

Sculpture in site: Examining the relationship between  
sculpture and site in the principal works of Giambologna

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (by Dissertation) in Art History  
and Theory

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January 2019

*Abstract: It is often said that the best understanding of a given situation requires the broadest scope of vision. Yet this is seldom taken literally. If we take a step back from conducting an analysis of every inch of a sculpture's surface and choose to look around the sculpture and understand its site, a whole new perspective reveals itself. This is the approach that I propose in my thesis. Taking three principal works of Giambologna—Fountain of Neptune, Appennino, and Ratto delle Sabine—as case studies, I examine how sculptures respond to their sites, be it through design choices made during production, or how the sculptural elements were impacted by installing them in the given sites. I analyse the spaces of the sites in relation to the sculptures, seeking to determine how the sculptures changed or enhanced their sites, and how the spaces influenced the ways in which viewers engaged with the sculptures. Throughout this discussion, my goal is to characterise the nature of the relationship between the sculptures and sites, whether on a physical level or a conceptual level. I argue that divorcing a sculpture from its site robs the spectator, or student, of much needed context, without which the sculptures cannot be wholly understood and appreciated. I demonstrate the importance of understanding the original spaces, physical and conceptual, in order to remove anachronism from the perception of a given sculpture.*

## **Acknowledgements**

My deepest gratitude to my family, whose patience and support through the difficult parts of my research was invaluable in completing this thesis.

Many thanks to my supervisor Dr Diana Presciutti for all her invaluable help throughout the data gathering and writing process, as well as the departmental staff for helping me every step of the way.

<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Fountain of Neptune</b>	23
Bologna and Piazza del Nettuno	25
The Neptune of Bologna	33
<b>Appennino</b>	50
Pratolino and the Cinquecento Villa	52
The Giant in the garden	61
<b>Ratto delle Sabine</b>	76
Piazza della Signoria under Florentine Scrutiny	78
The Florentine Ratto	85
<b>Conclusion</b>	97
<b>Index of Images</b>	106
<b>Bibliography</b>	120

# Introduction

The 1588 inventory of Villa Medici, Rome, has been largely responsible for the scholarly attention given to Ferdinando de' Medici's collection of sculptures, comprising of Roman antiques, as well as more modern work of cinquecento artists.<sup>1</sup> Most of the collection in question was held on the ground floor, in rooms such as the main salon, the loggia, the gallery, and the north and south sections, all arranged in perfect symmetry.<sup>2</sup> However, some of the collection was also present outside, in the immediate gardens and other sections of the villa's grounds.<sup>3</sup> The outside collection was organised according to a number of motifs, such as the central axis alluding to divinity, namely Apollo and Diana, with the villa building being directly in the centre of it.<sup>4</sup> The two ends of this axis each had their principal story or theme, with one showing the story of Niobe, specifically the episode of the massacre of the children, while the other represents Mount Parnassus.<sup>5</sup> Within this grand iconographic structure composed of countless sculptures, antique and modern, as well as villa salon walls covered in frescos and ornaments, a single sculpture catches the eye, a figure that seems perfectly at home in this composition, yet ready and free to fly away. I speak of Giambologna's *Mercury* [fig.1].

This is a relatively small sculpture, a seemingly miniscule fountain when compared to Giambologna's many acclaimed and famous colossi, such as the *Appennino* or *Fountain of Neptune*. It is a depiction of *Mercury* that is but one of a number of different reproductions of the

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Hochmann, "Introduzione. La collezione di villa Medici: i primi esperimenti museografici del cardinale Ferdinando," in *Villa Medici: il sogno di un cardinale: collezioni e artisti di Ferdinando de' Medici*, ed. Michel Hochmann (Rome: De Luca, 1999), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Gasparri, "I marmi antichi di Ferdinando. Modelli e scelte di un grande collezionista," in *Villa Medici: il sogno di un cardinale: collezioni e artisti di Ferdinando de' Medici*, ed. Michel Hochmann (Rome: De Luca, 1999), 52.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

same subject matter by the artist. And despite this, there is no better introduction to the complex topic of the relationship between Giambologna's sculptures and their sites than this fleeting figure. For what must be considered when trying to establish how sculptures responded to their sites, and how sites responded to their sculptures? There are two different places to begin this analysis: a physical examination of the sculpture, and a closer study of the site and its occupants. Let us examine this *Mercury* through the lens of formal analysis and begin drawing out the deeper issues important to us in this context.

The sculpture depicts the pagan god Mercury mid-flight, his left foot pushing off a gust of wind blown up from Zephyr's mouth beneath the figure [fig.2], the exhalation acting as both a support for the figure and the holder for most of the fountain's water spouts [fig.3]. The figure's pose is commonly praised for its seemingly perfect equilibrium. For example, the catalogue of a prominent text on the Villa Medici lauds the figure for being tightly composed and balanced, while at the same time remaining dynamic in its gesture and implied movement.<sup>6</sup> This is an observation with which other scholars have agreed. Herbert Keutner places *Mercury's* raised index finger as his point of equilibrium, around which the entire sculpture revolves, so to speak.<sup>7</sup> He, too, notes that the figure's pose comes together in a singular elastic action, with its frontal viewing point being quite closed and confined, while the lateral viewing point shows an open and active composition of limbs.<sup>8</sup> Charles Avery, in turn, ranks *Mercury* as one of Giambologna's many male bronze figures that show "open compositions in active poses with outstretched limbs."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Michel Hochmann, "Catalogo," in *Villa Medici: il sogno di un cardinale: collezioni e artisti di Ferdinando de' Medici*, ed. Michel Hochmann (Rome: De Luca, 1999), 202.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Keutner, ed., *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante e altre opere giovanili* (Florence: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 1984), 32.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Avery, *Giambologna The Complete Sculpture* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1993), 28.

My goal in this thesis is to analyse sculptures not just as autonomous artworks, but also in relation to their physical sites. The Medici *Mercury* presents an ideal opportunity for such an approach, as much of the scholarly writing on this sculpture, if interpreted with the site in mind, provides the contextual information to support a site-specific analysis. Specifically, the Medici *Mercury* is often compared to different versions of *Mercury* by Giambologna, most often the version that we know he made as a wedding gift to Emperor Maximilian II [fig.4].<sup>10</sup> Despite the formal similarity between the two *Mercurys*, scholars usually point out that the Medici *Mercury* shows *better* balance, is *more* tightly composed; in contrast, the previous iterations are deemed to struggle with the sense of weightlessness.<sup>11</sup> On a surface level, such a comparison testifies to Giambologna's inventiveness and his ability to improve. However, if we view the Medici *Mercury* as the *Mercury* intended for the Villa Medici—in other words, as a sculpture with a specific space—the change in design raises a new line of inquiry. Is the Medici *Mercury* a natural evolution of a motif repeatedly created by the same artist, or is there something specific about Villa Medici that inspired the design adjustments? I argue for the latter interpretation: that it was the specific site in the Villa Medici, as well as the general context of a cinquecento villa, that likely inspired the design changes, including the new base for the sculpture.

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<sup>10</sup> Patrizio Patrizi, *Il Giambologna. [A study of his life and work, with illustrations]* (Milan: L.F. Cogliati, 1905), 105; Keutner, *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante*, 27. Raffaello Borghini's account of this *Mercury* also describes it as the size of a 15-year-old boy, which does not correspond with the Medici *Mercury*, now situated in the Bargello: Raffaello Borghini, *Il riposo di Raffaello Borghini in cui della pittura, e della scultura si fa uella, de' piu illustri pittori, e scultori, e delle piu famose opere loro si fa mentione; e le cose principali appartenenti à dette arti s'insegnano*. (Florence: n.p., 1584), 587.

<sup>11</sup> Keutner talks about the gradual improvement in design and the sense of weightlessness between the Bolognese and Medici *Mercury* sculptures. Irving explicitly specifies that the Medici *Mercury* is the *Mercury* that demonstrates the sense of flight and immunity from the laws of gravity. Lastly, Hochmann in the 1999 catalogue to the Villa Medici collection mentions that the Dresden *Mercury* shows this pose in its early stages, a bit more crude, while the Medici *Mercury* demonstrates better composition and balance in the pose, especially in comparison to the Bolognese *Mercury*: Keutner, *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante*, 30-32; Irving Lavin, "Bologna è una grande intrecciatura di eresie: il Nettuno di Giambologna al crocevia," in *Il Luogo ed il Ruolo della Città di Bologna tra Europa Continentale e Mediterranea, Atti del Colloquio C.I.H.A. 1990*, ed. Giovanna Perini ([S.l.], Nuova Alfa editoriale, 1992), 17; Hochmann, "Catalogo," 202.

In order to justify my argument, the spaces in the Villa Medici must be examined. While we know little about the acquisition of this *Mercury* by Ferdinando aside from the 1588 inventory, an etching by Giovanni Francesco Venturini [fig.5] shows the *Mercury* as an integral part of an intricate sculptural and architectonic composition. Glenn Andres' account of the site also supports the existence of an overarching narrative in this space, linked to the aforementioned central axis of the whole villa, namely *Mount Parnassus*.<sup>12</sup> The *Parnassus* was the home of the sun god Apollo, a patron of many arts and scholarly pursuits common to the intellectual elite of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italy, such as philosophy, mathematics, and science.<sup>13</sup> Andres claimed that in a 1607 maintenance report, the entire villa was referred to as "Monte Parnaso".<sup>14</sup> Apollo and Mercury were connected: Apollo was the patron of intellectual pursuits and Mercury, being the messenger of gods, spread these pursuits amongst the people.<sup>15</sup> As Andres puts it, "fame is governed through its transmission by word", and knowledge follows a similar path.<sup>16</sup> Thus Giambologna's *Mercury* fits into a larger narrative structure in the Villa Medici.

This broader conceptual space with which *Mercury* interacts is what I call the *Mercury's macrospace*. This is one half of a spatial duality I propose here for the analysis of sculptures: the *microspace* and *macrospace*.<sup>17</sup> The *microspace* can be understood as the immediate space of the

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<sup>12</sup> Glenn M. Andres, *The Villa Medici in Rome*, vol.1 (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1976), 291.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>14</sup> Glenn M. Andres, *The Villa Medici in Rome*, vol.2 (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1976), 212.

<sup>15</sup> Andres, *The Villa Medici in Rome*, vol.1, 292.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Andres establishes a further connection between Apollo and Mercury by using the Pegasus, another central motif used at the villa. Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* shows Mercury and Pegasus portrayed together when describing their iconography; Pegasus is, in turn, connected to Apollo through his servitude to the Muses and his creation of the fountain Hippocrene. Thus all three figures share a bond. See Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* [Padua, 1611] (New York: Garland Pub, 1976), 155-156.

<sup>17</sup> These two terms are my own invention. I developed these in an effort to simplify spatial analyses of sculptures. When I originally undertook a thorough examination of the sculptures' spaces, I noticed that some sculptures are multi-layered, like *Fountain of Neptune*, or have a strong differentiation between their spaces and the spaces around them, like the Medici *Mercury*. Henri Lefebvre explains how tricky classifying space can be, especially when it comes to drawing the lines between conceptual and physical spaces, so I decided to split it into two categories. I leaned on the theory of spatial dividers, as explained by Alice Giannitrapani and Lefebvre, to create a spatial dichotomy. These classifications allow me to better examine the spaces in question and demonstrate my points in a



sculpture, marked by the outer-most element, such as a base that extends beyond the vertical limits of the actual sculpture. Although the term leans on the linguistic flair of “microcosm”, *microspace* is not representative of the *macrospace*, and can be interpreted as immediate or intimate space. However, it acts as a category to enable more organised spatial analysis, interacting heavily with the *macrospace*, hence the naming. The *macrospace* is the overarching space, physical and conceptual, into which the sculpture is inserted, and as such is much harder to define. While the site of a sculpture can be readily understood as the physical setting in which a sculpture is erected or exhibited, the *macrospace* entails all of the spaces with which the sculpture interacts. A town square can be a sculpture’s site, yet its *macrospace* could extend to the entire city, if the specific spatial characteristics of said city interact with the sculpture. This can also apply to conceptual aspects: for example, a sculpture can interact with the culture of a much larger space than the confines of the space within which it is physically placed.

In this case of the *Mercury*, the loggia where the sculpture was set may be its physical site, but the larger context of the Villa Medici—iconographically defined as a representation of Mount Parnassus—would be its *macrospace*. The distinction between site and *macrospace* may appear arbitrary, but it will help us differentiate between the physical setting of a sculpture, and the broader conceptual structure within which it operates. If Mercury is connected to Apollo and Parnassus through his divine duty to spread the word, then the artistic decision to emphasise flying and free-movement is key in order to integrate Giambologna’s *Mercury* into the narrative composition. We can also compare the Medici *Mercury* to the sculptor’s previous versions: while in the Villa Medici Zephyr’s exhalation carries Mercury up, in the other versions Mercury is

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more legible manner. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 3-16; Alice Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2013), 10-16, 26-27, 30-31.

simply landing on a ball, a common sculptural element that appears more like a default base than a meaningful iconographic element.

Such a change can have a number of reasons, two of which can be provided by Villa Medici. The first could be that a more elaborate base was required to serve as the main water outlet, as the *Mercury* needed to be adapted into a fountain. Second could be that the feeling of weightlessness and flight *had* to be highlighted in order to better fit with the narrative and visual elements of the sculpture's site and narrative *macrospace*. As an iconographic change aimed at integrating the sculpture into its surrounding space can be considered a reflection of both the patron and the spectator, this latter possibility raises the issue of the spectator. Ideally, both of these groups—patrons and viewers—would be able to notice and appreciate such a modification: Michael Cole states that at the time, artists were conscious of the fact that spectators engaged with artworks.<sup>18</sup> So it is conceivable that Giambologna would have had a general idea of what kind of reception the sculpture would have, how spectators were likely to engage with the artwork, and what they would notice.

If the Villa Medici were the *intended* site of this *Mercury*, then Cole offers us a believable explanation for the base's redesign. The importance lies in the word “exhalation”. Zephyr is shown as exhaling, an action that propels Mercury upwards. Cole states that the word “exhalation” was also a sixteenth-century term for a specific form of water purification common in fountains.<sup>19</sup> Simply explained, the process purifies water by pushing it through layers of grit filters, resulting in clean water becoming lighter and rising up above the dirtier water.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the light and pure water is “exhaled” upwards through the water jets.

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<sup>18</sup> Michael W. Cole, *Ambitious Form: Giambologna, Ammannati, and Danti in Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 280.

<sup>19</sup> Michael W. Cole, “The Medici ‘Mercury’ and the Breath of Bronze,” *Studies in the History of Art* 64 (2003): 132.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-135.

This is a comparison that, as Cole rightly states, would be apparent to those educated enough to understand the purification process, or at least be aware of it.<sup>21</sup> So now the question is whether the prototypical viewer, a visitor to Villa Medici, would fall into this erudite category. In order to understand the spectator, the spectator's space must be understood. Space is a direct product of the culture that is occupying it: Henri Lefebvre stated that "every society - and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e. all the societies which exemplify the general concept) produces a space, its own space."<sup>22</sup> In other words, spatial elements can inform us about how a space was used, what concerned the users, what the functions and intentions of said space were, as well as who frequented it and to whom it was catered. Cinquecento Italian villas were quite different from earlier Italian villas, as they were no longer agricultural, but instead acted as retreats for the elites, for wealthy villa owners and their guests—both groups often well versed in erudite philosophical and political topics.<sup>23</sup> As was mentioned before, Apollo, and the Mount Parnassus theme, all reference intellectual and scholarly pursuits. This corresponds with Lefebvre's assertions of a "society-specific" production of space: a shift towards intellectual pursuits resulted in the villa spaces being transformed into ones filled with symbols of these pursuits. Cinquecento villas were rather exclusive spaces: for example, the Villa di Pratolino was notorious for allowing access only once a year, on the Feast of Saint Cresci, unless one were explicitly invited.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the Villa Medici would have had a very specific *social space*, allowing us to estimate the type of spectator present, and more importantly, the type of response

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>22</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 31. Giannitrapani agrees with Lefebvre on this point, stating that each space is formed and defined by how it is used by its occupants, and what objects it contains: Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 14-17.

<sup>23</sup> Marcello Fagiolo, "Effimero e giardino: il teatro della città e il teatro della natura," in *Il Potere e lo spazio, La scena del principe*, ed. Franco Borsi (Florence: Centro Di Edizioni Alinari Scala, 1980), 42.

<sup>24</sup> Luigi Zangheri, "Il punto delle indagini storiche sull'Appennino," in *L'Appennino del Giambologna: Anatomia e Identità del Gigante*, ed. Alessandro Vezzosi (Florence: Alinea editrice, 1990), 45.

one could assume *Mercury* received. This was a space of debates, of politics, of philosophy, and of learned intellectuals and elites.

Taking Lefebvre's theory on space, it is safe to assume that the prototypical spectator of the *Mercury* was a learned individual, one most likely accustomed to reading villa garden sculptures in the context of grand narratives and intellectual ponderings, as the spaces of a cinquecento villa were specifically designed in this manner.<sup>25</sup> It is also quite likely that such visitors would, at the very least, know the name of the purification process, and thus appreciate the symbolism of Zephyr's exhalation. They would understand that the *Mercury* represents the purest, lightest form of movement, a figure and action comparable to the cleanest waters. They would appreciate how aesthetic devices placed emphasis on the upward motion of the pose, as well as the way a conceptual connection was forged between the filtration process and the deployed iconography. Alice Giannitrapani refers to this phenomenon as *vista oggettivante*, or *objectifying view*, wherein the spectator is guided by prior knowledge to recognise familiar features.<sup>26</sup> Thus whether or not Giambologna intended the *Mercury* to go to Villa Medici, some of the sculptural features point towards a site with learned spectators.

This discussion brings us back to the concept of the *macrospace* and why it is important to consider when trying to understand the relationship between a sculpture and its surrounding spaces. Had I examined the *Mercury* purely within the iconographic structure of the Mount Parnassus narrative, the *macrospace* would only encompass this region; however, when the spectator is involved as well, the *macrospace* must be expanded. The spectators in question are not only that of the Mount Parnassus section, but rather that of the whole Villa Medici. Following Lefebvre's approach to the production of space, the specific elements of the spaces of

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<sup>25</sup> John K. G. Shearman, *Only Connect: art and the spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 33, 13, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 14.

a villa define, and are defined by, their spectators. While the iconographic interaction of *Mercury* was limited in its physical footprint, the sculpture catered to the spectator of the villa as a whole, thereby engaging with the environment more broadly. The *macrospace* thus extends far beyond the specific site, and yet both are key for understanding a given sculpture. The site anchors a sculpture within its *macrospace*, which, as I seek to demonstrate in this thesis, tangibly impacts the meanings generated by a sculpture—from the moment of its installation through its subsequent peregrinations.

There is one point of potential contention that I still must address: the question of autonomous sculptures. So far, I have only discussed the pose of the Medici *Mercury* in terms of its effect on the sculpture itself. Keutner, however, takes it further and claims that the pose creates an isolating effect by its very nature, that the sculpture exists in its own space and has been designed to exclude close-up engagement and spectatorship.<sup>27</sup> Keutner makes a claim that seems at odds with the above analysis, stating that *Mercury* does not need a fixed installation, because it barely has a relationship with its surroundings at all.<sup>28</sup> If such an analysis of *Mercury*'s pose is accurate, would that make the previous discussion about the relationship between the sculpture and its site and *macrospace* nothing but conjecture? I maintain that a sculpture need not be dependent on its surrounding space in order to interact with it on a significant level; spatial autonomy does not necessarily mean the absence of a sculpture-site relationship.

The original spatial dynamic enhances the sculpture and can answer some questions regarding design choices, subject matter, or trends in patronage. When one sees *Mercury* in the Bargello today, the intended effect of the pose remains; the museum plaque and staff can fill in most of the necessary contextual information to understand the sculpture, so one can abstractly

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<sup>27</sup> Keutner, *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante*, 32.

<sup>28</sup> “E quanto poco necessita di una collocazione fissa tanto poco ha bisogno del rapporto con un ambiente esterno”: Ibid.

grasp some of the intended effects. But there is no running water. The *Mercury* is not surrounded by the Villa's loggia. There is no Mount Parnassus. The change in location shifts the emphasis to different sculptural elements. The spectator is no longer exposed to the "exhalation" effect, nor is there involvement with the narrative *macrospace* or a villa-specific spectator. Instead, the Medici *Mercury* stands next to Giambologna's *Bacchus*, highlighting the artistic elements: we can clearly see that the *Mercury*'s pose was heavily derived from the much earlier *Bacchus* [fig.6].<sup>29</sup> The reading of the pose changes, which highlights one of my principal arguments. As Mary Smith and Alan Wing observe, "often when describing movement, people actually describe the action and its goal," rather than the literal movement.<sup>30</sup> With the *Mercury* thus removed from its site and *macrospace*, the spectator can no longer determine what the *goal* of the sculpture is—despite the action still being legible. In the context of the narrative space of Mount Parnassus, *Mercury* was the vehicle by which wisdom was spread, so his action had a goal in line with this function. In the Bargello, however, this aim is no longer present. Throughout this thesis, I highlight the presence of similar sculpture-space relationships, in order to demonstrate that the intended space is just as integral a part of a sculpture as its material, or other features.<sup>31</sup>

The analytical approach demonstrated in this brief examination of *Mercury* and its relationship to its site and *macrospace* serves as an introduction to the questions and topics explored in this thesis. My claim throughout is that sculptural analysis should not be restricted to social context, or formal analysis, or any specific subsection. I will apply the approach taken here

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>30</sup> Mary H. Smith, Alan M. Wing, "Movement, Action and Skill," in *Psychology of Human Movement*, ed. Mary H. Smith, Alan M. Wing (London: Academic Press Limited, 1984), 2.

<sup>31</sup> For example, bronze was read as "congealed liquid" in sculpture, giving it a sense of being liquid and solid at the same time. Knowledgeable spectators read sculptures in this manner. A similar feature can be seen in the *Appennino*, where the illusion of the colossus being natural, with the construction method and materials being hidden from sight, played a major role in its reception. For bronze see Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 121. For *Appennino* materials see Luke Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden, The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 149.

with the *Mercury* to the sculpture-site relationship in other sculptures by Giambologna. With each, the first step will be to establish a thorough understanding of the site, including how its social space functioned and what the exact boundaries of the *macrospace* in question were. According to Lefebvre, the production of space is inherently linked to the society that uses said space.<sup>32</sup> It follows that if the site is read as the produced space, then *how* and *why* the space was produced will become clear—thus allowing the reader to infer much about the occupants of said space. Taking the above villa space as an example, it would be counter-intuitive for a society to produce a semi-isolated space for the intellectual class, if the society lacked such a target audience in the first place. The specific design of villa spaces informs us that the typical visitor and occupant of a cinquecento villa fits the criteria of a more philosophical and intellectual space. Thus the nature of the *macrospace* tells us about the nature of the spectators that occupied said space, which in turn provides further insights into the sculpture's *site*—a space that is within the *macrospace*. In the *Mercury* example, the site is the frontal loggia of Villa Medici's central building, while its *macrospace* is the area occupied by the Mount Parnassus allegory. Understanding the latter helps the reader to better understand the former and, consequently, its relationship to the sculpture.

Space is, however, a complicated subject. Its meaning is often fickle and difficult to pin down. Lefebvre believes that “space lays down the law because it implies a certain order,” yet interpreting it comes “almost as an afterthought,” relegating the reading of space to “a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot.”<sup>33</sup> But this is only in regards to the creation of space. In knowledge, reading of space comes first, and thus the purpose of this thesis—to analyse and read

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<sup>32</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

the spaces of Giambologna's sculptures—remains unchanged.<sup>34</sup> As Lefebvre claims, there is no singular way of reading a space: we can imagine the space expressing itself, with spectators and artists trying to read it, but indisputable singular messages cannot exist.<sup>35</sup> For example, Piazza del Nettuno in Bologna was used by market vendors soon after its sixteenth-century creation due to its convenient location, giving the space a utilitarian function rather than reflecting the pro-governmental messages communicated by the iconography of the *Fountain of Neptune*.<sup>36</sup> Thus no site or *macro-space* is entirely singular, no sculpture is perceived in one manner and one manner alone, and not every reading is readily accepted by different audiences. Nonetheless, reading space is exactly what I aim to do throughout this thesis, in order to understand how the artworks responded and related to their sites and *macro-spaces*. By examining these relationships I seek to demonstrate the importance of the intended sculptural spaces to our understanding of the given sculptures.

