grasping the hair of Fortuna/Occasio, and this she neatly ties to the wheel of fortune on the façade and the statues of David and Judith on the tomb, both of which originally showed a heroic figure grasping the head of a defeated foe by the hair. Kohl explicitly relates the imagery of the chapel and the tomb to rhetoric by showing many similarities between the art and two funeral orations (references to antique and biblical heroes and emphasis on themes such as Virtus, Fortuna, and triumph), one of which is published in an appendix. Overall, she interprets the iconography of the chapel and the tomb as reflecting the same concerns for fame and salvation as occurred in Demeurès, but a concern for dynastic continuity was not relevant for Colleoni, as he had no sons who could succeed him and his grandsons were not military men who could have held his domain together.

The concept of “Amadeo’s Werkstatt,” which recurs throughout the book, needs to be more carefully studied. One sense of “workshop” is a place where work is done, but another is the relationship between a master and his assistants and associates. Regarding the architecture, it is difficult to say, as Kohl points out, whether Amadeo was frequently on the site, actually supervising the construction, or whether his role as architect was more limited—say to making designs and models—while the actual construction may have been largely done by local artisans in Bergamo. Kohl uses the concept of “werkstatt” as an attributional strategy, according to which sculpture similar to the style of Amadeo is attributed to his workshop. It is likely that the Colleoni sculpture was made primarily in Binasco, Pavia, or Milan, and this has important implications for interpreting the documents (or lack thereof) about Amadeo’s presence in Bergamo and the attribution of the sculpture.

In sum, this is by far the most useful study of the Colleoni Chapel and the most thorough, insightful study ever done on the iconography of a Lombard Renaissance sculptural monument. Publication of an English edition would provide an opportunity to further refine the arguments, correct some minor errors, and make this important book available to a wider audience.

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Notes


Valeria Cafà  

Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne di Baldassare Peruzzi, storia di una famiglia romana e del suo palazzo in rione Parione  


The Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, designed by Baldassare Peruzzi and built in the mid-1530s, has always been recognized as an important but enigmatic monument of the Roman Renaissance. The first private palace to be constructed after the devastating Sack of Rome in 1527, the Palazzo Massimo’s design is entirely novel. When the notion of Italian Mannerism gained currency in the middle decades of the twentieth century, Peruzzi’s palace was hailed as a paragon of mannerist design. The building’s formal elements seemed to fly in the face of canonical classicism: its curved, rusticated façade with Doric pilasters on the lowest level but nothing above; the ground-floor portico supported by robust Doric columns; and the strange, small windows of the upper stories that have been described as “floating” across the expanse of rustication without any architectural anchor. The Palazzo Massimo is no less intriguing even as Mannerism has become less fashionable. Valeria Cafà’s important monograph on the building, awarded the James Ackerman Prize for Architectural History in 2006 by the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio, succeeds in shifting discussion about the building from formal analysis to a contextual reading of the palace and offers a nuanced interpretation that weaves together the patron’s needs, his economic and social position, the significance of the building’s site, and the politics of the city at a time of enormous civic stress.

Cafà’s is a densely packed and layered study divided into nine chapters. The author begins with a capsule portrait of Rome in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and then moves in discrete sections through the history of the Massimo family, its roots and rise to social and economic prominence, and its property holdings in Rione Parione. Cafà does not come to the architect, Peruzzi, and his project to rebuild Pietro Massimo’s residence until chapter four. There she reinterprets the chronology of the surviving drawings for the palace, and in the case of Uffizi 128A (U128A), reaffirms a problematic attribution to Peruzzi himself. Cafà saves a detailed discussion of the building for the book’s penultimate and longest chapter. This structure is telling. The social and urban context of the Palazzo Massimo is so crucial to the author’s argument that she withholding an analysis of the palace itself until the end of the book.

The Massimo did not belong to the oldest class of landed aristocracy but made their fortune in trade as recently as the early fifteenth century. The family’s welfare was thus tied to what Cafà calls...
“valori della municipalità,” that is a sort of loyalty to the city government of Rome rather than the papacy. Much of the extended family’s property along the Via Papalis, a major thoroughfare running through the city’s densely populated center, had been consolidated in Domenico Massimo’s hands by the time he died in 1528. He left his property to his three surviving sons, Pietro, Angelo, and Luca, along with the financial resources they needed to repair and rebuild the buildings on the Via Papalis that had been damaged during the sack. While each brother would rebuild, Pietro moved first, commissioning Peruzzi to redesign the family’s domus antiqua, the portion of his father’s holdings left to him.

