

CARDINAL BENEDETTO PAMPHILJ: PATRON OF THE VILLA DEL GRAN PRIORATO, ROME (1678-1730)

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Abstract

Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilj: Patron of the Villa del Gran Priorato, Rome (1678-1730)

The relationship between the Order of Malta and Benedetto Pamphilj – who served as Grand Prior of Rome from 1678 to 1730 – was mutually beneficial. The exceptionally educated young nobleman blossomed into a consummate cardinal patron, who took seriously his stewardship of the Order and the villa del Gran Priorato. My study of the archival record has resulted in a more accurate chronology and characterization of his patronage of the villa del Gran Priorato than previously known. In particular, it shows that major and much-needed repairs were executed from 1689 to 1705; the new «stanzone di ritiro» in the garden was designed and executed by Francesco Fontana in 1704; and the fresco of the Ecce angus Dei, in the vault of this pavilion, was painted by Luigi Garzi in this same year. Ultimately, the position of Grand Prior was the means through which Benedetto Pamphilj fulfilled the expectations of a cardinal-prince, at once wealthy secular aristocrat and pious apostolic successor.

Keywords

Gran Priorato, Pamphilj, Carlo Fontana, Francesco Fontana, Luigi Garzi, Patronage, Cardinal, Architecture, Narrative Painting, Late Baroque

Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilj (1653-1730), a cultural polyglot, circulated at the heart of Rome in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. [Fig. 1] In 1653, he was born into the top echelon of the city's social hierarchy, during the pontificate of his great-uncle Innocent X (1644-1655). Benedetto's father was Camillo Pamphilj, at first cardinal nephew and then secular prince, when he married Princess Olimpia Aldobrandini Borghese in 1647. Benedetto's mother could boast even more celebrated credentials: She was the great niece of Clement VIII, the heir of the Aldobrandini fortune, and the widow of Paolo Borghese (a relative of Paul V). The couple was the toast of the town. They hosted concerts, theatrical performances, banquets, and entertainments in their palace on the Corso, which was decorated with their art collections and precious objects. This is the world in which the young Benedetto grew up and in which his parents, especially his mother, nurtured him to become a learned and sophisticated nobleman and ecclesiastic¹. About a decade ago, I organized a collaborative, interdisciplinary research project focused on Benedetto Pamphilj whose objective was to examine our subject through the critical perspective of patronage studies, as they had evolved since Lina Montalto's 1955 biography. The result was the conference and edited volume, *The Pamphilj and the Arts: Patronage and Consumption in Baroque Rome*². The diverse expertise of our team placed Pamphilj under an interdisciplinary microscope, probing his intersection with education, religion, court culture, music, literature, art collecting, and the visual arts. Our collective results contribute to illuminating the late baroque in Rome, the period between the baroque and the age of the Grand Tour, when Rome enjoyed primacy as the cultural referent of Europe. Traditionally, scholars had perceived this intervening period as a decline of the arts, but Cardinal Pamphilj's consumption of the arts demonstrate that the production of the arts in their

broadest possible definition was active and vibrant during the late baroque³. His patronage «[spoke] about their owner in a public, exterior, and socially recognizable manner»⁴. Cardinal Pamphilj contributed to shaping the culture of the city that attracted Grand Tourists, including princely collections, academies, libraries, and *conversazioni*⁵. He promoted and sustained the very things that made Rome the requisite experience of the Grand Tour. As Samuel Johnson wrote: «A man who has not been to Italy is always conscious of an inferiority from his not having seen what is expected a man should see»⁶. Despite our comprehensive efforts, we left out two important aspects of Pamphilj's biography and patronage: his leading role in the program for the statues of the nave of S. Giovanni in Laterano, and his position as Grand Prior of the Order of St. John of Malta. The conference, *L'Ordine di Malta e la lingua d'Italia*, has given me the opportunity to show that Innocent XI's appointment of Benedetto Pamphilj as Grand Prior of the Order of Malta, in April 1678, had a decisive and long-lasting impact on both the patron and the institution⁷. [Fig. 2] In the person of Benedetto Pamphilj, the Order of Malta got an exceptionally educated young man who became a consummate patron. In return, Benedetto Pamphilj stepped into the defining position of his lifetime, which taught him responsibility, fostered his patronage habits, and provided him with a stage on which to enact his socio-religious status.

The Expectations for the Grand Prior in Rome

Understanding the expectations for the Grand Prior of the seat of the Order of Malta in Rome is essential to our analysis of this mutual relationship. When Benedetto Pamphilj became Grand Prior, the Order's original function of providing hospi-

tality to pilgrims on the way to and in the Holy Land had shifted to a military order that defended Roman Catholic lands and people against the advance of the Ottoman Turks and other infidels. This evolution of function followed the transfer of the Order from Jerusalem to Rhodes and finally, in the mid-sixteenth century, to Malta⁸. Linked to this long history, the European priories grew out of donations left to the Order. In the early centuries, the priories sent alms to support the hospitals of Jerusalem and Acre, but over time their work became increasingly local. By the early modern period, the primary duties of the Grand Prior were to administer the lands and properties, inside and outside Rome, and to host the annual assembly and diplomatic events⁹.

