Historians of architecture have tended to recognize architects less in terms of their practice and more in terms of their conformity to modern notions of the “professional” architect. This strategy fails, however, when the focus turns to early modern Italy. Not only were there no schools of architecture or systems of licensing in this period, but also, in terms of training and practice, architecture was without clearly defined occupational contours. As scholars of Renaissance architecture have noted, there was nothing to stop the painter, sculptor, or mason from freely assuming the title architetto in accordance with the position he then filled on a building site. The indefinite role and varying responsibilities of the early modern architect thus present a historical dilemma as to how to describe the practitioner. Whereas today we define the architect by professional status as such, in early modern Italy, how did the architect delineate his professed occupation? Equally important, was there even such a thing as a “profession” in early modern Italy? In relating our present-day understanding of the professional architect to the early modern period, are we not anachronistically transferring twenty-first-century ideas and social concepts to a historically distinct epoch?

Within the accepted narratives of social history, the professional so commonly cited by Renaissance architectural historians did not exist in the fifteenth century, or even the sixteenth or the seventeenth. According to sociologists, it was not until the nineteenth century that the true professional emerged: an individual distinguished by the specialized and discretionary character of his work, admired for his judgment, skill, and diligence, and believed to fill a role of special importance within the society at large. Within the sociology of professions, moreover, the status of the professional is maintained through a framework of official associations and accreditation boards, which affirm the professional’s expertise and separate that individual from his professional counterparts. But this established convention is challenged by the emergence of a group of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century architects who self-consciously professed themselves to their occupation and, in writing, appealed for the regulation, edification, and standardization of their art. Drawing inspiration from antiquarian models and taking advantage of the increasingly pervasive humanist ethos, they advocated for an extensive program of architectural education, whereby through years of training the practitioner would acquire expertise in both the manual and the theoretical components of the discipline, emerging as an authoritative architect, an exemplar of artistic, social, and moral ideals.

The profusion of architectural literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries shows that the idea of the professional architect flourished in Renaissance Italy. Dictating the lineaments of architecture—the skills required of the architect and the materials, methods, and rules of his practice—these texts sought to provide a programmatic foundation for architecture. They argued that architecture was a discipline of the creative mind, requiring strict regulations, and thereby affirmed that the practice of building design in this period already bore some resemblance to that of the modern profession. A close reading of numerous early modern writings on architecture, moreover, reveals that the term professione was explicitly used, and that it was related to distinct concepts of education, occupational work, and personal propriety. The Sienese architect Pietro Cataneo, for example, dedicated
his lengthy treatise to the “professione di buono Architetto.” Similarly, Andrea Palladio and Buonaiuto Lorini conceived their treatises as guides for those who “study the profession” of architecture, and Benvenuto Cellini and Giorgio Vasari theoretically distinguished the painter and sculptor from he who “makes the profession of architecture.” Taken alone, however, these citations are not enough to make the case for a legitimate professionalism as we understand it today; they only scratch the surface of deeper questions regarding professionalism in early modern Italian architecture.

Another problem can be discerned in the breadth and diversity of the early modern architectural literature, which itself proves that no consistent conception of professionalism, or even of architecture, existed at this time. Yet we find that, despite their multifarious meanings, these two charged terms did relate to real occupational constructs. The increased prevalence of the term professione in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century architectural texts—which gradually came to replace disciplina, scientia, and arte in characterizing architecture—reflects the architect’s self-definition and his desire to augment his newfound social status with defined occupational standards. In claiming professional status, the architect positioned himself alongside the university-educated professors in the fields of medicine, mathematics, and law. Yet, the emergence of the professione di architetto in architectural writings was not merely a literary trope. Claims of professionalism had real consequences for practicing architects. For fifteenth-century authors like Antonio Averlino Filarete and Francesco di Giorgio, the emerging concept offered a theoretical structure for the discipline, laying out a standard of training, expertise, and moral integrity that would improve design quality and speed construction processes.

The architect’s motivation for writing, and likewise the nature of his occupation, was significantly different a century later. By the mid-sixteenth century, the culture of profession had become a popular phenomenon. Increasingly applied to a wide range of occupational fields—regardless of a job’s intellectual rigor or the difficulty of the skill it entailed—the concept of the professional was no longer an explicit imprimatur of the specialist’s knowledge. By the second half of the cinquecento, moreover, the architect was an established figure of social repute. Within the city-states he served, he was distinguished from the craftsman, granted a significant salary, and often called upon for his expertise in matters of politics, business, and diplomacy. Yet as an occupation, architecture was also becoming increasingly specialized. Technological advances in warfare spurred a swelling divide between the branches of civil and military design, and increasingly, the professione di architetto was distinguished from the professione dell’architettura militare. Thus, as used by architects such as Pirro Ligorio and Giovan Battista Belluzzi, who bestrode the fields of civil and military design, the term professione spoke to evolving social and occupational structures. It had less to do with the humanist underpinnings of the professional, as conceived by Leon Battista Alberti, and more to do with the architect’s association with a given occupation, which was increasingly distilled with the formation of separate artistic and military academies. It was within these institutions that the concept of a comprehensive architectural curriculum was born, and although the academies did not succeed in categorically defining the architect, their formation marked an important step in the emergence of the modern architectural profession.

Architecture—Art and Profession

The word architect originates from the Greek architekton and literally means “chief artificer or master builder.” Classical ideals of architecture were a formidable presence in the imaginations of early modern practitioners. Although literature on architecture from antiquity is limited—Vitruvius’s De architectura is famously the only known tract dedicated solely to the subject from this period—the writings of Plato and Aristotle and of Pliny and Cicero served Renaissance architects as supplemental guides. According to Plato and Aristotle, the architect was a dignified figure who contributed knowledge, oversaw workmen, and took no part in banausic labor or even craftsmanship. Similarly, the writings of Pliny and Cicero attest that the architect was regarded as a noble figure, of unusual intelligence and ingenuity. Beginning with these texts and the etymology of architect, the following historical overview locates the origin of the idea of profession in architecture in the ancient period and traces its evolution in medieval and early modern Italy. I argue that the use of the term architect in historical records—and, conversely, its absence in distinct epochs—reveals more than lexicographic trends. In the Italian Renaissance, the occupational title of architect implicitly affirmed professional standards. Beyond this, the distinctions increasingly drawn in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries between the architetto, provveditore, and ingegnere—titles that previously had been blurred—may be correlated with the increasingly delineated understanding of the architect’s occupation in this period.

Written around 15 BC, De architectura represented Vitruvius’s attempt to redress the lack of professionalism the aging author saw among his peers (Figure 1). Vitruvius was a great reader, and in assembling material from a broad swath of literary sources—including the works of Plato and Aristotle, as well as those of Varro and Cicero, whom he regarded as mentors, and numerous other now lost commentaries of ancient Greek origin—he valorized the building culture of ancient Greece, producing a record of exemplary architecture and building practices. Renaissance readers of De architectura focused less on Vitruvius’s dissatisfaction with Roman
architecture than on his repeated affirmations of the precision, skill, and intellectual rigor required in the art of building. The ideals projected in the treatise were seen to mirror a superior, lost building culture. Within the text, Vitruvius does not speak explicitly of profession (profiteor or professio in Latin), as this term would not appear for another century. Instead, he describes architecture as an *ars* (occupation or branch of learning) and *disciplina* (instruction as given to disciples, or, more generally, teaching and knowledge). Still, he fully articulates the concept of the professional architect.10

Book 1.1 of *De architectura* opens with an assessment of architecture as an occupation encompassing all forms of building design—from the design of fortifications and water pumps to the realization of temples and palaces. The architect who takes on such far-reaching responsibilities, Vitruvius tells us, must be expert in “many disciplines and various sorts of specialized knowledge.”11 The character of this technically adroit, multiskilled, intellectual architect relates directly to the all-encompassing educational curriculum Vitruvius prescribed, which includes everything from geometry to history, medicine, geology, and law. Equally important were the architect’s moral obligations, which have often been overlooked.
by scholars. The architect, Vitruvius insists, is fair and trustworthy, free from greed, and buttressed by his good reputation. Reflecting on the dignity of the discipline, the importance of the title of architect, and the lifelong commitment that title entails, he concludes:

Because so great discipline must be adorned by and abundant in so many and such various types of expertise, I do not believe that architects can simply announce themselves as such, none but those who have climbed step by step, nurtured from an early age by education—in letters above all, and in the arts—that the concept of the autonomous, individual architect

described the architect as a highly regarded, well-trained designer and draftsman who directed the entirety of the building process. Likewise, numerous examples from the medieval period indicate that the building designer achieved reputable social standing. In depictions of building construction, such as one contained in a thirteenth-century mosaic in San Marco’s Basilica in Venice, the designer is often illustrated as a learned figure, distinguished from the craftsmen whose work he directs. Correspondingly, in an edict of 1337, the governors of Siena decreed that the design and technical direction of the construction of the cathedral were to be assigned to a “trusted and competent man,” an individual of superior rank, worthy of a handsome salary. All the same, documents from the long medieval period affirm that the concept of the autonomous, individual architect was nearly extinct. Great buildings continued to be erected, but, tellingly, the term architectus almost disappeared from use. Within the records from the collectively organized cathedral work sites, one reads of “masters” (maestro or magister), “project supervisors” (proveditore and capomastro), and “masons” (magistro lapidum and scalpellino), individuals who, absent a definitive building plan, collaborated over generations in realizing monumental constructions. When the term architectus occasionally appears in the records, its application is inconsistent, conveying no clear sense of duty or standard qualifications.

