

## INTRODUCTION

In October 1580, the Urbinate ambassador Simone Fortuna reported to his employer on a meeting he had had with Giambologna, the star artist of Grand Duke Francesco de' Medici's Florentine court. The Flemish sculptor, he wrote, was "the best person you could ever meet, not greedy in the least, as his absolute penilessness shows. Everything he does is in the pursuit of glory, and he has ambition in the extreme to match Michelangelo. In the judgment of many, he has already done this, and they say that if he lives much longer he will overtake him. The Duke, too, is of this opinion."<sup>1</sup> From Fortuna's day to ours, no cliché would dominate accounts of Giambologna more tenaciously than this: that his art, like that of every other major late sixteenth-century sculptor, essentially amounted to the emulation of his great predecessor. As the letter demonstrates, the artist himself promoted this perception. Yet to take Michelangelo as a primary point of comparison is to miss everything distinctive about Giambologna's sculpture. Giambologna, by contrast to Michelangelo, had no background in painting. He rarely drew, and he seems to have set his hand to marble sculptures with some reluctance. He was, on the other hand, a skilled caster, producing as many works in metal as in stone. He eschewed the non-finito, favoring a refined polish. He contentedly turned out as many small figures as large ones, and he gained fame for his representation of the female form. He commanded a large studio, and he appears to have been sociable, collaborating frequently and extensively with others. If one were to look, in sum, for an early modern antithesis to everything Michelangelo represented, this would be it.



I.1. Giambologna, *Samson and a Philistine*. Marble. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



I.2. Anonymous artist, after lost Michelangelo model, *Samson Slaying Two Philistines*. Bronze. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Michelangelo had acquired the status almost of an “ancient,” and the study of his works formed part of the curriculum for anyone learning the trade. Still, for an artist like Giambologna to tell others that he wished to “equal” Michelangelo—long dead at the time the Fleming spoke with the ambassador—was to distract them from the contemporary scene the sculptor was in fact trying to negotiate. To illustrate his case, Giambologna might well have pointed to his marble *Samson and a Philistine* (fig. 1.1), then on display in a Medici garden. Everyone in Florence would have identified that subject with a Michelangelo invention (fig. 1.2), a copy of which Giambologna even holds in a contemporary portrait (see fig. 1.14). The *Samson*, though, was a work Michelangelo had never actually executed in a permanent material; in truth, there was no autograph Michelangelo *Samson* against which anyone could have measured Giambologna’s marble.<sup>2</sup> What his viewers might immediately have compared with the sculpture were the two-figure marble groups that contemporaries like Vincenzo Danti were producing (fig. 1.3), even as they whispered that Giambologna relied entirely on assistants to do his carving. Noticing where the *Samson* stood, they might have remembered that Giambologna had lost the competition to make the city’s only public fountain—a massive installation with a colossal Neptune at its center—shortly before. And they might have remarked that Bartolomeo Ammanati, the winner of that commission, had anticipated Giambologna by two years in using a battle between nude men in a fountain context (fig. 1.4). Comparing Giambologna to Michelangelo deracinated Giambologna and apotheosized him. It disguised the interests of the potentates who enabled him to work, the rivalries, serious or petty, in which he found himself, the “period eye” with which audiences measured his achievements.

Nor is this only true for Giambologna. In the early 1570s, Danti carved a portrait usually referred to with the title “Cosimo I as Augustus” for the “testata,” or connecting wing, of the recently built Uffizi (fig. 1.5). Pose aside, its closest models are two Michelangelo statues, the Medici *capitani* from the New Sacristy in San Lorenzo: the three portraits all sport leather breastplates and pteruges, as well as boots with a draping tongue at the shin; from the Lorenzo portrait Danti further took the squared neckline with its ornamental border and mask (fig. 1.6), from the Giuliano a Leonine helmet (fig. 1.7). The original positioning of Danti’s figure between the recumbent marbles personifying Rigor and Equity (see fig. 5.4), imitations of Michelangelo’s *Times of Day*, would have made the allusions all the more unmistakable. Yet if this is Danti’s primary point of reference, his statue undoes Michelangelo’s chapel as much as it repeats it. Michelangelo’s sepulchral space expressed grief over the end of a Medici line, the end of a golden age.



I.3. Danti, *Honor and Deceit*. Marble. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.



I.4. Ammanati, *Hercules and Antaeus* (in situ, atop the fountain designed by Niccolò Tribolo). Bronze. Villa Medici at Castello.



I.5. Danti, “Cosimo I as Augustus.”  
Marble. Museo Nazionale del Bargello,  
Florence

Danti’s triumphantly risen figure could only have come to occupy the place it does at the height of Medici power; it marks a return from the dead.

