Renaissance Automata of the Villa Pratolino

Magic, Mechanics, and Medici Ambition

Lily V. Filson

palgrave
macmillan

Renaissance Automata of the Villa Pratolino

Lily V. Filson

Renaissance Automata of the Villa Pratolino

Magic, Mechanics, and Medici Ambition

palgrave
macmillan

Lily V. Filson
Università Ca' Foscari
Venice, Italy

ISBN 978-3-031-86992-1 ISBN 978-3-031-86993-8 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-86993-8

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Dr. James Bradburne,
a constant channel of stellar sympathy and the north star of this work,
across, and in spite of, vast distances of geography and time.

Foreword

Renaissance Automata of the Villa Pratolino: Mechanics, Magic, and Medici Ambition when read, experienced, and enjoyed will unfailingly captivate the reader. It is a striking and poignant reminder of the inexhaustible richness achieved through patient meticulous scholarship combined with ingenuity, wisdom, and a rare command of historical forms. This is a monumental work, an achievement in god-making. The divine word kisses and blushes the rounded cheek of nature, and we inhabit "the convergence of magic and mechanics under the Medici reign … epitomized by the intricate automata of Pratolino."

Dr. Lily Filson is a scholar and a teacher nonpareil, guiding the reader through the fascinating and carnivalesque boundaries between the hermetic and the metaphysical, the scientific and the mystical, the technological and the entertaining. We are transported not only to Renaissance Europe, but to the cultural and intellectual itinerary of the soul.

A consistent and nuanced sense of gnosis, a divine spark, admirably shapes Dr. Filson's thought and work. It allows her to seamlessly tie together a polyphony of figures as well as immerse the work in Neoplatonic thought, Arabic magical and philosophical texts, and Aristotelian-Democritan concepts of theurgy.

The author recovers the profundity of the Socratic predicament, that is, the impossible but essential desire to perceive the beauty of the unseen

and un-created realm, from the many shallow narratives which neglect its relevance and timelessness. From inanimate pen, ink, and paper, *Renaissance Automata of the Villa Pratolino* is veritably alive, a fountain of fecundity, "pregnant by the Spirit of Life."

University of Holy Cross
New Orleans, LA, USA

Caitlin S. Gilson

Preface

In the broad stamp of histories of the Renaissance that illuminate pinnacles of human achievement, this book identifies a new conquest of sixteenth-century art, technology, and philosophy that is both wondrous and enigmatic. The Villa Pratolino, a suburban retreat outside of Florence built by Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici, once housed automata of intricate craftsmanship and profound philosophical resonance; they are not so much lost works of art as lost vestiges of a worldview that went largely extinct with the Enlightenment. The automata of the Medici Villa Pratolino were not merely feats of engineering; they were the living vestiges of a dual heritage. From the legacy of antiquity, they drew upon not only mechanical ingenuity but also the esoteric philosophies of god-making, deeply rooted in the sacred traditions of ancient Egypt and Greece that were transmitted to Renaissance Italy as Neoplatonic and Hermetic philosophy. This dual transmission, mechanical and magical, represents a confluence of knowledge that Renaissance thinkers revered and sought to revive. Drawing upon historical texts, archaeological evidence, and scholarly interpretations, this work delves into the bivalent nature of these creations and explores how Renaissance patrons, inspired by the ancients, perceived their automata as more than mere curiosities. These devices—and other notable instances of Renaissance art and material culture—were seen as vessels, capable of channeling celestial influences and embodying some essence of celestial power, and their makers exercised nothing short of a demiurge's creative will.

