Renaissance
Medievalisms

Edited by
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What Counted as an "Antiquity" in the Renaissance?

Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood

Inaccuracies and confusions about the historicity of past art abounded in the Renaissance. The most famous case – and it is typical, not exceptional – is that of the eleventh-century Baptistery in Florence, which was described in late medieval and early Renaissance sources as a converted pagan temple.[1] The antiquity-oriented architects Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti looked to the Baptistery and other local Romanesque buildings as models.[2] At the church of S. Lorenzo, for example, Brunelleschi modelled the entablature blocks interposed between capital and arch from the exterior of the Baptistery. From SS. Apostoli, another eleventh-century building, Brunelleschi borrowed not only the plan but the non-antique motif of arches resting directly on columns.[3] Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy, meanwhile, was modeled closely, both in plan and in elevation, on the Romanesque Baptistery in Padua. Alberti, for his part, provided additions to the façade for S. Maria Novella that maintained and even strenthened the façade's association with the

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[1] According to Filippo Villani (c. 1330), the Baptistery had been a temple of Mars and Christianization had brought only minor changes. Davis, "Topographical and Historical Propaganda." Coluccio Salutati (1403) credited "a very old tradition obscured by the passage of years, that Florence was built by the Romans, there is in this city a Capitol and a Forum close by, ... there is the former temple of Mars, ... a temple built neither in the Greek nor in the Etruscan manner, but plainly in the Roman one" (*non graeco, non tusco more factum sed plane Romano*). Cited in Gombrich, "Revival of Letters," 104.

[2] See the general discussion of this episode in Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, 20–23. There is a vast literature on Brunelleschi's and Alberti's reception of ancient and medieval architecture; see the recent survey of Rocchi Coopmans de Yoldi, "Riflessioni sulla storiografia," and "Il Brunelleschi e il Battistero," in *Santa Maria del Fiore*, 27–34; 64–65. An excellent analysis of the paradox is Hansen, "The Concept and Study of Antique Architecture in 15th-Century Italy."

[3] Gombrich, "Revival of Letters," 106.

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elevations of the Baptistery and of the twelfth-century basilica of S. Miniato al Monte. In his project for a central-plan church in Florence dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, Simone del Pollaiuolo, called Il Cronaca (active in the 1480s), introduced in the interior elevation arcades framed by pilasters like those on the outside of the Baptistery.[4] The most archeologically minded Renaissance architects, in short, were as attentive to local pre-Gothic churches as they were to ancient ruins. They were interested in, as it were, the Roman in the Romanesque; for Brunelleschi, in the phrase of Howard Burns, "the idea of antique architecture was a set of principles rather than precedents."[5] The Romanesque buildings of Florence and elsewhere were very old – who knew how old? And they served as archives of the best Roman building manner. In the mid-sixteenth century Giorgio Vasari described the Baptistery as a "most ancient temple" and went on to argue that because the architects of medieval buildings like SS. Apostoli had emulated the "good antique order" that they had found in the Baptistery, Brunelleschi was therefore justified in taking SS. Apostoli as his model.[6]

A whole range of artefacts and monuments that are today no longer classed as ancient art were believed to be, or treated as if they were, antiquities in the Renaissance. These include not only buildings, but also medieval sculpture thought to be ancient, Byzantine icons, mosaics, floor pavements, and manuscript illumination.

To be sure, the will and ability to assign dates and attribute authorship to old *texts* was developing rapidly in this period. Lorenzo Valla, Angelo Poliziano, and Erasmus invented the philological methods

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[4]Cronaca's model book embraced drawings both of ancient buildings in Rome and of the Baptistery and SS. Apostoli. Giuliano da Sangallo was also interested in the Baptistery. Günther, *Das Studium der antiken Architektur*, 94, 96–97.

[5]Burns, "Quattrocento Architecture and the Antique," 286.

[6]In the preface to Book One of his *Vite*, Vasari says that the architects of S. Miniato were able to "recognize" and emulate "the good ancient order" (*l'ordine buono antico*) they found "in the very ancient temple of S. Giovanni in their city" (*nell'antichissimo tempio di S. Giovanni nella città loro*), that is, in the Baptistery of Florence; Vasari, *Le vite*, 1: 236–237. In the "Life of Andrea Tafi" he refers again to the Baptistery as "that ancient temple ... which is praised by modern architects as a singular thing, and rightly so; for it shows the good that that art already possessed" (*quel tempio antico...la quale è dagli architetti moderni come cosa singolare lodata, e meritamente: perciocchè ella ha mostrato il buono che già aveva in sè quell'arte*), and confirms that Brunelleschi, Donatello, and other masters used both the Baptistery and SS. Apostoli as models for their own work; Vasari, *le vite*, 1:332.

that are still, essentially, the ones used today to establish recensions and editions of texts. There is little evidence, however, that humanist scholars were able to securely date old books on the basis of their *physical* features. Angelo Poliziano described books dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries as "wonderfully old" or "most old" (*mire vetus, vetustissimus*), or as "most ancient" (*antiquissimus*); books dating from ninth to the eleventh centuries as "old," "very old," or "ancient" (*vetus, pervetus, antiquus*), and also as "most old" (*vetustissimus*) and "most ancient" (*antiquissimus*); and finally one book from the fourteenth century as "somewhat old" (*semivetus*).[7] But these were comparative terms. When Poliziano described the pre-Carolingian books as *mire vetus*, he was simply saying they were the oldest books he had seen. Scholars were most acutely interested in the identity of the *texts* transmitted by these books. They were also interested in the typological or categorical identity of certain ornamental features or scripts. Typically, humanistic border and initial ornament, such as white vine-scrolls, were modelled with careful exactitude on eleventh- and twelfth-century Italian manuscripts of ancient texts, books thought to be much older than they really were; or at least reliably reflecting very old prototypes, perhaps as old as the texts themselves.[8] The term *littera antiqua* as it was used in fifteenth-century inventories and elsewhere, referred to the style of the lettering, not the estimated age of the book.[9] Books from the eleventh to the thirteenth century are described in an inventory of 1426, for example, as *in littera antiqua* even though there were older books in the same collection whose scripts are not described this way.[10]

It was much the same with buildings and other artefacts. In the imagination of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, pictures and buildings were less strongly anchored in historical time than written documents. The artefact, unlike – supposedly – a literary text authored by an individual, did not receive its meaning all at once in the moment of its creation. The artefact was connected by chains of copying to other similar artefacts, or had undergone series of repairs or reconstructions. Scholars had little inclination and even less capacity for a philology of architecture

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[7] He described fifteenth-century books as *codices novi*. Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti*, 147–164; on the terminology used by other humanists see 165–167.