And once seen this way, the statue looks less like a variation on Michelangelo’s original figures than on a relief (fig. I.8) that Giambologna had produced in the early 1560s, probably just after the death of Cosimo’s sons Garzia and Giovanni in 1562.<sup>3</sup> The left-hand side of the sculpture is crowded with figures of demise: an old man tries to warm himself by a fire, a river god exhausts his waters, Saturn eats his children, the Parks weave the thread of fate. The primary narrative, however, is that of Mercury leading an armored figure away from this realm, out of a space of ruins and into a modern loggia. Most scholars have identified the figure as Cosimo’s



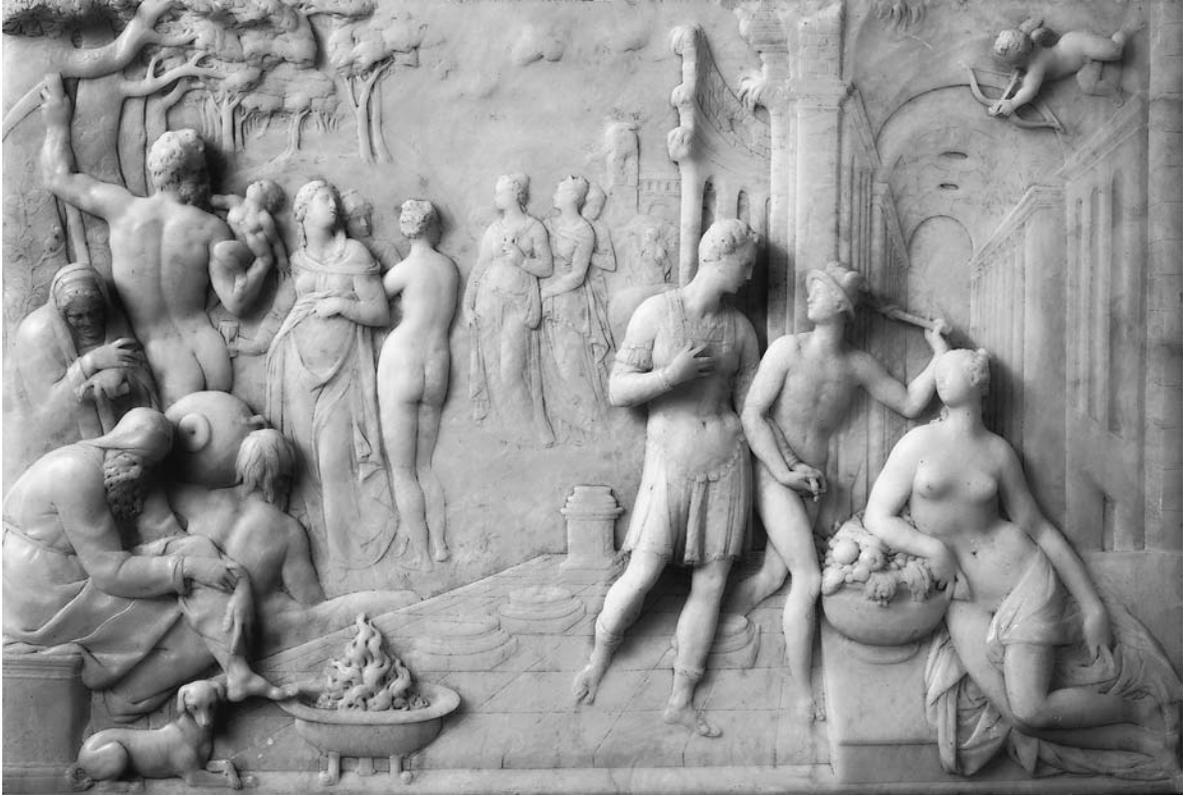
I.6. Michelangelo, Tomb of Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, Duke of Urbino. Marble. New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence.



I.7. Michelangelo, Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Nemours. Marble. New Sacristy, San Lorenzo, Florence.

surviving son Francesco, but the most certain thing we can say is that it is a Medici portrait: in hairstyle, physique, and costume, it resembles Michelangelo's Lorenzo and Giuliano (whom Michelangelo famously denied to be likenesses) more than any living person. The relief not only resurrects a Michelangelo character but also guides him to a new home, joining a recumbent nude who already replays the role that the *Times* did. Cupid, flying above, suggests that this is Venus, origin of the Augustan line to which the Medici compared themselves.<sup>4</sup> The container of fruit on which she leans, however, identifies her equally with springtime, and thus with a new cycle of family life.