The book unravels the connections between the engineering of automata and the mystical theurgies of the past. Celebrated in their time, these automata embodied the Renaissance's quest to unite art, science, and spirituality, bridging the mortal and divine, the earthly and celestial. The resurrection of Pratolino's lost automata reveals the ingenuity and philosophical underpinnings of their creators, demonstrating fluid boundaries between science, magic, art, and mechanics. This era marked a time when human creativity sought communion with the heavens, capturing the divine through advanced hydraulic and pneumatic engineering. Chapter 1 meticulously reconstructs Pratolino's marvels, from grottoes to hydraulic wonders, epitomizing a Mannerist ethos and the Medici dynasty's embrace of magical philosophy, engineering, and art. It also delves into Francesco de' Vieri's eclectic Aristotelianism, illuminating Pratolino through a lens bridging Classical philosophy and Christian orthodoxy, echoing Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino. The narrative then explores Francesco I's broader patronage of experimental sciences, rooted in ancient doctrines and Renaissance innovation, harnessing hidden occult principles. The Pratolino automata, grounded in Aristotle's De Anima and Democritus's Atomism, embody the Grand Duke's synthesis of art, science, and alchemy, intertwining with mystical and scientific pursuits in Francesco I's court. Chapter 3 charts the fascination with animating objects from antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, tied by the transmission of Hermetic wisdom, the rise of theurgy within Neoplatonism, and the integration of Arabic magical texts. Chapter 4 explores Byzantine and Islamic contributions to mechanical innovation, shaping early modern Europe's technology and influencing Francesco I's visionary automata. Chapter 5 examines the Renaissance revival of theurgical practices and their impact on cultural attitudes toward wonder and magic, tracing the philosophical lineage from Greco-Egyptian traditions through thinkers like Ficino, Lazzarelli, Agrippa, and Pomponazzi. This book argues that the Pratolino automata embodied not only mechanical ingenuity but also the Renaissance's recovery of ancient knowledge, weaving together engineering feats with profound philosophical and magical principles. This synthesis at Pratolino epitomized the era's quest to understand the natural and supernatural realms, shaping Renaissance Europe's cultural and intellectual landscape.

The book itself mirrors the alchemical process it describes within; the *prima materia* of its inception as a Master's thesis (Syracuse University 2011) and later a doctoral thesis (Università Ca' Foscari 2018)

metamorphosed into lectures for my university courses before being distilled once more into book format. In all stages of this Great Work spanning more than a decade, I have been fortunate and humbled by the support received. It is rooted in a Florence Fellowship granted by Syracuse University in 2008 and indebted to the standard of rigor imparted by Drs. Gary Radke and Barbara Deimling. In Florence, Dr. James Bradburne's unswerving enthusiasm for the esotericism of Renaissance grottoes, its technologies, and the intellectual life of the "satirocrats" charted my course to a doctoral fellowship at the Università Ca' Foscari in Venice, which was supported by a grant from the European Research Council. Here, I extend my deepest gratitude to my dissertation supervisor Dr. Marco Sgarbi, whose generosity with his knowledge and expertise is eclipsed only by his patience and kindness. I also would like to thank Dr. Sylva Dobalová, whose mentorship of my work as a Kateřina Dušková fellow in Prague in 2015 opened my eyes Medicean threads throughout the Bohemian Renaissance. I also direct endless thanks to Holly Flora, an iconic image *in se* who has mentored so many facets of my academic and professional life; this manuscript was written in the serenity of a borrowed office that became a refuge for focus and concentration. I wish to express most of all my tender indebtedness to my mother, the "tent-pole" of my family, and to my daughter, whose excitement and clever mind make me see my work and my world in a brighter light. The insights presented herein are testament to this love and support from my cherished network; any shortcomings or errors are solely my own.

Lily V. Filson

Contents

About the Author

Lily V. Filson is an interdisciplinary scholar in the fields of art history, architecture, and the history of technology and has held several academic positions, including Assistant Teaching Professor of Art History at Ball State University and Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, and the University of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, USA. She received her Ph.D. from Università Ca' Foscari in 2018 with a dissertation titled "Engineering Gods: Renaissance Theurgy and the Sixteenth-Century Automata of Francesco I de' Medici," the basis of the present work. Her research has been supported by fellowships and grants from institutions like the European Research Council, the Renaissance Society of America, and the Academy of Sciences in the Czech Republic.

Abbreviations

ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
I-Fn	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (Florence, Italy)
MAP	Medici Archive Project

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Vanished *Wonders*

Francesco de' Vieri coined the term "Maravigliose opere" or "wonderful works" in a 1587 panegyric treatise[1] that celebrated the suburban Villa Pratolino constructed for Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici (1541–87). This villa's creation *ex-novo* from a previously barren landscape devoid of any Medici legacy was itself a wonder and epitomized Francesco I's mastery over nature writ large.[2] The villa, flanked by two parks and water gardens and enriched further by numerous individual artworks and architectural elements, functioned primarily as a retreat from Florence's summer heat for Francesco I, his court, and distinguished guests and communicated to its witnesses the triumph of Francesco I's will over nature writ large. Historians have analyzed this site in extravagant terms: garden of wonders, of ingenuity, and of revere; oasis of the senses and of the memory; a place of splendor and ruin; princely residence and alchemical theater; exposition-space of science and technology; model and compendium of earthly paradise; mirror of the passions and virtues of a narcissistic prince; esoteric Utopian citadel; even a Tuscan Versailles.

