

37. Anon., design for a studiolo, c.1566, pen, brown ink and brown wash, Archivio di Stato, Naples, Carte farnesiane, b. 1853, II, vii, frontispiece (Photo: Archivio di Stato, Naples).

The *objets d'art* in the *studiolo* were kept in elegant inlaid wooden cabinets with many compartments which are also, confusingly, termed *studioli*. In 1578 Fulvio Orsini designed such a cabinet and arranged for it to be made for Alessandro at a cost of 300 *scudi*.²¹¹ The craftsman was Flaminio Boulanger, who had already worked for the Cardinal on the ceiling of the Oratorio del Crocefisso.²¹² In appearance it must have been very similar to the cabinet illustrated at the beginning of the *studiolo* inventory (pl. 37). This may be a piece, now at Écouen, that bears the Farnese arms, but that has harpies instead of the emblematic unicorns at the base.²¹³

Garimberto's letter demonstrates how the *studiolo* functioned as a place for both

solitary study and private enjoyment, remote from the cares of the Church. One is reminded of the image of the ailing Piero de' Medici (the Gouty) retiring to examine his gems for solace.²¹⁴

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Cardinal Alessandro spent enormous sums throughout his career on works of decorative art. It is true that he spent lavishly also on commissions for architecture and painting, both secular and religious, as we shall see in the two following chapters; but in commissions for the minor arts he perhaps reveals more of a taste for treasure than any strong appreciation of artistic skill. None the less, Alessandro's interest in miniatures, engraved crystals, goldwork and medals emerges at the beginning of his career as a patron in his own right and stands out as one of the more positive areas of his taste. He was undoubtedly often governed by his advisers, who were scouring Rome's antique markets for objects to add to the collection. But when it came to commissioning new works of decorative art, the Cardinal played a much more individual and independent role than in many of his later monumental projects.

III

COSE FUOR DE L'ORDINARIO: THE SECULAR PATRONAGE

since . . . it is destined for his most illustrious Lordship's own person, one must put things there which are suitable for the place and out of the ordinary.¹

FROM THE AGE OF FIFTEEN until the end of his life, Cardinal Farnese's chief residence was the Palazzo della Cancelleria (pls 38–9), close to Palazzo Farnese, and his earliest monumental commissions were for its decoration. The Cancelleria had been the official residence of the Vice-Chancellor of the Church since it was confiscated from its builder, Cardinal Raffaello Riario, in 1517. The palace was begun by an unknown architect in 1485 for this wealthy nephew of Sixtus IV and was, together with Palazzo Venezia, one of the first grand palaces to be built for a cardinal in Rome.² When Alessandro first moved in, the magnificence of the exterior would have contrasted dramatically with the interior of the palace, which had received little decoration and must have looked rather bleak.

It was for the Cancelleria that Alessandro made his first known commission for a painting. This was not until 1543. We have seen that he had already established himself as a major patron, spending considerable sums on works of decorative art, and the amount that he was spending was probably a major factor in preventing him from commissioning other works. In addition, he was having to contribute substantial sums towards the construction of Palazzo Farnese until 1546.³ Indeed, it was not until after the death of Paul III that he began to commission secular works on a really grand scale. Up to that time he had little need of new buildings, since he enjoyed the use of so many papal residences. But after Paul's death he was rapidly to make up for this tardiness with the construction of the magnificent villa at Caprarola, and numerous other projects for country residences and gardens. The purpose of this chapter is to reconstruct the secular works of art and architecture that he commissioned from the 1540s until the end of his life.

A further reason for his initially being inhibited from undertaking his own projects may have been that, as we have seen, he was constantly occupied with the supervision of his grandfather's commissions. Although he usually did no more than convey his grandfather's instructions and apparently took no responsibility



38. Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria, façade, 1485–c.1513 (Photo: Author).

39. Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria, courtyard, 1485–c.1513 (Photo: Author).

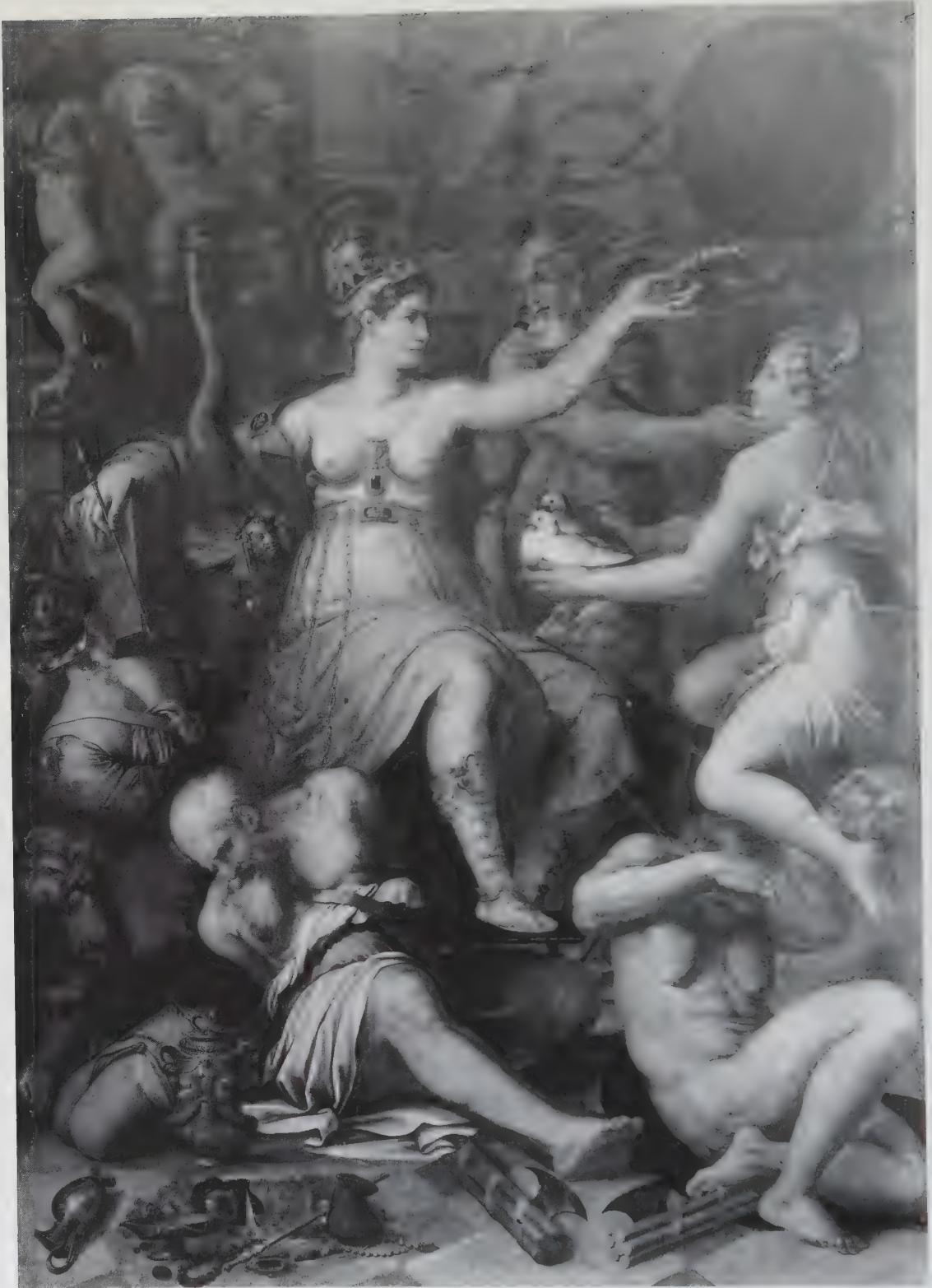


himself for artistic decisions,⁴ correspondence about the progress of a papal project was frequently addressed to the young Cardinal.⁵ Artists working on the Pope's commissions were generally reluctant to trouble Paul himself: the occasions on which they did so were either when an urgent decision was required,⁶ or when they were unable to obtain satisfaction from Paul's intermediaries, Alessandro included.⁷ More specifically, it was Alessandro who handled most of the negotiations to free Michelangelo from his obligations to the Della Rovere family over the tomb of Julius II. He also conducted most of the correspondence concerning an income for the artist from the Porto del Po.⁸ So too, when Pellegrino di Leuti reported to Paul that he had discovered the whereabouts of a lost bust of the Pope, it was left to Alessandro to try to recover it.⁹

Alessandro's earliest monumental commissions reflect a close involvement in family patronage, rather than any obviously individual taste, and they were primarily intended to glorify the family. The first major fresco cycle that he commissioned was, for example, closely tied to his grandfather's artistic programme. The Sala dei Cento Giorni, or Hall of the Hundred Days, painted by Giorgio Vasari in 1546, represents Paul III as the embodiment of certain virtues, appropriate to the functions of the location as well as to the papacy in general.

It was not Vasari's first work for the Cardinal. Three years earlier in 1543, Alessandro had commissioned him to paint another work reflecting one of the functions of the Cancelleria, the dispensation of papal justice. This was the vast canvas of *Justice* (pl. 40), now in Naples, which was intended for the first Salone of the Cancelleria.¹⁰ Vasari had been introduced to Alessandro in 1543 by the Florentine banker Bindo Altoviti and by the historian Paolo Giovio. He had already painted a number of works for Altoviti, including an *Immaculate Conception* (Florence, SS. Apostoli) and a lost *Pietà*, and he had frescoed two *logge*.¹¹ Giovio, a long-standing friend of the painter, was living at this time in the Farnese court. He recommended Vasari to his new patron as 'an efficient, expeditious, handy and resolute painter', and particularly commended Vasari's use of colour.¹² There were evidently high hopes on both sides, since Giovio also reported that he had promised the artist that he would find Alessandro 'no less liberal than Cardinal de' Medici, and a more steadfast supporter of the arts'.¹³ Vasari's hopes seem to have been fulfilled, since he was paid the considerable sum of 200 *scudi* for the painting.¹⁴

Early in January 1543 Vasari presented the Cardinal with a drawing for the *Justice* and two weeks later he sent him a written description, without which it would be difficult to decipher this complex *invenzione*. The drawing may be that now at Chatsworth (pl. 41). The image proposed by the artist was an unusual one, quite different from the conventional personification armed with balance and sword. Instead, a semi-naked figure of Astraea was to be accompanied by an ostrich, symbol of Justice's invincibility, and to have seven vices chained to her waist. She held an Egyptian sceptre, a bizarre invention of Vasari, which was surmounted by a stork and had a hippopotamus at the bottom. She crowns with oak leaves a figure of Truth, who is presented by Time.¹⁵ Whether the *invenzione* was entirely Vasari's own, or whether he received advice from Giovio in constructing this image is not known. Giovio's own words may imply that the *Justice* was indeed the painter's creation: 'I have exhorted Maestro Giorgio of Arezzo to make a clever invention for the *Justice*, according to your most Reverend Lord-



40. Giorgio Vasari, *Allegory of Justice*, 1543, oil on canvas, 353 × 252 cm., Naples, Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte (Photo: Soprintendenza ai beni artistici e storici, Naples).