Both Giambologna and Danti took up Michelangelo's principle of abstraction, a move that lends all four protagonists a certain interchangeability. The later portraits are not so much depictions of Francesco or Cosimo as they are embodiments



I.8. Giambologna, *Allegory*. Alabaster. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

of the Medici line in general. To be sure, Giambologna and Danti take up Michelangelo inventions; they do so, however, only to remove these from the narrative Michelangelo himself had created, writing new parts that were appropriate to the ducal regime. Regarding the late sixteenth-century sculptors as mere formalists, generating successive variations on Michelangelo's inventions, yields little; we understand Giambologna and Danti better, and we see the politics connecting both, when we place them in dialogue with one another—or when we use one to make sense of the other.

We need a more embedded history of sculpture in the period, all the more so since the standard comparative account of the period between Michelangelo and Bernini remains John Pope-Hennessy's *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture*, first published almost half a century ago.<sup>5</sup> That book's very title should already have raised questions about the author's commitment to making sense

of a sculpture that did not support the label “Renaissance” or “Baroque,” and indeed, Pope-Hennessy’s distaste for what happened between roughly 1550 and 1620 surfaces on nearly every page that treats those years. Baccio Bandinelli, Pope-Hennessy writes, “was an artist from whose composition the element of craftsmanship had been left out.”<sup>6</sup> Tribolo and Pierino da Vinci were “less aspiring sculptors whose minds operated on a smaller scale.” Leone Leoni “was almost totally devoid of . . . disinterested artistic aspirations.”<sup>7</sup> Vincenzo de’ Rossi was “a coarse, ungainly sculptor,” who “attempted vainly to reconcile a zest for violent action with a perverted brand of formal ingenuity.”<sup>8</sup> The best thing a sculptor could achieve, to follow Pope-Hennessy’s account, was admission to the “school of Michelangelo.” Danti escapes disparagement only because he “applied himself to the problems of the statue with the same seriousness as Pierino, and from a standpoint that was not entirely dissimilar, since his main article of faith was belief in Michelangelo.”<sup>9</sup> Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli gets sympathetic words because “he was influenced, to the depth of his creative being, by Michelangelo.”<sup>10</sup>

At times, Pope-Hennessy seemed to value progressive thinking: he despairs, for example, of Florence’s Accademia del Disegno, which he regarded as “a restrictive body” whose “unifying bond was a determination to evade the challenge of living art.”<sup>11</sup> On the whole, though, he did not see the modern. How, the reader must ask, is one to appreciate the late Renaissance sculptor’s engagement with “living art” when the text says of Ammanati only that “his taste and style were formed in Venice in the studio of Sansovino,” that “the style of Vincenzo de’ Rossi was a projection of Bandinelli’s,” or that Giovanni Caccini’s reliefs depend “from the marble reliefs carved by Giovanni Bandini about 1575 for the Gaddi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, and thus, at one remove, from [Bandini’s teacher] Bandinelli”?<sup>12</sup> When the text goes on to attack what it calls the “journalistic tendency” in some sculpture, it implies that making something of-the-day meant making something that could never be classic.<sup>13</sup>

Giambologna was the single artist active in the decades after the death of Michelangelo for whom Pope-Hennessy expressed real admiration, but the notion that the Fleming worked as a giant among dwarves required a narrative according to which he, too, only looked backward: to the designs of Michelangelo, which Giambologna “first combined and then adapted”; to an earlier training in Flanders; and ultimately, to the same kind of Hellenistic sources that would later open the mind of the young Gianlorenzo Bernini.<sup>14</sup> Pope-Hennessy’s best sculptors were those without a culture. And while subsequent scholarship has delivered a considerably clearer sense of the extent of the oeuvres of the artists he treated, and especially of the circumstances by which their works entered various collections, no

one has challenged this basic narrative or the intellectual and aesthetic premises that guided Pope-Hennessy's presentation of the period as a whole. Since it first appeared in 1963, *Italian High Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture* has gone through multiple editions, but few of the artists on whom Pope-Hennessy wrote have received sustained attention, and the books and exhibitions dedicated to Giambologna—an exception, now as then—have treated the artist largely in isolation. Even the most up-to-date scholarship repeats the mantra that the successors to Michelangelo pursued an “ideal,” paying no attention to what was happening around them.

### Ambition

Ammanati, Danti, and Giambologna all arrived in Florence toward the middle of the 1550s, and their convergence changed the aims of sculpture and the criteria by which it was judged, inaugurating a half century of sculptural production that counts among the most dynamic in the history of the West. Despite the energies that Florence's Museo Nazionale have committed to highlighting the achievements of all three, the work still remains poorly appreciated or understood outside of the city. In part, this is because art histories of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries still center on Bologna and Rome, the places associated with painters like Caravaggio and the Carracci, giving little attention to the city that for a time held its own as the most important sculptural center on the continent. In part it is because the sculpture of the period falls outside the conventional chronological divisions that continue to structure teaching and writing on the broader field. Where this art enters the story, it is in accounts of Mannerism, which focus on style but on the whole do not ask why a sculptor might choose to make objects in one way rather than another; iconic monuments are reduced to exemplifying the “figura serpentinata,” a phrase used once by a blind man from Milan who certainly knew almost nothing about what was happening to the south in his day.

