: The Registers of the *Guardaroba*', in Feigenbaum with Freddolini, *Display of Art in the Roman Palace*, 25-26.

signified the social obligations and status of the prince. Furthermore, this position implied that the *guardaroba maggiore* oversaw the work of all the *guardaroba* responsible for the individual palaces.¹¹

When this inventory was commissioned, the Grand Duke was only 27 years old, and still had 33 years of life and reign ahead. He had been in power since 1628, when he came of age and could terminate the regency of Mary Magdalene of Austria and Christina of Lorraine. In 1634, he married Vittoria della Rovere. If we consider only these major events in Ferdinando's biography, no particular reason justified an inventory in 1637.

The reason, as the document itself clarifies, was the reorganization of the court management; in 1637 the head of the Guardaroba, Marchese Vincenzo Giugni,¹² was dismissed, and his successor, Marchese Francesco Coppoli, needed a complete update of all the Medici belongings. The introductory paragraph of this inventory is eloquent in this regard, explaining the production of multiple copies and their use. After the invocation of the Holy Trinity and of Virgin Mary, the text continues:

This book in white parchment with white straps, marked A, is the original inventory of the *guardaroba* of the Most Serene Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando II, entrusted by the most illustrious Marquis Niccolò Giugni former *guardaroba maggiore*, to the most illustrious Marquis Francesco Coppoli, new *guardaroba maggiore*. This inventory has been compiled following the orders of His Most Serene Highness, with the assistance of myself, Cosimo Gorini, according to His Highness' edict, which is in my possession and of which I will make a copy on the other side of this folio, beginning today, 16 September 1637. Note: two copies have been made of this original inventory. We have made the first copy while compiling this original, so that we can compare this with new registers [of the *guardaroba*]. We made the second copy later, and this one must be used to compare this inventory with old registers.¹³

¹¹ Vaccari, *La Guardaroba*, 17-20.

¹² On the Giugni family in particular see Marco Calafati, 'Il palazzo e la collezione Giugni a Firenze tra Sei e Settecento con l'aggiunta di un inedito inventario', *Studi di Storia dell'Arte*, 18, 2007, 183-208.

¹³ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 521, fol. 1v: 'Questo libro in cartapecora Bianca correggiato Simile segnato A, è l'Inuentario Originale della Guardaroba del Ser:mo Gran Duca Ferdinando Secondo di Toscana, consegnato dall'Illustrissimo Sig. Marchese Niccolo Giugni, Guardaroba Maggiore passato, all'Illustrissimo Sig:r Marchese Francesco Coppoli Guardaroba Maggiore che succede, fatto di comandamento di S.A.S., con l'assistenza di mé Cosimo Gorinj. In conformità del benigno rescritto dell'Altezza sua appresso di mé copia del quale sarà nella faccia che segue, cominciando questo di 16 di settembre 1637. Nota come di questo Inuentario originale se ne sono fatte due copie

This complex paragraph highlights several differences between these court inventories and those compiled to settle or prevent patrimonial or inheritance controversies. First and foremost, the court inventory did not mark any change of ownership. Furthermore, temporality was different than in the case of notarial inventories: since the text was not intended as a means to assess and protect possessions transitioning through a hereditary process after the owner's death, time was not a particularly pressing concern; however, extreme accuracy in the description and appraisal of every single item included in the document was mandatory.

When the 1637 Medici inventory is examined in connection with other documents, and in particular with the 'old registers' mentioned in the introductory section, its function as a means to keep track of a large amount of objects always on the move is clarified. This inventory was not a self-contained document providing a static overview of the real estate and assets of a person at a given time. It functioned in interaction with other inventories and registers of the *guardaroba* recording the lives of the objects—movements as well as modifications or repairs. Indeed, the archive of the *guardaroba* is full of registers, inventories, and ledgers that account for the making of objects, textiles, and clothes, as well as for their movements.¹⁴

This system of compiled (and consulted) inventories and registers provides a clear view of the status of the objects in the grand-ducal patrimony as explained in the introduction to another inventory, devoted to the grand-ducal Palace, Palazzo Pitti, and compiled in 1663. As we have seen, each Medici residence had its own individual *guardaroba*, answering to the central *guardaroba* and mirroring the latter's administration.¹⁵ The inventory of Palazzo Pitti was taken for the same reason as the one authored for Fernando in 1637: the Grand Duke had appointed a new *guardaroba* for the palace, Giacinto Maria Marmi,¹⁶ who took responsibility of the Medici possessions in the grand-ducal main residence:

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity. Inventory of all the movable goods that are to be found in the Pitti Palace of His Most Serene Highness. [These

La prima copia s'è fatta nel medesimo tempo, che s'è fatto questo originale per comodità di potersi ragguagliare ne medesimi tempi giorno per giorno à libri nuouj, et La seconda copia s'è fatta poi con maggior commodità, et deue seruire per ragguagliarsi à libri uecchj'.

¹⁴ On the system of interdependent recording in different registers in the *guardaroba* see Vaccari, *La Guardaroba*, 17.

¹⁵ Vaccari, *La Guardaroba*, 17-20.

¹⁶ Giacinto Maria Marmi was an architect, and thanks to his profession he could easily respond to the ever changing needs of the grand-ducal palace, especially in relation to the display of furniture and the continuous rotations of furnishings. Marmi was especially active in relation to the design of the display in the Palazzo Pitti, as his drawings demonstrate (Paola Barocchi, Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà, *Arredi Principeschi del Seicento Fiorentino. Disegni di Giacinto Maria Marmi*, Turin: UTET, 1990).

goods] have been handed in to Giacinto Marmi new *guardaroba*, hired after the death of his uncle Biagio Marmi. This inventory must record in the credit page all the said Biagio's accounts related to the general *guardaroba*, and in the debit page all the future accounts by Giacinto. Written the said day by me, Lorenzo Betti, officer of the said general *guardaroba*.¹⁷

Comparing the introduction of this inventory to that written for Fernando in 1637 reveals that each author had his own style; Marmi, for example, felt the need to justify why it had taken longer than usual to compile this inventory, explaining that every item must be recorded meticulously, and with appropriate calligraphy:

Note how the making of the present inventory could not be accomplished with the brevity of time required by good standards. We started on 30 December 1663 and we finished today, 30 November 1664, because in the meantime we had to provide for guests, we had to cope with locked apartments when the Court was in Pisa, we had to furnish [the rooms] for the Winter and then store everything for the Summer. All these tasks have kept busy the new *guardaroba* Giacinto Maria Marmi. Furthermore, the *guardaroba* was busy writing the inventory on small booklets, and then copying everything in this book to have a better version. Moreover, he was behind because of the wedding [of Grand Prince Cosimo].¹⁸

This introductory paragraph provides precious information as to the making of these documents, registering the practice of compiling a first draft on 'quadernucci' —booklets—before producing a final form in the bound volume. Such observations reveal how the material existence and life of court inventories was different from the notarial inventories: the 1637 and 1663 inventories were individual, elegantly presented volumes preserved in the office of the *guardaroba*. A well-written text, bound in a volume often displaying the coat of arms of the family,

¹⁷ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 725, fol. 1r: 'Al Nome Sia della Santissima Trinita Inuentario dj Tutti I mobili che si ritrouano nel Palazzo de Pittj dj S:A:S: consegnati a Iacinto Marmj nuouo Guardaroba, entrato per la morte di Biagio Marmj suo Zio, il quale Inuentario deue far Credito @ tutti li contj dj Biagio sud:o alla Guard:ba Generale, e Debito in auuenire al d.o Iacinto, fatto questo di suddetto da me Lorenzo Betti ministro di detta Guardaroba Generale'.