41. Giorgio Vasari,
Allegory of Justice, 1543, pen
and wash, 29 × 22 cm.,
Chatsworth, Devonshire
Collection (Reproduced by
permission of the
Chatsworth Settlement
Trustees).

ship's request . . . and, in short, by indulging his caprices with these concepts, he has made a little cartoon.¹⁶ Whoever its author, this iconography evidently pleased Vasari greatly, and he continued to use it again and again, not only in the Sala dei Cento Giorni in reduced form, but in many later works.¹⁷ It also pleased the patron. Alessandro wrote back to Vasari, praising both the execution and the ingenuity of the invention: 'your interpretation is most dear to me, seeing you depart from ordinary inventions, as is your custom. And indeed the novelty of the story pleased me as much as the beauty of the figures.'¹⁸

Alessandro went on to promise that when he returned to Rome, they would discuss 'some beautiful undertaking', which suggests that he was already planning the frescoes of the Sala dei Cento Giorni.¹⁹ A sheet in Vasari's notebook, the *Zibaldone*, headed 'Cose della Cancelleria 1545', indicates that the programme was being planned in that year, although Vasari did not receive the formal commission until 29 March 1546. He recorded in his account book that he was to be paid 880 *scudi*.²⁰ As with the *Justice*, Giovio played a key rôle in obtaining this commission for Vasari.²¹ He also supervised the execution, as a number of reports to the Cardinal testify, and he used his expertise as both historian and collector of



42. Giorgio Vasari, the Sala dei Cento Giorni, 1546, fresco, Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria (Photo: Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico).

portraits to devise at least part of the programme. The document outlining the scheme has not survived, but it seems to be closely reflected in a long description of the frescoes by A.F. Doni of 1547.²²

The Cardinal was absent on a legation in Germany while the room was being painted. He was, however, anxious for its completion and insisted on its being executed with exceptional speed. Indeed, the room takes its name from the time taken to decorate it. The anecdote that when Vasari boasted of his rapidity here, Michelangelo replied with a laconic, 'so I see' (*si vede*), may be apocryphal, but Vasari was later to make excuses for himself: 'I thought only to serve that Lord, who . . . desired to have it finished for his own purpose.'²³ Nor were the frescoes entirely satisfactory either to Giovio, who complained about the standard of the portraiture, or to the patron, whose rather lukewarm reaction was reported by Giovio:



43. Giulio Romano and Gianfrancesco Penni, after designs by Raphael, The Sala di Costantino, 1520–21, fresco, Rome, Vatican Palace (Photo: Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico).

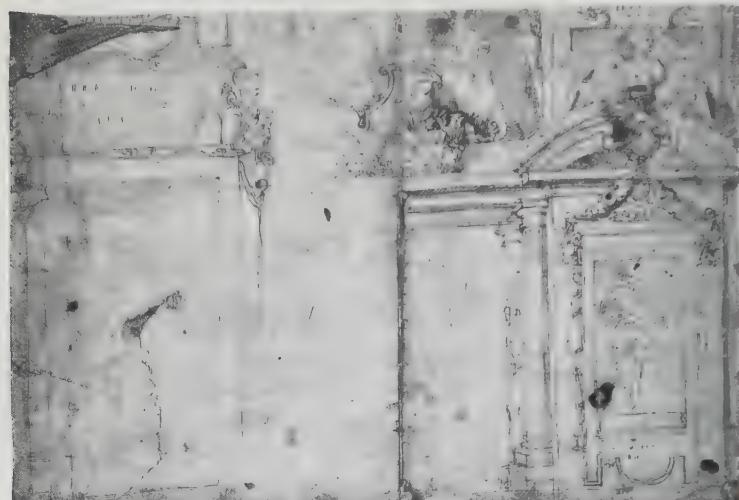
The Cardinal remains content, and I took our Lord patron to the place. Certainly he would have liked the portraits to be better. But above and below, the work has turned out more beautiful than he expected, given the short time allotted to you. Let it be enough that you are praised by seven eighths of the gentle spirits.²⁴

Some criticism of the loss of quality engendered by the speed with which Vasari had worked was also reflected in a letter of another Farnese adviser, Annibal Caro, and the disappointed artist was later to use his work in the Cancelleria to exemplify the dangers of entrusting too much to assistants.²⁵

If the execution did not live up to expectations, Vasari could at least be proud of his *invenzione* for the cycle (pl. 42). Although the scheme of history scenes flanked by personifications derives ultimately from Raphael's layout of the Sala di Costantino (pl. 43), Vasari achieved an elegant variation, fully exploiting the illusionistic and theatrical tendencies that he shared with Salviati at this time. He divided the three walls that were to contain narratives into three bands. In the middle band the *storie* appeared to open between the painted tabernacles like stage-sets. Niches in the tabernacles contain personifications painted in flesh-tones, rather than the expected fictive marble, again as in the Sala di Costantino. The viewer is given the

45. Giorgio Vasari, study for the Sala dei Cento Giorni, 1546, pen and wash, 32.5 × 22.7 cm., Turin, Biblioteca Reale, inv. 15673.

44 (below). Giorgio Vasari, study for the Sala dei Cento Giorni, 1546, pen and brown ink with wash, 27.0 × 40.5 cm., Florence, Uffizi, 65 Orn.



illusion that he might enter the ‘stage-sets’ by the complex staircases, based on Bramante’s Cortile del Belvedere, which Vasari painted below each narrative instead of the usual dado, ‘for variation, and to do something new’.²⁶ This kind of play with levels of reality is very similar to that which Salviati was later to employ in Palazzo Farnese (pl. 52). In the upper band more personifications support coats of arms, while painted busts of classical figures crown the tabernacles. Two studies in Turin and Florence (pls 44–5) show Vasari experimenting with this structure before the actual location of the figures was settled.²⁷ On the window wall further allegorical figures, based closely on Vasari’s figures for Palazzo Spinelli in Venice of 1541,²⁸ are seated above the windows.

The Sala dei Cento Giorni was the main audience hall in which the public business of the Cancelleria was performed. The iconography was devised, in accordance with decorum, to suit both the location and the patron, by glorifying the Farnese pope, Paul III. The subjects for the history scenes were chosen to celebrate the ideal qualities for a pope to possess, and to illustrate how Paul III embodied them: he is thus shown as the perfect lawgiver, peacemaker, patron of the arts and rewarder of service to the Church. The function of the personifications and busts around each scene is to draw attention to the particular qualities of the Pope that are being highlighted in the *storia*, and lest there be any ambiguity, extensive inscriptions spell out the message of each subject.

Thus the *Universal Homage to Paul III* (pl. 46) is an idealised representation of the function of the Cancelleria itself. The Pope is shown, with Cardinal Alessandro standing behind, receiving ambassadors from all the Christian nations of the world. They flock to Rome, symbolised by the figure of the Tiber reclining on the steps, to bring tributes to the Pontiff and to accept the decrees of the Cancelleria. The virtues in the flanking niches are Eloquence with a parrot and a simplified



46. Giorgio Vasari, *Universal Homage to Paul III*, 1546, fresco, Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria, Sala dei Cento Giorni (Photo: Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico).



47. Giorgio Vasari, study of allegorical figures, 1546, pen and ink, 27 × 44 cm., Paris, Louvre, RF 64v (© Photo R.M.N.).

version of Vasari's earlier *Justice*. A sketch for these figures in the Louvre (pl. 47) shows certain differences, particularly in the rendering of the Egyptian sceptre.²⁹ Above the *storia* Paul III's coat of arms is supported by figures of Liberality and Abundance, also important papal virtues in this context. The *all'antica* busts depict Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, and their accompanying inscriptions make it clear that they were included to emphasise the vast geographical area over which the Church had its dominion.

On the long wall of this room two subjects illustrate different aspects of papal patronage. In the first (col. pl. II), Paul III is shown inspecting his most prestigious architectural commission, and one that symbolised the renewal of the Catholic Church, the rebuilding of St Peter's. The Pope is dressed, somewhat unexpectedly, in the attire of a Hebrew high-priest. The significance of this is not altogether



48. Alessandro Cesati,
Paul III and Alexander before the High Priest,
1545–46, bronze medal,
diameter 4.9 cm.,
London, British
Museum (Photo:
Warburg Institute).



II. Giorgio Vasari, *Paul III inspecting the rebuilding of St Peter's*, 1546, fresco, Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria, Sala dei Cento Giorni (Photo: Scala).

clear, but contemporary evidence suggests that this costume was favoured by Paul: he was depicted thus in Clovio's miniature of the *Circumcision* (pl. 17). The same costume was shown in Cesati's medal reverse of *Alexander before the High Priest* (pl. 48): there it was wholly appropriate for the subject, but it is significant that Paul intended a message about papal authority to be conveyed.³⁰ In the fresco Paul is shown being presented with the plans of the basilica by personifications of Architecture, Painting, Sculpture and Geometry, while the actual state of the building in 1546 is represented in the background. To one side reclines a figure representing the Vatican Hill, surrounded by seven putti for the seven hills of Rome. The virtues associated with this subject – Religion, Opulence, Magnificence, Sincerity, Providence and Wisdom – combine to denote the enlightened piety and splendour of Paul's patronage, while magnificence is stressed in the inscription below the scene. The classical busts, too, illustrate figures who were noted for their pious deeds: Marcus Agrippa had built the Pantheon, a commission that is



49. Giorgio Vasari, *Paul III distributing benefices*, 1546, fresco, Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria, Sala dei Cento Giorni (Photo: Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico).

made to prefigure the rebuilding of St Peter's, while Numa Pompilius had actually introduced the ancient Romans to religion.

The other scene on this wall (pl. 49) depicts Paul III distributing benefices and cardinals' hats to a number of poor and thin *virtuosi* who had served the Church. As with the *Universal Homage*, this alludes to the Cancelleria, one of whose functions was to reallocate benefices when they fell vacant. But the setting devised



50. Raphael, *Healing of the lame man*, c.1515–16, gouache on paper, 342 × 536 cm., Her Majesty the Queen, on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (By courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

by Vasari bears no relation to the architecture of the Cancelleria palace. Rather, it is a fantastic room filled with twisted Salomonic columns, inspired by Raphael's cartoon for the *Healing of the lame man* (pl. 50). The writhing allegorical figure swallowing snakes in the foreground, which formally balances the figure personifying the Vatican Hill in the *Rebuilding of St Peter's*, represents Envy. Vasari included several portraits in this scene: Michelangelo, Antonio da Sangallo, Cardinals Pole, Sadoleto and Bembo, as well as Giovio himself. While the personifications in the niches outside the *storia*, Liberality and Religion, once more reinforce papal virtues, those within the scene, Virtue and Labour, seem more applicable to the recipients of the Pope's favours.

