Bartolomeo Ammannati and the College of San Giovannino in Florence

Adapting Architecture to Jesuit Needs

A
mid the famous monuments of Florence stands the modest, relatively little-known church of San Giovanni Evangelista, commonly called San Giovannino (Figure 1). It is situated between a main street, the Via Cavour, and the Piazza San Lorenzo, separated from the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi by only a small alley. The church is significant for the history of architecture, as it is part of one of the first Jesuit colleges in the world. It was designed in 1579–92 by the well-known Florentine architect and sculptor Bartolomeo Ammannati, who was not only the architect of the building, but also the most important benefactor of the complex.

San Giovannino was built in a period during which ecclesiastical architecture was characterized by the rational distribution and hierarchical arrangement of space and circulation, and when the arrangement of church interiors was being reshaped to satisfy the new requirements of the Tridentine reform of liturgical practices. Of particular interest is the way in which the ministries of the Jesuits affected architecture. Founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola, the Jesuit order played a major role in the reforms of the sixteenth century, emphasizing the propagation of the Catholic faith through education and spiritual guidance. To achieve their aims, the Jesuits engaged in a wide variety of activities, notably public preaching and the teaching of children and the unlettered. Their other ministries included hearing confessions, giving catechetical instruction, and administering the other sacraments, especially penance and the Eucharist. A fundamental determinant of the Jesuit reform of the church was their belief that salvation could best be achieved by meditation on Christ’s life and the examination of one’s conscience. These meditations, called “Spiritual Exercises,” were based on the autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola, in which he described his religious conversion after being wounded in the battle of Pamplona (1521). His book served as a manual for both clergy and lay people as they sought to live under the inspiration of God.1

The Society of Jesus was the first religious order to operate colleges as a principal ministry, and for this a new building type was needed. The earliest Jesuit college opened in Messina in 1547, when the city council invited the Jesuits to educate its citizens. After this successful pilot project, the Jesuits founded schools throughout the world.2 They built complexes of buildings, each including a church, a school, and residential quarters for the Jesuit community.

The Jesuits took great care that their buildings conformed to their aims. To supervise all architectural projects, a central body was established, headed by the consiliarius aedificiorum. Construction could only begin after approval by the head of the order, the general. San Giovannino is one of the first Jesuit complexes in which the architect tried to comply with the new functional and religious wishes of the order.

Most of the literature on San Giovannino focuses on the history of its construction, and some authors have analyzed the complex in the context of Ammannati’s oeuvre.3
However, little attention has been paid to the new ideologi-cal and functional demands of the Jesuits, which Amman-nati had to satisfy while taking into account grave spatial and financial limitations.

The Jesuit Foundation at San Giovannino

When the first Jesuits arrived in Florence in 1551, they hoped to set up a community for twelve members of their order with the support of the Duchess Eleonora di Toledo. During the first few years, the Florentine Jesuits experienced many setbacks, and finding a permanent residence was one of their main concerns. For several years, they were forced to occupy a number of unsuitable, rented houses. They probably expressed their troubles to Eleonora, because in 1554 her husband, Duke Cosimo I de’Medici, donated the medieval church and the rectory of San Giovannino to them. The location was almost perfect: a central position, easily reached by students from all over town. However, the medieval building was too small and in a state of disrepair. It was ill-suited to the ministries that were required, for there was no adequate space in which to teach, and the church did not satisfy the religious requirements of the Tridentine reformation. Furthermore, the narrow nave of the church would not accommodate large audiences, which forced the Jesuits to preach in the Duomo or elsewhere. As the Florentine people became familiar with the ideas of the Jesuits through their sermons, more and more came to San Giovannino. The church was often overcrowded, and many visitors had to stay outside or to return home. The annual report of the province of Rome in 1579 stated that the “very small” church did not have sufficient capacity for sermons.

The church building was of fundamental importance to the Florentine foundation, because the people did not show much interest in the education that they offered in the adjacent school rooms. In the beginning of the 1560s the Jesuits even considered closing their schools, because enrolment had declined dramatically. The rector blamed this on the character of the Florentines; according to him, there were no diligent students among that population of practically minded merchants. The Florentines seemed to prefer the more pragmatically orientated Abbaco schools, which taught the arithmetic needed for business.

The ministries that were conducted in the church could, however, count on much interest among the Florentine population. This was reflected in the relative number of Jesuits appointed to various tasks. Elsewhere, the division of labor between the church and the college were nearly always equal, and during the First General Congregation of the society (1558), it was determined that all colleges should have at least twelve members, of whom almost half were to be full-time teachers. It was stipulated that only two or three priests be assigned for confession and other ministries in the church. In Florence, it is striking that there were so many more priests than these regulations mandated. In 1578, there were six priests to serve the church and only two teaching masters (maestri) and two scholars (scolari). Seven years later, the number of priests had grown to ten, while the number of teachers stayed the same.

The residential complex was also too small, and there was not sufficient space to accommodate visiting members of the order. To the shame of the Florentine Jesuits, guests had to lodge with friends. The complex could only shelter fifteen permanent residents, while the community needed more members.

The overtaxing of the church of San Giovannino was reflected in the steadily increasing number of communicants. While in 1561 there had been 210 communicants on All Saints Day, twenty years later there were more than 500. The priests could only fulfill their ministries in church with great effort. Hearing confessions took up much of their time, and four priests had to be present every Sunday for this purpose in 1566, when there were only five
priests in total. The provincial supervisor, Giovancola De Notaris, reported in 1578 that the priests did their best despite their small number and that they said Mass as often as possible. However, they were often disturbed by the noise of the nearby tavern (osteria) and workshops (bottega). The neighboring activity was apparently so boisterous that the chalices trembled on the altar.

Besides the lack of space, the unsanitary condition of the old complex was also a serious problem. Illness among the members of the Florentine foundation was repeatedly reported and often blamed on the humidity of the cellars. The condition of the schools was not any better, and alarming reports were sent to Rome. The Florentine Jesuits expected to close their establishment if also the church were allowed to dilapidate any further.

Finding a Benefactor

Despite the inconveniences of the old complex, the Jesuits did not immediately look for a better solution. New construction was not attainable, for they were experiencing grave financial difficulties and lived in extreme poverty. Among the reasons for their meager funds was the refusal of the Jesuit order to accept payment for their ministries, which was uncommon in the sixteenth century. Reacting against abuses associated with the sale of indulgences, they avoided even the slightest suggestion of bargaining for salvation; lessons and confessions were free.

The Florentine foundation was therefore dependent on the generosity of the duke and other nobles. However, Cosimo was not devoted to the Jesuit cause, and even the promised annual donation of his consort, Eleonora di Toledo, often arrived only after long delays. His successor, Grand Duke Francesco I de’ Medici, was also reluctant to help the Jesuits find a new home. According to the great theologian and papal envoy Antonio Possevino, S.J., the grand duke once angrily complained that the Jesuits wanted the impossible: a spacious location in the center of the city without having to spend a penny.