[1] De' Vieri (1587). Scanned copies of the original 1587 publication of Giorgio Marescotti have been published by Europeana Collections, see https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/9200332/ABO__2BZ184584300.

[2] Godwin (2002, 175).

L. V. Filson, *Renaissance Automata of the Villa Pratolino*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-86993-8_1

During Francesco I's lifetime, the Villa Pratolino hosted numerous dignitaries, like the Duc Anne de Joyeuse in 1583 who bathed in its waters, danced with "the most beautiful women of Florence," and declared that its grottoes were the most beautiful in the world.[3] Even after Francesco I's death, the "waters and grottoes" of Pratolino still ranked at the top of a must-see list drafted for the visit of Mantuan Senator Giovanni Pietro Sordi in 1591.[4]

Pratolino's construction belongs to a Grand Ducal reign that saw the expansion of Medici holdings to include the villas of Magia, Lapegna (also called Lapeggi), Marignolle, as well as Francesco I's personal s*tudiolo* within the Palazzo Vecchio and *fonderia* at the Casino of San Marco.[5] An unassuming tract of Tuscan farmland five kilometers to the north of Florence on the road to Bologna owned first by the Orlandini[6] then until 1568 by a superintendent of works for the Medici, Benedetto di Buonaccorso Uguccioni, became the terrestrial canvas for an underground network of canals, conduits, and new aqueducts to bring water to every part of the villa and parks. Pratolino aligns with contemporary hydraulic Renaissance villas and gardens at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, and the Villa Gamberaia, as well as the Medici Villa Castello built by Francesco I's father and predecessor Cosimo I. Antonio Tiepolo aptly likened Pratolino's extensive hydraulic system, meticulously engineered by Benedetto di Buonaccorso Uguccioni, to the lifeblood of the estate.[7] This intricate network, depicted in the 1742 plan of Bernardo Sansone Sgrilli (1733–55) (Fig. 1.1), facilitated the realization of above-ground marvels such as Giambologna's monumental *Apennine* sculpture and a series of elaborate grottoes housing mechanical marvels including animated automata that "came to life" in front of the eyes of their Renaissance audiences—all reliant on the same newly-constructed piping infrastructure.

The Medici Villa Pratolino showcases an extensive array of wonders, ranging from automata to intricate architectural feats, emblematic of the

[3] ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 5109, fol. 127r, July 18, 1583, Andrea Albertani to Pietro di Francesco Usimbardi (MAP Doc ID# 17621).

[4] ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 280, fol. 77v-78r, July 31, 1591, Belisario di Francesco Vinta to Jacques Bylivelt (MAP Doc ID# 392).

[5] Mignani (1995, 15).

[6] Baldinucci (1845–1847, 496–497); see also Brown (2005, 6).

[7] ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 1687, fol. 115r, December 29, 1578, Antonio Tiepolo to Francesco I de' Medici (MAP Doc ID# 26543).