[8] See most recently Ceccanti, "Proposte per la storia die primi codici umanistici a bianchi girari," 11–16, and Crivello, "'Vetustioris litere maiestas," 227–234.

[9] Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti*, 114–122.

[10] Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti*, 122, n. 1.

that might distinguish building fabrics and serve as the basis for a reconstruction of building histories. The being of the physical artefact spreads complexly across time. It would simply not have occurred to most observers to ask, "When was this object made?"

And so old buildings were commonly "backdated." The church of San Lorenzo in Milan was for a long time described as a Temple of Hercules founded by Emperor Maximianus in the late third century. The Romanesque church of San Fedele in Como was believed until the seventeenth century to be in origin an ancient temple of Hercules. The eleventh-century Duomo Vecchio of Arezzo was said by Vasari to date back to the fourth century.[11] When he came to illustrate Greek temples in his 1521 edition of Vitruvius, Cesare Cesariano used the form of the cross-in-square plan, a building type that is not antique at all but *is* Greek, going back to eighth-century Byzantine models.[12] In Italy, the type was known primarily through eleventh and twelfth-century relays, churches such as San Vittore delle Chiuse near Fabriano, Santa Croce in Sassoferrato and Santa Maria delle Moie near Jesi.[13] And Renaissance architects consistently treated it as an ancient building type.[14]

The famous letter on the architecture of ancient Rome drafted by Raphael with the help of Baldassare Castiglione and Angelo Colocci would seem to break with this pattern, but even here the chronology is not very precise. According to the letter, "there are only three kinds of architecture in Rome": that produced by the ancients, that produced "during the time that Rome was dominated by the Goths, and one hundred years after that," and finally the architecture of the period extending from that obscure moment until the present.[15] Not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, after a sufficient quantity of visual

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[11] The last three examples are cited and discussed by Günther, "Die Vorstellung vom griechischen Tempel," 127 and n. 109.

[12] See Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 360.

[13] The importance of the type not only for Venetian architects such as Codussi but also for Bramante has long been recognized. See, for example, Wolff-Metternich on Bramante's Prevedari engraving: "Gedanken zu den Anfangen der Kunst Bramantes," 7–108, esp. 63: "Der Sakralbau, den das grosse graphische Blatt darstellt, folgt in den Grundlagen trotz des antikischen Gewandes, das ihn umhült, nachweisbaren mittelalterlichen Vorbildern."

[14] See Günther, "Die Vorstellung vom griechischen Tempel."

[15] See especially the transcription of the Munich manuscript in Shearman, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources*, 1:518–527.

material had been published, were antiquarians able to date ancient artefacts with anything like philological precision.

This article presents a wide range of examples involving different artists and different media. The very variety of cases indicates that one confronts here not simply a collection of incidental mistakes, but rather one of the conceptual "deep structures" of the period, a whole way of thinking about the historicity of artefacts that allowed for and even made use of this sort of temporal confusion.

The image proposed an unmediated, present-tense, somatic encounter with the people and the things of the past, collapsing past and present with a force not possessed by mere words. Historians were beginning to realize that material artefacts were a privileged sort of evidence about the past.[16] Some began to transfer their trust from texts to the tangible testimony of coins, carved inscriptions, painted and woven pictures, stone sculptures and tombs. Sigismund Meisterlin, a Benedictine cleric from Augsburg who studied in Padua in the 1450s, was the first German historian to break the chain of medieval chronicles by using inscriptions and other material artefacts as sources.[17] To write the history of the monastery of Murbach, for example, Meisterlin transcribed old tombstones and interpreted the events recorded on tapestries. Manuel Chrysoloras, meanwhile, the Greek scholar who taught in Italy for several years around the turn of the fifteenth century, vividly expressed the contrast between verbal and figural testimony when confronted with the material remains of ancient sculpture in Rome in 1411:

> Herodotus and the other historians are thought to have done something of great value when they describe these things; but in these sculptures one can see all that existed in those days among the different races, and thus this [image-based] history is complete and accurate: or better, if I may say so, it is not history, so much as the direct and personal observation [*autopsía*] and the living presence [*parousía*] of all the things that happened then.[18]

The work of art forces past and present into direct and dramatic contact. One might almost say that images were expected to disrupt chronological

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[16] Haskell, *History and its Images.*

[17] Joachimsen, *Die humanistische Geschichtschreibung in Deutschland.*

[18] For the Greek text, see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 150, with discussion on p. 81; translation modified with the help of that of Settis, in *Memoria dell'Antico*, 3:456.

time. It is no wonder that the historicity of old buildings and paintings appears to have been so poorly understood.

Byzantine Icons as Antiquities

An episode that brings out all the paradoxes we have been discussing is the reception in western Europe of icons imported from the Eastern Mediterranean. Many Byzantine icons were exported to Europe in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries and almost all of them were received and venerated in the West as hoary antiquities. Several were ascribed to St. Luke; some were thought to date from the time of Constantine or Theodosius (fourth century); at the latest, it seems, they were assigned to the time of Justinian and Gregory the Great, the sixth century. In fact, most of these were Palaiologan productions of the thirteenth century and later. Some of them were even executed in the fifteenth century. In short, the dating of Byzantine icons was regularly off by a thousand years or more. This is a very strange phenomenon.