Another reason for the poor financial circumstances of the Jesuits was their refusal to glorify their benefactors. Traditionally, the funds for the construction and decoration of Italian churches had depended on dedicating a significant part of the church as a place of burial. Donors expected to have their own burial chapels in perpetuity and to have a regular mass said for their salvation in return for funding the decoration of the chapel. The Jesuits, however, were reluctant to permit laymen to be buried in their churches, and paid masses were entirely forbidden. A donor was not even allowed to decorate a chapel with his name or coat of arms. In principle, only clergy were allowed to be buried in Jesuit churches. However, in exceptional cases, a lay donor could be granted this honor as testimony of his or her zeal for the Jesuit cause, as happened in the case of Ammannati and his wife.

Old habits die hard, and the Jesuits did not always uphold their ideals, as is evident from the patronage of the chapels in the nave of Il Gesù in Rome, where several private benefactors were permitted to use chapels as family tombs and decorate them with their arms. However, when the rector of Florence consulted General Claudio Acquaviva about a donor, Baldassare Xuarez, who wanted a chapel to be decorated with his coat of arms, the general replied that neither the coat of arms nor a perpetual family burial chapel (Jus perpetuum della sepoltura) were permitted “for good reasons, as Your Reverence well knows.” These restrictions made it rather unattractive to found a chapel in a Jesuit church.

In Florence, due to the absence of a devoted and wealthy patron, no improvement of the accommodation of the Jesuit community was forthcoming. Almost fifteen years after establishing their foundation in Florence, the Jesuits still faced an insecure future. In 1566 a committee of supportive and prominent citizens was founded to find a solution, and it is likely that Ammannati soon became involved with their work.

A letter by General Francis Borgia written on 6 June 1572 is the first evidence of Ammannati’s connection with the Florentine foundation. Having decided to expand the complex on the site of San Giovannino, Borgia wrote to rector Giulo Mancinelli that the Jesuits were dependent on Ammannati’s amiability and benevolence. According to the general, Ammannati could be of great help, particularly because of his good contacts with the grand duke in his position as court architect. Indeed, Ammannati’s assistance proved to be of great value. His close involvement with the construction of the new complex was exceptional; Ammannati not only proposed to make the designs, he and his wife also offered to take care of a substantial part of the expenses. The couple had agreed to pay for the construction of the college as early as 1577, although Ammannati hoped to persuade Giacomo Salviati, the cousin of Francesco de’ Medici, to be the main patron of the church. It seems that Salviati pulled back, making Ammannati responsible for bearing the cost of both the church and school.

The best proof of Ammannati’s and Battiferri’s generosity was the decision of the childless couple in 1581 to make the Jesuit community in Florence their heir. His sympathy with the Jesuits was in keeping with his religious awakening at the end of his life. In 1582, when Ammannati...
was seventy-one, he wrote a well-known letter to all the artists in Florence expressing remorse for the character of his artistic oeuvre and warning his colleagues to refrain from making unchaste images.³² He repented for creating the sensual ignudi for the Neptune fountain on Piazza della Signoria in Florence, saying that it was improper to erect these kinds of images in a public place, where the statues could evoke impure thoughts. This change in thinking might have sprung from the prospect of his death, for Ammannati was old and probably in bad health, but it seems that his contact with the Jesuits was in part responsible.³³

The Problems of Renovation

The site of San Giovannino was unsuitable for a new, larger complex, because it did not have many possibilities for expansion. The Jesuits hoped to find another and a more spacious location in the city center, and between 1570 and 1577 several efforts were made to acquire such a site. But all failed.¹⁴ A faster, but less favored option was a large-scale renovation of the old San Giovannino. General Borgia mentioned this possibility in 1572, and Ammannati had expressed his preference for rebuilding San Giovannino in 1578.³⁵ He made a plan in which the church and the rectory would be altered beyond recognition, but to lower the costs, he reused the old foundations and walls as much as possible.

Not all Jesuits were convinced that the renovation would be successful, because the alterations, although expensive, would not yield much improvement. Moreover, if the church were enlarged, there would be little space left for the college. In 1576, Lodovico Corbinelli, a prominent member of the Collegio Romano, expressed this view in a letter to Ammannati, in which he also pointed out that erecting a tall building would make the cortile small and damp.³⁶

Around 1578, the Jesuits decided to remain on the old site but to enlarge it as much as possible, demolish all the old buildings, and build an all-new complex. A plan of that date in the central Jesuit archive in Rome shows the situation of the old medieval church and rectory (Figure 2).¹⁷ The Jesuits had in their possession only the eastern half of the intended site, occupied by the medieval San Giovannino and rectory (lower half, below the line marked: “questa linea có tutta la chiesa è braccia 48½” in Figure 2), while houses and workshops (botteghe) occupied the western half (at top). They did not own enough land for an adequate building, and the Jesuits resolved to enlarge the site by acquiring all the houses and workshops, indicated on the plan by the letters A to I. (The drawing indicates the commercial value of the property, estimated at between 3,500 and 4,000 scudi.) The Jesuits also wanted to enlarge the building plot on the south side, where a tavern (ostaria) is indicated at center left on the edge of the plan.³⁹ To do this an alley—Via de’ Biffi—would have to be closed, and for that they would need the permission of the grand duke of Tuscany.

Because the Jesuits did not have enough funds to buy all the houses at the same time, they apparently decided to begin the new construction and buy the land bit by bit, as it were needed.³⁹ This approach seemed pragmatic but turned out to be very problematic. Many owners were not willing to sell their houses and tried to cash in on the situation by asking very high prices. This was one of the major reasons that the final acquisition cost would far exceed the estimates marked on the plan; the cost of the additional land rose to almost 10,000 scudi.⁴⁰

Allied with the private owners, the nearby chapter of San Lorenzo also sought to thwart the plans for expansion. They saw the Jesuits as rivals and therefore did not want to sell the property that they owned on the Piazza San Lorenzo, and the aid of the grand duke was needed for the Jesuits to purchase two workshops from the San Laurentians.⁴¹ The chapter also attempted to foil the plans of the Jesuits to construct a porch on the piazza.³² Their opposition delayed the consolidation of the Jesuits’ site for almost half a century.

Ammannati’s Plan

Following the decision to enlarge the existing site, Bartolomeo Ammannati planned a new building. In 1579 the construction of the new nave of the church began, and already in 1581 the church was consecrated after the first three bays were built. However, after this successful start, the acquisition of new land largely failed, compelling Ammannati to adjust his design. In 1590 he produced a carefully made plan, which is now preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Rome (ASR) (Figure 3).⁴³ On this drawing the church is surrounded on two sides by the rooms of the college (upper left), while, adjacent to the church façade, two classrooms (Scola) have been drawn (lower left).