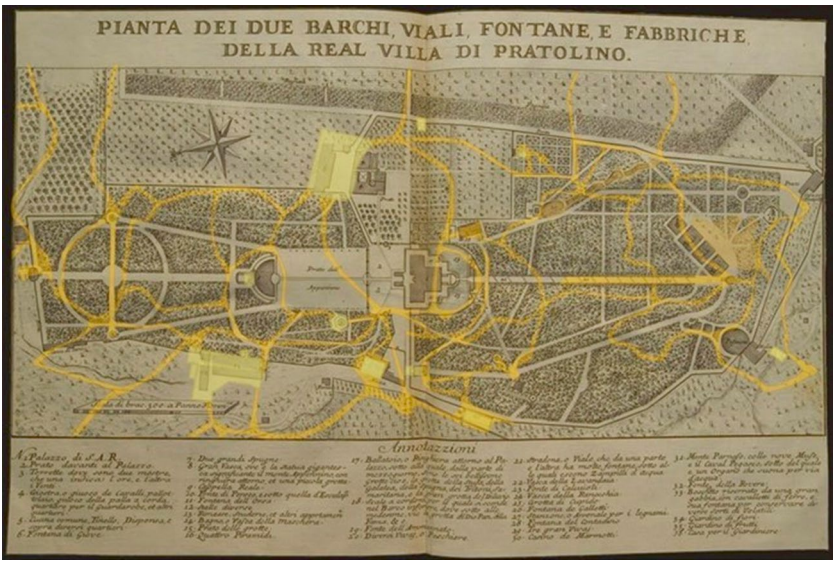

Fig. 1.1 Bernardo Sansone Sgrilli, Plan of the Two Parks, Paths, Fountains, and Buildings of the Royal Villa of Pratolino

broad artistic and engineering pursuits orchestrated by Bernardo Buontalenti (*ca.* 1531–1608) under the patronage and collaboration of Francesco I de' Medici. A lifelong companion to the Medici prince after being rescued from the ruins of a collapsed palace and educated at court, Buontalenti worked side by side with young Francesco in the Medici's foundries and laboratories, and then having traveled with the prince on his sojourn to Spain (1562–63), Buontalenti's life and career can be analogized as the executive producer contributing his unique stroke of genius to Francesco I's direction. Other artisan-engineers were associated with Pratolino's vast works including Bonaventura da Orvieto (or da Bagnoregio), Gocerano da Parma, Tommaso Francini, David Fortini, and Maestro Lazzaro delle Fontane;[8] however, Buontalenti realized the lion's share of Pratolino's architecture and virtually all of its grottoes, or artificial

[8] Zangheri (1986, 16–17). The last two engineers, David Fortini and Lazzaro delle Fontane, appear to have been working for Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici in Rome before being released to work on Pratolino relatively late in its construction. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 1212, fol. 106r, March 30, 1578, Antonio Serguidi to Pietro di Francesco Usimbardi (MAP Doc ID# 4223).

caves, that housed the "living" statues of Pratolino and most of its other celebrated "wonders."

By the late sixteenth century, grottoes emerged as a distinctive feature of Italian Renaissance garden design, tracing their origins back to antiquity. Initially, grottoes in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century gardens served as secluded retreats, evoking a sense of wilderness and primal nature while providing relief from summer heat for solitary reflection or intimate gatherings. However, at Pratolino, grottoes took on a prominent role, transcending precedent. These grottoes were not standalone structures within expansive parks but were integrated into Italian residential architecture to an unprecedented extent and prominence. Lavishly adorned with stalactites, mother of pearl, shells, corals, marine plants, and mosaics, compartmentalized grottoes on Pratolino's ground floor featured intricate automata and cutting-edge technologies. Buontalenti, a key figure in grotto design, extended his influence beyond Pratolino most notably to the Grotta Grande in the Boboli Gardens of the Pitti Palace (realized 1583–93), transforming it into a riotous display of forms absent in its earlier, simpler design by Giorgio Vasari (realized 1556–60). Additionally, ephemeral grottoes were erected for theatrical spectacles, such as *La Pellegrina*, designed by Buontalenti for the 1589 wedding of Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609) to Christine of Lorraine, as depicted in engravings of the event's second *intermedio* (Fig. 1.2).[9]

Regrettably, scant remnants exist of Pratolino's sixteenth-century villa, parks, and famed grottoes, with none of the automata surviving. The entirety of the villa, including its ground-floor grotto complex, and many park features chronicled by De' Vieri were demolished. Following Francesco I's demise, the inheritance of the site by his son Don Antonio was annulled by his brother Ferdinando I, who realized a new phase of Baroque automata and notable new features while battling breakdowns as early as 1588 in its hydraulic system described in detail by Marco Dezzi Bardeschi.[10] Subsequently, ownership transferred to Cosimo III de' Medici (1642–1723), whose reign saw the initial dispersal of artworks from the

[9] Caves also appear in an engraving of Buontalenti's scenography for the fourth *intermedio*, "in the region of demons," but the second *intermedio*'s use of garden typologies was selected for illustration on the merits of its closer affinity to Pratolino's lost forms.