¹⁸ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 725, fol. 1v: 'Notasj come nel fare il presente Inuentario, non s'è possuto tirare à fine con quella breuità dj tempo che ricercaua la buona scrittura; che si principiò il dj 30. Dicembre 1663 e uiene terminato questo di 30 Nouembre 1664 sendo che si sono fraposte Foresterie, Apartamenti serratj, stante la Corte essere à Pisa, e lo sparare, e parare per lo da state a Inuerno, ch'hanno resto occupato il nuouo Guardaroba Iacinto Maria Marmj; e si ancora per hauere hauto il ministro di Guardaroba nel fare l'Inuentario gl'accidenti suddetti a scruiere su quadernuccj, e poi riportarlj per ordine su il presente Libro al pulito; e si ancora, che stante le nozze era in Guardaroba restato da scruiere in dietro'.

raised the status of the inventory itself. Everything—the objects and their descriptions—contributed to define the family status and social distinction.¹⁹ In contrast, many non-princely inventories were fabricated as booklets and eventually included within larger, often miscellaneous volumes comprising other documents, as was the case for those included among the contracts compiled or ratified by notaries, or those included in the volumes of the Magistrato dei Pupilli in Florence (the magistracy of wards, responsible for administering the patrimonies of orphans whose fathers had died intestate, as well as women and people with physical and mental disabilities).²⁰

The observations on Marmi's work included in the introduction to the 1663-1664 inventory are rich in detail as they record the movements of objects, as well as those of members of the court throughout the year. This source enables us to explore the temporality of the court inventory as a text, and to understand better how inventories depended heavily upon the relations of people to things, and how court inventories, in particular, mapped those relations on the pages of the dedicated volumes. Marmi started working on this inventory on 30 December 1663, and finished only on 30 November 1664. During this nearly one-year period—an unbelievable and, more importantly, probably needless stretch of time for a notarial inventory²¹—possessions had been constantly changing their position and function. The author discusses how the obligation to provide hospitality to guests, the wedding of Grand Prince Cosimo, the inaccessibility of closed apartments in the Pitti Palace when the court was in Pisa, as well as the revolving furnishing of the palace for summer and winter (implying, for instance the installation of tapestries during the cold months), delayed and interfered with smoothly writing the inventory.²² This episode demonstrates that if we read these texts as texts, investigating the complexities of their production, the author becomes prominent; moreover, such an approach helps to explore questions of agency, as well as textual strategies.

¹⁹ The tradition of individual, elegantly bound volumes for the inventories registering the belongings of important families was well established. See, for instance, the inventory of cardinal Pietro Barbo, compiled before his papal election, explored by Xavier F. Salomon, 'Cardinal Pietro Barbo's Collection and its Inventory Reconsidered', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 15: 1, 2003, 1-18.

²⁰ On the Magistrato dei Pupilli see Lorenzo Cantini, *Legislazione Toscana*, 32 vols., Florence: Albizziniana, 1800-1808, vol. 22, 253; Giulia Calvi, *Il contratto morale: madri e figli nella Toscana moderna*, Bari: Laterza, 1994; Caroline Fisher, *The State as Surrogate Father: State Guardianship in Renaissance Florence, 1368-1532*, PhD Diss., Brandeis University, 2003; and Sicca, 'Da Notaio a Maestro di Casa', 18-19.

²¹ Fanuccio Fanucci, *Tractatus the Inventario Haeredis ac eius Beneficio*, Naples: Apud Lazarum Scorigium, 1623, 16.

²² ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 725, fol. 1v.

The complexity of the list, I: trajectories of time and space

We have seen how inventories at court were far from mere inert lists of things at a given time, but functioned in synergy with other documents, creating a flow of information that was tantamount to the movements of objects through time and space. By recording the dynamism of the grand-ducal belongings, some inventories acquired even more complex textual structures, diverging from the common typology of the list penned in a linear order within the page. This is the case, for instance, of an inventory of clothes, jewels, metalworks, linens, and other belongings of Grand Prince Cosimo (the future Cosimo III), compiled by the secretary Cosimo Prie.²³ This inventory is a double-entry book in which every item is registered on the debit page and again on the credit page. The double-entry book-keeping, traditionally used in accounting from the fourteenth century onwards,²⁴ had been devised to capture and to control the flow of monetary funds, and it is significant that the same system was used for an inventory aimed at registering the movements and transformations of things through time and space. Moreover, the double-entry inventory had no notarial tradition. It was, in fact, useless for a notary who needed to record objects at a designated moment in time and a specific space.

This typology of inventory instead had a tradition within the church, to keep track of liturgical objects and vestments through time. For example, the 'General Inventory' compiled in 1715 for the church of San Lorenzo in Florence not only described everything meticulously on the debit folios, but often recorded modifications, restorations, and other major episodes of the life of the objects on the credit side:

[fol. 19 debit]

In the Sacristy

In the altar drawer

A cup made of rock crystal, engraved and mounted in gold, with fifty seven big pearls and seventeen diamonds of medium dimension, five small diamonds in the small cross and one [diamond] on top, bigger than the

²³ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 666, *Inventario di Vestiti, Ori, Gioie, Argenterie, Biancheria, et altre Robe, Del Ser:mo Gran Principe, Seguitando l'Inventario del Libro Vecchio Seg:to A, tenuto da me Cosimo Prie; Cominciato nel 1655*. On Cosimo Prie see Erik de Jong, 'For Profit and Ornament: The Function and Meaning of the Dutch Garden Art in the Period of William and Mary, 1650-1702', in John Dixon Hunt, ed, *The Dutch Garden in the Seventeenth Century*, Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks, 1990, 33.

²⁴ Geoffrey A. Lee, 'The Coming of Age of Double Entry: The Giovanni Farolfi Ledger of 1299-1300', *Accounting Historians Journal*, 4: 2, 1977, 79-95; John J. Williams, 'A New Perspective on the Evolution of Double-Entry Bookkeeping', *Accounting Historians Journal*, 5: 1, 1978, 29-39; and Geoffrey T. Mills, 'Early Accounting in Northern Italy: The Role of Commercial Development and the Printing Press in the Expansion of Double-Entry from Genoa, Florence And Venice', *Accounting Historians Journal*, 21: 1, 1994, 81-96.

others. Twenty four big rubies similarly mounted in gold, and eleven small [rubies] with the same mount. A balas-ruby mounted on top, a golden lunette with four small rubies, four screws to fix the said cup on the base of gilded wood. Two diamonds and a big pearl have been missing for a long time. This cup is preserved in a box covered with leather, and [internally] clad with red satin and the said cup [shows] the coat of arms of Pontifex Leo X, who bequeathed it. A red taffeta cloth to cover the said cup. Two pearls and two rubies fell, and are temporarily in the custody of the Sacristan.