It is useful to concentrate not on the much studied thirteenth-century interaction between Italian painting and the Byzantine icon, the crucial matrix for the art of Cimabue and Duccio, but on a less familiar episode of reception, the later fifteenth century, which saw a new wave of icons arrive from the East in the wake of the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. This episode widely established Byzantine image types as objects of special veneration. The Virgin Hodegetria and the Virgin Eleousa were copied and adapted by Netherlandish, German, and Italian painters and eventually published in prints. Although this phenomenon is often associated with the history of so-called popular piety, it is in fact integral to the history of humanist and antiquarian scholarship. Moreover, it had an important effect on the major artistic developments of the period – on the development of the genre of portraiture, for example, and on the conditions of collecting and displaying works of art.

The enthusiasm and credulity that greeted the Eastern icons was not merely the response of uneducated masses. The collectors and propagators of the icons were, regularly, humanist scholars, prelates, and princes. One can speak of a veritable icon vogue among cognoscenti, an enthusiasm linked to the presumed antiquity of these Greek paintings. A fourteenth-century micromosaic of the Virgin Eleousa, now in a private collection in New York, bears a piece of parchment on the back with an inscription in a late fifteenth-century humanist hand claiming that this

icon was the first Christian image gazed upon by the just converted St. Catherine of Alexandria. The inscription clearly indicates that its author considered this very object, and not merely the image type, to be the very picture that St. Catherine held in her hands.[19] Another late micromosaic, this time of St. Demetrios, now in Sassoferrato was apparently given by the famous Greek cardinal and scholar Basilius Bessarion to his secretary, the grammarian Niccolò Perotti. The silver revetment carries an inscription in archaizing letter forms: the now-lost inscription on the left side of the image was a prayer written in the voice of the Emperor Justinian. The inscriptions, which were very likely prepared in Constantinople at the same time that the image was made, must have reinforced Perotti's conviction that he was in possession of a relic of ancient Christianity.[20] In 1475 Pope Sixtus IV gave to Philippe de Croÿ, count of Chimay, a micromosaic icon of Christ Pantocrator, also from the fourteenth century. It soon acquired fame in Chimay as an *acheiropoieton*, or image made without the intervention of the human hand.[21]

The antique provenance of the icons from Greece was explicitly affirmed in at least one description of a collection in the period. Describing the collection of Pietro Barbo (Pope Paul II, r. 1464–1471), which contained many Roman antiquities, Cardinal Jacopo Ammanati noted "images of saints of ancient workmanship brought from Greece, which they call icons."[22] Sixtus' nephew, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere (Pope

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[19] The inscription reads: "Tabella sancti heremitae [A]lexandrini quam dedit sanctae virgini Catharinae: eam in fidelium informans: Et fuit prima effigies sibi in christianitate visa: Coram qua agnovit Christum unigenitum dei patris." For the most recent account of the object, with bibliography, see *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, cat. 128.

[20] The chronology of the object resists clarification even under the microscope of modern art-historical analysis. Cutler, "From Loot to Scholarship," 237–268, esp. 253, believes the mosaic itself was commissioned by Perotti in the 1450s. Lollini, "Bessarione e Perotti," 127–142, esp. 128–129, dates the mosaic to 1320–50 but believes that the revetment and frame date to ca. 1600. In the recent exhibition catalogue, *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, cat. 139, Jannic Durand argues that the mosaic, apart from the interpolation of Perotti's coat of arms on the Saint's shield, dates to the early fourteenth century, and that the revetment was commissioned by Perotti in the mid-fifteenth century. It is unlikely that the inscription was invented by Perotti, and the eagles are distinctly Palaiologan. The revetment was most probably a Palaiologan antiquarian venture. Thanks to John Monfasani and Alice-Mary Talbot for sharing their views on the work.

[21] *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, cat. 132.

[22] Müntz, *Les Arts à la Cour des Papes*, 2:131–132, n. 4, here p. 132: "imagines

Julius II, r. 1503–1513), in turn, owned a large ivory carving with an enthroned Christ. He added a framework with gems and with niello roundels of the Evangelists and Church fathers, inscribing it with his coat of arms and the date 1500 (Fig. 1).[23] We now know that this is a tenth-century ivory, but Cardinal Giuliano would have had little reason, and no art-historical tools, to give it such a date. Indeed, he would have had no reason to consider this imposing figure in pallium and tunic, sitting like an emperor on a throne, as anything other than the true face of antiquity. In its general layout, the metal framework he added resembles those added to other icons that were given immemorial provenances, such as the Chimay icon discussed above. The framework and the ivory sustain each other in a field of temporal cross-references. The gem arrangement, a form of decoration reserved for the most venerable objects, imitates the decorations shown within the ivory, on the throne, and especially on the book held by Christ. The book's contents are projected in the portraits of the Evangelists, the first Christian authors, and the Church fathers, their most authoritative early commentators. These *all'antica* roundel portraits thus gain an antique authority from their proximity to the ivory and, conversely, form a tight-fitting envelope of early Christian resonances around the object: mutually corroborating arguments for the antiquity of the object.

    Lorenzo de' Medici was also a collector of icons, and actually acquired some of those that had belonged to Barbo. He seems to have had a special preference for mosaic icons: he owned eleven Greek icons and all of them were in mosaic.[24] The one surviving icon that can be traced back to Lorenzo's collection is a micromosaic of Christ Pantocrator now in the Bargello and dated to the twelfth century (Fig. 2). This may have been one of the icons he inherited from Barbo's collection – one of the "images of ancient workmanship brought from Greece" seen there by Ammanati.

    An interesting parallel has been found in the reception of Byzantine manuscript ornament. In 1477 Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, a friend of

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sanctorum operis antiqui ex Graecia allatas, quas illi iconas vocant."

    [23]See Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinischen Elfenbein Skulpturen des X.–XIII.* no. 54; also, Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 45–48, 65, 84, 207, and 217. His reading of the inscription IRSC/RAMD—I(ulianus) R(uere) S(avonensis) C(ardinalis) R(everendissimus, renovavit, or restituit?) A(nno) MD—is debatable, but the link to Giuliano della Rovere and the date are clear enough.

    [24]Fusco and Corti, *Lorenzo de' Medici Collector and Antiquarian*, 74.

