CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ALTAR TABERNACLE IN ITALY

"Unity is the maximum..." (Nicolas of Cusa)\(^{460}\)

The mid-Quattrocento proved to be a turning point for classical Sacrament tabernacles in form and content. In addition, there was an even greater proliferation of these monuments with the unabated focus on the Eucharist in liturgy, popular piety, and theology. The decade of the 1440s had a concentration of new tabernacles and most important, a greater concern for the incorporation of eucharistic reservation into altar ensembles. With Archbishop Antoninus' expressed desire that every church in his diocese should be equipped with a special receptacle for Host reservation, a field of opportunity was opened for artists and even more classical tabernacles were created.\(^{461}\) While Antoninus' requirement was unusual in the fact that it was stated so specifically, it must be seen within the context of the widespread focus on Host reservation that had been building for some time. Grand Gothic tabernacle-altars were standard features in Northern European churches and tabernacles were being


\(^{461}\) See Orlandi, *Sant'Antonino*, 82-83.
sculpted in all regions of western Europe.\textsuperscript{462} I contend that the acceptance and dissemination of the \textit{all'antica} style throughout Italy was aided by this eucharistic iconography. As we have seen, the idea for incorporating a Host tabernacle as part of a large sculpted high altar had been developed north of the Alps. The altar-tabernacle in Italy seems to have had a delayed development, although smaller versions such as Donatello's tabernacle in St. Peter's may well have functioned as the altarpiece for the original chapel.\textsuperscript{463} By the 1440s, the devotional focus on the Eucharist was increasingly part of elaborate altars in Italy.

In concluding this study, some important examples should be examined in the context of the direction that Quattrocento Host tabernacle were to take, ultimately culminating in the absorption of eucharistic reservation into the high altars of the Counter Reformation. Some of the most important works by Tuscan artists, after the great decorative sculptural programs of the early Quattrocento, involved the sacrament of the Eucharist.


\textsuperscript{463} The mid-century chapel of the Cross in Impruneta also incorporated a combined reliquary/Host tabernacle as part of the altarpiece. See below, this chapter, for a discussion of Host reservation and iconography in Impruneta.
Archbishop Antoninus and the Cathedral of Florence

One of the most influential figures in the 1440s and 1450s in Florentine and its territorial churches, was the new Archbishop of Florence. A Dominican who had been prior of San Marco, Antoninus Pierozzi was Archbishop from 1446 until his death in 1459. St. Antoninus' ideas and power must be studied within the context of the whole social structure of Florence, not simply in his role as the highest ecclesiastical authority. If any doubt exists concerning not only the power, but also the political acumen of Antoninus in civic affairs, an examination of Antoninus' Constitutions and the commune's response to them is illuminating. Richard Trexler's study of these previously lost constitutions demonstrates a case in point. In 1451 the commune passed a law that levied a tax on any exchange of property which passed from taxable to nontaxable status. Antoninus responded to this law with a letter saying that it was against ecclesiastical liberty and that it could not possibly apply to ecclesiastical persons, churches, or pious places. He suggested to the Signoria that they make a statement to that effect, rather than annulling the whole law. The Signoria responded by

amending the law. The force of Antoninus' personality was such that although the communal government of Florence was engaged during this period in a consolidation of power, the Archbishop was able to balance some of this control; Savonarola was not the first Dominican prior of San Marco to influence the structure of the commune. With this social structure in mind, the weight of Antoninus' authority concerning the course of Florentine church iconography should be given even more emphasis.

Antoninus' attention to art in general and the reservation of the Eucharist in particular, has allowed important insight into the iconography of the Host in the mid-Quattrocento. His *Summa Theologica* discusses artistic activity in an unprecedented way, pointing out a number of theological errors committed by artists in rendering different iconographies. A lengthy portion, well-known to scholars, entitled "Ed statu mercatorum et artificiorum," is divided into four sections and concerns the ethics of an odd assortment of trades including,

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465 Trexler, "Constitutions," 430-431. However, Antoninus maintained a working relationship with the commune by giving *quid pro quo* in the area of fraudulent property exchanges between certain members of the clergy and laity.

466 Antonino Pierozzi, *Summa theologica et iuris pontificia*, Venice, 1582. See also Morcay, St. Antonin, Paris, 1914. Gilbert, "The Archbishop on the Painters of Florence, 1450," *Art Bulletin*, XLI, 1959, 75-87, contains an important discussion of the opinions of Antoninus on art. As Gilbert points out, the Trinity was specially venerated by Antoninus and it was the Trinity to which he dedicated his *Summa*. 
significantly, goldsmiths, jewelers, architects, smiths, carpenters, and painters.\textsuperscript{467}

Almost immediately after Antoninus became archbishop of Florence in 1443 he concerned himself with Host reservation in the Cathedral. Creighton Gilbert has discussed the documents concerning the changes engendered

\begin{quote}
\textit{Pictores non solum secundum quantitatem laboris, sed magis secundum industriam et majorem peritiam artis, de salario suo artificii magis vel minus rationabiliter postulant sibi solvi. Qui in hoc offendunt, quando fomant imagines provocativas ad libidinem, non ex pulcritudine sed ex dispositione earum, ut mulieres nudas et hujusmodi. Reprehensibles etiam sun cum pingunt ea, quae sunt contra fidem, cum faciunt Trinitatis imaginem unam Perrsonam cum tribus capitibus, quod monstrum est in rerum natura; vel in Annuntiatione Virginis parvolum puerum formatum, scilicet Jesum, mitti in uterum Virginis, quasi non esset de substantia Virginis ejus corpus assumptum; vel parvulum Jesum cum tabula litterarum, quum non didicerit ab homine. Sed nec etiam laudandi sunt, quum apochrypha pingunt, ut obstetrices in partu Virginis, Thomae apostolo cingulum suum a Virgine Maria in Assuntione sua propter dubiationem ejus dimissum, ac hujusmodi. In historiis etiam sanctorum seu in ecclesiis pingere curiosa, quae non valent ad devotionem excitandum, sed risum et vanitatem, ut simias et canes insequentes lepores, et hujusmodi, vel vanos ornatus vestimentorum, superfluum videtur et vanum.}