This state of building design carried over to the early Renaissance, when—even within the most ambitious, classically inspired building projects—the chief designer, the “architect,” remained a phantom. Here we can take as reference the well-documented building sites of Milan, Florence, and Siena. Records from the Florentine Opera del Duomo from the pivotal period in which Filippo Brunelleschi oversaw the design and construction of the legendary dome (1417–36) contain only two references to architetti. Yet there are nearly seven thousand references to capomaestri and maestri and more than two thousand more to proveditori. Brunelleschi himself is commonly referenced as proveditore, but only once as architettto. The absence of the “architect” is also apparent in the mid-quattrocento documents from the workshop of the cathedral of Siena. Here, too, the great building designers were known as maestri and operai, and they lacked the absolute authority of the ancient architectus.

Notably, however, contemporary records from Milan show the use of a different lexicon. Beginning in the late fourteenth century, documents from the Milanese Opera del Duomo refer to the building designer as ingegnere. In a document of October 1387, the cathedral’s first recorded chief designer, Simone da Orsenigo, is referenced as “engineer of said building.” Yet the pervasive presence of the term ingegnere in Milanese documents, used to describe building designers as well as multitalented artists more generally, indicates that it was essentially synonymous with the contemporary Tuscan proveditore or capomastro and, as an occupational designation, similarly lacked clear definition.

A well-known roster of Milanese “engineers” in the late 1480s is the best evidence of this. Here we find Bramante and Leonardo, both named as “ingeniarius et pinctor,” as well as Giovanni Giacomo Dulcebuono (“ingeniarius et schulptor”) and Giovanni Battagio (“ingeniarius et murator”). But Leonardo was not employed as an engineer in Milan, and Bramante—notorious for his limited knowledge of structural systems—certainly did not possess the structural knowledge that is typically associated with a modern engineer. There is little evidence, moreover, that Dulcebuono and Battagio did work that was dramatically different from that which “architects” would later do. This is supported by a document of 1490 in which Dulcebuono and Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, chief designers of the Milan cathedral, are literally named with both terms—“architects or engineers” (“quos predictos architectos, seu ingeniarios”).

The engineer was not only a Milanese phenomenon, however, and given that the terms ingegnere and architettto have often been used interchangeably—in early modern documents and also by historians of architecture—it is worth pausing to consider the relationship between the two occupations in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. The distinction between the architect and the engineer, which became increasingly clear over the course of the Renaissance, helps to define the architect in this period, as by the second half of the sixteenth century, the increasingly delineated engineer came to characterize what the architect was not.
In its etymological origins, the term *engineer* (*ingegnator* in Latin) is connected to *ingenium*, an innate mental facility and power to invent. As consummately illustrated in Taccola’s *De ingegnis*, the design of military devices, as well as mechanical devices more generally, was considered the domain of men with great *ingegno*—ingenuity, intelligence, and the power to invent (Figure 2). Brunelleschi, according to Taccola, was “gifted . . . especially in architecture” but was also “a most learned inventor in the design of structural devices.”

Already by the 1430s, the practice of the Italian engineer had expanded beyond the military arts, a logical evolution given that the two disciplines involved similar technical skill sets. In the documents it appears that by the second half of the fifteenth century (outside Milan) the term *engineer* was applied to individuals in regard to their work on particularly technically complicated building tasks. For example, in Sienese documents of the 1460s and 1470s, Antonio Federighi is named *ingegnere* in regard to his involvement with the reconstruction of the Torre del Mangia. A century later, the association between the engineer and the design of mechanical systems and fortifications had become almost universal. By the time Vasari wrote his *Vite* (1550 and 1568), strictly technical, utilitarian design was no longer considered the realm of the architect.

**Alberti and the Rebirth of the Architect**

The Renaissance revival of the “architect”—as a concept and as an occupational designation—thus marked a watershed. Leon Battista Alberti’s definition of the architect, as set forth in his *De re aedificatoria* (ca. 1450), provided the ideal model for the Renaissance architect. It was Alberti’s architect who was routinely cited and championed throughout the early modern period, and, significantly, it was this model that set the framework for the architect’s rise as a professional. While the reason the Albertian architect gained such popularity has often eluded historians—the erudite Latin of *De re aedificatoria* and the work’s absence of illustrations certainly did not attract broad readership—Alberti’s deep affinity with contemporary social thought offers an explanation.

Based on ancient precedent, the Albertian architect was a civic figure upon whom “the security, dignity and honor of the republic depends” and was not unlike the model professional the prominent humanist author espoused in his other celebrated texts.

Among the leitmotifs of *De re aedificatoria* is the idea of the architect’s nobility—his position, Alberti confirms, is “a great matter”—and his categorical distinction from the craftsman. In this repositioning and, indeed, redefinition of the architect, Alberti not only dissociates the architect from anonymous *maestri* of the medieval work site but also places him among the intellectual elite, ranking him alongside “the greatest exponents of other [learned] disciplines.” In Alberti’s view, such a shift was necessary, as the architect—like any individual who wished to succeed within the competitive, increasingly educated society of mid-fifteenth-century Italy—had to profess the intellectual basis of his occupation and rank his role in an organizational hierarchy above that of his collaborators. Elaborating on the qualifications and character of the architect, Alberti articulates the architect’s commitment to his occupation as act of profession (*profiteor*):

If the architect is to succeed in planning, preparing, and executing the work properly and according to his office, there are a number of considerations that he must not overlook. He must ponder the nature of his position, what he professes, and what impression he would like to give; he must calculate the size of the project and the amount of praise, remuneration, thanks and even fame he will achieve, or conversely, if he embarks on something without sufficient experience, prudence or consideration, what contempt and hatred he will receive. . . . A great thing is architecture, and not everyone can undertake it. He must be of the greatest ingenuity, the keenest insight, the highest learning, and the widest experience, and most importantly, he must be serious and of good judgment and counsel, who dare to profess himself the architect.

The attributes Alberti ascribes to the architect—civic, intellectual, and moral—are not confined to the building designer. In fact, they correspond with the more general characterization of the professions he lays out in his *De commodis* (1429). In this ironic essay, Alberti weighs the virtues and vices of pursuing a scholarly career, contrasting the cloistered scholar (*litteratus*) with the businessman or the scribal, medical, legal, or military professional. The scholar is under-appreciated in society and poorly remunerated, yet he is noble in his pursuit of knowledge. The professional, by contrast, may be wealthy and esteemed but is slave to the clients he serves. Sarcasm aside—Alberti’s *litteratus* is comically pitiful—*De commodis* offers an alternative professional model: the civic-minded intellectual. A socially engaged scholar who pursues knowledge for a greater purpose than knowledge itself, this figure uses his expertise to serve and enrich society. Although the civic-minded intellectual values learning over material wealth, Alberti concedes that this person’s great knowledge and agreeable nature are often rewarded with financial prosperity. Moreover, due to his many positive attributes, this professional exemplar often earns honor, esteem, and admiration.

The character of the civic-minded intellectual in *De commodis* is not unlike the architect in *De re aedificatoria*. This professional model also appears in Alberti’s *De statuta*. Here, reflecting on empirical knowledge of the artist, Alberti cites the example of the shipbuilder. “Who would dare to profess himself a ship-builder, if he did not know the parts of the ship, how one ship differs from the next, and how parts of a
Figure 2. Jacopo Mariano Taccola, *De ingeneis*, ca. 1420–35, study drawings of a two-speed winch (center), wagons for the transport of cannons and a trebuchet (top and center), palisade and mallet (center right with notes), a three-part wagon (bottom), and cannon and cannonballs (bottom with note) (Codex Latinus Monacensis 197, part II, folio 19v, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich; by permission of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich; reproduction prohibited).
construction hold together?" Following this he categorically asserts, "Everyone should have learned the art he professes." As in De re aedificatoria, Alberti thus affirms the intellectual basis of the artist’s work; he also sets out a framework of professional standards and social decorum.

Alberti does not mention profession in his famed treatise on painting, but this is not because he deems painting in any way inferior to the other arts. On the contrary, the clear distinction evident in Alberti’s treatment of the painter relative to the architect speaks directly to the contemporary evaluation of the former’s nobility and the ambiguous social standing of the latter. De pictura is based on the recognition of painting as a cognate art, based in mathematics and letters, and thus easily distinguished from the manual crafts. Painting, Alberti reminds his reader, was pursued in the ancient world by noble citizens, kings, and philosophers and is distinguished not only in its intellectual foundations but also in great beauty and the joy and physical ease of its creation. In keeping with his exalted status, moreover, the painter belonged to one of the greater guilds (arti maggiori)—as did judges and notaries, silk and cloth merchants, bankers, doctors, and apothecaries—occupational fields that demanded less manual work and drew higher earnings. The architect’s exclusion from the arti maggiori, and from any professional system for that matter, only reaffirmed the need to delineate the requirements of his occupation. De re aedificatoria addressed this need, drawing on an emerging understanding of professions. Bestowing the architect with a classically grounded theory and technical lexicon, Alberti placed him alongside members of the learned professorate. The eloquent Latin of De re aedificatoria—although inaccessible to the average worker—initiated a dialogue on architecture that spurred a culture of architectural literature. The treatise represented the first step in the definition of the early modern architectural professional. The teaching of architecture in schools was the second.

Gilds, Universities, and the Aspirant Professional

The guilds of early modern Italy were essentially the first self-governing professional organizations. In their staunch traditionalism and regimentation, however, they were fundamentally at odds with the understanding of professions espoused by Alberti and the preeminent role of the architect advocated in De re aedificatoria. Alberti’s theory of architecture, conceptually intertwined with contemporary humanist discourses on the individual, rationalism, and the acquisition of fame, provided a prescription for the architect-as-author. Within this conceptual framework, the architect took his place alongside the nomini illustri—poets, rhetoricians, and men of letters—whose legacy was rooted in their authorship of laudable works. Guilds (arti) were antithetical to such authorship. In the view of ambitious quattrocento Italians like Brunelleschi, the guilds were homogenizing institutions that, in controlling every aspect of their members’ occupational lives—from their primary training to the numbers and types of jobs they were to execute, the pay they were to receive, and the traditions they were to follow—stifled individuality and innovation. Thus it was unclear how the Albertian architect was to gain an institutional framework, acquire valid social credentials, and, in turn, achieve professional status. The Renaissance universities—themselves founded as guilds—provided a model.