[10] Dezzi Bardeschi (1986, 108).

Fig. 1.2 Epifanio d'Alfiano, Second Intermezzo for La Pellegrina

site. Shortly after, pieces of the property were put up for rent.[11] Neglect ensued, leading to an ambiance of decay immortalized in the writings of the Marquis de Sade after his visit in 1774.[12] The villa's ultimate destruction and the transformation of its Renaissance parks into an English landscape occurred between 1814 and the 1820s,[13] reflecting a shift in societal values held by the more pragmatic Medici successors, the Grand Duke Ferdinand III of Lorraine (1769–1824) and his son Leopold II (r.

[11] Its first tenant was a sculptor, and in 1741 Bernardo Sansone Sgrilli, the author of a treatise that featured detailed engravings and plans, began to occupy the site. Finally, a lawyer rented some of the property in 1828 before it was sold to Paolo Demidoff.

[12] The ruins of Pratolino furnish an evocative setting of decadence and depravity featured in a work originally entitled *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu, suivie de l'histoire de Juliette sa soeur*. See de Sade (1968). Two films have also been based on *Justine:* a 1969 Italian production, *Juliette de Sade*, and a 1972 French production, *Justine de Sade*.

[13] Cf. Godwin dating its destruction to 1822; Godwin (2002, 175).

1824–70).[14] The subsequent sale to Russian industrialist Prince Paul Demidoff in 1872, subsequent alterations, and its current incarnation as a public cultural site have ushered a dramatically-reduced footprint of Pratolino into the modern day.

A Reconstructed Visit

This section offers a virtual tour of Pratolino's vanished parks and grottoes, reconstructed from primary sources and recent scholarship. The unique attractions of this late Renaissance Medici construction arguably made Pratolino the first modern amusement park,[15] yet its design and elements articulated authoritative statements about Medicean knowledge and power that transcended mere entertainment. Notably, the playful water features in Pratolino's grottoes and parks captured the attention of early visitors such as Michel de Montaigne and Fynes Moryson,[16] although their accounts provide limited insight into the functioning of the automata. Earlier sources offer little further clarification. Raffaello Gualterotti's 1569 *Vaghezze sopra Pratolino* was composed before much of Pratolino's construction had been completed, and an outpouring of dedicated compositions between the years 1586 and 1587 to mark the villa's completion and honor Francesco I do not dwell on the technical triumphs. These latter include Cesare Agolanti's epic work of 400 eight-lined stanzas composed sometime in the 1580's,[17] three madrigals composed by Torquato Tasso, and a choral composition for five voices, "Li Pratolini," by court musician Gian Piero Manenti[18] performed in Venice and dedicated to

[14] Pratolino, long ago stripped of anything of value, was considered an embarrassing reminder—"a symbol of a privileged past, of a defunct royal, or worse, bourgeois society." Miller (1992, 119).

[15] Zangheri (1986, 15).

[16] de Montaigne (1983) and Ginzburg (1993). See also Moryson (1907); the latter is the first English language account of Pratolino, written a decade after Montaigne's visit that furnishes more details of the experience of the grottoes and its hydraulic features.

[17] Agolanti, *La descrizione di Pratolino,* MS. in Florence, BNC, Fondo Magliabecchiano, Cl. VII, 8, 44v-55, 57; ASF, Guardaroba, 136, 327v; see Smith (1961, 166); Wright (1996, 54).

[18] Manenti appears in a 1579 list of grand ducal household members with a salary recorded of 3 scudi. Correspondence from 1579. *Mediceo del Principato,* vol. 616, f. 375v mapDocId#27559. In another and more extensive inventory of personnel, he is listed as Giovanni Piero Maneti, *musicho*, and still compensated 3 scudi. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 616, fol. 448r, Undated correspondence (MAP Doc ID# 28366).

Bianca Capello, the controversial Venetian mistress of Francesco I and later the Grand Duchess of Tuscany.[19]

No visual document of the Pratolino automata—or the site at all—from the lifetime of Francesco I has been identified. The handful of depictions from the early years of the seventeenth century offer valuable insights into the site's layout but reveal little about the automata themselves. Whereas distant partial-perspectives, like the 1599 lunette by Giusto Utens (Fig. 1.3), the *ca.* 1588 engraving *Pratolino Magni Ducis Hetruriae* by Salvatore Vitale (Fig. 1.4),[20] and Sgrilli's 1742 plan referenced above are nevertheless useful for locating the grottoes and original environs of the Pratolino automata.