This book attempts a more grounded evaluation, starting not with the question “was this sculpture better than that?” but “what were the rules of the game?” Answering that will require a closer look at the conflicts and, to use Pope-Hennessy's word, “aspirations” of a given moment. For this, it will be more helpful to regard the material at issue not as “academic” but as “courtly.”<sup>15</sup> Fortuna's report on Giambologna's impoverishment, for example, probably requires qualification: even if the artist himself complained in these years about watching “servants and students” laughing as they left his shop to earn riches and honor using models he had invented, the sculptor was, by 1580, the premier Medici artist, and by the

middle of the following decade his savings permitted him to build an impressive burial chapel.<sup>16</sup> The lines quoted above in the letter record less a fact than an idea: that poverty signaled seriousness, that the sculptor put his art above a desire for money. As Giambologna himself reminded his employer: “I refused enormous offers both from the king of Spain and from the Emperor in Germany.” One way of historicizing ambition—Fortuna’s word—in this period is to look at the way art as such defined itself in opposition to other interests: wealth, propaganda, religion.

To maintain that the Florentine sculptor’s ambition was a function of his status as a courtier invites a focus on the artist’s patronage. Ammanati and Danti attempted to displace Bandinelli as the chief sculptors to Duke Cosimo I; Giambologna made nearly all of his surviving works while in the successive employ of Cosimo’s two sons, Francesco (1541–1587), who became Grand Duke in 1574, and Francesco’s younger brother, Ferdinando (1549–1609). All three artists, while working for the Medici dukes, enjoyed the steady income of a guaranteed state salary, for which they traded away their right to travel at will and to take commissions from whomever they pleased: on one occasion, the duke prohibited Giambologna from working for a Medici cousin, the Queen of France; on another, the sculptor offered to make works for a prospective foreign patron “in secret,” so as to avoid having to seek an exceptional dispensation.<sup>17</sup> With their posts came the expectation that the artists would conceive and deliver works that would impress on viewers their employers’ magnificence, dynastic prestige, and commitment to the often systematic beautification of the territories they oversaw. The early modern state put its artists on a large stage, spurring them to make sense of and keep pace with what other court artists were doing for their own sovereigns. It was in Ferdinando’s own interests, as much as the artist’s, that the duke could finally insist in 1604 that “Cavaliere Giovanni Bologna . . . is today the best sculptor in the world.”<sup>18</sup>

The sculptors worked primarily for a single individual, but the things they made addressed a broader public. Over the course of their careers, they would build palaces and churches; reconfigure open, accessible spaces both in Florence and in its territories; and send more portable works to other courts across Europe. The indifference they could show to any kind of market must have seemed a liberation as much as a limitation. This is not to say, however, that the Medici dukes deserve the adulation some recent fans of their collections have offered them. These were men who crushed the residual early republics of Europe, who unhesitatingly jailed enemies or dispossessed them of home and property, and who invaded and colonized foreign territories, strategically using sculpture along the way. Exhibitions celebrating the dukes’ “treasures” and their “magnificence” have sometimes helped to render invisible these rulers’ brutality, and any study of patronage runs the risk of looking at a society only from top down, of adopting the voice of the

court panegyrist flattering a tyrant. This book will consequently attempt throughout to situate the objects it treats within rather than above political, religious, and even military conflicts; it will argue that we should try to look at such objects from the point of view not just of the people who commissioned or owned them but also of those whom the dukes worked against. That said, the book's primary goal is to move the study of sculpture away from source hunting and toward a more historicized art criticism; for this it will be necessary to consider carefully the kinds of patronage that made particular goals possible.

## Competition

Baldinucci reports that when Ammanati returned to his native Florence in the mid-1550s, "he found fortune and a spacious field in which to demonstrate his virtues."<sup>19</sup> The language echoes that which Vasari used when reporting on how Giambologna, "a youth of pride and *virtù*," challenged Ammanati in the competition for the *Neptune* fountain: Giambologna "did not think he would get to make the marble giant," Vasari wrote, "but he wanted at least to demonstrate his *virtù* and make everyone appreciate who he was." The notion that sculpture demonstrated the artist's *virtù* runs through the biographical literature of the period, but just what did that virtue look like? Fortuna tells us of Giambologna's "ambition to rival Michelangelo (*d'arrivare Michelangelo*)," but he says little further about what such a matching might amount to. Eventually, ambition would become a defining condition of sculptural modernism, but few scholars have asked what artists in these years were really *after*.<sup>20</sup>