Often known as universitas (corporation), scola (school), collegia (assembly), or corpora opificium et artificium (order of laborers and artisans), the early modern guild provided an institutional framework where men of like age, instincts, tastes, and occupations could gather, their common interests protected and their morals and well-being looked after. Guilds also often functioned as educational institutions, appointing well-qualified instructors to teach young men in the duties and responsibilities of particular occupations. It was within this framework that the first universities (studio or sapientia) were established as guilds of scholars, self-regulating bodies of learned men. The association between the early modern universitas (Latin) or universita (Italian)—that is, the craft and artisan sodality—and the modern university stems from this connection.

The administrative structures that controlled the occupational activities of the university-educated professoriat and artisan guild members were therefore closely related. The scribe, like the painter or mason, belonged to a sodality that provided a social and religious community, set standards for his education, and closely monitored the work he did and the remuneration he received. In early modern Italy there was a distinct theoretical and social divide between the professional elite and the artisan class—the product of deeply ingrained social hierarchies and the sociopolitical ramifications of guild affiliation. Not all guilds were created equal, and a person’s social rank was directly related to his position within the guild system. As noted previously, the more socially prestigious, “greater” guilds were reserved for those occupations with higher earnings and cleaner and less labor-intensive work. Painters and goldsmiths belonged to the arti maggiori. Those who worked in all other craft and commercial occupations—from butchers to shoemakers, stonemasons, tanners, locksmiths, carpenters, and bakers—were housed within the arti minori. Architects, who did not have a guild of their own, were most typically grouped with stonemasons, woodworkers, or carpenters in the arti minori.

The association between the early modern trade guilds and the universities also helps to elucidate how artists and architects came to reposition their work within the artes liberales. In ancient Greece, the artes liberales were those subjects
deemed necessary for “free” men to master in order to participate in civic life—grammar, logic, and rhetoric, as well as arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Their study was controlled by no institution and was undertaken for no concrete economic purpose. This philosophy of the *artes liberales*, which equates to the Renaissance *studia humanitatis*, was not absolutely mirrored in the pursuits of early modern Italian intellectuals. The humanist writers and thinkers of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy had in reality much in common with Alberti’s model professional. Employed as secretaries, lawyers, notaries, doctors, and chancellors, they were engaged in the societies to which they contributed. Beyond this, they were often employed as schoolteachers or professors. There was thus a direct connection between the members of the guilds of doctors and lawyers and the members of the university guilds—the professors. The title *humanista*, in fact, was used to describe a professional teacher of the *studia humanitatis*.

The Renaissance *studio*—with its emphasis on liberal education and the practical application of knowledge—was formative in the conceptual development of professionalism. The first professionals of early modern Italy were university-educated doctors, lawyers, and secretaries, whose social rise coincided with that of the university. The early modern *studio* was a fundamentally urban institution. The social basis of its recruitment was broad and democratic—attendance was not limited to the wealthy or members of the elite—and its members were sincerer at least in spirit, to practitioners of the mechanical arts than they were to those of the purely liberal arts. This is not to say that the early modern university was a training ground for the common citizen—or, for that matter, the architect. The language of the university was still Latin, and teaching focused not on specific occupational skills but rather on broad scholarly principles—the ability to think critically and to apply analytical reasoning to a problem. But it was this “liberal” focus that opened the *studio*, and the intellectual model it propounded, to a greater population of aspiring professionals.

Pietro Cataneo discusses the value of the university in the development of a city’s middle classes in his *L’architettura*. “The honored *studio*,” he notes, “will be of much use to the city, because, in addition to the money which it brings in, there come many students from far away, and from close regions.” He continues: “But even beyond this, what is most important is that the city’s inhabitants will be trained in different distinguished sciences, and because of this, they will bring great honor and fame to their city.” Cataneo’s faith in the *studio* as a stepping-stone for professional advancement was the product of his own experiences. Trained as copyist and scribe, Cataneo was introduced to architecture through his work within the scriptorium of the *studio* of Siena, where he copied and studied architectural texts, including Francesco di Giorgio’s *Trattato di architettura*, and later completed an advanced course in mathematics.

While Cataneo’s intellectual background was something of an anomaly among architects—the majority of architects did not write treatises—the implicit association he drew between occupational success and a theoretically based education resonated with a greater audience of artists. By the mid-sixteenth century, artists in Italy were increasingly discontented with the standard, guild-structured apprenticeship—education that depended on one master and was limited to those projects that happened to have engaged the workshop during the artist’s training. They wanted broader, more objective education and thus were increasingly drawn to universities and literary academies. Baldassare Peruzzi, for example, was appointed by the *studio* of Siena to teach courses on perspective and craftsmanship (ca. 1530), and Agnolo Bronzino, Bartolomeo Ammannati, Vincenzo Danti, and Francesco da Sangallo were members of the Accademia Fiorentina.

The increasing concern among Italian Renaissance artists for education and specialized knowledge also spurred the restructuring of traditional craft guilds and the development of artificer academies—sister organizations of the university. The growth of the early modern *studio*, therefore, combined with the dissemination of new professional ideals, allowed skilled craftsmen, merchants, artists, and architects to assume elevated social roles. While most artists and architects were not scholars, by creating and joining in occupational structures that were comparable to those of the universities, they were able to define themselves in the same terms as the professoriat.

Profession by Another Name

By the second half of the fifteenth century, with Alberti’s ideal of the authorial architect circulating in printed editions of *De re aedificatoria* and Italian universities enjoying vigorous growth, the social and cultural conditions might have been ripe for the emergence of the professional architect. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that the concept of professionalism was widely recognized within Italian society, and in regard to architecture, it is clear that the term *professione* was not consistently or uniformly used. While Lorenzo Ghiberti and Alberti spoke explicitly of profession in their commentaries on the arts, the term is entirely absent from the two primary vernacular architectural treatises of the fifteenth century: those of Filarete and Francesco di Giorgio. Nevertheless, these two authors unquestionably considered architecture as a profession: a specialized occupation involving extensive theoretical knowledge and skill and requiring a level of judgment and moral integrity that eludes the average worker. In describing the work of the architect, Filarete and
Francesco employed the terms disciplina, dottrina, scientia, and arte interrelatedly, in a manner that itself implies profession. Disciplina, as understood in the early modern period, was a field of learning or knowledge; dottrina was defined as a piece of teaching or instruction, often made in public; the Latin scientia took the literal meaning of “knowledge”; and arte, in Italian, means “skill” or “craft.” In associating arte with disciplina, dottrina, and scientia, the authors linked the identity of the knowledgeable, publicly avowed individual with that of the craftsman-artist.

Written nearly two decades apart, Filarete’s Libro architettonico and Francesco’s Trattato di architettura differ substantially in form and content. The former is composed as a utopian narrative, while the latter reads as a programmatic thesis on the art of building. As individual texts, each defining architecture in response to its author’s own situation, the two treatises provide substantially different portraits of early modern architecture. Yet the Libro and the Trattato are immediately comparable in that both set out to provide a theoretical framework to underpin the building professions. Adopting a didactic tone, Filarete and Francesco alike drew on their own experiences to instruct the reader on practices of building design, construction, and project management. Moreover, by including significant information from their own lives, both authors created, in effect, professional autobiographies. While the impact of these architectural profiles should not be overstated, neither was it inconsequential. Although never printed, both the Libro and the Trattato enjoyed significant readership. Filarete’s tract—realized in two versions (ca. 1460 and 1464) and dedicated to Duke Francesco Sforza and Piero de Medici, respectively—was copied in its original Italian as well as in Latin. The treatise made it into the libraries of the elite—Alfonso II, Duke of Calabria, and Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, among others, owned copies—but was also circulated among practitioners. Francesco’s tract, known today in two principal versions (ca. 1480 and ca. 1490), was copied by the hundreds. Its didactic images were so widely reproduced among practitioners that they became canonical, anonymous models. The Libro and the Trattato were thus circulated as published manuals for professional practice, defining their authors while at the same time educating a broader public on the architect’s occupational endeavors.

Composed as a fictional dialogue between the architect and his employers, Filarete’s Libro mirrors the author’s less-than-agreeable experiences working in the Sforza court of Milan. Relating every detail of the planning of the utopian Sforzinda, Filarete stands as the model practitioner, and unquestionably it was this ideal of the architect, and of the rudamenti of architecture more generally, that Filarete sought to elucidate (Figure 3). He speaks of the importance of good marble and how to assess its quality, for example, and then relates a trip to a marble quarry, thereby proving his competence. Likewise, he notes the importance of proper calculation of expenditures and then does the math for Sforzinda according to his foretold assessment of what is necessary and appropriate.

The scope of architecture assumed by Filarete followed closely on Vitruvius’s prescription, involving the design of houses, churches, and civic buildings; the conception and construction of bridges, ports, towers, forts, and moats; and the provision (often through invention) of building machinery. Filarete not only advanced the Vitruvian ideal of the architect’s polymathic knowledge but also gave great attention to the architect’s moral character. His chosen moniker, Filarete—literally “lover of virtue”—was a rhetorical reaffirmation of his firm belief in the dignity of architecture and the virtue it demanded of its practitioners. In the building and maintenance of society, the architect was all-important, providing knowledge and experience without which “one cannot conceive or dedicate a good building.” Filarete returns to this point on several occasions, placing the value of the architect above that of monetary compensation and stressing that the architect should be properly compensated in the honor, favorable salary, and authority he receives.