This is the approach I will take in order to fully explore the spatial dynamics of Giambologna's sculptures. The site and the *macro-space* must be examined, which in turn allows us to understand the spectator. Although I use Lefebvre's assertions on the theory of the production of space, his theories coincide with those of art historical scholars; for example, Robert Williams states that "different sites, then, demand different kinds of pictures; the order of art extends, as it were, into real space."<sup>37</sup> The cinquecento version of both Williams' and Lefebvre's observations was *giudizio*: the skill of an artist to create art appropriate for a specific site.<sup>38</sup> Luke Morgan also leaned on Lefebvre's theories in his text on Renaissance villa garden

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>36</sup> Richard J. Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," in *La nuova Piazza Nettuno a Bologna*, ed. Paolo Capponcelli (Milan: Electa, 1992), 16.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 97.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



sculptures.<sup>39</sup> A sculpture with a powerful political agenda behind it may require a space that is already politically charged in order to be perceived in the desired manner.

Lefebvre may be right in stating that there is no “correct” way of reading a space, but in a situation such as this, we must determine whether there is a *desired* reading of a space—one that then informs us about the sculpture and its spectators. These are the factors that must be examined when seeking to understand how, or if, the sculptures in question respond to their sites, and whether these responses are special and unique at all. To determine these factors, I shall be using a variety of information about the locations, as well as primary sources such as contemporary reports, letters, official documents, and books.

In order to be able to delve deeply into the complex and multi-layered relationships between sculptures and spaces, I limit my scope here to three monumental public sculptures by Giambologna: *Fountain of Neptune*, *Appennino*, and *Ratto delle Sabine*. Each of these sculptures represents a significantly different approach to the site-sculpture dynamic. *The Fountain of Neptune* is a politically charged sculpture, commissioned in order to glorify the patron, the government of Bologna, and the Papal State. It is a physically isolated sculpture, occupying a central position in a piazza that was specifically made for it and was also central in the city as a whole. Meanwhile, the *Appennino* is in Villa di Pratolino, located at the feet of the Apennine Mountains near Florence. It is a sculpture of extraordinary size, even for colossal sculptures, and occupies a dominant position within the garden. Finally, *Ratto delle Sabine* is a non-political sculpture placed in a space that had possessed strong political connotations for decades prior to its installation. While the *Ratto* is, like *Neptune*, also located in a busy urban centre, this time in Florence, it is removed from the political sphere and instead engages with the cultural and artistic spaces of the city. In other words, all three sculptures were situated in vastly different spaces,

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<sup>39</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 45.

and interacted with their surroundings in specific ways with minimal overlap. As I wish to maintain focus on the spatial dynamic, I have decided to use these three sculptures by the same artist, thus keeping the artist and time period constant and thereby allowing the focus to rest instead on the different locations.

My intention is to address a certain gap in the academic literature. The importance of context has long been recognised in art historical scholarship. Culture, politics, religion, period taste, artistic movements—all of these receive ample attention in academic writing. My focus, however, is on space. In the scholarly literature, a sculpture's interaction with space is often explored through either the pose or the presence of viewing points. Pose, especially, is a common topic in regards to cinquecento art. Francois Quiviger discusses the importance, in cinquecento art theory, of *touch*, not just sight; touch encompassed “sensations pertaining to the body,” and “the practice of disegno also promoted postural awareness.”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Cole explains that artists drew sketches of figures and other sculptures in order to fully explore posture, not as a means of capturing a moment in time, but rather to see how that pose functioned as an action.<sup>41</sup>

Thus sculptural space and pose are often linked in the art historical literature. A good example of this is Keutner's take on *Mercury*, where he proclaims that the space is autonomous and isolated mostly due to the pose.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Birgit Laschke reads the pose of Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* as descending onto the piazza, depicting a real and present Neptune.<sup>43</sup> Some modern interpretations delve more deeply into the relationship between a sculpture's pose and

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<sup>40</sup> Francois Quiviger, *The Sensory World of the Italian Renaissance* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 101-108.

Kirchman, however, makes the opposite point, claiming that touch was the lowest of the senses and sight was the quintessential one. Quiviger, however, agrees with Kirchman as far as the 15th century is concerned. See: Milton Kirchman, *Mannerism and Imagination: A Reexamination of Sixteenth Century Italian Aesthetic* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 1979), 89.

<sup>41</sup> Cole, *Ambitious form*, 123-124.

<sup>42</sup> Keutner, *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante*, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Birgit Laschke, “Un ritratto di Giovanni Bologna e la Fontana di Oceano nel Giardino di Boboli,” in *Giambologna tra Firenze e l'Europa: atti del Convegno Internazionale*, ed. Bert W. Meijer (Florence: Centro Di, 2000), 69.

space. Cole provides a thorough critique of Filippo Baldinucci's reading of Giambologna's *Hercules* that illustrates this. Baldinucci appears rather critical of the pose, believing that it does not portray a specific action and acts as a pose for the sake of a pose; Cole, however, contextualises the pose within the artist practice of the Cinquecento, turning this reading from criticism to appreciation.<sup>44</sup> One could say that Cole re-interpreted this reading in the context of *Hercules's* artistic *macrospace*. John Paoletti takes a similar path, examining the ambiguity of the pose and iconographic elements in Michelangelo's *David*, linking his observations to period writing and the particular elements of *David's* site.<sup>45</sup>

These scholars have helped to expand the conversation on sculpture beyond the figures themselves. Although I am focusing on a sample of Giambologna's works, my arguments are not limited to his *oeuvre*; rather, I wish to speak more broadly to those that approach artworks through the lens of their context, both conceptual and physical. Moreover, the lens of the *setting*—seeing sculptures not *in relation* to their relative spaces, but instead as in an *active relationship* with their spaces—is the central concern. My goal is to build on the contributions of Claudia Lazzaro and Luke Morgan by focusing on sculpture in a particular physical setting and exploring every detail of this relationship.<sup>46</sup> Throughout this thesis, I examine the role of the original site and *macrospace* of a sculpture, seeking to place these spaces on the same level of importance as other sculptural elements, such as materials. To put it plainly, one of the criticisms of sculpture by painters during the cinquecento *paragone* debates was that sculptures lack a

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<sup>44</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 129; Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua, per le quali si dimostra come, e per chi le bell' arti di pittura, scultura, e architettura lasciata la rozzezza delle maniere greca e gottica, si siano in questi secoli ridotte all' antica loro perfezione, etc.*, vol. 2 (Florence: n.p., 1845-47), 573-574.

<sup>45</sup> Paoletti reads the pose of *David* as purposefully ambiguous, and spends considerable time rooting this gestural ambiguity in the courtly culture of 16th century Florence: John T. Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David, Florentine History and Civic Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 80-81.

<sup>46</sup> I am mainly referring to Luke Morgan's *The Monster in the Garden, The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design*, and Claudia Lazzaro's *Italian Renaissance Garden*.

composition.<sup>47</sup> By demonstrating the importance of the sculpture-space relationship in both the design and the reception stages, I aim to refute this criticism and state that a sculpture's intended spaces *are* its composition.

In order to this, I make use of theories of spatial reading and perception—in particular, Henri Lefebvre's work on the production and reading of space. Namely, I shall interpret the sculptural spaces according to how they were read by spectators, and how they were “supposed” to be read, according to the sources on the creation of the said spaces. I will argue for the importance of both the *intended* reading of a sculpture's space, and the *eventual* reading, as seen through the viewing experience. While Lefebvre claims that social space should not be seen as a blank page with a specific message, Alice Giannitrapani highlights the role of spatial enunciators, which can be used by the designers of a space to portray such a message.<sup>48</sup> I will explore to what degree were spatial enunciators were used to manipulate the reading of a sculpture's space, and whether this was accepted or rejected by the occupiers, opening up a variety of possible readings.<sup>49</sup>

In Chapter One, I begin the examination with the *Fountain of Neptune*. This is a fine starting point, as it is one of Giambologna's earliest large scale sculptures and, in many ways, it is the one responsible for his rise to fame as a sculptor. I will argue that the *Neptune* is a sculpture firmly rooted in its urban setting—not just in a symbolic way, as a sixteenth century political tool and a visual icon of the city, but also as a key contributor to the urban design of Bologna. In order to demonstrate this, I explore the *Neptune*'s spaces from various angles, including the period leading up to its commission. The first crucial piece of the puzzle is the circumstances of Bologna in the sixteenth century, both political and urban, as it was the second

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<sup>47</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 30-34.

<sup>48</sup> Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 142; Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 41-43.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

seat of the Papal State, a city governed by a mixture of Church officials and elected local citizens. Such a long build-up to the time of the commission is vital, as I seek to demonstrate that it was not only the government and patrons of the 1560s that played an important role in the creation of the *Neptune's* commission, but rather a long string of events and circumstances starting at the turn of the century. I argue that the *Neptune*, as we know it today, depended on the specific circumstances of sixteenth-century Bologna. While the topic of interest is the fountain itself, I also examine the unique relationship between the site and its *macrospace*. Namely, how the *macrospace* and its conditions allowed for the commission of the *Neptune*, which in turn created the site, instead of the site being pre-existing and the sculpture installed within it. This allows me to explore the unusual spectator-artwork dynamic, as the citizens and travellers in Bologna had to respond not only to a new public artwork, but also to a brand new social space. Thus I will analyse the impact that the *Fountain of Neptune* had on its site and *macrospace*, demonstrating that the three had more than just a tangible relationship—they actively influenced each other.

Following this discussion of the *Fountain of Neptune*, I shift away from Bologna and to a villa just outside of Florence, Villa di Pratolino. Within the Pratolino, the great colossus *Appennino* resides, forever slouched forward, seemingly weighed down by large rock protrusions, gazing forward at the waters generated from under his hand, and towards the villa, or at least where the villa once stood. I begin by examining the cultural and artistic elements of *Appennino's macrospace*, for I aim to show that the colossus held a peculiar position as a sculpture that appears at once tailor-made for its space, while at the same time standing out from the other sculptures present. Cinquecento villas, and by extension the Pratolino, were designed with specific philosophical and cultural considerations, quite removed from urban and rural

conceptions of space. I believe that the *Appennino* reflects these considerations so effectively that it distinguishes itself from other villa sculptures. I argue that the harmonious relationship between the *Appennino* and its space is something unique to the Villa di Pratolino, in the sense that the *Appennino* in part relies on its Tuscan location, especially regarding its subject matter. I claim that the colossus plays a key role in portraying the Villa Medici as a microcosm of Tuscany. While our discussion on the *Neptune* is largely focused on urbanism and political agendas, with the *Appennino*, I focus predominantly on philosophical arguments proposed in the production of Pratolino's spaces, and how the colossus contributes to them.

Finally, I consider another sculpture whose subject matter is up for debate, albeit in a significantly different manner than was the case with the *Appennino*. The *Ratto delle Sabine* is a tangle of bodies twisting and turning in on themselves and one another, a silhouette of a dancing flame, yet one whose very subject matter caused the greatest stir. The sculpture is famous for not only its impressive display of artistic merit and virtuosity, but also for its lack of defined subject matter upon its installation in Loggia dei Lanzi. The *Ratto* is a quite different sculpture to the previous two. Not only does it have no water system, but it is the most portable and self-contained sculpture of them all. It does not dominate its space, nor does it carry clear messages. I argue that an open public location was intended for the *Ratto*, one that would allow the sculpture to interact with the Florentine public at large; due to the pre-existing artistic tradition, the Loggia dei Lanzi met these requirements.

With *Neptune* it was important to understand the urban and political climate of Bologna, but with the *Ratto* it is instead the cultural, artistic, and political climate of Florence, as well as the specific circumstances of the cinquecento Piazza della Signoria, that are key to the discussion. The unique culture that allowed for ambiguous sculptures to thrive in the most public

and politically charged location in the city requires significant unpacking in order to be understood. I believe that it was the specific culture of Florence at the time that enabled a sculpture like *Ratto* to not only be accepted, but to gain fame and thrive. I argue for the importance of the particular manner in which sixteenth-century Florentines engaged with public artworks in determining the sculpture's identity and subject matter; I also demonstrate how the specific physical location of the sculpture was a key contributing factor. As the chapter will show, it is a paradoxical sculpture, one that was highly autonomous and independent from its site and *macrospace*, while at the same time it required the Florentine space of its time in order to have a permanent identity.

It is my hope that such a thorough discussion of three sculptures by a single artist will reveal the merit of this analytical approach. It is not my intention to provide definitive and exhaustive answers. Rather, I argue that the relationship between a sculpture and its site runs deep, and that a careful consideration of this dynamic is essential to the interpretation of the artworks in question. By focusing not only on the sculptures, but also on the prototypical spectator experience, my goal is to demonstrate that sculptures should be approached through the lens of their original spatial context, broadly conceived; without an understanding of this contextual frame, the modern viewer misses out on much of the rich polysemy of these complex and multi-layered artworks.

## Fountain of Neptune

The best place to start any discussion is right at the beginning. I have laid out the framework for my argument in the previous section, and now it is my duty to provide an example to expand and support said argument. While *Mercury* allows us to identify the approach necessary in order to understand the relationship between site and sculpture, a more thorough and definitive case study is required if we are to truly dive into the specifics of this sculptural element. There is no finer first sculpture to examine in such a way than one of Giambologna's first major works, the *Fountain of Neptune* [fig.7]. Although it is not his first sculpture, it is the earliest of those discussed in this thesis, and it is one that allowed the sculptor to make a name for himself.<sup>50</sup> The fountain is a complex structure, featuring nine figures of varying sizes, a plethora of water jets, basins for gathering water at different levels of the fountain, as well as emblems of all parties involved with the fountain's creation and location. According to Irving Lavin, the fountain depicts the pagan water god Neptune, caught in the act of calming the seas, taken straight from the Aeneid epic.<sup>51</sup> The remaining figures are four sirens at the bottom of the fountain, and four putti above them holding dolphins. All of these figures double as iconographic elements and water outlets, combining artistic ability with engineering ingenuity.

The *Fountain of Neptune* became one of the major symbols of Bologna, alongside its larger architectural works, such as San Petronio and Piazza Maggiore.<sup>52</sup> This is what makes the sculpture the ideal starting point, as not only is it chronologically first amongst Giambologna's well known works, it is also a site-defining symbol, a piece of iconography that can be used to

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<sup>50</sup> Avery, *Giambologna The Complete Sculpture*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Lavin, "Bologna è una grande intrecciatura di eresie: il Nettuno di Giambologna al crocevia," 19-20.

<sup>52</sup> Renzo Imbeni, "Preface," in *Il Nettuno del Giambologna - Storia e Restauro*, ed. Giulio Bizzarri, Marco Guidi, Aurora Lucarelli (Milan: Electa, c1989), 9.



symbolise the city of Bologna, and thus it lends itself as an accessible example for my approach. Sixteenth-century Bologna held a quite a unique position as the second capital city of the Papal State, the geopolitical presence of the Catholic Church; despite this, the figures chosen for the fountain are of pagan origin, a pagan god no less.<sup>53</sup> To be fair, pagan figures in monumental public sculpture were quite common at the time. We must only think of the 1534 installation of Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus* [fig.8], and the subsequent *Fountain of Neptune* by Ammannati [fig.9], both in Florence and both with the intention of being civic and Medici symbols. Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* was erected in the mid-1560s, during the Counter Reformation and only two decades after Bologna hosted part of the Council of Trent.<sup>54</sup> The latter may have been the cause for some of the mid-to-late sixteenth century renovations and projects within the city centre. With this in mind, a pagan god seems a strange choice for the city's most iconic sculpture, given the Counter Reformation departure from pagan iconography, especially in art connected with the Church.<sup>55</sup>

These observations raise the obvious questions: why did Pope Pius IV choose the subject matter he did in this Counter-Reformation climate, and why did Giambologna's interpretation of the pagan god thrive to such an extent that it became one of the principal symbols of Bologna? It is clear that a much deeper understanding of the period and the city of Bologna is required in order to determine the specifics of the relationship between *Fountain of Neptune* and its site. In order to do this, I will first focus on the site, composed of the specific physical site of Piazza del Nettuno, and then the *macrospace*, which, as I will argue, is the city of Bologna as a whole. We must examine the entirety of the sixteenth-century Bologna, as well as Giambologna's specific

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<sup>53</sup> Davide Righini, "La fontana del Nettuno e L'architettura comunale a Bologna nel XVI secolo," in *Emilia Romagna Rinascimentale*, ed. F. Lollini and M. Pigozzi (Milan: Jaka Book, 2007), 61.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 109, 114.

design in relation to the urban restructuring plans of the city. I seek to demonstrate here that Giambologna designed a sculpture that functions particularly within the specific urban and political space of Bologna.

## Bologna and Piazza del Nettuno

In order to understand the relationship between the *Fountain of Neptune* and the city of Bologna, we must look back a number of decades to see in what climate the fountain was created. I have already touched upon the religious context, but we must dive deeper to see the full picture. In the earlier part of the sixteenth century, Reformation ideas were widespread in Bologna, a fact largely credited to the city's commercial interests, which centred on the Via Flaminia and Via Emilia and which linked Italy with the rest of Europe.<sup>56</sup> In order to combat these Reformist tendencies, a number of initiatives took place, most importantly an intervention by the Inquisition, as well as a large series of public works and reorganisations of public services.<sup>57</sup> These allowed the government to counter the undesired religious ideologies within the city, as well as to promote the Papal State and convince its citizens that papal rule was preferable. Thanks to these interventions, a mere 20 years later the city has been notably transformed.<sup>58</sup>

The Papal State exerted its influence over Bologna in a direct manner, as from 1506 Bologna had a mixed government consisting of a papal resident and the citizen senate.<sup>59</sup> Not only

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<sup>56</sup> Lavin, "Bologna è una grande intrecciatura di eresie," 8-9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Righini, "La fontana del Nettuno e L'architettura comunale a Bologna nel XVI secolo," 55.

did this allow the Church to intervene in the governmental decisions of the city, but it also attracted many artists to Bologna's papal court; this meant that the Papal State had both the political and cultural influence essential for its schemes aimed at enforcing religious orthodoxy.<sup>60</sup> These urban interventions were just the beginning of half a century of projects and renovations to the city, with the earliest being the construction of the Porta Galliera.<sup>61</sup> The next few decades carried this theme of embellishing and empowering the city. The importance of Bologna within the Papal State allowed the city to host the Council of Trent from 1547 to 1548, and these two factors brought attention to the city centre, the focus of my attention here.<sup>62</sup>

The efforts of the 1550s and early 1560s continued the trend of highlighting the presence and importance of the Church within Bologna, as well as aiding in the general development of the city centre. From 1550 to 1555, Girolamo Sauli worked on improving the primary entrance of the palace on Piazza Maggiore in order to improve access, with the goal of transforming the entrance from a simple fortified gateway to one fit for the processions “that culminated in triumphal entrances to the prestigious palace”.<sup>63</sup> And it is with the topic of improving space in regard to movement and social use of space that we arrive at the focus of our current discussion, as we have now reached the 1560s, the decade of *Neptune's* creation. It is fitting to approach the *Fountain of Neptune* from the broad perspective of this entire decade; despite the fact that the fountain itself was only finished in 1567, it began to change the urban cityscape of Bologna years before that.

Although the year of the fountain's completion is often cited as 1567, Detlef Heikamp dates its creation to 1563-1567; while this is a rather broad date range, it captures the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>63</sup> “che culminavano in entrate trionfali nel prestigioso palazzo”  
Ibid.

complicated relationship the *Fountain of Neptune* has with its surrounding space.<sup>64</sup> The year 1563 is not the year when Giambologna first entered his workshop in order to work on the fountain, but rather it is the year of two important events: papal vice-legate Pier Donato Cesi issued the decree to create the *Fountain of Neptune*, taken up by the architect Tommaso Laureti, and there was an issue, seemingly unrelated, of traffic congestion on the principal roads due to excessive market stalls.<sup>65</sup> With these events in mind, I will first examine the initial hurdles that had to be cleared in order for the fountain to be created.

In the spirit of the previous public and artistic works we've seen throughout the sixteenth century, the *Fountain of Neptune* "propagandised the advantages of living in the second capital of the Papal State."<sup>66</sup> It was deemed that the fountain was to be visible to the majority of Piazza Maggiore, as Cesi wanted it to be central and representative of the papal presence in the city.<sup>67</sup> However, it could not be erected directly on the piazza itself; there was a ban on building permanent obstacles within the piazza space due to its multi-functionality, namely the frequent processions that would be impeded by such obstacles.<sup>68</sup> This conflict could have been avoided had Cesi settled for a peripheral location within the borders of the piazza. However, the central space of Bologna in that time was quite different from what we know now, as the Piazza Maggiore was only accessible via narrow roads that suddenly opened up to the large space.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Detlef Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," in *L'acqua, la pietra, il fuoco: Bartolomeo Ammannati scultore*, ed. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, Dimitrios Zikos (Florence: Firenze musei: Giunti, 2011), 231.

<sup>65</sup> For the decree, see Giuseppe Pittano, "Il mito di Nettuno," in *Il Nettuno del Giambologna - Storia e Restauro*, ed. Giulio Bizzarri, Marco Guidi, Aurora Lucarelli (Milan: Electa, 1989), 28. For traffic congestion, see: Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 16.

<sup>66</sup> "propagandava i vantaggi di vivere nella seconda capitale dello Stato Pontificio": Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 15.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>68</sup> Richard J. Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore: Studi su Bologna nel Cinquecento*, trans. Cristina Fraccaro (Venice: Saggi Marsilio, 2001), 194.

<sup>69</sup> Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 15.

Thus, it would be rather difficult, if not impossible, to erect a symbolic fountain with proper visibility in such conditions.

In order to understand how this conflict was resolved, we must return to the second important event of 1563—the market stall regulation. Bologna was an important commercial city, with merchants and travellers passing through it, namely along its principal routes. Naturally, many local merchants wanted to attract these passersby to their stalls, and, as the main streets for these travellers were also the main streets of the city in general, the presence of market stalls is to be expected. In the 1490s, an area north of Palazzo Comunale was paved and made into a dedicated market area, yet this was not enough to prevent the stalls from overflowing onto the streets and clogging them up.<sup>70</sup> Thus Cesi, the Pope's delegate in Bologna at the time, published a decree prescribing the limit to which a merchant's stall could protrude into the street; this would ensure that the citizens of Bologna and other travellers would be able to pass through without encumbrance, and that the beauty of the “magnificent city” would be left undisturbed.<sup>71</sup>

So why does the question of traffic congestion or the issue of location within the city centre matter at all in relation to *Fountain of Neptune*? Well, if we look at the map of Bologna, the area north of Palazzo Comunale mentioned above is also just north of Piazza Maggiore [fig.10] . Up until the 1560s, the space between these two open areas was occupied by a building block—a row of seemingly unimportant houses, at least in terms of governance.<sup>72</sup> The solution to the issue of placement thus became obvious to Cesi: all that was required was to demolish the row of houses in order to create the ideal space for Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune*.<sup>73</sup> This solution opened up the intermitting space, creating a new piazza specifically designed to house

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore*, 198.

<sup>72</sup> Paolo Bettini, “Avanti piano, quasi indietro,” in *La nuova Piazza Nettuno a Bologna*, ed. Paolo Capponcelli (Milan: Electa, 1992), 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

the fountain. At the same time, this demolition would expand the space that was previously predominantly occupied by market stalls, thus improving the flow of traffic through the zone.

It may seem like a radical decision to demolish a row of houses in order to create a fitting site for a sculpture, but such urban changes were quite typical of the time. One needs to look no further than Florence to see many examples of this, with its Piazza della Signoria having been created almost entirely through a long series of demolitions.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the practice was so common that Trachtenberg can list a range of techniques used to “demolish substantial areas and to establish new building lines in accordance with the rules of planning”.<sup>75</sup> Bologna functioned in a similar fashion, as during this period the desire for better visibility of artworks and architecture was enough to justify the demolition of urban areas.<sup>76</sup> The case of the *Fountain of Neptune* is an apt example of how easily such decisions could be made, as the Senate of Bologna voted to demolish the row of houses in early December of 1564; this action was taken even though the Senate did not yet have the funds to reimburse the citizens living in those houses.<sup>77</sup> While the Senate did receive Papal approval for this task later in the same month, the original Papal letter that instructed the creation of *Fountain of Neptune* did not mention the creation of a new piazza to go along with it.<sup>78</sup> Despite these plans being only approved in December, the new space was fully open by the end of January 1565, marking the beginning of Piazza del Nettuno.<sup>79</sup>

This review of 60 years of urban developments in Bologna provides the context in which the decision was made to create a brand new space for the sake of housing the sculpture I examine here. Richard J. Tuttle is quite adamant about the fact that Cesi and his artists intended

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<sup>74</sup> Marvin Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye: urbanism, art, and power in early modern Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 108.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>76</sup> Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 13.