Unlike the three *storie* we have considered so far, the final fresco alludes to a specific historical event, the truce that Paul had managed to secure at Nice in 1538 between the Emperor Charles V and Francis I (pl. 51). Although the negotiations did not accomplish a lasting peace, the treaty was considered at the time as the greatest political achievement of Paul's pontificate. The event had already been celebrated in several Roman festivals, using similar motifs, and was to be repeated in later cycles of Farnese history both in Palazzo Farnese and at Caprarola (pls 52 and 83).³¹ Despite the use of portraits of the Emperor and the French king, this scene does not depict the actual Truce of Nice but rather, as Vasari himself states, it evokes a notion of universal peace with Paul III as a representative of the ideal peacemaker.³² The Pope is shown being carried by several allegorical figures, of whom only Victory with her palm and Peace, who sets fire to a pile of weapons, can be identified.³³ The idea of peace is symbolically reinforced with two motifs from the celebrated passage of Virgil's *Aeneid* in which Jupiter predicts Rome's



51. Giorgio Vasari, *Truce of Nice*, 1546, fresco, Rome, Palazzo della Cancelleria, Sala dei Cento Giorni (Photo: Musei Vaticani, Archivio Fotografico).

future peace: the figure of Furor is shown chained and the building to one side represents the Temple of Janus, whose gates were closed in times of peace.³⁴ The Pope's pose with arm outstretched also connotes peacemaking. It deliberately imitates the gesture of the bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Campidoglio,



52. Francesco Salviati, *Truce of Nice*, 1558–63, fresco, Rome, Palazzo Farnese, Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani (Photo: École française de Rome).

and it was to be repeated in the Pope's statue for his tomb, which Annibal Caro described as being 'in the attitude of a peacemaker'.³⁵

In planning these subjects, Giovio and Vasari took care to choose generalised scenes that exemplified papal virtues, rather than simply illustrating historical events. The principle governing the choice of subjects was identical to that which Giovio had employed in devising an earlier programme for the house of Tommaso Cambi in Naples, which showed deeds of Charles V:

And I shall make a selection of the four most honoured acts of Caesar, according to the four singular virtues of His Majesty in all his actions. This will be a scheme that will give something to talk about without offending anyone, and without adulation of Caesar.³⁶

The reasons why a patron might be concerned about conveying too explicit a political message are made plain in a letter of Cardinal Bernardo Cles about the subjects that Dosso Dossi was proposing to paint in the Castello del Buonconsiglio at Trent in 1534:

concerning [Dosso's] desire to paint in that beautiful room the capture of Rome, of the king of France etc., as you will see we are of contrary opinion for two reasons, one, because it would be a work involving great time and money, the other because it would be a most hateful thing in relation to Rome; it could happen that, if the Pope, or his legates... came here and saw their figures represented, their displeasure would be aroused.³⁷

It would have seemed all the more important to avoid offence and excessively partisan adulation in the Sala dei Cento Giorni, given that the palace was

not Farnese property, and would revert to the Church after Alessandro's vice-chancellorship.

Throughout the room, even in the *Universal Peace*, the scenes are represented in a strikingly unhistorical, semi-allegorical manner. Personifications brush shoulders with famous individuals accurately portrayed, and even the illusionistic sculptures participate: Constancy holds Furor's chain in the *Universal Peace*, and Virtue restrains Envy in the *Remuneration*. The architectural settings and the costumes, too, are a similar mixture of the contemporary and the exotic. This type of painting was termed by the theorist Giovanni Andrea Gilio 'mixed painting', being halfway between 'poetic' and 'historical' painting. It was a mode well suited to this kind of generalised encomium, and it was particularly developed by Vasari and Salviati.³⁸ It was especially apposite as a means of stressing Paul's position as an exemplar of the ideal pope, rather than glorifying him in a manner that might quickly seem dated.

Vasari's work for Cardinal Farnese led to another much more important undertaking. As the artist related in a celebrated account, it was at a dinner given by Alessandro one evening in 1546 that the project to write the *Lives of the Artists* was first conceived. Vasari gives a vivid picture of the brilliant intellectual atmosphere of the Cardinal's court:

At that time, when I had finished the day's work, I used often to go and watch the said most illustrious Cardinal Farnese dining. There were always there to entertain him with very fine and venerable discussion, [Francesco Maria] Molza, Annibal Caro, Master Gandolfo [Porrino], Master Claudio Tolomei, Master Romolo Amaseo, Monsignor Giovio, and many other *letterati* and gentlemen, of whom that Lord's court is always full.³⁹

He went on to recount how the discussion had turned to Giovio's *Museo*, the vast collection of portraits of famous men of arms and letters, which the historian had amassed and hung in his villa at Como, with short epigrams on their deeds below.⁴⁰ When Giovio proposed to extend this project to the visual arts and expressed a desire to write a treatise on famous artists from Cimabue to the present day, Alessandro asked Vasari's opinion of the scheme. Vasari was rather critical of the historian's approach which, he said, was full of errors because, 'he was not looking so discerningly', an opinion that is borne out by the surviving fragments of Giovio's artistic biographies.⁴¹ Such a task, in Vasari's view, would require the assistance of a professional artist. At this point, naturally enough, he was urged to undertake it, and he hastily put together the notes he had been compiling since his youth, 'as a certain pastime of mine, and for an affection that I had for the memory of our artists'. Thereupon, Giovio insisted that the painter was altogether better qualified than himself, and the *Lives* was conceived.

There has been much discussion as to the accuracy of Vasari's account of the dinner party, since not all the guests whom he names could have been present in 1546. One, indeed, Francesco Maria Molza, had been dead for two years.⁴² It is impossible to determine whether this results from a degree of literary embroidery, or simply forgetfulness. But, given the importance that Vasari attaches in the *Lives* to the theme of good and bad patrons, it says much about the artistic interests of the Cardinal's court that Vasari should locate the conception of his book there.



53. Titian, *Ranuccio Farnese*, 1542, oil on canvas, 89.7 × 73.6 cm., Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection.

While he was working in the Sala dei Cento Giorni, Vasari was also instructed by his patron to ensure that Titian was well looked-after while he was staying in Rome to work for the Farnese: 'Titian being recommended by that Lord to Vasari, he kept him amiable company in taking him to see the sights of Rome.'⁴³ Alessandro had already supported Titian in the preceding years, while the family were trying to persuade him to come to Rome. His first work for the Farnese had been the superb portrait of the young Ranuccio (pl. 53), painted in Venice in 1542.⁴⁴ This commission was intended for Alessandro's and Ranuccio's mother, Gerolama Orsini, but it is apparent from a contemporary report that the rest of the family was interested in obtaining further work from the painter. G.F. Leoni wrote to Alessandro in September 1542:

You can count on acquiring this man, whenever you think fit. Quite apart from his ability [*virtù*], Titian has appeared to everyone to be a reasonable, charming and obliging person, which is a consideration in such rare men.⁴⁵

The following year Titian went to the papal court at Busseto, where he painted the Naples portrait, *Paul III without cap* (pl. 1).⁴⁶ It is not known whether the actual commission for this work came from Alessandro or from his grandfather. The painting subsequently belonged to Alessandro: Vasari reported that it was in his *guardarobba* in 1568.⁴⁷ The Cardinal may have inherited the painting rather than have been the patron. It seems more likely that this kind of official portrait would be commissioned by the Pope himself, perhaps with Alessandro acting as

54. Raphael, *Leo X with his nephews, Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi*, oil on panel, 1518, 154 × 119 cm., Florence, Uffizi.



intermediary. None the less, Titian apparently considered himself to be working for the entire family. Giovanni della Casa wrote to Alessandro in 1544 that the painter was 'ready to portray the whole of the most Illustrious House of Your Lordship, even the cats'.⁴⁸

Alessandro performed his customary rôle in conducting all the negotiations to persuade the artist to come to Rome, while Titian delayed, in the hope of obtaining a number of favours. One of his prime concerns was to obtain the benefice of the Abbazia di S. Pietro in Colle for his son Pomponio, a project with which he was to persist, though fruitlessly, for many years. He also enlisted the Cardinal's support in a long dispute that he had with the monks of S. Spirito in Isola in Venice. Another matter for negotiation concerned the office of *piombatore*, with responsibility for overseeing the production of the lead seals for papal bulls, a sinecure that would have made Titian a papal servant and had been offered as bait when he was at Busseto. Titian indicated on several occasions that he might be willing to take up the offer but eventually let it be known, somewhat disingenuously, that he did not wish to deprive the present incumbents, Sebastiano del Piombo and Giovanni da Udine, of their position. There was, in fact, never any likelihood that he would have accepted, since he would have had to settle permanently in Rome and leave Venice, from where he could so conveniently keep his patrons at a distance.⁴⁹

In Rome Titian's chief task was to continue his work at Busseto in providing official portraits of the Farnese family, an undertaking that was a deliberate imitation of his commission to paint Charles V and his family.⁵⁰ The most significant work was the triple portrait of *Paul III with Alessandro and Ottavio Farnese*, now in Naples (col. pl. III). Paul was shown seated, with the Cardinal standing behind and with his hand on Paul's throne, in a gesture that looks back to Raphael's *Leo X with his nephews* (pl. 54). Ottavio was shown in the conventional



III. Titian, *Paul III with Alessandro and Ottavio Farnese*, 1546, oil on canvas, 210 × 174 cm., Naples, Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte (Photo: Scala).

act of reverence to the Pope. The painting was begun in December 1545, but was never finished. As Zapperi has shown, the portrait had a very specific political message, which was aimed at the Emperor. It was intended to lend papal authority to the succession claims of Paul's two elder grandsons, that of Alessandro to the papacy, and that of Ottavio to the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza. When it became clear to Paul that it would not be possible to mollify Charles V, and that to further the family fortunes it would be necessary to cultivate a dynastic alliance with France, work on the picture was suspended. The message was an essential part of Paul III's determined policy of advancement for his descendants. Alessandro again acted primarily as an intermediary in this commission, although he did intervene over certain aspects of it that affected his own *amour propre*. The keen jealousies between the two brothers, and especially Alessandro's anger that his rights of primogeniture had been disregarded, forcing him into an ecclesiastical career, caused him to step in to ensure his prominence in the picture, possibly even causing Titian to move his figure closer to the Pope.⁵¹

The first work that Alessandro specifically commissioned from Titian was ostensibly of a different genre, and one more to his taste. The Naples *Danaë* (col. pl. IV) was, however, in one sense a portrait. A letter of Giovanni della Casa reveals that the artist was waiting for a sketch from Giulio Clovio, showing the 'relative of Signora Camilla', a courtesan, as Zapperi has recently shown, by the name of Angela.⁵² Della Casa described the work as a 'nude', and compared it with the work that had inspired Alessandro's commission, the *Venus of Urbino* (pl. 55), in the possession of his brother-in-law, the Duke of Urbino, suggesting that the *Venus* would look chaste by comparison. The *Danaë* was begun before Titian came to Rome, but it seems to have been finished or altered after his arrival: it was this picture in Titian's studio in the Belvedere that, according to Vasari, caused Michelangelo to lament that it was a pity the Venetians did not learn to draw.⁵³ That such an overtly erotic subject should have been commissioned by an influential prelate has caused some commentators to suggest that Ottavio must have been the patron, but Charles Hope has demonstrated that the picture was painted for Alessandro, and that it hung in his *camera propria* until at least 1581.⁵⁴ (A taste for painted erotica evidently ran in the family, as his nephew Cardinal Odoardo's patronage of the Carracci Gallery ceiling vividly demonstrates.) Alessandro may, however, have felt some inhibitions at having a simple nude on his walls. It has recently been suggested from the evidence of *pentimenti* revealed by X-rays that the picture's content was made more 'respectable' after Titian had brought it to Rome, transforming it from a nude into a mythological *poesia*.⁵⁵ In this context the passage of Terence, describing a classical picture of Danaë, which Ginzburg has adduced, may suggest the reason for choosing this particular subject: the work would gain something in respectability, if it could be considered as a recreation of a classical painting, even though this excuse might not satisfy more prudish reformers.⁵⁶

It is possible that while Titian was in the city Alessandro commissioned a pendant to the *Danaë*. The 1649 inventory records a *Venus and Adonis*, now lost. Titian was to paint these two subjects as a pair for Philip II, but it is more likely that the Farnese *Venus and Adonis* was a later variant on the Spanish king's work, and not a pendant to the *Danaë*, since it is not mentioned in the 1581 report of the



IV. Titian, *Danaë*, 1546, oil on canvas, 119 × 165 cm., Naples, Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte (Photo: Scala).

55. Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, 1538, oil on canvas, 119 × 165 cm., Florence, Uffizi.



paintings in Alessandro's room, and indeed is not documented before 1649.⁵⁷ Another work of a similar genre, which Alessandro probably acquired while Titian was in Rome, was the Capodimonte *Portrait of a girl*, evidently a picture of a courtesan.⁵⁸ A letter from Titian informs us that the Cardinal was trying to obtain another of his works which he had seen in his studio when he visited Venice in November 1546. The painter was unable to give him this, but was working on another 'quadro' for him during 1547. This may have been the work which he later turned into the *Pardo Venus*.⁵⁹

Whether it was or not, Alessandro did not apparently receive his painting, and with the death of Paul III in 1549 he ceased to be a major patron of Titian. This may not have been the result of ill-feeling, although it is unlikely that Titian was paid for his work in Rome.⁶⁰ But the artist found more rewarding opportunities working for more powerful patrons, particularly Charles V and other members of the imperial family. Titian certainly continued to correspond with Alessandro, still in fruitless pursuit of Pomponio's benefice,⁶¹ and he continued to send the Cardinal occasional works of art: in 1567, an engraving of the *Trinity*, which he had painted for Charles V, and the Naples *Magdalen* (pl. 192). Unfortunately, Alessandro seems rather ungraciously to have been slow in responding.⁶²

Another Venetian artist from whom Alessandro may have commissioned work in the early years is Sebastiano del Piombo. Michael Hirst has discussed the possibility that the *Madonna del Velo*, which Vasari describes as being in Alessandro's *guardarobba*, was actually painted for the Cardinal.⁶³ He would certainly have known Sebastiano as a result of his office of papal *piombatore*, but contact may also have been strengthened through Sebastiano's friendship with Francesco Maria Molza and Claudio Tolomei.⁶⁴ A number of other works attributed to the painter are later documented in the Farnese collection, but it is impossible to determine whether they were commissioned by Alessandro. A lost *Holy Family* is not mentioned before 1680, nor is a *Shepherd with flute*, which may be a copy.⁶⁵ A portrait of Clement VII, now in Naples, almost certainly came from Fulvio Orsini's collection.⁶⁶ If Alessandro did not commission other works, he did try to assist Sebastiano's son after the artist's death in 1547, writing a number of letters on his behalf concerning two portraits of Clement VII and Giulia Gonzaga, which had been commissioned by Caterina de' Medici.⁶⁷

The death of Paul III in 1549 caused a major caesura in Alessandro's artistic patronage, both religious and secular. The serious difficulties that arose over the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, leading to the War of Parma, resulted in Alessandro's absence from Rome for most of the reign of Julius III (1550–5). One unsurprising consequence of these upheavals is that he ceased to commission works of art until that pope's death.

Caprarola: architecture

Around 1555, before his definitive return to Rome, Alessandro began planning his most ambitious secular project, the building of his magnificent villa at Caprarola, located some thirty miles north of Rome, close to the Via Cassia, and in the heart of Farnese territory (pl. 56 and col. pl. V).⁶⁸ This was to take the place of several Farnese palaces in Lazio, at which Alessandro had previously passed his summers.



56. Jacopo Vignola,
Villa Farnese,
Caprarola, aerial view,
from 1556 (Photo:
I.C.C.D.).

Annibal Caro, in a long letter of 1543 to Claudio Tolomei, evoked vividly the delights, and the discomforts, of this peripatetic life away from the merciless heat of Rome:

Our pleasures are, firstly, to enjoy the sight of our patron as well and as happy as he used to be, and more frequently than we were permitted to in Rome; next to go around like a pope, changing places almost every day, seeing various locations in this state. They are all (I think) delightful, and each is endowed with something noteworthy. At Gradoli we revisited that beautiful palace, imbibed that good air, and had dances, wrestling and races, in short great merriment. At Valentano we walked through those open streets . . . and we met Signora Isabella Farnese, who came to visit the Duke . . . At Ischia we were guests of Cavalier Gandolfo [Porrino]; consider what follows, knowing his ambition. Just think that he made us eat *à la carte*. And leaving aside the other dishes, it is sufficient to

know that for wine he gave us nectar to taste, and for melons, ambrosia. And he refreshed us in such a way with the coldness of these, and with the shadiness of a cellar of his, that for this year we have escaped the dog days . . . We are now at Castro, where I take great delight in considering the rotation of earthly things. This city, which on other occasions when I was here . . . , seemed to me a hovel for gypsies, now rises with such great and such sudden magnificence, that it seems like the birth of Carthage. From here, however, we return to Ischia . . . From Ischia we go to Capodimonte. O, Capodimonte is indeed beautiful! So beautiful! I would give for that little palace, with that small peninsula, bathed by that lake, courted by those little islands, adorned with those gardens, and enclosed by those shadows, all the vales of Tempe, all the Parnassuses in the world. We shall then continue to the other places, which I have not seen. And finally we shall go up to Ronciglione, where we shall enjoy being near you. This is enough of pleasures. The drawbacks are the bad accommodation, sleeping badly, and the absence of the other comforts which one has in Rome.⁶⁹

Many of the fortress-palaces mentioned by Caro had been adapted to make them suitable for modern *villettiatatura*, insofar as was possible, especially through the addition of *logge*, but, as Caro reveals, the buildings were not planned to house a cardinal's extensive retinue in any comfort.⁷⁰ Alessandro now decided that he needed something more modern to match the splendours of the villas of the two most extravagant patrons in Rome in recent times, the Villa Giulia (pl. 64), built for Julius III, and the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, with its magnificent and highly original water gardens, then being planned by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este (pl. 113).⁷¹ He was to create a worthy rival at Caprarola, and from the moment it was habitable, he was to spend at least four months of every year there until his death. Although its primary function was as a retreat, the villa was also important as a place to hunt, for large-scale entertaining, such as the lavish display put on for Gregory XIII in 1578, and as a symbol of family power in Lazio.⁷²

The building of Caprarola marked the formal beginning of Alessandro's architectural association with Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, whom he was thereafter to employ almost exclusively until the architect's death in 1573. Vignola had already been in Farnese service for some years. He probably first became known to the family when he worked with Meleghino in the Belvedere, while he was graduating from the painting of *prospettive* to architecture.⁷³ In fact, his first documented work for the Cardinal was the painted scenery for a 'chomedia' performed during the Carnival of 1541.⁷⁴ His architectural skills evidently soon recommended him to the Farnese. In 1545 Alessandro wrote on behalf of Paul III supporting his appointment as architect of S. Petronio in Bologna.⁷⁵ He was also recommended to Alessandro's father in 1546, but Pier Luigi did not apparently commission anything from him in the brief remainder of his life.⁷⁶ In July 1555, at just the time when Alessandro began to plan Caprarola, Vignola signed himself as 'the architect of the most Reverend Cardinal Sant'Angelo', that is, Cardinal Ranuccio, in a payment for work on Palazzo Farnese, which had just recommenced.⁷⁷ The following year, Alessandro also employed him on the restoration of the mill at Ponzano.⁷⁸

On the site of Farnese's new villa there already existed substantial fragments of a



V. Jacopo Vignola, Villa Farnese, Caprarola, entrance façade, from 1556 (Photo: Scala).

pentagonal fortress, which had been begun by Peruzzi and Sangallo, but then abandoned.⁷⁹ The main reasons for its non-completion were Paul III's elevation to the pontificate and the need to attend to more urgent fortifications elsewhere in the Papal States. Partridge has established that when Vignola came to make his design, there existed five perimeter walls, corresponding to the present plan, as well as the arrow-head bastions, and a number of walls.⁸⁰ The constraints imposed on Vignola by the existing fortress plan make his transformation of the *rocca* into a superb modern villa all the more remarkable. Admittedly, the other Farnese palaces that Alessandro had previously visited in the summer months all tended to combine a defensive function with that of a villa, and this may have suggested to Vignola the feasibility of a successful adaptation.⁸¹ Roman sixteenth-century villas are remarkable for their diversity of appearance. At this time there was no fixed architectural form for the villa, although certain features, notably *logge* and extensive gardens, closely related to the building, are common to all these structures. Vignola's design for Caprarola ingeniously exploits the ambiguities inherent in the decision to adapt the existing fortress, while alluding to earlier Roman villas, self-consciously borrowing a number of motifs. At the same time aspects of the villa's design recall contemporary Roman palace architecture, particularly with its solid

57. Caprarola, view up main street
(Photo: Author).



58 (below). Jacopo Vignola, Villa Farnese, Caprarola, entrance façade, from 1556 (Photo: Author).





59 (above). Jacopo Vignola, Villa Farnese, Caprarola, entrance façade, from 1556 (Photo: Author).



60. Peruzzi, Villa Farnesina, garden façade, c. 1505–11 (Photo: Author).

block of three storeys. Vignola continued this impression within, setting the rooms around a central courtyard, although this is circular rather than the square or rectangle that was usual in Roman palaces. The distribution of the rooms, with the Cardinal's apartments on the *piano nobile* and the servants' quarters above, is also reminiscent of palace design.

As one approaches the villa up the steep main street, designed on axis with the entrance, one sees a tall building, though one has no idea of its width (pl. 57). On entering the piazza immediately before the coach entrance one's impression changes: now the palace can be read as a kind of expanded Villa Farnesina, with a loggia articulated with Ionic pilasters, surmounted by a composite storey, sitting on the huge arrow-headed bastions, and recalling the garden façade of Peruzzi's building (pls 58 and 60).⁸² Then on mounting to the brick platform above the coach entrance, the full, imposing scale of the building becomes clear (pl. 59).

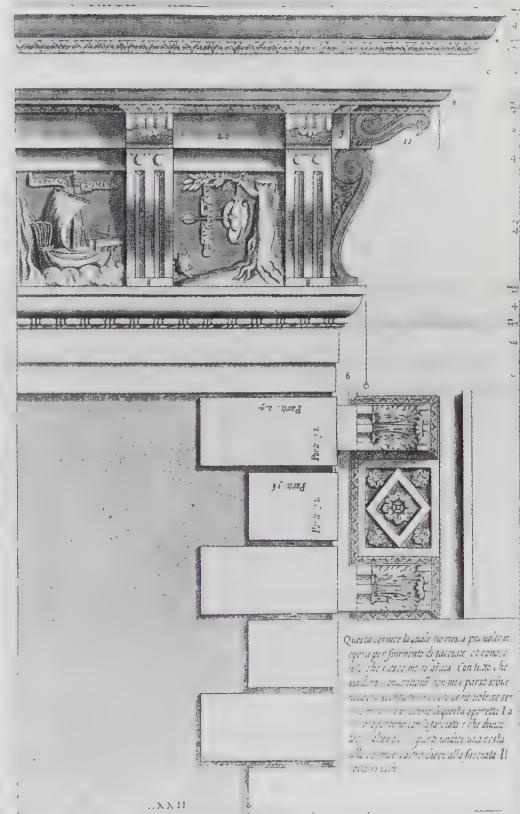
The villa is reached on foot via sweeping *cordonate*, which embrace a rusticated carriage entrance with three arcades, flanked by stone basins. The carriages could pass through this into the basement of the building, via a tunnel hollowed out of the tufa, to a circular space for the carriages to turn under the courtyard, from which a staircase leads to the main rooms. The feat of hollowing out the tufa was greatly admired by contemporaries.⁸³ The rising ground is effectively exploited, as the ramps lead up to a brick platform, from which there leads a double ramped staircase which is based on that in the Villa Belvedere. At the top is a tiny oval set of steps, which leads to the drawbridge and the main *portone* of peperino, which is decorated with Farnese lilies and *impresa* (pls 61–2). This closely recalls Vignola's entrance to the Villa Giulia, with the Doric pilasters almost swamped by the rustication, as do the grilled windows on either side (pl. 64).