\textit{His haerent miniatores librorum sive cum calamo sive cum penello, quibus etiam competit praemium de labore suo. Offendunt et ipsi, si diebus festis hoc agunt, vel quando nimium pretium exigunt, et maxime quum non bona temperamenta in coloribus mittunt, propter quod cito delenter in libris, vel quando ut cit expleant, non diligenter facient, quando neque firmatum est pactum de tanto pretio.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{467} Ibid. The section of Antoninus' \textit{Summa} devoted to artisans includes references to the three-headed image of the Trinity, the reception by Thomas of the girdle at the Assumption, the painting of curiosities, and the improper way of representing the Incarnation in scenes of the Annunciation:
by the Archbishop’s declaration that the Host was being kept in an undignified manner in the Cathedral.\textsuperscript{468} Indeed, compared to the new dignity given to Host reservation by the classical tabernacles made for other Florentine churches, the situation must have been urgent. The Dominican archbishop took important steps to rectify the situation, so that the seat of the Bishop in Florence would conform to the current liturgical focus on the Corpus Domini. Much scholarly disagreement has been engendered by the lack of an extant Host tabernacle for the Cathedral, as well as the incomplete and contradictory documents concerning Sacrament reservation there. Formerly, the Host had been reserved in the chapel of St. Anthony Abbot, controlled by the Parte Guelfa, but the operai transferred the it to the chapel of St. Stephen in 1446, perhaps as a temporary measure.\textsuperscript{469}

A new tabernacle was commissioned to hold the Sacrament and extant documents of 1447 make reference to a

\textsuperscript{468} Gilbert,"Saint Antonin," 9-18. See also Orlandi, Sant’Antonino, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{469} For the documents see Poggi, \textit{Il Duomo di Firenze}, Italienische Forschungen herausgegeben vom Kunsthistorischen Institut in Florenz, II, Berlin, 1909, cxvi, Nos. 1089-1101. Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 236) discusses the transfer as temporary; the Sacrament was kept in the chapel of St. Anthony in the south tribune until 1446 when it was moved to the chapel of St. Stephen in the north tribune. Gilbert ("Saint Antonin," 14) also discusses this transfer as temporary, citing the words of the provision "per a tempo e non perpetuo" because the Sacrament should be located "nel piu degno luogo della chiesa," which would be in the choir and near the high altar. Gilbert comes to the logical conclusion that the idea came from Antoninus.
number of payments for its parts. Among other things, gilding applied to the tabernacle and the socle were paid for at this time. The document also refers to a payment to a sculptor for his work on a pilaster and, in July 1447, to a glazier for glass panels. Gilbert believes that the allusion in the document to a pilaster connects that project with another payment of the same period, to a carpenter for two columns (though the document is unspecific regarding the purpose of the columns). From these records, Gilbert envisions a small gilded wood structure with glass doors, standing on a socle.470 A year later, in June 1448 Luca della Robbia received a partial payment for two angels "pro tenendo in capella corporis Christi." He further believes that the angels sculpted by Luca della Robbia (Figures 191a-b) were meant for this wood tabernacle, rather than a lost marble tabernacle by Buggiano, as stated by Marquand and Pope-Hennessy.471 Gilbert believes they were intended to enhance the tabernacle, and says they transformed a "modest receptacle made of wood, into a work of refined

471 Marquand, Luca della Robbia, 94–97. Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 236) says that "The exact relation between the three elements cannot be established, since the tabernacle has disappeared." Poggi (as in note 469 above) records the documents concerning the lost tabernacle executed in marble, thought to have been sculpted by Buggiano and assistants and finished in 1447. In addition, the wooden wings of the two terracotta angels, now lost, were sculpted by Giovanni di Domenico Gaiole "legnaiuolus" (and painted by Domenico di Francesco).
classicism." Despite this hypothetical elaboration, he believes that their sober and severe conception also corresponds to Antoninus' convictions regarding simplicity and sobriety in works of art. Based on the hypothesis that the new tabernacle appears from the documents to have been of wood, Gilbert emphasizes the austerity of Antoninus' taste in church decoration. However, it seems probable that this is an overstatement of Antoninus' convictions regarding artistic matters. 473

At the time of the meeting of the operai, some were disturbed by the placement proposed for the tabernacle in the chapel of St. Stephen, "drieto all'altare in sulle colonne come s'e ordinato." This chapel of St. Stephen sheltered the relics belonging to the Cathedral, which were located more prominently (stated ambiguously as "piu eminenti") than the place provided for the tabernacle containing the Sacrament. As Gilbert points out, this was not suitable. 474 As we have seen, the Quattrocento


473 Ibid. Gilbert believes that the archbishop's acceptance of the angels proves that the archbishop's taste was compatible with the new Renaissance style. If Gilbert is correct in his belief that the new tabernacle was made of wood, it should also be noted that the statements made by Antoninus regarding the temporary nature of the reservation may have helped to determine the material of the receptacle.