<sup>77</sup> Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore*, 196.

<sup>78</sup> For Papal approval see: Righini, “La fontana del Nettuno e L’architettura comunale a Bologna nel XVI secolo,” 64. For the Papal letter see: Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore*, 195.

<sup>79</sup> Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore*, 196.

from the very beginning to create this new space for the fountain, due both to the vice-legate's desire to propagate the great charity and power of the Papal State and to his desire to have his name linked with such an audacious urban and artistic endeavour.<sup>80</sup> Davide Righini agrees with Tuttle on this topic, as both scholars understand the importance of the new piazza not only in terms of housing the projected fountain, but also in the literal terms of opening up the city centre.<sup>81</sup> This new and open space finally allowed for proper vantage points and views of Palazzo Comunale and Palazzo del Podestà, buildings that previously were either completely closed off or surrounded by narrow roads that prevented aesthetic appreciation.<sup>82</sup> The effect on the visibility of the surrounding buildings was so great that it ultimately triggered additional architectural renovations, especially with regards to Palazzo del Podestà.<sup>83</sup> After all, the “true scale and regularity” of the central buildings, such as Palazzo Comunale and Palazzo del Podestà, went completely ignored until the creation of the piazza, as no one could have appreciated them due to the poor visibility.<sup>84</sup>

What we must not forget in our discussion is the *Fountain of Neptune* itself. Tuttle provides us with one of the most thorough breakdowns of the piazza's creation, in which he points out that the inclusion of bronze artistic elements on every side of the fountain clearly indicates that the fountain was designed with the intention of it being visible from every angle.<sup>85</sup> Evidence like this supports Tuttle's conclusion that the Piazza del Nettuno was a “major factor in the development and the design of the monument itself.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, much of the scholarly writing about the creation of the piazza specifically considers Cesi's desire to create a new space for the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>81</sup> Righini, “La fontana del Nettuno e L'architettura comunale a Bologna nel XVI secolo,” 64.

<sup>82</sup> Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore*, 197.

<sup>83</sup> Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 15.

<sup>84</sup> Richard J. Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna: bronze, marble, and water in the making of a Papal city*, ed. Nadja Aksamija and Francesco Ceccarelli (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2015), 174.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 15.

fountain right from the moment of conception, and also that Piazza del Nettuno was built primarily for the sake of housing the *Fountain of Neptune*.<sup>87</sup> Thus we can see that the planned space has an impact on the fountain's design, further supporting the idea that the piazza's primary reason for existence was to provide the best spatial dynamic for the *Fountain of Neptune*.

With that said, a deeper look into the other possible factors that might have solidified the decision to open this space up is warranted; after all, the original papal letter speaks nothing of a new piazza or an artistic sculpture.<sup>88</sup> Urban issues, such as the point made above about visibility and urban restructuring, show that the situation was more complicated. Not only did the opening of the city centre allow for greater appreciation of the principal buildings, but also the demolition and construction process destroyed two old roads in order to give way to a new south-north traffic route through the piazza.<sup>89</sup> Keeping in mind that the east-west traffic route passed directly north of the newly created Piazza del Nettuno, it becomes clear that the piazza not only allowed for easier passage through the city—it also acted as the crossroads for the principal trading routes. This effectively connected both Piazza Maggiore and Piazza del Nettuno with the city as a whole, blurring the boundaries between the spaces. Despite this, each piazza had its own most defining and common use, thus there was still a clear functional distinction between them.<sup>90</sup> Yet such a blurring of borders is one of the reasons why I include the city of Bologna as a whole in my discussion on site and *macrospace*, instead of just focusing on the Piazza del Nettuno.

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<sup>87</sup> The general consensus is that Cesi planned to free up space for the fountain from the conception of that project, and that the fountain was specifically designed for the purpose of adorning the newly created space. It is almost a circular reasoning, but it stands to reason that the space would be freed for a project, yet the specifics thereof would be chosen with the newly created space in mind. On this, see: Andrea Emiliani, "Uno sguardo sovrano," in *Il Nettuno del Giambologna - Storia e Restauro*, ed. Giulio Bizzarri, Marco Guidi, Aurora Lucarelli (Milan: Electa, 1989), 50; Bettini, "Avanti piano, quasi indietro," 8; Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 195; Laschke, "Un ritratto di Giovanni Bologna e la Fontana di Oceano nel Giardino di Boboli," 69.

<sup>88</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 30.

<sup>89</sup> Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 15.

<sup>90</sup> Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 26.



With the issue at the time of traffic congestion due to excessive market stall placements in the space directly north of Piazza del Nettuno, the opening up of a new traffic route and the expansion of the previous market space acted as a tremendous help in dealing with general urban issues. Tuttle rightly points out that it is unlikely that the new piazza was created solely with the intention of easing traffic, yet given that the council of Bologna saw the new piazza as being of benefit to the city, it would be unwise to dismiss the role that contemporary urban issues might have played in such decision making.<sup>91</sup> In fact, Andrea Emiliani states that the citizens of Bologna responded by making practical use of the newly opened space in the city centre.<sup>92</sup> Although their numbers were regulated by the government, merchants that previously filled the streets and other designed areas were now allowed onto the new piazza.<sup>93</sup> This development may be due to the fact that the piazza, at its conception, had little to no inherent political connotation; there was a clear lack of pre-existing spatial definers, so the citizens responded to the opening of the space in their own way.<sup>94</sup> Alice Giannitrapani argues that a space can be quickly transformed depending on who uses it and how; in our case, this can be seen in how the piazza was immediately transformed into a market—a utilitarian space for the people, as that is what they needed from a new open space.<sup>95</sup> A part of the reason for this relatively easy transformation is the initial lack of spatial enunciators, elements that communicate how a space is *intended* to be used by the creators of said space.<sup>96</sup> The presence of a few enunciators usually implies a trust

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<sup>91</sup> On Tuttle and traffic, see Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 16. Ibid., 13.

<sup>92</sup> Emiliani, “Uno sguardo sovrano,” 50.

<sup>93</sup> Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 16.

<sup>94</sup> Giannitrapani refers to spaces like these as *objectifying spaces*, though the specific term appears a bit ambiguous, as she does not fully clarify whether there are few or no enunciators in such space, merely referring to them as with a hidden author. Thus, while interesting in our discussion, I have chosen to avoid using said terminology: Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 14.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

between the creator and the user; however, as I will explain further in this discussion, we shall see that this changes over time in Piazza del Nettuno.

The long decades of urban renovations and artistic projects aimed at glorifying the Papal State by improving the quality of life and aesthetics of Bologna resulted in the ideal conditions for the creation of Piazza del Nettuno. The governmental desire for the above effect, being great enough to invest significant funds in general architectural projects, goes a long way towards explaining why the idea of demolishing houses for the sake of another grandiose project became palatable. This particular project would have been especially attractive, as it also allowed for the utility of a new space within the city centre.

## The Neptune of Bologna

My broader aim here is to examine how Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* responds to its site—the newly constructed Piazza del Nettuno. The previous examination of the political context of sixteenth-century Bologna allowed us to appreciate the value and utility of the fountain in terms of urban design and political agenda. However, just because an object is valuable to a space, does not mean that it is specific to it. Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is valuable to the Museum of Louvre, and can arguably be called its principal attraction, yet it was not made for it, nor does it interact in a special way with that space and that space alone. It is neither “site-specific” nor “site-orientated”.<sup>97</sup> With that distinction in mind, it is now my aim to

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<sup>97</sup> I am using Kwon's brief definition of site-specific and site-orientated art. Kwon states that site-specific art is completely grounded within its specific physical location. In contrast, site-orientated art interacts with both the physical and the conceptual, however, it holds dominion over its site, effectively creating it. See: Miwon Kwon, “One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity,” *October* 80 (1997): 85, 91-92.

examine the ways in which *Fountain of Neptune* operated not just as Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune*, but also as Bologna's as a whole. I shall do this in two ways: first, I will closely examine the fountain, its reception, and how it functioned within the Piazza del Nettuno; at the same time, I will also demonstrate that these factors are unique to its setting by comparing it to Ammannati's *Fountain of Neptune* in Florence.

One of the primary aspects of the Piazza del Nettuno in relation to Giambologna's *Neptune* is the complete absence of any other permanent fixture. This openness allowed the above mentioned market stalls to spring up, as well as facilitating easier passage for travellers and traders; with that said, this lack of competition is also an integral part of the sculpture. Tuttle refers to the isolation of the sculpture in this new open space as "splendid", stating that the monumental fountain "would have enjoyed the status of a perfectly autonomous modern artwork."<sup>98</sup> Birgit Laschke uses similar language when describing the fountain, especially the central figure of Neptune, seeing it as an expression of Giambologna's "idea of an isolated and autonomous figure, visible and appreciable from every side."<sup>99</sup> Laschke further emphasises the lack in the piazza of any other permanent features, such as niches.<sup>100</sup> The complete isolation of the fountain in open space is clearly an important feature in terms of how the sculpture functions within the said space. The fountain is highlighted, as anyone that enters Piazza del Nettuno is immediately confronted with the fountain; given its staggering height, it is reasonable to assume that the fountain remained visible at all times, even on the occasion of active markets in the piazza.

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<sup>98</sup> "L'intero monumento avrebbe dovuto goduto dello status di opera d'arte moderna perfettamente autonoma": Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 14.

<sup>99</sup> "rappresenti il primo risultato dell'ideale artistico del Giambologna ed esprima la sua idea di una figura isolata e autonoma, visibile ed apprezzabile da ogni lato": Laschke, "Un ritratto di Giovanni Bologna e la Fontana di Oceano nel Giardino di Boboli," 68-69.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 69.

The importance of this isolation in aesthetic and spatial terms comes in when we compare Giambologna's *Neptune* to Ammannati's *Neptune* in Florence [fig.11]. This comparison is by no means arbitrary, as they are directly linked. The Florentine *Neptune* was created shortly before the Bolognese fountain. Around 1549, Florence undertook a large-scale project to improve the city's water infrastructure, culminating in the 1560s.<sup>101</sup> It was through this larger campaign that the commission to erect a fountain in Piazza della Signoria came to be. The commission was originally given to Baccio Bandinelli; after his death in 1560, the duke decided to open a contest to decide who would be awarded the commission.<sup>102</sup> While Giambologna was amongst the artists that competed for the commission, he did not succeed—Ammannati received it instead.<sup>103</sup>

There are many possible reasons for this decision, such as Cosimo wanting a pre-established artist, or already existing connections helping Ammannati. Filippo Baldinucci claims that while Giambologna's design was deemed to be the best of all, the duke was worried that the young, unproven sculptor would not be able to realise the design in large marble. More plausibly, Tuttle claims Giambologna's proposal was simply far too expensive.<sup>104</sup> However, from a purely design point of view, the two fountains differ significantly, and this divergence offers us a clue. When designing an artwork or structure for a specific location, the other pre-existing elements within that location must be taken into account. Is the desired effect conformity and unity, or rather sharp contrast and isolation? Is the to-be-added feature more important than the pre-

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<sup>101</sup> Emanuela Ferretti, "La Fontana del Nettuno: Infrastruttura idrica e scultura," in *Ammannati e Vasari per la città dei Medici*, ed. Cristina Acidini, Giacomo Pirazzoli (Florence: Polistampa: Banca CR Firenze, 2011), 197.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> For Ammannati's "victory," see: Ferretti, "La Fontana del Nettuno: Infrastruttura idrica e scultura," 197. For Giambologna, see: Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 233.

<sup>104</sup> Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 557; Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 37.

Heikamp also specifically mentions that Giambologna had to scale down his version of the *Neptune Fountain* for Bologna, which implies that his proposal was too grandiose and expensive even for a monumental sculpture that is intended to be the centre of attention. See: Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 233.

existing ones, or is it intended to be a part of a larger whole? We see that Piazza del Nettuno was specifically created for Giambologna's *Neptune*, as the design was intended to make a new, empty space that the fountain could dominate. Piazza della Signoria has a major distinction from Piazza del Nettuno: it is filled with other artworks and permanent fixtures.

One of the most prominent fixtures at the time was the *Ringhiera*, an elevated section of pavement that ran along the perimeter of Palazzo Vecchio. The space was used by the governing body of Florence to address the citizenry and issue decrees.<sup>105</sup> Placing a sculpture on the *Ringhiera*, or in line with it, thus had serious political connotations. Michelangelo's *David* is one such sculpture, as the goal of the governing body was to associate the subject matter of *David* with Florence.<sup>106</sup> Ammannati's *Fountain of Neptune* shared this political space of sculptures along the *Ringhiera*, as the projected, and eventual, location for the fountain was at the corner of Palazzo Vecchio, requiring Ammannati to dismantle a section of the *Ringhiera*.<sup>107</sup> A drawing by Jacques Callot [fig.12] demonstrates this, as we can see the section of the *Ringhiera* facing Loggia dei Lanzi still intact, with the *Fountain of Neptune* to its left on the corner of Palazzo Vecchio. This placement tells us two things: the *Fountain of Neptune* was deemed important enough to allow for the partial dismantling of such a pivotal political space as the *Ringhiera*, and placing the fountain in line with the other sculptures along the perimeter of Palazzo Vecchio was more important than maintaining the unity of the *Ringhiera*.

This is where the comparison between the *Neptunes* of Giambologna and Ammannati becomes visible in light of our discussion. Ammannati's *Neptune* had to conform to the pre-established space. The message of his *Neptune* was that of wisdom, just government, and the

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<sup>105</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 192; Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David*, 147.

<sup>106</sup> Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David*, 147.

<sup>107</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 193.

dominion of the prince over the seas.<sup>108</sup> This is quite reminiscent of Giambologna's *Neptune*, which had the goal of embellishing the city with a symbol of just and protective government, aimed at popularising the rule of the Papal State over Bologna. However, in Ammannati's case, *Neptune* was but one of many such public sculptures laden with governmental propaganda; as such, it could not stand out as the sole carrier of such a message. Indeed, the intention was for it to "fall in line", so to speak, with the other giants on the piazza.<sup>109</sup>

Ammannati's design for the *Neptune Fountain* in Piazza della Signoria clearly worked within the scope of these intentions and plans for the fountain; however, we can also deduce that Giambologna's unsuccessful proposal *did not*. It was Ammannati who, in this case, demonstrated better *giudizio*.<sup>110</sup> And this is important for our efforts to understand the unique interactions between sculpture and site. From what little can be gleaned about Giambologna's design for the Florentine *Neptune Fountain* from two available drawings, Heikamp believes that he projected a gigantic fountain, bigger than what Ammannati eventually realised.<sup>111</sup> Heikamp further states that the fountain would have dominated Piazza della Signoria to the point that the "*Ringhiera* with its giants would have become a second class attraction"—an unthinkable situation in terms of the spatial dynamics and hierarchy of the political space in the Piazza della Signoria.<sup>112</sup> Giambologna's design, constrained by pre-existing sculptural and political elements within the space it was to occupy, could not work in Piazza della Signoria. In other words, his design lacked *giudizio* in this case.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>110</sup> Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, 97.

<sup>111</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 232.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

In spatial theory, one of the possible ways of defining space is by thoroughly identifying that which the space is *not*.<sup>113</sup> By understanding what a thing is not, we can get a better understanding of what the thing is, and why it is defined as such. It is for this reason that the above comparison is pivotal to our understanding Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* as the *Neptune of Bologna*—a fountain whose design specifically fits the space of Bologna. His *Neptune* needed an autonomous, empty space, a space deprived of all other artistic and political features or messages, one where the fountain could fully dominate its surroundings without the fear of overshadowing another local element. As we have previously mentioned, the inclusion of artistic elements on every side of the fountain, each of equal detail and quality, explicitly states that the surrounding space *needed* to be empty. Piazza del Nettuno may be perfectly geographically central within the old city walls, surrounded by Palazzo Comunale and Palazzo del Podestà, two of the most important civic buildings, but “it does not resemble any other historically important city piazza, neither does it belong to any civic institution”.<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, Piazza del Nettuno was *not* like any other piazza at the time, and it was *not* associated with any specific civic body or authority. These factors allowed Giambologna's design to work specifically within this newly created space as it would have been unable to do anywhere else; as it was the sole solicitor of political messages, it did not have to compete or share with any other artwork or fantastical architectural designs. It is also perhaps due to this that the space around the *Neptune* was quickly adopted by the citizens of Bologna as a marketplace, rather than having political significance consciously placed on it. The number of stalls was regulated by the local government, no doubt for practical reasons—such as preventing the clogging up of this new space that had utilitarian functions in terms of traffic and trade routes—

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<sup>113</sup> Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 10, 25-26.

<sup>114</sup> Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 11.

yet one can also assume that there was a desire that the fountain not be overshadowed by the busy market.<sup>115</sup>

When it comes to the relationship of a visual object, an artwork, to its surrounding space, another crucial consideration are the viewing angles. A natural conclusion would be that restricting the size of the market would allow for better access to the ideal viewing angles of the sculpture; however, unlike Ammannati's *Fountain of Neptune*, Giambologna's fountain has less rigid viewing angles. We know that Piazza della Signoria had principal viewing angles at the beginnings of the streets that connected to it, especially the western streets that opened up to the front face of Palazzo Vecchio. Heikamp points out that the positioning of Ammannati's *Neptune* on the corner of Palazzo Vecchio allowed the "appreciation of the fountain from two sides of the piazza" and the various points of entry to the piazza that offered unique viewing points.<sup>116</sup> While the fountain was meant to be seen from a number of specific angles, we can assume that the principal viewing angle for the *Ringhiera* is from the entrance of Via Vacchereccia, as it is from here that one can truly appreciate the line of giants in front of Palazzo Vecchio, of which *Neptune* is a part. However, for Piazza della Signoria as a whole, the ideal viewing point was from Via dei Calzaiuoli, on the north-west corner of the piazza; this vantage point offered the ideal view of the entire piazza, as well as highlighting the connection between Palazzo Vecchio, *Ringhiera*, and Loggia dei Lanzi.<sup>117</sup> Thus viewers were naturally encouraged to view the fountain from several specific points.

The Bolognese *Fountain of Neptune* was no exception to such a regulation of viewing points. The fountain was intended to be visible from the majority of Piazza Maggiore, and to have "privileged" viewing points at the mouth of Via San Mamolo, now called Via Massimo

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>116</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 193.

<sup>117</sup> Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*, 111-113.



d’Azeglio; a part of Via degli Orefici; and the archway of Palazzo del Podestà, “which would have framed [the *Neptune*] in a superb fashion.”<sup>118</sup> When giving this list of viewing points, Tuttle aptly uses the word “privileged” instead of “ideal”; this is an important distinction for us to make, for the very design of the *Fountain of Neptune* openly invites a less static approach to spectatorship. Indeed, it seems to invite circumambulation. The reason for this is the overall design of the fountain. As I have mentioned above, Giambologna’s design works in Piazza del Nettuno because the intention was to create a spatially isolated figure. This means that there are no permanent fixtures or other visual impediments, other than the very boundaries of the piazza, that would suggest how to view the fountain. In Ammannati’s case, however, although the fountain can be visible from many angles, the importance of it being a part of the sculptural composition in front of Palazzo Vecchio prescribes clearly desired viewing points.

The contrasting relationship of both fountains to their surroundings can thus help to demonstrate how Giambologna’s *Neptune* is specific to a large, open and empty space. If we are to understand the roles of the specific figures and iconographic elements in the fountain-site relationship, we must understand the space they are interacting with first. With this dynamic in mind, we can now turn to the *Neptune* itself: the fountain is composed of nine figures divided up into three layers: four sirens on the bottom, each situated on a corner facing directly outwards; four putti figures hold dolphins, each on a corner directly above the sirens; and the figure of Neptune himself, located on top of the fountain structure. From the first glance, one can see the fountain being divided into three horizontal layers from top to bottom, with both sculptural

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<sup>118</sup> “La nuova fontana sarebbe stata visibile da buona parte di piazza Maggiore, anche se non da tutta, benché i punti di vista privilegiati sarebbero stati l’imbocco di via San Mamolo a sud (ora via Massimo d’Azeglio) e, a est, dalla parte di via degli Orefici, il voltone del palazzo del Podestà, che l’avrebbe inquadrata in modo superbo”: Tuttle, *Piazza Maggiore*, 194.

elements and water acting as spatial dividers. The sirens occupy the lowest level, with the putti directly above them, and Neptune standing atop the composition.

Each of these layers has its role to play in grounding the *Neptune* within the space of Piazza del Nettuno, as well as in allowing for direct interaction between the fountain and the *entire* piazza simultaneously. Let us first examine the bottom layer. Sirens are mythological sea creatures, known for luring sailors to their deaths through beautiful songs. Their narrative engagement with the mortal man, the sailor, makes them a fitting sculptural theme for the lowest level of the fountain. This implied connection with the spectator's space through iconography, luring a spectator closer to the fountain much like a siren would lure a sailor, is underlined by the siren's direct physical contact with the largest body of water of the fountain. While the position and facing of the sirens connects the *Fountain of Neptune* with the surrounding space through the use of iconography and sculptural gaze, it is the water in which they are partially immersed that connects with the physical needs of the people occupying the piazza.

Pointing out that water is an important feature of a fountain seems obvious at first glance, however water was a topic of heated debate with regards to Giambologna's *Neptune*. There was an ongoing issue with the people of Bologna using the fountain's waters to do their laundry and washing fruit and vegetables from the surrounding market.<sup>119</sup> The problem was great enough that the government issued a decree in 1595 banning such use of the water under heavy penalties, citing the damage these activities might cause to the fountain, especially the pipes.<sup>120</sup> It was perhaps due to the fears of such abuse that Cesi originally wanted to install some form of

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<sup>119</sup> Giancarlo Roversi, "La storia della città attraverso i bandi. 1595: Proibita far bucato nella Fontana del Nettuno," in *Bologna, notizie: mensile dell'Amministrazione comunale*, (Bologna notizie, ANNO XIX - n.5 - NUOVA SERIE, May 1979, Mensile dell'Amministrazione comunale, Spedizione in Abbonamento Postale, Gruppo III/70), 2. Article provided scan of original decree on page 2.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

protection around the fountain; despite his wishes, the barrier was only installed later in 1604.<sup>121</sup> The public was thus reduced to using the waters of the nearby Fontana Vecchia, both as a result of the ban and later with the physical enforcement by the protective iron fence.<sup>122</sup>

This alone shows us two ways in which Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* fit into the space of Piazza del Nettuno. The people of the piazza appear to have immediately assimilated the fountain into their daily lives and activities as a source of water. Indeed, Laschke points out that the original inscription of the fountain claimed its purpose was to "adorn the piazza and to provide the public utility of water."<sup>123</sup> Perhaps Cesi and the local government simply did not anticipate such a vigorous use of the fountain's waters, to the point of risking serious damage to the water system; regardless, the fountain was always intended to combine the political message it carries with a utilitarian purpose.<sup>124</sup> After all, the fountain was linked to the renovation of an "ancient aqueduct that brought water from the monastery of S. Michele in Bosco to the heart of the city", including the eventual *Fountain of Neptune*.<sup>125</sup> The function of the *Fountain of Neptune* as a *fountain*, thus, cannot be understated. The presence of running water could have, quite literally, drawn people to it, making it the focal point of the piazza not only because it was the only permanent fixture in a large open space, but also because it functioned as an important feature of daily life. In this sense, designing the *Fountain of Neptune*—and not just a *Neptune* monument—would have been a direct reflection of the needs and resources present in this new space.

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<sup>121</sup> Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 14.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>123</sup> "Le iscrizioni spiegano la motivazione della fontana, destinata ad ornare la piazza e alla pubblica utilità dell'acqua": Laschke, "Un ritratto di Giovanni Bologna e la Fontana di Oceano nel Giardino di Boboli," 69.

<sup>124</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 154.