Attending carefully to the personal significance of subject matter, and not just to style, can help. In an infamous public letter that Ammanati wrote to his fellow academicians in 1582, he maintained: "we all know that most of the men who employ us do not give us any invention whatsoever, but leave everything to our judgment, saying 'here I would like a garden, here a fountain, here a pool, and so forth.'"<sup>21</sup> Evidence of various kinds suggests that Ammanati and his contemporaries did indeed have a lot of leeway in what they made—even in religious commissions—so long as they delivered pieces of the right size and material that fit the expected environment. This comes as something of a surprise, given that the period at issue is the one that historians of religion conventionally identify with the Counter-Reformation, when church authorities are supposed to have reined artists in, exercising a newly strict control over the things artists made. That Florence in particular maintained the importance it did reflects the protections that the dukes (mostly) afforded to those who worked for them.

Academic affiliations, too—*pace* Pope-Hennessy—may have helped define art in a way that encouraged sculptors to pursue their own purposes, allowing them to claim possession of the ideas that guided the pieces they made. The fundamental theoretical concept in central Italy after the founding of Florence’s academy in 1563 was that of *disegno*, and though this is frequently treated in relation to drawing or design, two possible English translations of the word, it equally involved what in English would be called an artist’s “designs,” his purposes. This is the sense in which Giambologna used the word when he wrote to Grand Duchess Bianca Capello that he would like to see “every good design of hers and his rendered in color,” or when Grand Duke Ferdinando wrote that he did not “want to impede [Pietro] Francavilla in his designs or his fortune.”<sup>22</sup> We do not need to put too much weight on these turns of phrase to see how the metaphors let one kind of “design” shade into another, or to understand why one contemporary emblem of *disegno*, artistic and otherwise, was that of the archer trying to strike a target.<sup>23</sup> Fortuna, too, regarded ambition as something that directed the artist: it compelled Giambologna, literally, to “arrive” at a goal.

Sculptors formulated their aims through exchanges with one another, continually assessing what they were doing. Consider a remark by the forty-year-old Pietro Bernini, shortly after leaving Florence to work in Naples:

You see in the variety of styles the valor of the artificers and the emulation and stimulus they will represent to whoever comes after them; it makes everyone desire to emerge victorious and to try to defeat others. Talking here with others about such things ignites my desire for this kind of undertaking, and I perceive the difficulty of attaining for myself that great fame which one must hope to achieve only by means of worthy works.<sup>24</sup>

Ambitious sculptors, the letter suggests, wanted much the same thing, and they regarded their relationship to their own field as an agonistic one. That Renaissance and Baroque artists frequently found themselves in dramatic competition, of course, is now a commonplace.<sup>25</sup> Still, most writing on the period tends to put the guiding lights above all that. The history of Renaissance art continues to follow the conventions of the monograph, starring heroic individuals whose best works defy comparison.

The documentary record alone should make us question this. Early writers make it clear that sculptors and their partisans mocked one another’s shortcomings, publicly: Danti’s early difficulties with large bronzes, Giambologna’s with stone. No one was above politicking to his rival’s disadvantage. In November 1577, for example, Giambologna’s friend, Niccolò Gaddi, wrote to the Cavaliere Serguidi that the artist would be making more progress on the two figures he was

carving for the duke's garden at Pratolino if the men most able to assist him were not working instead with Danti.<sup>26</sup> At another point, Giambologna tried to persuade the duke to reduce Danti to a kind of assistant, overseeing the quarrying of marbles for Giambologna's own works so that the Fleming could stay in Florence and devote himself to bronzes.<sup>27</sup> Episodes like these reveal the inevitable frictions that resulted from the subordination of the Florentine art world to a hierarchical order with a single overlord. Collaborations could be forced, and the audacious artist, modeling himself on Raphael or Vasari, could try to turn the situation to his advantage, regarding the whole city as a potential workshop.<sup>28</sup> Other incidents, however, are considerably more mean-spirited. In July 1578, Ammanati wrote about some damage to the quarries at Severezza, reporting that he "had been told" Giambologna was among those responsible.<sup>29</sup> He recommended that the "delinquents" be identified and that an example be made of them. Ammanati's ostensibly self-flagellating 1582 letter to the Academy, lamenting the production of nude sculptures for public display, was delivered within days of Giambologna's completion of his monumental, lascivious *Sabine*. And most vicious of all was the sculptor Michelangelo Naccherino's denunciation of Giambologna, his former teacher, to the Inquisition in 1589, the year the older artist unveiled his most impressive piece of religious architecture. These are not the acts of people who focused uncompromisingly on the legacy of Michelangelo, but rather the gestures of envious strivers who did not want to stand in the shadows of contemporaries. We can only assume that artists so intent on undermining one another would also have paid close attention to the work their rivals produced. Where ambition translates into specific kinds of artistic decisions, we should expect those decisions to have been made in relation to what else was happening in the city.