The earliest and most extensive documents of Pratolino's automata are a series of sketches by Giovanni Guerra (1544–1618) housed in Vienna's Albertina Museum. These drawings belong within a context of several notable Italian villas, including the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, the Palazzo alle Terme at the Villa Montalto, the Villa Adobrandini at Frascati, and the Villa Giulia in Rome.

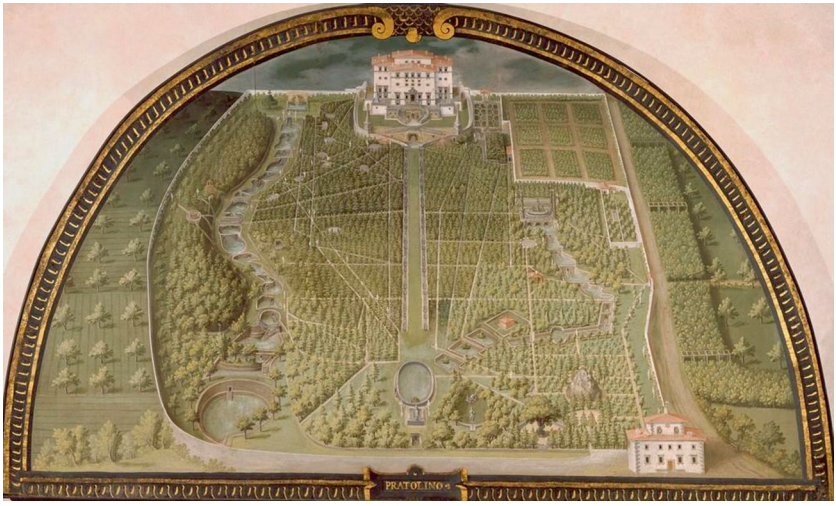

Fig. 1.3 Giusto Utens, Pratolino. 1599

[19] Smith (1961, 165f); the Manenti composition was cited by Torquato Tasso (Tasso 1898–1902, IV, 356 n.) and credits an Angelo Gardano with its staging in Venice.

[20] Vitale (1639, 32).

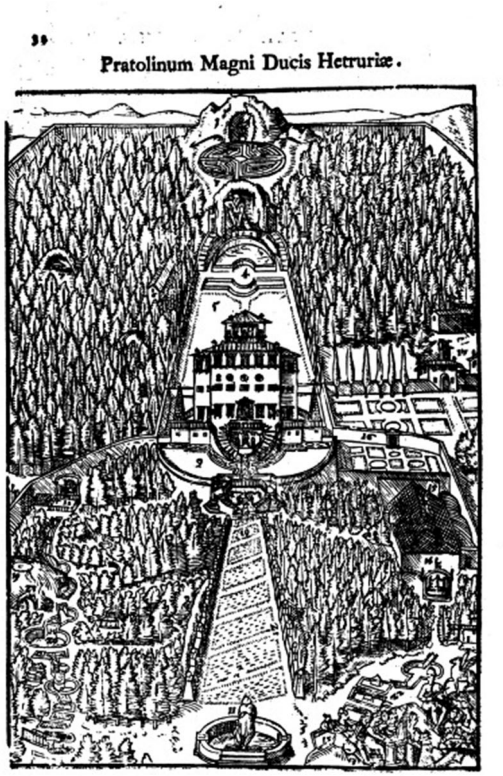

Fig. 1.4 Salvatore Vitale, Pratolinum Magni Ducis Hetruriae, ca. 1588

Guerra's sketches are dated to *ca.* 1601, and they remain for some of the devices they depict the only known visual record. Short-hand sketches in the first years of the seventeenth century by Heinrich Schickhardt (1558–1635), the German architect and engineer to the Duke of Württemberg, document the workings of an automated tableau that was installed by Ferdinando I after the death of Francesco I and roughly around the same time period as Guerra's drawings.[21] Around 1650, Stefano della Bella (1610–64) executed a series of engravings which were

[21] Schickhardt's notes and sketches are preserved in the Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart; see Smith (1961, 156f). Schickhardt's mechanical drawings of Pratolino's organs have recently been explored in detail as well. See Kaiser and Valleriani (2016, 88–90).

published as plates within Sgrilli's 1742 *Descrizione* of Pratolino. Guerra, Schickhardt, and della Bella's visual documents will figure below in direct relation to the structures and artworks they depict. Although later plans and vistas of Pratolino exist, no further visual documents exist for the Pratolino automata specifically, which by the eighteenth century had fallen into terminal disrepair.