As a way of enforcing the standards for his model architect—which from experience he knew was more the exception than the norm—Filarete offers a hypothetical test by which the presumptuous architect might be distinguished from the truly practiced. While this is perhaps one of the first references to an architectural accreditation exam, the impetus behind Filarete’s proposal was not unique. Complaints about the unregulated state of architecture, and about the existence of “pretenders” who claimed titles and the associated rewards without undergoing the requisite training, were ubiquitous in fifteenth-century Italy. Certainly Francesco di Giorgio’s Trattato di architettura was born out of similar concerns, and the time Francesco poured into writing, revising, and rewriting his treatise proves that his desire to codify architecture was sincere, a career-long endeavor.

The Trattato, like the Libro, highlights exemplary practical models while also drawing attention to the flaws in architecture and its lack of a system of assessment and accreditation. Beyond this, Francesco, like Filarete, speaks extensively of his own experiences, using a first-person, active voice to guide the reader through the lineaments of architecture. This is particularly evident in the second version of the treatise, as conserved in the authoritative codex Magliabechiana II. I.141 manuscript. Here Francesco tells us, for example, about the many buildings he designed for Federico da Montefeltro, how he and the duke toiled over the text of Vitruvius, and the numerous experiences he had surveying building sites or locating valuable minerals. The value of the text lies in the
Figure 3 Antonio Averlino Filarete, Libro architettonico, ca. 1465, illustration of the architect giving orders to two workers (ms. Magliabechianus II.I.140, folio 1r, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze; by permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; any reproduction is prohibited).
firsthand insights and empirical knowledge of its impressive author. Such on-site training, Francesco repeatedly reminds the reader, is essential for professional success and is what ultimately distinguishes true practitioners from those “so-called architects” (architetti nominati).29

Francesco’s critique of the unregulated, lamentable state of architecture is most forcefully displayed in the final book of the Trattato, on machinery. “Always and increasingly today,” he writes, “the most ignorant take reward for the labors of others, and glorify themselves with words of knowledge and power in many things, which in truth are the inventions of others. And this flaw in our time is most common in those architects who call themselves such precipitously, who are almost all ignorant and inexpert men, whose own work is so easily realized.”30 This impassioned statement, from a man obviously frustrated with the state of his professed occupation, cannot be understood as anything but a call for its reform. This sentiment is further manifest in the self-affirming definition Francesco issues several lines prior regarding the virtues of the architect proper. Nearly echoing Alberti’s ideal of the monetarily indifferent, knowledge-seeking professional, Francesco asserts that “I have acquired the knowledge of [these machines] with great toil and discomfort, and at the sacrifice of my means of livelihood.” But such a condition, he continues, applies to all who are truly dedicated to their art: “I find that he who achieves such experience [knowledge] does so with great time, expense and at the impediment of other useful cares.”31

One might reasonably ask why, if Filarete and Francesco sought to educate others on architecture, they needed to relate so much personal information. And one would be justified in thinking that the authors were as interested in self-promotion as they were in education. But such conspicuous self-promotion and self-definition were necessary for the architect’s transformation from an anonymous maestro, one of several dozen involved in a major construction project, to the authoritative building creator. Beyond this, Filarete and Francesco were working to create an ethos of professional practice. Although they did not explicitly discuss the professione di architetto, in showing themselves as credible and knowledgeable individuals, and in systematizing their practice in a manner that also informed the greater citizen body about the requirements and social importance of architecture, they codified their occupation as a profession.32

The Emergence of the Professional

In content, structure, and didactic function, the architectural treatises of the sixteenth century were not substantially different from those of the fifteenth. They too responded to the need to systematize the processes of building design and sought to do so through self-definition. Yet the cinquecento writings differ in the explicit claims they make for the professione di architetto. Architects’ appropriation of the term professione—used to refer to the title an individual claimed, his occupation, or his commitment to a subject through teaching—went hand in hand with the greater proliferation of the concept of profession across social and cultural strata. As evident in Tomasso Garzoni’s voluminous La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo (1585), the use of professione had far more to do with self-representation and public perception than it did with the value of an occupation, its intellectual rigor, or the difficulty of the skill it entailed.83 According to Garzoni, almost every occupation—from that of academics (academici) to those of housewives (comari), printers (tipografi), and robbers (rubbatori)—could be valued as a profession.84 Guild associations, moreover, were largely irrelevant, as in fact there were far more professions—150, according to Garzoni—than there were guilds. The enormous success of Garzoni’s La piazza universale, which saw twenty-nine editions from 1585 to 1683, affirms the resonance of this popular conception of profession, as well as its understanding within the literate middle class. Certainly, Garzoni was not alone or even original in promoting the culture of professions. His discussions derived from a mass of contemporary treatises and practitioner manuals in which professione, as both a concept and a vocational title, may be traced.

It was thus in keeping with current social and lexicographic trends that nearly every architectural writer of sixteenth-century Italy employed the term professione. As casually referred to by Andrea Palladio, the word seems little more than a gesture to social norms.85 But for certain authors—in particular those who, due to the insecurity of their own positions, adopted a polemical approach to architecture—the use of professione was a deliberate rhetorical means by which to cement the parameters of their occupation. Indeed, what was meant by “architecture” changed in the sixteenth century. The substantial political, cultural, and religious developments under way in this period—spurred by the Sack of Rome, the Reformation, and a long series of Turkish attacks on the Italian coastlines—brought with them changes in building tastes and needs. Under the continual threat of war, the leaders of Naples, Florence, Venice, the Papal States, and Genoa invested heavily in defenses, and the ever-increasing specialization of these constructions, necessitated by the technological developments in firearms, led to the categorical rise of the fortification expert. And if ever a professional existed—that individual who possessed specialized, practically oriented knowledge, whose work immeasurably benefited the society he served, and who was trusted for his skill, judgment, and moral integrity—it was the military architect. Architects like Pirro Ligorio and Giovan Battista Belluzzi thus stood on the fissure of a rapidly splitting occupation,
and each endeavored in writing to codify and legitimate his practice. In tone, the texts of Ligorio and Belluzzi have much in common with the acerbic passages of Francesco’s Trattato, similarly charging “ignorant and inexpert” pretenders with hindering the advancement of building and tarnishing the architect’s reputation. Yet the context in which they wrote was markedly different, as was the impact of their words. Ligorio, drawing on the Vitruvian model, advocated for the polymathic, intellectual architect. Belluzzi, in turn, promoted the newly emergent military architect.

Practiced as a civil architect, fortification designer, hydrologist, and antiquarian, Pirro Ligorio (1513–83) was among the most provocative and vocal critics of sixteenth-century architecture.86 His damnation of the accepted norms of his occupation is readily apparent in his Trattato di alcune cose appartenente alla nobiltà dell’antiche arti (ca. 1570), in which he addresses the character of the architect within the broader context of artistic decorum (Figure 4).87 The book’s rambling quality and caustic tone is revealed in its full title, which may be roughly translated as follows: “Treatise on the nobility of the ancient arts, especially on painting, sculpture and architecture, and the good and the bad that those people acquire that weakens the arts, and on those who are not of the profession, who speak excessively so as to sound learned about that which they do not know, and detract from those they themselves deface.”88 The term professione, which appears not only in the title but also throughout the text, delineates good practice and is employed more subtly in the associations Ligorio draws among intellectual, moral, and social superiority.

Within the treatise Ligorio never identifies practitioners of bad architecture, but he does elaborate on the character flaws of such individuals. These men are inferior in intellect, judgment, and virtue, he argues, and in falsely assuming the title of architect, they degrade the profession.89 “Every mason and every surveyor,” he writes, “wishes to be an architect.”90 But these individuals fail to recognize that the architect “is called as such because he is literally ‘chief’ and ‘builder,’ lord of the arts, and commander,” and thus foolishly claim his title without knowing “how to found a building, or how to draw it, or how to examine its proportions or recognize the nature of its members, or how it should be raised and where it must be located.”91 Equally as dangerous as such pretenders, according to Ligorio, are those “spiteful and stupid” individuals who recognize neither the extensive learning of the architect nor his selfless dedication to his occupation. Such men “sap the
merits of virtuous men”—true architects—“who practically kill themselves in doing something that is honorable, sparing neither life nor their means.” This passage echoes the Vitruvian notion of the learned, socially upstanding, and abstemious architect, and the lines that follow, in fact, regarding the architect’s extensive education, are taken directly from Vitruvius.

The self-commendation evident in Ligorio’s writings, as well as his explicit claims about the profession’s superiority, are also found in documents concerning his career. In the correspondence regarding Ligorio’s 1568 transfer to Ferrara, for example, the architect’s selflessness, exceptional knowledge, and professional character are routinely highlighted. But Ligorio, like almost every other artist of the day, was not indifferent to salary and rewards, and in transferring to Ferrara he secured for himself a generous contract of twenty-five scudi a month as well as a house, a food allowance, and two servants.

The contradiction evident here—whereby Ligorio characterized himself according to the model of the knowledge-seeking classical architect, upholding all the virtues this entailed, while at the same time greedily pursued fame and wealth—might be seen as a product of the changing nature of architecture and, paradoxically, the increased professionalism it demanded. On one hand, the publication of the 1568 edition of the Vite of Vasari—Ligorio’s great rival—coupled with the establishment of the Accademia del Disegno degraded the design activities of military architects and ingegneri. But at the same time, fortification designers, due to the immense political and economic value of their work, increasingly demanded monumental salaries. Sixteenth-century Italian military architects consciously sought to differentiate themselves from their civil-oriented peers, drawing a link between the profession they espoused and their pay. Within both camps of architecture, professione was increasingly used as a badge of affiliation. Within the ever-expanding body of printed architectural literature, professione signified social and economic status and had little to do with the practitioner’s moral character or classical virtues.