## Toward Architecture

This book aims to identify and characterize the primary issues that arose for sculptors between the final years of Michelangelo's activity and the advent of Bernini, pursuing this through a comparative account of the Florentine careers of Giambologna, Ammanati, and Danti. While touching on other important figures of the moment as well, it maintains that the work of these three in particular is best understood in dialogue. The three are distinguished not only by their status as the most technically gifted sculptors of their day, but also by their close association after 1560 with theory and criticism—even if, in all three cases, the surviving evidence of this association requires inference and interpretation. Danti published only the first book of what he had projected as a much lengthier treatise.

Ammanati worked on a treatise that never saw publication at all and that survives only in fragmentary form. Giambologna, an immigrant whose native language was not Italian, wrote little, though other commentators understood his works, too, to engage the literature of art.<sup>30</sup>

Not every aspect of the three artists' paths aligns in a way that allows equal treatment. Giambologna and Danti were near contemporaries, both born in the late 1520s; Ammanati, a generation older than both, had the initial support of Vasari, and on his arrival he immediately established himself as the dominant member of the triad. The sculptors' difference in age may be one reason why so few scholars have thought about the figures (and writings) of one in relation to the other two. Danti left Florence in 1573, and his importance for the other two immediately waned thereafter; Ammanati died in 1592, leaving Giambologna without real rivals for the last years of his life. Giambologna was also a more productive sculptor than either Danti or Ammanati, and his activities are rather better documented.

Nevertheless, the careers of the three sculptors followed paths that betrayed their shared concerns, with Danti and Giambologna frequently responding in almost serial fashion to Ammanati. The old Florentine sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, watching his young successors vie for positions, foreshadowed this when, in the 1560s, he wrote his short, polemic discourse "On Architecture." The essay begins with the assertion that architecture "is the second daughter of sculpture," constructing a genealogical relationship that made architecture sculpture's dependent. His implication, that sculptors should be especially capable of designing buildings, sounds self-congratulatory, but it is really more defensive than that. In composing the text, Cellini set out to show he knew something about a field in which, looking at Ammanati, he regretted having never really worked.

The sculptor's ability and especially his desire to become an architect, in fact, turns out to be the central topic of a parable Cellini goes on to recount about a semifictional artist from Ferrara. In the days of Duke Ercole d'Este, he writes, there lived a certain vassal who supported himself as a maker of "Moorish buttons." Feeling "called" by the art of architecture, the haberdasher persuaded the duke to let him test his abilities, renaming himself "Terzo," and presenting himself as the follower of Michelangelo and Antonio da Sangallo. The artist's nickname already hints at the trajectory of Cellini's story, the exposure of the button maker's vanity both for thinking that he could make a kind of work that was beyond him and for attributing to himself such an honorable place in the history of art. Cellini undermines Terzo's self-fashioning by rejecting the button maker's lineage. The first architect, he maintains, was "an excellent sculptor of ours" named Brunelleschi; Brunelleschi's second, lesser follower was the "woodworker" (*maestro di legname*)

Antonio da Sangallo, and the true “Terzo” (lit., “Third”) was Michelangelo, who had undertaken architecture with nothing other than “the force of his marvelous sculpture.” Being a sculptor prepared one for things that being a button maker did not.

Cellini’s discourse concerns 1560s Florence, not an earlier Ferrara, or even the days of Michelangelo, identifying the most ennobled and debased forms of the contemporary sculptor’s work. The former goldsmith chose his counterexample to the properly formed architect with care. It may be, as Cellini insists at the outset, that “architecture is an art of the greatest necessity to man, like his clothing and his armor, and by means of its beautiful ornaments it becomes a marvelous thing.” Terzo was mistaken, though, if he thought that architecture was nothing more than a decorated outfit. Such ornamental labors, Cellini implies, are what those who would become architects had to define themselves *against*.

In the days of Brunelleschi and Ghiberti, the maker of churches and the maker of church doors might have considered themselves to belong to one and the same field, and throughout the Renaissance, some architects conceived structures in terms of bodies.<sup>31</sup> Against this equivalence, though, ran ideas like those in Alberti’s *De re aedificatoria*, which treated sculpture simply as a form of figural ornament. This treatise had been published in the vernacular for the first time in Florence in 1550, and by the time Cellini was writing in the 1560s, the sculptor might well be concerned with priorities. Cellini’s insistence that architecture is the child of sculpture, in other words, contested what was becoming a standard view, that the dependency was exactly the reverse. Reframing the question as one of professional formation, finally, Cellini tacitly acknowledged the new hierarchy in which sculptors in his day found themselves.

