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Founded in 1968, the Metropolitan Museum Journal is a double-anonymous, peer-reviewed scholarly journal published annually that features original research on the history, interpretation, conservation, and scientific examination of works of art in the Museum’s collection. Its range encompasses the diversity of artistic practice from antiquity to the present day. The Journal encourages contributions offering critical and innovative approaches that will further our understanding of works of art.

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ABBREVIATIONS
MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
MMJ Metropolitan Museum Journal

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.
Although the literature contains several contributions regarding Ciro Ferri’s artistic production and his position as agent and director of the Medici Academy in Rome, several episodes are yet to be reconstructed so that we may better understand this artist’s role in serving the grand ducal court.¹ This article sheds light on the preparation of the parade carriages Ferri designed for the cavalcade of Prince Francesco Maria de’ Medici (1660–1711), brother of Grand Duke Cosimo III, who visited Rome in spring 1687 to receive the cardinal’s hat from Pope Innocent XI.²

Correspondence found at the Archivio di Stato in Florence between the future young cardinal and his artistic contacts in Rome elucidates some of the episodes pertaining to Ferri’s assignment. The letters,
written from autumn 1686 to May 1687, are used here to trace the production of the vehicles by analyzing the dialogue between the patron and Abbot Angelo Doni, a man of great culture who was the artistic agent of the grand ducal family in the eternal city. Another source provides critical information: the booklet titled *Breve ragguaglio della promozione alla porpora* (Brief Account of the Elevation to the Cardinalate), written in 1687 by Giovanni Andrea Lorenzani, a Roman chronicler. Given the lack of illustrated plates accompanying the text, Lorenzani’s exacting descriptions of the event provide invaluable insights about the final appearances of the carriages. Together, the two sources provide a visual impression of the carriages. This article focuses on three drawings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art that contain decorative ideas for carriages intended for the Roman school. They are catalogued among work by anonymous late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Italian artists. The sheets under examination come from a disassembled album, previously owned by a Piedmontese collection, then sold on the antiquarian market, and partly acquired by the Museum in 1952 from the János Scholz collection. All the sheets bear a Gothic “A” stamped in purple ink.

The solemn procession to receive the cardinalate held great relevance. For any designated figure in
dramatic, political, and religious terms it was an occasion to flaunt the power of lineage. According to the Roman ceremonial, the future cardinal was expected to prepare two processions: the first for his entrance into the city from the Porta del Popolo and the second for his arrival at the apostolic palace to receive the cardinal’s biretta. The first of the two processions always drew a crowd of onlookers; however, the latter demanded the highest financial outlay as it required a considerable contingent of noblemen and clerics to lead the parade of the cardinal’s carriages that were the true centerpiece of the event. The carriages were divided between the richly decorated ones for the nobility and the plainer ones for the retinue. The outer structure of a noble carriage might feature one or more gilded wood carvings positioned on the front and back, designed to extol the person’s virtues through allegories and the family’s coat of arms. The carriage interior, door panels, upholstered seats, and ceiling would be lined in finely embroidered velvet.

The task of creating an image to match the ambitions of the Medici family was conferred on Ferri, who began working on drawings and models in October 1686. The artist was a major authority on carriage design: in 1686 he gained favorable recognition for the carriages of the ambassador of England, Lord Palmer Castlemaine, and soon after he also received a commission for those of Rinaldo II d’Este (1655–1737). The latter had been appointed cardinal at the same time as the young Francesco Maria and was to make his ceremonial appearance in December 1688. In designing these moving vehicles, Ferri could not avoid taking into account models created by a previous generation, notably Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who, with his bold experiments, had succeeded in raising the artistic potential of this means of transport. Among Bernini’s disciples, Johann Paul Schor became one of the most talented furniture designers of the mid-seventeenth century. The naturalism of his carriages, which featured intertwined leafy ornamentation and no more than three figures, gave way from the 1680s onward to denser decorative arrangements that influenced Ferri’s mature period.

To familiarize himself with the style of Roman-style parade chariots, Francesco Maria de’ Medici asked Angelo Doni to find him a drawing of the noble carriage of the ambassador Lord Castlemaine to King James II. The sheet reached Florence on October 19, and as early as the 22nd, Francesco Maria de’ Medici reported that he was impressed by the grandeur of the carriage and replied that elephants, not horses, would be needed to draw the coach. Lord Castlemaine’s first imposing carriage, which appeared in January 1687, featured a large group of almost life-size statues, as can be seen in the print commemorating the occasion (fig. 1). The assemblage of sculptures was a celebration of England’s power over land and sea, which was represented by Cybele and Neptune raising a crown. Behind them, two tritons alluded to the sea, while the lower part contained a unicorn and lion, emblems of the Crown, advancing.