In texts by Galeazzo Alessi, Buonaiuto Lorini, Francesco de’ Marchi, and Giovan Battista Belluzzi the concept of profession is explicitly employed to underscore the scarcity of the military architect’s—or engineer’s—knowledge. According to these authors, success in the professione dell’architettura militare required full commitment to the professione militare. This meant that it was not only imperative to be proficient in surveying, plan making, and construction management—as was the case for essentially all architects—but it was also necessary to know firearms and attack and defense strategies, and to have had firsthand experience on the battlefield. In delineating the technical acumen required of the military architect, exponents of the profession explicitly differentiated themselves from their “civilian” peers, even going so far as to belittle the ornamental concerns of their art. As Belluzzi states:

Architects and scholars . . . have not seen so many of the exercises I have found in the architecture of combat, nor [do they know] how to draw a piece of artillery or to make a stronghold with a countermine . . . thus, it will be fine to let architects make palaces, churches, sepulchers, cornices, architrave, bases, columns, swags, shields, masks and other carved details, because fortresses require good flanks, good parapets, fine gates, and good men. He elaborates on this sentiment elsewhere, again treating the civil architect’s aesthetic and formal concerns with disdain. “Fortresses made in Italy by architects without the advice of soldiers suffer great opposition . . . and thus the prince who wants to make a fortress should take the advice from soldiers and from those to whom he would like to give it custody when necessary, and not to scholars [dottori] because neither measures nor books fight.”

Remarkable in both passages is the comparison Belluzzi draws between architects and men of learning (dottori), and its derogatory implications. The Renaissance definition of dottore—an authoritative figure of eminent learning who is often looked to for instruction—was quite closely related to professore, and so also to professione. In correlating the dottore with the architect, Belluzzi bestowed the latter with university-level credentials. Yet, whereas such association was befitting the Albertian architect, for Belluzzi and his peers such bookish learning was worthless in the profession of the military architect. As reiterated by Lorini, “For he who wants to be a good Military Engineer and perfect soldier it is unnecessary . . . to complete a doctorate in Padua or Bologna . . . but he should have seen artillery sieges.”

From these passages, it might seem that Belluzzi, like Lorini, was hard-nosed and anti-academic. In a certain sense, he was. Within the context of such exceptionally accomplished, authoritative, and often legitimately noble men, however, anti-academic did not equate to anti-learning. Correlating Belluzzi’s claims with his actual practice helps to clarify what was meant by the professione dell’architettura militare. Giovan Battista Belluzzi (1506–54), a member of the distinguished Belluzzi family of San Martino, was trained in bookkeeping, but through a series of fortuitous relationships, he found a place in architecture and the military arts. Whatever applied or theoretical training he had missed in his youth, he made up for in practice. In service to Cosimo de’ Medici, Belluzzi demonstrated his abilities in mathematics, draftsmanship, military strategy, and surveying (he even designed a new instrument to facilitate the surveyor’s process), and his architectural knowledge and linguistic eloquence were such that Cosimo specifically requested that he write
Beloved and highly esteemed within the Florentine court, Belluzzi was the learned yet decidedly practical professional that his treatise so doggedly promoted. The profession of military architect championed by Belluzzi did not take hold overnight. While the advancing pace of military technology undoubtedly demanded greater specialization, in terms of practice alone, sixteenth-century Italian military architects did not categorically distinguish themselves from their civil-oriented peers. Most telling in this regard is the fact that in the sixteenth century, military architects continued to work in the civil realm and vice versa. The impassioned rhetoric of the military designers was in large part the propaganda of self-promotion. Military architects of Belluzzi’s rank enjoyed generous salaries and the rewards of courtly affiliation—benefits that alone were sufficient to justify their desire to institutionalize their occupation and strictly limit the entry of others. Within the volatile political climate of sixteenth-century Italy, which brought with it uncertainties of patronage and an increasingly fluid workforce, the claims of profession were a practical means of legitimation. But in order for the profession dell’architettura militare to truly take root, new educational programs were needed—military academies—in which customized curricula based in practical warfare, architectural drawing, artillery, geometry, and philosophy would provide the requisite training for the new fortification architect. The academy founded by Galileo in Padua, which accepted students from 1592 to 1609, was the first of its kind to offer a comprehensive educational program on fortifications. Almost a half century earlier, however, academies of civil architects and artists were already operating in Florence, Perugia, and Rome.

The Rise of the Academy

Academies, as conceived and developed in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, were directly associated with profession. The first academies emerged around 1440, in Florence under the auspices of Cosimo de’ Medici and in Rome under Cardinal Bessarion. By 1500, Naples, Padua, Mantua, Lecce, Siena, and Urbino all supported semi-institutionalized academies. Early modern academies differed from universities primarily in that the latter were founded by public authorities, whereas the former were private entities, admission to which was carefully controlled. Educational activities thus differed substantially from one academy to the next, but as in the studio, the Ciceronian debate (disputatio) was the common epistemological model. Characterized by the continual testing of ideas through discussion, the disputatio allowed academicians to explore broad inquiries into the structure and character of knowledge as well as more specific topics in history, poetry, music, and the arts. Benedetto Varchi’s 1542 Due lezioni, on the nobility of the arts, is perhaps the best-known example of academicians’ theoretical engagement with the arts. This debate, and the dialogue it sparked, laid the groundwork for the formation of the Florentine Accademia del Disegno two decades later and the subsequent development of analogous artistic academies in Perugia and Rome. These artistic academies represented the first institutional attempts to professionalize the arts.

Giorgio Vasari’s Vite, the second version of which was composed in the same years that the Accademia del Disegno was conceived and founded, was the most extensive literary publication of the sixteenth century to promote the professional artist. Within the Vite, Vasari speaks of the professions of painting, sculpture, and architecture, employing the term explicitly as a means to affirm the practitioner’s excellence. We learn, for example, that Francesco di Giorgio had “very good judgment in architecture and proved that he had a very good knowledge of that profession,” and that no one equaled Baldassare Peruzzi in the “profession of architecture.” Vasari’s use of the term also implicitly values the artist’s assessed character—his skill, morality, and decorum—the defining characteristics of a true professional. The critical and narrative history put forth in the Vite, moreover, was integral to the development of the Accademia del Disegno, which was inaugurated in 1563 as an academy and university (academia et studio). As the first academy of art—a state-controlled, scientifically oriented institution that hosted lectures, offered students an extensive library of books, drawings, and models, and sponsored publications, competitions, and conferences as a means to spark innovation and elevate artistic standards—the Accademia del Disegno marked a crucial step in the institutionalization of artistic professionalism. The regulating function of the academy was particularly important in terms of architecture, a discipline that, as Vasari asserted in the first edition of the Vite, was often practiced by “cunning impostors,” ill trained in perspective and even the principles of craftsmanship. Like so many before him, Vasari saw the need to define the then unmonitored practice of architecture: “The truth, indeed, is that architecture can never be practiced to perfection save by those who have an excellent judgment and a good mastery of design, or have labored much in painting, sculpture, or works in wood.”

The proper architect according to Vasari was thus a master of disegno—the father of the arts—which, “proceeding from the intellect, derives from many things a universal judgment, like a form or idea of all things in nature.” This conception of disegno provided the foundation for the admittance of the fine arts into the liberal arts and justified the establishment of an academy for artistic education. In the Vite, Vasari also associates proficiency in disegno with judgment, prudence, and discretion, and his repeated elision of these concepts implicitly affirms that in mastery of disegno lies artistic
Figure 5 Giovan Battista Belluzzi, *Trattato delle fortificazioni di terra*, ca. 1550, illustration of bussola (surveying compass) (manuscript copy, Biblioteca Antica Z.II.24, folio 5v, Archivio di Stato Torino; by permission of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo; any reproduction is prohibited).
professionalism. The Accademia del Disegno was to be the institution for the artist’s cultivation, a complement to workshop practice, whereby through *disputatio* and demonstrations the standards for a unified community of professional artists would be set.

In theory, the Accademia del Disegno was to foster all arts rooted in *disegno*—painting, sculpture, and architecture. In its actual operation, however, architecture was given an inferior status. Within the Accademia’s statutes, the admission of architects was limited to those who were qualified as painters or sculptors. This stipulation was born out of the lingering distaste for any activity that appeared to be manual or mechanical in nature, as well as the still pervasive conception of architecture as a utilitarian art, dependent in its form on the “service and adornment” of painting and sculpture. Thus within the Accademia del Disegno, the architect was a practitioner of the *artes liberales* only in his abilities as an artist—a designer of building ornaments and profiles—and not in his abilities as a technician.

This policy was reflected in the Accademia’s membership. In its first year of its existence, there were no architect members, and by 1595, the institute had welcomed just one architect who did not affiliate with another discipline. Vasari supported the academy’s homogenizing policies, promoting the model of the artist-architect in the second edition of the *Vite*. Of the nearly three hundred artists included in the compendium, only eleven are said to be purely architects (and just one is an architect-engineer). Little is said about the architect’s distinction in the book’s introductions, and Vasari includes just a handful of references to built works in his lengthy discussion of the achievements of the academy members. Vasari’s bias, and that of the Accademia del Disegno, was significant not only in that it excluded masons, carpenters, and other nonartist architects from Florence’s prestigious art institute. The Vasarian concept of the architect also redefined on an official level what was meant by the term *professione di architetto*. The exclusion of fortification designers and machinists from the Accademia only reinforced the desire among these individuals to establish their own specialized academies.