Bessarion and himself an inheritor of part of Paul II's collection, commissioned a manuscript of Homer's *Iliad* with facing page translation in Latin, and lavishly illustrated by Gaspare Padovano. Whereas the Latin side shows marginal ornamentation composed of elaborate quotations of Roman antiquities drawn from monuments such as Trajan's Column, the Greek side shows an equally careful citation of "ancient" Greek ornament. However, as Robert Nelson has shown, the sources for these patterns lie in tenth and eleventh-century Byzantine manuscripts.[25]

The evidence suggests that the collecting of Greek icons was an integrated feature of the antiquarian culture of fifteenth-century Italy. As Roman statues were dug up from the ground and ancient texts were discovered in European and Greek monasteries, "ancient" Greek paintings began to arrive in substantial numbers from the East, and achieved similar fame and status. The revival of Greek learning in fifteenth-century Italy has long been a central chapter of the story of Renaissance humanism, but the visual side of this coin, the traffic in Greek images, has been relatively ignored. Since Giorgio Vasari in the mid-sixteenth century made *arte greca* the retrograde, rigid, hieratic foil against which the Renaissance in the arts arose, it has seemed impossible to see Byzantine art in any other way. In a classic article now forty years old Ernst Kitzinger complained about this prevailing bias, demonstrating that Palaiologan art presented a vivifying challenge to Duecento and Trecento artists and in fact triggered and shaped their interest in the art of antiquity.[26] And yet, in many ways the old view remains in place. It has not been easy for scholars of Renaissance art to see the imports from Constantinople together with the splendid statues, Hellenistic and Roman, that inspired so many artists to rethink their conceptions of beauty. Still, the authority of the icons as samples of a lost civilization was immense, and in this respect they were at least the match of the marbles.

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[25] Nelson, "Byzantium and the Rebirth of Art and Learning in Italy and France," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 515–523, esp. 520–521.

[26] Kitzinger, "The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art," 25–47, 45: "Clearly, then, the Greek influence involved something more than an endless repetition by unimaginative Italian craftsmen of stale and outworn Byzantine formulae. It was a living challenge emanating from the most recent developments in Constantinople and taken up by leading artists."

STYLE AND SUBSTITUTION

The idea of style – that idea that form registers the circumstances of its own making – is the core concept of modern art historical scholarship. Style analysis gathers seemingly disparate artefacts into coherent groups. The very premise that enables the art historian may, however, actually impede understanding of how people in the past thought about the historicity of art. Paradoxically, Renaissance writers on architecture sometimes held up as paragons of the best ancient building manner structures that we would today classify as "Gothic." Alberti, for example, celebrated Florence cathedral for its union of charm and solidity, of grace and majesty, exactly what he considered to be the greatest achievement of Roman architecture;[27] Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini praised northern European cathedrals such as St. Stephen's in Vienna;[28] and Cesare Cesariano, in his 1521 edition of Vitruvius, reproduced the elevation of the cathedral in Milan to illustrate Vitruvian proportions.[29] As Hubertus Günther has pointed out, however, these authors had no intention of celebrating the style of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries.[30] In fact, they were not primarily thinking about architectural form in historical terms at all. Instead, they saw in these relatively modern buildings the very features – clarity, monumentality, proportion, and technological achievement – that made ancient architecture so praiseworthy. Unfortunately, there were few surviving samples of ancient architecture, and the very old buildings that supposedly best reflected ancient practices, such as the Baptistery in Florence, were not nearly as impressive as the Gothic cathedrals.

   Such backdatings permitted communities to link themselves to deep, prestigious origins by association with buildings, images, or motifs. There was usually plenty of incentive to designate an artefact as "ancient." In fact, the dream of reconnecting with a desirable origin-point may have been the only reason to think about the date of an artefact in the first

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[27] Alberti, "Profugiorum ab aerumna libri III" in his *Opere volgari*, 2:107–183; discussed by Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism*, esp. 59–79.

[28] Piccolomini, *Deutschland, der Brieftraktat*; Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations*, 244–248; Müller, *Die "Germania generalis" des Conrad Celtis*, 250–263.

[29] Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, I, 2, plate LVI. For discussion, see Krinsky, *Cesare Cesariano*.

[30] See Günther, "Die Vorstellung der griechischen Tempel."

place. But what was it about images and buildings that put them so readily in touch with the most distant pasts?

Unlike linguistic texts, such artefacts were *material*. They offered themselves as tangible relics, samples of a lost life-world. Everyone knew that in fact most artefacts were not so old. The church had been built on the site of a previous building; the painting copied or replaced an earlier painting. But the relic "effect," the rhetoric of the artefact, was so powerful that communities chose, in effect, to forget what they knew about production history and treat old artefacts as if they were very old.

Some special classes of buildings or images were officially linked to ancient prototypes by virtue of adherence to special exotic iconographies. The most striking examples were portraits of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints that delivered the features of authoritative prototypes that captured living likenesses. Some central-plan buildings enjoyed a comparable authority. Richard Krautheimer, in his seminal article on the "iconography" of medieval architecture (1942), argued that the imitations of the Holy Sepulchre built in Europe in the Middle Ages, by virtue of their preservation of proportional and numerological features of the originals, were understood not as copies so much as mystical reinstantiations of their prototypes.[31] The replica of the Holy Sepulchre in Italy or Germany confounded linear time, made antiquity present, and transported Jerusalem from there to here.

Such exceptional artefacts provided the model for all the others. The claim of this article is that the present-tense authority of many images and monuments, religious or secular, was bound up with some claim to ancient origins; and that that claim was sustained by a notional model of production similar to the one that sustained the sacred portraits or the central plan buildings. Like the icon or octagonal Baptistery, the artefact either *was* the original artefact, or was a reliable substitute for the original. It was difficult to imagine, certainly to articulate, the notion that an image- or building-type could be invented. And the chain of copies or substitutions that delivered the original type was – this was decided in advance, as it were – simply reliable.