The architectural historians Carlo Carmagnini and Pietro Matracchi supposed that this drawing was made in 1575 or in 1576.⁴⁴ In their opinion, this was the first concrete design for the new complex on the location of the San Giovannino. Their argument for this early date is based on the similarity between the spatial organization of the plan and the critique made in 1576 by General Everard Mercuriano and Lodovico Corbinelli. They thought that the location was too small, and that if the church were enlarged, too little space would be left for the college.⁴⁵ Matracchi sup-
Figure 2 Plan showing the site of the old San Giovannino, with rectory and surrounding workshops, ca. 1578. Archivum Romanum Societas Iesu

Figure 3 (opposite) Ammannati, plan for San Giovannino, 1590. Archivio di Stato di Roma
poses that eventually the first design was rejected because of their critique.46

The thesis that the ASR drawing shows the rejected plan is questionable. Doubt is cast on this hypothesis by scholars who have noted similarities between it and two plans from ca. 1661–82 that show the executed sixteenth-century work (Figure 4).47 These drawings, made by Adam Kochanski, S.J., were made after the enlargement of the college in the seventeenth century. The complex seems to be divided into two parts, with the seventeenth-century expansion on the left side, while on the right side, close to the church, lies the part that can easily be identified on Ammannati’s plan in the Archivio di Stato di Roma. The alley that once separated the two blocks was the dividing line between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century work.

Figure 3 also seems to depict smaller architectural details of the existing building. The articulation of the church façade on the plan corresponds to the lower story of the façade today (see Figure 1). Corner pilasters are paired with columns in niches, followed by large niches for statues, then paired columns in niches and lastly, on the central axis, the portal. These similarities make it unlikely that this drawing records the unbuilt design criticized by Mercuriano and Corbinelli.

Further doubt is cast on the proposed date of 1575–76 by the fact that before 1578, when Carmagnini and Matracci suggest that this drawing was made, the Jesuits wanted to build their new college in another location. It seems unlikely that Ammannati made such an elaborate plan for San Giovannino for such an uncertain site. A simple sketch would have been sufficient to show the possibilities of a renovation. Even after the decision to enlarge the site and renovate San Giovannino, major issues about the design still had to be settled. It is probable that the composition of the church façade was undetermined before construction of the nave started in 1579. A design by Ammannati for the façade of San Giovannino, now in the Uffizi in Florence, shows that various options were considered and put aside.46 The elevation does not correspond to that shown in Figure 3 (for example, the paired columns are absent), suggesting that Figure 3 shows a later, more finalized version, made when the work was already in an advanced stage.

Figure 3 is probably identifiable as the plan that was mentioned by General Claudio Acquaviva on 1 September 1590, after it was sent to Rome for review.49 There are several reasons for this assumption. First, Figure 3 is closely related to an elevation drawing by Ammannati for the façade of the residential complex facing the Piazza San Lorenzo, which is also preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Rome (Figure 5). The drawings have the same watermark, and the sheets have nearly the same dimensions, suggesting that the paper came from the same source and the sheets were probably used simultaneously. Ammannati’s other drawings have different watermarks.50

There is a consensus about the date of this design for the façade of the residential building, which is related to a
A critical letter written by the general on 4 August 1590, in which Acquaviva suggested reducing the IHS medallion and the balustrade because they were too sumptuous. Only a month later a ground plan was sent to him. That was almost certainly the plan illustrated here in Figure 3. After Acquaviva had seen the plan, he wrote on 1 September that Ammannati’s suggestions were to be followed, since Ammannati possessed much intelligence in his art, and he reminded the rector that the college was being built at the architect’s expense. The general concluded that the Jesuits could surely rely on his prudence for the convenience (comodità) of the disposition of the college.

This new dating of the plan helps to explain some curious details. The annotation “Cortiletto vecchio del macello” (the old courtyard of the slaughterhouse, Figure 3, upper left next to “refettorio vecchio”) would not have been written before the acquisition of the slaughterhouse in 1589 by the Jesuits (letter H on Figure 2). The name was derived from the former function of the courtyard, located between the refettorio (refectory), the cucina (kitchen), and the refettorio vecchio (old refectory). From 1583 onward, the Jesuits had made a great effort to buy this slaughterhouse because of the nuisance it caused, emitting a terrible smell, next to the refettorio vecchio. The acquisition was delayed because the proprietor, Cavaliere fratello Vicenzo d’Agniolo Ginori, Commendatore in the Order of Sant’ Antonio, would not cooperate, and the case was worked out in favor of the Jesuits only through the intervention of the nuncio of Pope Sixtus V. The slaughterhouse was finally obtained in 1589.

Another interesting detail is the structure next to the schools, on the other side of the alley Via de’ Biffi (see Figure 3, lower left corner). This is the only building on that side of the alley drawn by Ammannati. From other records it is clear that this is the carpenter’s house, on the corner of the Via dei’ Martelli and the alley, that was bought by the Jesuits on 19 May 1590 from the fathers of Santa Maria Maggiore. The acquisition was delayed because the proprietor, Cavaliere fratello Vicenzo d’Agniolo Ginori, Commendatore in the Order of Sant’ Antonio, would not cooperate, and the case was worked out in favor of the Jesuits only through the intervention of the nuncio of Pope Sixtus V. The slaughterhouse was finally obtained in 1589.

Ammannati probably created this new design in 1590, after the failure to obtain permission to close the Via de’Biffi, which split the site in two. The street closing would have consolidated the building block south of Via de’Biffi with San Giovanni. The Jesuits and Ammannati had formulated the unification of the two blocks as a condition for starting the renovation of San Giovanni, but to their great disappointment, it turned out to be impossible. The workshops with the tavern were at last obtained in 1620, and the site remained divided until the second half of
the seventeenth century.\(^5\) This setback must have created an enormous problem, for the classrooms and the residential complex had originally been planned on the south side of San Giovanni. Now they would have to be squeezed onto the original site of the church, and that is what Ammannati accomplished in the new design, making the most of every available square meter. As a result, the complex has unusual features: the living quarters are placed above the main chapel and sacristy, and there is no proper, rectangular courtyard.

**Function and Design: Circulation**

In the design of 1590, Ammannati had to improvise. He worked out a compact plan that squeezed different parts together, wrapping the college around the church in an L shape (see Figure 3). Nevertheless, the important threefold division of a Jesuit complex was maintained: church, school, and housing.

The combination of a school and a church was important to Jesuit colleges, because the spiritual program of the Jesuit curriculum included attending mass every day, hearing sermons on Sundays and holidays, and going to confession at least once a month. Furthermore, students were to discuss their spiritual progress in church. The Jesuits also provided sermons, lectures, theatrical performances, and masses for the people, and in Florence this public function proved to be of special importance.

In spite of Ammannati’s compact design, he managed to keep a strict division between the three functional areas. As was customary in many small college complexes, the courtyard divided the public and private domains. Although colleges had a more open character than convents or monasteries, the residential area was not accessible to outsiders.\(^6\) In most colleges, rooms for the common use of the Jesuit community, such as the refectory, the kitchen, and the storerooms, were on the ground floor, and the Jesuits’ private rooms were situated on the floor above. Despite the compact site, Ammannati maintained this arrangement, with communal facilities on the ground floor (upper left corner) and a large stair next to the main chapel leading up to the private rooms.