474 Ibid. The tabernacle must have been set on the altar or a little higher, according to Gilbert, perhaps on a socle sitting on the table. He believes it was necessary to install the relics lower in order to avoid a hierarchic rivalry with the top or the base of the tabernacle, if that furnishing was really placed on the table as indicated, and
notions regarding Host reservation called for the relics to take a subordinate position in veneration and, eventually, in their placement in the church. It was decided, therefore, to move the relics under the altar table. The document for the transfer implies a protective grille was used, which may be the rich bronze decoration still in place.\footnote{Ibid.}

...slightly raised by means of small columns. Other details supplied by the documents have led Gilbert to a hypothesis concerning the appearance of the tabernacle and altar. One of the features of the new commission were columns, which Gilbert believes to have been placed behind the altar table, situated between the altar and the wall of the back of the chapel and perhaps served to support the tabernacle. He points out that this arrangement would be more elegant than necessary and therefore at odds with the asceticism of the archbishop. I disagree with this reasoning regarding the rigor of Antoninus' taste, but Gilbert makes a more valid point when stating that this hypothetical reconstruction would be unstable. Nor does it supply any support for the angels by Luca della Robbia commissioned for the ensemble, which were certainly meant to flank the tabernacle. Gilbert interprets the description differently. He reads "drieto all'altare" to mean "on the back part of the altar table". This would permit the angels also to rest on the table. He envisions a tabernacle situated rising up to the chest-level of the celebrant.

\footnote{Ibid.} Gilbert says that the enclosure (which he believes is the one still in place today), executed in bronze in a very elegant style, was more costly, took more time and generated more documents than the tabernacle for the Host, which is otherwise more of more value in the sacred hierarchy. Gilbert explains this by pointing out that the funds for the project of the enclosure were raised entirely from the operai and therefore it was not necessary to comply with the ideas professed by the archbishop in matters of sumptuary expenditure. However, considering the power of Antoninus in the commune, his position, and the unlikelihood of wishing to contradict the archbishop, it seems more likely that the commission was done with his approval.
The new altar for the chapel of St. Stephen was consecrated in 1447 before the angels were executed by Luca. Significantly, Host reservation in the following two decades in Florence and its territory increasingly conforms to the propriety desired by the Archbishop. One of the motivating factors in Antoninus' rapid reform of reservation in the Duomo must have been in regard to the example it set for other churches. However, it should also be noted that Antoninus must have been well aware of the fact that Florence lagged behind northern Europe, and even northern Italy, in incorporating the tabernacle into altarpieces. The new archbishop was enormously influential, well connected, educated, and strict in his observance of the eucharistic principles on which fifteenth-century theology was based. His understanding of the dignity due to the consecrated Host appears to have been profoundly influential; however, the aestheticism of his artistic judgment needs to be reevaluated. Antoninus' well publicized objections to some types of decoration in churches concerns its theological orthodoxy and, probably, its competition with the visual prominence of the reserved Host. To display the Host with distinction, with appropriate symbolism must have been the Archbishop's goal. The classicism that was predominant in Florentine liturgical furnishings by the mid-1440s must have been sanctioned by the Archbishop and, as we have seen, germane to the eucharistic core of Christian worship.
Altar and Eucharist in the Collegiata, Impruneta

The Collegiata at Impruneta represents one of the finest extant examples of the new decorative programs undertaken to emphasize the devotional focus on the Eucharist and the incorporation of Host reservation into an altar tabernacle. In addition, it demonstrates the absorption of Marian iconography into the larger context of eucharistic symbolism.

Almost immediately after becoming the Pievano of Impruneta, Antonio degli Agli was responsible for a unified decorative program that included the reservation of the Host. Under the tutelage of the new Pievano, substantial work in the church probably commenced between 1439 and 1440. Pope-Hennessy points out that Degli Agli was an important figure in Florence; he was a humanist, Latin and Greek scholar, associated with the Medici and the Papal court of Eugenius IV in Florence. In addition to his status as a participant of Cosimo de' Medici's Accademia Platonica (established in 1439), he was also the mentor of Jacopo Ammanati (future confidant of Pope Pius II).476 Although not a large parish, Impruneta was an

476 See Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 50-54 and 245-246; Marquand, Luca della Robbia, 136-152; and Cruttwell, Luca and Andrea della Robbia, 108-118. Marquand (p.137) states that Impruneta has been the center of a terracotta industry for many centuries. The parish of Santa Maria in Impruneta was founded in 1054 by the Buondelmonti family, whom Cruttwell (p.118) credited with commissioning the chapels, claiming that they were, "the founders and patrons of the church, as is proved by the presence of their stemma carved on the base of both. Caplow (Michelozzo, vol. II, p. 617) repeats
important one which attracted many pilgrims and was extremely well endowed. The parish owned not only the miracle-working Virgin, but also a fragment of the True Cross donated by Pippo Spano before 1426. The tabernacle for the miraculous Madonna, discussed in the

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Cruttwell's assertion, which Pope-Hennessy (p. 245) flatly contradicts. Both Marquand and Pope-Hennessy credit Antonio di Bellincione degli Agli, pievano from 1439 until his death in 1477, with financing the decorative program. Pope-Hennessy (p.245) states that the sum of money expended on the church by Degli Agli was said to total twelve thousand florins and that "Degli Agli was credited with responsibility for the decoration of the church at Impruneta as early as 1471 in the Theotocon of the Dominican, Fra Domenico da Corella, in two lines of verse:

Allius hanc ornare volens antonio edem
Eximia pollens religione pater.