The discipline of art history depends on, and often leaves unquestioned, a model of artefact production according to which each work is a singular event in a chronological sequence and reflects in its material makeup or stylistic features of the time in which it was made. Artefacts

31 Krautheimer, "Iconography of Christian Architecture."

understood in "typological" or "substitutional" terms are by contrast temporally unstable. They belong *both* to the time in which they were made *and* to the time of their referential content. What mattered was the referential authority of the work, its transmission of authoritative content, rather than those context-reflexive elements that advertise the moment of the artefact's production. People who used artefacts in this way automatically filtered out the noise of those context-sensitive elements, concentrating instead on the essential content transmitted by the image.[32] The result of such thinking was that a recent work had the capacity to participate in the antiquity of the prototype. The ninth-century Patriarch Nikephoros, for example, could say of an icon produced in his own day: "This representation of Christ is not a new invention. The picture has the authority of time: it is pre-eminent in its antiquity; it is coeval with the proclamation of the Gospels."[33] In this way it becomes possible to understand Renaissance misdatings as something other than mistakes.

The substitutional or typological models of production, which we believe governed most premodern thinking about the historicity of artefacts, were not symptoms of a massive naiveté about pictures or buildings. Rather, they functioned as myths that corrected for the obvious but uninteresting fact that material artefacts are actually fabricated at a given time and place and that they eventually do decay. These myths ensure the persistence of identity of artefacts and monuments despite the corrosive interference of time. For if every brick in a building is replaced over time, is it wrong to say that it is still the same building? The premise of identity preserved by substitution and typology came under new pressure in the fifteenth century, as artists and even architects began to present themselves as authors, as points of ultimate origin in their own right. This pressure forced both the idea of substitution and its opposite, the idea that artefacts are context-sensitive, historically specific productions, into a new conceptual clarity.

MOSAICS AS ANTIQUES

The dialectical tension between the substitutionally-generated and the handmade artefact may help explain, for example, Lorenzo de' Medici's special fondness for the medium of mosaic. Lorenzo de' Medici valued

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[32] For a fuller discussion of the "substitution" model of artefacts, see Nagel and Wood, "Towards a new Model of Renaissance Anachronism."

[33] Quoted by Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies*, 11.

icons, especially mosaic icons, precisely because they were exhibits of successful substitution at work, and in that sense stood in powerful contrast to the splendid new author-driven painting of his day, which he also collected, of course. The mosaic medium itself was strongly branded as antique. Ancient painting had barely survived and there was almost no sense of what it looked like. Ancient mosaics, on the other hand, could easily be seen first-hand; they were the expected form for two-dimensional images from antiquity. Beyond these empirical factors, mosaics symbolized a different modality for images, one that was less time-sensitive than painting. Mosaics were painting translated into hardened, durable form, as if painting needed to undergo some such conversion in order to survive through the ages. Mosaic lifted images away from the real-time activity of their production. In painting the minerals are finely ground and mixed with a medium, resulting in a fluid application that exactly registers the movement of the artist's hand. In mosaic, the material building blocks of the image remain integral, introducing a remove between author and image. Moreover, pieces of the mosaic could be replaced over time, and often were, without damaging the image's referential functions. Vasari nicely expressed this difference by recourse to a metaphor of continual re-ignition:

> Mosaic [he said] is the most durable painting there is; whereas ordinary painting is extinguished with time (*col tempo si spegne*) this kind of painting, in being continuously produced is reignited (*nello stare fatta di continuo s'accende*). And whereas painting on its own is consumed, mosaic due to its long life can almost be called eternal.[34]

In contrast to the analogue condition of painting, mosaic is digital in structure. It is in an eminently substitutable, restorable state. One did not have to be deluded to believe a relatively late mosaic was an antiquity; one only had to see it as the sum of a set of replaceable parts.

Lorenzo de' Medici was not content simply to collect the Greek icons. He also tried to ignite a mosaic revival in late fifteenth-century

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[34]Vasari, Introduction to *Le vite*, chap. 29: *Del musaico de' vetri, et a quello che si conosce il buono e lodato*, 1:148: "E certo è che il musaico è la più durabile pittura che sia, imperò che l'altra col tempo si spegne e questa nello stare fatta di continuo s'accende, et inoltre la pittura manca e si consuma per se medesima, ove il musaico per la sua lunghissima vita si può quasi chiamare eterno." See also in the life of Ghirlandaio, 3:494: "Usava dire Domenico la pittura essere il disegno, e la vera pittura per la eternità essere il musaico."

Florence. He directed two sets of brothers, Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio and Monte and Gherardo di Giovanni to learn and practice the craft.[35] Apparently, Lorenzo had plans to decorate the interior of Brunelleschi's cupola with mosaics.[36] In 1490, he contracted Domenico Ghirlandaio and Gherardo di Giovanni to provide mosaic decoration for the chapel of St. Zenobius, patron saint of Florence, also in the cathedral of Florence.[37] The effort, however, did not get very far, yielding little more than a test panel of St. Zenobius, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence.

COSMATESQUE PAVEMENTS AS ANTIQUES

Several signal monuments of Renaissance art – the Sistine Chapel (Fig. 3), Bramante's Tempietto (Fig. 4), and the Stanza della Segnatura (Fig. 9) – are paved with small coloured tiles in geometrical patterns typical of so-called Cosmatesque pavements, an ornamental system unique to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Rome and Lazio. Indeed, one could easily mistake the floors of these late fifteenth-and early sixteenth-century spaces for medieval floors. What precedents did the Renaissance designers think they were invoking? Little else in the Sistine Chapel, the Tempietto, or the Stanza della Segnatura raises associations with the Roman Middle Ages. It seems evident that Cosmatesque ornament was understood around 1500 as essentially an *ancient* form. As late as 1620, in fact, Giacomo Grimaldi in his *Descrizione* of Old Saint Peter's characterized the Cosmatesque pavement in that basilica as "perhaps Constantinian" (*fortasse Constantinani*);[38] that is, as old as the basilica itself. This was a not

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[35] On the Lorenzo-driven mosaic revival, see Kennedy, *Alesso Baldovinetti*, 191; Haftmann, "Ein Mosaik der Ghirlandaio Werkstatt"; and Chastel, "Une mosaïque Florentine du XVe siècle au Musée de Cluny."