<sup>125</sup> Righini, "La fontana del Nettuno e L'architettura comunale a Bologna nel XVI secolo," 64.

While the availability of water through the fountain feature shows how the *Fountain of Neptune* responded to the new open space of Piazza del Nettuno and its particular needs, the very enclosure of the fountain, along with legal and physical barriers to the water, also served this purpose. Tuttle speaks of the barrier erected by Cesi in 1604 not just as a means to prevent further damage to the water systems, but rather as a means of enforcing his original intention to create an isolated, autonomous modern artwork.<sup>126</sup> During this period, water had a “cosmic and symbolic dimension, it was a precious civic benefit, and the water jets of fountains recalled wisdom and good government,” as Heikamp puts it.<sup>127</sup> When speaking of Ammannati’s *Neptune*, Heikamp uses this aspect of water to show the political message of the *Neptune*, with the surrounding waters and jets giving him the appearance of travelling on the tides in his carriage, symbolising the aforementioned “dominion of the prince on sea.”<sup>128</sup> Giambologna’s *Neptune* can be seen in a similar fashion, with the waters intended to be more symbolic of the water god himself, rather than operating as an exclusively utilitarian feature. Framing the fountain and removing access to the water emphasises this aspect, and is one of the main spatial enunciators present in the piazza. With the occupiers of a space no longer using it entirely according to the wishes of the creators, regulation was introduced.<sup>129</sup>

This emphasis on water as a symbolic form—instead of a utilitarian one—tells us a great deal about government intentions for the fountain, and the people’s response to it. The caging off of the *Fountain of Neptune* is not just an attempt to give it a restricted space that could be infiltrated—it is a direct consequence to the site’s response to the fountain. The people of Bologna quickly assimilated the fountain into their daily lives, so much so that the government

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<sup>126</sup> Tuttle, “Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale,” 14.

<sup>127</sup> Heikamp, “La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano,” 247.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 42-43.

felt as though the political aspect of the fountain was being undermined. By preventing the use of water, ostensibly in order to conserve the pipes and allow the water to flow, the government sent the message that the symbolic aspect of water was more important. However, the issue for my purposes here is not “which is more important” but instead the fact that the government had to intercede to declare which was more important. This is a testament to how easily the *Fountain of Neptune* integrated itself into its surrounding space. It became a symbol of Bologna, while at the same time it was treated as a simple water source. In other words, within the context of a large, empty space frequented by citizens, it fulfilled its role.

However, the above is just one of many facets of the *Fountain of Neptune*. To fully understand the relationship between *Neptune* and its piazza, we must examine the rest of the sculptural figures. Moving up a layer from the sirens, we encounter the four putti. Much like the sirens, they are each on a corner of the structure, one above each siren. The putti are simply four children playing dolphins, with each dolphin also being a water jet. We are, however, very fortunate that *Fountain of Neptune* has a rather rare and detailed iconographic breakdown provided by the patron himself, Cesi.<sup>130</sup> According to Cesi, the dolphins held by each of the putti are to be interpreted as Neptune’s subjects, “their human and humane characteristics reflected and embodied in the putti who play with them,” creating the visual expression of leisure—leisure made possible only by Neptune’s vigilance.<sup>131</sup> Their iconography seeks to enhance the message of *Neptune* as “an ideal of good government,” as the human and animal subjects are capable of ludic relaxation—enjoying the benefits of Neptune’s rule, rather than having to worry about

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<sup>130</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 111.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

survival or other issues.<sup>132</sup> Thus the putti reinforces the *Fountain of Neptune*'s relationship with Bologna on a symbolic and political level.

However, for the topic of spatial relationships, the putti are interesting not only because of their iconographic relevance, but also due to their poses. The putti are sitting on corners in a twisted position [fig.13]. Their poses are a deliberate design intended to interact with the space around the fountain, and especially with the spectators of the fountain. A large open space around a single monumental sculpture naturally encourages circumambulation, as we are given a focal point in the middle of an open space, one that requires different angles in order to be fully seen. By placing twisting bodies near the top of such a sculpture, the spectator is naturally encouraged to follow along with twists and turns, to see the figures fully and thus to travel from one face to another. While this is a feature that can be seen in other monuments, there is no better example than Niccolò dell'Arca's *Arca of San Domenico* [fig.14]. When speaking of this particular monument, James Beck highlights the Evangelist figures on the top corners. They are free-standing sculptures that "allow, indeed encourage, the spectator to make the transition from one face of the *Arca* to the next."<sup>133</sup> This is due to "the way in which the figures turn within a central axis .... directional shifts of the heads, torsos and limbs", all of which encourage the spectator to walk around the monument.<sup>134</sup>

Whether Giambologna saw the *Arca* or not is questionable, but secondary. It is true that the *Arca* is a monument to which even Michelangelo contributed; with Giambologna known for assimilating information on art wherever he travels, it seems likely that he would have at least

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> James H. Beck, "Niccolò dell'Arca: A Reexamination," *The Art Bulletin*, no. 3 (1965): 340.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

glimpsed it.<sup>135</sup> Regardless, the comparison allows us to see that twisting and turning bodies on the higher points of monuments encourage spectators to move around and to observe from different angles.<sup>136</sup> In the case of the *Fountain of Neptune*, the putti actively encourage the spectators to circumambulate the sculpture—to appreciate it from every angle, to make full use of the open space without any obstacles. The *Arca* shows that one does not need a space as large as Piazza del Nettuno to achieve this; with that said, it is the very scale of *Neptune* that requires such a space. Giambologna designed a gigantic fountain, one we know he had to scale down to a size appropriate for the piazza.<sup>137</sup> The putti allow the fountain to be in the centre of the piazza and to actively interact with the spectators observing from every point within it, encouraging them to move around the space while keeping their focus on the *Neptune*, each new view leading into the next.<sup>138</sup> This may not be an example of a unique response to Piazza del Nettuno, but it is clear that the fountain was designed to function in a space with the exact parameters of the piazza. Yet as we have discussed, the piazza resembles no other in its content, size, or civic function; by actively interacting with a space of Piazza del Nettuno's parameters, the *Fountain of Neptune* can be said to function specifically within Piazza del Nettuno.

In order to understand the whole spectrum of *Neptune*'s relationship with its site, there is one final piece of iconography that we must examine: the central figure of the fountain, Neptune himself. At the start of this discussion I mentioned that the Neptune depicted is one from the Aeneidian mythos; this mythos was interpreted since the early Christian era as an allegory of the

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<sup>135</sup> For Michelangelo's contributions, see: Ellen L., Longworth, "Michelangelo and the Eye of the Beholder: The Early Bologna Sculptures," *Artibus et Historiae* 23, no. 46 (2002): 79-81. Borghini discusses Giambologna's different research trips. See Borghini, *Il riposo*, 585. Valentiner discusses Michelangelo's influence on Giambologna, namely in musculature, but stresses Giambologna's "more openly-built composition" when comparing their *Hercules and Antaeus* sculptures: W. R., Valentiner, "Renaissance Sculpture," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 8, no. 11 (1913): 248.

<sup>136</sup> Longworth agrees with Beck on this point when discussing the twists of bodies and draperies in Michelangelo's figures in the *Arca*. See: Longworth, "Michelangelo and the Eye of the Beholder," 81.

<sup>137</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 233.

<sup>138</sup> Virginia Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento* (New York: Garland Pub, 1976), 155.

dominion of the Church.<sup>139</sup> Yet Giambologna's *Neptune* differs from the pre-established forms of portrayal of this pagan god. Neptune is usually depicted either as standing still, relaxed, with his trident at his side, or as brandishing his trident with wrath in order to move and command the waters.<sup>140</sup> As Irving Lavin points out, Giambologna combined these two, creating a figure which combines seemingly contradictory elements.<sup>141</sup> This creates a rather unique Neptune iconography, one that shows both dominion and peace, a depiction that fits the political and religious intentions behind the commission in Bologna.

This is where Cesi comes to our rescue once again.<sup>142</sup> Cesi actually argues *against* the Aeneid interpretation of the *Fountain of Neptune*. When Neptune protects Aeneas and his comrades, he asserts his dominance and sovereignty in an aggressive fashion.<sup>143</sup> Instead, the *Neptune* in Bologna is “making the winds subside”, as well as calming the “tossing sea in order to secure peace and to foster the pursuit of pleasure among his subjects”.<sup>144</sup> This is reflected in his unusual pose. Cesi states that the *Neptune* is threatening to use his trident against his enemies—those who would threaten his subjects.<sup>145</sup> Neptune's relaxed hold on the trident is misleading, as Tuttle points out that it is the unarmed hand to which we must pay attention.<sup>146</sup> The *Neptune* is not attacking, he is *getting ready* to attack, slowly grasping the trident, possibly

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<sup>139</sup> Lavin, “Bologna è una grande intrecciatura di eresie: il Nettuno di Giambologna al crocevia,” 19.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>142</sup> Tuttle remarks that the presence of such a detailed explanation of a sculpture's iconography by its patron is quite rare. However, if we consider the already discussed issues of reading the narrative structure, the need for clarification becomes understandable, especially in the post-Tridentine religious and artistic climate, where the Church writers urged for greater clarity in art. A patron clarifying the “correct” reading of a sculpture might have been a necessary element, given the ambiguity of the *Neptune*'s pose. On this issue, see: Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600*, 110-111.

<sup>143</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 113.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>145</sup> Excerpts from Cesi's “DE REBUS PRAECLARIS A PIO IV GESTIS ET ROMAE AC BONAIE RELICTIS,” transcribed by Tuttle in Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 203-204, with partial translation by Tuttle in Ibid., 111.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 113.



holding it like a javelin.<sup>147</sup> This speaks of the *Neptune* not as a tyrannical government that is quick to use force to assert itself, but as a government that is primarily concerned with providing leisure and peace to its subjects, only using force for outside threats when necessary, without involving its subjects.

It is not only this unique blend that sets Giambologna's *Neptune* apart from the rest. Both Lavin and Righini point out that Neptune is directly interacting with the space around him. For Lavin, the pose "indicates that he is descending and heading to the side, in the direction of the large central piazza of the city, Piazza Maggiore."<sup>148</sup> Likewise, for Righini the twists and serpentine pose of the Neptune give the figure life and energy, creating the sense that the figure is expanding into its surrounding space.<sup>149</sup> This Neptune is not like that of Ammannati, riding symbolic waters and enclosed in his own narrative space; rather Giambologna depicts the Neptune of Bologna, one that is present and interacting with the space and elements around him. The Bolognese *Neptune* is not just some princely ruler over the waters; he is more than a marine deity, with the vast variety of water at his command in the fountain reflecting the expansive realm over which *Neptune* rules.<sup>150</sup> This Neptune, unlike many others, is actively present in the piazza, amongst the people of Bologna.<sup>151</sup> He transcends his own immediate space and seems to draw in an adjacent space. It is a composition and pose that requires the spatial dynamics of Piazza del Nettuno to function the way it does—both for us and, more pertinently, for the people of Bologna at the time.

By having Neptune be a physical and present god, Giambologna depicts the desire of the Church, and the Bolognese government, to be seen as physical and present within Bologna. Like

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Lavin, "Bologna è una grande intrecciatura di eresie: il Nettuno di Giambologna al crocevia," 24.

<sup>149</sup> Righini, "La fontana del Nettuno e L'architettura comunale a Bologna nel XVI secolo," 64.

<sup>150</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 111-113.

<sup>151</sup> Laschke, "Un ritratto di Giovanni Bologna e la Fontana di Oceano nel Giardino di Boboli," 69.

Neptune, the Papal State is not some distant or conceptual being—it is present, it has a direct impact on the people, and it changes their lives like it does nowhere else. This specific meaning of *Neptune*, created through a variety of factors unique to its *macrospace* and site, demonstrates how pagan images could still be used, even during the Counter Reformation.<sup>152</sup> In fact, its presence in a city that hosted the Council of Trent helps validate it. The *Fountain of Neptune* by Giambologna thus functions in Piazza del Nettuno differently from how it would anywhere else; it is a sculpture designed to be autonomous and yet to interact with its space, a sculpture so unique and important that the space it required was specifically crafted for it. However, despite the wide variety of ways in which *Fountain of Neptune* interacts with its site and *macrospace*, there are still many aspects of sculpture-site relationships that we were unable to explore here. Thus we must depart from Bologna and continue our examination of Giambologna's sculptures.

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<sup>152</sup> Blunt explores some texts by Christian theologians from the period in regards to artistic creation. Those that involve the question of pagan imagery often agree that they are not to be encouraged, but can be allowed and welcomed when used as a vehicle for “a good moral lesson in accordance with Christian ethics.”: Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600*, 111-115.

## Appennino

When discussing the sculptures of Giambologna, it is little wonder that we began with one of his colossal statues, the *Fountain of Neptune*. Cinquecento Italy was a period rife with colossal statues, with more than fifty sculptures of such dimensions being created, mostly in gardens.<sup>153</sup> Despite the relative popularity of this sculptural type at the time, even with artists such as Cellini and Michelangelo partaking in the practice, Giambologna can be considered the most prolific and accomplished sculptor of colossal figures.<sup>154</sup> For if *Neptune* demonstrates how a sculpture can operate seamlessly within its *macrospace* on both conceptual and physical levels, to the point that the spatial dynamic is unique to the specific site within the *macrospace*, then the *Appennino* of Villa di Pratolino is the fitting next step in further analysing this phenomenon in Giambologna's works.

The *Appennino* [fig.15] is a colossal statue in the truest sense of the word, towering at an impressive eleven meters, or forty feet. It represents a personification of the Apennine mountains.<sup>155</sup> The common date for the creation of this gigantic sculpture is 1579-1580, though as Alessandro Vezzosi points out, other possible dates are 1579-1583 and 1579-1590, with different scholars agreeing on different dates.<sup>156</sup> While the precise date is not crucial to our debate, this range of possibilities mirrors the scholarly debate around the *Appennino*'s subject,

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<sup>153</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, xxv.

<sup>154</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 118. Michelangelo's *David*, and Cellini's *Perseus* are both classified as colossal sculptures. See: Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 117.

<sup>155</sup> For a physical description, see: Una Roman D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 31, no.1 (2011): 1; Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 12; Luigi Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie* (Florence: Edizioni Gonnelli, 1987), 145-148.

<sup>156</sup> Alessandro Vezzosi, "Inediti e rari per il gigante di Pratolino," in *L'Appennino del Giambologna: Anatomia e Identità del Gigante*, ed. Alessandro Vezzosi (Florence: Alinea editrice, 1990), 34; Zangheri appears to agree with the 1579-1583 date range, while D'Elia cites 1579-1580: Zangheri, "Il punto delle indagini storiche sull'Appennino," 11; D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 1.

namely whether it originated as a river personification or whether it has always been intended to be a mountain personification.<sup>157</sup> With *Neptune*, we have seen the importance of subject matter in the relationship between an artwork and its *macrospace*, especially on a conceptual level; in order to explore the spatial dynamics of the *Appennino*, especially through the Period Eye, we must dive deep into this scholarly debate and attempt to determine how this colossus was perceived and received.<sup>158</sup>

The *Fountain of Neptune* and the *Appennino* show many similarities and differences in how they respond to their sites of display, as well as key differences; with that in mind, throughout this discussion, I will make comparisons between the two, using the *Fountain of Neptune* to demonstrate that some considerations in the relationship between site and sculpture are more universal, especially with a predetermined site, and some are unique to specific sculptures. Both sculptures are colossal in size, both dominate their spaces physically and both stand out, figuratively and quite literally, from other sculptures in similar spaces or of similar subject matter. Yet while *Neptune* demonstrates a certain level of dominance in both his *macrospace* and site, the *Appennino* evinces a certain duality of dominance and co-existence, changing the spatial dynamics considerably. However, any discussion involving space cannot proceed without understanding said space, and the specifics of cinquecento villas are far too particular to allow for immediate conclusions from the *Appennino* alone. Thus, I shall first examine the culture of cinquecento villa gardens in detail, as well as the specifics of Villa di Pratolino, before tackling the task of discerning the relationship between the *Appennino* and its spaces.

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<sup>157</sup> This is an extensive debate between a number of scholars that I explore in detail further in the chapter. See: this thesis, 62-65.

<sup>158</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 29-33.

## Pratolino and the Cinquecento Villa

This journey through Giambologna's repertoire takes us to the curious case of Villa di Pratolino, a location that is at once a vital political seat of power, and a remote autonomous area mostly isolated from the everyday life of Florence and Tuscany. Situated just north of Florence, the Medici villa of Pratolino was "once hailed as a marvel of its age," and acted as the principal residence of Francesco de' Medici.<sup>159</sup> The villa held an interesting geographical location in regards to the city: it is situated in a remote location, yet at the same time it is on a key road for travellers and communication.<sup>160</sup> There was certainly a sense of being "close enough" to Florence—justifying its use as a permanent residence—yet at the same time far enough from the centre for it attain full autonomy from the city. It became an "obligated destination", as Zangheri puts it, for any visits by state officials, ambassadors, or illustrious travellers visiting Florence.<sup>161</sup> Yet at the same time, access to the Pratolino was heavily regulated and travellers without state authority would normally be barred from entering without a direct invitation, viewed as a sign of benevolence on the part of Francesco.<sup>162</sup> The villa's autonomy and isolation was great enough that Zangheri referred to it as having its own "microcosm", while reminding us that it was only openly accessible once a year, during the feast of Saint Cresci.<sup>163</sup>

This creates an immediate sense of "outside versus inside". The villa was almost completely detached from the world and, as such, it should be treated as a separate entity. That said, examining the *Appennino* only within the scope of this villa would be faulty, to say the

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<sup>159</sup> D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 1.

<sup>160</sup> Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie*, 25.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 45.

least. It is true that the villa was specifically designed for Francesco's needs and desires by Bernardo Buontalenti.<sup>164</sup> Zangheri refers to the whole design of the villa as a comfortable residence that was essentially a "gold prison constructed by its prisoner to his own standards and for his own needs."<sup>165</sup> And despite all of these observations pointing towards the villa being quite unique, it shares many of the common considerations of a cinquecento villa and was certainly not immune to period fashion and philosophical considerations. Namely, Pratolino shares a theme with most cinquecento villa gardens: as Una D'Elia puts it, "the notion of the grandiose suffering of nature".<sup>166</sup>

It may come as no surprise that nature is a principal theme in a villa garden, a location removed from urban centres that usually contains only the bare minimum amount of structures necessary for the needs of the occupant and is surrounded by sizeable plots of greenery. When describing his stay at the Pratolino, Bernardo Sansone Sgrilli focuses on the main house, stables, and the outdoor area used for equine activities, before embarking upon a long description of artworks, grottos, and landscaping.<sup>167</sup> Likewise, when discussing the water infrastructure of the villa, Zangheri focuses on the water system for the cisterns of the stables, the main house, and the large water reservoirs which are a part of the landscape design.<sup>168</sup> The structures are so few that it is easy to describe them in detail, as one does not need to go into lengthy analysis of large

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<sup>164</sup> D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 1.

<sup>165</sup> Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie*, 44. A space specifically designed for the principal occupant and his guests is more open to a specific reading than others. While the Piazza del Nettuno was a produced space, it was very much open to interpretation and transformation, at least to a certain degree. Villa di Pratolino, however, is a fitting example of Lefebvre's concept of a consciously produced *representational space*, where "space is directly lived through its associated images and symbols": Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39, 142. While Lefebvre is adamant that a social space cannot be read like a page in a book, I believe that a space as meticulously designed as the Villa di Pratolino *can* be seen as having a specific spatial reading in mind, even if that reading is to be ambiguous and open to interpretation.

<sup>166</sup> D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 1.

<sup>167</sup> Bernardo Sansone Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino* (Florence: n.p., 1742), 9-10. Sgrilli devotes the remainder of the manuscript to landscape commentary.

<sup>168</sup> Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie*, 31. With reference to Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino*, 10.

blocks. Looking at the layout maps of different villas, or artistic renditions thereof, validates this approach, as we often see an intricately designed garden surrounding a central or peripheral structure, with little else aside from greenery [fig.16].

This large presence of greenery can almost be called “dominating” when considering the sheer proportion of “naturesque” areas to buildings. Indeed, the drawings of the Boboli Gardens, Villa di Castello, and Villa di Pratolino all show areas dominated by greenery with a few distinct structures in strategic locations. The dynamic and the relationship between nature and man, or to be more specific, nature and art, was one of the key considerations within cinquecento villa garden designs.<sup>169</sup> The villa was no longer a manor with fields to be worked around it; rather, Marcello Fagiolo defines it as a “collective artwork realised by the *elite* intellectuals and reserved for benefits of the court and the few initiated [visitors]”.<sup>170</sup> This puts Zangheri’s comments on Villa di Pratolino in a different light, as the exclusivity of access to the villa was not entirely unique to Pratolino, but instead was a common element in cinquecento villas. Thus Fagiolo and Zangheri, with some support from Sgrilli, give us vital information about the spectators of artworks in villa gardens of the period: they were people of high social standing and often educated in manners allowing them to engage with any philosophical or artistic considerations a villa sculpture might present; these spectators would be used to engaging with sculptures and other artworks, as seldom would an uneducated or “ignorant” spectator be allowed entrance to the villa grounds.

Reading Zangheri and Fagiolo closely, we can see how Pratolino, although unique in its own ways, fits within the broader archetype of the cinquecento villa. An interesting linguistic point to make is that both of the scholars use the word “microcosm”. Zangheri refers to Pratolino

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<sup>169</sup> Fagiolo, “Effimero e giardino: il teatro della città e il teatro della natura” 45.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 42.

as its own microcosm due to its isolation and autonomy, while Fagiolo speaks of any cinquecento villa garden as being capable of “presenting itself as a symbolic form of the universe, a meeting point between micro and macrocosm.”<sup>171</sup> Claudia Lazzaro also uses the terminology “microcosm” and “macrocosm” in the context of cinquecento gardens, giving us the final elaboration we need in order to understand how the concept applies here. Lazzaro sees the cinquecento garden as “a summation of contemporary knowledge of the natural world, a microcosm of nature in a literal sense.”<sup>172</sup> The garden was thus the ideal learning space, a space of intellectual pursuits of the elites; “because the ordered microcosm reflects the macrocosm,” the garden was designed to reflect the world, and through it, provide a condensed understanding of it.<sup>173</sup> In other words, the microcosm that Zangheri and Fagiolo speak of is not just one of isolation, of wanting everything to be in your space so that said space is all you need, but rather one that serves as an imitation of the world.

This microcosm was the result of the general approach to villa design at the time. The Cinquecento saw the “natural world in terms of its usefulness,” as well as using natural motifs in a symbolic manner, to represent “heraldic, moral, philosophical, and religious” ideas.<sup>174</sup> This was reflected not only in the artworks, but also in the general layout as a whole, including the planting, hydraulic systems, and water-powered devices.<sup>175</sup> I previously used the word “greenery” when speaking of the vegetation areas of villas, despite the fact that one might be prone to use “nature” instead. However, the “nature” present in cinquecento villas is symbolic only—it is a form of imitation forged through careful landscaping and artistic practice.<sup>176</sup> All

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Claudia Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden: from the conventions of planting, design, and ornament to the grand gardens of sixteenth-century Central Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 10.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 10.



sections of vegetation were carefully planned out and artificially planted, with the variety of plants reflecting the knowledge of plants at the time gathered by “the flourishing activity of Renaissance naturalists.”<sup>177</sup> These gardens aimed to display this floral variety within “an ordered structure”, with the underlying theme of demonstrating one’s ability to manipulate nature according to plan.<sup>178</sup> Careful ordering and geometry played a vital role in these designs. Luke Morgan argues that the use of geometry was not to impose “an artificial geometrical scheme”, but instead to reveal the “inherent geometrical order of the natural world”, the divine order of nature.<sup>179</sup>

Thus when we speak of “nature” we must be careful. Nature certainly is present in cinquecento villa gardens, but more as a concept and a symbol rather than as genuine nature. It is, therefore, no surprise that “nature” is a central topic within villas, and not just in the landscape design. There are two key aspects of nature that are represented in these villas: the relationship between nature and art, and the previously mentioned topic of “terrifying and suffering nature.” For the sake of clarity, I will use the word “greenery” when discussing the vegetation areas of the gardens, and “nature” when discussing nature in its symbolic form. Let us first examine the relationship between nature and art in detail, as understanding the mechanics of this relationship will give us the necessary knowledge in order to analyse the form that nature took, and what it symbolises.