The grand ducal court then received Ferri’s preliminary ideas for the cardinal’s procession: a drawing for the first noble carriage with figures of the Arno and Tiber Rivers and a second drawing of a carriage with simple carvings for the retinue. Doni notes that the subject of the first carriage was executed “secondo il pensiero da me suggerito al Sign.r Ciro (following the idea I had suggested to Lord Ciro),” thereby proving his skill as an iconographic designer and his firsthand relationship with the artist in creating the carriages. This design matches Ferri’s well-known sheet in the Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe of the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, portraying two imposing male deities wearing laurel crowns and holding oars. They represent the Arno River at right, sitting on a lion, and the Tiber River at left, while the she-wolf suckles Romulus and Remus (fig. 2). The sculptural energy and expressive vibrancy of the sheet are reminiscent of work by Ferri’s master, Pietro da Cortona. The smooth, mellow red pencil strokes are complemented by watercolor brushstrokes that highlight the central group, leaving part of the upright at left and wheels in the background.

Francesco Maria’s comments were not long in coming, and on October 25 he wrote to the secretary that he preferred there be no figures on the carriage because they did not meet his taste, and that the weight of so many figures would make it difficult for the horses to draw the coach. The monumental ceremonial carriages in the Roman style, as already observed for the English ambassador’s first carriage, seemed overly lavish in the eyes of a Florentine accustomed to more unassuming vehicles. His request troubled Abbot Doni, and his subsequent lengthy letter pointed out that the front carriages of all the cardinals presented the figure of an angel or animal in addition to ornamental foliage. He further reported that the designs he had seen prepared for other cardinals and princes were adorned with numerous sculptures. Even greater opulence and larger statues were reserved for those of the ambassadors, drawn by six horses. To preempt his patron’s recurring objection about weight, Doni reassured him.
that all sculptures would be medium-sized, carved from lightweight wood and hollowed out inside.¹⁸

Doni then discussed the second parade coach, suggesting that the prince should select a design based on foliage only, to which a lion or other figure evoking the Medici coat of arms could eventually be added.¹⁹

No reply to this suggestion has been found; however, it seems to have been accepted, as Lorenzani’s account states that the third vehicle portrayed the crowning of the Marzocco, the symbol of Florence.²⁰ Notably, a design in The Met shows the rear train of a chariot with a putto crowning a lion that rests its paw on a ball with three fleurs-de-lis (fig. 3). Writing on the verso of the sheet identifies the design as the “Disegno della 3a Carrozza nobile del servito nero” (Drawing of the 3rd black carriage). The lion and the putto are enclosed by the leafy ornamentation of the uprights; the wheels are barely outlined, and a light brushstroke marks the vehicle’s shadow to provide greater depth to the drawing. The firm strokes used to outline the shapes and the areas in blue-gray ink bear little resemblance to Ferri’s fluid style, but it remains possible that the drawing was executed by someone associated with his workshop. The drawing could be a copy of a compositional
proposal based on Ferri’s model for the carriage, or even a copy from the master’s original to be used to execute the carvings.21 The artisan appointed to execute the wooden parts may have been Giorgetti, a member of a family of Roman carvers extending back more than two generations.22 He could be identifiable as the little-known Giovanni Giuseppe, son of Giovanni Maria and brother of Antonio, both of whom had died by the time of this commission. Giorgetti undoubtedly possessed skills ranging from drawing to modeling. However, there is not enough evidence to attribute The Met’s drawing to this still elusive figure.23

The technique and draftsmanship of the project in The Met match that of another sheet in the Museum that depicts the rear of a vehicle, the uprights of which are solely embellished with decorative foliage (fig. 4). Comparison with the Marzocco carriage design reveals similar strokes and watercoloring and the same ornamental language with acanthus leaves and large flowers. The resemblances suggest that the sheet can be
identified as a copy from an original by Ferri or one of the artists who worked closely with him. The inscription *Disegno della 2ª Carrozza nera* (Drawing of the 2nd black carriage) in the lower margin of the drawing in figure 4 is identical to the inscription on the sheet with the Marzocco carriage, linking the two sheets to the same project. However, the description in Lorenzani’s *Breve ragguaglio* explains that the carriage was decorated not only with foliage but also with two cherubs frolicking among the leaves. Regrettably, the correspondence does not disclose any other details related to Francesco Maria’s selected iconography, but the sheet in The Met (fig. 3) was likely a preliminary design idea, which was then modified in keeping with the prince’s frequently stated preferences for a subdued and lightweight carriage. Here again, Abbot Doni recommended this compositional solution, as reflected in a letter in which he refers to a drawing that had been sent to Florence and from which inspiration could be taken. The sheet depicted the first noble carriage adorned with three cherubs that was being made for the Neapolitan Cardinal Fortunato Ilario Carafa della Spina, who had also been appointed cardinal by Innocent XI. 