[36] In the *Vita* of Baldovinetti, Vasari reports that when Lorenzo told Graffione, a pupil of Baldovinetti, that he wanted to cover the interior of Brunelleschi's cupola in the Cathedral with mosaic decoration, Graffione responded, "But there are no masters." Lorenzo replied, "We've got the money, we'll get the masters," prompting Graffione to quip, "Oh Lorenzo, it's the artists that make the money, not the money that makes the artists!"

[37] Only the ribs in the vaults were completed. See Haines, "Il principio di 'mirabilissime cose': i mosaici per la volta della cappella di San Zanobi."

[38] Grimaldi in *Descrizione della Basilica Antica di S. Pietro*, 141: "Pavimentum totum ex fragmentis marmorum. Alicubi cernebantur reliquiae primi pavimenti (et fortasse Constantiniani) vermiculato opera phrigiato ex albis, porphyretis serpentinisque

unreasonable assumption, given that Cosmatesque pavements are closely related to ancient pavement designs. A series of comparisons prepared by Paloma Pajares Ayuela reveals the similarities between ancient and Cosmatesque isotropic patterns (Fig. 5). Although the ancient examples on the left are *opus tessellatum*, composed of small regular mosaic pieces, while the *opus sectile* of the Cosmatesque floors involve differently shaped marble pieces, the origins of one in the other are clear enough. Because the medieval floors were in many cases composed out of marble fragments from previous floors, they were linked in a very real and material sense to antiquity.

The outfitting of the Sistine Chapel (see Fig. 3) with an ancient floor was especially appropriate given that the chapel as a whole stood in a powerful substitutional relationship to the most venerable prototype of all, the Temple of Jerusalem, whose proportions if not actual measurements as recorded in 1 Kings 6 match those of the Sistine Chapel.[39] It is likely that the dimensions, and possibly elements of the floor, go back to the erection of the building by Pope Nicholas III (r. 1277–1280). The important point is that both elements were understood, in the Renaissance, to point much further back.

The Tempietto (see Fig. 4) was built on an important ancient site, the spot, reputedly, where St. Peter was crucified. The building's special relation to its site was emphasized by its earliest commentator, Fra Mariano da Firenze, who wrote in 1517 that the height of the Tempietto was determined by the amount of the hill taken away to build it: *ad magnitudinem ablati collis*.[40] Thus the building was conceptually subterra-

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lapillis. In hoc sacro vermiculato solo magnae rotae errant, meo tempore has notavi: Tres amplae nobilissimae et integrae, quarum una fracta nunc est in novo pavimento ante sepulcrum Clementis VIII, visebantur ante solium pontificis apsidae veteris; Jacobus a Porta architectus rogatus a multis, ut integras inde elevaret sub dicto Clemente, quia volebant apsidam diruere, verba dedit et tales lapides flocci pendit. Fabricatores murorum massas super ipsas rotas deiciendo in plures partes fregerunt, multae licet crassitudinis essent; huiusmodi lapidis material cinericius erat, orientale granitum vocant. Illinc non longe alia rota similes minor erat, quam integram elevarunt. Mirabantur inspicientes et priscorum Romanorum potentiam inde arguebant."

[39] See Battisti, "Il Significato Simbolico della Cappella Sistina," and most recently, Danesi Squarzina, "La Sistina di Sisto IV."

[40] Fra Mariano da Firenze in *Itinerarium Urbis Romae*, 98: "At vero pro commoditate conventus mons crucifixionis in medio claustri remanens, adaequavit. Ibique magnum marmoreumque ciborium columnis ornatum ad magnitudinem ablate collis cum altare

nean, dug out of the site, and carried powerful archaeological associations. The Cosmatesque pavement offers itself, in effect, as a primordial floor, its footprint in antiquity.

The great counterpart to the site of Peter's crucifixion was that of Jesus' crucifixion. In Rome the nearest one got to that site was the Helena Chapel in the basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. In the first years of the sixteenth century, both sites, Tempietto and Helena Chapel, were under Spanish patronage. Helen, Constantine's mother, had reputedly transported earth from the foot of the cross at Golgotha, drenched with Christ's blood, into the flooring of the chapel in Santa Croce. The chapel housed a relic of the True Cross. This was a place of deep spatio-temporal ambiguity, a parcel of Jerusalem in Rome. Not surprisingly, it was known throughout the Middle Ages as Chapel Jerusalem. Here, too, we find a Cosmatesque pavement, much remanaged. Only a few sections remain and they were placed, at some point, near the altar, surrounding the area of the earth from Golgotha, that is, in the part of the chapel that is "oldest" (Fig. 6).

The Jerusalem chapel in Santa Croce is a laboratory of substitutions. The walls may date from the third or fourth century. Helena brought earth from the Holy Land. In the fifth century the chapel was outfitted with mosaics, perhaps under the patronage of Galla Placidia (c. 388–450), some of those mosaics remained at the end of the fifteenth century.[41] The space was restored repeatedly until, after 1500, it fell under the steward-ship of Cardinal Bernardino de Carvajal, who commissioned the ceiling decoration in mosaic, done about 1508, by Baldassare Peruzzi (Fig. 7).[42] This ceiling may reproduce elements of the fifth-century mosaics. At any rate, the original Golgotha chapel, the one in Jerusalem, is known to have carried a mosaic roundel of Christ in the apse above the *crux gemmata* placed by Constantine on the site of the Crucifixion.[43] We see reflections of the configuration in Jerusalem in the sixth-century Monza *ampullae* from the Holy Land; and it was reproposed on a monumental scale in

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et cavernula Amadaei, ut visitor, exstruxit."

[41] Payne, "Lux Mundi," 35–43, 36, note 15 cites Ugonio, *Historia delle Stationi di Roma che si celebrano la Quadragesima*, Bb5v.

[42] The architectural refurbishing by Antonio da Sangallo occurred in 1519–1520; see Frommel, "Progetto e archeologia in due disegni di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane per Santa Croce in Gerusalemme," 382–389.