The outermost bays of the *piano nobile* and the top storey are defined by huge quoins. The first floor houses a five-bay loggia, articulated with Ionic pilasters in peperino. This was originally open and afforded a superb panorama over the town and beyond to Monte Cimino. It is framed by two windows topped with elaborate scroll-mouldings which recall again the main façade of the Villa Giulia. The upper storey containing rooms for the servants and some courtiers is divided by composite pilasters, and the cornice above is a highly original blend of Doric and Corinthian (pl. 63), with Farnese emblems between the S-shaped 'triglyphs', which Vignola proudly published in his *Regola delli cinque ordini*.⁸⁴





61 (left). Jacopo Vignola, Villa Farnese, Caprarola, entrance (detail), from 1556 (Photo: Author).

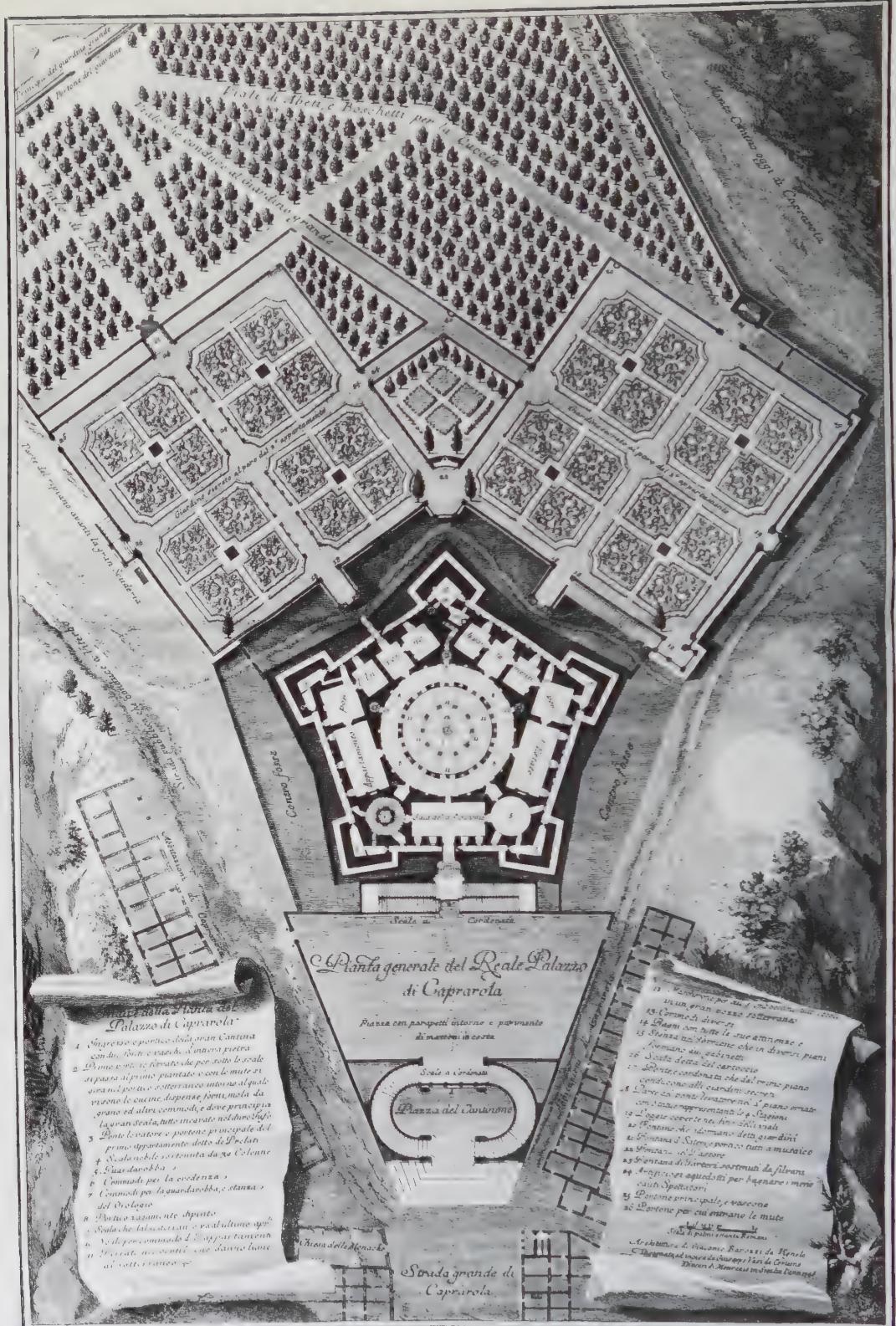


62 (above left). Jacopo Vignola, Villa Farnese, Caprarola, entrance portal, from 1556 (Photo: Author).

63 (above right). Jacopo Vignola, *Cornice of the Villa Farnese, Caprarola*, from Vignola, 1562, pl. 32 (Photo: Warburg Institute).



64. Jacopo Vignola, Façade of the Villa Giulia, 1551 (Photo: Author).



65. G. Vasi, plan of the Villa Farnese, Caprarola, engraving, 1746 (Photo: Warburg Institute).



66. Jacopo Vignola, courtyard of the Villa Farnese, from 1556 (Photo: Author).

67. Raphael, courtyard of the Villa Madama, c.1518–20 (Photo: Paul Davies).



Inside Vignola chose to abandon the pentagonal *cortile*, which had been included in Sangallo's design, preferring a circular court, which was probably inspired by Raphael's plan for the Villa Madama (pls 65–7), itself an allusion to Pliny's villa, although it also recalls the courtyard of the palace of Charles V in Granada. The ground-floor arcade, with its smooth *bugnato* on the lower storey, echoes the lower part of the exterior, while its decoration with a painted pergola is reminiscent of the hemicycle at the Villa Giulia. Above is another arcade with paired Ionic half-columns attached to piers in which there are rectangular openings, and an elegant balustrade running round. As Coffin has observed, this resembles both Bramante's design for the upper level of the Belvedere courtyard, and Raphael's *loggetta* at the Vatican palace.⁸⁵ The arcade's function is to provide access to all the rooms without disturbing the patron's privacy.

Privacy was evidently the chief priority in the distribution of the rooms. The *piano nobile* is reached by a magnificent spiral staircase with paired Doric columns and lilies in the metopes (pl. 68) which is derived from Bramante's staircase in the Villa Belvedere. This leads directly on to the central arcade, rather than into the

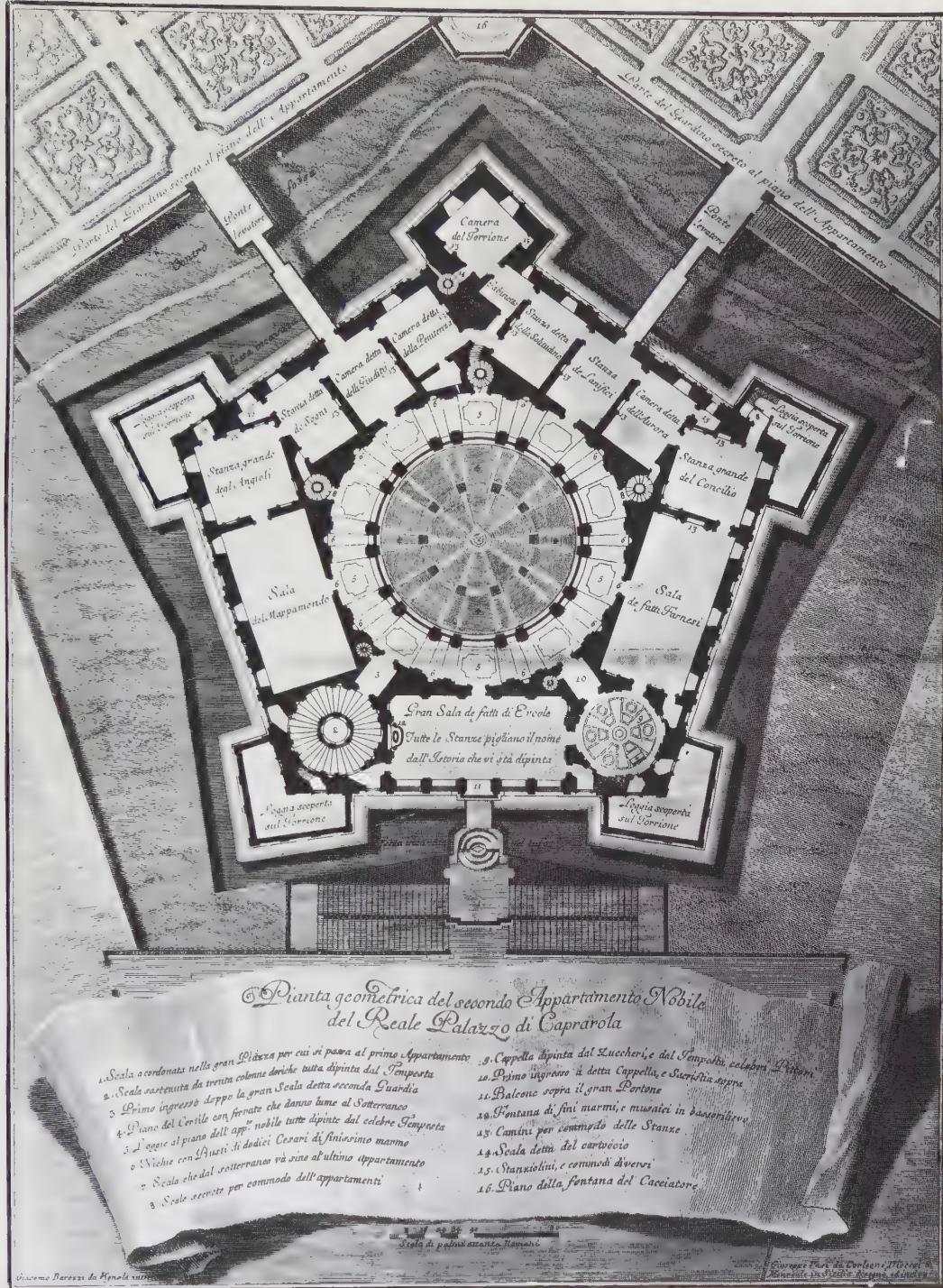


68. Jacopo Vignola, Villa Farnese, Caprarola, staircase, from 1556 (Photo: Author).

adjoining loggia, known as the Sala d'Ercole. The rooms are arranged in two symmetrical apartments (pl. 69) with all the public rooms at the front of the villa, and the private rooms – bedrooms, dressing-rooms, studies – at the rear overlooking, and in some cases leading onto, the gardens.