Carriages portraying angels frolicking among acanthus fronds were common in those years, and some idea of their appearance can be gleaned from a study contained in the same album from the János Scholz collection in The Met (fig. 5). The sheet is rendered with a well-defined pen stroke, which was intended to express shapes in a sculpted manner. Unlike the others, the drawing bears no inscription that traces it to its intended recipient. Once again, the graphic style and handling of this sheet may be a copy from a design similar to those devised by Ferri in the late 1680s and attributable to a Roman artist.

By the second week of November, the designs for Francesco Maria’s noble carriages had been approved, and Abbot Doni had commenced production. He also attempted to restrict visitor access to the workshop, wanting to retain an element of surprise during the procession. Despite these precautions, Camillo Affarosi, an agent of the future Cardinal Rinaldo II d’Este, succeeded in intercepting two drawings of the first and second Medici carriages and dispatched them to Modena. Although we have no information about the origin of these drawings, their existence further proves how lively the circulation of reproductions of the original models must have been at the time. Ferri presented the compositional design of the two rivers to Affarosi again a few months later as a proposal for one of the carriages of the Este prince’s procession. Affarosi then wrote to Rinaldo II that he liked the design, especially the lower part, but he doubted that it would be executed, since it closely resembled the Florentine’s first carriage with the rivers. Affarosi, however, insisted that should the carriage be to the prince’s liking, some alterations could be made to give it a distinctive appearance.

The custom of replicating a successful innovation, changing no more than a few details, was a well-established practice that appears not to have raised any significant concerns about the vehicle’s originality. Thus, it is unsurprising to find similar iconography for a carriage designed by Giovanni Battista Foggini for the wedding coach of Violante Beatrice of Bavaria for her marriage to Ferdinando de’ Medici, nephew of Cardinal Francesco Maria, celebrated in Florence on January 9, 1689. Anton Francesco Marmi’s chronicle of the wedding reports that the chariot was carved by a famous sculptor who designed the front with figures that are slightly less in relief than life-size ones. At the back he portrayed two pairs of figures, the first of which
represented the allegories of Peace and Abundance holding a royal crown, and the second two rivers, the Arno and the Danube. Between the two figures is a lion in the act of drinking.30 The description is similar to that of a drawing in the Museum der Bildenden Künste in Leipzig, in which a lion about to advance is portrayed in the same pose as that of the third Medici carriage. The only differences are the half-moon attribute on which the animal treads and the two virtues on each side, identifiable as Prudence and Abundance.31

The correspondence in Florence and Modena has proven to be a valuable documentary tool containing a wealth of new information regarding the circumstances surrounding the production of the Medici cardinal’s three parade carriages. These extraordinary vehicles resulted from a combination of the patron’s needs, his appointed agents’ ambitions, and the creativity of the artists and their collaborators. The stylistic variety of the sheets in The Met exposes the complex issues involved in analyzing carriage designs, especially the identification of the artists and their individual roles. The study of graphic works alongside documentary sources is an essential starting point for understanding these extraordinary ephemeral vehicles that no longer exist yet fascinated Roman spectators in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