[fol. 19 credit]

The cup on the other folio has been repaired the year 1708, and the Prior ordered that three white sapphire stones be mounted to replace the two missing diamonds and another one that was fake. A more ordinary pearl has been placed, and the rest has been repaired and nothing is missing. Niccolò Ruini Canon.²⁵

Double-entry book keeping enabled the author of this inventory to encompass a large time span—from 1708 to 1715—while recording the biography of this object. The potential for a long chronological span in the inventory was fully exploited by the Medici officers in the *guardaroba*. The double-entry volume associated with Grand Prince Cosimo preserved in the *guardaroba* archive was used for about twenty years, starting from 1655: the mobility of the objects, their social life, and the owner's interaction with them come to life in this document. The entries are very

²⁵ Florence, Archivio del Capitolo di San Lorenzo, 2128, *Inventario generale di tutte le robe che si trovano in guardaroba. sagrestia. e chiesa da consegnarsi à Sagrestanij pro tempore fatto l'anno corrente MDCCV*: [fol 19 credit] 'In Sagrestia Nel Chiusino dell' Altare Vn Bicchiere di Cristallo di montagna intagliato, e legato in Oro con cinquanta sette perle grosse, e diciassette diamanti mezzani, cinque piccoli nella Crocellina, e uno in punta maggiore di tutti gl'altri; Venti quattro rubini grossi legati similmente in oro, e undici piccoli con la medesima legatura. Vn Balascio a opera in punta, lunetta d'oro con quattro rubini piccoli, quattro madre viti per fermare detto Bicchiere Sul pie di lego dorato. Mancano due Diamanti, et una Perla grossa da un tempo in qua. Si conserua questo Bicchiere in una custodia coperta di quoio foderato di raso rosso a detta Custodia arme del Pontefice leone X., dal quale fù donato. Vna ueste di taffetà rosso per coprir detto Bicchiere. Due Perle con due rubini sono staccati, e stanno in mano del Sig:r Sagrestano pro tempore'. [fol. 19 debit] 'Fatto raggustare l'anno 1708. il di contro Bicchiere e in luogo de i due diamanti, che mancauano, e d'un altro, che era falso ui fu fatto mettere d'ordine del nostro S:r Priore tre Zaffiri bianchi e la Perla fu messa piu ordinaria dell'altra, e del restante fu rassettato come si uede non mancandoui cosa alcuna Io Niccolò Ruini Canonico [...]'. The document is partially published in Antonella Capitanio, *Ostensorio, Firenze, Chiesa di San Lorenzo*, in Cinzia Maria Sicca, ed, *John Talman. An Early Eighteenth-Century Collector of Drawings*, <http://talman.arte.unipi.it>, accessed 12 January 2014.

detailed, and record the provenience²⁶ as well as the subsequent trajectories of the objects.

For example, in 1655 the inventory mentions a golden ring, providing information beyond its materials and decorations. The narrative traces the history of the object from the acquisition of the gem to the commission of the jewel from the artist Monsu Lione:

October 1655

A small golden ring, completely enameled and punched, with an engraved carnelian gemstone. It was commissioned from Monsu Lione, and cost 24 liras including the gold and the work. The gemstone was bought by His Highness from a goldsmith some time ago.²⁷

The corresponding entry in the credit page shows that Cosimo showed this ring to an appraiser—or more likely a dealer—from Rome, who probably bought it because the jewel was never returned to the *guardaroba*:

20 October 1671

The small golden ring, entirely enameled and punched, with an engraved carnelian, mentioned in the facing folio, was taken by His Moste Serene Highness to show it to the Antiquarian coming from Rome. He (the Grand Duke) did not give it back, as recorded in the inventory no. 21 compiled on 20 October 1671.²⁸

The span of 20 years shows how these volumes were used and re-used, and how later additions to the original entries stratified the story of an object and its existence through time and space. The same volume includes other references to things whose previous lives—the history of their entrance to the Medici possessions and provenance—are recorded for their significance. For example, on 24 January 1656, Cosimo de' Medici received a 'Persian saddle, with all its ornaments consisting of

²⁶ On the difference between provenience (the original findspot of an object) and provenance (the chain of ownership of an object) see Rosemary A. Joyce, 'From Place to Place. Provenience, Provenance, and Archaeology', in Gail Feigenbaum and Inge Reist, eds, *Provenience. An Alternate History of Art*, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012, 48-60.

²⁷ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 666, fol. 180 debit: 'Vn Anellino doro, tutto smaltato e strafurato, con corniola intagliata fatto fare da Monsu Lione, e pagatoli fra oro e fattura lire uentiquattro, e la pietra compera da S.A. da un Orefice lire piu tempo fa'.

²⁸ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 666, fol. 180 credit: 'Addi 20 Ott:re 1671 Il di contro anellino d'oro tutto smaltato, e strafurato con corniola intagliata S.A.S. lo prese per mostrarlo all'Antiquario uenuto di Roma e non lo rese come all'Inuentario n. 21 fatto il di 20 Ottobre 1671'.

bridles and harnesses, embroidered in gold and preserved in a wooden box. Gift to His Highness, given in Leghorn by Pietro Arrach, Armenian merchant.²⁹

Leghorn was the grand-ducal port, and a major commercial hub for the Mediterranean.³⁰ The Medici fostered the economic, financial, and social prosperity of the city, and guaranteed its cultural and religious diversity, especially with a law promulgated in 1591 by Ferdinando I to grant religious freedom in the city.³¹ The Armenian community in Leghorn was thriving in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and the Grand Dukes took great pride in exchanging gifts and supporting its members.³² The Medici promoted the construction of a new church for the community, designed and decorated by the court sculptor and architect Giovanni Battista Foggini, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.³³ Such a relation between the Armenian merchants based in Leghorn and the Grand Dukes shows how the value of the saddle donated to Cosimo de' Medici did not simply originate in the materiality of the work, but also in its provenance from Persia and from the Armenian merchant Pietro Arrach.

The denotation of geographic origin in the case of the saddle reflects an interest in recording the source of an object, which often correlated with its rarity and value. The same Medici inventory records a Turkish scimitar and a Turkish inkwell brought back from a naval trip to the East by a courtier, the brother of Cosimo de' Medici's chaplain, and given to the Grand Prince.³⁴

²⁹ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 666, fol. 181 debit: 'Vna Sella alla Persiana, con tutti i sua adornamenti di briglia et altri finim:ti che si ricercano, ricamata con oro, entro una Custodia di asse d'albero n.1 Dono fatto à S.A. in Liorno da Pietro Arrach' Mercante Armeno'.

³⁰ On Leghorn as the Medici Port see Jean-Pierre Filippini, *Il Porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)*, 3 vols., Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998; and Adriano Prosperi, ed, *Livorno 1606-1806. Luogo d'incontro tra popoli e culture*, Turin: Allemandi, 2009.

³¹ On the issue of religious freedom in Leghorn see especially Lucia Frattarelli Fisher, 'La Livornina. Alle Origini della Società Livornese', in Prosperi, *Livorno 1606-1806*, 43-62.

³² On the Armenian community in Leghorn, see Francesca Trivellato, 'From Livorno to Goa and Back: Merchant Networks and the Coral-Diamond Trade in the Early-Eighteenth Century', *Portuguese Studies*, 16, 2000, 193-217; and Riccardo Spinelli, *Giovanni Battista Foggini. 'Architetto Primario della Casa Serenissima' dei Medici (1652-1725)*, Florence: Edifir, 2003, 156-162.

³³ Riccardo Spinelli, *Giovanni Battista Foggini. 'Architetto Primario della Casa Serenissima' dei Medici (1652-1725)*, Florence: Edifir, 2003, 156-162.

³⁴ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 666: '[fol. 182 debit] [7 September 1656]

229 Vna Scimitarra alla Turchesca, con fodera di corame nera, guarnita di Piastre d'arg:to dorato, con sua Campanelle, fibbie, puntale, e manica lauorata n. 1
Dono fatto à S.A. dal fratello del Panci Cappellano di S.A.S.

[...]

[fol. 182 credit]

La Di contro scimitarra alla Turchesca con sua annessi descritti consegnata a Carlo Colzi come per Inuen.rio del di [day missing in the document] Luglio 1674 n. 1

[...]

Such attention to the dynamics of the life of an object was rare among families of lower rank. It was, of course, difficult to record all the possible facts of an object's biography in an inventory compiled in haste upon the death of a family member. More significantly, if things were appraised on the marketplace for their potential monetary value in relation to inheritance, the biography of the object was only occasionally relevant, and very rarely was included in the text.