In the early modern period, the papacy asserted control over the Order's dignitaries in the tongue of Italy, and the position of Grand Prior of Rome became the prerogative of papal scions. In *The Knights of Malta*, H.J.A. Sire characterized the typical Grand Prior as appointed at a young age and later promoted to cardinal. Grand Priors were enlightened men and patrons of the arts, but rarely genuine knights. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Cardinal Alessandrino (Michele Bonelli, 1541-98), the nephew of Pius V, returned the Priorato to the Aventino (where it had been from 1312-1467) and restored its church and residence. The succession of Grand Priors between Cardinal Alessandrino and Benedetto Pamphilj included Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini (1571-1621), Cardinal Antonio Bar-

berini (1607-1671), and Cardinal Sigismondo Chigi (1649-1678). Sire singled out Benedetto Pamphilj as one of the most distinguished Grand Priors¹⁰. Like his predecessors, he was entrusted with the villa del Gran Priorato on the Aventino, which comprised the church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the residential building of the palace, the block of service buildings, and the gardens, as well as the other urban and rural properties belonging to the Roman Priorato¹¹. [Fig. 3]

Benedetto Pamphilj as Educated Nobleman and Defender of the Church

Benedetto Pamphilj held the post of Grand Prior for fifty-two years, from his appointment in 1678 to his death in 1730. This appointment was the first of many positions and offices over the course of his lifetime¹². Although he was young—twenty-five years old—he was not nearly as young as his immediate predecessor, Sigismondo Chigi, who was only nine at the time of his appointment¹³. First and foremost, in the person of Benedetto Pamphilj, the Order of Malta got a well-educated nobleman. In fact, Paul F. Grendler has shown that Pamphilj was exceptionally educated¹⁴.

Pamphilj received an excellent education at the Jesuit Collegio Romano, and his advancement to the highest level of the school implies an intelligent and interested student. At the age of



Fig. 1. Jacques Blondeau, *Portrait of Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilj*, c. 1681, engraving, published by G.G. de' Rossi (© The Trustees of the British Museum, 1848,0304.182, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license).



Fig. 2. *Portrait of Cardinal and Grand Prior Benedetto Pamphilj* (© Art Collections of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Rome).

nine or ten, Benedetto probably began his studies in the lower school for grammar, humanities, and rhetoric, along with religious instruction and devotion. He then advanced to the upper school where he followed a sequential program of logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. In 1673, at age 20, Pamphilj joined the ranks of the few best students by presenting a formal disputation of «all of Philosophy» (*la disputa di tutta Filosofia*), which taught him the valuable skill of Aristotelian argumentation. Notably, Pamphilj then proceeded to the highest level of the Collegio Romano, which offered «intense professional theological training» in dogmatic and moral theology for ecclesiastical students¹⁵. In 1676, at age 23, Benedetto Pamphilj completed a rigorous disputation concerning theology and received his doctorate of philosophy and theology.

Pamphilj fit the bill of the Grand Prior as defined by Sire— young, papal scion, and groomed for the Sacred College— but his exceptional education demonstrates that he had a more serious qualification. He had the ability to defend the dogma of Roman Catholic theology, which offered a counterpart to the knights' military protection of the Church. Pamphilj's education at the Collegio Romano prepared him well for his professional life in the Church, which started with his appointment as Grand Prior.

Benedetto Pamphilj as Patron of the Arts

In the person of Benedetto Pamphilj, the Order of Malta also received a budding patron. In 1673—the year of Pamphilj's disputation of Philosophy—the young nobleman began to collect paintings to outfit his apartment in the family palace. As I argued in *The Pamphilj and the Arts*, this first period of fervent collecting continued only until 1684. This concentrated, rather than continuous, activity was motivated by acquiring the trappings of nobility as Benedetto came of age and established his identity as a Roman nobleman. From the inception, our patron chose to establish his taste through the genre of still life. By the second half of the seventeenth century, this genre was well established in Rome. Cardinal Flavio Chigi was the first nobleman to collect still life systematically and the patron of Mario de' Fiori. But Pamphilj took still-life collecting even a step further, using it to distinguish himself from contemporaries. In most noble collections, only one to two percent of the paintings were still life, but remarkably about a third of Pamphilj's paintings fall into this category. Furthermore, his collection included the full range of subjects—flowers, fruit, game, fish, kitchen scenes, and live nature—and he privileged the display of still life in his living spaces¹⁶.

The events of Pamphilj's early life were unfolding at an expected pace. In 1681, thanks to the system of «paying back the hat», Innocent XI raised Benedetto to the Sacred College of Cardinals¹⁷. Over the next fifty years, Cardinal Pamphilj abundantly fulfilled the cultural expectations of a prince of the Church, becoming one of the most active patrons in the city. In their respective essays in *The Pamphilj and the Arts*, Daria Borghese, Ellen T. Harris, Alessandra Mercantini, Vernon Hyde Minor, Alexandra Nigito, and Stefanie Walker show how ban-

quets, refreshments, concerts, operas, support for musicians and composers, book collecting, the literary arts, and luxury items were constant cultural pursuits in his life¹⁸. Viewed as a whole, Pamphilj's activities and expenditures reveal a patron actively engaged in the consumption of material goods and ephemeral activities that contributed to creating the image of a magnificent nobleman and to fulfilling his role as a prince of the Church¹⁹.