The threefold division was clear-cut, but for easy communication, the parts had to be connected properly. In most colleges, the residential area was attached to the school, while the church had to be accessible from both the living quarters and the school. In Florence, the compactness of the complex forced Ammannati to pay special attention to the arrangement of the internal circulation. The three areas are connected in several ways; the most important circulation route of the college starts at the entrance next to the church façade (see Figure 3, lower left corner) and leads through the courtyard to the residential area (upper left corner). Other routes are more subtle, and connections between the church (and sacristy) and the rest of the complex are highly refined.

The church is accessible from the residential area on three levels. On the ground floor, the chancel and main altar could be reached through a small side door from a corridor near the refectory. On the opposite side, a door led to the sacristy (sagrestia, upper right). The drawing indicates that the sacristy was to have been reached directly from the residential area via a staircase. However, this staircase was not built. Because the sacristy could also be reached through the main chapel (upper center), it still was possible to carry vessels and other requisites for the mass easily to and from the altar.

On the second level, the church was connected to the courtyard by a small stair leading to the pulpit, which was placed between the chapels of the Nativity and Saint Bartholomew. The pulpit was reachable only directly from the outside, so priests would not be delayed by crowds in the church.

The church and the college were also connected via the oratories, which were located above the side chapels and could be entered from the living quarters. These oratories, commonly called coretti, provided the Jesuit community with more private places for prayer and the Spiritual Exercises. Every Jesuit was required to perform these exercises regularly, and good access to the coretti was therefore important. In an early drawing for the elevation of the nave of San Giovanni in the Uffizi, Ammannati located the coretti directly above the confessional.\(^6\) However, the construction was carried out differently, because the space between the pilasters was too narrow to contain a coretto and their accessibility would have been very restricted. Ammannati decided to move the coretti to the attic where it was possible to link them by of a small corridor above the side chapels (Figure 7). The coretti were placed in front of the windows, and additional windows, above the coretti, were added in the seventeenth century. This arrangement had been used a little earlier by the important Jesuit architect, Giovanni Tristano, S.J. The best example of incorporating the coretti in window frames is Tristano’s São Roque (1565–1586) in Lisbon.\(^6\) A direct connection between São Roque and San Giovanni is not likely, but perhaps Ammannati knew of this innovation from drawings or other buildings by Tristano.

The schools were also linked to the church. The 1590 plan shows an oval staircase behind the church façade leading up to the coretti (see Figure 3, lower center). This was
built as a tiny spiral stair, with a corridor connecting the scuole to the nave of the church, which is visible on the drawing by Kochanski (see Figure 4, lower center). The staircase is so narrow that it does not seem that it was used extensively. It could only have served for maintenance or for emergency purposes. The coretti had a very private character, exclusively for the members of the Jesuit community.

Jesuit Ministries and Spatial Organization

For the ground plan of the church Ammannati chose the single-nave church type that had become increasingly popular during the sixteenth century. This arrangement, with side chapels, has a very long tradition, going back as far as the Middle Ages, but due to religious reforms, it was frequently used in the sixteenth century. To involve laymen more directly with worship it was ordained at the council of Trent that the view of the high altar had to be clear of obstacles, and in a single-nave church such as San Giovannino, the main altar was visible from every part, with no obstructing columns or pillars. In the same spirit, in the sixteenth century many old churches were renovated and choir screens that blocked the view were removed. Bartolomeo Ammannati was probably guided by the fine example of this arrangement provided by Giorgio Vasari’s renovation of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce in Florence, undertaken in 1565–77 by order of Cosimo I. The most important alterations were the demolitions of the choir screens that had separated clergy and laymen, so people could see the priest celebrating mass. The engagement of laymen was now considered more important than the clausura of the clergy. Seating reserved for the monks was moved to the main chapel, behind the high altar. In Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce, a richly decorated tabernacle was placed on the main altar. In addition, Vasari removed all the secondary altars from the nave and arranged them in a unified system against the walls of the side aisles.

The clearance of obstructions from the nave was not only necessary to provide a good view of the main altar. In the sixteenth century, the church was used more regularly for preaching, and a broad, unobstructed nave was needed to accommodate the audience, allowing them to gather within sight and earshot of the pulpit. The Jesuits saw the public sermon as one of their most important ministries and preached as much as possible, preferably every day. Their sermons attracted large audiences, and in Florence they often preached in the Duomo or in the larger churches. However, after the renewal of San Giovannino, it was also possible to preach in their own church. Because of the importance of the pulpit, it had a fixed place in most Jesuit churches. Ammannati went a step further in San Giovanni, making the pulpit part of an articulated, systematically organized interior elevation.

Another important ministry contributed to the success of
the Jesuits in Florence, where the order seems to have had a near monopoly on hearing confessions. No other modern orders in Florence stressed the importance of confession to the same extent.66 While it was possible to confess to the priest of one’s local parish, confessing to the Jesuits had two advantages: it was free of charge, and the Jesuits had the reputation of being more forgiving.67 Every Jesuit church had several confessionals, but in San Giovanni there were as many as eight, which is an exceptionally high number in proportion to the size of the church.

Ammannati incorporated the confessionals in the interior elevation in a manner that is of particular importance for ecclesiastical architecture. While in many churches, such as Il Gesù, the confessionals were freestanding pieces of furniture, in San Giovannino they were built into the walls (Figure 8).

Ammannati was not the first to integrate the confessionals and the architecture. More than ten years before, Pellegrino Tibaldi had arranged the confessionals of the important Jesuit church of San Fedele in Milan (1568) as niches in the walls of the nave (Figure 9).68 As at San Giovanni, the site of San Fedele was cramped and relatively narrow, but to accommodate large audiences, the nave had to be made as wide as possible. Derek Moore has suggested that the preference for a broad nave, explains why the side chapels in San Fedele are so shallow; the absence of freestanding confessionals apparently has the same cause.69 In churches where sufficient space was available, deep chapels and independent confessionals, like those in the Gesù, were preferred. An important advantage in those larger churches was that there was space for passages connecting the chapels in the partition walls. In the broad nave of Il Gesù, the freestanding confessionals did not hinder the crowds, and the niches could be chapels. The preference for maximizing the number of chapels was reflected in the advice that came from Rome in 1636 concerning the Jesuit church in Reggia Emilia. The Roman authorities recommended that the confessionals not be built into the walls in order to make room for an extra pair of chapels.70 This did not occur in Florence and Milan, because in San Giovanni and San Fedele, the number of chapels was less important than the width of the nave.