478 This relic of the True Cross was given by Pippo Spano (Filippo degli Scolari) before his death in 1426 (see Marquand, Luca della Robbia, 145). When Antoninus became Archbishop of Florence, Degli Agli adopted the Archbishop's view that the study of classical literature should be undertaken only for, as Antoninus stated, "la maggior gloria di Dio." Degli Agli also studied the Patristic sources of what Pope-Hennessy terms "Christian mythology". He produced a treatise called Le Vite e le azioni dei Santi, separating history from myth and stated in Humanist terms. Two other treatises by Degli Agli (De immortalitate animae and De rationibus fidei), are examples of Christian humanist thinking. Antonio degli Agli remained an important and respected theologian and Humanist with close ties to the Medici through the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent. As Pope-Hennessy points out, "this was the man with whom Luca della Robbia came into regular, perhaps daily contact at Impruneta." See Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 50-51 for a more detailed discussion. For a biography of Antonio degli Agli see Salvino Salvini, Catalogo cronologico de' Canonici della chiesa Metropolitana Fiorentina, Florence, 1782, 41, note 346.
Chapter Six, was incorporated as part of the new decorative program.

The work done under the aegis of Antonio degli Agli consists of two lateral chapels, each formed of identical baldachins supported by ponderous fluted columns with composite capitals and capped by a projecting cornice (Figure 192). In addition, the two new chapels of the Collegiata in Impruneta were visually unified by means of enamelled terracotta decoration, including ceilings with a pinecone motif (Figure 193). The chapels stand in the east end of the nave of Santa Maria Impruneta and house altars crowned by classicizing tabernacles, which in turn house the cherished relics of the Collegiata.

Michelozzo has been attributed with the design of the classicizing architectural baldachins that define the

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479 In their design, with pinecones and pine needles, the ceilings refer to the original title of the church, Santa Maria in Pineta (see Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 51). It should be noted, however, that the image had an important connection to antique imagery in the Renaissance because of the colossal bronze pine cone in Rome. It was associated with the worship of Bacchus, because his wand, the thrysos, was capped by a pine cone. The pine tree is an evergreen, the attribute of Attis, symbolizing generation and resurrection. The monumental bronze sculpture (originally part of a Roman fountain) was placed in the forecourt of St. Peter’s in the early Middle Ages (before the late fifth century), as a symbol of the arbor vitae. The huge pine cone was placed under an Early Christian architectural baldachin, covered with gilt bronze tiles, supported by eight prophyry columns. The secondary sculptural motifs of the entablature were also related to rebirth and eternity. See Bober and Rubinstein (220-221, Figure 187 and 187a) for further discussion of its history, representations and bibliography.
space of the chapels. The Impruneta chapels derive mainly from the Chapel of the Annunciation in Santissima Annunziata in Florence. Luca della Robbia designed the enamelled terracotta decoration of the baldachins, the tabernacle of the Cross that includes a predella with a Host repository, as well as the full-length standing figures in both chapels. It should be noted that the chapels themselves are most often referred to as "tabernacles" in the literature on Impruneta. The term tabernacle is used in this sense to denote an architectural covering for the altar, highlighting the closely related function of canopies and Sacrament receptacles in liturgical furnishing. For the sake of clarity, this study will refer to the larger architectural structures by Michelozzo as "baldachins", and continue to

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480 Santa Maria Impruneta sustained extensive bomb damage in 1944, during World War II, but the chapels have both been accurately restored. Information concerning the damage and reconstruction is supplied by Frederick Hartt, Florentine Art under Fire, Princeton, 1949, 58-59 and Filippo Rossi, "La basilica di Santa Maria dell'Impruneta," Bollettino d'Arte, XXV, 1950, 85ff. For the condition of the decorations at the beginning of this century see Maud Cruttwell, Luca and Andrea della Robbia and their Successors, London and New York, 1902. Despite a lack of documentation it is generally acknowledged that the architecture of the chapels can be attributed to Michelozzo in design. (See Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 246, for a discussion of the extant documents).

"tabernacles." The majority of scholarship regarding the Quattrocento decoration in the collegiate church of Santa Maria Impruneta revolves around the portions done by two artists, Michelozzo and Luca della Robbia, and has been dealt with mainly in terms of the artists' aesthetic evolution.\footnote{482} However, the work commissioned for Impruneta was largely concerned with establishing an iconography surrounding these important relics and should be studied in that context. More specifically, the imagery that developed to emphasize these relics is intimately connected to the Eucharist and to its reservation.

It is my belief that Antonio degli Agli saw great symbolic potential in connecting the two famous relics of his parish by means of a new, unified decorative program. Both relics were enhanced by their commonalities: the Chapel of the Cross gained by its intimate association with the Body of Christ in the form of the reserved Host and the Chapel of the Madonna shared in and reinforced that imagery. The eucharistic connection is essential to the meaning of the chapels and elucidates the decorative program as a whole.

The Chapel of the Madonna

The frieze designed by Luca della Robbia around the

\footnote{482} See note 481 above for bibliographic references.
canopy of the chapel of the Madonna, in the nave to the left of the high altar, provides an essential component in the eucharistic symbolism at Impruneta (Figure 194). This decoration includes leafy vegetation punctuated by bunches of fruit; centered on each frieze is a relief of a bust-length Madonna holding the infant Christ. Numerous sepulchral monuments of antiquity, as we have seen, utilized fruit and garlands as symbols of life and rebirth, and Luca expanded on these formal and iconographic sources. The grapes found in the frieze are the most obvious allusion to Christian sacrifice and redemption, but two other types of fruit are also depicted. The quince commonly symbolizes the Resurrection and the citron is associated with the Virgin. The inclusion of fruit in general substantially enriches the symbolism of both the Virgin and the Host. Christ himself says "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Thus the enamelled terracotta decoration of Luca della Robbia, based in part on the rich funerary monuments of antiquity, is intimately connected with the eucharistic content of

483 See also Ghiberti's development of the garlands of antiquity in his work for the Old Testament door of the Baptistery (Krautheimer, Ghiberti, vol. 1).