Previously, I used the word “dominating” when referring to the sheer presence of greenery in villas, and this was a deliberate choice of words because the topic of domination is one of the central themes in the exploration of the nature-art dynamic. Fagiolo speaks of villa

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>179</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 26.

gardens as theatres that can often shift in their theme, message, and “vitruvian classification.”<sup>180</sup> He describes how “[a]rt could dominate the nature”, but, at the same time, “art could also be subjugated by natural models”.<sup>181</sup> From his point of view, the dominant member of the two depends on the specific artwork and philosophical consideration—in other words, it is subjective. The intrusions of art into a “natural” landscape, the reshaping of land to fit specific designs and compositions, all show the dominance of art through the will of its patron. Yet art can also be dependent on nature and it can seek to simulate it; there might be no better vehicle for the intended message or subject matter.<sup>182</sup> The dynamic is fluid and cannot be seen as black-and-white.

While this appears to be a very diplomatic viewpoint, wherein the dominant member is subjective to individual cases, other scholars offer somewhat different insights into the dynamic. Zangheri talks about the nature in Villa di Pratolino as the background to the present artworks, seeing the nature as completely without “dominant connotations”, where “all of the wonder comes from artificial sources”—in other words, from art.<sup>183</sup> For him, Pratolino’s nature is without pretence or noteworthy qualities: it is the ideal background, an empty canvas for the art of Francesco and his designer.<sup>184</sup> The important point to note here is that Zangheri is ambiguous on the total dominion of art over nature across all villas, as the passages that discuss this dynamic always explicitly refer to Pratolino. The villa’s mountainous location brings “natural nature” in direct contact with the artificial nature and the villa’s inhabitants; regardless of how much the

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<sup>180</sup> Fagiolo, “Effimero e giardino: il teatro della città e il teatro della natura,” 42, 44.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>182</sup> According to Williams, the art theory of the time suggested a certain “necessary correspondence, at least ideally, between art and life,” the success of which would satisfy knowledgeable viewers. If villa art seeks to imitate nature at times, then this train of thought can be applied, suggesting a certain level of sophistication on the spectator’s part: Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, 98.

<sup>183</sup> Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie*, 25.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

vegetation is altered, it was impossible to flatten the area.<sup>185</sup> However, Zangheri ties Pratolino specifically with Lazzaro's observations on the role of vegetation in villa designs. While it is true that Francesco had the villa significantly redesigned, Cosimo I's main interests were botany and mineral collecting—two hobbies inherently tied to prestige, as a collection such as his would have been the pride of any ruler at the time.<sup>186</sup> In other words, Pratolino had the ideal conditions for becoming the microcosm of learning described by Lazzaro, as nature was already collected and categorised at the site.

However, this strong position does not seem to be shared by more recent scholars. Despite the above correspondence between Zangheri and Lazzaro, Lazzaro directly criticises the twentieth-century literature on the Renaissance, claiming that the interpretation of “man dominating nature” stemmed from “our current attitudes rather than those of the past.”<sup>187</sup> It is certain that there was an active attempt in Renaissance garden design to elaborate on the relationship between art, man, and nature; with that said, Lazzaro disagrees with a dominant-dominated dynamic. There is no competition, instead art and nature “are united into an indistinguishable whole,” nature creating art, and art creating nature as a symbol, working together to overcome their individual limitations.<sup>188</sup> Morgan agrees with Lazzaro, claiming there is little justification for views akin to Zangheri's in historical sources.<sup>189</sup> These writings more often suggested that “the relationship between art and nature was conceived as a collaborative

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>187</sup> The vital distinction is that Lazzaro talks about both the general “nature” present in the villa, where she disagrees with Zangheri, and the specific species of flora collected for the purpose of knowledge, supporting Zangheri's account of Cosimo's fascination with botany. See: Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 9.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 27.

one.”<sup>190</sup> The reading presented by Morgan and Lazzaro, as well as Fagiolo to an extent, appear much more compatible with the second major theme in cinquecento villas: terrifying and suffering nature. Even Giovanni Mariacher, whose opinion of the relationship between nature and art lies somewhere between Zangheri and the others, places heavy emphasis on this theme.<sup>191</sup> Mariacher sees the union of nature and art as a result of man’s desire to use nature.<sup>192</sup> He sees the two united, acting towards a common goal; however, he sees the motivation as one of usefulness and dominance, thus agreeing in part with both Lazzaro and Zangheri.

The relationship between mankind and nature could be seen in all facets of Renaissance garden design, with hydraulics and water-powered devices demonstrating how art and spectator engagement were bent to suit the needs of the villa and its “nature”; at the same, such manipulation showed how much effort and commitment was invested into the manufacture of such “naturesque” features.<sup>193</sup> Agostino Ramelli’s inventions demonstrate this peculiar desire to shape and imitate nature.<sup>194</sup> The machines that Ramelli designed were not simply fountains for drinking water, but elaborate machinations with specific purposes, such as water fountains and “fountains with singing birds and moving parts.”<sup>195</sup> Through the use of pipe networks and pressure, these fountains produced “a harmony of birdsong and parts that moved at intervals.”<sup>196</sup> Such devices filled sixteenth-century garden visitors with curiosity and wonder, showing great interest in “the volume of water and the effects that it made possible.”<sup>197</sup> When speaking of the *Appennino* in particular, Sgrilli spoke of the effects of water as a prominent feature of the

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 26. Williams’ comments on the prestige of an artist to be being able to create a correspondence between art and life, as well as how “naturalism” was a vehicle to portray ideas rather than being an end of itself, support this mutually beneficial relationship: Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, 98, 107.

<sup>191</sup> Giovanni V, Mariacher, *La Scultura del Cinquecento* (Torino: UTET, 1987), 11.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 8.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 17. See also: Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 122.

sculpture.<sup>198</sup> Although vision and sight held a certain primacy amongst the senses, especially in the arts, running water was often approached and described in non-visual terms, such as in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499).<sup>199</sup>

Sight was important, as we have seen with Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune*; there, the watery net around the fountain created by the plethora of water jets created an effect "of an autonomous attraction distinct from, but in perfect harmony with, what is seen through it".<sup>200</sup> Water provided "real and ceaseless movement", celebrating "pure artifices."<sup>201</sup> In the garden context, this presence of water could add life and animation, perhaps even helping to hide the artificial qualities of the "nature". After all, water had a "cosmic and symbolic" quality, alluding to abundance, functioning services, and all-round wellbeing—a quality on which designers who wished to imitate nature certainly placed heavy emphasis.<sup>202</sup> Both the movement and the sound that waters made were vital, as they all added animation to gardens and sculptures; the artists and designers involved recognised this importance, as fountain design became "subservient to the properties of water."<sup>203</sup> Such a deep understanding of water's role is vital to this discussion, as the *Appennino* is inherently linked to water and its production, acting as both a fountain, of sorts, and a reservoir of water.

Thus this discussion on the relationship between art, man, and nature cannot continue without delving into the sculptural element of cinquecento gardens. Indeed, I mentioned fountains many a time in the above examination of the role water plays in this relationship, and if the theme of suffering and terrifying nature as well is to be explored, we must turn our gaze

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<sup>198</sup> Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino*, 10.

<sup>199</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 31.

<sup>200</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune in Fountain Bologna*, 101.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 247.

<sup>203</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 31.

away from general garden design, and finally focus on the primary artwork of this section, Giambologna's *Appennino*.

## The Giant in the garden

Amidst the turbulent relationship between nature and art, the *Appennino* stands, slouched over and weary, at once a giant and a mountain. Whatever disagreements scholars may have about the specific role and perception of nature in cinquecento Italian villas, there is one point on which most scholars agree: the *Appennino* is an effective personification not just of its own subject matter, but also of the themes and topics of cinquecento villa gardens. Una D'Elia sees the *Appennino* as the culmination of the tradition of portraying nature as weary and suffering; Bush calls it the “climax of the Cinquecento tradition of colossal sculpture” within the context of gardens; Morgan marks the *Appennino* as a prime example when discussing different aspects and representations of nature in cinquecento gardens.<sup>204</sup> The scholars seem quite eager to answer the question of what type of relationship *Appennino* had with its site; by claiming that it is an ideal representation of garden sculpture, they seem to say that the *Appennino* demonstrates a perfect response of an artwork to its setting. Their statements, however, are rather vague without the much-needed context—a context that allows us to understand why such a stance has been taken, as well as to further elaborate about the specifics of the relationship between *Appennino* and Villa di Pratolino. Therefore I shall delve deeper into cinquecento gardens and the artworks within them, examining the deeper context of the *Appennino* within its *macrospace* and site and

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<sup>204</sup> D'Elia, “Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering,” 1; Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, 293; Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 4, 12, 116, 118, 125, 128, 140.

thereby determining the specifics of its relationship to Pratolino and the Renaissance garden more broadly.

In order to understand the specifics of the “tradition” in which the *Appennino* finds itself, the first step is to examine the subject matter, iconography, and style of both the *Appennino* and garden sculpture in general. I shall examine these elements in conjunction, as arbitrarily separating them out would be detrimental to the discussion. Cinquecento garden statues were, as a whole, almost exclusively inspired by classic mythology, and these sculptures were often functional, namely as fountains.<sup>205</sup> It was not just nature that was depicted: in the Pratolino itself we see *Jupiter* by Bandinelli, *Narcissus* by Cellini, and *Perseus* by Danti.<sup>206</sup> In fact, the range of possible subject matter varied greatly depending on the desired narrative structure of a specific grotto or section of a garden, including “not only the inhabitants of mythical earthly paradises and personifications of nature, but also peasants, farmers, shepherds and their animals, genre subjects, and dwarfs.”<sup>207</sup> This choice of pagan, classical, and mythical subject matter stems from the cinquecento focus on using Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as a literary source for garden design as a whole.<sup>208</sup> The imagery and sculptures in particular reflect this source.<sup>209</sup> The very topic of “metamorphosis” was commonly present in Renaissance writing “in order to create a mournful myth of the ancient origins of the Tuscan landscape.”<sup>210</sup> This is where the theme of suffering and

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<sup>205</sup> Mariacher, *La Scultura del Cinquecento*, 11.

<sup>206</sup> Herbert Keutner, “Note intorno all’Appennino del Giambologna,” in *L’Appennino del Giambologna: Anatomia e Identità del Gigante*, ed. Alessandro Vezzosi (Florence: Alinea editrice, 1990), 18.

<sup>207</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 150.

<sup>208</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove: the Italian Renaissance garden and the English imagination 1600-1750* (London: Dent, 1986), 42, referenced in Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 3.

<sup>209</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 25-26.

<sup>210</sup> D’Elia, “Giambologna’s giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering,” 1.

This recalls Lefebvre’s notions on the production and readability of space. A designer of space can choose specific forms to act as signifiers, where the form enunciates the function or message of said space. In this case, the forms are taken from the *Metamorphoses* to create a more mythical nature, with transformations, violence, and mourning. This invites the visitor of a villa to not approach each sculpture individually, but rather as a piece of iconography, an enunciator of a greater spatial design of the villa as a whole, a vital point in this *Appennino* analysis. See: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 144.

terrifying nature comes into effect. Morgan points out that *Metamorphoses* contains contrasts between the “tranquil, idealized landscape” and “barbarous violence”, where “pleasant places provide the locale for acts of terrifying violence and transformation”.<sup>211</sup>

The *Appennino* is a colossal personification of a mountain range, and it can also be referred to as a mountain god of the Apennines. Depictions of mountain gods, and specifically the Apennines, are rather rare in art and literature.<sup>212</sup> Perhaps it is for this reason that the *Appennino*’s subject matter has been a topic of some debate, especially in terms of its original subject matter. Referencing Baldinucci’s *Notizie*, Keutner states that the giant used to have two different interpretations: as the Apennine mountain god and as Jupiter.<sup>213</sup> Baldinucci admits that the giant was called the *Appennino* at the time of the writing of his *Notizie* (late seventeenth century), but also claims that Giambologna originally made the figure to represent the figure of *Giove Pluvio*, loosely translated as “Jupiter of the Rains”, due to the belief that Jupiter brought rain.<sup>214</sup> Keutner, however, argues for *Appennino* possibly being a representation of the River Nile; to bolster this claim, he uses iconographic comparisons with Giambologna’s *Fontana dell’Oceano* [fig.17], as the two figures share a similar *contrapposto* pose, with one arm extending down between their legs and supporting the other arm on a solid backdrop.<sup>215</sup> Using this reading, Keutner then interprets the head under *Appennino*’s left arm as a hypo, as well as pointing out that a personification of River Nile was seen as a symbol of fertility and abundance in the Cinquecento.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 5-6.

<sup>212</sup> D’Elia, “Giambologna’s giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering,” 4.

<sup>213</sup> Keutner, “Note intorno all’Appennino del Giambologna,” 18.

<sup>214</sup> Baldinucci, *Notizie de’ professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 566-567.

<sup>215</sup> Keutner, “Note intorno all’Appennino del Giambologna,” 21.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.



While there are some contextual pieces of evidence that can support Keutner's theory, much more leans towards *Appennino* being a personification of the Apennine mountain, as it is known today. For one, Keutner himself states that in the 1580 documents on the construction of the area, the colossus was referred to as both *Nile* and *Appennino*. He also admits that despite the similarities in pose between *Fontana dell'Oceano* and *Appennino*, there are ample differences.<sup>217</sup> Cristina Luchinat makes strong points against Keutner's hypothesis, citing a number of late sixteenth-century texts that all refer to the giant as *Appennino*, such as De Vieri and Cesare Agolanti.<sup>218</sup> Michael Cole, too, supports Luchinat's view, stating that De Vieri, Aldrovandi, and Borghini all agree that Giambologna did not personify a river, but instead "reacted to the one major representation of a mountain to be found in a Tuscan garden, the bronze bust Ammannati had made for Castello in 1563-65."<sup>219</sup> Both sculptures appear as though "they have emerged from the earth", with Ammannati's "bust-length format" suggesting "an organic relation to the island beneath" while Giambologna's *Appennino* "creates the same effect through its sheer size and through his choice of materials."<sup>220</sup>

There is something to be said, however, for the specific method of portrayal that Giambologna used. Reading Cesare Ripa's 1611 *Iconologia*, we see that some river gods and mountain gods shared many a characteristic; their poses may be different—for example river gods tended to recline—but overall the iconography was similar. The River Arno and the Apennine demonstrate this in particular, with features such as "an old man with a beard, and with long hair".<sup>221</sup> One of the key aspects of the Arno's pose is that he rests an elbow on an urn from

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>218</sup> Cristina Luchinat, "Acidini, L'Appennino dal modello all'opera compiuta," in *Risveglio di un Colosso, il restauro dell'Appennino del Giambologna*, ed. Cristina Luchinat (Florence: Alinari, 1988), 13.

<sup>219</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 111.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ripa, *Iconologia*, 170.

which water gushes.<sup>222</sup> Giambologna's *Appennino* also rests a hand right above a water sprout—the monster's head; when we consider the artist's tendency to experiment with unusual poses, such as with the figures of Euphrates, Ganges, and Nile on the *Fontana dell'Oceano*, Keutner's hypothesis—that the *Appennino* might have been a simply unusual river god—becomes understandable.<sup>223</sup> However, we have also seen Giambologna adapt poses he used with older sculptures for newer ones, such as with *Bacchus* and the Bargello *Mercury*.<sup>224</sup> Morgan points out that the same might have happened with the figures of *Oceano* and the *Appennino*.<sup>225</sup>

This question of subject matter is vital in determining the relationship between *Appennino* and Pratolino. The villa itself is located close to the Apennine mountains, with Sgrilli describing the villa's location as mountainous, with healthy but cold air.<sup>226</sup> In the most straightforward of terms, the *Appennino* can represent “an anthropomorphic representation of a threatening, mountainous landscape located within the garden of the villas.”<sup>227</sup> After all, one must not forget the fascination with nature as a suffering and terrifying force in Renaissance gardens. Giants carried a tradition of invoking the terrifying aspect of nature: in folklore the giants were known for “having colossal appetites”, a feature connected “to ancient fears about nature's destructive potential”.<sup>228</sup> The *Appennino* served as a powerful expression of “the disproportionate and frightening scale of nature”, especially considering its abnormal size, even for a colossal sculpture.<sup>229</sup> Bush points out that there was much exaggeration and confusion

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 123.

<sup>224</sup> Keutner, *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante*, 31.

<sup>225</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 123.

<sup>226</sup> Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino*, 5.

<sup>227</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 140.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 15. One could thus place the *Appennino* as an enunciator of the theme of terrifying, violent nature. Given its position in the villa, and the fact that a part of the villa's design relies on the presence of the *Appennino*, it is safe to assume that the colossus was a conscious element in the production of the specific desired reading of Pratolino's spaces. On this issue, see: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 142-144.

about the actual size of the *Appennino*, with estimates being wildly incorrect.<sup>230</sup> Borghini estimated the giant to be fifty *braccia* tall if he stood up, while Sgrilli placed it at forty *braccia*—the actual size being eleven meters in its current position.<sup>231</sup>

The rough conversion for Borghini's and Sgrilli's estimates would place the giant at 35 meters and 28 meters tall, respectively, when standing. It is difficult to estimate how tall *Appennino* would be if he stood up, however the sheer presence of such estimates at the time evince fascination with the towering giant's size. In addition to its tremendous size invoking fear and the feeling of overwhelming nature, the *Appennino* was also seen as a towering colossus of terrifying force, literally squeezing water out of the rock and ground.<sup>232</sup> The mountain personification can be understood as "depicted in a moment of perpetual creation, squeezing water out of its peaks and crevasses."<sup>233</sup> The fact that the giant is involved in the creation of water allows us to understand the confusion surrounding its subject matter; with that said, the fact that it is a representation of the Apennines becomes vital when considering the relationship between sculpture and site.

Villa di Pratolino was a Tuscan villa, a retreat of a Medici ruler of Florence. The river Arno was often positively associated with Florence due to the river passing through the city, bringing prosperity and fertility.<sup>234</sup> Ripa explicitly states, in his description of River Arno iconography, that the river originates from the "Apennine mountain."<sup>235</sup> In addition, the Pratolino is located at the feet of the Apennine mountain range, so much so that the *Appennino*

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<sup>230</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, 292.

<sup>231</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 588; Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino*, 9; Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 148.

<sup>232</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 127.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>234</sup> Ripa, *Iconologia*, 170-171.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

itself is partially made of living Apennine rock, namely the lower portions.<sup>236</sup> The use of actual Apennine rock is something that could only be done in such close proximity to the mountains, creating a material connection between the sculpture and its location. The same personification could be created in many a location, as we have seen the general subject matter fits Renaissance gardens quite well; however, by using the rock of the mountain, the sculpture seeks to personify something unique to *Appennino* in Pratolino.

The connection between the location and the sculpture through material allows us to read the giant as not only a personification, but as the *literal* mountain. Thanks to this, the connection to the River Arno grows stronger. One of the principal arguments made in favour of reading the *Appennino* as the River Nile is that the Nile was regarded as a symbol of fertility and abundance.<sup>237</sup> It is easy to imagine an owner of a villa desiring a symbol of fertility and abundance to dominate their garden, as it would be a simple way of saying that one possesses such qualities in their riches and social standing. Yet, as we have already established, for the Florentines, the River Arno had the same connotations. Furthermore, the very ability to commission a colossal sculpture demonstrates the patron's wealth and position, due to the immense costs that came with sculptures of such size.<sup>238</sup>

Thus, the setting itself makes a personification of the Apennine mountains the most likely subject matter of the colossus, for it is from the mountains that Florentine abundance flows in the form of River Arno. Morgan suggests that the giant refers to ancient stories of creation linked to giants, with *Appennino* being "a primeval, demiurgic giant depicted in the act of creation," and the monstrous head underneath it being "a personification of the landscape itself."<sup>239</sup> Following

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<sup>236</sup> D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 4.

<sup>237</sup> Luchinat, "Acidini, L'Appennino dal modello all'opera compiuta," 13; Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 123.

<sup>238</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, 3.

<sup>239</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 123.

this train of thought, the waters ejected by the monster can be the Arno itself, bringing fertility to newly created land. Furthermore, the water is collected in an artificial lake, acting “as a reservoir, providing water to the rest of the garden.”<sup>240</sup> This leads Morgan to interpret the *Appennino* as the literal Apennine mountain range and the Pratolino as the entire Italian peninsula; this recalls the status of a cinquecento garden as a microcosm. However, it is also possible to interpret the scene more locally—not as a microcosm of the peninsula, but of Tuscany. This interpretation hinges entirely upon the giant’s site, as the parallel between Arno and the water would not work were the villa elsewhere and not owned by a Florentine Medici. In other words, the site offers us a different perspective and new symbolism to the *Appennino*.

Yet the power necessary to create the waters, whatever their identity is, also demonstrates the burden under which the giant stands, with his “contorted tension-filled pose” emphasising the “difficult[y] in bring[ing] water to a harsh environment.”<sup>241</sup> Cinquecento villas had a peculiar tradition of showing nature as “bowed-down, sorrowful, trapped in stone,” instead of as triumphant or joyous.<sup>242</sup> Mountain and river gods in particular are often portrayed as “pathetic, burdened creatures,” suffering under the weight of their respective tasks.<sup>243</sup> As we have noted, the *Appennino* is a prime example of this, demonstrating a weary and melancholic attitude.<sup>244</sup> In fact, the sculpture embodies this specific garden style of nature gods so well, that it differs significantly from sculptures by some of Giambologna’s contemporaries, such as Ammannati, Bandinelli, or Cellini.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> D’Elia, “Giambologna’s giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering,” 2.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 118.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

Giambologna seems to adhere quite rigorously to the themes of nature in cinquecento villas, as the giant recalls Ovid's passage on Atlas, who held up the world on his shoulders, straining under the weight.<sup>246</sup> Although representations of mountain ranges and gods are few and far between, they are most commonly represented using the motif of "Atlas supporting the globe", such as in Villa Mattei.<sup>247</sup> The *Appennino*'s strained pose should not be mistaken for senility; the giant struggles under the burden of his task and his age, yet he continues his work without hindrance or confusion.<sup>248</sup> When we recall Morgan's interpretation of *Appennino* as being in the process of creation from before the time of man, the parallels between the Apennine and Atlas become more apparent. Both are involved in the upkeep of the world—one creates it, while the other carries it on his shoulders.

However, the two giants share another connection that is reflected in garden design and mythology. In the fourth book of *Metamorphoses*, "Atlas was changed into a mountain as huge as the giant he had been [fig.18]."<sup>249</sup> With the *Appennino*, we see the opposite transformation take place: a mountain range morphs into a colossal crouching giant.<sup>250</sup> The giant maintains enough mountainous features that the mountain and the personification seem, at first glance, to merge.<sup>251</sup> This is achieved through both his crouching pose and the abundance of *spugna*—the stalactites that hang off most parts of his body.<sup>252</sup> Originally the *Appennino* was comprised of two parts: the giant and a mountain behind him from which he seems to tear himself away [fig.19].<sup>253</sup> Unfortunately, the mountain was dismantled in the eighteenth century, much to the impoverishment of the sculpture; however, if we analyse the giant's pose with the mental image

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<sup>246</sup> D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 5.

<sup>247</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 148.

<sup>248</sup> Luchinat, "Acidini, L'Appennino dal modello all'opera compiuta," 13; Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 118.

<sup>249</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 4.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>251</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 149.

<sup>252</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 149.

<sup>253</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 149.

of a jagged mountain behind him, we can imagine the creature simultaneously pressing down with his left arm and supporting himself in reaction to the momentum of having torn his body away from the mountain.<sup>254</sup>

As transformation is one of the key themes of the *Metamorphoses*, choosing to portray the mountain range as both in the act of creation and just after having transformed places the *Appennino* within the established literary and iconography tradition of cinquecento gardens. While Baldinucci makes no mention of the mountain, Sgrilli recounts that the mountain was no longer extant, having been replaced by a “flying dragon made of stone”.<sup>255</sup> The absence of the mountain allows us to understand better the confusion surrounding *Appennino*’s subject matter, as the mass served as an important iconographic element in helping the spectator identify the figure. Perhaps it was for this reason that all visitors recognised the giant as a personification of the Apennines, regardless of what some construction documents might say.<sup>256</sup> The mountain would have originally served to frame the giant visually, making him appear imprisoned and highlighting the connotations of defeat and weariness in his pose.<sup>257</sup> This juxtaposition fuelled the literary celebrations of the giant “as a sorrowful, frustrated, and shivering creature.”<sup>258</sup>

The mountain thus emphasised the motifs of defeat and suffering in nature, demonstrating how every element of the giant reflected the tradition and style of cinquecento garden sculpture. With that said, “style” is a tricky word and the context in which it was used in the Cinquecento differs from modern conceptions of the word. “Style” can have connotations

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino*, 10.