Although Ammannati’s and Tibaldi’s designs show similarities in the arrangement of the confessionals, their inte-
rior nave elevation differed greatly. San Fedele has only two side chapels on each side, each flanked by two niches in which the confessional are placed, to create the rhythm b-A-b-b-A-b. This seems to be inspired by Roman bath architecture. By contrast, Ammannati chose a system that refers to antique triumphal arches. This resemblance was more powerful before the upper windows were added in the seventeenth century, while the elevation had only one full story and an attic (see Figures 7 and 8). The rhythm of the composition has a simple sequence of b-a-b-a-b-a-b-A-b—where A is the larger chapel of the pseudo-transept. Ammannati was not the first to use this system. A century earlier in San Andrea in Mantua, Leon Battista Alberti alternated large chapels and pilastered piers whose intercolumnations contained niches. The façade of San Andrea clearly resembles a triumphal arch, using the same elevation system as the interior. However, the innovative aspect of Ammannati’s solution lies in the combination of Tibaldi’s built-in confessional and the elevation used before by Alberti in San Andrea and Vignola in Il Gesù.

The unification of the elements of the elevation in a system is an important innovation in church architecture. The uniformity of the interior is achieved by the motif of classical triumphal arches, whose alternating arches and niche-filled intercolumnations unite the side chapels, confessionals, pulpit, and pseudo-transept. Through this invention, the nave was completely cleared of obstacles. Ammannati’s solved the architectural problems that he encountered in Florence, satisfying the complicated requirements of the Jesuits on a confined site.

Representation and the Veneration of the Eucharist

Compared to the rest of the crowded complex, the church is strikingly large and uncluttered. While the size of the college had to be reduced because of restricting circumstances, the church was given priority. Even in the original design of 1578, the church must have taken up a large part of the building site. Not all churches with Jesuit colleges were so favored. In the sixteenth century the Collegio Romano, for example, made use of the small and elementary SS Annunziata. Of course, that college had less need for a large church because the mother church, Il Gesù, was nearby. In Florence, no such adjacent facility was available, but the greater prominence of the church of San Giovannino was also related to the specific needs of its Jesuit foundation, whose public ministries were of greater importance than its educational program.

The high priority given to the church functions is visible in the large size of the main, axial chapel (Figure 10). This was probably planned in 1590, simultaneously with the private rooms of the college that were constructed above it.
In spite of the shortage of space, Ammannati designed a large chapel crowned by a cupola that penetrates the living quarters as far as the third floor. This makes the arrangement of the residential area difficult, splitting it almost in two and robbing it of much space. Around the cupola are many odd-shaped voids that only can be used for storage. The rooms directly above the sacristy—on the second floor—are connected to the rest of the complex by a narrow corridor running next to the cupola. On the side toward the piazza, there is another dead end corridor. Ammannati had difficulty fitting the two parts together.

Given the lack of space, it would have been easier to lay out the residential quarters if Ammannati had created a smaller main chapel without the high cupola. A fine example of such a solution is Santa Maria in Gradi in Arezzo, made according Ammannati’s design, which he delivered to the Camaldoliesi in 1591 (Figure 11). This church resembles San Giovannino in many respects; however, the main chapel has a lower barrel vault. The large chapel in San Giovannino is all the more remarkable because the Jesuits were not permitted to have a choir. Its size was not a matter of functional need but of representation. This emphasized the veneration of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and its cupola marked the most important place in the church.

The dramatic effect of the tabernacle was increased by its theatrical position, in front of the window at the back of the main chapel. Due to this backlighting, it stood out against a bright background. This effect was clearly envisaged by Ammannati as the visual climax of the interior, which was also emphasized by the contrast between the high cupola of the chapel and the coffered ceiling of the nave. Nowadays the effect is lost, because in the seventeenth century the coffered ceiling was replaced by a higher Eucharist. According to the Catholic Church, the host was not only a symbol but was actually the body of Christ (Præsentia realis). In the consecrated host, God was physically present in every church, and so, after the Council of Trent, it was ordered that the tabernacle be placed in the most important location in the church to emphasize its sanctity. It became the focus of all church interiors. In San Giovannino, the high altar and the tabernacle immediately attracted the attention of worshipers. Documents demonstrate that the tabernacle was a sumptuously decorated colossus of wood, covered with gold, that almost filled the whole entrance to the main chapel. Its richness elicited the criticism of Ammannati’s friend, the Jesuit painter and architect Giuseppe Valeriano, who attacked the excessive richness and size of modern tabernacles. He pointed to the gigantic costs that had to be borne even by poor parishes, and he noted that the Archbishop of Florence had remanded the rector of the Jesuit college, Pietro Blanca, for the expensive tabernacle in San Giovannino.

The effect is lost, because in the seventeenth century the coffered ceiling was replaced by a higher.
wooden vault and additional nave windows were inserted, reducing the dramatic difference in lighting. Originally, it must have resembled the ceiling in Santa Maria in Gradi (see Figure 11).73 Moreover, in the eighteenth century the large tabernacle was dismantled and replaced by a huge altar by Carlo Andrea Marcellini, which was in turn dismantled during the restoration in 1954.74

The chancel and the main altar are also emphasized by the two adjacent lateral chapels, which are larger, with arches reaching above the cornice (see Figures 7, 10). These chapels form a pseudo-transept and harmonize in both form and dimensions with the arched entrance to the main chapel, which suggests a centralized layout (see Figure 10).

Emphasis on the veneration of the Eucharist affected the exterior as well. Increasing plasticity accentuated the central axis of the façade, which was aligned with the high altar. A similar effect had already been created in the façade of Il Gesù in Rome by Giacomo Della Porta (1578). However, the composition of San Giovannino is a variation on the wall articulation of the vestibule of Michelangelo’s Biblioteca Laurenziana (Figure 12). The rhythm of the lower story of the church façade closely follows the alternation of pilasters, columns, and niches designed by Michelangelo. It is a typical example of how Ammannati was influenced by his great master, whom he did not copy slavishly, using the increasing plasticity of the Michelangelesque motif at the center of the façade for a special, new purpose, emphasizing the position of the high altar on the central axis.

San Giovannino in a Wider Context

The complex of San Giovannino is adapted to its specific situation. Ammannati had to create a design that complied with the new ideological and functional demands of the Jesuits while taking into account the grave spatial and financial limitations. The final design of 1590 demonstrated his flexibility and acute observation, which were architectural skills championed in Antonio Possevino’s encyclopedia, the Bibliotheca selecta (1593). Possevino consulted Valeriano and Ammannati for his chapter on architecture, which is well-known for its dismissal of blind adherence to Vitruvius’s De architectura. According to Possevino, the antique text, with its many confusing passages, could not provide appropriate models for modern architectural practice. Instead, he argued that architecture depended on good design, which in turn was achieved by reason and thorough observation. In the Bibliotheca he stressed the importance of a pragmatic approach to architecture. Possevino believed that architects had to pay special attention to strength and durability (firmitas), site, economics, and sanitation—all of which played important roles in designing San Giovannino.75

The Florentine Jesuits were particularly proud of overcoming the problems they encountered in building their church. In 1581, when San Giovannino was consecrated, the annual report remarked with enthusiasm that the people considered it almost a miracle that, in spite of many setbacks, the church was built so swiftly that it seemed to have appeared suddenly.76

The admiration of San Giovannino is apparent in its influence on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century churches in Florence and Tuscany. Several churches were inspired by Ammannati’s system of alternating chapels and confessionals in niches. San Gaetano by Matteo Nigetti, Gherardo Silvani, and Pier Francesco Silvani (1604–83) (Figure 13) and SS. Simone e Giuda by Gherardo Silvani (1628) share a comparable layout and wall articulation.77 The same is true of San Paolino, designed by Giovanni Battista Balatri (1669–93), although the oratories are placed directly above the confessionals, reminiscent of Ammannati’s first plan (Figure 14).78 These three seventeenth-century churches differ in the dimensions of their side chapels. San Gaetano and San Paolino have deep chapels, like Il Gesù, while in SS. Simone e Giuda the side chapels are only alluded to by the large stone frames of the altars, which are directly placed against the wall.