484 See Pope-Hennessy, Luca della Robbia, 52.
Madonna and Child imagery. It should also be remembered that the miraculous painting of the Madonna, as a "relic" housed by the new chapel, had a frame sculpted in the same mode as contemporary Sacrament receptacles.

Further, Luca's use of these images should be seen within the larger context of the revival of classical motifs used to enhance the new liturgical focus on the eucharist, especially those containing images of the Madonna and Child. Contemporary monuments of the 1440s provide important precedents for and confirmation of the eucharistic symbolism of the decorative motifs and architecture of the chapel of the Madonna in Impruneta. Most illuminating is Fra Angelico's altarpiece for the Dominican convent of San Marco, finished by 1443 while Antoninus was still Prior (Figure 195).

In the San Marco altar, Virgin and Child are enthroned in front of a classical sanctuary covered halfway up with a cloth of honor. The cloth terminates above the halo of the Madonna, emphasizing the coffered apse of the sanctuary. The architecture in the painting displays important similarities with the Host repositories of the 1430s, although like Masaccio's *Trinity* fresco, it is capped only by a projecting cornice and is without a pediment.\(^{485}\) The entablature of this structure is

\[^{485}\text{As noted in Chapter Five of this study, Fra Angelico's work combines the classicism of antiquity with the graceful, slender figures inherited from the International Style; no antithesis was seen between the two}\]
decorated with garlands and above it are swags of fruit, hanging in mid-air to either side. Fra Angelico's painting emphasizes the altar aspects of the throne and, like Luca's imagery in Impruneta, exploited the antique resurrectional symbolism that had become an important theological statement by the 1440s.

The iconography of the altarpieces in Impruneta also elucidates the unified meaning of the decorative program. Placed on either side of the tabernacle of the Madonna, two sculpted figures executed by Luca della Robbia in enamelled terracotta, were added to the altarpiece (Figure 196). Although the words of St. Paul are included in the inscription surrounding the Host tabernacle in the chapel of the Cross, the full meaning of the sculpted figure of St. Paul, pendant to that of St. Luke, has not been previously addressed by scholars. However, an examination of the imagery on the exterior of the Madonna chapel elucidates the relevance of St. Paul to the program as a whole.

First, the glazed terracotta relief images of the Madonna and Child call attention to the frieze. Because these two images are so similar, it has been suggested that the relief on the side of the Chapel was transferred in liturgical art. See Goffen, "Masaccio's Trinity Fresco," for a discussion of the architecture as tabernacle.

The painting of the miraculous Madonna obviates the inclusion of St. Luke.
to that position from the front face of the chapel opposite. However, when viewed in the context of the resurrectional, eucharistic iconography, the inclusion of both of these reliefs is logical.

The relief centered in the frieze above the entrance to the chapel represents the Child with eyes wide open, alert to the viewer, glancing down and out to his right (Figure 197a). His Mother rests her cheek and lips on his head and glances down and out to her left. Both engage the beholder's eye in their glance. The Child in the relief on the west side of the chapel (facing the nave), on the contrary, turns his head more toward his mother; neither the Virgin nor the Child engages the viewer's eye (Figure 197b). The Mother's gaze is hooded and inward and the Child's face is in shadow. The infant Christ is related to the sleeping Child shown particularly in many Venetian images, cradled by his mother. As in many other representations of the Christ Child in the Quattrocento, this suggests the future Sacrifice. The significance of this type of image has been repeatedly acknowledged in the literature; theologians had long

487 Marquand (Luca della Robbia, 143-144) describes the Madonna on the eastern side of the frieze as a "replica or copy, made in Luca's studio, under his supervision, in large measure the work of his own hand to decorate the same, or the adjoining monument." He notes that the Madonna and Child are not nimbed, nor does the Child give any sign of blessing.

488 See Goffen, "Icon and Vision," 503, for a discussion of this type of image in half-length Madonnas.
claimed that the "same body of Christ which the blessed virgin bore, which she cherished at her bosom, girded in swaddling clothes, nurtured with maternal care, it is that, I say...which we now receive from the sacred altar, and we drink its wine in the sacrament of our redemption." Thus together the two reliefs provide a complete ideation of transubstantiation, representing the miraculous nature of the sacrificed and animate Christ borne by the Virgin.

There are numerous references, often quoted by Bernardino da Siena, in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, that are relevant to the program of this chapel. The first epistle underscores the eucharistic connotations of the Child, as well as the fruit and greenery of the frieze. The chapel program uses seemingly contradictory ideas to prove a point, echoing Paul’s verbal juxtapositions. Providing assurance of the resurrection Paul states, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

489 "Illud siquidem corpus Christi quod beatissima Virgo genuit, quod in gremio fouit, quod fasciis cinxit, quod maternna cura nutriuit, illud, inquam...nmunc de sacro altari precipimus, et eius sanguinem in sacramentum nostrae redemptionis haurimus." Peter Damian, Sermons, ed. I Lucchesi, CCCM, 57, Turnholt, 1983, p. 267, as quoted by Miri Rubin, Corpus Christi, 22.
For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead." (I Cor. 15:20-28)\(^{490}\)

Further, not only do the two relief images of the child differ in terms of glance and mood, but the images of the Madonna on the frieze vary as well: one is represented with a veil over her hair, as are most images of the Virgin, and the other is represented without a covering for her head. The inclusion of this unusual image without a veil may have a partial explanation in the Greek text of St. Paul.\(^{491}\) (It should be remembered that Antonio degli Agli was a competent Greek scholar.) There are a number of references in Paul's epistles that may be pertinent. First, the veil in connection to the Old and New covenants is discussed in 1 Cor. 11:10-16. Paul says, "... a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels". However, the word "veil" is in fact the

\(^{490}\) I Cor. 15: 20-28 continues: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, 'For God has but all things in subjection under his feet.' But when it says, 'All things are put in subjection under him,' it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him."