Documentary evidence informs us that the villa was already being planned in July 1555.⁸⁶ Vignola was asked to submit designs from early on, as we learn from a letter of 13 August 1558, in which he mentioned that his design was already two years old.⁸⁷ However, another architect, Nanni di Baccio Bigio, was also called in. Nanni, an architect whose fame has been much obscured by Vasari's neglect, worked for some years on the fringes of the Farnese circle, without ever succeeding in obtaining Alessandro's patronage. In June 1556 he sent a 'design of the building of Caprarola' to Alessandro's secretary there.⁸⁸ It is uncertain whether this was an entirely new scheme submitted in competition or an emended version of Vignola's design of the kind subsequently made by Francesco Paciotto.⁸⁹

Construction of the villa was slow in starting. Although building materials were being assembled during August 1556, there were delays, and that October it was reported that 'the building . . . sleeps'.⁹⁰ The following year preparation of the site



69. G. Vasi, plan of the *piano nobile*, Caprarola, engraving, 1746 (Photo: Warburg Institute).

began, if not actual building.⁹¹ As was to happen with the Gesù, the final design was not approved until after construction had begun. In 1558 the patron himself scrutinised the designs and made certain criticisms, as we learn from a letter of

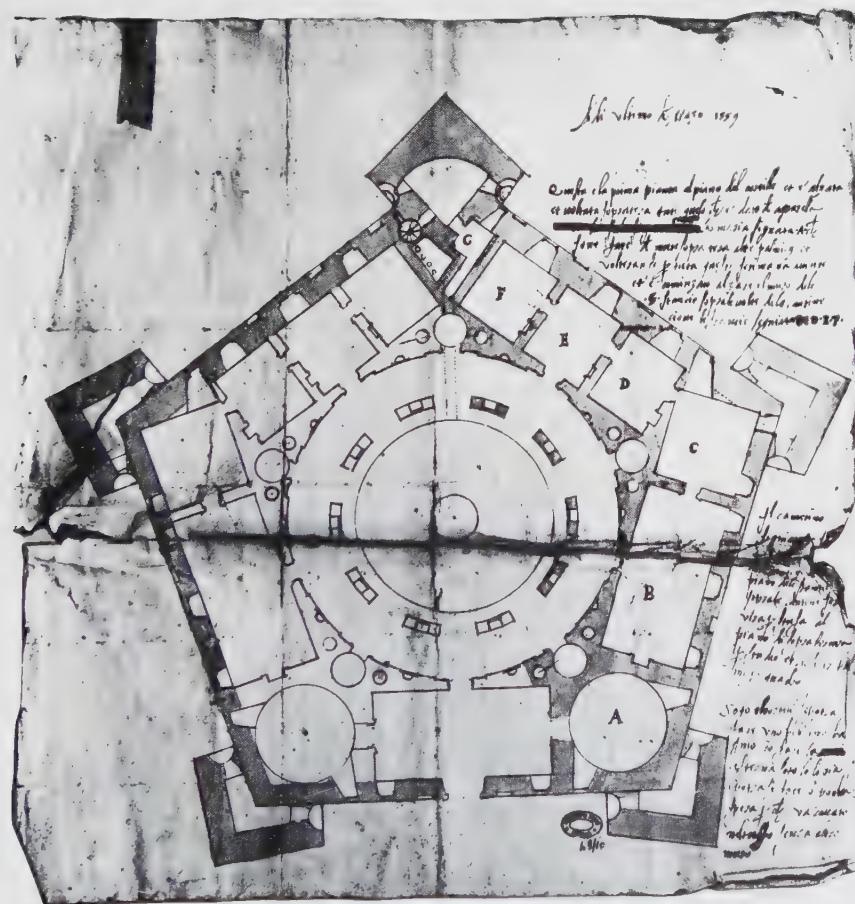
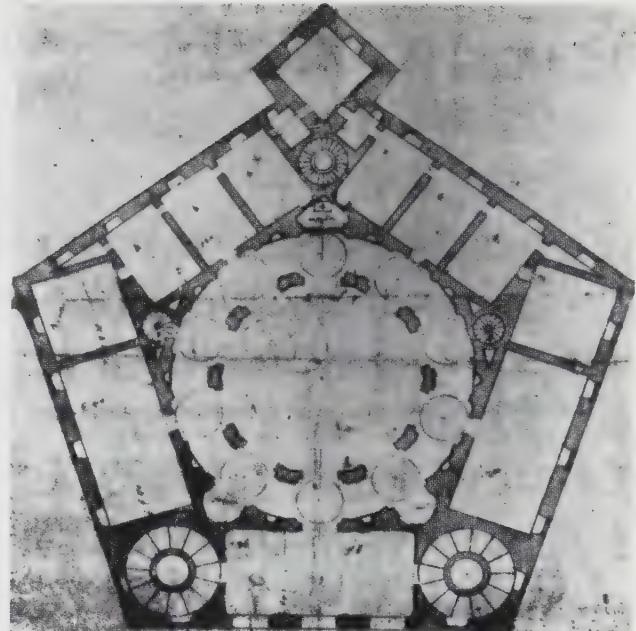
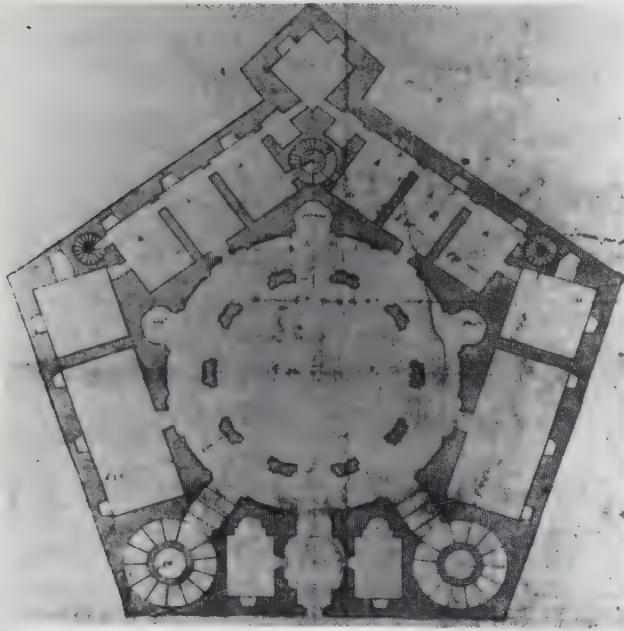
Vignola in which he refers to an early plan ‘that I made for Caprarola, which had the staircase in the courtyard, which Your Most Illustrious Lordship decided he did not like, wanting to make the courtyard spacious’.⁹² But, as he had possibly already done with Nanni di Baccio Bigio, and certainly following his grandfather’s cautious practice, the Cardinal decided to consult yet another expert: Vignola’s latest scheme was sent to the military architect and engineer Francesco Paciotto, who was then working for Alessandro’s brother Ottavio.⁹³ Paciotto was also a close friend of Annibal Caro, Alessandro’s chief artistic adviser at this time, and Caro was apparently largely responsible for his promotion in the Farnese circle. On one occasion he wrote to the architect: ‘Of me you should think that you have an eternal friend, more at a distance than close at hand, and more in a storm than in good times.’⁹⁴ Paciotto had previously been called in by the Cardinal, possibly at Caro’s instigation, to make an alternative design for the tomb of Paul III.⁹⁵

When he received the Caprarola drawings he was instructed not to depart radically from Vignola’s design, as he himself wrote: ‘As for the division of the rooms, I have not departed too much from that of Vignola, because of what you said to me, and because it is also very beautiful.’⁹⁶ His modified scheme is recorded in two drawings (pls 70–1), as well as his letter to the patron. The major alterations affected the entrance to the ground floor, which was made narrower, and the *cortile*, where Paciotto proposed a decagonal courtyard. He also introduced a second spiral staircase in the space where Vignola had planned the chapel and the ground-floor Sala Rotonda, the chapel being squeezed into a small area between the Stanza della Solitudine and the Stanza della Penitenza.⁹⁷

Paciotto’s proposals were passed on by Farnese to Vignola, who took exception to them all as being ‘pointless’, besides increasing the cost of the building unnecessarily. Writing to the Cardinal in August 1558, he set out his objections in some detail.⁹⁸ He particularly stressed the greater economy and convenience for the patron that his disposition of the rooms provided: Paciotto’s second staircase would deprive the villa of two rooms – an armoury on the ground floor and the circular chapel, which in Vignola’s plan would be capacious enough to hold the entire household at mass. It would, moreover, have the effect of turning the first-floor loggia, the Sala d’Ercole, into a corridor, thereby reducing Alessandro’s privacy. Farnese evidently found Vignola’s arguments persuasive, since the villa was executed without departure from his scheme.

Whether because preparation of the site dragged on, or because further discussion of the plans was none the less thought necessary, construction did not begin until April 1559.⁹⁹ Thereafter, however, work proceeded rapidly, so that by the end of May five rooms on the ground floor were built (pl. 72), and Tommaso del Giglio could predict the completion of the ground-floor summer apartment (*appartamento d'estate*) by that winter.¹⁰⁰

Numerous letters reveal how Alessandro was kept informed of the progress of the work either by Vignola himself on his frequent visits to the site, or by his majordomo.¹⁰¹ Our knowledge of the state of the building over the entire period of its construction is further enhanced by the detailed *misure* discovered by Partridge.¹⁰² Work continued for many years, but the villa was virtually complete by 1573 when Vignola died. For this reason Alessandro decided not to appoint a new architect for the completion of the building, but, as Buchicchio has recently



70 (above left). F. Paciotto,
plan of the ground floor,
Caprarola, pen and wash, 1558,
Archivio di Stato, Naples,
Carte farnesiane, b. 1414.

71 (above right). F. Paciotto,
plan of the piano nobile,
Caprarola, pen and wash, 1558,
Archivio di Stato, Naples,
Carte farnesiane, b. 1414.