In the same years that the Accademia del Disegno instituted a revised meaning of the *professione di architetto* in Florence, so did the Università degli Architetti e Agrimensori in Milan (1563). Although more a specialized guild than an educational institution, the Milanese “university of architects and surveyors” was unprecedented as a state-established institution dedicated to the protection of the building professions. Founded in response to the influx of foreign artisans in Lombardy—“the multiplication of inept people who exercise the profession”—the Università sought to impede the rise of outsiders who were said to compromise building projects in their ignorance of design principles and building practices. In addition to levying professional fees, the Università implemented an extensive set of exams as a means to ensure the intellectual and practical competence of architects, who, in keeping with Lombard tradition, were still closely associated with “engineers.” Aspiring architects were tested in geometry, arithmetic, leveling, Milanese regulations regarding the diversion of water, easements, and rules of civilian and military architecture. The Università degli Architetti e Agrimensori did not offer classes to assist students in their preparation—for mathematical instruction, for example, students could attend lectures at the University of Pavia or take classes in the Scuole Palatine of Milan—but within the closely affiliated Opera del Duomo a strong tradition of architectural theory did develop. The tract of Pellegrino Tibaldi is particularly notable. Not only was Tibaldi a member of the Università, but also his prescriptive theory on architecture was written as a *disorso*. Relying heavily on the texts of Vitruvius and Alberti, Tibaldi’s *L’Architettura* gives significant attention to the role of the architect and his education, technical competence, and professional practice. In short, Tibaldi’s theory might be regarded as having provided an educational curriculum for the Università degli Architetti e Agrimensori, laying out the criteria necessary to gain admittance to Milan’s architectural profession.

While the Università degli Architetti e Agrimensori sought to monitor professional practice through legislation, the Accademia di San Luca in Rome sought to do so through education. Modeled on a literary academy, the Accademia di San Luca was conceived to train and support “studious young boys, who wished to study the most noble professions of Design: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.” Its first principal, the distinguished painter and architect Federico Zuccaro, substantially shaped the academy’s curriculum. A former member of the Florentine Accademia del Disegno, Zuccaro issued a critical assessment of the institute in a letter written in 1578, calling attention to its weak instructional curriculum, which he believed should be enhanced with figure-drawing classes, lessons in handling tools, artistic critiques, and regular lectures in mathematics. Within the letter, Zuccaro also specifically addressed the base status of the architect within the Accademia: “And as architecture is united with these [arts], the most expert Architects should, above all, at times be present and discuss, as one must use this extraordinarily useful and necessary knowledge, and its modes should be preserved.”

When Zuccaro founded the Accademia di San Luca in Rome more than a decade later, his dedication to architectural education remained a principal concern. The early history of this institution is well documented in its surviving statutes, as well as in Romano Alberti’s *Origine et progresso dell’Accademia del disegno de’ pittri, scultori et architetti di Roma* (1604). As a studio for artists, the Accademia di San Luca
was to bring together students and experienced practitioners for lectures, demonstrations, and debates on subjects ranging from the human figure and its movements to history, decorum and beauty, the rules of architecture, proportion, invention, color, and perspective. Biweekly lessons on the theory of art were also held, which in regard to architecture primarily consisted of discussions about Vitruvius. It was Zuccaro’s belief that the rigorous curriculum would benefit both the young and the experienced; aspiring artists would gain from necessary instruction, and the more advanced academicians as well as the amateurs would be furnished with dialogue that “would sharpen the wit, and make it more prudent and livelier.”

The Accademia meeting of 11 February 1594, recorded in the Origine, is of particular interest in regard to the institution’s approach to architecture. Discussing the role of the architect, Zuccaro, along with the architects Francesco Volterra, Onorio Longhi, and Flaminio Ponzio, examined the Vitruvian definition of architecture. While some within the group challenged the practical applicability of Vitruvius’s model of the polymath architect, Zuccaro adamantly upheld the ancient author’s theory. The practice of architecture, Zuccaro argued, had become so competitive and “so commonly professed” that only the true expert, proficient in letters and drawing, theory, and mechanics, could fully comprehend and practice all the requisite fields of knowledge needed for building design. To support his argument further, Zuccaro returned to the etymology of architecture. “Architecture is a name derived from Greek, which relates to the work of the capomastro and may be understood according to the particular professions and the practices it subordinates, such as those of masons, carpenters, stonecutters, and the like, which it absolutely commands.” Implicitly invoking Vitruvian authority, and echoing the sentiments of the quattrocento theorists, he continued:

Architecture, in our language, denotes Archi et tette, which is the substance of building, and as such this refers to the particular work of building, and its machines, but in terms that connote greater dignity and greater intellect, as also the ability to organize and instruct. . . . We say, therefore, [that] Architecture is the science of building and its pertinent rules, and the orders of distribution in its theory and practice. . . . We say it is a machine, of many types and composed of diverse materials, which makes use of the artifice of various disciplines and different practices.

The Failure of Profession

Within the greater scope of early modern architecture Federico Zuccaro’s affirmation of Vitruvius may seem unremarkable: from Lorenzo Ghiberti to Pietro Cataneo, numerous architects had championed the ancient author. But by the late cinquecento, the Albertian-Vasarian ideal of the architect-as-designer reigned supreme. According to the professional social norms of the time, the architect proper adhered to the educational model of the Accademia del Disegno, while more technically oriented practitioners were increasingly drawn to the specialized profession di architettura militare. Zuccaro’s vision for the architect was at once radical and retrograde; few of his contemporaries followed his model. It is thus perhaps not surprising that the academy that was to support this model of the architect was largely unsuccessful. Artists and architects disliked the intensive lecture schedule of the Accademia di San Luca and were reticent to speak in front of others. In addition, there was insufficient accord on the curricular ideals advanced by the academy, implementation of the academy’s statutes was too difficult, and the relationship between classroom education and on-site practice was poorly delineated. The architectural profession envisioned by Zuccaro, moreover, was fundamentally weakened by factors far beyond his control: the political divisions of Italy and the corresponding pull of local cultures, local traditions, and local guilds. No city-state wanted to surrender its building heritage, no patron wanted to defer to state-imposed regulations, and no architect wanted to submit to a standardized course of training.

In the modern sense of the concept, therefore, there was no profession of architecture by the onset of the seventeenth century in Italy. There were no degree-granting institutions, no licenses for practice, and—the Università degli Architetti e Agrimensori aside—no accreditation boards to impose occupational regulations. Yet, as I have shown, a classical concept of professione undoubtedly did exist. Among the likes of Leon Battista Alberti and Francesco di Giorgio in the fifteenth century and Pirro Ligorio and Giovan Battista Belluzzi in the sixteenth, there was a clear understanding of what it meant to profess oneself a member of a learned occupation in which theoretical knowledge was combined with practical expertise and public service. These architects also conceived their work in terms of civic integrity, which affirmed the inherent value of their own practice and placed it within a social hierarchy far above that of the average worker.

In crafting didactic treatises about their work, the architect-authors of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy were decidedly modern. Their objections against pretenders and “so-called architects,” and their systematic efforts to introduce theory to the art of building, foreshadowed a long history of architectural literature that continues to this day. The central themes of inquiry explored in the Renaissance texts regarding the role and practice of the architect have become canonical. The intellectual character of the architect, the nature and extent of his involvement on the work site, his
technical know-how, and his education are topics of long-standing debate. One can thus rightfully say that Italian Renaissance architects initiated an internal dialogue within architecture that, by spurring the discipline’s codification and progressive evolution, came to be a defining characteristic of the modern architectural profession.

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Notes


3. The generally positive connotations of the architectura carried into the Roman world, where the Latin term architexta first appeared around 200 BC. Pliny immortalizes many ancient artists and their works, discussing sculpture in book 34 of The Natural History, painters in book 35, and architecture and monuments in book 36. See Pliny, Natural History, vols. 9–10 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995). In book 1.42 of De officiis, Cicero comments on architecture: “But the professions [profissionem atque architexta] in which either a higher degree of intelligence is required or from which no small benefit to society is derived—medicine and architecture, for example, and teaching—these are proper for those whose social position they become.” See Cicero, De officiis, trans. and ed. Walter Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913), 47–48.


5. Vitruvius asserts that “an architect should understand letters so that he may strengthen his own memory by reading what has been written in the field.” Vitruvius, Ten Books on Architecture, 22. On Vitruvius’s reliance on commentaries and his encyclopedic ambitions, see Indra Kagi McEwen, Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 17–31.

6. For a discussion of the etymological roots of the word profession, see Maria Malatesta, “Introduction: The Italian Professions from a Comparative Perspective,” in Society and Professions in Italy, 1860–1914, trans. Adrian Belton, ed. Maria Malatesta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5–7. One of the first references to a profession, which attributes ethical content to skill or workmanship, is found in the medical treatise On Remedies by Scribonianus Largus (early first century AD). On this and other early appearances of the term, see Ingrid D. Rowland and Thomas Noble Howe,
commentary on book 1, in Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, 142. As derived from Aristotle's definition of scientific knowledge, in its original meaning the Latin *ars* referred to a branch of learning, connected to *scientia*. The meanings of these two terms evolved in the late medieval period, when *ars* came to be associated with *artificium* (craftsmanship or manual ability) and *scientia* came to connote theoretically based knowledge.


14. On the degree to which *De architettura* was read in Vitruvius’s lifetime and the late Roman period, see ibid., 1–2, 6; Robert Osterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 39–40.


17. This document is quoted by Fabio B. Petrucci, *Le fonti di Siena e i loroagogue*, vol. 1 (Siena: Edizioni U. Periccioli, 1974), 91. A document of 1339 that refers to the appointment of Landi di Pietro as head of cathedral works similarly characterizes the building designer, referring to him as “a most outstanding man . . . of great intelligence and invention.” See Gaetano Milanesi, ed., *Documenti per la storia dell’arte senese*, vol. 1 (Siena: Onorato Porri, 1854), 228.

18. Helen Rosenu asserts that “the standing of the architect in the Gothic period was high,” but she does not cite a single example of the use of the term *architect* in the records. Helen Rosenau, *Design and Medieval Architecture* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1934), 28.


21. Antonio Manetti’s *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi* (ca. 1480), the first comprehensive biography of an artist written in the Italian Renaissance, further solidified Brunelleschi’s fame.