Other inventories of ruling families across Europe show a similar concern for the trajectories of objects, while not always mirroring this practice of registering the provenance or the destination of an object, at least on a regular basis. Take the case of the inventory of the art collection of Charles I in England, a document compiled before 1639 by Abraham Van der Doort. Here the entries relating to a significant number of paintings not only described the works and attributed them to a specific artist or a school, but also recorded the provenance and the circumstances of the acquisition by the King:

Item the Picture [...] of the Princess of ffaulsburch Sister to the duke of Lowrane with a Blackmoure by at length In a black gilded frame. Brought from. Brussells by Mr Endimion Porter. [...].³⁵

The need for inventories capable of recording the dynamics of time and space and that could focus on objects regardless of their locus *at the moment of the inventory* also arose in the context of gift-giving. Such inventories record objects caught at a very unstable moment of journeying through time, space, and hands. The Medici archives are well stocked with such documents. For example, a list of luxury goods presented by the Grand Dukes as gifts between 1646 and 1656 illuminates the desire to document the association with the Medici family. This list, spanning over a decade, records a range of items, from paintings to coaches and medals, that were presented by the Medici to local courtiers and aristocrats as well as to foreign dignitaries and sovereigns.

[fol. 184 debit]

[12 August 1656]

240 Vn Calamaio alla Turchesca, parte d'argento e parte d'ottone con tre scannellati à uso di pennaioli, per tenerui penne e temperino; Dono fatto a S.A. dal fratello del Panci, tornato da nauicare n. 1

[...]

[fol. 184 credit]

Il di contro calamaio alla Turchesca parte d'Argento e parte d'Ottone consegnato a Carlo Colzi come per l'inuentario del di [day missing in the document] Luglio 1674 n. 1'.

³⁵ On the left margin: 'Done by Sr. Anthonie Vandik Beuond ye Seas'. See Oliver Millar, 'Abraham Van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I', *The Thirty-Seventh Volume of the Walpole Society*, 1959-1960, 6.

8 October 1646. A horse blanket of Turquoise fabric, with three stripes on the border made of yellow fabric, and a Medici coat of arms [...]

Presented with a black horse called *Spensierato* [Happy-Go-Lucky] to the Cardinal of Poland, who visited Florence on his way to Loreto [...]

12 April 1651

A painting on panel representing St Catherine of Alessandria, painted by Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, about *Braccia* 1 1/6 high and *Braccia* 1 wide, with ebony frame

Presented to the Duke of Modena—From the Tribune

A Painting on canvas, with walnut frame, with carved and partially gilded front, in which is depicted Virgin Mary sitting, with Our Lord on her lap, and the Young St. John, deriving from Raphael, copied by Andrea del Sarto, *Braccia* 1 1/3 high, *Braccia* 2 1/2 wide, formerly housed in the Pitti Palace.

Formerly in the Pitti Palace

Presented to the Duke of Modena.³⁶

This particular category of document, an inventory of now absent objects, counterweighs the loss with detailed descriptions and careful notations of the destination. The textuality of the object descriptions is quite similar to standard inventories,³⁷ revealing how both aesthetic qualities and material aspects were vital for constructing value as well as identifying objects in a consistent way. In terms of paintings, for example, the presence of the frame is recorded nearly without exception in early modern inventories. Frames were important: they could be sold independently and were valuable goods. If they included gold, the presence of the precious metal was never overlooked: it meant monetary value.³⁸

³⁶ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 770bis, ins. 42, fol. 665 recto: 'adi 8 d'Otto bre 1646 [...] Vna Coperta da Cauallo di Panno Turchino, con tre listre attorno di panno Giallo, e Arme de medici [...] Donata con un Cauallo detto Spensierato morello al Cardinale di Pollonia, che passò alla uolta dell'Oruieto Adi 12 Aprile 1650 [according to the Florentine *ab incarnatione* calendar]

Vn' Quadro in tauola dipintouj santa Caterina delle Ruote di mano di Raffaello da Urbino, o uero di Lionardo da Vincj alto b. 1 1/6 largo b. 1 incirca con adornamento d'ebano n. 1 Donato al Duca di Modena—della Tribuna

Vn' Quadro in tela, con ornamento di noce à frontespizzio intagliato e dorato imparte, entrouj dipinto la Madonna à sedere, con Nostro Sig:re in braccio, e San Giouannino, che uiene da Raffaello da Urbino, copiato da Andrea del Sarto, alto b. 3 1/3 largo b. 2 1/2, il quale staua nel Palazzo de Pittj n. 1

Staua nel Palazzo de' Pittj

Donato al Duca di Modena'.

³⁷ On the descriptions see below.

³⁸ On Frames see Adriano Amendola, "Questa signor mio è la ruffiana delle pitture": Salvator Rosa e l'invenzione di un nuovo modello di cornice', in Sybille Ebert Schifferer, Helen Langdon, and Caterina Volpi, eds, *Salvator Rosa e il suo tempo, 1615-1673*, Rome: De Luca,

However, these inventories of gifts are radically different from legal inventories in their insistence on the journey of the object changing hands, deemed as equally important as the object itself. As the two paintings given to Francesco I d'Este in 1650 show, both directions of this trajectory — provenance and destination — were vital and both contributed to defining the value of the object and reinforcing the obliging nature of the gift. As recent studies of provenance have shown, the referent of the giver was extremely significant in the early modern period.³⁹ Perhaps not surprisingly, royal or princely provenance enhanced the value of an object as indicated by descriptions of collections found in diaries and guidebooks,⁴⁰ and this particular inventory of gifts reveals that the donor — Ferdinando II de' Medici — took pride in asserting the provenance of two paintings gifted to the Duke of Modena.⁴¹

In the case of the *Saint Catherine*, significance is also attached to the exact place of provenance, not generically the Medici collections, but the very architectural space in which the masterpieces were displayed, the Uffizi Tribune, which in the seventeenth century was already a well-recognized temple of the highest achievements of art.⁴² Court culture required inventories that could summarize the plentitude of objects, their continuous migrations inside and outside the palace, as well as notions of value that were not solely based on the materiality but also on the much less stable concepts of authorship and provenance. The copy of Raphael's *Madonna della Seggiola* is described as such and the attribution to Andrea del Sarto accords it very high status. Andrea del Sarto was an iconic artist for Florence, with a reputation sanctioned by Giorgio Vasari's *Lives*. Ferdinando II, the

2010, 255-265; and Adriano Amendola, 'The Necessity of Frames', in Feigenbaum with Freddolini, *Display of Art in the Roman Palace*, 231-233.

³⁹ Feigenbaum and Reist, *Provenance*.

⁴⁰ See for instance Daniela Bleichmar, 'Seeing the World in a Room: Looking at Exotica in Early Modern Collections', in Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall, eds, *Collecting across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, 17-19.

⁴¹ The bibliography on gift-giving is extensive. Suffice here to refer to Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1990; to focus on European early modern society, see Alain Callé, 'Don et réciprocité en Europe', *Archives européennes de sociologie*, 24, 1983, 151-166; and Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000. For the gift-giving tradition within the Medici court see Suzanne B. Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de' Medici (1549-1609)', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 11, 2007, 243-354.

⁴² On the Uffizi Tribune see, Detlef Heikamp, 'Zur Geschichte der Uffizien-Tribuna und der Kunstschränke in Florenz und Deutschland', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 26, 1963, 193-268; Detlef Heikamp, 'La Tribuna degli Uffizi come era nel Cinquecento', *Antichità Viva*, 3: 3, 1964, 11-30; Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà, *La Tribuna di Ferdinando I. Inventari 1589-1631*, Modena: Panini, 1997; and André Corboz, 'Sur la fonction première de la Tribune des Offices à Florence', *Artibus et Historiae*, 29: 57, 2008, 109-124.

reigning Grand Duke who presented this painting to Francesco I d'Este in 1650, had no less than three paintings by Andrea del Sarto in his Audience Chamber in Palazzo Pitti as a 1666 inventory of the Palace attests.⁴³ Provenance, provenience, and authorship, in this specific case, became equally relevant.