It is notable that the first church in Florence to adopt San Giovannino’s architectural system, San Gaetano (started in 1604), was built by the Theatines (Figure 15). However, San Gaetano surpasses San Giovannino in scale and in the richness of its decoration, and in that sense is reminiscent of San Andrea della Valle in Rome, which the
Theatines built to outstrip Il Gesù of the Jesuits. The Theatine-Jesuit competition continued in Florence.

Ammannati’s influence stretches as far as the eighteenth century. After the notorious fire at Santa Maria del Carmine in 1771, the nave was given a system of alternating chapels and confessionals that strongly resembles San Giovanniino (Figure 16). This system was adopted throughout Tuscany and beyond its borders. A fine example is Santo Spirito in Pistoia (1647–1685), designed by Tommaso Ramagnani. Two designs for Jesuit churches that are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, for the Gesù in Montepulciano (1630) by Benedetto Molli and San Vigilio in Siena (1626) by Orazio Grassi, show the same sequence of alternating chapels.79 Outside Tuscany, other Jesuit churches follow Ammannati’s system, including SS. Pietro e Paolo in Sezze and San Sebastiano in Verona.

However, for the understanding of Jesuit architecture, the history of the planning of San Giovanniino is as important as its influence. The renovation is illustrative of the way that older churches were adapted to new functional and religious needs at the end of the sixteenth century. It is a well-documented example of the difficulties that the Jesuits met when erecting new buildings for their colleges. In many Jesuit foundations, the architecture, like Ammannati’s, was the outcome of a search for balance between the particular needs of the Jesuits and their meager funds. Often the Jesuits preferred a location in the city center, although they did not have much to spend.80 Consequently, they were dependent on the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings. There were only a few cities in which they had the opportunity to construct their colleges ex novo.

Until recently, the literature has emphasized the most prestigious buildings of the order: Il Gesù, the Collegio Romano in Rome, and San Fedele in Milan. However, the study of smaller churches like San Giovanniino can provide a better understanding of sixteenth-century Jesuit architecture in Italy. Il Gesù and San Fedele were far too grand for the initial phase of the Jesuit order. They were erected with the help of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (Il Gesù) and the

Figure 13 Matteo Nigetti and Gherardo Silvani, San Gaetano, Florence, 1604–39, view of the elevation of the nave

Figure 14 Giovanni Battista Balatri, San Paolino, Florence, 1669–93, view of nave

Figure 15 Nigetti and Silvani, San Gaetano, view of nave

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archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo (San Fedele), while the patron of the Collegio Romano was no less than Pope Gregory XIII. The interests of these wealthy and powerful benefactors clashed repeatedly with the restrained Jesuit policy toward patronage. Pope Gregory, for example, demanded, against the will of the general, that the first version of the front of Collegio Romano be torn down, because he thought it was not representative of his Papal magnificence.81 Similarly, Alessandro Farnese tried to make Il Gesù a “Farnese church” by appointing his own architect, Vignola.82 The important cardinal was in a position to have his own ideas executed, quarrelling with the Jesuits because he wanted his church to have a vault.83 Moreover, when discussing the orientation of the church in 1568, Farnese explained to General Francis Borgia that he had instructed Vignola to turn the church 180 degrees. He bluntly added that he desired the general to be calm and not to even think about trying to weaken his resolve.84

This way of proceeding was not the norm in Jesuit architecture at the end of the sixteenth century. It was not usually possible to decorate a chapel with even a small coat of arms. But Farnese imposed his ideas and was allowed to put a medallion with his coat of arms on the façade. The only concession he had to make was that the coat of arms was positioned at great height in the pediment, where it was hard to see.85

The resulting monumentality of Il Gesù is not characteristic of early Jesuit architecture. Most Jesuit churches, like San Giovannino, depended on lesser patrons with smaller financial resources and limited power. These benefactors were not usually allowed to put a large, personal stamp on the architecture.

But although Ammannati did not have the stature of a Farnese or a Borromeo, and although his support for the Jesuits did not spring from political aspirations, he had one thing in common with those grander patrons. He, too, wanted to demonstrate his stature, and the prospect of burial in the church is likely to have pleased him. Ammannati and Laura Battiferri were granted this unusual privilege in recognition of their zeal for the Jesuit cause, because without their ongoing efforts the new complex would never have been accomplished. The couple were even permitted to decorate the chapel of Saint Bartholomew with an altarpiece.86 The altarpiece that Ammannati commissioned from Alessandro Allori is still visible in the second chapel on the left (see Figure 8), and it is said that the couple are depicted on the lower right. Clearly, Ammannati could not have wished for a better expression of his prestige, to be buried in front of the chapel of Saint Bartholomew in a church he designed and financed. He was highly satisfied with his achievement, as he wrote to the Accademia del Disegno in 1582, boasting that, through his contribution, the very beautiful San Giovannino (la bellissima Chiesa di S. Giovannino) was being erected.87 Even though their sepulcher must have originally been no more than a humble stone with an inscription, it drew prestige from the lack of other private
In that sense Ammannati’s intentions were not so far removed from those of Farnese at Il Gesù. San Giovanni-nino would be his mortuary monument.

Notes

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Abreviations: ASF, Archivio di Stato di Firenze; ARSI, Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu; ASR, Archivio di Stato di Roma.


2. In 1556 there were already more than thirty-five colleges around the world, of which nineteen were based in Italy. See O’Malley, First Jesuits, 207.

3. A short bibliography on San Giovanni; Eduard Vodóz, In 1556 there were already more than thirty-five colleges around the world, of which nineteen were based in Italy. See O’Malley, First Jesuits, 207.

4. For detailed information about the residences of the Jesuits in Florence before 1554, see the documents published in the First Jesuits, part 2, 424.

5. Bencivenni, L’architettura, 28. For detailed information about the residences of the Jesuits in Florence before 1554, see the documents published in the First Jesuits, part 2, 424.