Benedetto Pamphilj as Patron of the Villa del Gran Priorato

In early modern Rome, cardinals from noble families comprised two persons, wealthy secular prince and pious apostolic successor²⁰. Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilj's appointment as Grand Prior of Rome was one of the means through which he fulfilled both of these roles. His five decades in this position stand out as his longest commitment to a single ecclesiastical institution. To promote the mission of the Roman Catholic Church, Pamphilj supervised the operations of the Roman Priorato, managed its capital, and cared for its properties. At the same time, the villa del Gran Priorato hosted his social life as a Roman nobleman. In the position of Grand Prior, Benedetto Pamphilj combined the identities of the cardinal-prince.

According to Lina Montalto, who studied his account books in the Archivio Doria Pamphilj, but cited them only generally, Pamphilj's tenure as Grand Prior was a period of great patronage activity and the villa was a site of sociability. She wrote that his appointment initiated a campaign of renovations on the church, palace, and auxiliary buildings, and in 1681 Carlo Fontana assumed the position of architect. Montalto described a lavish residence with the expected material trappings and an equally lush garden with flowers, fruit trees, and new plants. She taught us that Pamphilj treated the Aventino, one of his favorite residences, as a setting for concerts, academies, banquets, and leisure. His lengthy list of guests included papal



Fig. 3. View of the Villa Magistrale, from the secret garden to the church and palace.

relatives, foreign princes, ambassadors, cardinals, noble persons, musicians, literati, and friends, and he hosted the annual assembly of the knights of Malta²¹.

My study of Cardinal Pamphilj's *registro di mandati* and *giustificazioni* for the Gran Priorato allows us to understand Montalto's broad conclusions more precisely and to produce a more accurate chronology and characterization of Pamphilj's renovation of the villa del Gran Priorato²². To start with chronology, I have not found evidence that Pamphilj immediately initiated building works at the Priorato in 1678 or that Carlo Fontana was actively at work there as early as 1681. Instead, the first evidence of significant building activity dates to nearly a decade later. The *registro di mandati* (1678-1729) offers a good overview of the expenditures²³. In the initial years of Pamphilj's tenure, there are repeated payments for plants, flowers, and the gardener, but only one payment, in 1682, to capomastro muratore Giovanni Battista Olmo²⁴.

During Pamphilj's first decade as Grand Prior, a single payment for paintings reveals something of his earliest patronage

activities at the Gran Priorato. On 2 December 1682, Filippo Pietro Rosa, or Rosa da Tivoli, was paid forty of seventy scudi for «diversi lavori»²⁵. This payment occurred during the period from 1680-84 when Benedetto Pamphilj purchased several paintings from this German painter, who had recently arrived in Rome, to display in his apartment in the Palazzo Pamphilj al Corso. Rosa da Tivoli specialized in pastoral landscapes with ruins and animals, such as this one that remains in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj. [Fig. 4] Benedetto's inventory of 1725 records about three dozen paintings by Rosa da Tivoli and his brother Franz²⁶. Rosa da Tivoli's payment for «diversi lavori» at the Priorato implies decorative paintings rather than framed pictures. Either way, the commission indicates that Pamphilj extended his taste for live nature scenes to the Priorato.

Regular payments for masonry work begin a decade after Pamphilj became Grand Prior. On 22 June 1688, Giovanni Battista Olmo was paid for «diversi lavori fatti alla Cicchignola e nel Palazzo del Gran Priorato di Roma...», which had been executed from April to December 1687²⁷. Olmo had a steady track



Fig. 4. Phillip Peter Roos, *Landscape with Goats and View of the Temple of Vesta, Tivoli*, oil on canvas. Proprietà Trust Doria Pamphilj (Roma, Galleria Doria Pamphilj © 2022 Amministrazione Doria Pamphilj s.r.l. Tutti i diritti riservati).

record of working for Benedetto's father, Camillo, at the Villa Pamphilj, Palazzo Pamphilj al Corso, Sant' Agnese in Agone, and Sant' Agostino²⁸. When Benedetto needed to hire a mason for the Priorato, he turned to a familiar artisan. However, in June 1689 for unknown reasons—but age is a possibility—Olmo was replaced by Mastro Domenico Ingani²⁹. From 1693 to 1700, payments to Ingani are fairly steady. In December 1700, Domenico Ingani's name is replaced with his brother Giovanni Battista. Based on the *registro di mandati*, the periods of greatest building activity at the Priorato are from 1689 to 1700 and 1704 to 1705³⁰. During these years, the Ingani received about 2,860 scudi in total, and many other artisans also received payments: *stagnari* Germano Iacobelli and Francesco Antonio Iacoboli, *falegnami* Giovanni Canavese and Tomaso Madoni, and *chiavari* Carlo Borgiassi and Domenico d'Orario. From 1704-1705, *indornatore-pittore* Giovanni Filippo Macchi was paid for «diversi lavori» and «tutte le pitture, colori, et altri lavori», and *imbiancatori* Domenico Molinari and Domenico Pettolini were paid for «lavori di bianco e colori»³¹. Macchi was a trusted decorative painter of Pamphilj who also worked steadily in the Palazzo Pamphilj al Corso and the villa in Albano³². The *registro di mandati* allows us to establish the chronology of the building works, the types of artisans, and the individuals. But more importantly, what were these works?