26. This document, of 13 April 1490, appears in *Annali della fabbrica del Duomo di Milano*, vol. 3 (Milan: Libreria Editrice G. Brigna, 1880), 55. In the documents that follow, Amadeo and Dulecbuno are referred to both as architects and to degrees to which.

27. Historians have largely disregarded the distinction between the engineer and the architect, peremptually using both terms according to their modern connotations. While numerous publications have been devoted to the topic of “engineers” in the Renaissance—for example, Bertrand Gille, *Engineers of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966); Paolo Galluzzi, *Renaissance Engineers: From Brunelleschi to Leonardo da Vinci* (Florence: Giunti, 1996)—as far as I am aware, no comprehensive study has yet addressed the origins of the concept “engineer” in the early modern period.

28. For original text and translation, see Mariano Taccola, *De ingeniis*, vol. 1, ed. Gustina Scaglia, Frank Prager, and Ulrich Montag (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert Verlag, 1984), 134. Taccola, paraphrasing Brunelleschi, refers to those individuals who might otherwise be called engineers as “masters in the mechanical arts” (*meccanistrum in arte mechanismia*). Ibid., 135.

29. In the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612), *ingegnere* is defined as someone with talent in machines and invention, synonymous with the Latin *macinatore* and *architectus*. See Giovanni Nencioni, ed., *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1987), 444.

30. See Ettore Romagnoli, *Biografia cronologica de’ bellartisti senesi*, 1200–1800, vol. 4 (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1976), 593. Federighi’s role as *ingegnere del comune* is discussed in Mirella Cirfi Walton, *L’architettura di Antonio Federighi* (Siena: Betti Editrice, 2009), 129–36. Notably, Francesco di Giorgio is also often referred to as “engineer” in Siennese documents, but that description is used even in records entirely unrelated to his work. It is thus not clear if he was called “engineer” because of the work in which he was then involved or if this term had come to take on more social weight. For a reasonably complete catalogue of documents pertaining to Francesco’s life, see Allen Stuart Weller, *Francesco di Giorgio: 1439–1501* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

31. Scholarly skepticism of Alberti’s credibility begins with Vasari, who comments that many architects “have done better work than Alberti in practice, [but] such has been the influence of his writings on the pens and speech of scholarly men that he is commonly believed to be superior to those who were, in fact, superior to him.” See Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi (Florence: Sansoni, 1966), 3:284.


33. Ibid., 315.

34. Ibid., 3.

35. This translation is based on that provided by Rywerk, Leach, and Tavernor in ibid., but I have revised it to take into account the original Latin terminology. The passage reads: “Sed quo in his rebus curandis parandis exequendis esse recte atque ex officio genere architectus possit, nonnulla sunt

36. Alberti summarizes this sentiment: “In scholarship . . . the rewards that come naturally are elegance of thought and moral refinement, which prudent men generally consider the purpose of their study, so that it is more becoming to bear poverty with fortitude for the sake of knowledge than to gain wealth without honor.” Leon Battista Alberti, The Use and Abuse of Books, trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1999), 32.


38. Alberti argues that one cannot fully dedicate oneself to both knowledge and money, as these two passions are entirely opposite. However, he does concede that it is possible for an individual to “become justly rich for his learning.” See Alberti, The Use and Abuse of Books, 27, 30–31.


40. See Alberti, On Painting and On Sculpture, 63.


43. On the architect-as-author, see Trachtenberg, Building-in-Time, 88.

44. See also Donata Levi, Il discorso sull’arte: Dalla tarda antichità a Ghiberti (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2010), 277–82.

45. Staley discusses the decline of the guilds in relation to the decline of public spirit and the rise of the individual. Staley, The Guilds of Florence, 583.

46. On the regulations imposed by early modern guilds, see Elliott Krause, Death of the Guilds (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 5; Giorgio Borelli, “A Reading of the Relationship Between Cities, Manufacturing Crafts and Guilds in Early Modern Italy,” in Guilds, Markets and Work Regu-

47. For general overviews of guilds in the early modern period, see Krause, Death of the Guilds, 2–9; Sheilagh Ogilvie, “The Economics of Guilds,” Journal of Economic Perspectives 28, no. 4 (Fall 2014), 169–92.


49. In general terms, the medieval Latin use of universitas referred to a corpo-


51. On the function of guilds as political units and the medieval social divi-

52. Ibid., 231.


55. For discussion of the “professionalism” of the humanist in early modern Italy, see Douglas Biow, On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy: Men, Their Professions, and Their Beards (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 62, 93–94.

56. See Douglas Biow, Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Profes-


58. As Grendler notes, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century bulls issued in establishing universities invariably presented these institutions in terms of their benefit to the community as a whole. Grendler, “The Universities of the Renaissance,” 2. On university attendance as a means of upward mobility, see Oppel, “Alberti on the Social Position,” 130.

59. See Cataneo, L’architettura, 207.


61. Young artists often disregarded guild regulations and deliberately moved between workshops to gain experience. See Anabel Thomas, The Painter’s Practice in Renaissance Tuscany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67. The very fact that artists joined, or attempted to join, academies proves that there was strong interest in doing so. See François Quiviger, “The Presence of Artists in Literary Academies,” in Italian Academies of the Sixteenth Century, ed. David Chambers and François Quiviger (London: Warburg Institute, 1995); also see Giovannoni and d’Achardia, “Architectural Education in Italy.”


63. On the general decline of traditional guilds in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Staley, The Guilds of Florence, 583. See also Paul Anderson,

64. On the exponential growth in the number of universities in the early modern period, see Grendler, “The Universities of the Renaissance,” 2–4.

65. In his I commentarii (ca. 1455) Ghiberti develops the idea of the knowledgable, publicly avowed artist who professes himself as such (si professa). Lorenzo Ghiberti, I commentarii, ed. Lorenzo Bartoli (Florence: Giunti, 1998), 47–49.

66. This definition of profession draws on that provided by Freidson, Professionalism Reborn, 200–201.

67. There exist today at least ten complete or partial versions of the Libro architettonico in Italian and five Latin manuscripts of the treatise. See Antonio Averlino dit Filarete, Trattato di architettura, ed. Anna M. Finoli and Liliana Grassi (Milan: Edizioni il Polifilo, 1972), cvii-cxv; Filarete, Filarete’s Treatise on Architecture, vol. 1, ed. John R. Spencer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965), xviii–xix. The Codex Misc. L.V.9 (Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena), attributed to Pietro Cataneo, proves the distribution of the Libro among practitioners, as this is in fact a reevaluation of Filarete’s treatise.


69. For discussion of Cellini’s self-definition as a professional, see Douglas Biow, In Your Face: Professional Improproprieties and the Art of Being Cindy Sherman in Sixteenth-Century Italy (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 148–50.

70. For an overview of Filarete’s tenure in Milan, see Welch, Art and Authority in Renaissance Milan, 145–66.


73. Filarete’s discussion of the requirements of the architect follows closely on that of Vitruvius. See Filarete, Filarete’s Treatise on Architecture, 198–200.

74. Ibid., 18–19.

75. Ibid., 199–200.

76. Ibid., 201.


78. Biow discusses the self-referential quality of Benvenuto Cellini’s autobiography in similar terms. Biow, In Your Face, 148.


80. “Sempre e massimamente oggidi li ignoranti, facendosi onorati delle fatighe aliene, e si gloriano con parole di sapere e potere molte cose, le quali se la verità si cercasse si trouvera invenzione d’altri; e questo vizio nel tempi nostri abbona in quelli che architetti si chiamano precipuamente, li quali sono quasi tutti omni ignoranti et inesperiti, che per le opere loro facilmente si può comprendere.” Martini, Trattati di architettura, 492–93.

81. “Peroché avendo io acquistata la notizia di quelle con grande mia spesa di esperienza e grave incomodo, lascando da parte le cose al mio vitto necessaria . . . né trovo che consideri che le esperienze non si possino acquistare vere senza lungo tempo e dispendio et impedimento dell’altra cure utili.” Ibid., 492.

82. See Biow’s discussion of Cellini in In Your Face, 149.

83. For general discussion on the rise of the concept of profession in the sixteenth century, see Biow, Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries, 5–13. See also George W. McClure, The Culture of Profession in Late Renaissance Italy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

84. See Tomaso Garzoni, La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo (Venice: Miloco, 1665), 556. For information on the original 1585 edition, see Tomaso Garzoni, La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo, 2 vols., ed. Giovanni Battista Bronzini (Florence: Olschki, 1996).

85. See note 4 above.


88. See Pirro Ligorio, Trattato di alcune cose appartenente alla nobiltà dell’artici (Venice: Miloco, 1665), 556. For information on the original 1585 edition, see Pirro Garzoni, La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo, 2 vols., ed. Giovanni Battista Bronzini (Florence: Olschki, 1996).

89. Ligorio bases his argument for the general superiority of the professional on the Platonic theory of inequality and the idea that men are diverse, and with such diversity comes variation in intellect, judgment, and virtue. See ibid., 1417–18.


91. “Egli è pur detto da archi e tector, dal signoreggierle le arti, commandartet- tura, dunque, uscendo del metodo del buono architetto, non sanno fondare uno edificio, non sapendo disegnare o ‘samarinche le proporzioni e conosciere la natura d’i membri, dove nascono e dove si devono locare.” Ibid., 1445.

92. “Con certe ingratitudine per farcare gli honori le forze et meriti degli huomini virtuosi, che crepano il cuore per fare acquisto di cosa honorevole non risparmiando nella vita nella faccultà si sforzarono procurarsi quel che huomo possa e lassando da parte le cose al mio vitto necessaria . . .” Ibid., 1445.