<sup>256</sup> This would coincide with the idea that the spectators are knowledgeable about the location and the specific messages of the villa. An “objectifying view,” as Giannitrapani calls it, would have allowed the spectators to see the *Appennino* within the context of the mountain and the villa as a whole. Thus later interpretations were much more likely to express doubt and confusion, while the knowledgeable spectators of the time appeared to have little difficulty understanding the iconography and subject matter. See: Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 14; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 142-143.

<sup>257</sup> D’Elia, “Giambologna’s giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering,” 2.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 1.

with the personal identity of the artist—akin to Leonardo da Vinci’s idea that every painter paints himself—yet the term was also something that an artwork could simply possess (or not).<sup>259</sup> Robert Williams states that “style” had a number of possible meanings in the Cinquecento, with one being that which emerged with Mannerism; in the context of Mannerism, “a work has style itself, that it possess style in such a way as to demonstrate what style fundamentally is”, placing value “upon the conspicuous display of artifice.”<sup>260</sup> While at the same time, an artwork may display good style when artifice is transparent and the artwork possess “the effect of artlessness, of naturalness.”<sup>261</sup> Despite the giant not being referred to as having “style” in the period writing that we have previously examined, Giambologna sculpted the *Appennino* in a manner that sought to hide the artifice and possess a natural effect—thus it can be considered a Mannerist sculpture.

I noted above that the *Appennino*’s lower parts were sculpted out of a real portion of Apennine rock on site, forging a material link between the sculpture and the site. Yet this does more than just establish a connection between the sculpture and the real mountain located nearby. Much like with *Mercury* and the filtration process of exhalation—where the understanding of how water was purified in fountains drew visual and conceptual parallels between water, lightness, motion, and the figure of Mercury being lifted by Zephyr’s exhalation—using real Apennine rock highlights the theme of transformation in the *Appennino*. This adds further validity to Cole’s reading of the *Appennino* as having risen from the earth itself. The giant not only represents the *idea* of a mountain transforming into a figure, but, on a

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<sup>259</sup> Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, 73-75.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 74. It is important to note that the term “Mannerist” is somewhat of a complex one. Anthony Blunt reminds us that Mannerist styles varied greatly from region to region, mostly sharing philosophical principles rather than being a tightly defined movement. Whether this umbrella term applied to Giambologna or not is secondary, as it is the perception of art at the time that is important here. Thus if this conception of “style” was relevant during the active period of Mannerist artists, regardless of the specific definition of Mannerism one may accept, then this “style” is relevant to Giambologna’s *Appennino* as well. See: Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600*, 103.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.



material level, it *is* a mountain that was transformed into a figure—not by magic or mythological power, but by Giambologna. This further plays into a popular reading of the giant as the embodiment of an ancient story where Dinocrates proposed the idea of carving a giant out of a mountain to Alexander the Great; on a conceptual level, Giambologna has truly managed to do this.<sup>262</sup>

The artist intended the *Appennino* to appear as though it were wholly “carved out of the living rock”, yet, aside from the lowest parts, the giant was actually constructed out of “brick, stone, and stucco,”—even including inside rooms.<sup>263</sup> The outer construction was then covered in *spugna*, creating the weary look we have discussed.<sup>264</sup> The *spugna* further the illusion of the giant being wholly natural, as Cole points out that *spugne* in garden sculptures were often believed to be real stalactites made from hardened water.<sup>265</sup> Water thus plays another part in this colossal sculpture, as it now has a productive past, showing a reciprocal relationship between it and the giant: the giant generates the waters and the waters generate the giant, “using water that rose, fell, and congealed into its form.”<sup>266</sup> Every element of the giant was thus geared towards creating the perfect imitation of nature, as well as of the creative process of nature. Not only does the giant appear to have been naturally formed, but the rushing water, the *spugna*, and the implication of transformation from the now-absent mountain behind all seek to imitate the way in which nature creates and is created. Thus just about every facet of the *Appennino* fits into the tradition of cinquecento garden sculptures. As such, on both iconographic and design levels, the

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<sup>262</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 118; Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, 11; D’Elia, “Giambologna’s giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering,” 4.

<sup>263</sup> Avery, *Giambologna The Complete Sculpture*, 28.

<sup>264</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 149.

<sup>265</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 112.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. Cole refers to this as *natura naturata*, “the product generated by motions no longer present, the residue of a now-stilled engine.” While such a reading might bring us back to the debate on the giant’s subject matter, Cole himself sees the giant as pressing “forth water from the mouth below,” as well as already having argued against Zangheri’s reading, thus rendering the argument redundant as it has been examined at length already.; Ibid., 111, 113.

sculpture aligns perfectly with its location. There is no artistic choice that cannot be explained by its site, whether it be in a villa garden more generally or specifically in the Pratolino.

Just like the *Fountain of Neptune*, the *Appennino*'s precise physical location within the Pratolino is deliberate and inserts it within the conceptual *macrospace* of the villa garden. When we look at maps of the Pratolino from the mid-to-late sixteenth century [fig.20], it becomes clear that the *Appennino* was actually a part of a unified, ordered space—one that stretched from the giant to the main villa palazzo. This area was known as “Prato dell’Appennino” [fig.21].<sup>267</sup> To be precise, the Prato stretched from the water reservoir in front of the colossus all the way to the wall that protected the villa building, an area roughly 150 meters in length, and 70 meters in breadth.<sup>268</sup> The sheer size of this area was important at the time, with Sgrilli calling it a “vast prato” and giving estimations of his own, much as he estimated the size of the *Appennino* itself.<sup>269</sup> This layout highlights the *Appennino*, as the Prato is directly in the centre of the Pratolino garden and it shares a space with the most important building present.<sup>270</sup> Franco Cardini claims that along the length of the Prato were 26 antique sculptures, laid out in opposing pairs, alluding to “great men of the past and the journey of humanity towards reason.”<sup>271</sup>

This is a reflection of the idea that the “nature” behind the *Appennino* is a representation of prehistoric chaos, while the Prato tracks the development of humanity, culminating in the cinquecento villa.<sup>272</sup> This reading recalls the idea of the “third nature,” a concept stemming from antiquity, wherein “first” nature is real nature and “second nature” is “human modification of the

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<sup>267</sup> Herbert, “Note intorno all’Appennino del Giambologna,” 18.

<sup>268</sup> Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie*, 148.

<sup>269</sup> Sgrilli, *Descrizione della regio villa, fontane, e fabbriche di Pratolino*, 9.

<sup>270</sup> Herbert, “Note intorno all’Appennino del Giambologna,” 18.

<sup>271</sup> Franco Cardini, “L’Appennino. Una nota simbologica,” *L’Appennino del Giambologna: Anatomia e Identità del Gigante*, ed. Alessandro Vezzosi (Florence: Alinea editrice, 1990), 28.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

natural environment.”<sup>273</sup> In this sense, the third nature lies between the first two, an “interstice” between the natural and the cultural.<sup>274</sup> In spatial theory, there is a difference between an opening that allows for passage through, and a whole space whose sole purpose is to allow passage between two other spaces. The former would be referred to as a “soft boundary” or “threshold”, being a spatial definer that is permeable, whereas the latter is an “interface”.<sup>275</sup> *Appennino* is this third nature, an interface, one that exists between the “natural” part of the Pratolino and the “civilised” part marked by the Prato dell’Appennino.<sup>276</sup>

The colossus holds this position for two principal reasons. Its precise site is at the boundary between two very different sections of the villa. Taking the original presence of the mountain, the *Appennino* essentially acted as a frame to the Prato; it worked as the physical object that stood in the way of “first nature” and allowed “second nature” to flourish. On a more conceptual level, the *Appennino* represents the transformation from still, “natural nature”—a mountain—into a man-like figure that started to impose its will on the world around it, shaping and changing it as a mythological giant. It makes a transition from first to second nature—the point in time where man began to exert his influence on nature, but was yet to create space that is entirely under his domain. This spatial connotation only exists due to the *Appennino*’s site within the Pratolino. Had it been elsewhere, or had the garden design not connected it so intimately with the main villa building, the giant would be more likely placed into first nature. In other words,

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<sup>273</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 9.

<sup>274</sup> Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 126.

<sup>275</sup> Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 27-30.

<sup>276</sup> One of Lefebvre key arguments on spatial dividers, namely on using names and terminology for specific locations, is that these “serve to distinguish, but not to isolate, particular spaces.” The Prato may distinguish itself from the greenery, but thanks to the third nature represented by the *Appennino*, it is not isolated—it is an integral part of the overall design. Certainly, the numerous statues and the paved area act as powerful enunciators as to the difference in social practice anticipated within the boundaries of the Prato. Nonetheless it can be defined as a “central space,” a finite space that is clearly defined by its opposition. The *Appennino*’s spatial role is thus to allow the Prato to remain a specific space, but at the same time a part of a greater space. For Lefebvre, see: Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 16. For “central space,” see: Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 10, 13.

the site of the sculpture gives it a specific meaning that relies on its location within the garden, as well as on the conceptual issues explored in cinquecento gardens. *Appennino* responds to the Pratolino by bridging its two nature spaces, and the Pratolino responds to the *Appennino* by granting it the third space of nature.

Thus, as we can see, gauging the exact relationship between a sculpture and its site requires considerations that depend on the specific sculpture and site in question. Had we approached the *Appennino* with the same questions as the *Fountain of Neptune*, we would have missed out on many of the nuances. Each space is unique, as it reflects the society that lives in it; thus each space requires its own set of questions.<sup>277</sup> In *Neptune*, the specific urban layout of Bologna played a vital role in understanding how the fountain related to the city, yet with the *Appennino*, the philosophical concepts played a more vital role, with these informing the physical layout of the Pratolino and *Appennino*'s precise location. Yet our exploration of the relationship between sculpture and site does not end with a simple "it depends on context," for we have one more sculpture to examine—one that will allow us to see one more approach to determining this relationship, and thus to learn more about both site and art.

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

## Ratto delle Sabine

So far, we have examined a fountain with precise iconography laden with political messages, interacting with a space built specifically for it and ultimately responding to the entire city of which fountain is the centre. We then moved onto a colossus burdened with artistic tradition dating all the way back to antiquity, acting as the ultimate physical manifestation of an issue explored in the conceptual space of cinquecento villas. Now, having finished our sojourn in the Tuscan countryside and the comforts of a private villa, we must return to the busy urban life of cinquecento Italy one last time. Our journey takes us to Florence, a city quite different from Bologna in many ways, there being no better example of such differences than the central political spaces of the cities. Unlike in Piazza del Nettuno, where the space revolved around a single dominating monument, Piazza della Signoria boasts sculptures that enhance the space and one another; none is too dominant or asserts too much power over the piazza. There is no colossus towering over others, no *Appennino* capturing the essence of Florence, but instead a collection that works together to achieve these aims. As we have seen with Ammannati's *Fountain of Neptune*, the Florentine government took great measures to ensure this cohesion was upheld. Aside from the sculptures along the entrance façade of Palazzo Vecchio, Loggia dei Lanzi, also known as Loggia della Signoria, contained an impressive collection of sculptures from various artists, including Donatello and Cellini.

Our attention will focus on the right-hand arch of the Loggia, where Donatello's *Judith* stood until 1582, when it was replaced by a twisting three-figure sculpture by Giambologna,

known as *Ratto delle Sabine* [fig.22].<sup>278</sup> The *Ratto* is quite a different sculpture to the others we have discussed. It is no grand symbol of a city or a political body, nor is it the personification of a long-standing philosophical pondering of the intellectual elite; instead, it is a curious case of, as Michael Cole puts it, a “sculpture with no name”.<sup>279</sup> While today we know this composition of twisting and struggling bodies as “*Ratto delle Sabine*”, all sources suggest that upon its installation, there was no name given, and more importantly, no specific subject matter either. And yet, the sculpture was given a prized spot in Piazza della Signoria; it was deemed of such high quality that Donatello’s *Judith* was moved to a less prestigious section of the Loggia dei Lanzi to make way for the *Ratto*.<sup>280</sup> To have a sculpture in the piazza or the loggia was the ultimate goal and ambition of local artists at the time, so how did a sculpture with no name or subject matter manage not only to secure a spot in such a prestigious location, but also to take the spot of one of Donatello’s works?<sup>281</sup>

By now, it must come as no surprise that the answer lies in the context of cinquecento Florence. Unlike with the *Neptune*, here I will not be examining urban planning in much depth, nor will I focus on the patron of the sculpture. Neither will I attempt to contextualise the sculpture within an overarching narrative, as was the case with *Mercury*, or a general philosophical consideration, as I did with *Appennino*. This time, the answer lies in the people of Florence themselves. Florentines of the time had a quite peculiar approach to artworks, especially public sculptures, one that facilitated open and active engagement. Debating and

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<sup>278</sup> Tessa Boars, and Ghislain Kieft, “The Rape of a Sabine and the Diavolino as apotropeia: iconography, location and function of two Giambologna sculptures.” in *Giambologna tra Firenze e l’Europa, Atti del Colloquio C.I.H.A. 1990*, ed. Giovanna Perini. [S.l.]: Nuova Alfa editoriale, 1992), 120.

<sup>279</sup> Michael Cole’s article on the subject matter of Giambologna’s *Ratto delle Sabine* is titled “Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name”. See: Michael W. Cole, “Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name,” *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (2008): 339-359.

<sup>280</sup> Heikamp, “La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano,” 199.

<sup>281</sup> Heikamp argues that the piazza became the stage for artistic contests, the winner of such contests, whether imaginary or real as with *Fountain of Neptune*, gets to have one of their figures be present in one of the most important public spaces in the city. *Ibid.*, 187.

writing about public sculptures was commonplace in cinquecento Florence, and much of the populace was intellectually equipped to do so. What we are faced with here is not a nameless artwork, but rather a blank slate presented to an engaged public; this is the context that we must fully explore if we are to understand not only how *Ratto delle Sabine* interacted with its site and *macro-space*, but also how those two spaces were defined in the first place. I shall begin by analysing the culture of cinquecento Florence, and work my way towards determining whether the peculiar fame and success of this Giambologna sculpture is inherent, or whether its spaces also deserve some credit for the sculpture's success.

## Piazza della Signoria under Florentine Scrutiny

Piazza della Signoria is a fascinating case study of organic urban expansion and change. Much like Piazza del Nettuno in Bologna, Piazza della Signoria's history revolves around demolition. As Marvin Trachtenberg puts it, "the very premise of Piazza della Signoria was based on the demolition of a number of entire city blocks."<sup>282</sup> The first part of the piazza, pre-1299, predates even Palazzo Vecchio, as the northern section of the piazza was left empty following the demolition of the residence of the Uberti Family.<sup>283</sup> This new space quite literally paved the way for the creation of the piazza. The construction through demolition took place in four different phases [fig.23]: pre-1299, 1299-1307, 1343 and 1356-62, and finally 1359-1380s.<sup>284</sup> To give a quick summary: we have already stated the nature of the first phase; the second stage saw an expansion of the piazza and the construction of Palazzo Vecchio; the third

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<sup>282</sup> Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*, 108.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 92-93. The family was accused of treason against the city of Florence.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

witnessed further westward expansion; and the fourth saw mostly architectonic projects, such as Palazzo della Mercanzia.<sup>285</sup> During the final phase of the piazza's construction, the years 1374 to 1382, the Loggia dei Lanzi was constructed.<sup>286</sup> In other words, the *Ratto*'s site was created roughly two hundred years prior to its installation; as such, we must explore the history, layout, and contents of Piazza della Signoria and the Loggia in order to understand the two centuries of context that led to the *Ratto*'s success.

The history of the piazza's creation is a curious one to the modern eye, but the Florentine people went to great lengths to ensure that Piazza della Signoria was the closest equivalent to an ideal piazza. At the time of its construction, city planners held a 45° viewing angle as the ideal angle from the top of a building to a viewing point when planning a piazza.<sup>287</sup> Trachtenberg places heavy emphasis on the Florentine adherence to this rule, claiming that the north-westward expansion of the piazza was due to two primary reasons: “the sheer spatial needs of public functions” that took place on the piazza, and “the form and perceptual demands of the palace”.<sup>288</sup> In other words, there was a strong desire to create the ideal viewing angle for the Palazzo Vecchio, to the point that the configuration of the square was altered to accommodate such a view.<sup>289</sup> This ideal viewing point rests at the entrance to Via dei Calzaiuoli from the piazza, providing an oblique view of the Palazzo and Loggia dei Lanzi [fig.24].<sup>290</sup>

Such a viewing point highlights the aesthetic and proportional relationship between Palazzo Vecchio and Loggia dei Lanzi, thus it comes as no surprise that the latter was specifically designed and altered to create a complementary relationship between the two. The

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 111-113.



Loggia was scaled to the palace dimensions: its capitals and cornice decorations were placed on the same height of that of the Palazzo, and the size of its “intercolumnar spacing is repeated by the distance between the two buildings (which thus becomes a ‘fourth’ bay).”<sup>291</sup> The loggia was also rotated ever so slightly, or rather its facade was altered, so that the structure would align with Via Vacchereccia and the south wall of the palace.<sup>292</sup> Trachtenberg claims that the primary purpose of the Loggia was “to flank the primary power structure of the city with satellite monuments of civic authority,” essentially acting as adjacent space that is visually connected with the Palazzo.<sup>293</sup> This plan shows the lengths to which spatial dynamics were considered in Florentine urban planning, as there is no physical connection between the Palazzo and Loggia—instead a visual interface is created through corresponding heights and proportionality.

The connection between the two spaces is not just due to this alignment, but is also caused by the presence of another feature of Piazza della Signoria, one we have discussed before and one that is also highlighted in the Via dei Calzaiuoli viewing point: the *Ringhiera*. The *Ringhiera* was a political space composed of a terrace in front of Palazzo Vecchio, from which the Florentine government would often make important political declarations.<sup>294</sup> As it was a highly political space, the sculptures chosen to be installed there were of great significance to the Medici and to Florence, namely as political symbols. John Paoletti states that Michelangelo’s *David* “became a part of this symbolic imagery of civic power merely by its placement on the *Ringhiera* in 1504”—such was the inherent nature of the *Ringhiera*’s space.<sup>295</sup> If there were the intention to give a sculpture powerful political symbolism, the *Ringhiera* would be chosen as the

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<sup>291</sup> Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*, 128  
With reference to Trachtenberg, 1988, fig. 27.

<sup>292</sup> Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye*, 128.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Heikamp, “La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano,” 192. See also: Paoletti, *Michelangelo’s David*, 147 and this thesis, 35-36.

<sup>295</sup> Paoletti, *Michelangelo’s David*, 142.

installation site. However, it is not the *Ringhiera* itself that is significant to us right now, but rather the physical space that it occupies, the line directly in front of Palazzo Vecchio.

When examining Ammannati's *Fountain of Neptune*, we noticed that despite the significant political importance of the *Ringhiera*, it was still possible to dismantle it—for a good reason. Ammannati's *Neptune*, after all, was installed at the left corner of the Palazzo, causing a partial dismantling of the *Ringhiera*, as the physical location was of higher importance.<sup>296</sup> To Cosimo I the priority was to ensure that the central figure of *Neptune* was in line with the other giants in front of Palazzo Vecchio, thereby creating unity amongst the central figures of the piazza, all carrying Medici symbolism and propaganda.<sup>297</sup> This decision is in line with Cosimo's other changes to the spatial dynamics of Piazza della Signoria, namely wanting to ensure that the Loggia held a more official role, with the space being better defined as “ducal” rather than a space of simple artistic admiration.<sup>298</sup> Francesco Vossilla claims that this spatial categorisation came about with the installation of the *Perseus* in the Loggia, especially as the *David* and *Hercules* in front of Palazzo Vecchio, as well as Ammannati's *Fountain of Neptune*, all align with the *Perseus* in a straight line—and all these sculptures were directly linked to the exaltation of Florence and the Medici family.<sup>299</sup>

This is a vital observation if we seek to understand the Loggia dei Lanzi: every aspect of the piazza's design and subsequent sculptural installations was aimed at connecting the major monumental objects and structures in the piazza. In other words, because the *Perseus* was placed in the same visual line as *David*, *Hercules*, and *Fountain of Neptune*, the Loggia dei Lanzi began to share a conceptual space with the *Ringhiera*. Heikamp states that in the 1500s, the Loggia dei

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<sup>296</sup> Heikamp, “La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano,” 194.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>298</sup> Francesco Vossilla, “Il Giambologna e la Loggia della Signoria,” in *Giambologna tra Firenze e l'Europa, Atti del Colloquio C.I.H.A. 1990*, ed. Giovanna Perini ([S.l.] : Nuova Alfa editoriale, 1992), 87.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 87, 88.

Lanzi became the other space within the piazza, aside from the front of Palazzo Vecchio, that was filled with statues and acted as a contested stage for important Florentine artists.<sup>300</sup> While the observations by Vossilla and Heikamp provide conceptual connections between the two spaces, there is even more to the story. When the *David* was installed on the *Ringhiera* in 1504, it replaced Donatello's *Judith*, which, as we know, was then moved to Loggia dei Lanzi.<sup>301</sup> The space of the Loggia was deemed of enough significance and exposure that a *Ringhiera* sculpture could be moved there. John Shearman points out that Cellini's *Perseus* was intended to balance Donatello's *Judith*, leading to a "number of symmetries", from "the choice of bronze for the *Perseus*, to the two-figure group, to its high base, and to a clear *contrapposto* between the subjects."<sup>302</sup>

Furthermore, in 1515 Bandinelli's first *Hercules* occupied the left-hand arch where *Perseus* was later placed; a location where, Shearman suggests, the sculpture would have appeared to interact with Michelangelo's *David*, "as if Hercules swung his club threateningly at David, and as if David returned the insult with disdainful glare."<sup>303</sup> Paoletti supports Shearman, stating that the stucco sculpture was a "temporary parade decoration" "designed as a competing pendant to the *David*."<sup>304</sup> Today, we can see Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*, a different Hercules, standing in front of Palazzo Vecchio, guarding the entrance along with (a copy of) *David*. Thus we see a cinquecento tradition of moving sculptures between the *Ringhiera* and Loggia dei Lanzi. *Judith*'s relocation influenced the design decisions behind *Perseus*, and *Hercules* and *David* first clashed across spaces, then later stood side-by-side. The two spaces were deeply connected, to the point that sculptures could be interchanged between them, and it

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<sup>300</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 192.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 199. Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David*, 142.

<sup>302</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 50-51.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>304</sup> Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David*, 159.

was within this realm of possibility that they would “interact” on some level. Thus the specific arch in which the *Ratto* stands is a site with prestige comparable to the *Ringhiera*.

There is one point made above, however, that stands out from the others. It is not some fanciful conjecture that made Shearman suggest that *David* and *Hercules* could have been seen to interact with one another; rather, this claim reflects an acute understanding of cinquecento Florentine society and culture. The time of the *Ratto* is not the period of Cosimo I, who heralded the Loggia della Signoria. Florence lacked a tradition of colonnades and *loggie* filled with antiques, as could be seen in Rome at the time.<sup>305</sup> It was Cosimo I’s desire to ensure that the Loggia held a more official role, with the space being better defined as “ducal” rather than as a space of simple artistic admiration.<sup>306</sup> Under him, the strong connection between Loggia dei Lanzi and the *Ringhiera* flourished; his intent was to fill the loggia with statues “whose main greatness would be enclosed within a single united discourse: the exaltation of the Medici.”<sup>307</sup> It is no wonder, then, that the redefining of the loggia’s artistic space came about with the installation of the *Perseus*.