The lack of a seventeenth-century plan of the Priorato makes it difficult to identify the precise locations where the work took place, but the modern ground floor plan published by Isa Belli Barsali is useful in identifying the general locations³³. [Fig. 5] At the north end of the Priorato is the rectangular block of the palace with three large rooms (number 1). It is contiguous to the choir end of the church and oriented parallel to the church (number 2). To the south of the church is the U-shaped service building (number 3). The long, narrow bocce court (number 4) extends from the southern end of the service building. The secret garden (number 5) is nestled in the center of the service building. Opposite the bocce court across the garden is the pavilion that Cardinal Benedetto built (number 6). Based on the *giustificazioni*, which provide greater specificity than the *mandati*, the building works until 1700 mostly consisted of repairs to existing structures rather than new constructions. Olmo carried out minor repairs on the *muriccoli* (low walls) of the garden and the walls of the church, palace, and bocce court, only amounting to 17.13 scudi³⁴. In April 1689, Ingani took over the repair work on the roofs, the hen house (presumably in the service building), and a fallen wall that supported the piazza before the palace (presumably the area to the left of the palace)³⁵.

Pamphilj seems to have taken advantage of his absence from Rome from 1690-93, while he was papal legate in Bologna, to carry out major repairs. The steep hill from the Ripa, seen in Van Lint's painting, made the work difficult. [Fig. 6] In 1691, Ingani was paid «per riparare dove minacciava rovina nella galleria in cima del Palazzino»³⁶. The gallery occupies the entire top floor of the palace, above the three rooms in the Belli Barsali plan. [Fig. 5, no. 1; fig. 7] Described as *scomodità*, the repairs began on the façade of the gallery facing the Ripa, where scaffolding was set up with difficulty. [Fig. 8] Work continued

on the adjacent façade, facing the garden. Shoring up the walls included replacing the iron brackets that supported six trusses and installing twelve 24-palmi-long (5.36 m) *pontelli* (wood beams) at the heads of the trusses. Ingani replastered the frames of the large windows as well as holes and cracks in the wall surfaces. Scaffolding was set up so that the painters could re-

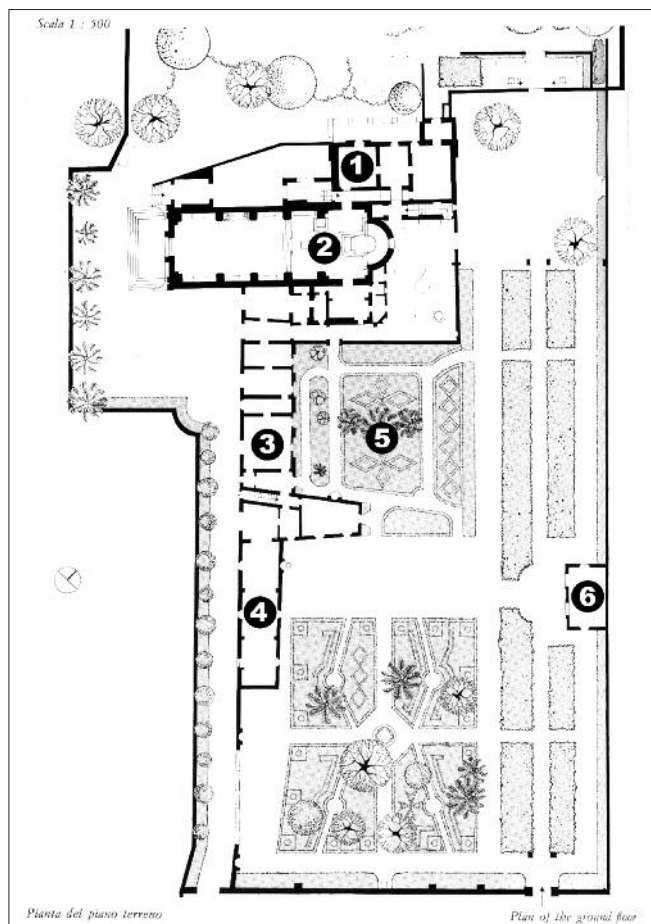


Fig. 5. Ground floor plan of the Villa Magistrale: 1. Palace, 2. Church of Santa Maria in Aventino, 3. Service building, 4. Bocce court, 5. Secret garden, 6. Stanzone di ritiro (or Coffee-House) (from I. Belli Barsali, with author's annotation).



Fig. 6. Hendrik Frans van Lint, View of the Monte Aventino in Rome, 1741, oil on canvas (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, public domain).

paint the walls. He remade parts of the roof and replaced the parapet of the loggia above the roof, which must have served as a lookout point from the height of the Aventino. This is the first work at the Priorato signed by Carlo Fontana.

Beginning in 1691, Carlo Fontana's signature became common, documenting his role as the supervising architect. Work focused on the gardens and auxiliary buildings. For example, in December 1691, Ingani rebuilt the fallen bocce court³⁷. From 1692 to 1694, he made various repairs in the area of the service building and secret garden, including the walls, the stables that were leaking, the kitchen that had suffered water damage, and the stairs next to the bocce court³⁸. [Fig. 5, nos. 3 and 5; fig. 9] In 1696, after Pamphilj's return to Rome, the stability of the palace continued to be a problem. Work was carried out «per

rimediare alla Ruina che minacciava la facc[ia]ta del Palazzo di detto Priorato dalla parte, in facc[ia]ta a Ripa, et altri lavori misurati da me sottoscritto e stimati, con il riguardo della qualità, e fatt.re, e scommodo di detti lavori»³⁹.