72. Jacopo Vignola, plan of the
ground floor, Caprarola,
showing the state of progress
on 31 May 1559, pen and wash,
43.5 × 42 cm., Archivio di
Stato, Parma, Mappe e disegni,
b. 45, fol. 12.

established, promoted Giovanni Antonio Garzoni da Viggiù, who had already been working there as chief *scalpellino* (mason). Garzoni was responsible for a hunting lodge, the Barco, about two miles away, which is now ruined, the expansion of the *peschiera* in front of the villa, and probably the stable block across the road, as well as the Palazzina located above the villa (pl. 73).¹⁰³ Another architect, Giacomo del Duca, may have had a hand in designing part of the garden below the Palazzina, particularly the ramps, the *catena d'acqua* (water-chain) and the Fontana del Bicchiere, although this area was substantially modified during the early seventeenth century by Girolamo Rainaldi.¹⁰⁴

Giacomo del Duca had first become known to Alessandro through his acquisition of a tabernacle, now at Capodimonte (pl. 74). This had originally been commissioned for Pius IV and followed a design by Michelangelo.¹⁰⁵ But the work was not finished until 1567–8, after the Pope's death, and it was presumably then sold to Alessandro.¹⁰⁶ It must have belonged to the Cardinal by October 1570, when he was asked to write a reference for 'the Sicilian sculptor who has made the metal tabernacle'.¹⁰⁷ Subsequently Alessandro seems to have employed del Duca as an architect, and, apparently, he worked primarily on garden design.¹⁰⁸ The works that can be attributed to him have long been disputed, but he was probably involved with the Orti Farnesiani on the Palatine, as well as the gardens of Caprarola.¹⁰⁹

Caprarola: decoration

The decoration of the villa was started around 1561. The commission was awarded to Taddeo Zuccaro, although he appears to have been Alessandro's second choice. An anonymous biography of Girolamo Muziano, which is clearly based on the painter's own testimony, states that shortly after his return to Rome from Orvieto, during the pontificate of Pius IV (1559–65), Alessandro attempted to secure his services for Caprarola. Muziano at some point painted à portrait of the Cardinal, but refused to undertake the Caprarola project, preferring to work for Ippolito d'Este, and he is recorded as the latter's painter from April 1560.¹¹⁰ The work of both artists could have been seen in Rome at this time, and unfortunately, we do not know which criteria governed Alessandro's original choice.¹¹¹

It would be interesting to know why such a patron as Cardinal Farnese should be rejected by an artist in this way. Alessandro's rivalry with the Este cardinal was strong. On a number of later occasions he was to employ painters who had already proved themselves by working for Ippolito – for example, Giovanni de' Vecchi and Cornelio Fiammingo – as well as his *fontaniere* (fountain-maker) from Tivoli.¹¹² Possibly Ippolito was offering greater rewards. No information has survived about the terms Farnese was offering to Muziano, but in general the wages paid by the Este cardinal compare very well with those offered by Alessandro.¹¹³

Although he may not have been Alessandro's first choice, Taddeo was at that period in considerable demand in Rome.¹¹⁴ He was therefore able to arrange highly favourable conditions of work, essentially just providing designs and overseeing the execution, but painting relatively little himself, as Vasari reports:



73 (above). Giovanni Antonio Garzoni da Viggìù, Palazzina, Caprarola, probably 1584–86 (Photo: Author).



74. Giacomo del Duca, tabernacle, 1565–67/8, bronze, height 200 cm., diameter 90 cm., Naples, Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte (Photo: Soprintendenza ai beni artistici e storici, Naples).

Since Taddeo did not want to abandon his other works in Rome, he was obliged to create all the drawings, cartoons, arrangements and divisions of the works in painting and stucco that were to be done there; the men who were to execute them were chosen by Taddeo but paid by the Cardinal; Taddeo himself had to work there for two or three months each year, and go there as often as was necessary to see how things were going, and to retouch that which was not in his manner.¹¹⁵

Taddeo seems to have taken full advantage of these conditions and, as a result of his extensive reliance on assistants, chief of whom was his younger brother Federico, the attribution of individual parts of the decoration executed during his lifetime is highly problematic. For this work he received a salary of sixteen and a half *scudi* per month, which was more than any other artist in Farnese service during these years, including Vignola.¹¹⁶ Vasari commented on the exceptional generosity of these terms, describing them as 'such honoured treatment', and noting that they caused Taddeo to break his habit of accepting 'any base job'.¹¹⁷

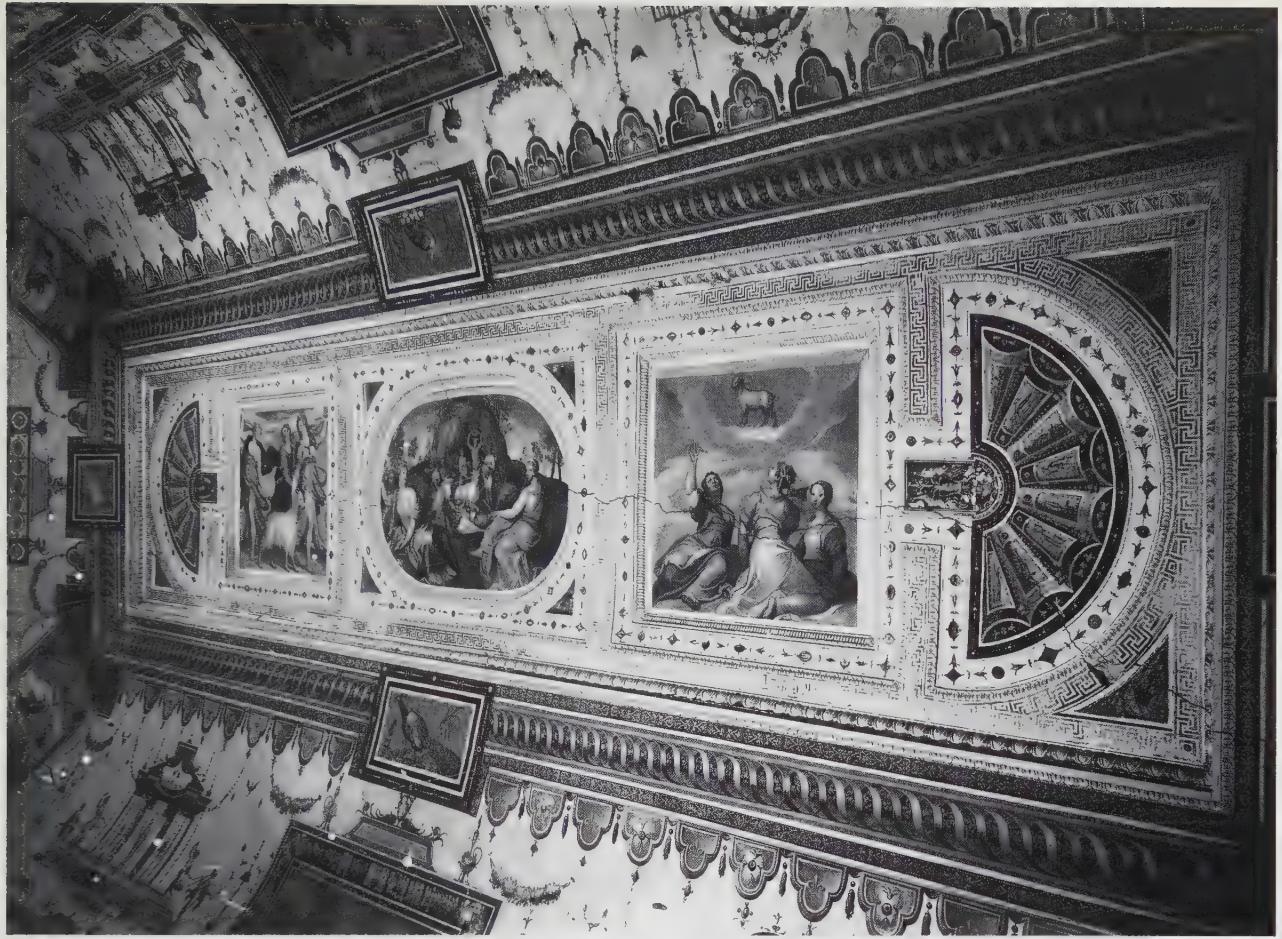
It is likely that the Cardinal could obtain Taddeo's commitment to a project of such magnitude only by offering so much. Once he had acquired his services he was very reluctant to let him go. Taddeo was keen to have Alessandro's support for the prestigious Sala Regia commission, over which the Cardinal had considerable influence. He had already promoted Salviati as a candidate, although Salviati was at that time working on the Palazzo Farnese frescoes.¹¹⁸ In Taddeo's case, however,

the Cardinal, not wishing to employ him in [the Sala Regia], replied that the work at Caprarola should be sufficient, and that it did not seem right that his works should be left behind for the sake of emulation and rivalries with other artists. He added that when they were well done, it was the works that brought renown to places and not places to works.¹¹⁹

Admittedly, this sounds like Vasari putting words into the Cardinal's mouth, but the difference between Alessandro's treatment of the two artists over this commission is striking.

Decoration at Caprarola began as soon as the ground-floor summer apartment was ready, in 1561. The frescoes at Caprarola form one of the most complete decorative ensembles to survive in a Roman Cinquecento villa and are immensely informative about the way in which such schemes evolved. The mode of decoration established by Taddeo set the pattern for the entire villa and was taken up by the later artists who worked there, so that the overall effect is one of great unity. Taddeo divided up most of the ceilings into many little compartments with rich stucco work. The walls were frescoed only in the public rooms, and Taddeo here abandoned the exuberant illusionism of Vasari and Salviati, preferring a rather more classicising presentation of the complex subject-matter he was given. In the private rooms the walls were hung with rich gold and silk hangings.¹²⁰

By the beginning of 1562 the Sala d'Amalthea, or Hall of Amalthea (pl. 75), and the Camere delle Stagioni, or Rooms of the Seasons, were frescoed. Taddeo himself was responsible only for the decoration of the ceiling in the Sala d'Amalthea,



75 (above). Taddeo Zuccaro, ceiling of the Sala d'Amalthea, 1562, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese (Photo: I.C.C.D.).



76. Jacopo Vignola, column, 1562–3, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese, Anticamera del Concilio (Photo: Author).

with its programme dedicated to the goat Amalthea, as a punning allusion to the supposed etymology of 'Caprarola', as deriving from 'capra' or 'goat'.¹²¹

Vignola too had a hand in the decoration. As his biographer Danti reported:

Not content to be immortalised through the stupendous architecture of that building, Vignola also wanted to give a demonstration of his efforts at perspective among the beautiful paintings of Taddeo and Federico Zuccari.¹²²

Around June 1562 he therefore painted the perspective scenes on the walls of the Sala d' Amalthea, as well as the illusionistic ceiling of the Sala Rotonda, and the columns in the corners of the Anticamera del Concilio (pl. 76) which aroused great admiration among contemporaries.¹²³

The Camere delle Stagioni are four private rooms leading off the Sala d' Amalthea. The decoration of each room, which was left in the hands of Taddeo's workshop, following his designs, was dedicated to one of the Four Seasons, which is personified in the centre of each vault, and surrounded by small mythological scenes connected with the time of year. The Seasons themselves are treated in an unusual way. Each is represented as a putto adorned with attributes and set in a landscape appropriate to the time of year. The landscapes are very similar to those painted by Taddeo in the audience chamber of the Villa Giulia, and by Federico in the Villa d'Este.¹²⁴ Spring (pl. 77) thus holds three lilies and a bowl of plants. He is accompanied by a deer and some birds, and on the ground are a torch and a thyrsus, a small shield, a large mask and a cornucopia. Immediately above this scene are the three zodiacal signs for the spring months. The myths associated with this season are 'all subjects that indicate spring': the Rapes of Europa and Proserpina, included, according to an eighteenth-century source, because Europa gave the bull roses, and Proserpina was raped in the spring; Hercules' combat with Achelous, whose horn was eventually filled by nymphs with flowers and fruit; and Proteus surrounded by the creatures into which he transformed himself, as a symbol of the richness and variety of spring.¹²⁵ In the four corners are four of Alessandro's *imprese*. No preparatory drawings for this room have yet come to light. The ingenuity and complexity of these associations recalls the iconographic programmes of Annibal Caro elsewhere in the villa, and it is quite likely that he was responsible for the iconography in all four rooms.¹²⁶