The disappearance of the Pratolino automata from the material record poses challenges to understanding their historical reception. Francesco de' Vieri's 1587 treatise provides insight into contemporaneous perceptions, but this work never attempts a faithful, technical description of the Pratolino works or its automata; it was written, as he states, after only one day at Pratolino and an hour's consultation with the architect, Bernardo Buontalenti, and his son.[22] Instead, De' Vieri emphasizes the engineering and metaphysical triumphs of Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici. De' Vieri's interpretation of the automata as embodiments of ancient knowledge will be explored further in the following chapter.

The reconstructed journey through Pratolino's parks and grottoes begins with an overview of the Old and New Parks, spanning twenty hectares in total. These parks, depicted in Vitale's engraving, defy traditional conventions of the Renaissance garden. Notably, these wilder areas of Pratolino were the site of an assassination attempt on Francesco I during a hunt in 1587.[23] Starting from the northernmost point of the Old Park, the reconstructed itinerary follows a north-south axis, traversing the villa and its grottoes, and descending through the New Park. Central to this exploration are the hydraulic automata, which will be examined in light of their maker's esoteric philosophies in subsequent chapters.

The Old Park

Jupiter, the celestial ruler in Greco-Roman mythology, oversees the entirety of the Pratolino complex, with the Fountain of Jupiter, or Jove, marking the commencement of a significant portion of water flow crucial for powering Pratolino's hydraulic infrastructure. A grotto-niche, depicted

[22] De' Vieri (1587, 23).

[23] A letter implores the governor of Milan to extradite his would-be assassin. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 270, fol.164, September 1, 1587, Francesco I de' Medici to Carlo I d'Aragona Tagliavia Duca di Terranova (MAP Doc ID# 19338).

at the center of Vitale's engraving, originally accommodated a sculpture and water feature: a *Jupiter* originally crafted by Baccio Bandinelli (1493–1560) for the Florence Cathedral choir. By the time Pratolino was built, both Bandinelli and his original patron, Francesco I's father Cosimo I,[24] were deceased, so the placement of a sculpture depicting a Classicized God the Father by Bandinelli, likely held personal and dynastic significance for Francesco I. This statue, designed to emit water from a golden thunderbolt in the god's hand,[25] deteriorated over time, leading to its relocation to the Boboli Gardens without the thunderbolt in 1834 (Fig. 1.5).[26] Subsequently, a new *Jupiter* was installed at Pratolino in 1886,[27] but neither iteration incorporates flowing water today, a vital element for both natural and artificial life, including the animated automata prevalent in the late sixteenth century. While Bandinelli's mid-sixteenth-century sculpture lacked autonomous movement, its water feature constituted a form of animation within an otherwise static composition.

Descending south, the visitor would encounter a labyrinth depicted in Vitale's woodcut and meticulously described by De' Vieri: a complex structure featuring an octagonal circuit with eight columns under a large pergola topped with an iron cupola eighteen *braccie* high and two-hundred

[24] Bandinelli had been a favorite and salaried artist of Cosimo I; Bandinelli's salary from Cosimo I is the standard requested by Benvenuto Cellini in 1545. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 613, f. 27r, October 3, 1545, Pier Francesco Riccio to Cosimo I de' Medici (MAP Doc ID# 17947).

Cosimo I had even made provisions for the sculptor to study cadavers in a dedicated space apart from the hospital at Santa Maria Nuova, a move designed to minimize the risk of excommunication; ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 1170, fol. 290r, January 17, 1543, Marzio di Girolamo Marzi Medici (Bishop of Marsico) to Pier Francesco Riccio (MAP Doc ID# 2408).