In 1704, a change occurred in Cardinal Pamphilj's patronage of the Priorato. Instead of repairs and embellishments, Cardinal Pamphilj built new structures in the garden «per accrescere molto comodi, e migliorare in diverse parti il palazzo e giardino... denominato il Priorato di Roma»⁴⁰. The two principal structures were made for the relaxation of the cardinal and his household respectively. The cardinal's pavilion was called «la nuova stanza fatta per ritiro in testa al viale d. della Boccie», or the «stanzione di ritiro»⁴¹. [Figs. 10 and 11] This rectangular structure has two arches on the façade and one on each end,



Fig. 7. Sala del Capitolo Generale (formerly called the gallery), Villa Magistrale (© Sovereign Military of Malta, Rome – Nicusor Floaroica).



Fig. 8. Façade (northeast), Villa Magistrale (© Sovereign Military of Malta, Rome – Nicusor Floaroica).



Fig. 9. Secret garden of the Villa Magistrale, with the service building and bocce court in the right middle ground.



Fig. 10. View of façade of Coffee-House (or stanzione di ritiro).

and the Doric order is the only architectural ornament, resulting in a restrained and elegant appearance. The pavilion is built against the retaining wall of property toward the ex-monastery of SS. Bonifacio e Alessio and aligned with the axes of the garden. [Fig. 5, no. 6] The façade is perpendicular to the «viale detto della Bocchie», which leads to the bocce court, and parallel to the «viale di mezzo», through which one sees the view of St. Peter's⁴². This description identifies the bocce court as the long rectangular building on the opposite side of the garden. [Fig. 5, no. 4] The other principal structure is «la nuova stanza per comodo della famiglia che resta contigua al rimessone vecchio à piedi il giardino segreto», or the «casino per la famiglia in fianco la Chiesa sopra il rimessone»⁴³. Its location is less clear, but it might be the large rectangular room in the north wing of service building, adjacent to the choir of the church.

Carlo Pietrangeli called Pamphilj's *stanzone di ritiro* a «so-called Coffee-House», that is, an earlier and smaller form of the coffeehouse built for Pope Benedict XIV in the Quirinal gardens in 1741⁴⁴. Roman coffeehouses were leisure spaces set in verdant locations and used for learned conversation⁴⁵. Given what we know about Cardinal Pamphilj's social life, it is likely that his *stanzone di ritiro* fulfilled this same function. Without the building documents, Pietrangeli did not date nor attribute it, but the newly found *misura e stima* provides the date of 1704 and the signature of F. Fontana, allowing us to attribute it to Francesco Fontana (1668-1708)⁴⁶. Francesco was Carlo Fontana's son and close collaborator. Francesco signed several *misure e stime* for the Priorato, and further support for his role as the supervisor and designer of this project is found in the account of the decorative painter, Giovanni Filippo Macci: «Conto per havere dipinto al Priorato con Paesi, et architettura come l'ordine e disegno del Sig Cav. Francescho Fontana due vani grandi con forme le luce delli portoni, e fattoci li archi finti con li suoi angoli e vedute finte»⁴⁷. It is notable that Pamphilj could command the attention of the Fontana for this relatively small project because in the early years of the eighteenth century, the architects were heavily involved in the direction of the Accademia di San Luca and pursuing a variety of opportunities presented by Pope Clement XI Albani (1700-1721)⁴⁸. But Cardinal Pamphilj could rely on his established relationship with Carlo Fontana and his family's even longer relationship with the network of *maestri* from the Mendrisiotto, the small southern region of Ticino, who had emigrated to Rome, lived in Pantani, and were central to the building trade in Rome⁴⁹.

The *misura e stima* of the stucco work (dated 16 June through 31 December 1704) by Giovanni Battista and Domenico Ingani provides further information about the scope and the specifics of the project: «havere ornato il nuovo stanzone di ritiro nel giardino, li due portoni, e fatto la nuova scala lumaca per le stanze sopra la rimessa, con stanzini annessi et altri lavori nella piazza, loggia sotto, pomario, et altri siti in detto giardino»⁵⁰. In the *stanzone di ritiro*, the Ingani prepared the *colla* for the fresco painting in the central field of the vault, which had to be done twice to satisfy the painter. [Fig. 12] The payment of 120 scudi to «Luigi Garzi Pittore» (1638-1721), dated 1 December 1704, solves the question of the attribution of the painting and adds a new work to Garzi's recently established oeuvre: «haver dip-

into un San Gio[vanni] Battista con altre figure e paese alli Priorato nel Quadro della volta della stanza nuova fatta nel Giardino»⁵¹. As Pietrangeli noted, the fresco represents the *Ecce agnus Dei*, an episode from the Gospel of John in which John the Baptist points to Christ and tells his two disciples that He is the Lamb of God, after which the disciples become Christ's apostles Peter and Andrew⁵². John the Baptist is the patron saint of the Knights of Malta, and the scene in the middle ground of Christ guarding his flock alludes to the mission of the Order to protect Catholics. Garzi's training under Andrea Sacchi, in the classical tradition of narrative painting, is evident in the clarity and monumentality of the scene. The body of John the Baptist leaning against the rock and the Lamb to his side form a stable triangle in the center, and the disciples on the left loosely balance the scene of Christ in the receding landscape on the right. Composed along diagonals, the three gesturing figures in the foreground are calm yet dynamic, retaining echoes of Garzi's study of Domenichino's evangelists in the pendentives of the dome of Sant'Andrea della Valle. Although this is the only evidence of Cardinal Pamphilj's patronage of Garzi, the painter was a logical choice because he was entrenched in the artistic milieu of the minor genres in Rome. Garzi's first master was Vincent Adriaenssen, il Manciola (1595-1675), a painter from Antwerp who specialized in landscapes, hunting, and battle scenes. Then, from 1652-1658, he lived and trained with the landscape painter Salomon Backereel (1602-1660). Throughout his life, he maintained close ties to and collaborated with these and other Flemish painters in Rome—the Bentvueghels—making a reputation for adding putti to garlands of flowers. Serafinelli has identified the influence of his training in the minor genres on his monumental frescoes, noting his naturalistic rendering of flowers and vegetation⁵³. In Cardinal Pamphilj's *Ecce agnus Dei*, we see Garzi's attention to the feathery foliage that frames the figures, which must have appealed to our patron's sensibility for landscape painting.