Shearman interpreted the collection of sculptures in the loggia as Cosimo’s attempt at neutralising “the encoded political message of existing images by making them more emphatically works of art in an open-air gallery”.<sup>308</sup> Shearman also mentions that Cosimo transformed Piazza della Signoria into Piazza Ducale, undermining the “republican memories” of the space.<sup>309</sup> Such a move suggests a spatial transformation that resulted in a space more intimately connected with the “duke”, and more specifically, the Medici.<sup>310</sup> One of the possible

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<sup>305</sup> Vossilla, “Il Giambologna e la Loggia della Signoria, 87.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> “Queste statue dovevano esser dedicate a figure esemplari della città, ma loro singola grandezza serebbe stat racchiusa in un discorso unitario: l’esaltaione dei Medici”: Ibid., 88.

<sup>308</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 52.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

reasons for such a change was the relatively recent return to power of the Medici in Florence, specifically in 1512, 25 years prior to Cosimo I's rise to dukedom.<sup>311</sup> After all, one of the first acts the Medici family performed upon their return was to stop many an artistic commission, especially within Palazzo Vecchio, that propagandised Republican ideals and displayed anti-Medici sentiments.<sup>312</sup> While it is a stretch to see Cosimo's actions as a direct continuation of this, it is important to note the general political and propagandistic climate of the first half of the sixteenth century.

However, in 1574, Francesco de' Medici took over the governance of Florence, ushering in many a change within these spaces.<sup>313</sup> Francesco sought to establish a more friendly relationship with artists and his subjects more generally, all the while seeking to show himself as "the one who rules the state".<sup>314</sup> An example of this is his replacement of Danti's statue of *Cosimo I as Augustus* in the Uffizi with Giambologna's statue of himself in contemporary clothes; this shift replaced the image set forth by his father with one less mediated by metaphors, despite still remaining rather courtly.<sup>315</sup> Amongst other changes relevant to our topic was the installation of a hanging garden on the Loggia dei Lanzi's terrace in 1582, the same year as the *Ratto* was installed.<sup>316</sup>

Thus we have reached the year of Giambologna's *Ratto delle Sabine* with a better understanding the Florentine climate and culture of the sixteenth century. Much like in Bologna, these have evolved and changed over the years, seeing a dramatic shift with the return of Medicin dominance in 1512. Unlike with Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune*, the context into

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<sup>311</sup> Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David*, 158.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Vossilla, "Il Giambologna e la Loggia della Signoria", 89.

<sup>314</sup> "colui che reggeva uno stato." Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 91.

which *Ratto* enters is one of artistic changes and spatial transformations, rather than one of urban redesign. With this much needed cultural context of the sixteenth century, we can now examine the relationship between the *Ratto delle Sabine* and its site.

## The Florentine Ratto

The *Ratto delle Sabine* is a three-figure sculpture located in the Loggia dei Lanzi, also known as Loggia della Signoria, in Piazza della Signoria in Florence. The three figures all occupy different planes. The central figure is a young man who holds up a similarly young woman in his hands. Below this pair is an old man on his knees. In 1582, the sculpture was installed in the right-hand arch of the Loggia, the same arch where Donatello's *Judith* stood since 1504.<sup>317</sup> While the *Appennino* has been accompanied by two different, albeit possibly co-existing, readings of the narrative space and its subject matter, the *Ratto*'s subject matter and narrative space is shrouded in a deeper debate. Although it was not unheard of for an artwork to leave an artist's studio without a name, the *Ratto*, according to known sources, had no specific subject matter to begin with.<sup>318</sup>

Our best source on this is topic is Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo* (1584). Borghini apparently received updates on the production of the sculpture, as well as seeing it first hand, possibly due to his friendship with Bernardo Vecchietti.<sup>319</sup> Borghini claims that Giambologna had yet to prove himself a truly capable sculptor in marble; thus he decided to show to the world

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<sup>317</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 199.

<sup>318</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 72, 73.

<sup>319</sup> Dimitrios, Zikos, "Le belle forme della Maniera. La prassi e l'ideali nella scultura di Giambologna," in *Giambologna, Gli Dei Gli Eroi*, ed. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, Dimitrios Zikos (Florence: Giunti: Firenze musei, 2006), 21.

his ability, not just in carving simple figures, but also in creating multi-figure compositions of the highest difficulty.<sup>320</sup> Patrizio Patrizi echoes this sentiment, claiming that Giambologna's rivals looked down on the sculptor, noting that he had yet to sculpt a multi-figurative sculpture in marble without any "historia".<sup>321</sup> According to Borghini, Giambologna started work on the sculpture of his own initiative, with Francesco de' Medici only seeing the *Ratto* when it was almost finished.<sup>322</sup> It was then that Francesco lamented the fact that the sculpture had no name or subject matter, and urged Giambologna to give it some thought. The Duke suggested that the sculptor align his creation with Cellini's *Perseus* by claiming it to be *Ratto di Andromeda*, depicting the abduction of Andromeda by Phineus, with the older figure representing her father, Cepheus.<sup>323</sup>

Thus ignited the first spark of a deep debate over the subject matter of this ambiguous sculpture. Within the same text, Borghini refutes the possibility of such a reading as nowhere in the story of Andromeda does Phineus defeat Cepheus in a manner that would fit the *Ratto*'s composition.<sup>324</sup> Quite a few poems were written about the *Ratto*, with Gherardo Capponi's sonnet being of particular interest to us.<sup>325</sup> Capponi's sonnet does not focus on the subject matter as much as it does on the beauty of the female of figure within the composition, likening her to a goddess.<sup>326</sup> According to Capponi, *Ratto* represents a young artist who made such a beautiful female sculpture that he begged Venus to give her life; while the goddess grants this request,

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>321</sup> Patrizi, *Il Giambologna*, 120.

<sup>322</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 72.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 166-168.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 168.

upon understanding her fate, and for fear of losing her virginity, the young woman turns herself back into marble for protection.<sup>327</sup>

The idea of petrification in sculptural and artistic contexts was quite topical at the time. As Shearman puts it, “the Medusa effect becomes a topos of sculptural criticism,” implying that “the statue is more alive than its observer; the observer comes more marble-like than the statue.”<sup>328</sup> Through Cellini’s *Perseus* in 1554, this topos returned, “the more real, the more living the bronze seems” and the more beautiful the figures depicted, “the more the spectator will become as marble before it - stoned, as it were, in admiration.”<sup>329</sup> When the *Ratto* was added to Loggia dei Lanzi in 1582, “the Medusa topos returned in laudatory poetry”.<sup>330</sup> Thus there was a cultural and literary basis for a reading of the sculpture with petrification in mind.

This raises the question of why there were so many possible readings the same sculpture. The first clue lies in Giambologna’s tendency to create ambiguous figures with very little in terms of iconography elements to fix their identification. His *Samson and the Philistine* [fig.25] is an indicative example of his iconographical ambiguity and how it lends itself to misidentification. When *Samson and the Philistine* was moved to England in 1623, its identity changed temporarily; the figures were more readily identified as the biblical brothers Cain and Abel, specifically as portraying the moment when Cain murders Abel.<sup>331</sup> The sculpture was vague enough that the spectator’s literary background could change how the subject matter was perceived and recognised. With *Ratto delle Sabine*, we see a similar situation.

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>328</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 48.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>331</sup> Randall Davies, “Giovanni Bologna’s Samson and the Philistine,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 54, no. 310 (1929): 27-28.



However, Cole rightly points out that the cultural context of cinquecento Florence cast doubt on Borghini's assertion that Giambologna made the sculpture "with no thought to what might become of it."<sup>332</sup> At the time of the unveiling of the *Ratto*, Giambologna had already spent almost thirty years in Florence; as such, he would have been exposed to the public comments and debates around prominent new sculptures.<sup>333</sup> These public engagements with sculptures weighed their relative merits and faults, criticising, satirising, or praising them.<sup>334</sup> Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*, for example, was received to a "blizzard of sonnets" that abused Bandinelli's artistic ability, and "some of them had taken the Hercules theme the wrong way, as a figure of arrogant Medici domination."<sup>335</sup> These sonnets often used the figures and their actions to invent new stories, to give them a different meaning and "make the reader see the work in an unexpected, ironic way."<sup>336</sup> This is definitely true of Capponi's sonnet, and Borghini's musing about Andromeda follow a similar fashion, albeit in the form of a straightforward discussion instead of a sonnet.

One modern scholar on literature examined *Ratto delle Sabine* exactly in this light. Timothy Wutrich struggles with the idea that "a piece of representational sculpture can lack meaning."<sup>337</sup> He claims that the composition and the interactions between the three figures tell a story by themselves.<sup>338</sup> Wutrich lists not only possible representations of both classical and contemporary plays and epics, but also abstract concepts, such as: "Old Art" being conquered by the sculptor; Machiavelli's suggestion that "conflict within a state might be good for that state's

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<sup>332</sup> Cole, "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name," 344.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-344.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 53.

<sup>336</sup> Cole, "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name," 344.

<sup>337</sup> Timothy Richard Wutrich, "Narrative and allegory in Giambologna's Rape of a Sabine," *Word & Image* 20, no. 4 (2004): 309.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

well-being”; and Ficino’s theory of opposites creating harmony in music.<sup>339</sup> Wutrich’s approach seeks to highlight how identifying the cultural context of a sculpture can help us understand its nuances, the iconography, and most importantly, its subject matter. The poets and intellectuals of Giambologna’s time could have used any of Wutrich’s suggestions, as most were specific to Florence.

This brings us back to Cole’s point: as Giambologna had been immersed in Florentine culture for decades, he knew what to expect by unveiling a sculpture so vague in its iconographic elements. In the light of such eager public engagement with new sculptures, the ambiguity of *Ratto delle Sabine* seems to invite lively discussion more than to reflect merely the sculptor’s desire to demonstrate nothing but artifice and skill.<sup>340</sup> If we break down the sculpture’s composition and design, we can see merit in Wutrich’s point that the sculpture has a clear *narrative*, despite the claims for not having a predetermined *subject matter*. If we read the sculpture in the context of Florentine culture, taking Florence as a whole as the *Ratto*’s *macrospace*, this becomes a deliberate choice: a narrative device can suit many a subject matters, opening up the floor to debate. If the *Samson and the Philistine* could be validly interpreted as two entirely different subject matters due to them sharing a near identical narrative moment, then it is entirely within the realm of possibility that *Ratto delle Sabine* was intentionally made to produce similar multivalence.

The physical site of the *Ratto* could not be more in line with such a proposition. The *Ratto* was placed in the right-hand arch of Loggia dei Lanzi, one of the most visible and prestigious sites in Piazza della Signoria. Donatello’s *Judith* held the position until the *Ratto*

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<sup>339</sup> “See the introductory essay by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella to their translation of Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Xviii-xix.” Cited in Wutrich, “Narrative and allegory in Giambologna’s Rape of a Sabine,” 317-318.

<sup>340</sup> Cole, “Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name,” 344.

replaced it, forcing the *Judith* to be moved to an arch facing the Uffizi; Heikamp called this “a new but less magnificent home,” which supports the idea that the original arch holds prestige and majesty.<sup>341</sup> Placing a sculpture that essentially acts like a blank slate to be discussed and filled with one’s own opinions in such a high-profile spot very much supports Cole’s proposition of Giambologna giving an invitation to critics to discuss it—one could go as far as to say that the sculptor is *daring* them to do so.

If *Ratto delle Sabine* were an isolated case, one would be more cautious about such readings of the sculpture; however, as I have shown, the vagueness is not uncommon in Giambologna’s work. Perhaps even more importantly, Piazza della Signoria and Florence as a whole had a culture rich in ambiguity. Paoletti reminds us that “ambiguity was a deliberate form of discourse in the environment in which Michelangelo was raised,” recalling an anecdote wherein Lorenzo de’ Medici, upon being called too difficult to understand, told his accuser to simply learn his language.<sup>342</sup> If the court welcomed deliberate ambiguity as a common manner of expression, then it is not surprising that its citizens thrived in discovering alternative readings and interpretations of sculptures.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the *Ratto* is not the only sculpture in Piazza della Signoria that is steeped in ambiguity; what might be surprising, however, is that the sculpture that best helps us understand this Florentine tradition is none other than Michelangelo’s *David*. Upon closer inspection, we find that *David* has very little in terms of identifying iconographic elements.<sup>343</sup> The man himself is not as young as he is usually portrayed. There is no sword, no head of Goliath, and the only item that *David* is holding is disguised and hidden; upon closer

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<sup>341</sup> “una nuova ma meno maestosa dimora”

Heikamp, “La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano,” 199.

<sup>342</sup> Paoletti, *Michelangelo’s David*, 80.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

inspection it looks more like a scroll than a sling.<sup>344</sup> As Paoletti puts it, the figure has no possibility of a simplistic literary reading, “forcing a wider metaphorical reading that must have operated on both personal and public levels.”<sup>345</sup> Instead, Michelangelo transformed *David* into “a manifestation of civic ideals,” demonstrating heroism through the idealised muscular body, and full awareness through the expression, highlighting abstract ideas and concepts that could not be portrayed through the depiction of a specific narrative moment.<sup>346</sup> Thus Michelangelo’s *David* can be said to be the opposite of Giambologna’s *Ratto delle Sabine*, as the former has specific subject matter but not a specific narrative, and the latter has clear narrative but ambiguous subject matter.

The people of Florence were quite resistant to the specific interpretation of the *David* that the government tried to promote, referring to the colossus more generically as “the giant.”<sup>347</sup> Foreign visitors, those more likely to be oblivious to the desired political and civic connections of the *David*, also referred to the sculpture in this way, a particular example being Monseigneur Edme.<sup>348</sup> Johann Fichard, in a letter written after a visit to Florence in 1536, referred to *David* as Orpheus instead.<sup>349</sup> Paoletti points out that it is entirely possible that at the early stages of the *David*’s public life, the sculpture went through a period of uncertainty and ambiguity when it came to interpretation and intended message, with perhaps even more readings being offered that simply did not survive to today.<sup>350</sup> This puts Giambologna’s *Ratto delle Sabine* in the same tradition of the *David*, at least in terms of interacting with its *macrospace*. Both sculptures were draped in ambiguity and different interpretations of their iconography were presented.

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 44.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., also cited by Paoletti, *Michelangelo’s David*, 78.

<sup>349</sup> Paoletti, *Michelangelo’s David*, 78.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

Giambologna must have been aware of this discussion, especially as Fichard's visit is not too distant from his own arrival in the city. This is an excellent demonstration of Giambologna's *giudizio*.<sup>351</sup> The sculptor matched the style of the other sculptures in Loggia dei Lanzi, and created a sculpture that fits the rather unique interests and demands of its site.<sup>352</sup> From this point of view, we should regard the entirety of Florence as the *Ratto's macrospace*, as the sculpture interacts with the culture of the city, and thus with the people and the city as a whole. This is where the previous distinction between subject matter and narrative comes into play. There is no doubt that the artistic merit of *Ratto dell Sabine* would have been recognised anywhere, given enough exposure through display in an accessible site. After all, there are scholars such as Patrizi who, following Borghini, claim that the *Ratto* was entirely a display of skill, with the subject matter being an afterthought. Yet if the *Ratto* had been unveiled in a city with a different literary culture, or if its viewers had been less prone to engage in public discourse on art, it is entirely possible that the sculpture would have had a significantly different accepted subject matter. And inversely, had Giambologna operated in a city with such a different culture, the *Ratto* would perhaps have had a better defined subject matter, with more unambiguous iconographic elements; by the same token, it might also have been accepted as a display of skill rather than as an autonomous work of art.

There is another connection to be made with Michelangelo's *David* that supports our claim, and that is the precise site of both sculptures. As we have mentioned, there is a very loose connection between the two sculptures: they both ultimately forced Donatello's *Judith* to be

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<sup>351</sup> Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, 97.

<sup>352</sup> In this way, following Lefebvre's train of thought, not only did the society shape the space that it is in, the society also shaped the objects and enunciators within. It is true that given Ferdinando's supposed involvement in the creation process, according to Borghini, there was some level of input from the government. Nonetheless the argument I lay out above makes it clear that the particular interests and manner of spatial engagement of the society helped further shape the space. Not only did the society produce the space, it also produced the contents thereof. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 31. See also: Borghini, *Il riposo*, 72.

moved to positions of lower prestige. Clearly, the intention was for both of these sculptures to be viewed in prominent positions, so that everyone in Piazza della Signoria could see them. Paoletti states that merely placing the *David* on the *Ringhiera* gave the sculpture strong political and civic connotations, as well as just exposing the sculpture to the widest possible audience.<sup>353</sup> One could go as far as to state that by choosing the *Ringhiera*—and more specifically just a few feet away from the entrance of Palazzo Vecchio—the sculpture was implicitly given connotations, whether people chose to accept them or not. After all, in order to enter the Palazzo, one had to pass by *David*; by creating a balanced pair, the later inclusion of *Hercules and Cacus* made *David* appear as a portal to the most important political space in the city. In other words, the site helped shape the sculpture's reception.

So it was with Giambologna's *Ratto delle Sabine*; however, in the case of the *Ratto* the impact of the site on the sculpture did not end with exposure to the public. In the *Fountain of Neptune* and *Appennino*, we had cases of the sculpture and space being closely bound through design features that reflected one another's needs and intentions. The *Ratto* presents a somewhat different take on this relationship: it appears that the figures were sculpted with an open-space site in mind, yet the base implies knowledge of its specific setting within the Loggia dei Lanzi. Cole calls this sculptural group "the paradigm of the sculpture designed to work from multiple points of view"; indeed, as was the case with the *Fountain of Neptune*, the twisting bodies and shifting gazes encourage the viewer to circumambulate the sculpture.<sup>354</sup> For this reason, it is strange that the Loggia makes such an action impossible, as the lateral views are impeded by the columns of the Loggia.<sup>355</sup> The assumption, thus, is that the figures were sculptured without prior knowledge of the sculpture's site. Indeed, Borghini's account of the *Ratto* seems to imply this as

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 142, 147.

<sup>354</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 280.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

well, as he states that Francesco de' Medici, the man who would ultimately decide where the *Ratto* would be placed, saw it only after the figures already had shape and were, at the very least, defined enough to have a clear narrative.<sup>356</sup>

At the same time, this piece of information does explain the choice of stand for *Ratto delle Sabine*. Vossilla claims that Giambologna chose to give the sculpture a base of such height entirely for the benefit of creating a visual symmetry with Cellini's *Perseus* [fig.26].<sup>357</sup> Altering the stand to better connect with other sculptures in the same setting is not unheard of; here, too, Piazza della Signoria already has a precedent, as the high base for Cellini's *Perseus* was chosen specifically to balance Donatello's *Judith*.<sup>358</sup> These alterations go even further: Cole observes that Giambologna gave a bronze version of this abduction group an oval base, "suggesting that it had no single ideal point of view", but this was changed for the marble version—thus "determining a strong frontal aspect" reinforced by the columns of Loggia dei Lanzi.<sup>359</sup> Therefore the Loggia forced a set of viewing points onto a sculpture that inherently had no ideal viewing point. The site caused the base of the sculpture to be altered and it ultimately disabled certain forms of spectator engagements, as the visual relationship between sculpture and spectator became arbitrarily regulated by the location. Furthermore, Cole claims that the addition of the bronze relief sometime after the sculpture was installed served to reinforce the frontal view, as well as helping to compensate for some of the viewing angles lost due to the architecture of the loggia.<sup>360</sup> Following this train of thought, the site inspired the creation of a secondary artwork to support the primary sculpture in order to make up for the limitations that the site inflicted upon the sculpture's reception and spectator engagement.

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<sup>356</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 72.

<sup>357</sup> Vossilla, "Il Giambologna e la Loggia della Signoria", 96.

<sup>358</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 50-51.

<sup>359</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 96.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

This brings us to our final point in discussing the peculiar relationship between *Ratto delle Sabine* and its site, Loggia dei Lanzi. Borghini's account of the sculpture is that the *Ratto* was not intended to be placed in the loggia; if we keep in mind the above analysis of the relationship between sculpture and site, this seems to imply that the *Ratto* does not belong in its location. Yet we have already seen with *Mercury* that a sculpture can be completely autonomous and still fit with both its site and its *macrospace*; in that case, Keutner saw *Mercury* as separated from the world, standing there to be admired from afar but never interacted with.<sup>361</sup> Cole reads the *Ratto* in a similar way, placing it in the tradition of Ammannati's *Victory* and Michelangelo's *Prisoners* as a "placeless work" due its "resistance to any architecturally bound program, its openness to competing readings."<sup>362</sup> The narrative of the sculpture is independent of the site, its artistic merit and brilliance equally so. Regardless of where the *Ratto* was placed, if it were designed with no favoured or ideal viewing point, then any viewing point is enough to appreciate it.

And yet I will argue that there is some importance to the site chosen for the sculpture. Francesco de' Medici certainly must have made the choice deliberately, as not only did he personally choose the site, but he must also have judged the site important enough that the *Judith* should be moved to make space for the *Ratto*. Exposure is also vital. Piazza della Signoria was arguably the most important space in Florence: anyone who would approach Palazzo Vecchio would see the Loggia, and thus the *Ratto*, especially viewing the Piazza from the ideal viewing angle of Via dei Calzaiuoli. It is hard to imagine that there would have been an equal amount of public discussion surrounding the subject matter of *Ratto* had it been placed in a more private or restricted area, or if it were not in such a large and dominant space. Cole may very well be

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<sup>361</sup> Keutner, *Giambologna: il Mercurio volante*, 32. See also this thesis, 11.

<sup>362</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 100.



correct in stating that the sculpture itself is placeless, but I would argue that *Ratto*, as we know it today, including the subject matter, is specific to Loggia dei Lanzi and to the broader cultural context of Florence.

Thus the *Ratto delle Sabine* offers a different relationship between site and sculpture than the other sculptures I have examined in this thesis. With *Fountain of Neptune* and *Appennino* the relation was symbiotic, with the site informing design elements and artistic choices, while the sculptures enhanced the site and carried the desired messages. In contrast, the *Ratto* seems both to clash with and to benefit from its site. On the one hand, the site is not ideal from the point of view of formal and aesthetic appreciation, yet Giambologna could not have asked for a better site than the Loggia from a conceptual and cultural perspective. The site forced changes onto the sculpture that were arguably detrimental to the original artistic choices in its creation; yet at the same time, the site is solely responsible for the success of its subject matter and intended purpose. Today we can divorce the *Ratto* from the Loggia dei Lanzi and understand the three-figure abduction piece as representing the abduction of the Sabine women; however to take this and conclude that the sculpture is therefore wholly independent of its site is anachronistic, as it was the site that gave this work of art its meaning and subject matter.

## Conclusion

What is the nature of the relationship between sculptures and their sites? How important is this relationship to the art historian seeking to better understand these artworks? These were the questions that inspired this research project, as I sought to uncover the ways in which a sculpture's spaces impact the sculpture, both at the design and the reception stages, and, inversely, how a sculpture's commission and eventual unveiling could impact the space in which it is set. Monumental sculptures are the most physical of artworks, at least when we consider the sixteenth century. They are solid, stationary objects that require great effort and planning to be moved; they are often left in place for years, if not forever, depending on their size and circumstances.<sup>363</sup> They protrude into the space they occupy, unlike paintings that, at the time, typically created illusions of deep space on a two-dimensional surface. Paintings respond to the space around them in their own way, and, thanks to the onslaught of research into perspective during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, this topic has been debated at length. Yet the complex and dynamic relationships between monumental sculptures and their spatial environments have not received the same level of scholarly attention; this thesis has endeavoured to address this discrepancy through a careful consideration of three key works by Giambologna.

As this thesis has shown, each sculpture under examination demonstrated the cinquecento concept of *giudizio* in different ways.<sup>364</sup> The *Fountain of Neptune* in Bologna was a curious case of both good and bad *giudizio*, one that allowed for a better understanding of the approach that a cinquecento artist was expected to have toward the creation of monumental public sculptures.

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<sup>363</sup> Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus* and Ammannati's *Neptune* currently visible in Piazza della Signoria in Florence are the original sculptures, left unmoved for all these centuries: Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 199.

<sup>364</sup> Williams, *Art Theory, and Culture*, 97.