[43] Schmaltz, *Mater Ecclesiarum*, 277–278, citing Quaresmius, *Elucidatio*, II, 481. See also Pächt, "Avignon Diptych," 407, who cites the *Breviarius de Hierosolyma*.

Rome in the apse mosaic of the Lateran basilica as well as at Santo Stefano Rotondo. Peruzzi and Carvajal restored the Jerusalem configuration here, in Jerusalem in Rome, now again across the three dimensions of the chapel. Peruzzi's Christ roundel in the ceiling mosaic hovered above the relic of the True Cross transported here by Helena, so establishing a parallel to the Golgotha chapel in Jerusalem. Peruzzi's mosaic is thus multiply substitutional: it substituted for mosaics on this site, and for mosaics at the original Golgotha chapel in Jerusalem, and it did so by reference to Roman thirteenth-century apses, themselves understood as earlier substitutions.

The restoration of the Helena chapel in 1507–1508 was a significant event, certainly present to mind during the planning of the Stanza della Segnatura, which from 1508 to 1511 was decorated by Raphael and his assistants for Pope Julius II. Here the configuration of the ceiling is extremely similar to the ceiling of the chapel in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (Fig. 8). Mosaic persists, but now only as a reference: the tesserae on the ceiling of the Segnatura are fictive, merely painted, but on the floor, once again, there is neo-Cosmatesque pavement (Fig. 9). A watercolour done in the early eighteenth century by John Talman maps the floor (Fig. 10).[44] It would seem that the quincunx configuration was not made for this space. It was installed, in alignment with the window, and then the smaller panels of isotropic decoration were fitted in around it. This suggests that this floor was probably not newly created for this space, as at the Tempietto, but is older and was imported from elsewhere, perhaps from Saint Peter's. Nonetheless, Julius II enthusiastically adopted the floor and claimed it as his own.[45] This sort of floor appealed to Julius, for he had one like it installed in 1482 in the apartments he had built at Santi Apostoli when still a Cardinal, in a room, in fact, that corresponds in several ways to the Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican.[46] It is hard to imagine that Julius II would have been unaware of Seutonius' account of his namesake Julius Caesar's extravagant predilection for having mosaic floors (*sectilia pavimenta*) carried about for him when on expedition.[47]

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[44] Brown, *Earlier British Drawings*, cat. 219; Brown ink and watercolour over graphite, 1057 x 770 mm.

[45] The inscriptions in *opus tessellatum* bearing the name of Julius II look like additions, suggesting they were introduced by Julius into the pre-existing floor.

[46] See Magister, *Collezione di Antichità del Cardinale Giuliano Della Rovere*.

[47] Seutonius, *Julius Caesar*, 46: "Munditiarum lautitiarumque studiosissimum multi prodiderunt; villam in Nemorensi a fundamentis incohatam magnoque sumptu abso-

CONCLUSION

We have discussed a number of Renaissance works modeled on a range of artefacts and monuments that modern scholarship would date squarely to the middle ages: Cosmatesque pavement, Romanesque and Byzantine churches, Byzantine painted and mosaic icons as well as manuscript illuminations. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries neither artists nor patrons were afraid to confront and absorb these precedents. It would be misleading to describe these imitations as instances of "medievalism," or the deliberate adoption of an obsolete or outdated style. Rather, they are aspects of the overall cultural project of *rinascita dall'antichità*. The twelfth- and thirteenth-century artefacts were treated as if they were antiquities. We would go so far as to argue that, strictly speaking, such monuments ought to be catalogued in the Census of Antique Works of Art known to the Renaissance, alongside Hellenistic sarcophagi and statuary.[48] The corpus of "alternative antiquities" introduces a stranger antiquarianism, one that does not so much dispel as thrive on temporal confusion.

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lutam, quia non tota ad animum ei responderat, totam diruisse, quanquam tenuem adhuc et obaeratum; in expeditionibus tessellata et sectilia pavimenta circumtulisse."

    [48]See the preliminary volume by Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*. The project has been expanded in the digital "Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance" maintained by the Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar der Humboldt-Universität in Berlin, at <http://www.dyabola.de>.

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Figure 1 Christ enthroned, ivory, 10th century; silver revetment with gems and nielli roundels of the Evangelists and Church Fathers and the coat of arms of Giuliano della Rovere, 1500, private collection, Switzerland. (After Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 2. fig. 12)

Figure 2 Christ Pantocrator, micromosaic, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, 12th century. (Nicolo Orsi Battaglini/ Art Resource, NY)

Figure 3 Interior of the Sistine chapel, marble, Vatican City, c. 1478. (Scala/ Art Resource, NY)

Figure 4 Floor of the Tempietto at San Pietro in Montorio, marble, Rome, c. 1503. (Photo: Alexander Nagel)

3-18a. Roman mosaic, Utique, Tunisia

3-19a. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18b. Roman mosaic, Ouzouër-sur-Trézée, France

3-19b. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18c. Roman mosaic, Trieste, Italy

3-19c. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18d. Roman mosaic, Trieste, Italy

3-19d. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18e. Roman mosaic, Italica, Spain

3-19e. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18f. Roman mosaic, Ostia, Italy

3-19f. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18g. Roman mosaic, Hammam Guergour, Algeria