Fig. 11. Francesco Fontana, *Coffee-House (or Stanzone di Ritiro)*, interior, 1704 (© Sovereign Military of Malta, Rome – Nicusor Floroica).

The unpublished «Inventory of the Gran Priorato of Rome» demonstrates that Cardinal Pamphilj decorated this palace in the same manner as the Palazzo Pamphilj in Via del Corso and his villa in Albano⁵⁴. Made on 1 September 1712, the inventory does not record when the works were hung and whether the installation happened in a single campaign or gradually over time. The piano nobile rooms contained 113 pictures and the large gallery on the top floor (measuring 89 x 51 palmi, or 19.88 x 11.39 m) had sixty-seven pictures and fifty-five geographic maps⁵⁵. As was common, the person who made the inventory—in this case, the cardinal's gardener Clemente Conti—did not provide attributions. For the most part, the pictures on both floors represented the full range of still life and landscape paintings, including flowers, fruit, game, fish, kitchen scenes, and live nature. Many were small in scale, and some were drawings. With the new information about Pamphilj's commission of Garzi for the *Ecce agnus Dei* fresco, one wonders if the unattributed «quadro Grilanda [sic] de fiori ovato alto p.mi 3 con cornice color di Tartaruga et oro» and its companion might have been his works. The three religious subjects—a Nativity in a black frame with gold leaf, its pendant of the Glory to God, and a Saint Anthony of Padua—were interspersed with the numerous secular subjects. One painting, «un Quadro di Tafettano giallo alto p.mi 2 largo 1½ con cornice Negra, che rapresenta [sic] il modo di maneggiare cannochiali», reminds us that the elevation of the Aventine Hill made the loggia above the gallery the perfect place to view the sky

through a telescope. Cardinal Pamphilj's display of pictures in the palace matched his commission of Rosa da Tivoli for decorative paintings that probably represented landscapes with animals and ruins. Moreover, it reinforces what we know about Cardinal Pamphilj's taste in art and collecting: He privileged secular cabinet pictures over religious and narrative scenes, and he installed his pictures in a continuous decorative scheme rather than a hierarchical arrangement highlighting individual pictures⁵⁶.

Montalto implied that Carlo Fontana's work on the church of Santa Maria del Priorato began after his appointment as Pamphilj's architect in 1681, but I have not been able to find archival evidence of this work⁵⁷. Instead of building documents, Fabio Barry used two descriptions of the church, respectively before and after Pamphilj's tenure (1650s and about 1760) in order to deduce Fontana's intervention⁵⁸. Barry concluded that Pamphilj commissioned Carlo Fontana to renovate Santa Maria del Priorato in a way that was significant and conditioned Piranesi's later project. The medieval church was a single nave traversed by four diaphragm arches on piers. Although previous Grand Priors had embellished the medieval church, they had not modified the structure. By comparing the before and after descriptions, Barry concluded that Fontana made significant structural changes. Fontana used the pre-existing transverse arches to vault the nave. He added clerestory windows and a small lantern over the crossing. The result was a miniature Gesù-type church. [Fig. 13]



Fig. 12. *Coffee-House (or stanza di ritiro)*, detail of the vault by Luigi Garzi, *Ecce agnus Dei*, 1704 (© Sovereign Military of Malta, Rome – Nicusor Floroica).

These features became the bones of Piranesi's scheme of 1764-1766. In the words of Barry: «Carlo Fontana's structural skeleton was patched, braced, and realigned here and there, but otherwise left untouched in its general lines. Piranesi encrusted the whole interior in a finely modelled stucco envelope that supplied a tectonic and illusionist depth beyond the means of such a mute structure»⁵⁹.

In conclusion, my study of the documents shows that during Pamphilj's long tenure as Grand Prior, he took seriously his obligation to care for and embellish the magnificent property of the villa del Gran Priorato. We can now place these works more securely into the chronology of his patronage activities and date and attribute the *stanzone di ritiro* and its vault fresco. From the start, Pamphilj ordered the maintenance and beautification of the gardens, but as anyone with a garden knows, one can hardly ignore the cycle of growth and decay! In the early years, he also commissioned minor works of embellishment in the palace and church. But the larger works of restoration, decoration, and new commissions occurred from about 1690-1705 when Pamphilj had come into his maturity as a cardinal-prince. In 1678, the Order of Malta chose well when they selected the twenty-five-year-old Benedetto Pamphilj. This promising youth matured into a consummate patron who treated the Aventine seat as an important site of his patronage and socio-cultural activities.