6. Bosel, Jesuitenarchitektur, 78 note 3: The conveyance of the property was officially sanctioned by a papal bull on 28 Oct. 1539. Originally, the church had been the property of the Dominicans, but in the period before San Giovanni-nino came into possession of the Jesuits, the church had been senza cura. (ARSI, Rom. 126, fol. 244.)

7. In a letter from 1571 is written: “poiché molti hanno lasciato il duomo et hanno portato li loro banchi in nostra chiesa. . . . adesso si spera avviarla stabi-

8. …essendo questa città mercantile, non si dilettano di studi en non vi sono scolari fermi.” Rector Peruschi to General Giacomo Laínez, 29 Apr. 1564, ARSI, FG 650a, Epistolae selectae no. 435. In Scaudo, Giacomo, part 2, 370.


13. Draft for the Annals of the Florentine foundation, 1585, ARSI, Rom. 126b, fol. 334. In 1585 there were twenty-four Jesuits, of which ten were sacerditi (priests), two were maestri (masters), two were scolari (formed scholastics) and the rest were coadjutors.

14. To put an end to this embarrassing situation, a house was bought in 1561.


16. In the case of the property the church and the Scolopian complex.

22. They could not even pay for the papal bull that sanctioned the unity of the college and the San Giovanni (Bolla di unione della chiesa di San Giovanni). ARSI, Ital. 61, fols. 112r, 172v. Reference in Scaduto, Giovanni Tristano, part 2, 443.


29. General Francis Borgia to Giulio Mancinelli, rector of Florence, 13 June 1572, ARSI, Ital. 69, fol. 80v. In ibid.


31. Fossi, Ammattani, 179 note 3.


33. For a remark on Ammattani’s health, see Raffaello Borghini, Il Riposo, in cui della pittura e della scultura si fardà, de’ più illustri pittori e scultore e delle più famose opere loro si fa menzione; e le cose principali appartenenti a dette arti si insegnano, Florence, 1584, ed. Mario Rossini (Milan: Labor, 1967), 395.

34. See Pirri, Ammattani, 6, 12.


38. Letter by Lodovico Corbelini, “Ragioni per proporre al Gran Duca per l’aumento di S. Michele non potrebbe haversi…” ca. 1577, ARSI, Rom. 121, fol. 178r–w. The letter is not dated, but for the dating of the letter see note 18, above. Three requirements were formulated, if San Giovanni were rebuilt: the Florentine foundation had to obtain the workshops surrounding the old site, and secondly the small street had to be closed. “Quando si havesse difficoltà, per potersi ottenere al preti il sito di S. Michele; allora si desidererebbe, che almeno suo Alt: si degnasse di far grà al detto Collegio alla compagnia di Gesù tre cose facili . . . L’una sarebbe che Alt: si degnasse mostrare efficace desiderio, che si havessero, a giusto prezzo con evidente utilità della chiesa di San Lorenzo, ò ad empii[?i] perpetua quelle case niece piccoli, et contigue, che da Rettore di Prei di S. Lorenzo si affittano a’ bottegai . . . La seconda, che S. Alt. si degnasse applicare al collegio quel piccolo vicolo, ò stradella, che sia da una parte il collegio …” The third requirement was the permission by the grand duke to build a higher church.

39. This strategy was not uncommon to the Jesuit order and various colleges were built in this way. An example is the San Francisco Saverio in Naples, of which there is a drawing by Agazio Stoia in Cosimo Fanzago where all the parcels needed for subsequent construction phases are indicated. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Hd–4, 93. Giancarlo Palmerio, “La tematica del “modo nostro” gesuitico e il Riposo, in L’architettura della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia XV–XVII secolo, Atti del convegno 1990, ed. Luciano Patetta and Stefano Della Torre (Genoa, 1992), 110. See also Jean Vallery-Radot, Le recueil des plans d’édifices de la Compagnie de Jésus conservé à la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris, Bibliotheca Instituti Historicii S.J. 15 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Jesu, 1960), 41 no. 146.

40. An eighteenth-century document shows that between 1578 and 1590, 9850 scudi were spent on acquiring new property, including the costs of the papal bull sanctioning the unity of the college and San Giovanni. ‘Beni Stabili ritrovati in’ ‘esser il di 31 maggio 1676 di proprietà’, ed. attenenza del

41. “Ser. mo Granduca. Li padri della Compagnia di Gesù humildemente fanno intendere a V.A.S. qualmente alla tribuna della loro chiesa sono congiunte due botteghe del Vener. Le Cap. di San Lorenzo, le quali impediscono grandemente il culto divino; imperoche in una vi è un fabbro, che col continuo battere no solo turbia lì sacerdoti che celebrano nell’ altare maggiore, ma anco impedisce di chi ascolla la messa. Nell’altra vi è un barbiere il cui caldaio sta in vicino a detto altare, ch’il camino riesce dentro [dentro] la chiesa sopra lo stesso ciborio, onde resulta grande irrevinence al S.mo Sacram.to....” ASF, Compagnie religieuse soppressa da P.L.G. XII 1064. 337. The request was granted on 25 Aug. after which the workshops were conveyed. Also in Carmagnini and Matracchi, Collegio, 309–10 note 28.

42. ARSI, Rom. 121, fol. 178.

43. The drawing was first published in Bösel, Jesuitenarchitektur, 88, where he attributed the drawing to Ammannati.

44. Carmagnini and Matracchi, Collegio, 300.


46. In the subsequent articles by Matracchi and Boccia, this assumption is accepted without any further comment. Matracchi, Edificazione, 107 and Boccia, Attesità conchiusa, 95–96 also note 6.

47. Benvenuti, Architettura, 30 note 13.

48. Design for the façade of San Giovanniino, Bartolomeo Ammannati, ca. 1580; Florence, Uffizi, Gabinetto disegni e stampe n. 2928 A. See Fossi, Ammannati, 112 and fig. 137.

49. “Habbiamo ricevuto la pianta del Collegio con la lettera di V. R., in cui ci occorre dire in risposta, che essendo Ms. Bartolomeo Ammannati tanto intelligente della sua professione, che perciò anco coteote Altezzé nelle loro principali fabbriche si sono servite di esso, et essendo tanto amorevolè et benefattore del collegio, poiché quasi a sua spese vuol fabbricare, et vi si impiega con tanto fervore ci pare di rimetterci alla sua prudenza, che ben haverà riguardo alle comodità del collegio, ma se pure in alcuni particolari pare a V. R. rappresentargli alcuna cosa, lo faccia suavemente, remettendosi però alla sua determinazione.” General Acquaviva to rector Orazio Torsellino, 1 Sept. 1590, ARSI, Rom. 13, fol. 346v. In Pirri, Ammannati, 51. Fossi mistakenly wrote that this ground plan was probably a design for the expansion of the new college across the Via de’ Biffi. Fossi, Ammannati, 138.

50. My random check in Ammannati’s corpus in the Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi in Florence has uncovered no watermarks similar to those on the ASR drawings.