97. See Galeazzo Alesso, Compendio della fortificazione della città (ca. 1570); Buonaiuto Lorini, Le fortificazioni (1597 and 1609); Francesco de’ Marchi, Architettura militare di Francesco Marchi (1577); and Giovio Battista Belluzzi, Della fortificazione or Libro de fortificazioni (ca. 1550), printed posthumously as Nuova inventione de fabricar fortezze de varie forme (1598). Belluzzi refers to the designer of fortifications as an engineer but relates his work to architecture. “Agli ingegneri che vorranno ordinare et terminare la fortificazione, haveranno bisogno di esser instrutti delle cose della guerra, et delle mathematiche, massimamente di quella parte che serva alla architettura.” Giovio Battista Belluzzi, Nuova inventione de fabricar fortezze de varie forme (Venice: Roberto Meletti, 1598), 2.

98. Lorini speaks of the architetto militare. The professione militare was also discussed by Giovanni Battista Zanchi, Jacopo Fusto Castriotto, and Bertrano Puccini, among others.

99. “Li Architetti et li Dottori si in molti lochi hò ditto questo non esser suo offritio proprio non havendo gia mai veduto in tanti esserciti che mi son trovato l’Architettura ‘a combater ne meno tirar un pezzo d’artiglieria ne far un forte da campo una contraminia una traversa. . . . Però sarà bene che li architetti vadino a far palazzi, chiese, sepoltre, cornise, architrave, base, colonne, foggianz, scudi, termini, maschere et trofici, perché a fortezze conven- gano bone spalle, boni parapetti, bone sortie e bone homeni non ricercando li canoni misura né intaglio.

100. “E ché ciò si il vero vi dico che di tutte le fortezze che si trovano in Italia fatte per Architetti senza consiglio de soldati patir grande oppositioni come di Firenza fatta d’Antonio Sangallo di Passenza ordinata da Zanstefero Negro et molte altre in Italia et fuor d’Italia quale patiscono mancamenti, et manca- menti d’importanza, et pero devra il prencipe che vuol far una fortezze pigliar il consiglio de soldati et da quelli a’ i quali gli darà da custodire quando fosse il bisogno et a non a dottori perché ne misure li libri non combattono.” Ibid., 31. Belluzzi’s conception of the architect-as-scholar, concerned primarily with the building’s formal and aesthetic features, is strikingly similar to Alberti’s prescription, which was significantly more accessible following the 1530 publication of Cosimo Bartoli’s Italian edition of Alberti’s works.


102. “Si che chi vorrà essere buono Ingegnere Militare e perfetto soldato non gli sarà bisogno (dopo la fatica fatto intorno a questo studio) andarsi a dottorare a Padova, né a Bologna, ma dove si fa la guerra e si difendano li Architetti et li Dottori si in molti lochi hò ditto questo non esser suo offritio proprio non havendo gia mai veduto in tanti esserciti che mi son trovato l’Architettura ‘a combater ne meno tirar un pezzo d’artiglieria ne far un forte da campo una contraminia una traversa. . . .” Buonaiuto Lorini, Le fortificazioni (1597 and 1609), nobile fiorentino – . . . (Venice: Presso Francesco Rampazetto, 1609), 111. This is then confirmed: “E però giudico: coloro che vogliono fare professione di sapere Fortificare bisogna che habbino con l’esperienza visto assai, si nel fabbricar come nel eseguirle le Fortezze.” Ibid., 112.

103. For a discussion of Belluzzi’s distinguished ancestry, see Daniela Lam- berini, Il Sanmarino: Giovanni Battista Belluzzi, architetto militare e trattatista del Cinquecento, vol. 1 (Florence: Olchilli, 2007), 3–12. Lorini’s nobility— proclaimed in the title of his treatise, Le fortificazioni di Buonaiuto Lorini, nobile fiorentino—was also hereditary.

104. On Belluzzi’s early life, see Lamberini, Il Sanmarino, 19–40. On Cosimo de’ Medici’s sponsorship of Belluzzi, see ibid., 46.

105. On Belluzzi’s buona topografica, ibid., 133–46. Within the treatise, Belluzzi displays his classical learning, citing the ancient writings of Julius Caesar, Flavius Renatus Vegetius, Vitruvius, and Polybius. See ibid., 288–90.


112. There are clear correlations between Varchi’s theory of disegno and that promulgated by Vasari, which served as the conceptual foundation for the latter’s establishment of the Accademia del Disegno. For an overview of sixteenth-century artist academies, see Nikolaus Pevsner, “From Leonardo da Vinci to the Accademia di San Luca,” in Academies of Art: Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 25–66.

113. On Vasari’s promotion of profession more generally, see Biow, In Your Face, 189–90; David Cast, The Delight of Art: Giorgio Vasari and the Traditions of Humanist Discourse (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 115.

114. It is perhaps no coincidence that Vasari omitted the term professione when describing those artists for whom he had little esteem—among others, Al- berti, Ercole Roberti, and Cosimo Rosselli. For his comment on Francesco, see Vasari, Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, 3:383: “Nell’architettura ebbe gran- disso giudizio e mostrò di molto bene intender quella professione.” Discussing Peruzzi’s model for Saint Peter’s, Vasari writes: “E di vero questo artefice fu tanto diligente e di sì raro e bel giudizio, che le cose sue furono sempre in modo ordinate che non ha mai avuto pari nelle cose d’architettura, per avere egli, oltre l’altre cose, quella professione.” Ibid., 4:322.


117. Vasari, Lives of the Painters, 2:54–55. “Sommone piacere mi piglio alcuna volta nel vedere i principii dell’arte di nostri per veder salire molte talora di basso in alto, e specialmente nell’architettura; la scienza della quale non e stata esercitata da parecchi anni adietro se non da intagliatori o da persone soffis- tiche, che facevano professione, senza saperne pure i termini et i primi princi- pii, d’intender la prospettiva. E pur e vero che non si puo esercitare architettura perfettamente se non da coloro che hanno ottimo giudizio e ben disegno, o che in pitture, sculture o cose di legname abbiano grandemente operato; con ciò sia che in essa si misurano i corpi delle figure loro, che sono le colonne, le cornici, i basamenti, e tutti l’ordin’ di quella, i quali a ornamento delle figure son fatti e non per altra cagione. E per questo li legnaioli, di continuo maneggianti, diventano in ispazio di tempo architetti.” Vasari, Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, 4:609 (1550).
118. “Perché il disegno, padre delle tre arti nostre architettura, scultura e pit-
tura, procedendo dall’intelletto cava di molte cose un giudizio universale sim-
ile a una forma overo diea di tutte le cose della natura.” Vasari, Le vite de’ più 
excellenti pittori, 1:110 (1550).


120. On Vasari’s theoretical development of disegno and the related concepts 
of giudizio, diligenza, and prudenza, see Robert Williams, Art, Theory, and 
Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne (Cambridge: 

121. Vasari, Lives of the Painters, 2:24. In the preface to the 1550 edition of 
the Vite, Vasari highlights architecture “as the most universal and the most neces-

studiosi, che nelle nobilissime professioni del Disegno, vogliono studiare 
Pittura, Scultura & Architettura.” Zuccaro saw that young artists in Rome of-
ten lacked proper instruction and accommodation and were accustomed to 
working long hours in workshops, grinding pigments and preparing canvases 
without receiving proper training in return.

132. Barzanti, The Florentine Academy, 67–68. For the full transcription of 
the letter, see Alberti and Zuccaro, Origine, 243–46.

133. “Et con queste esendo unita l’architectura, i più periti Architetti sopra di 
Lei, alle volte ragionassero, et mostrassero, come di deve usare questa scienza 
tanto utile, et necessaria, et quei modi, si debbono tenere, et quei fuggire.” 
Alberti and Zuccaro, Origine, 244.

134. Composed in homage to Zuccaro and the academy he created, the 
Origine reveals the Accademia’s founding legislation and chronicles the 
speeches and arguments it hosted from 1593 to 1599. The history’s full 
title is Origine et progresso dell’Accademia del disegno de’ pittori, scultori 
et architetti di Roma: Dove si contengono molti utilissimi discorsi, & Filosofici ragu-
namenti appertinenti alle suddette professioni, & in particolare ad alcune nove 
definizioni del disegno, della pittura, scultura, & architettura. See Maria Grossi 
and Silvia Trani, “From Universitas to Academia: Notes and Reflections on 
the Origins and Early History of the Accademia di San Luca Based on 

135. Hermann Schlimme, Dagnar Holste, and Jens Niebaum, “Bauwissen 
im Italien der Frühen Neuzeit,” in Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Architektur, 
vol. 3, Vom Mittelalter bis zur Frühen Neuzeit (Berlin: Max Planck Institute, 

136. Zuccaro’s 1593 letter to the academy’s patrons, as quoted in Quiviger, 

137. This is not to say that architects had a predominant role in the academy. 
As Elisabeth Kieven and others have emphasized, during the early years of 
the Accademia di San Luca, architects played a minimal role in the overall admin-
istration. See Kieven, “‘Mootra Tuncuzione,’” 188.

138. Alberti and Zuccaro, Origine, 46.

139. A former member of Claudio Tolomei’s Vivitran academy, Zuccaro 
developed his conception of architecture based on his close reading of De 
architectura.

140. “L’architettura dunque che hoggi comunemente si profesa.” See 
Alberti and Zuccaro, Origine, 47–48.

141. “L’architettura è nome che da greco deriva, dando l’
interpretatione di 
architetto intendente, pratico e istoriografo nei 
progetti e nella professione di Carlo Fontana,” in 
Maestri d’Europa: Eventi, 
relazioni, strutture della migrazione di artisti e costruttori dai laghi lombardi, ed. 
Stefano della Torre, Tiziano Mannoni, and Valeria Pracchi (Milan: EdiNodo, 
1996), 277.

142. Giovanna Curcio, “L’architetto intendente, pratico e istoriografo nei 
progetti e nella professione di Carlo Fontana,” in 
Maestri d’Europa: Eventi, 
relazioni, strutture della migrazione di artisti e costruttori dai laghi lombardi, ed. 
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