Benedetto Pamphilj as Formed by the Role of Grand Prior

This role was not only Benedetto Pamphilj's earliest church appointment but arguably the defining position of his lifetime. Indeed, his testament of 12 March 1730 attests to his enduring identification with the Gran Priorato because he ordered that «siano celebrate quella maggiore quantità di mese sarà possibile... nella chiesa Patriarcale di S. Giovanni dove io sono arciprete, in quella del mio titolo cardinalizio, et in quella del mio Gran Priorato in Perugia e Todi e di Roma»⁶⁰. In *The Pamphilj and the Arts*, James Weiss examined Cardinal Pamphilj's ecclesiastical career in the context of the major religious and political issues and events of his time. Referring to Pamphilj's appointments of Legate of Bologna (1690-1693), superintendent of the aqueduct of Civitavecchia (1696-1703) and the port of Anzio (1698-1726), protector of the Collegio Clementino, and archpriest of the Lateran (1699-1730), Weiss argued that Pamphilj «discharged highly responsible offices with industry and commitment»⁶¹. But he also presented the contradictory perspective of Orazio d'Elci, whose *Relatione della Corte di Roma*, an in-depth analysis of *papabili* in 1699, described Pamphilj as «An Enemy of Application and Business, and much more to fatigue, he no sooner sets about doing anything, than he immediately tires of it...»⁶². Weighing these and other pieces of evidence, Weiss concluded that Pamphilj was «an honorable, versatile, and competent person in occasional assignments, but ultimately marginal in the major affairs of the Church»⁶³.



Fig. 13. Church of Santa Maria in Aventino (© Sovereign Military of Malta, Rome – Nicusor Floroaiica).

Without disputing Weiss's broad conclusion, I would argue that my study of Benedetto Pamphilj as Grand Prior of the Order of Malta, for over fifty years, amplifies the sober side of Pamphilj's character, one that accepted responsibility and acted with commitment. His lifetime of activities at the Priorato aligns with his productive administrative work in Bologna, Civitavecchia, and Anzio and his abundant and diverse acts of patronage that established and maintained his credentials of papal scion and prince of the Church. We might even suggest that the position of Grand Prior set the tone for his entire career. It required Pamphilj to act responsibly and helped him to mature into a dutiful, if not unerring, prince of the Church. Beyond Pamphilj's treatment of the villa del Gran Priorato as

a stage for his aristocratic lifestyle, there is evidence that he took seriously the assignment of the Order of Malta to protect Christian lands. Around 1678-1681, he rallied the Italian princes and governments to provide money and counsel to ward off the Turkish threat to Malta⁶⁴. On a more mundane note, my analysis of the payment records shows that for decades Pamphilj dutifully attended to his administrative role by supervising, maintaining, restoring, and sometimes enhancing the property. Here, he learned that patronage was more than display and status; it was also stewardship. Pamphilj's work as Grand Prior proves that ultimately the two persons of the cardinal – aristocratic and ecclesiastic – could be «compatible and mutually reinforcing»⁶⁵.

Note

¹ MONTALTO, 1955; LEONE, 2011A, pp. 11-22.

² LEONE, 2011a.

³ For the redefinition of the late baroque, JOHNS, 2000; MINOR, 2006; FINDLEN, WASSYNG ROWORTH, SAMA, 2009; MINOR, 2010.

⁴ AGO, 2006, p. XVIII.

⁵ For the cultural and intellectual structures fundamental to Enlightenment Rome, MINOR, 2010, pp. 7-12.

⁶ FINDLEN, WASSYNG ROWORTH, SAMA, 2009, p. 2.

⁷ On his appointment, MONTALTO, 1955, p. 346.

⁸ SIRE, 1994, pp. 3-98.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-111.

¹⁰ SIRE, 1994, pp. 168-172.

¹¹ The properties in Rome were located in via Bonella, via Alessandrina, via del Priorato, arco dei Catecument, the street next to Sant'Urbano ai Pantani, and the Borgo. The rural properties included the church of Sant'Antimo, Cecchignola, and the Abbey of Magione. MONTALTO, 1955, 346-347.

¹² WEISS, 2011.

¹³ SIRE, 1994, p. 171.

¹⁴ GRENDLER, 2011.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-94: p. 85.

¹⁶ LEONE, 2011b.

¹⁷ Cited in WEISS, 2011, p. 98.

¹⁸ LEONE, 2011a.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-22.

²⁰ MANSOUR, 2010.

²¹ MONTALTO, 1955, pp. 270-275, 343-357.

²² In the Archivio Doria Pamphilj (ADP), I reviewed the *registro di mandati*, 1678-1729 (sc. 49, b. 55), all of the *giustificazioni* (sc. 49, bb. 20-28), one *libro dell'entrata e uscita* (sc. 49, b. 39, 1678-85), and the *libri mastri* until 1694 (sc. 49, b. 40, 41, 43, 46). I have not yet consulted three *libri dell'entrata e uscita* from 1714 to 1730 (sc. 49, bb. 50-52) and three *libri mastri* from 1695 onward (sc. 49, bb. 42, 47, 48). Based on my reading of the documents, I do not expect them to contain significantly different information about Cardinal Pamphilj's patronage than what I found in the *registro di mandati* and the *giustificazioni*.

²³ ADP, *Registro di mandati*, sc. 49, b. 55, s.p.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 22.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 23.

²⁶ LEONE, 2011b, pp. 119-120.

²⁷ ADP, *Registro di mandati*, sc. 49, b. 55, c. 46.

²⁸ Olmo is cited in numerous documents in the ADP, banc. 86, nn. 7, 43; banc. 94, nn. 1, 8; sc. 94, bb. 4-13; sc. 97, bb. 16, 19. See also GARMS, 1972, pp. 239-240; EIMER, 1970.