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NOTES
1 The topic is explored extensively in my doctoral thesis, which is being completed at the University of Genoa under the supervision of Professor Daniele Sanguineti. On Ciro Ferri as a designer, see Davis 1986 and Prosperi Valenti Rodinò 2015.
2 On this ceremony, see Fusconi 1984 and Figlioli dell’Arco 1997, 537. On the Prince-Cardinal, see Paoli 2009.
3 Although the name of the agent Angelo Doni is familiar to scholars of art collecting between Florence and Rome in the late seventeenth century, his biography is unknown. Gualandi 1844–56, 3:213–49.
4 The lack of prints in the Ragguaglio limits our knowledge of the event. The entrances of the English envoy and of Cardinal Rinaldo II d’Este, both of which feature a series of engravings of vehicles, are better known. For Castlemaine’s entrance, see Wright 1687 and Figlioli dell’Arco 1997, 528–31; for Rinaldo II d’Este’s entrance, see Lorenzani 1688; Fusconi 1984, 82–84; Figlioli dell’Arco 1997, 543–45; and Curci 1999, 234–36.
5 This letter “A” was described by Frits Lugt (Lugt S 47a) “as an unidentified mark on a collection of drawings which, he reported, may have belonged to the Savoia-Aosta family”; Myers 1975, 6, 8 (quote). See also Scholz 1976, ix, and Tordella 1996, 25–26n6.
6 Angelo Doni, letter to Francesco Maria de’ Medici, October 8, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 49: “Sig. Abbate Francesco Maria de’ Medici, letter to Angelo Doni, October 25, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 49: “et non fosse giudicato costà baronata non vorrei in nessuno ragion di disegni pareggiare a Roma a cagione del gran lavoro che mi costa in difesa di certi disegni che vi sono nel Sign. Ciro.”
7 On the topic is explored extensively in my doctoral thesis, which is being completed at the University of Genoa under the supervision of Professor Daniele Sanguineti. On Ciro Ferri as a designer, see Davis 1986 and Prosperi Valenti Rodinò 2015.
8 On Bernini’s invention of carriages, see Petrucci 2017, with previous bibliography.
11 Francesco Maria de’ Medici, letter to Angelo Doni, October 12, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 101: “Le soggiungo, che avrei caro, ch’ella mi mandasse il disegno della carrozza nobile fatta far costi dal S.r Amb.re d’Inghilterra.”
12 Angelo Doni, letter to Francesco Maria de’ Medici, October 19, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 46: “I disegni della Carrozza prima d’Inghilterra si mandano questa sera, e martedì prossimo s’invieranno quelli delle carrozze di V.A”; Francesco Maria de’ Medici, letter to Angelo Doni, October 22, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 106: “Ho visto i disegni della carrozza d’Inghilterra à tirar la quale credo che ci voglion elefanti, e non cavalli!”
13 The carvings of Lord Castlemaine’s carriages were awarded to Arnold van Westerhout based on graphic models developed by the Roman artist Giovanni Battista Leinardi; see Figlioli dell’Arco 1997, 528–31.
14 For a description of the carriage, see Wright 1687, 45.
15 Angelo Doni, letter to Francesco Maria de’ Medici, October 22, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 47: “Oui annessi riceverà V.A. Rev.ma due disegni delle Carrozze, uno figurato per la Prima Carrozza di ricamo, il quale rappresenta i due fiumi Arno, e Tevere secondo il pensiero da me suggerito al Sign.r Ciro, e l’altro semplicemente intagliato il quale servirà per le dieci carrozze di seguito.”
16 Francesco Maria de’ Medici, letter to Angelo Doni, October 25, 1686, ASFI, Principato Mediceo, doc. 5818, p. 49: “Sig. Abbate non mi porta altro di preciso et che mi obbliga ad altra risposta che i disegni della prima carrozza qualcheduno si fosse possibile et non fosse giudicato costà baronata non vorrei in nessuno
Il disegno mostra il carro che sosteneva detta carozza, nella parte di dietro, li bracci erano di fogliami intrecciati; nel mezzo vi era un Leone che scherzando fra foglie poneva il piede sopra una palla, la quale era adornata con li tre gigli impresa della Serenissima Casa, nella cimasa vi era un putto, con ghirlanda di fiori in atto di coronare detto leone, la parte d'avanti, e le rote erano tutte lavorate con bellissima simetria, come anche la serratura disegno del medesimo signor Ciro.

On this subject, see Ehrlich 1975, 1:189–211; Fusconi 1984, 97; and Disegni decorativi del barocco romano 1986, 18–26.

On the Giorgettis, see Montagu 1970 and Parisi 2019.

On the basis of the inscription at the bottom, the author has linked the drawing to the solemn entry into Rome in 1675 of the Portuguese ambassador Don Luis de Sousa; however, at present no account of this procession has been found to confirm this hypothesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASFI Archivio di Stato di Firenze
ASM Archivio di Stato di Modena


Disegni decorativi del barocco romano


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Fagiolo dell’Arco, Marcello

Fusconi, Giulia

Gualandi, Michelangelo

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Sanguineti, Daniele

Schmidt, Eike D.

Scholz, Janos

Tordella, Piera Giovanna

Werkner, Patrick

Wright, Michael
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