The apparently dependent nature of sculpture would have been reinforced when sculptors looked around at the other figurative arts. Whereas painters had been experimenting for nearly a century with the gallery picture, the print, and the drawing, all of which could be conceived with some autonomy, circulated as gifts or sold on the open market, sculpture, through the end of the sixteenth century, remained largely inextricable from its sites. There were, to be sure, statues like Donatello’s *Judith* or Michelangelo’s *David*, which those in power had decided to move from one place to another, but the vast majority of sculpture was intended for a specific room, wall, or square. Michelangelo’s choice to work on the *Prisoners* even after he knew they were unlikely to go into the tomb for which they had originally been conceived, like Cellini’s later carving of a *Narcissus* on the mere speculation that it might work well in a garden, departed radically from standard practice. One plot of this book is the path sculptors followed from the sited work to the liberated object and back. That story takes place, however, across the

increasingly common biographical narrative of the sculptor finding his way into architecture.

This could happen by different routes. The sculptor might, most simply, try to become an architect in the conventional sense. This is what Jacopo Sansovino had done when he moved to Venice after the Sack of Rome in 1527, serving as *proto* to the Procurators of S. Marco and supervising various building projects that the church took on.<sup>32</sup> Among these was the Marciana Library, across from the doge's palace, and among Sansovino's assistants on that project was Ammanati. Ammanati spent much of his own subsequent career traveling between centers, but it was the move to Florence in the late 1550s that let him eventually specialize in independent architectural commissions, including renovations of the Pitti Palace and of palaces belonging to the Grifoni, Giugni, and Ramirez di Montalvo families.<sup>33</sup> The opportunities that Florence offered him were the mirror image of those it presented to Vincenzo Danti, and when that sculptor left the city in 1572, it was to be chief architect of his native Perugia. According to one tradition, Giambologna worked under Ammanati on Palazzo Grifoni, designing consoles. This would be relevant background for the eventual competition between the artists, and for the Fleming's quite serious later architectural pursuits, though the earliest documentation of the collaboration is Giovanni Cinelli's 1677 reedition of a late Renaissance guidebook.<sup>34</sup> More likely is that Giambologna was responsible for the renovation of Bernardo Vecchiotti's palace after 1578, the years in which he was working on the *Altar of Liberty* in Lucca. After 1580, his interests were primarily architectural, as he took on designs for at least three chapels, for the facade of Florence cathedral (1586–87), for the altar of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova (signed and dated 1591, now in Santo Stefano), for the altar of Pisa cathedral, and for his own house (received as a gift from Duke Ferdinando in 1596).<sup>35</sup>

Sculpture might, as Cellini thought, prepare the way into architecture, but becoming an architect did not necessarily mean leaving sculpture behind, especially when architectural projects involved extensive ornament. The opportunities that opened to the likes of Ammanati and Danti, moreover, suggest how a sculptor could pursue architecture using his own traditional materials and techniques. The *Altar of Liberty* would seem to have played an analogous role for Giambologna as Ammanati's and Danti's tombs played for them; in 1579, the year of its completion, Duke Francesco referred to Giambologna as "my sculptor and architect."<sup>36</sup>

Cellini, finally, raises one last possibility as well: that sculptors might try to reduce their objects and the architect's to a single common denominator. If Sangallo the woodworker qualified for Cellini as Italy's second architect, this can only have been on account of the models he produced; further along in the text, the author suggests that Michelangelo was able to impose his vision at St. Peter's because

Sangallo had died before finishing the *modello* he was making. It was with models that architects proposed projects to patrons, and it is telling that Cellini himself used models so extensively, even producing one in wood—the material architects favored—for the base of his *Perseus*.<sup>37</sup> The model could serve as a manifestation of the sculptor's *disegno*, his role as the ideator of the artwork and the overseer of the shop that produced it. At the same time, the reliance on models to a certain extent differentiated the practice of sculptors from that of drawing-based fields—including Cellini's own, goldsmithery. Relative to painters, few sculptors drew extensively, and those who did used drawings primarily for study, seldom as part of the design process. Making models in wood or other materials transformed invention from the translation of an idea to a hands-on experimentation. It also construed architecture itself as an activity in which visualization in three dimensions was essential. Significantly, the earliest evidence of sculptors wanting to become architects coincides with the practice of using models; the sculptor's function as a modeler will be a central topic of this book.