²⁹ ADP, *Registro di mandati*, sc. 49, b. 55, c. 50.

³⁰ ADP, *Registro di mandati*, sc. 49, b. 55, cc. 50-157.

³¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 147-153.

³² ADP, *Registro di mandati del card. Benedetto Pamphilj*, sc. 1, b. 47.

³³ BELLI BARSALI, 1970.

³⁴ ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 22, s.p., «Lavori fatti al uso di Muratore da Mastro Battista Olmo capomastro», 10 April 1687-December 1687, s.p.

³⁵ *Ibid.* «Misura e stima dei lavori di muri, et altro fatto a tutte spese e fattura di M.ro Domenico Ingami Capo M.ro muratore ... nel Giardino e Palazzo et altri membri pertinenti del Priorato misurati e stimati da me sottoscritto ordinati dal Sig.re Ascanio», 5 April 1689.

- ³⁶ *Ibid.* «Misura e stima delli lavori di Rappezzi di muro, et altro fatti a sue spese, e fatture di M.ro Dom Ingami Capo Mastro Muratore ... al Priorato Urbano per riparare dove minacciava rovina nella galleria di cima del Palazzino misurati da me sottoscritto e stimati 2.o la qualità delli lavoro loro fatture e scomodà», 2 August 1691.
- ³⁷ The work cost 65.31 scudi. ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 22, s.p., «Misura e stima delli lavori di muro, et altro fatti a tutte sue spese e fatture di M.ro Dom. Ingani Capomro murature...al Priorato Urbano in principiare à refare il Gioco di boccie caduto...».
- ³⁸ These repairs cost 120.24 scudi. ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 22, s.p., «Misure e stime delli lavori di muro, et altro ... M.ro Domenico Ingani Capo mastro muratore...nel priorato urbano con ordine del Sig. Domenico Buccelli misurati e stimati da me sottoscritto, considerate la qualità de lavori, et altro il tutto come segue».
- ³⁹ The cost was 102.34 scudi. ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 22, s.p., «A di 7 Xbre 1696. Misura e stima delli lavori di muro, et altro fatti, a tutta sua robba spese, e fatt.re di M.ro Domen.o Ingani Capo m.ro mu.re...».
- ⁴⁰ ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 25, s.p., «Misura e stima delli lavori di muro...di Giovanni Battista Ingani», 1 March–15 June 1704.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, «Misura e stima delli lavori di muro...di Giovanni Battista Ingani», 1 March–15 June 1704; «Misura e stima delli lavori di muri stucchi et altro...M.ri Giovanni Battista e Domenico Fratelli de Ingami», 16 June–31 December 1704.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, «Misura e stima delli lavori di muro...di Giovanni Battista Ingani», 1 March–15 June 1704; «Misura e stima...di Mr.o Tomasso Madoni Capom.ro Falegname», 12 December 1704.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, «Misura e stima delli lavori di muro...di Giovanni Battista Ingani», 1 March–15 June 1704; «Misura e stima...di Mr.o Tomasso Madoni Capom.ro Falegname», 12 December 1704.
- ⁴⁴ PIETRANGELI, 1991.
- ⁴⁵ On coffeehouse culture, MINOR, 2010, p. 11.
- ⁴⁶ ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 25, s.p., «Misura e stima delli lavori di muro ... di Giovanni Battista Ingani», 1 March–15 June 1704.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ HAGER, 1997.
- ⁴⁹ EISLER, 2009, 380-382. LEONE, VIERTHALER, 2020.
- ⁵⁰ ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 25, s.p., «Misura e stima delli lavori di muri stucchi et altro...M.ri Giovanni Battista e Domenico Fratelli de Ingami», 16 June–31 December 1704.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.* On Garzi, see GRISOLIA, SERAFINELLI, 2018.
- ⁵² Pietrangeli, 1991, p. 436, attributed the painting to the Sicilian painter Giacinto Calandrucci (1645-1706), who worked in various Roman palaces.
- ⁵³ On Garzi's formation and style, SERAFINELLI, 2018. On the influence of Domenichino on Garzi and his training under Sacchi, GATTA, 2018.
- ⁵⁴ ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 26, s.p. LEONE, 2011b; RYBKO, 1990a; RYBKO, 1990b.
- ⁵⁵ The gallery's measurements are taken from the work of roofing the gallery on 11 May 1716; ADP, *Giustificazioni*, sc. 49, b. 27, s.p.
- ⁵⁶ LEONE, 2011b.
- ⁵⁷ MONTALTO, 1955, pp. 348-350.
- ⁵⁸ BARRY, 2010.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 147. See also CONNORS, 1998.
- ⁶⁰ Cardinal Pamphilj's testament is unpublished; Archivio di Stato, Roma (ASR), *Testamenti, 1723-1730*, Trenta Notai Capitolini, Uff. 18, vol. 1076, cc. 441r-442v, 473r-73v.
- ⁶¹ WEISS, 2011, p. 100.
- ⁶² Quoted in WEISS, 2011, p. 102.
- ⁶³ WEISS, 2011, p. 101.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 107 n. 44.
- ⁶⁵ MANSOUR, 2010, p. 238, refers to Fabio Albergati's *Ragionamento* (1572) addressed to Filippo Boncompagni, cardinal-nephew of Gregory XIII.

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