\(^{491}\) Goffen, "Icon and Vision," 497-498, also discusses the concept of veils and curtains in relation to royal imagery and the silk veils of San Marco that were hung behind the Eucharist, probably suspended from a Byzantine ciborium. In addition, she cites the Letter to the Hebrews in relation to the description of the tabernacle of the Old Covenant sanctuary in which a curtain separated the outer sphere from the sanctum sanctorum.
translation of the word "authority" in the Greek text. The veil can be a symbol of authority or law precisely because of this translation. Paul's text goes on to say, "For as woman was made from man so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God."^492 The text emphasizes the humanity of Christ in the Incarnation, borne of Mary.

A longer passage regarding veils from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians further explicates Luca's figure of the unveiled Madonna, showing that the new covenant is revealed through Christ:

...the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor.

But their minds were hardened; for to this day when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yet to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his

^492 The rest of the passage continues, "Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering."
likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:7-18)

There was considerable commentary on this text, moreover, its appositeness for the chapels in Impruneta is further demonstrated by Nicholas of Cusa who, in his contemporary *vision of God*, connects Paul's concept of the veil with Jesus as the Tree of Life in the paradise of delights. Cusa says no one can partake of "that desirable life save from thy fruit. ...it behoveth every man to put off the old man of presumption and to put on the new man of humility, which is after thy pattern, if he hope to taste the food of life within the paradise of delights." In conclusion he states that in Christ "the finite is united unto the infinite, and unto that which is beyond union, and the incomprensible is possessed in an eternal fruition which is bliss most joyous and inexhaustible. Be merciful unto me Jesu, be merciful, and grant me to behold thee unveiled, and my soul is healed!"

Cusa's "eternal fruition" clearly refers to the renewable miracle of Christ in the Eucharist. These references in Paul's epistles and the contemporary Quattrocento commentary to the veil, fruit, and the Tree of Life forge the link between the chapel of the Madonna

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493 Nicholas of Cusa, *Vision of God*, Chapter XXI. See also the discussion of humility in connection with eucharistic imagery.
The Chapel of the Crucifix

The chapel of the Crucifix (Figure 198), in honor of the relic donated by Pippo Spano, contains a reliquary tabernacle (Figure 199) that was created as a pendant to the older tabernacle for the miraculous Madonna. Crucial to the iconography of the whole program, the tabernacle includes a repository for the Host. The unity of the two chapels is emphasized not only by the architectural baldachins, but also by the format of the tabernacle created by Luca della Robbia. It portrays the Crucified Christ, flanked by the Virgin and John the Evangelist, surrounded by a the classicizing architectural structure closely related to Sacrament tabernacles. Like Luca’s tabernacle for Sant’Egidio, now in Peretola, the Impruneta structure has a triangular pediment crowning a niche with classical pilasters. The pilasters, however, are covered in a foliate design derived from antique funerary monuments (see Figures 218-219, 223 below) and executed in colorful enamelled terracotta. The altar and tabernacle are flanked by two saints, John the Baptist and Augustine.

Rather than a console, the predella serves as a

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494 It should also be noted in regard to the veil that the tabernacle enclosing the Madonna painting includes a furled curtain in the relief sculpture of the tabernacle. This veil "reveals" the image of the Madonna and Child.
combined reliquary-Sacrament receptacle. The sportello, representing an antique funerary portal or classical altar with a grille in the lower portion, is flanked by angels bearing scrolls that pertain to the eucharistic reservation (Figures 200a-b). The inscription on the left side of the marble relief is taken from the first epistle of St. Paul:

PROBET AVTEM SEIPSVM HOMO
ET SIC DE PANE ILLO EDAT (I Cor. 11:28) 495

The inscription on the right side of the repository is from the Gospel of St. John, read in the mass. As Marquand points out, 496 it occurs in the mass ritual under the heading of Homilia Sancti Augustini Episcopi:

HIC EST PANIS VIVVS
QVI DE CELO DESCENDIT (John 6:58)

The chapel of the Cross underscores the complex and learned unification of the decorative program of the two chapels by means of eucharistic imagery. The entablature

495 In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes a number of references to communion that much of eucharistic theology drew from. For example he says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the practice of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?" (1 Corinthians 10:16-18) and, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

496 Luca della Robbia, 150. Marquand bases the identification of the figure to the right of the tabernacle on the basis of this inscription.
of the canopy was originally surrounded not by the fruit garlands and Madonna reliefs of the other chapel, but with a frieze of putti and chalices in direct reference to its function as a repository for the Eucharist (Figure 201).\textsuperscript{497} The iconography of the tabernacle of the Cross is specifically linked to that of the chapel of the Madonna. In addition to the references to flowers, fruit, and Christ as the Tree of Life, there are other eucharistic connotations in this symbolism specifically connected to the Cross. Old Testament prophecy is full of references to trees and fruit, prefiguring the Sacrifice on the cross. Ezekial (47:12) states that the trees growing on the bank of the river, whose leaves shall not fade, and whose fruit shall not be consumed, "shall bring forth new fruit...because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." Bonaventura repeats and amplifies this idea: "O Jesus, benign vine, come! O Tree of Life, which is in the midst of Paradise, Lord Jesus Christ, whose leaves are for medicine, whose fruits