Peruzzi’s first project for Pietro’s palace is preserved in a drawing now in the Uffizi (U368A), and Cafà dates it to circa 1533. This date is important, and the design’s most striking feature is the inclusion of a portico, supported by six columns, within the palace façade. A careful analysis of the preexisting buildings on the site leads the author to suggest that this first plan preserved more of the domus antiqua than has been suggested previously, including the motif of a portico on the façade.

Unlike other scholars, Cafà argues that U368A represents neither an early nor an alternative design for the palace but rather “a new project shaped by different needs and intended for another context and a ‘changed’ patron” (129). The new context was the election of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese to the papacy as Paul III in 1534, and what changed for Pietro was a more visible position in city government under a more receptive Roman pontiff. Cafà suggests that Peruzzi’s first design was not imposing enough for Pietro and that a dialogue between patron and architect ensued, the evidence for which she finds in U128A. Although the attribution and even the subject of this sheet are controversial, the author attributes it to Peruzzi and associates it with the Palazzo Massimo project.

Cafà believes that the new design of the Palazzo Massimo was also driven by the desire of the Maestri di Strade, the municipal officers in charge of the city’s streets, to regularize the stretch of the Via Papalis from the Via del Paradiso—opposite Pietro’s domus antiqua—to what is today the Piazza Argentina. These plans included giving the street a uniform width, aligning all of its façades, and clearing the intersection with the Via del Paradiso that, in the first part of the sixteenth century, was one of the major access routes from the Via Papalis to the Campo dei Fiori. Peruzzi was able to take advantage of the requirements imposed by the Maestri di Strade to, in Cafà’s words, “give the façade greater size, monumentality, symmetry and visibility” (183). His innovations included aligning the palace’s portico with the Via del Paradiso to improve its visibility and adding a gentle curve to the façade, now possible because of the widening of the Via Papalis.

Cafà identifies Paul III as an active participant in the history of Pietro’s palace since he gave the builder permission to take the necessary timber from lands controlled by the Farnese family and exempted the material from import duties. The Palazzo Massimo is thus the first fruit of a papal urban policy intended to stimulate the rebuilding of the city, and its success is manifest in the fact that the palace façade was finished in time for Charles V’s official entry into Rome on 5 April 1536. On that day the emperor approached the Via Papalis from the Capitoline Hill and would have turned toward the Campo dei Fiori at the Via del Paradiso, in front of Pietro’s magnificent new residence. Although lacking archival documentation, Cafà suggests the emperor’s entry into the city as the terminus ante quem for the construction of the palace and the decoration of its façade.

Cafà completes her monograph on the Palazzo Massimo with a lengthy description and analysis of the building’s façade, courtyard, and interior. Clearly articulated, this discussion of the building’s architecture emphasizes the innovation of Peruzzi’s design and its very deliberate references to antiquity. The same antique inspiration is true of Daniele da Volterra’s cycle of frescoes on the piano nobile representing the history of the gens Fabia, the ancient Roman family from which the Massimo claimed to descend. This emphasis on the antique was intended to reinforce the family’s status and the civic values they represented.

Cafà’s monumental study, copiously illustrated with excellent black-and-white photographs and numerous diagrams, suffers from some weaknesses. The author often supplies only indirect documentary evidence to support her conclusions—and this despite an enormous appendix of documents. It is too easy to confuse what is known with what might, however plausibly, be inferred. Her suggestions are tantalizing, but the hard evidence to support them is sometimes thin. This is especially true of the dating and attribution of the drawings, in particular U128A, and the arguments that surround these drawings go to the heart of the history she constructs for the palace. In a sense it is a question of accepting the author’s word for it. If one believes her, her hypotheses are convincing; but if one questions her analysis of the drawings, her tightly woven conclusions might easily unravel.

That said, this work remains an enormously important contribution to the literature on the Italian Renaissance and its buildings for the ground it breaks in our understanding of the Palazzo Massimo and the picture it presents of one Roman family in the difficult period following the sack of the city in 1527. Cafà’s close reading of the documents and drawings and her careful analysis of the building, layered within the context of personal concerns and city politics, reveals the complexity of the forces that drove this palace project and offers seductive suggestions about the connections between them and Peruzzi’s design process. Most appropriately, it also recalls the example of James Ackerman’s seminal work on Italian architecture in the Renaissance.

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