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“Ferdinando I de’ Medici’s Gifts to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in 1587: a Reexamination of Giambologna’s Bronze *Ornamento* and Medici Patronage in the Holy Land”

Project Description and Scholarly Significance*:

The project that I am proposing in this application is a short onsite research trip to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Please note, that this is a modification of the proposal that I submitted on my “Intent to Apply” document as I have chosen not to request funds for archival research at this time, having decided to focus on the onsite portion of the trip and continue working with documents I currently possess.

The focus of this research trip is the study and documentation of a bronze railing that formed a substantial part of my doctoral dissertation, which centered on the sixteenth-century sculptor Giambologna and his work as court sculptor to the Medici Grand Duke, Ferdinando I in the late sixteenth century. In my dissertation (*Giambologna’s Bronze Pictures: The Narrative Reliefs for Ferdinando I de’Medici and the Post-Tridentine ‘Paragone’*) one of the issues I examined was Ferdinando’s interest in possessing certain sites in the Holy Land, particularly within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. To that end, he commissioned a bronze railing, known as the “*ornamento*,” which was intended to surround the Stone of Unction, the stone on which Christ’s body was anointed prior to burial. Emblazoned with the Medici coat of arms, in its positioning around the Stone, the *ornamento* would have functioned as a large, permanent reliquary, which would have very clearly expressed in both physical and visual terms, the message of Medici ownership of one of the most important relics in all of Christendom. The *ornamento* was further decorated with six narrative reliefs designed by Giambologna and his workshop, illustrating episodes from Christ’s Crucifixion to the Entombment, which took place on the very site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. In the end, the *ornamento* proved too short to encircle the Stone of Unction, and was instead later reconfigured into an altar in the Chapel of the Crucifixion on Mount Calvary where it still remains today.

It is important to note that at present there are currently no high-quality color images of the *ornamento*. In publications they have been reproduced in black and white only. Scouring the internet and various image databases has proven fruitless aside from general photographs taken by tourists of the *ornmanto* in its current state as an altar. Needless to say, these photographs are not of a quality sufficient for scholarly research. Thus, the importance of this trip in terms of producing high quality color photographs for the first time in the object’s history.

In addition to the *ornamento*, Ferdinando I de’Medici sent other gifts to the Church, including several silver oil lamps and a painting of the Resurrection of Christ which was to be hung at the entrance to Christ’s tomb. These objects were meant, along with the *ornamento*, as a sign of Medici piety and generosity that would have elevated the Grand Duke to a status equal to that of rulers of larger European courts. The painting has never been physically identified although there are two promising candidates in the Church that require first hand observation in order to potentially determine their age and provenance. The only photographs I have ever seen of these

two paintings which are of interest are out of focus and unreliable. The issue of the lamps is more complicated, as there are many dozens of lamps that have been sent to the church throughout the centuries, so being able to possibly identify those sent by the Grand Duke will be a challenge. However, it is an important challenge to undertake and would contribute greatly to our knowledge of what still remains of those gifts *in situ*. I do have descriptions of the lamps from 17th and 18th century travel guides to the Holy Land and will certainly be using those as an aid in identification.

Thus, this is a research project that revolves around Ferdinando's patronage of the Church as well as Giambologna's role as court sculptor in helping to visually craft the Grand Duke's message as ruler. In the project I am proposing for FRCWA funding, I would undertake a four (4) day trip to Jerusalem to extensively document the objects described above via photographs and onsite notes. Having previously conducted preliminary archival research at the Medici Archives (Archivio di Stato di Firenze), I feel the most pressing issue is to get to Jerusalem, something I could not do as a graduate student, for first hand investigation. I have documents in my possession that I discovered in the archives which would be greatly enhanced by such visual documentation. Since the completion of my dissertation, this is a topic of investigation that I have longed to return.

Brief Literature Review:

With regard to the *ornamento's* history in art historical scholarship, it appears in most monographs on Giambologna and his career, with the seminal work being Elisabeth Dhanens monograph published in 1956 (*Jean Boulogne – Giovanni Bologna Fiammingo, Douai 1529-Florence 1608*. Brussels: Palais der Academiën, 1956), and in Charles Avery's monograph *Giambologna. The Complete Sculpture* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1987; 1993; 2000), although it is treated in less detail. As an object of independent study, the *ornamento* was first dealt with in 1927 by Fredrich Kriegbaum ("Ein Bronzepaliotto von Giovanni da Bologna in Jerusalem." *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, Bd. 48 (1927): 43-52). However, the most extensive work on it was published in 1970 by Avraham Ronen, in his article entitled "Portigiani's Bronze "Ornamento" in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem." (*Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts In Florenz* IV (December, 1970), 415-442). The name Portigiani in the title refers to the bronze founder who cast the *ornamento's* narrative reliefs from Giambologna's clay models and assembled the entire object. While this is a crucial study of the object, it is also the last substantial critical inquiry that has been conducted and the photographs published are only in black and white. Additionally, the *ornamento* has been discussed by Massimiliano Rossi, in his essay, "Emuli di Goffredo: epica granducale e propaganda figurativa," (*L'arme e gli amori. La poesia di Ariosto, Tasso e Guarini nell'arte fiorentina del Seicento*, edited by Elena Fumagalli, Massimiliano Rossi, Riccardo Spinelli, 32-42. Firenze: Sillabe, 2001), as part of Ferdinando I's ambition to be associated with the great hero of the Christian Crusades, Godfrey of Lorraine.

In terms of scholarship on Ferdinando's use of diplomatic gifts to curry favor or signal his status on the larger European stage, the most important essay (in my opinion) is Suzanne Butter's "Ferdinando de' Medici and the Art of the Possible" (*The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence*, edited by Cristina Acidini Luchinat, 67-75. New Haven and London:

Yale University Press, 2002). She also published another article, “The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de’ Medici (1549-1609),” (*I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, vol. 11 (2007), 243-354), which is equally elucidating. Although the scholarship of Dr. Butters and I overlaps at points, I believe that with the research I have conducted thus far, and would like to conduct with this grant, I will be able to contribute valuable information and greater understanding to this area of scholarship.

Relation of this Project to My Scholarship:

As mentioned above, the focus of my doctoral dissertation was Giambologna’s work as court sculptor for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando I de’ Medici. Half of my dissertation is devoted to analysis of the *ornamento* within the context of the relationship between painting and sculpture in the late sixteenth-century as well as Ferdinando’s use of certain artistic project to promote his personal agenda of expanding the Medici hegemony over Tuscany and beyond.

I presented some of my findings explained above at the Renaissance Society of America’s 2010 conference in Venice in a session sponsored by the Medici Archive Project (“Giambologna’s bronze *ornamento*: a Medici gift to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem,” The Renaissance Society of America Annual Conference, Session: *Medici Gifts: 1500-1700*, April 8-10, 2010, Venice, Italy). And I have recently presented at the Midwest Art History Society Conference on Giambologna’s narrative reliefs (Giambologna’s Bronze Narrative Reliefs and Their Relationship to the *Paragone*,” Midwestern Art History Society Conference, Session: *Renaissance Art (I)*, March 21, 2013, Columbus, Ohio), for which I have been nominated for the MAHS Award for Best Presentation by an Emerging Scholar Award.

Goals and Objectives of the Project:

With this proposed trip to Jerusalem, I foresee two important outcomes. The first is to my own scholarship agenda. In light of the amount of time that has passed with regard to a complete study of the *ornamento*, I believe more current research and analysis is warranted and would be welcomed. This is a project that would benefit the scholarly community at large and particularly those who are interested in Medici patronage and/or Giambologna’s career, especially as the *ornamento* is one of his least known works. In addition, the documents I previously discovered in the archives regarding the Grand Duke’s gifts to the Holy Sepulcher have not been published previously by any other scholar to the best of my knowledge, and I think that in conjunction with the visual evidence, I would have a very strong and important contribution to make to this particular area of study. Moreover, full color documentation of the *ornamento*, the lamps (if they still exist), and the painting, would be a great contribution to the scholarly community and I would plan on sharing them through a digital imaging database such as Artstor.

Research Methods:

For this project my primary method of research is going to be onsite documentation of the objects mentioned in the Project Description. As art history is a visually based discipline, the visual documentation of these works is imperative. In addition to the visual component, I will also be using archival documents to help put these objects into greater historical perspective and

I will be consulting established and new literature on both Giambologna and Ferdinando I de' Medici.

Timeline for Completion:

As this project I am proposing is primarily a fact-gathering research trip, I can certainly accomplish the onsite written and visual documentation at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the four days I have planned. Upon return to Evansville, with this newly gathered visual information, I would then begin supplementing an article which is currently in progress for submission to a peer-reviewed journal within the following two semesters.

*Please note, this application was written following OSPRA Faculty Research and Creative Work Grant Call for Proposals document dated 11-15-13 which is currently on the website. I have followed the "Application Requirements" section on pages 2-3 and have addressed the five criteria mentioned.