The complexity of the list, II: describing artworks and defining value

As already suggested, although the inventory might seem, at first, a stable and traditional typology of text, if we focus on descriptions of paintings and sculptures, the array of differences among categories of inventories can vary over time, space, and social rank. As we have seen, individual entries can be very simple, just mentioning the subject of a painting, its support—canvas or panel—and its frame and dimensions, for example. This is the usual language in the early modern period, when notaries and public officials could not venture risky evaluations of quality based on style and artistic achievement. Although early seventeenth-century Florence was the place where an artistic canon became institutionalized through a law that prohibited the export of works by specified, significant artists,⁴⁴ aesthetic principles were nonetheless perceived as the most unstable form of value: styles changed, and with the exception of a few outstanding names, the canon was not universal and the market value of artists could decline quite rapidly.

As Patrizia Cavazzini has convincingly argued, when the need to fill rooms with paintings became more and more compelling in the early modern period, the production of cheap copies of famous works, as well as the acquisition of low quality paintings, became the norm.⁴⁵ This, of course, put notaries in the position of inventorying thousands of low-quality works, and we encounter masterpieces only rarely in these texts. Furthermore, as Michelangelo explained to Francisco de Hollanda, artistic value could be determined only by 'those with judgment'.⁴⁶

⁴³ The paintings are *The Trinity with Saint Augustine, Lawrence, Peter Martyr, Frances and Mary Magdalen* and the *Madonna and Child with Saints Onophrius, Lawrence, Sebastian, Roch, John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene* (still in Palazzo Pitti), and the *Archangel Raphael, St Leonard and a Donor* (in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna since 1792). See the inventory published by Malcolm Campbell, *Pietro da Cortona at the Pitti Palace. A Study of the Planetary Rooms and Related Projects*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977, 74.

⁴⁴ In 1602 the Medicean government passed a law prohibiting the export of works of art specified by a list of artists, all active in the previous century. These artists were listed in the following order: Michelangelo, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Domenico Beccafumi, Rosso Fiorentino, Leonardo da Vinci, Franciabigio, Perin del Vaga, Pontormo, Titian, Francesco Salviati, Bronzino, Daniele da Volterra, Fra Bartolomeo, Sebastiano del Piombo, Filippo Lippi, and Correggio. See Karen-edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State. The Discipline of Disegno*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 78.

⁴⁵ Patrizia Cavazzini, *Painting as Business in Early Seventeenth-Century Rome*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2008, 120.

⁴⁶ Philip Sohm, 'Introduction', in Philip Sohm and others, *Painting for Profit. The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-Century Italian Painters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press,

Michelangelo referred primarily to artists, and sometimes artists offered their service as appraisers for the public officials compiling inventories.⁴⁷ This practice was more common in Rome than in Florence, where artists and experts were not usually hired by notaries, and were involved only in rare circumstances, such as the appraisal of sculpture in the Salviati collection by Filippo Baldinucci in 1676 and 1699,⁴⁸ or the appraisal of the 'statues and marble busts' requested from the sculptors Agostino Cornacchini and Bernardino Ludovisi in 1727.⁴⁹

When the notary had to make decisions independently, standard methods of pricing paintings were based on size and materiality.⁵⁰ As Philip Sohm has argued in the context of discussing negotiations between artists and patrons, issues of size and material as a means of ascertaining the price of paintings in the early modern period can bring art historians back to Michael Baxandall's seminal concept of the

2009, 2. On negotiating value between artists and patrons see also Michelle O'Malley, *The Business of Art. Contracts and the Commissioning Process in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, 99-130.

⁴⁷ On Rome see, for example: Getty Research Institute Provenance Index® <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb>, nos. I-1091 (Domenico Bosio, 1627, paintings appraised by the painters Domenico Chiavarini and Tommaso Campana), I-5030 (Francesco Grisolati, 1681, paintings appraised by the painters Giuseppe Ghezzi and Felice Ottini), I-3733 (Prince Urbano Barberini, 1686, paintings appraised by Carlo Maratta), I-4350 (Cardinal Origo Curzio, paintings appraised by Giuseppe Ghezzi), I-3416 (Sacchetti, 1726, paintings appraised by Pietro Ghezzi), accessed 26 March 2014.

⁴⁸ Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, Archivio Salviati, 38, Serie II, Ins.9.

⁴⁹ Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, Archivio Salviati, Filza 62, ins. 65, unpaginated folio inserted between fols. 2 and 3. Significantly, the Salviati had strong connections with Rome, where they had palaces, and indeed this last appraisal is for the sculpture in their Roman palace. As the document discussed in Freddolini and Helmreich, 'Inventories, Catalogues and Art Historiography', note 33 shows, in Florence appraisals by artists were not usually devoted to entire sections of inventories, as in Rome, but could concern specific objects. Appraisals by artists were extremely common in legal disputes solved by the tribunal of the Accademia del Disegno (ASF, Accademia del Disegno, 73, unpaginated, passim).

⁵⁰ Luigi Spezzaferro noted how textual conventions in inventories provide essential information regarding 'thinking patterns, and ways of judging things, and grasping them'. ('Questo tipo di fonte [...] vale come indicazione di gusto, di giudizio: indicazione di una pratica critica, di un modo di pensare, di giudicare le cose, di farsene un'idea'. Luigi Spezzaferro, 'Il Caravaggio, i collezionisti romani, le nature morte', in Alberto Cottino, ed, *La natura morta al tempo di Caravaggio*, exhibition catalogue, Naples: Electa, 1995, 51). On Spezzaferro's historiographical contribution to the study of inventories within the larger field of the history of collecting and the art market see Michel Hochmann, 'Luigi Spezzaferro, l'histoire et l'historiographie du collectionnisme', *Paragone Arte*, 82, 2008, 93-104; and Tomaso Montanari, ed, *L'amore e la rabbia. Dialogo con Luigi Spezzaferro*, Special issue of *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte*, 96, 2008. On the notaries and their vocabulary, often dependent on what the heirs could tell them about the objects included in an inventory, see Sicca, 'Da Notaio a Maestro di Casa', 23.

'period eye'.⁵¹ This idea informs our understanding of how notaries looked at artworks, and can induce us to define the 'period eye of the early modern notary' as essentially based on the size and materiality of the works, as well as on measurable features such as the number of figures in a painting. These characteristics were especially crucial for the inventory, typically undertaken when the artwork was spatially and temporally distant from negotiations between artist and patron concerning price, and when the object was about to be projected towards (or protected from) a volatile art market.⁵²

With such considerations in mind we can better analyze the text, language, and conventions of princely inventories, and we can also better grasp the exceptionality of documents describing collections of extremely high value in which the voice of the author reveals the eye of the collector.

Rulers were extraordinary patrons, whose social obligations in terms of distinction were higher than those of anyone else. For this reason rulers—and the Medici are a representative example—more and more often promoted the formation of inventories in which the description of the object implicitly defined hierarchies that were not simply dictated by material value, but were also informed by aesthetic judgment and the desire to devote particular attention to extraordinary paintings and sculptures, as well as precious metalworks. Indeed, we could argue that the production of inventories based on aesthetic values developed as a consequence of the conspicuous consumption of extraordinary works: the (aesthetic) exceptionality of such works required adequate descriptions that articulated discourses of value and helped to interpret the works.

A compelling example showing the evolution of this process is found in the contrast between two inventories of the Medici collections taken in 1553 and 1698. The first inventory registers the goods belonging to Cosimo I de' Medici, and the second one is the inventory of paintings displayed in Grand Prince Ferdinando's apartment in Palazzo Pitti.⁵³ In Cosimo's inventory—a text including all the

⁵¹ Sohm, 'Introduction', 26-27. On Baxandall's 'period eye' see his seminal *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 29-108. See also Allan Langdale, 'Aspects of the Critical Reception and Intellectual History of Baxandall's Concept of the Period Eye', in Adrian Rifkin, ed, *About Michael Baxandall*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, 17-35.