\textsuperscript{497} The frieze is no longer in place, but in storage. Although Cruttwell (Luca and Andrea della Robbia) believed this frieze to be a seventeenth-century replacement, Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 82) notes the fifteenth-century style of the terracotta decoration and believes it to be original. It seems likely that Luca would have planned a frieze in enamelled terracotta to correspond with the decoration on the chapel of the Madonna, but the frieze is so appropriate to the iconography that perhaps it simply remained incomplete and was never glazed. Technical analysis of the terracotta might solve this uncertainty.
indeed for eternal life; O blessed flower and at the same
time fruit of the blessed rod of the most chaste Virgin
Mary....

Perhaps even more explicit is Bonaventura's hymn on
the cross:

O Cross, health-giving fruit tree
Watered by the living font,
Whose aromatic flower
Is the longed-for fruit,

Nourish us with these fruits,
Enlighten our thoughts,
Lead us by the right ways,
Break the enemy's assaults,

Fill us with divine light,
breath devout breaths into us,
Be to those who fear Christ
The tranquil condition of life.

In both chapels at Impruneta, the frieze and images of the
Madonna and Child, Cross, Host, and their supporting
decoration thus can be seen as intentional parts of a
complete program concerning the Incarnation and Host.

Luca della Robbia's abundant use of fruit and flowers
is always meaningfully used in his work. It expands on
the plentiful regeneration-rebirth motifs on antique
funerary monuments that were his original source of
inspiration. By using this isolated and expanded
classical imagery he and Michelozzo, in collaboration with

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of Life and the Holy Cross," in Christianity and the Renaissance, note 35, 158.

499 Bonaventura, Decem opuscula, 138, 140 and Hatfield, ibid., 157, note 22. (Also cited in Ch. 5 of this study.)
Antonio degli Agli, were able to unify the relics of the Cross and the Madonna into a single program that elucidates their iconographic relationship to the central mystery of Christianity. It is clear from the consistent quotations and glosses on the prophets and on Paul’s epistles that the classical motifs with their garlands, blooming flowers, and general emphasis on symbols of everlasting life provided a distinctive model for Renaissance artists wishing to underscore these meanings in the context of the Corpus Christi. Moreover, the chapels at Impruneta emphasize the liturgical need to incorporate Host reservation as the central, unifying factor in Renaissance altars.

**Donatello and Altar Reservation**

During the same decade, another example illustrates both the widespread incorporation of the tabernacle into the altar during the mid-fifteenth century and the spread of the related all’antica style in church furnishing. Donatello, who had been so instrumental in the early formulation of all’antica eucharistic iconography in central Italy, worked outside of Tuscany during the 1440s. His most important commission during this period, the new High Altar for the church of Sant’Antonio in Padua, was closely associated with the explication of the central mystery of Christianity (Figures 202-204). Franciscans, as we have seen, were particularly devoted to the Body of
significantly, the form of Donatello’s free-standing altar derived in large part from the Trecento "arca," the tomb-altars of saints.\textsuperscript{503}

Moreover, the notion of an altar that incorporated a Host tabernacle was not foreign to the Veneto. Prior to Donatello’s work for the Santo a Gothic architectural format prevailed. The tabernacle-altar in the Veneto has connections to those of the regions north of the Alps, as can be seen in the polyptych by Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d’Alemagna of 1443 demonstrates (Figure 205).\textsuperscript{504} This important altarpiece for the church of San Zaccaria subordinates its painted images to the ornate Gothic architectural structure and the sculpted images on its vertical axis. Painted saints flank the large sportello, emphasizing the reservation of the Host. Using the Host rectangular doorway as a base, the Virgin, surrounded by several figures, swoons above the half-length sportello image of the man of sorrows; the door proper is

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1979, 198-222, for a discussion of the original understanding of the term "sacra conversazione." Although Donatello’s altar for the Santo does not fall within the time frame of her study, Goffen’s discussion helps elucidate the connection between the painting type and the group of saints (regardless of the impossibility of ascertaining the original placement) as a holy community. The implications of her definition deserves further study.

\textsuperscript{503} McHam, "Donatello’s High Altar," 73-86.

\textsuperscript{504} See Caspary (Kult und Aufbewahrung, 117f) who briefly discusses Donatello’s altar in its context as a Sacrament retable and mentions Paduan precedents. See also Chapters 4 & 5 of this study for German altar-tabernacle ensembles.
circumscribed by a carved foliate design. The whole retable is surmounted by the Risen Christ, who is covered by an elaborate architectural canopy. Thus the precedent for incorporating a Eucharist tabernacle in a large altarpiece was already part of the north Italian repertoire before Donatello's commission for the high altar of the Santo.

Commissioned in 1446, the sculpted altarpiece for the Santo was surmounted by an architectural canopy which, as we have seen, was traditionally an important feature in the protection of the Holy of Holies. The original appearance of the High Altar, with the well-documented canopy, is related to the ciborium altars of early Christianity. The church of Sant'Antonio in Padua, like that of the smaller church of Sant'Ambrogio in Florence, had originally kept its most important relics in the high altar. In the 1440s both of these churches refocused

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505 This design is very similar to that on the back wall of the Cavalcanti tabernacle in Santa Croce, a number of Gothic tabernacles, as well as numerous funerary monuments of antiquity.