These insights came in part from an analysis of the original competition for the *Neptune Fountain* in Florence. My claim was that the site of the Piazza della Signoria, and the Florentine *macrospace*, demanded different things from public art than the Bolognese *macrospace*. Many of my arguments and analyses regarding Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* and the Piazza del Nettuno engaged deeply with the work of Richard Tuttle, and, to a lesser extent, other scholars. By examining Giambologna's *Neptune* in the context of Ammannati's *Neptune*, however, I was able to further nuance my claims about the specific relationship between Giambologna's fountain and the spaces of Bologna. In light of the fact that the existence of Bologna's *Neptune Fountain* was at least partially due to Ammannati's earlier fountain, I argue, the comparison between the two projects is crucial to understanding the spatial dynamics at work.<sup>365</sup>

The marked differences between these two sculptures with the same name, and the particular socio-political needs of cinquecento Bologna, provided the cornerstones for my argument that Giambologna's *Neptune* is specific to its site and *macrospace*. The comparison with the Florentine *Neptune* enabled me to demonstrate circumstances that would *not* favour Giambologna's design, allowing me to define what something is by examining what it is not.<sup>366</sup> Speaking of these two *Neptunes* in relation to one another is nothing new: Cole,<sup>367</sup> Heikamp,<sup>368</sup> Bush,<sup>369</sup> and Tuttle<sup>370</sup> all incorporate both projects into their analyses of one sculpture or the other. Seeing as Giambologna competed for the Florentine commission, this comes as no surprise. My approach, however, went further: I demonstrated the insurmountable differences

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<sup>365</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 58.

<sup>366</sup> Giannitrapani, *Introduzione alla semiotica dello spazio*, 25.

<sup>367</sup> Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 58.

<sup>368</sup> Heikamp, "La Fontana di Nettuno, La sua storia nel contesto urbano," 231-233.

<sup>369</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento*, 152-153.

<sup>370</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune Fountain in Bologna*, 37.

between the two in design and spatial configuration. I argued that Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* is not just *different* from its predecessors, but that it is *unique to Bologna*.

When discussing the differences between more traditional sculpture and modern installations, Alex Potts claims that "installation work literally situates the viewer inside the frame," while a sculpture "presents itself as existing in a space set slightly apart within a virtual frame."<sup>371</sup> While Potts draws some parallels between a spectator's engagement with an installation and a sculpture—seeing installations as both inclusionary and exclusionary to the spectator<sup>372</sup>—the key difference he mentioned above is my main point of contention. I argue that a sculpture that has a deep relationship with its site and *macrospace*, the way that Giambologna's *Neptune* does, also provides an "inside the frame" experience. If the original spaces are a vital component in the spectator's experience of a sculpture, then the site and the *macrospace* both act as these "frames". The spectators interact with the sculptures differently depending on where they are in these conceptual frames. In the case of the *Neptune*, the sculpture's spatial dynamics within Piazza del Nettuno are an inherent part of its design. The encouraged circumambulation<sup>373</sup>, the sight and sound of running water, the sense of a real Neptune present on the piazza<sup>374</sup>, the busy market stalls and constant travellers<sup>375</sup>—all of these elements that make up the *Neptune*'s site and *macrospace* are constitutive parts of the spectator's perception and experience of this monumental fountain.

The spectator's perceptions and experience are the key components of my arguments. Given the surviving documentation from the sixteenth century, determining the extent to which Giambologna considered his sculptures' spaces is difficult, if not impossible. Yet there is

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<sup>371</sup> Alex Potts, "Installation and Sculpture," *Oxford Art Journal* 24, no.2 (2001): 9-10.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>373</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune Fountain in Bologna*, 172-174.

<sup>374</sup> Laschke, "Un ritratto di Giovanni Bologna e la Fontana di Oceano nel Giardino di Boboli,"

<sup>375</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune Fountain in Bologna*, 145; Tuttle, "Nascita e vita di una piazza rinascimentale," 15.

certainly ample evidence that the sculptures worked with the spaces quite well. Returning to the *Fountain of Neptune*, I agree with Tuttle's analysis of the design, in that the presence of ornaments on every side, and the strongly encouraged circumambulation suggest that Giambologna planned the fountain to be in a large open space.<sup>376</sup> Not to mention that the Piazza del Nettuno would have been thoroughly planned by this point, so Giambologna would have known exactly what type of space he was dealing with, and, by extension, how the sculpture needed to fit into it.<sup>377</sup>

Much the same could be said of the *Appennino*, as the Villa di Pratolino was carefully designed by Bernardo Buontalenti, with both the *Appennino* and its supporting space Prato del Appennino being pre-planned.<sup>378</sup> As I have explained in detail, the colossal sculpture exemplified cinquecento garden sculpture; in the specific case of the Pratolino, the *Appennino* also occupied the space of the "third nature".<sup>379</sup> This effect occurred through both its specific placement and the manner in which Giambologna depicted the subject matter, implying that the sculptor knew with which spatial and philosophical concept to endow his colossus. The *Neptune* fountain and the *Appennino* reflected the needs of their respective spaces in their design, while managing to augment the said spaces. In the case of the former, the changes were of a more utilitarian manner, as the sculpture had a tangible impact on the urban space of Bologna; the *Appennino*, in turn, enhanced the philosophical concepts embodied in cinquecento villa gardens.

Unlike *Fountain of Neptune*, the *Appennino* embodies many philosophical considerations common to cinquecento gardens. The sculpture managed to combine a wide variety of topics within a single representation, all depending on how one approaches the giant.

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<sup>376</sup> Tuttle, *The Neptune Fountain in Bologna*, 172.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 171-174 and this thesis, 34-35.

<sup>378</sup> D'Elia, "Giambologna's giant and the cinquecento villa garden as a landscape of suffering," 1.

<sup>379</sup> For "third nature" see: Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance garden*, 9.

If considered as, first and foremost, a cinquecento garden sculpture, then the themes of transformation, Ovidian iconography, suffering nature and the terrifying unstoppable nature can all be read in the crouched, weary demeanour of this mountain god. If one approaches it instead as a sculpture in a Medici villa at the feet of the Apennine mountain range, the giant begins to fully personify the mountains—in iconography, in general appearance, and in the materials used. And if we see the giant as a simple point on a map when examining the overall design of the Pratolino, we see its identity as a border and an interface, a way of separating and bridging two vastly different sections of the garden. On a conceptual level, the colossus brings the disparate areas of the Pratolino far closer together than one would imagine, unifying a seemingly divided space. More than just creating a topic for debate, multiple readings and approaches forge points of view that allow us to appreciate a subject from every angle, to see every reading.

The analyses of the above two sculptures emphasized how the designs met the requirements of the relevant spaces, as well as how beholders would have understood them. With the *Ratto delle Sabine*, the focus shifted decisively onto the spectator. After the installation of the *Ratto* there was a public discussion about its subject matter, with even sonnets being written about it. Raffaello Borghini would have us believe that the sculpture was just a tool for Giambologna to silence those that doubted his skill, and that Francesco Medici, the patron, lamented the lack of a subject matter.<sup>380</sup> On the other hand, Cole established that the culture of Florence was suitably primed for an ambiguous sculpture and that Giambologna would have expected an active public debate about the *Ratto* to ensue.<sup>381</sup> For my purposes, however, the academic debates surrounding the subject matter—whether it was purposefully ambiguous or if the sculpture was just a show of skill—were not the primary concern. It might not be possible to

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<sup>380</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 72.

<sup>381</sup> Cole, “Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name,” 343-344.

determine exactly why Giambologna created the *Ratto* without a set subject matter, but we can speculate productively about how the spectators might have engaged with this sculpture once it was installed.

In the case of the *Ratto*, I argue, the very act of understanding the multivalence of a sculpture can sometimes be *the* understanding of a sculpture. The Loggia dei Lanzi—as a site with architectural limitations—tamed Giambologna’s design, yet at the same time the site was also responsible for the *Ratto*’s fame and identity. And all the while, only *this* site could allow such an approach to sculptural design in the first place. One can live without the other, neither is dependent, yet both benefit from one another and redefine each other. The *Ratto* enhanced the aesthetics and artistic connotations of Piazza della Signoria and Loggia dei Lanzi by providing a sculpture that was intended to be read on a purely artistic and literary level, while the same site provided the optimal ground for such a sculpture to be warmly received, loved, and eventually given an identity.

Leaving aside the question of whether Giambologna had always had a particular subject in mind or if the sculpture was just a show of skill, what mattered for my analysis here was that the public debated the possible subject matter at length. Wutrich’s analysis of the *Ratto* serves to illustrate my point. The scholar lists a variety of possible interpretations of the *Ratto*’s narrative structure based on topics and ideas popular in Florence at the time. The vital part is that these are not just literary sources, but also texts on political theory, music, and mathematics.<sup>382</sup> The plethora of possible readings available to the citizens of Florence was one of the reasons why I labelled that section “The Florentine Ratto.” It was the debate in Florence that officially gave the sculpture its name; the sculpture mainly reflected the specific concerns and interests of the city’s citizens, allowing engagement across the social spectrum. I believe that the experience of taking

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<sup>382</sup> Wutrich, “Narrative and allegory in Giambologna’s Rape of a Sabine,” 309-315.

part in this extensive debate is as much a part of Giambologna's *Ratto delle Sabine* as any other of its features. This is why the *Ratto* is important to my argument, as it exemplifies the importance of a sculpture's spaces in the spectator experience, taking it further than just judging how well a sculpture interacts with its spaces.

Certainly, it is tempting to use the specific spatial dynamics of these three sculptures to demonstrate intent on Giambologna's part, but the evidence of his good *giudizio* is circumstantial and derived from finished works, rather than documents from the time. This is why I wish to conclude by focusing on what *can* be determined: the spectator experience. Wutrich used the *Ratto*'s context, what I would call its *macrospace*, to demonstrate what is there; my focus was instead to demonstrate the value of the context itself in the spectator's perception of a given sculpture. When the modern spectator looks at the *Ratto* in Florence, the debates surrounding the subject matter are no longer present. The ambiguity is gone, as now the relief on the sculpture's base provides a definitive subject matter for the marble figures.<sup>383</sup> There is no prohibition of active interpretation, but it is very much a "decided" matter. When approaching such a sculpture, an intimate knowledge of the specifics of its "original" site and *macrospace* can most effectively guide our approach to the sculpture.

This contextual specificity was also important in the case of the other sculptures discussed in the thesis. The *Appennino* is certainly a formidable sculpture worthy of the praise it gets for the artistic display by Giambologna. Yet understanding the debates surrounding "nature" in cinquecento villas allows the viewer to see the *Appennino* in the space of the "third nature." Approaching the colossus without this knowledge is akin to looking at a painting by Paolo Uccello or Piero della Francesca while knowing little about fifteenth-century linear

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<sup>383</sup> Cole claims that the added relief increased the ambiguity, rather than dispelling it. This, however, applies more to the prototypical spectator, rather than the modern spectator in question. See: Cole, *Ambitious Form*, 100.



perspective.<sup>384</sup> Certainly one can appreciate these artworks on their own merit, but the viewer does not see what was most relevant to a viewer of the time. On the other hand, understanding Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* as a steadfast symbol of the city and nothing else is also to great detriment to the sculpture and its history. Certainly it was praised and welcomed by the citizens and travellers alike, but it was first appreciated for its utilitarian function as a fountain. Equally importantly, it was one of the last in a long line of renovations and projects aimed at bringing the city closer to the Papal State.

Renaissance sculptors were correct in praising the physicality of sculpture, the ability to walk around it and interact with it on a physical level, a feature that they claimed gave superiority to sculpture over painting.<sup>385</sup> Yet painters believed that sculptures lacked a composition and were restrained due to the physical limitations of the medium.<sup>386</sup> I have sought to demonstrate here that the site and *macrospace* of a sculpture *are* its composition, with the “frame,” to use Potts’ term, being the outer border of these spaces. To appreciate the sculptures themselves, we might not necessarily need these spaces—as we saw in the case of the *Mercury*. However, to truly understand them, we do. *Mercury*’s pose is an action without a goal, yet in its *macrospace*, it fits a grand narrative structure and is endowed with purpose. When we remove the sculpture from its composition and deny the spectator the opportunity to “step inside the frame,” we lose a significant portion of the desired perception and experience of said sculpture. The central claim of this thesis has been that a sculpture’s spaces are just as intrinsic a feature of

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<sup>384</sup> As an example, Piero’s *Flagellation of Christ* has an almost perfectly calculated linear perspective, aside from a single “mistake” in the band of white marble separating the two scenes in the painting. Piero consciously ignored mathematical correctness in order to create the right viewing experience. My argument is that if a spectator approaches Piero’s *Flagellation of Christ* without this knowledge, they fail to appreciate the decisions and inventiveness of the artist. This is akin to how a modern spectator may approach a sculpture without any knowledge of its original space. See: J.V. Field, *The Invention of Infinity: Mathematics and Art in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 99-101.

<sup>385</sup> Borghini, *Il riposo*, 31-32.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

a sculpture as any other, and, much as we give careful consideration to compositional space in paintings, so too with sculptures should we focus on site and setting, space and *macrospace*.

## Index of Images



[fig.1] Giambologna. *Mercury*. 1580. Bronze. Bargello National Museum, Florence. Author's photograph.



[fig.2] Giambologna. *Mercury*. Detail of Zephyr. 1580. Bronze. Bargello National Museum, Florence. Author's photograph.



[fig.3] Giambologna. *Mercury*. Detail of Zephyr's mouth and water jets. 1580. Bronze.

Bargello National Museum, Florence. Author's photograph.



[fig.4] Giambologna. *Mercury*. 1585. Bronze. The Kunstkammer, Vienna. Source:  
<http://www.visitingvienna.com/sights/museums/khm/kunstkammer-2/>. Accessed January 10,  
2019.



[fig.5] Giovanni Francesco Venturini. *The fountain of Mercury at the Villa Medici, Rome*. 1691.

Etching. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/702012>. Accessed January 10, 2019.



[fig.6] Giambologna. *Mercury and Bacchus*. 1580 and 1560. Bronze. Bargello National Museum, Florence. Author's photograph.



[fig.7] Giambologna. *Fountain of Neptune*. 1565. Bronze. Piazza del Nettuno, Bologna.

Source: <https://bolognauncovered.com/2017/01/07/the-story-behind-bolognas-fountain-of-neptune/>. Accessed January 10, 2019.



[fig.8] Baccio Bandinelli. *Hercules and Cacus*. 1534. Marble. Piazza della Signoria,

Florence. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules\\_and\\_Cacus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules_and_Cacus). Accessed January 10, 2019.





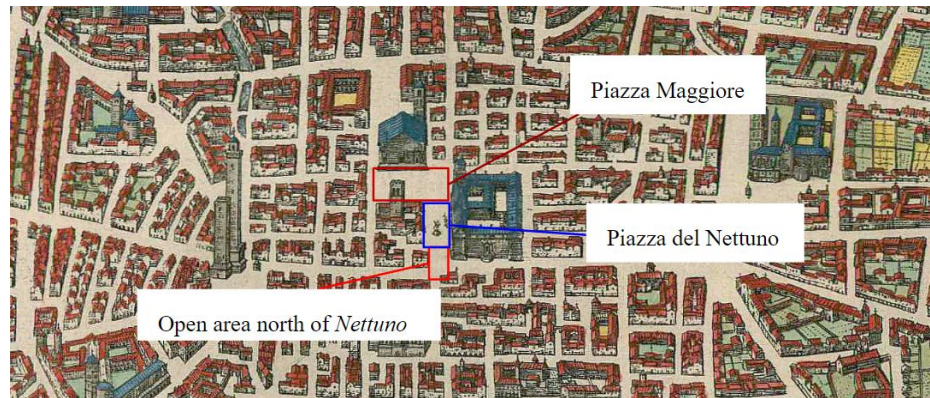
[fig.9] Bartolomeo Ammannati. *Fountain of Neptune*. 1565. Marble. Piazza della Signoria, Florence. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fountain\\_of\\_Neptune,\\_Florence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fountain_of_Neptune,_Florence).

Accessed January 10, 2019.



[fig.10.1] Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg. *Bird's eye view plan of Bologna from the North*. 1588-97. Engraving. Source: <https://www.sanderusmaps.com/en/our-catalogue/detail/166265/antique-map-bird-s-eye-view-plan-of-bologna-by-braun-and-hogenberg/>.

Accessed June 9, 2019.



[fig.10.2] Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg. *Bird's eye view plan of Bologna from the North*, detail. 1588-97. Engraving. Author's edit of fig. 10.1.



[fig.11]

Left: Giambologna. *Fountain of Neptune*. 1565. Bronze. Piazza del Nettuno, Bologna.

Source: <http://www.tripwolf.com/en/guide/show/264191/Italy/Bologna/Fontana-del-Nettuno>.

Accessed June 17, 2019.

Right: Bartolomeo Ammannati. *Fountain of Neptune*. 1565. Marble. Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fountain\\_of\\_Neptune,\\_Florence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fountain_of_Neptune,_Florence). Accessed June 17, 2019.





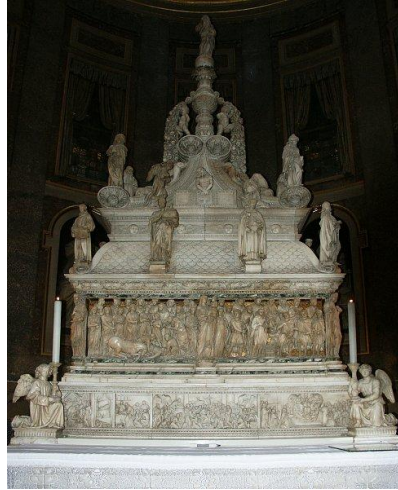
[fig.12] Jacques Callot. *Piazza della Signoria*. Early 17th century. Drawing.

Source: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1-piazza-della-signoria-florence-jacques-callot.html>. Accessed 10 January 2019.



[fig.13] Giambologna. *Fountain of Neptune*. Detail. 1565. Bronze. Piazza del Nettuno, Bologna. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fontana\\_Giambologna.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fontana_Giambologna.jpg).

Accessed January 10, 2019.



[fig.14] Niccolo dell'Arca. *Arca of San Domenico*. 1469-1473. Marble. Basilica of San Domenico, Bologna. Source:

<https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/italy/bologna/arca/arca.html>. Accessed January 10, 2019.



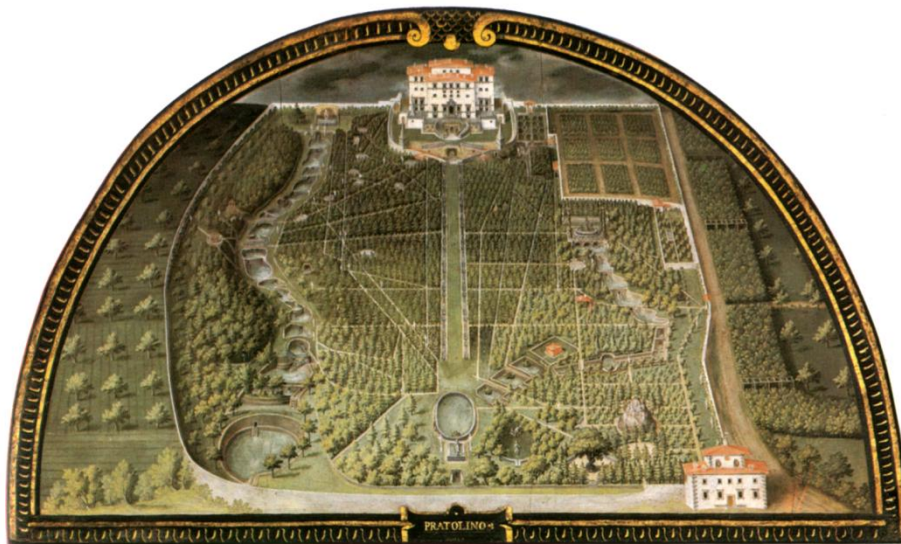
[fig.15] Giambologna. *Appennino*. 1579-1580. Brick, mortar, and stucco. Villa di Pratolino.

Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Parco\\_di\\_pratolino,\\_appennino\\_del\\_giambologna\\_01.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Parco_di_pratolino,_appennino_del_giambologna_01.JPG). Accessed January 10, 2019.



[fig.16.1] Giusto Utens. *Pitti palace and Boboli gardens*. 1599. Oil. Villa La Petraia. Source: <https://www.visittuscany.com/en/ideas/boboli-gardens-the-green-heart-of-florence/>. Accessed January 10, 2019.



[fig.16.2] Giusto Utens. *Pratolino, lower half*. 1599. Oil. Villa La Petraia. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa\\_di\\_Pratolino](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_di_Pratolino). Accessed January 10, 2019.





[fig.17] Giambologna. *Fontana dell'Oceano*. Mid-late 17th century. Marble. Boboli

Gardens, Florence. Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boboli,\\_isolotto,\\_fontana\\_dell%27oceano\\_del\\_Giambologna\\_03.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boboli,_isolotto,_fontana_dell%27oceano_del_Giambologna_03.JPG). Accessed 10 January 2019.



[fig.18] Giacomo della Porta. *Atlas Fountain*. 1602. Stone and bronze. Villa

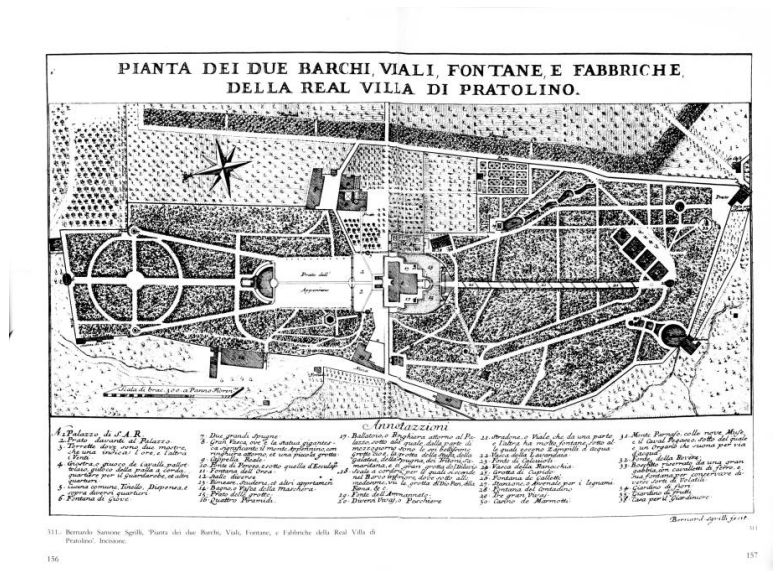
Aldobrandini, Frascati.

Source: [https://www.wga.hu/html\\_m/p/porta\\_g/index.html](https://www.wga.hu/html_m/p/porta_g/index.html). Accessed 10 January 2019.

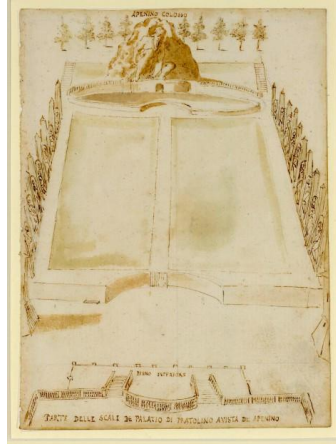


[fig.19] Stefano della Bella. *Incisione raffigurante l'Appennino del Giambologna nel giardino della Villa di Pratolino*. 1651. Engraving. Source:

<https://brunelleschi.imss.fi.it/itinerari/immagine/img34457.html>. Accessed 20 June 2019.



[fig.20] Bernardo Sansone Sgrilli. *Pianta dei due Barchi, Viali, Fontane, e Fabbriche della Real Villa di Pratolino*. Engraving. Source: Luigi Zangheri, *Pratolino: il giardino delle meraviglie*, vol.2 (Florence: Edizioni Gonnelli, 1987), 156-157.



[fig.21] Giovanni Guerra. *Prato del Appennino*. 1598. Drawing. Source:

[http://digilib.mpiwg-](http://digilib.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/digitallibrary/jquery/digilib.html?fn=/permanent/echo/pratolino/Guerra_Albertina/pageimg&pn=7)

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[pageimg&pn=7](http://digilib.mpg.de/digitallibrary/jquery/digilib.html?fn=/permanent/echo/pratolino/Guerra_Albertina/pageimg&pn=7). Accessed 17 June 2019.



[fig.22] Giambologna. *Ratto delle Sabine*. 1582. Marble. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence. Author's

photograph.







[fig.25] Giambologna. *Samson and the Philistine*. 1560. Marble. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Source: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/giambolognas-samson-and-a-philistine/>. Accessed 10 January 2019.



[fig.26] Cellini's *Perseus* alongside Giambologna's *Ratto delle Sabine*. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence. Author's photograph.



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