⁵² On notarial descriptions of artworks (focusing especially on seventeenth-century Dutch culture) see John Michael Montias, 'How Notaries and Other Scribes Recorded Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Sales and Inventories', *Simiolus. Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 30: 3/4, 2003, 217-235.

⁵³ The bibliography on Cosimo I is vast. Important texts include Konrad Eisenblicher, ed, *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001; and Henk Th. Van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his self-representation in Florentine art and culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; on the collections of Grand Prince Ferdinando see the pioneering pages penned by Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters. A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1963, 228-241; Marco Chiarini, 'I quadri della collezione del Principe Ferdinando di Toscana, I',

furnishings of the interior of Palazzo della Signoria—the entry groups together four sculptural masterpieces, including Baccio Bandinelli's *Bacchus*, Michelangelo's *Apollo*, Jacopo Sansovino's *Bacchus*, and Benvenuto Cellini's *Ganymede*. The entry reads as follows:

Four marble statues, namely a Bacchus by Bandinello, another Bacchus by Sansovino, a David by Buonarroti, unfinished, and an ancient putto with an Eagle by his feet.⁵⁴

The exceptionality of the works, as well as the display—four statues by the protagonists of Cinquecento sculpture grouped together to form a unique *paragone*⁵⁵—emerges clearly from this document, but the description does not articulate any aesthetic discourse. On the other hand, the 1698 inventory has extremely detailed entries, such as the one describing a painting by Pietro Testa representing *The Death of Dido*:

A painting on canvas painted by Pietro Testa, with whole figures slightly less-than-life-size, in which is told the story of Queen Dido according to the narrative of Virgil in the fourth book of *Aeneis*, where we see the said queen on the pyre while injuring her chest. Around her are a variety of figures, all

Paragone, 301, 1975, 57-98; Marco Chiarini, 'I quadri della collezione del Principe Ferdinando di Toscana, II', *Paragone*, 303, 1975, 75-108; Marco Chiarini, 'I quadri della collezione del Principe Ferdinando di Toscana, III', *Paragone*, 305, 1975, 53-88; Elisabeth Epe, *Die Gemäldesammlungen des Ferdinando de' Medici, Erbprinz von Toskana (1663-1713)*, Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1990; and Riccardo Spinelli, Ilaria Ferraris and Franco Angiolini, eds, *Il Gran Principe Ferdinando de' Medici (1663-1713). Collezionista e mecenate*, Florence: Giunti, 2013.

⁵⁴ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 28, fol. 6v: 'Quattro statue di Marmo cioe un' Bacco del Bandinello altro Bacco del Sansouino uno Dauit del Buonarruoto imperfetto, et un putto antico con Aquila a piedi'. The inventory is entirely transcribed in C. Conti, *La prima reggia di Cosimo I nel Palazzo già della Signoria di Firenze coll'appoggio d'un inventario inedito del 1663 e coll'aggiunta di molti altri documenti*, Florence: Pellas, 1893, as well as in P. Barocchi, and G. Gaeta Bertelà, *Collezionismo mediceo e storia artistica, I: da Cosimo I a Cosimo II, 1540-1621*, 2 vols., Florence: Spes, 2002, vol. I, 183-195. The document is also explored by Stefano Pierguidi, 'Il confronto tra antichi e moderni nel collezionismo di Cosimo I: Michelangelo, Sansovino, Cellini, Bandinelli', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 54: 3, 2010-2012, 504-520. On this inventory and on Cosimo I's apartment see also Andrea Gáldy, 'Che sopra queste ossa con nuovo ordine si vadano accomodando in più luoghi appartamenti': Thoughts on the Organization of the Florentine Ducal Apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1553', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 46: 2/3, 2002, 490-509; and Andrea Gáldy, *Cosimo I de' Medici as a Collector: Antiquities and Archaeology in Sixteenth-Century Florence*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 61-108.

⁵⁵ On this display see Pierguidi, 'Il confronto tra antichi e moderni'; and Francesco Freddolini, 'Allestitimenti e strategie narrative: collezioni e descrizioni a Firenze e Roma tra Cinque e Seicento', in Sicca, *Inventari e cataloghi*, 45-62.

showing sorrow for the baleful occurrence. Iris is in the air, sent by Juno in order to separate the queen's soul from her body, and far away we can see Aeneas' army with a marine view. The episode is shown at the beginning of dawn, *braccia* 4 ½ high, 6 1/8 wide, with gilded frame, marked no. 245.⁵⁶

The difference between these two texts is not simply represented by their length, but in the very nature of the descriptions. As mentioned, the inventory of Cosimo I's belongings in Palazzo Vecchio reveals a very cold, or notarial tone in defining the objects and avoids any un-necessary words to describe them. In contrast, the 1698 inventory entry reads like an ekphrasis.⁵⁷ In the inventory of Grand Prince Ferdinando the text of the inventory provides the reader with a precise and literary guide to the painting, taking the imagined viewer through the depiction of the story and the hierarchy of the episodes, including the departure of Aeneas, unaware of what Dido is doing during that exact moment—a very sophisticated rhetorical idea. This text, in other words, is not simply *recording* a painting; it is *interpreting* the painting, with a vivid attempt to match the artist's achievement with an articulated and refined vocabulary, and with a rich narrative strategy.

If we read Grand Prince Ferdinando's text according to notarial conventions only the very first line and the conclusion of this entry—mentioning the size of the figures, the dimensions of the painting, and the presence of the frame—would seem reasonable and necessary. However, this inventory, in its narrative, problematises the authorship and function of such documents. In this case the eye, as well as the voice that resonates in this text, are that of Ferdinando himself, describing this painting to his courtiers, or his guests, and engaging in erudite discussions as to its literary source, the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneis*. Such a description would be overtly redundant if the task was simply to identify the painting to ensure that it did not leave the family collections. Yet such a description was crucial to define

⁵⁶ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1067, fol. 2 recto: 'Vn quadro in tela dipintoui da Pietro Testa figure intere poco meno del naturale espressoui l'istoria della Regina Didone secondo il racconto, che ne fa' Virgilio del Lib:o 4 dell'Eneide, oue uedesì la d:a Regina sopra la pira in atto di Ferirsi il petto all'intorno ui sono uarie figure tutte esprimenti dolore del funesto successo; In aria ui e' l'Iride mandata da Giunone per sciogliere l'anima della d:a Regina dal Corpo, et in Lontananza si uede l'amata d'Enea con Marina, il fatto s'esprime sullo spuntare dell'Aurora, alto b. 4 1/8 largo B. 6 1/8 con adornamento dorato Segnato 245'. The entire inventory is published on www.memofonte.it, accessed 12 February 2014. On Pietro Testa see Elizabeth Cropper, *The Ideal of Painting. Pietro Testa's Dusseldorf Notebook*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984; and Elizabeth Cropper, *Pietro Testa, 1612-1650. Prints and Drawings*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1988. On this painting see Epe, *Die Gemäldesammlungen*, 113-114.

⁵⁷ On ekphrasis in the early modern tradition see Svetlana Alpers, 'Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23: 3/4, 1960, 190-21; Giovanna Perini, 'L'arte di descrivere: la tecnica dell'ecfrasi in Malvasia e Bellori,' *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 3, 1989, 175-206; and David Rosand, 'Ekphrasis and the Generation of Images', *Arion*, Third Series, 1: 1, 1990, 61-105.

artistic and aesthetic values. Furthermore, by constructing such values, the language and the textual conventions of this inventory defined the owner *as a collector* and the objects as part of a system that transcended their materiality, and implied the gaze of 'those with judgment,' to borrow Michelangelo's words.⁵⁸ When Grand Prince Ferdinando, one of the most refined collectors in Europe, acquired Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* (Florence, Uffizi), he described the painting as 'disegnata come da Raffaello, finita con l'anima' (as drawn by Raphael, finished with the soul).⁵⁹ This phrase, unveiling a compelling capacity to create a discourse on style as well as establishing an intention to define value through aesthetic quality, encapsulates the cultural context within which the 1698 inventory was compiled.