51. General Claudio Acquaviva to rector Orazio Torsellino, 4 Aug. 1590, ARSI, Rom. 13, fol. 343v. In Pirri, Ammannati, 51. For the attribution of the ASR design, see also Carmagnini and Matracchi, Collegio, 306. Kiene has published another drawing (ASF. Compagnie religieuse soppressa da P. L. G. XII 1065. 338), which according to him is a second design by Ammannati for the new college across the Via de’ Biffi. Fossi, Ammannati, 138.

52. See note 49, above. Another document demonstrates that the two drawings of the façade and the ground plan were made at the same time. General Acquaviva wrote to Ammannati, 4 Aug. 1590, after having seen the design for the façade to send him the ground plan: “Il disegno della facciata del collegio verso Santo Lorenzo ci è piaciuto molto, ne ci occorre altro senza rimettere alla molta prudenza di V.S. che ben sa quale conviene alla comp. a. [compagnia] Il Padre Rettore ancora se haverà alcuna cosa da rappresentarle, lo farà con molto confidenza. A.S. credo che V. S. haverà potuto[?] mandare il resto del disegno del collegio, perché ho ricevuto dopo che si è amalato...” ARSI, Rom. 13, fol. 343v.

53. ASF. Compagnie religieuse soppressa da P. L. G. XII 1064. 337.

54. “Resta anco da comprare un Macello, quale è necessario perché sta accanto al Refettorio, et rende male odore et stridi, che con difficoltà si può sopprimere...” Letter by the provincial supervisor Giovandola de Notarisi, 1583, ARSI, Rom. 51, fol. 226r.

55. According to the already mentioned eighteenth-century document (see note 40, above), the slaughterhouse was acquired in 1589 for 950 scudi: “A di primo Aprile 1589. Il Pre Giovanni Paolo Navarola ottenne dal Cavaliere fra Vicenzo d’Angiolo Ginori Commendatore della Commenda di S. Antonio detta del’ ferro Una Casa di detta Commenda sotto vi il Macello posta su la Piazza di S. Lorenzo e nel canto del Chiazzolino...” 19 May 1590, ASF. Compagnie religieuse soppressa P. L. G. XII 977. 50.


57. Both the staircase near the sacristy and the one next to the main chapel were not executed and another staircase behind the church façade was executed differently from the plan, which was originally planned much bigger. Though the nave of the church was already finished before 1590, the staircase itself could have been part of the new design. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the staircase is shaded differently.

58. Furthermore, these parts are already different in the seventeenth-century designs by Kochanski (fig. 3) and another drawing probably by Alfonso Parigi, ca. 1657; ARSI, Rom. 121, fol. 209r.

59. In 1590 the Jesuits did still not possess the Via de’ Biffi Jesuits. “...et impo raunque far più piaicer à questo capitolo [chapter of San Lorenzo] per poter haver certa hosteria one designava M. Bartolomeo Ammannati et noi far li scuole, et col favor del Gran Duca facilmente si potra haverre, et inserire il chiazzolino che di mi saper V. P.ta Si che mi da quanti cose concorroni in questo negotio.” Giovandola Jacobo Basso to Claudio Acquaviva, 17 Jan. 1590, ARSI, Ital. 160, fol. 131v. The alley was eventually closed during the second enlargement in the seventeenth century. On the drawing by Alfonso Parigi it is possible to read an inscription that explains the advantage of closing the alley: “Facendo conforme vi è detto, si libera in tutto, e per tutto il Collegio, da persone vagabonde, e le scale saranno pavimento tutto unite, e non vi...”
potrà andare se non chi deve." ARSI, Rom. 121, fol. 209v. In Bösel, Jesuitenarchitektur, 82.
60. The first alterations of this part, south of the Via dei’ Biffi, took place in 1624. Giulio Parigi began the renovation of several houses on the east side of the block. ARSI, Rom. 17, fols. 437, 480v. In Bösel, Jesuitenarchitektur, 80.
61. A fine example of such a separation is evident from the word claustrum written on an approved plan for the Jesuit college of Montepulciano by Ser.
afino Fabrini in 1669. It marks the entrance of the residential complex near the porch leading to the cortile. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, Hd-4a, 12. Published in Bösel, Jesuitenarchitektur, fig. 77.
62. Bartolomeo Ammannati, ca. 1580; Florence, Uffizi, Gabinetto disegni e stampe n. 2944 A. Published in Fossi, Ammannati, fig. 143.
63. See Pirri, Trattati, fig. 11.
66. The new approach to confession differed from more traditional orders. See O’Malley, First Jesuits, 140–41. Other modern orders as the Barnabites, the Scolopi and the Oratorians established themselves only in the seventeenth century in Florence. See La comunità cristiana fiorentina..., 131.
68. Another church for the Jesuit College in Évora (Portugal), Spirito Santo, by Manuel Pires (1566–1574, begun two years earlier than Milan) has the same solution. Noticeable is also the similitude with São Roque of Rome, 1581, ARSI, Rom. 126 B, fol. 265. In Pirri, Ammannati, 19.
70. See note 64.
73. Sandro Benedetti, Fuori dal Classicismo, reinterpretazione, tipologia, ragione nell’architettura del Cinquecento, Storia d’architettura, saggi 5 (Rome: Multigrafica, 1984), 98.
75. See Pirri, Trattati, 174, 226–27 doc. 22.
76. “...e di nuovo le piante, cioè che la facciata dinanzi volser dire a la strada che va a Cesarini... et cosi ha in commissione il mio Architetto, a che desidero che V.S. si acquieti, et non pensi alterar altrimenti questa mia risoluzione.” Letter from Alessandro Farnese to General Francis Borgia, 26 Aug. 1568. This document has been lost, but was originally kept in Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Carte Farnesiane, fasc. 700 fol. 294. In Pirri, Trattati, 228.
77. See also Connors, Reflections, 702.
78. Bailey, Painting Cycle, 137, 159.
79. In Barocchi, Trattati, part 3, 115.
80. The gravestones that currently covers Ammannati’s grave dates probably from the nineteenth century. Ammannati was not the only important patron who was allowed a place of burial in San Giovanni. Some documents point to other benefactors, such as a “Greek woman” who paid for most of the ornaments in pietra serena. She had also bought a house for the college. Because of her support she was granted the privilege of being buried in the San Giovanni. Draft for the Annals of the Filopontine foundation, 1584, ARSI, Rom. 126b, fol. 326. Apparently Ammannati was not very happy about taking the wishes of other donors into account. In a reply to a (lost) letter by Ammannati, Claudio Acquaviva wrote, 12 Aug. 1581: “A VS. poi non dirò altro intorno a non voler più ricevere limosine per la fabbrica, perché mi persuaso ch’ella si farebbe maggiore scrupolo d’esser cagione d’impedir quel bene, non ammettendo la limosina, che pregiudicando l’anima sua col riceverla, perché cooperando alla buon’opera, verrà più tosto a meritare, che farsi danni.” In Balducchi, Notizie, part 2, 33.

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Figure 15. By permission of Lex Bosman

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