Books about sculpture tend to draw overly restrictive boundaries around just what that medium included. Cellini, like all those who wrote versions of a *paragone* argument, implied that sculpture existed as a category apart; in many cases it is easier to talk about a sculptor than a sculpture, however. And to see the sculptors of the late Renaissance as aspiring architects is to give new shapes to their careers. In the case of Giambologna, it corrects against a peculiar aspect of the historiography, the fact that the majority of the literature on the artist takes the form of exhibition catalogs. Though often excellent, these have made minor works, including small bronzes produced by assistants for export, the subject of extensive analysis, while giving scant attention to the magnificent ensembles in the various Italian cities where he worked.<sup>38</sup> It is remarkable that there has to date been little published analytical literature on the Salviati Chapel in San Marco, one of the most beautiful spaces in Florence. There is even less on the artist's burial chapel in the Santissima Annunziata, a space so damaged by the flood of 1966 that it has remained difficult to assess. Catalogs give the impression that Giambologna was a fundamentally secular artist, and the first half of his career, when most of his secular compositions originate, has been much better studied than the second. The situation with Ammanati is comparable: a number of excellent essays treat individual monuments, but the only synthetic account of his sculpture covers the early career exclusively, and the best general monograph omits the sculpture entirely.<sup>39</sup>

Scholars have sometimes divided both Giambologna's and Ammanati's careers into an early, more worldly period and a later religious one.<sup>40</sup> This is not entirely without basis, and Ammanati's increasingly close ties to the Jesuits in his late years

had consequences for the whole Florentine scene. Such divisions, nevertheless, prove untidy at best. One of the last sculptures Ammanati ever made was his *Ops* (see fig. 2.12); the pose and the discrete drapery make the figure more modest than his own earlier *Ceres* (see fig. 3.10) but the subject is essentially the same. Crucifixes, conversely, count among the earliest portable objects Giambologna produced, and he made his *Christ at the Column* around the same time as his first small secular bronzes of the 1570s. No documented version of the *Hercules and Lichas* predates 1589, the year Giambologna unveiled his second chapel, and the project that most obsessed him in the 1590s was *Hercules and the Centaur*. Nor is there any way to argue that sculptures in different categories—sacred versus secular, early versus late—engaged independent sets of concerns. The dukes (and often their wives) encouraged the artists' activities in both realms, and they distributed both kinds of objects to other courts. When the Grimaldi commissioned their chapel in Genoa, they used a *Sabine* Giambologna had sent to Ottavio Farnese in Parma as a point of reference to explain the kind of beauty they were after.<sup>41</sup> The small objects that now make it repeatedly into exhibitions are inseparable from the larger ones. This, too, comes out in the Grimaldi contract, as it does in the frequency with which modestly scaled models served as prototypes for life-size or even colossal figures, which were subsequently re-reduced into bronze copies.<sup>42</sup> In the case of Ammanati, and increasingly of Giambologna as well, the idea of architecture subtends nearly everything the artist made, even those works for which the ultimate conditions of display were originally unknowable or indifferent to him.

### The Abstract

In attempting to place the sculptors of late sixteenth-century Florence in their own time, one might hope to reconstruct a year-by-year history of their activities. The available written evidence, unfortunately, makes this impossible, though my account does hold to a rough chronology, with each chapter centering on an issue that best comes into focus at a particular moment around particular objects. Chapters 1 and 2 consider the reconception of the sculptural profession in Florence during the three artists' first decade or so there, as the production of models became a center of attention. Chapters 3 and 4 revisit the twin criteria that scholars have most often used to assess Renaissance statuary—its degree of “naturalism” and its success in depicting (or implying) action. These chapters point to the paradox inherent in applying either description to works that consisted largely of motionless representations of the human body, then attempt to resurrect both in slightly different form. The last chapters offer three different perspectives on

what it might mean for a sculptor to aspire to “architecture”: making figures that are architectural in conception, using sculptures as the central elements in architectural compositions, and defining assignments in terms of site.

This way of proceeding allows the book to represent the diverse objects of late Renaissance sculpture while also bringing out their shared orientation. To push sculpture in the direction of architecture was to move it, like the figures that became columns in Vitruvius’s antiquity, toward something that was barely still figural at all. Danti’s treatise casts a particularly sharp light on this, though once we notice how architecture led Italian sculptors into something like abstraction, we will also recognize the degree to which such interests were already there from the beginning. Moderns scholars may write of the *olimpica astrazione* in a statue like Danti’s own *Cosimo I as Augustus*, but Ammanati himself refers to the *Hercules* he made for Marco Mantova Benevides simply as “the colossus,” to the *Neptune* as “the giant,” and to the surrounding monsters as *ignudi*.<sup>43</sup> Giambologna similarly could designate works he sent to other places by names as vague as *la femina*, “the woman.” To make models was often to move from a specific iconography to a more generic common denominator. To cast those models as statuettes was to create works that did not take their start from a larger program or place. The architecture of sculpture was not always a building.