If we compare the above mentioned entry on Pietro Testa's *Death of Dido* with two other entries in inventories of the same collection taken respectively over the years 1697-1708 and after the death of Grand Prince Ferdinando in 1713, the language, narrative, and functions of this 1698 document can be further problematised. Pietro Testa's painting is described in the 1697-1708 inventory with a text that replicates the above mentioned entry in every single word, only adding a reference to Testa's engraved reproduction at the end.⁶⁰ Obviously, the first inventory was the model for the second one, and the reference to the engraving is, once again, completely useless from the vantage point of the notary while serving the purpose of adding further value to a work that has been deemed worthy of reproduction by the author.

The 1713 inventory, taken at the death of Grand Prince, had the primary purpose of assessing the properties of Cosimo III's son, and although more succinct, the text clearly derives from the previous two inventories:

A painting on canvas 4 1/8 braccia high, 6 braccia and 4 soldi wide on which it is painted by the hand of Pietro Testa the history of Queen Dido, where one sees the said queen on the wood, while injuring her chest, with many

⁵⁸ See above, note 46.

⁵⁹ Haskell, *Patrons and Painters*, 232. On the acquisition of the painting by Ferdinando see Epe, *Die Gemäldesammlungen*, 55-56.

⁶⁰ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1185, fol. 466r: '245. Un quadro di Pietro Testa di figure intere, poco meno del naturale espressovi l'istoria della regina Didone, secondo il racconto che ne fa Virgilio, nel libro quarto dell'Eneide, ove vedesi la detta regina sopra la pira in atto di ferirsi il petto; all'interno vi sono varie figure tutte esprimenti dolore per il successo funesto. In aria vi è l'Iride mandata da Giunone per sciogliere l'anima alla detta regina dal corpo, e in lontananza vedesi l'armata d'Enea con marina il fatto si esprime su lo spuntar dell'aurora. Detto quadro è alto braccia quattro e un ottavo, largo braccia sei e soldi quattro con suo adornamento dorato. Il quadro è messo alla stampa et intagliato dal medesimo autore in acqua forte'. The inventory is published on www.memofonte.it, accessed 12 February 2014.

figures surrounding her in different poses, and on the upper section one sees Iris and Juno, and far away Aeneas' army with a marine view. No. 245.⁶¹

These three inventories point to the potential intertextuality of inventories and suggest how the production of the texts probably took place at the desk of the writer, who copied previous entries rather than describe the paintings afresh every time. Furthermore, the relatively more succinct entry in the 1713 inventory shows that once Ferdinando was no longer present, extremely ekphrastic and literary descriptions were no longer crucial. This confirms that the hidden author behind the production of the first two texts was, indeed, the heir to the grand ducal throne.

Also of significance is that the three inventories consistently refer to the same painting with the same number (no. 245) in a manner that anticipates museum accession numbers, clearly demonstrating that Grand Prince Ferdinando's assemblage was conceived as a collection with the potential to accrue additional items over time. This practice was not uncommon in major collections as the 1651 inventory of Gaspar de Haro y Guzmán Carpio shows.⁶² The inclusion of numbers in inventories unveils a major shift in the relationship of owners to objects, articulating hierarchies that distinguished paintings and sculptures from the rest of the objects inhabiting a given architectural space. Instead of being listed and described as part of the complex and stratified system of objects activating the social life of the palace's interior, paintings had acquired a special and higher status: they were singled out, described, and evaluated *as art*. Significantly, such numbering systems did not include furniture or metalwork, and even the descriptions show radical differences in length, vocabulary, narrative, and textuality. As opposed to the ekphrases devoted to the paintings, the same 1698 inventory comprises unnumbered entries such as:

Two rock crystal chandeliers with similar drops and crown on top, with gilded metal armature and 12 cast brass roundels, about 2 1/6 Braccia high.⁶³

In sum, as a consequence of the development of galleries displaying pictures and sculptures in the early modern period, and the growing production of art theories

⁶¹ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1222, fol. 21: 'Un quadro in tela alto braccia 4 1/8, largo braccia 6 soldi 4, dipintovi di mano di Pietro Testa l'istoria della regina Didone, ove si vede detta regina sopra la legna in atto di ferirsi il petto, con molte figure attorno in varie attitudini et in alto si vede l'Iride e Giunone et in lontananza l'armata di Enea con veduta di mare, n. 245'. The inventory is published on www.memofonte.it, accessed 12 February 2014.

⁶² Gail Feigenbaum, 'Manifest Provenance', in Feigenbaum and Reist, *Provenance*, 18-19. On the 7th Marquis of Carpio see Leticia de Frutos, *El Templo de la Fama. Alegoría del marqués del Carpio*, Madrid: Fundación Caja Madrid, Fundación Arte Hispánico, 2009.

⁶³ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1067, fol. 2r: 'Due lumiere di cristallo di monte con gocciolami simili e corona sopra di cristalli sudetti, con ossatura di ferro dorato e 12 padellini d'ottone di getto dorato, alta braccia 2 1/6 circa'.

and histories from Vasari onwards, such objects acquired a different position in the system of possessions as well as in the texts describing them. Rather than providing an all-encompassing overview of the interior with no aesthetic hierarchies, princely inventories gradually isolated what was circumscribed by the frame or supported by a pedestal: the paintings and the sculptures.

It is crucial to point out how the Medici were not alone in pursuing this approach. If we expand our scope to the courtiers and the members of the aristocracy in the early modern period, we can easily find other examples of inventories deploying an inherently aesthetic methodology. For example, the 1612 inventory of the Florentine Riccardi palace of Gualfonda includes painting attributions that, in many cases, have proven to be reliable over time. Two examples are Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halberdier* now at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and the portrait of Maria Salviati by the same artist, preserved at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.⁶⁴ More importantly in this context, the author defined the artistic quality of the works with language that explicitly refers to aesthetic or stylistic categories.⁶⁵ Even the anonymous paintings were evaluated in relation to their artistic quality, and classified as 'by a good master' (di mano di buon maestro), or 'by an ordinary master' (di mano di maestro ordinario),⁶⁶ showing how words transitioned from the artistic vocabulary developed by authors such as Vasari to the inventorial jargon.⁶⁷ The Riccardi inventory is remarkable because, in one case, a word was even manipulated to refer to lesser quality works 'by a less than ordinary master' (maestro ordinariaccio).⁶⁸ Such categories are indicative of hierarchies determined by aesthetic value. This inventory—written for the family consumption and still preserved in the family archive, included in a volume exclusively devoted to the family belongings—sanctioned the identity of the Riccardi as refined and sophisticated collectors. As much as the collection itself, this

⁶⁴ On Pontormo's *Halberdier* see Elizabeth Cropper, *Pontormo. Portrait of a Halberdier*, Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1997; and Antonio Pinelli, *La Bellezza Impura. Arte e Politica nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2004, 123-154.

⁶⁵ The inventory was published for the first time by Herbert Keutner, 'Zu einigen Bildnissen des frühen Florentiner Manierismus', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 8: 3, 1959, 139-154. See, for example, the entry devoted to painting attributed to a 'Lombard master', transcribed in Keutner, 'Zu einigen Bildnissen', 153.

⁶⁶ The term 'ordinary' was relatively common in notarial inventories, and a search in the Getty Provenance Index® Databases produces 294 occurrences in inventories compiled in the seventeenth century (Getty Research Institute Provenance Index, <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb>, accessed 14 September 2014).