3-19g. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

3-18h. Roman mosaic, Fréjus, France
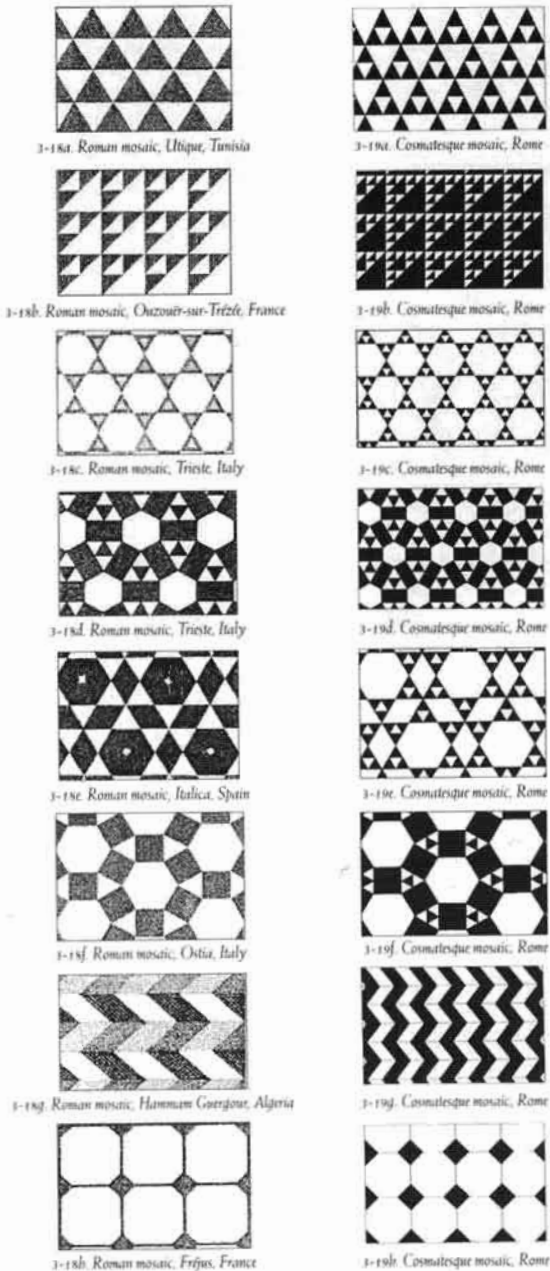
3-19h. Cosmatesque mosaic, Rome

Figure 5 Diagram comparing ancient Roman and Cosmatesque isotropic patterns. (After Pajares Ayuela, *Cosmatesque Ornament*, Figs. 3–18, 3–19)

Figure 6 Floor of the Chapel of St. Helen, marble, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome, date uncertain. (Photo: Alexander Nagel)

Figure 7 Baldassare Peruzzi, ceiling of the Chapel of St. Helen, mosaic, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome, 1507. (Alinari/Art Resource, NY)

Figure 8 Raphael and assistants, ceiling of the Stanza della Segnatura, fresco, Vatican City, 1508–1509. (Scala/ Art Resource, NY)

Figure 9 Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican City, 1508–12. Cosmatesque floor of uncertain date, installed in this room during the pontificate of Julius II, 1503–1513. (Scala/ Art Resource, NY)
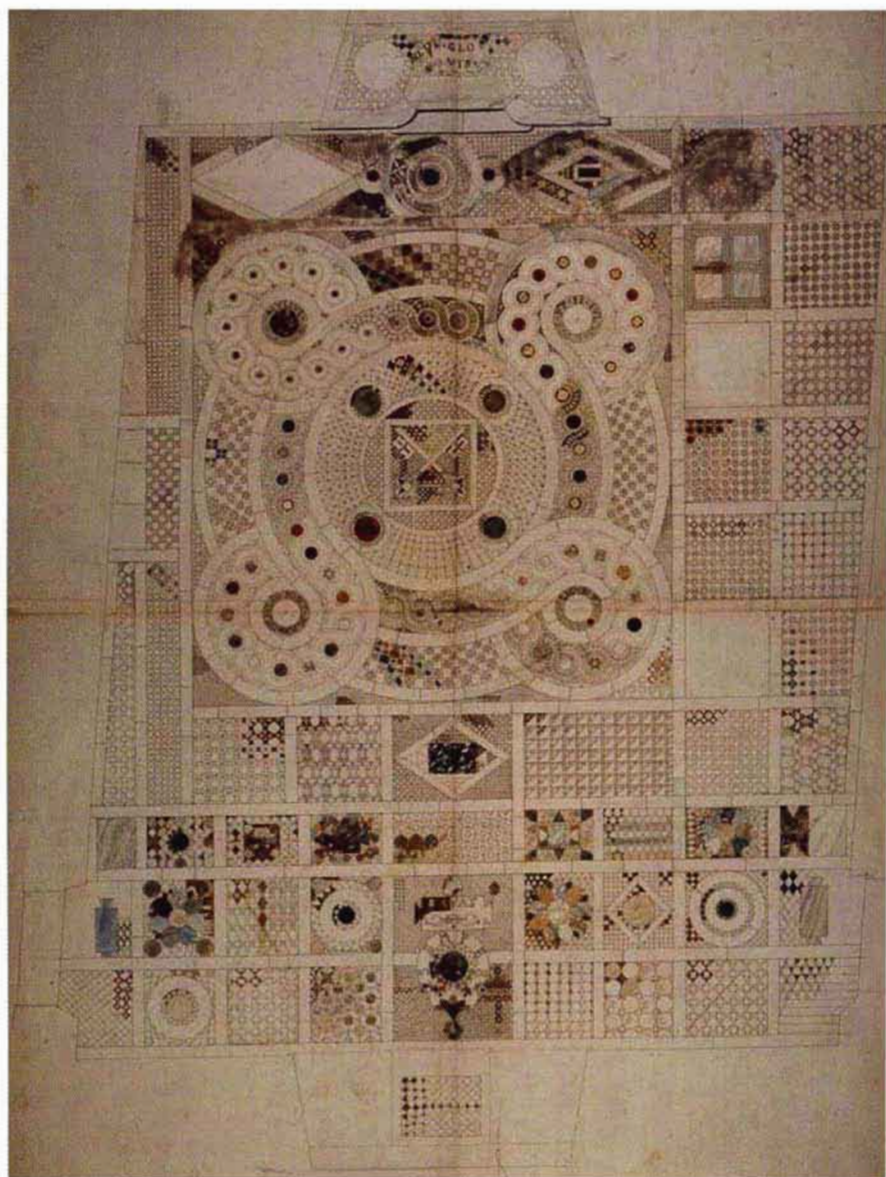
Figure 10 John Talman, diagram of the floor of the Stanza della Segnatura, watercolor, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, early eighteenth century. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)