The Camera dell'Estate (pl. 78), dedicated to summer, is laid out in a similar pattern, although it lacks the *imprese* in the corners. The putto representing this season is crowned with wheat ears and brandishes a sickle. He stands in a landscape full of corn, and there are also a mask, a deer, a twisted horn, pan-pipes and a large pine-cone. A rainbow above contains the appropriate signs of the zodiac. The accompanying mythological scenes all suggest the abundance and heat of summer. We see Phaethon falling through a fiery orange glow and Ceres worshipped by figures bearing the earth's produce. Two more scenes are dedicated to Triptolemos, the inventor of agriculture. One shows him in his traditional chariot drawn by dragons, setting fire to bushes and thickets, as a prelude to cultivation. The other shows him distributing grain to men with ploughs. A fine *modello* for the latter (pl. 79) corresponds fairly closely with the figures but omits the landscape.¹²⁷

The Camera dell'Autunno (pl. 80) follows the same scheme as the previous two rooms, with a chubby *bacchino* in the central panel carrying on his head a

77. Taddeo Zuccaro, vault of the Camera della Primavera, 1562, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese.

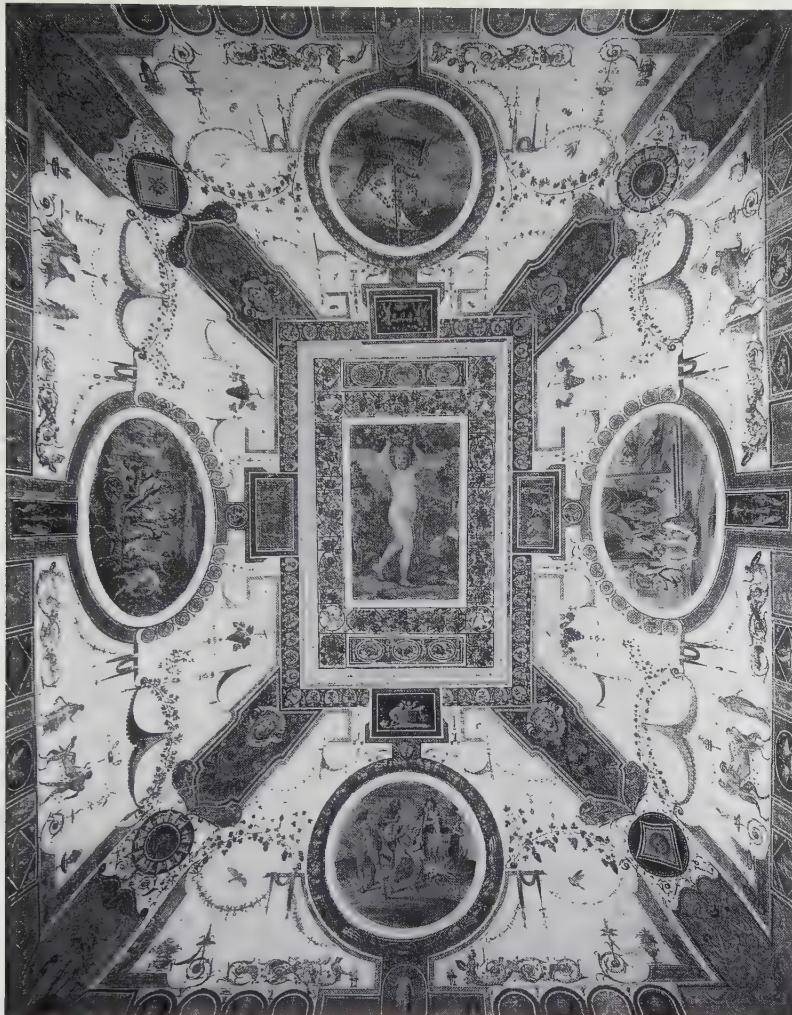




78. Taddeo Zuccaro,
vault of the Camera
dell'Estate, 1562,
fresco, Caprarola,
Villa Farnese.



79. Taddeo
Zuccaro,
Triptolemos
distributing grain,
1562, pen and
brown ink over
red chalk, with
white heightening
on blue paper,
24.9 × 31.6 cm.,
Oxford, Christ
Church (By
permission of the
Governing Body,
Christ Church).



80. Taddeo Zuccaro,
vault of the Camera
dell'Autunno, 1562,
fresco, Caprarola, Villa
Farnese (Photo:
I.C.C.D.).

basket of apples and grapes, and standing with a leopard in an autumnal landscape. All the exquisite grotesques in this room continue the bacchic theme, as do the four mythologies, which concern the life of the god of wine. This had already been the subject of another Farnese decorative scheme, the bedroom of Palazzo Farnese, frescoed by Daniele da Volterra, but the choice of episodes there was rather different.¹²⁸ The events depicted at Caprarola are Bacchus's birth, his being destroyed by the Titans and restored to life,¹²⁹ his travelling to India by ship, and his triumphal return.¹³⁰

The last of the Camere delle Stagioni, the Camera dell'Inverno (pl. 81), is the most damaged, with a large area of the figure of Winter in his bleak landscape missing.¹³¹ The Ovidian scenes around are united by the theme of bad weather. Taddeo depicted the Council of the Gods in which they planned the flood, and the succeeding stories of Deucalion and Pyrrha, Aeolus loosing the winds, and a subject that may be Vulcan binding Boreas, the North Wind, to a rock to prevent the rains.¹³²

This work on the ground floor was immediately followed by the decoration of the apartment above, beginning with the main *salone*, the Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani,



81. Taddeo Zuccaro, vault of the Camera dell'Inverno, 1562, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese (Photo: I.C.C.D.).

or Hall of Farnese Deeds (pl. 82), which was painted between 1562 and 1563.¹³³ The Anticamera del Concilio, or Antechamber of the Council, was presumably planned and executed at the same time, since the programmes of the two rooms are closely connected. The iconography of the Sala dei Fasti, at any rate, was probably planned at the latest in January 1562, by which time the stucco compartmentment had been fixed and indeed executed.¹³⁴ The iconography of these two public rooms concerns a favourite Farnese subject, their own glorious history, which is manipulated to present an entirely favourable impression of the family as a whole, and of Alessandro in particular. This was, of course, an extremely common type of imagery in Cinquecento palaces: notable examples are the celebrations of the Medici in Palazzo Vecchio, of the Obizzi at the Villa Cathaio, and of the Vitelli in Città di Castello.¹³⁵ Family history had already been the subject of Vasari's cycle in the Cancelleria and was being used in the contemporary cycle in Palazzo Farnese, begun by Salviati, and completed by Taddeo.¹³⁶ The two rooms at Caprarola were the most ambitious presentation of Farnese deeds yet attempted and were intended to bring its history right up to date. There are here important

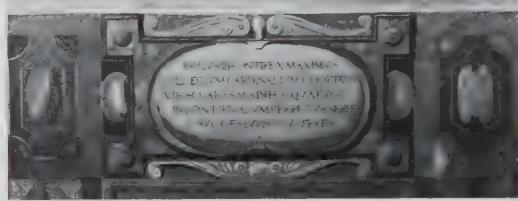


82. Taddeo Zuccaro and workshop, the Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani, 1562–3, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese (Photo: I.C.C.D.).

differences in treatment. In the other Farnese cycles history was presented in a semi-allegorical manner to show the family as exemplars of particular qualities, and personifications took part in the action alongside historical characters in order to make this point. At Caprarola themes were repeated from the other Farnese cycles, and in the Anticamera del Concilio even the layout of the decoration with a *storia* enclosed by personifications is essentially the same. But the manner of depiction is different and there is a greater preoccupation with historicity. In addition, the attributes of the allegorical figures are greatly simplified, in comparison with those of the Sala dei Cento Giorni. To a very considerable extent this more straightforward handling must be due to the patron's wish to present himself as a worthy successor to his grandfather, with greater stress on his own achieve-



83. Taddeo Zuccaro and workshop, *Truce of Nice*, 1562–3, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese, Anticamera del Concilio (Photo: I.C.C.D.).



84. Taddeo Zuccaro and workshop, *Paul III creating four future popes as cardinals*, 1562–3, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese, Anticamera del Concilio (Photo: I.C.C.D.).

ments, but this change of emphasis was considerably assisted by the more classical temperament of the artist.¹³⁷

For example, in both the Sala dei Cento Giorni and Salviati's room in Palazzo Farnese the idea of a universal peace achieved by Paul III was conveyed by the conjunction of allegorical figures, symbols such as the Temple of Janus, and portraits of key individuals (pls 51–2). At Caprarola, by contrast, the subject painted (pl. 83) was the Truce of Nice itself. All the figures were shown in contemporary dress, the number of portraits was higher and the landscape was presumably intended to evoke the French coast. The personifications were banished entirely from the scene to the flanking niches.¹³⁸

A similar contrast in the manner of depiction shows itself in the scenes of Paul III creating cardinals. In the Cancelleria (pl. 49), where this subject was intended as an *exemplum* of papal munificence, few of the figures were individualised (although there were some portraits), the personifications played an active rôle, and the setting was imaginary. At Caprarola the emphasis was on Paul's skilful choice of men. The inscription beneath the painting points out that, of the cardinals nominated by the Farnese pope, no fewer than four were elected to the pontificate



85. Taddeo Zuccaro and workshop, vault of the Anticamera del Concilio, 1562–3, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese
(Photo: I.C.C.D.).



86. Detail of pl. 85.



87. Taddeo Zuccaro and workshop, *The Council of Trent*, 1562–3, fresco, Caprarola, Villa Farnese, Anticamera del Concilio (Photo: I.C.C.D.).

in unbroken succession, and the figures kneeling before Paul show portraits of the future Julius III, Marcellus II, Paul IV and Pius IV (pl. 84).¹³⁹

The subjects of the Sala dei Fasti have been identified and discussed at length by Partridge, but those of the Anticamera have received less attention in recent literature. Its programme, like that of the Sala dei Fasti, was probably devised by Onofrio Panvinio, but with some assistance from both Annibal Caro and Fulvio Orsini.¹⁴⁰ The Anticamera del Concilio is dedicated entirely to the deeds of Paul III. The narrative is presented throughout in a characteristically Mannerist way. Though the Pope was the main subject, swirling crowds dominate the foreground of several scenes, while Paul is usually relegated to the middle ground. The centre of the richly stuccoed vault is dominated by Paul's coronation in 1534 (pl. 85).¹⁴¹ The four surrounding scenes illustrate episodes in which Paul asserted his authority as supreme church leader. Two of these concern the Emperor Charles V, with whom Paul had wrestled so frequently. One asserts Paul's spiritual superiority, by showing the aged Pope praying for the imperial fleet as it set out to conquer the Turks at Tunis in 1535. In the other Paul is shown uniting the imperial and Venetian fleets to fight the Turks, thus stressing his diplomatic superiority too. The third scene shows Paul excommunicating the English king, Henry VIII, 'having condemned the crime of depraving religion', as the inscription records. Importunate English ambassadors kneel before a curious adaptation of Bramante's Tempietto and below a balcony on which the Pope stands, bull in hand, and surrounded by his bishops (pl. 86).¹⁴² The last scene on the ceiling depicts one of the most brutal