⁶⁷ The term 'ordinario' was used by Vasari to identify low quality painters, such as Andrea de' Ceri, Perino del Vaga's first master, defined 'not a good painter, or ordinary, one of those that engage with mechanical works publicly, in open workshops' ('Era Andrea non molto buon pittore, anzi ordinario, e di questi che stanno a bottega aperta pubblicamente a lavorare ogni cosa meccanica'). See Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori, 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, 6 vols., Florence: S.P.E.S., 1966-1987, Vol. 5, 108.

⁶⁸ See the transcription in Keutner, 'Zu einigen Bildnissen', 154.

text was instrumental in fashioning the family identity and promoting the Riccardi within the courtly establishment of Florence.

As this example suggests, the language of an inventory—especially when not dictated by a notary—could become an active agent in defining the prestige of a family. An eloquent case-study is the 1681 inventory of the Mellini collection in Rome, recently brought to scholars' attention by Murtha Baca and Nuria Rodriguez. The text is a poem celebrating each painting and, in turn, sanctioning the refinement and cultural position of their owner.⁶⁹ A similar objective informed the 1681 inventory of the Florentine courtier Valentino Farinola, who commissioned an inventory of all his paintings. By separating the artworks from the rest of his belongings, he conceptually identified them as a proper art collection, rather than a group of paintings furnishing his house. This act was reified by Farinola's strategy of intertextuality as he mirrored the descriptions found in the Florentine guidebook by Francesco Bocchi and Giovanni Cinelli, published in 1677, even using a similar vocabulary in some of the entries.⁷⁰ This process established new canons of value based not simply on the materiality of the works, but on their status as artworks worthy of a guidebook.

In this context, the inventories of Grand Prince Ferdinando emerge as textual tools to describe and to define the Medici collections as such and, in turn, as literary means to fashion the prestige and the prominence of the Medici as art collectors in relation to the court society that surrounded them. Along the lines of this tradition, the 1697-1708 Medici inventory was extremely detailed in articulating the paintings' authorship. In some circumstances it clearly identified some paintings as copies, mentioning the author of the copy and the author of the original, as in the extremely detailed entry on a still life copied by Bartolomeo Bimbi after Evaristo Baschenis.⁷¹

⁶⁹ On the Mellini inventory see Nuria Rodriguez Ortega and Murtha Baca, 'Ut Pictura Poesis: Pietro Mellini's 'Relatione delle Pitture Migliori di Casa Melini' (1681)', *Getty Research Journal*, 1, 2009, 161-168.

⁷⁰ Freddolini, 'Allestimenti e strategie narrative', 55. On the issue of inventories and collectors' identities see also Juan Luis González García, 'Charles V and the Habsburgs' Inventories. Changing Patrimony as Dynastic Cult in Early Modern Europe', *RIHA Journal*, 12, 2010, <http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2010/gonzalez-garcia-charles-v-and-the-habsburgs-inventories>, accessed 12 March 2014.

⁷¹ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1185, fols. 110v-111r: '530. Un quadro copiato dal medesimo autore [Bartolomeo Bimbi], originale di Evaristo Baschenis detto il Prete Bergamasco, entrovi alcuni strumenti musicali, cioè un leuto col corpo all'insù, sul quale apparisce esservi della polvere e delle ditate dal fregare sulla medesima polvere, con suo nastro amaranto, un violino con il suo arco, con le corde all'ingiuè et un foglio di musica con le sue note, su il quale vi è posata una mosca su uno stipo nero aperto, con otto cassetini d'avorio, con paesi dentro et un sportello nel mezzo pure d'avorio, con una figura nel mezzo e sua bocchetta per le chiave dorata, lavoro pur dorato alle quattro cantonate di detto stipo. S'apre davanti, su il sportello del quale vi è posato un arancio con foglie et una cassetina con lavori di paglia di diversi colori. E su il medesimo stipo vi è posato un chitarrino con il corpo all'ingiuè et una tromba. Più a dietro vi è un altro stipetto color di noce serrato nel mezzo con un ganghero o

This attention to the copy, recurring in other instances of the same inventory, clearly articulates a hierarchy between an original and its reproduction. In other circumstances, this inventory mentions double authorships, when paintings were the result of a collaboration between artists. For example, among a series of landscape paintings by Crescenzo Onofri, this document specified those in which the figures had been painted by other artists, such as Livio Mehus⁷² and Alessandro Magnasco.⁷³ Authorship was the primary element defining value in this text, deemed so important that several entries end with transcriptions of signatures present on the painting. A compelling example is a painting signed by Carlo Caliarì, now preserved at the Uffizi Gallery. The extensive entry explains the presence of St Frediano in the painting, and concludes with the dimensions of the work and the transcription of the signature in Latin: ‘Carlo filio Pauli Calieri Veronesi f.’ (Carlo, son of Paolo Caliarì from Verona made [this painting]).⁷⁴

The textual organization of this inventory is also remarkable, as the paintings are grouped together in relation to their authors, regardless of their location within the grand ducal palace. This inventory, useless for the scholar concerned with the display of art, establishes an epistemological framework that was inherently art historical and marked a shift in the relation between viewer and artwork. The paintings were no longer described as objects *found* during an inspection of a given space at a given time,⁷⁵ but were those *selected* from amongst a much larger and multifold system of objects.⁷⁶ The order of the list was not dictated by the objects’ position in the architectural space, but was imposed by a conceptual organization of the text that indicated authorship of the works of art as the primary index of value. Furthermore, the deeply meditated and complex descriptions reflect long hours of observation of the paintings, and evoke the conversations in front of them entertained by ‘those with judgment’. Such descriptions were the result of a text that was composed at the connoisseur’s desk, rather than during an officer’s inspection of the palace. This inventory acknowledged the specific aesthetic nature of paintings as art, and purposefully grouped the objects together as a collection. By

uncino, sopra del quale vi è posato un zufolo et un violino con le corde all’insù, e suo [lacuna] diritto e su un altro piano vi posano quattro libri e sopra l’altro una sfera con suo piede et una chitarra con le corde all’insù, con fascie, manico e tastiera nera intarsiata d’avorio, quali cose tutte posano in una tavola coperta con un tapeto alla persiana di diversi lavori e colori. In alto vi è un gran panno, fondo verde di ricamo a fiorami grandi d’oro, foderato di amaranto e cremisi, alzato e legato in varii luoghi con cordoni e nappe verdi con oro, alto soldi diciassette, largo braccia uno e soldi tre e mezzo con suo adornamento dorato’.

⁷² ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1185, fol. 162r.

⁷³ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1185, fol. 165r.

⁷⁴ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 1185, fol. 143r.

⁷⁵ See the etymology of ‘inventory’ in Freddolini and Helmreich, ‘Inventories, Catalogues and Art Historiography’, with regard to the Latin word ‘invenire’ (to find).

⁷⁶ On the relation between the process of selection and the origin of the word ‘catalogue’ see Freddolini and Helmreich, ‘Inventories, Catalogues and Art Historiography’.

selecting these paintings, by describing them in purely ekphrastic terms, and by clustering them according to their authors, this text blurs the line between inventory and catalogue, and proves the significance of such texts in shaping the discourse of art history, then and now.

Francesco Freddolini is Assistant Professor of Art History at Luther College, University of Regina. His recent publications include his monograph *Giovanni Baratta, 1670-1747. Scultura e Industria del Marmo tra la Toscana e le Corti d'Europa* (2013) and contributions to *Display of Art in the Roman Palace, 1550-1750* (2014), edited by Gail Feigenbaum with Francesco Freddolini. He has received fellowships from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Huntington Library, and the Getty Research Institute.

francesco.freddolini@uregina.ca