One correspondence of 1550 preserving the earlier Grand Duke's orders for the design of another fountain as well as his amusement at Bandinelli's barbed comments about an artistic rival; ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 1176, f. 11r, September 11, 1550, Iacopo Guidi da Volterra to Pier Francesco Riccio (MAP Doc ID# 3033). Archival sources also detail the relationship of financial dependency of Bandinelli to the Medici, with payments recorded from both Cosimo I and Eleanora of Toledo, as well as the assistance of Cosimo I in Bandinelli's purchase of various property from Bartolomeo Gulaterotti, Luigi Gherardi, and Ugolino Grifoni.

[25] De' Vieri (1587, 25).

[26] Zangheri (1979, 143–144). The last informs us that the work was originally created for the Duomo of Florence but was diverted by Francesco I to his villa's park.

[27] Brown (2005, 15).

Fig. 1.5 Baccio Bandinelli, Seated Jupiter. 1556. Boboli Gardens, Florence

braccie in diameter. At its center, a Corsican sponge-rock spouted water from its summit. De' Vieri interprets the labyrinth as symbolic of humanity's descent into confusion, where deceit and secrets entrap individuals akin to navigating a maze. Yet, for those who possess the means to escape both literal and metaphorical labyrinths, De' Vieri reserves an ever-green crown of laurels.[28]

Pratolino's vital water flowed from the celestial north embodied in Bandinelli's *Jupiter*, through the *Apennine*, a personification of the Tuscan

[28] De' Vieri (1587, 26).

mountains, sculpted by Giambologna around 1580. Giambologna, sometimes written Gian Bologna or alternately Giovanni Bologna (all Italianizations of Jean de Boulogne, 1529–1608) was a prominent artist in the Grand Ducal household, receiving substantial payment increases during his tenure that reflected the monumental scale of his work.[29] The *Apennine* represented a remarkable achievement, being the first colossal sculpture since antiquity. Giambologna's dedication to the project is evident from a letter by Francesco I in 1580, explaining his inability to undertake additional commissions.[30] Unlike predecessors and Renaissance luminaries Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo Buonarroti, who conceptualized but never realized such grand sculptures,[31] Giambologna's work came to fruition, and Francesco I's admiration for the *Apennine* after a visit in August 1582 is documented in the archival record.[32]

Giambologna's *Apennine* colossus, a rare surviving sixteenth-century sculpture at Pratolino in its original location, can be seen in early drawings by Giovanni Guerra (Fig. 1.6) and later engravings by Stefano della Bella (Fig. 1.7). Situated on the north side of its basin-pond, the colossus originally occupied a grotto-niche of substantial proportions, no longer extant, as depicted in visual documents by Vitale, Guerra, and della Bella, and in a terracotta model housed in Florence's National Museum of the Bargello (Fig. 1.8).[33] Water that cascaded from the *Jupiter* sculpture's thunderbolt was transported until it reached the colossus, where it powered fountains

[29] Like the musician Manenti, Giambologna also appears in personnel inventories of the Grand Ducal household, receiving thirteen scudi a month in 1562 under Cosimo I. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 5086, unnumbered folio, May 19, 1562, Antonio Serguidi to Giovanbattista de' Servi (MAP Doc ID# 14103). Thirteen scudi are also tallied in an undated correspondence. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 616, fol. 448r (MAP Doc ID# 28366). Later, Giambologna receives an extraordinary twenty-five scudi in 1579 around the time of his works for Pratolino. The significant pay raise mirrors the massive work undertaken. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 616, f. 375v, 1579 (MAP Doc ID# 27559).

[30] A letter from Francesco I in 1580 that explains that Giambologna was too busy to work on requested works from Giangiorgio Cesarini. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 254, fol. 83r, July 28, 1580, Francesco I de' Medici to Giovanni Giorgio Cesarini (MAP Doc ID# 21211).

[31] Keuther (1986, 55).

[32] A letter from the Grand Duke records a visit in early August 1582 of the secretary Buonriccio to Pratolino and notes especially that he personally showed him the "grotto and fountains" of the *Gigante*. Mediceo del Principato, 257, fol. 185r, August 3, 1582, Francesco I de' Medici to Ottavio Abbiosi (MAP Doc ID# 13954).

[33] Smith (1961, 156).