507 McHam ("Donatello," 82-84) points out that the Santo was built to house the bones of St. Anthony. His relics excited extraordinary devotion and many miracles had been attributed to them, attracting a multitude of pilgrims. The bones were placed in a sarcophagus on raised columns that was placed before the high altar after the church of St. Anthony (incorporating the original church dedicated to Santa Maria Mater Domini). The sarcophagus was transferred
attention on this sacred area, providing it with a new, more meaningful iconographic locus - the corpus Christi.

In the Santo, Donatello's altar incorporated a repository for the Host with a sportello (Figure 206). Preserved because it was part of the High Altar, the bronze relief represents one of the few extant doors with specific Host imagery seen, at least in part, in its fifteenth-century context. The bronze image is a variation on the standing man of sorrows, like the painted panel by Giovanni Bellini (Figure 207). The door to the Host in the Santo altar represents Christ seated on a sarcophagus,

in 1310 to the Chapel of the Arca of St. Anthony in the transept. Stairs were added in order that masses could be said with the arca as an altar. This marked a break with Franciscan tradition since it had never before emphasized relics. In addition, McHam (p.84) demonstrates that the commission for a high altar on such a grand scale reasserts the Franciscan tradition de-emphasizing the relics:

Although the altar thus symbolically alluded to the importance of Anthony's relics, the high altar's monumentality and lavishness emphasized that it, rather than the Chapel of the Arca of St. Anthony, was the formal visual and devotional focus of the basilica. Clearly the earlier high altar had played second fiddle to the altar in the Chapel of the Arca of St. Anthony because the latter housed the relics of the saint; the Donatello high altar was intended to correct that. But even though the Massari replaced the humble fourteenth-century high altar with Donatello's grand conception, they did not translate the relics of the saint back to their earlier location before the high altar. Thus it is clear that they intended to keep the pilgrimage function of the Chapel of the Arca of St. Anthony separate from the high altar.

with a canopy above. A coffered portico leads into this scene of the man of sorrows, whose body is supported by a throng of small angels, and the back opens up (like Bellini’s) into a landscape. With the repository originally placed in the back of the altar, the whole program of the remarkable monumental bronze altarpiece focused on the meaning of the Eucharist.509

Donatello’s altar for the Santo also demonstrates the importance of Marian imagery to the worship of the Body of the Lord, for the Virgin is clearly seen as a tabernacle for the Christ Child (Figure 208). Contained within the a rigid form as if she were carved from a stone block, the bronze Virgin holds the infant Christ within the confines of her body. The throne on which she is seated, like Donatello’s Florentine works, is derived from antique funerary monuments. Antique funerary monuments often used the sphinx, with their lion bodies and feminine heads and breasts (Figures 209 and 210). These figures make reference to the Virgin as a receptacle for the body of Christ and, in addition, allude to the Virgin as the Throne of Wisdom, which had a long tradition, particularly with the Franciscans in Venice.510


510 See Rona Goffen, Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice, New Haven and London, 1986, 144, note 27. In regard to this image Goffen cites Isa Ragusa, "Terror Demonum and
That the Host was intended to be an important focus for the altar is also demonstrated by the complaints that were made concerning the reservation of the Eucharist. Documents indicate that dissatisfaction was expressed because the tabernacle where the Host was reserved was very difficult to see. When the High Altar was replaced in the late sixteenth century, the tabernacle was placed at the front of the altar, as was required in Counter-Reformation Host reservation.\

Donatello’s complex iconography in the High Altar for the Franciscans is an important example of the growing concern for the Eucharist as the focal point of the church. Not only do narrative scenes incorporate the eucharistic imagery of St. Anthony, with the key story of the doubting priest and the mule who kneels before the Host (Figure 211), but the central image of the Madonna and Child can also be seen in the larger context of eucharistic worship. The relationship of the altar to...
the sepulchral tradition of saints' tombs connects it even more firmly to a programmatic focus on the central mystery of Christianity. Moreover, the incorporation of the reserved Host into the high altar had important repercussions in Donatello's native Tuscany.

**Liturgy, Patronage, and Eucharistic Imagery in the Church of San Lorenzo, Florence**

The final Host tabernacle to be discussed in this study, is also one of the most remarkable sculptures of the latter half of the Quattrocento. Although Archbishop Antoninus was concerned with Host reservation in the Cathedral of Florence, it was the church of San Lorenzo that became the receptor of one of the most visually significant tabernacles for the Sacrament in the fifteenth century (Figure 212). This extraordinarily large tabernacle, completed in 1461 and executed by Desiderio da Settignano, was enormously influential to subsequent Host repositories. The sculpted receptacle has been the subject of much controversy in recent years, but should be looked at in the wider context of the eucharistic reservation and the thematic focus of Renaissance altars.

A *terminus ante quem* of 1461 has been established by means of records that show that the tabernacle for the

[of the Trinity]...his body was from her body." See Saint Bonaventure, "Sermo I, De Assumptione Beatae Virginis Mariae," in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 9, ed. David Fleming (Quaracchi, 1901), 690, as cited by Goffen (*Piety and Patronage*, 147).
"Corpo di Christo" was placed in its position in the church of San Lorenzo ("fu murato interamente") in early August of that year.\textsuperscript{513} However, no document tells us where in the church it was placed. In 1507 the tabernacle was recorded in an inventory in the left transept of San Lorenzo, on the altar of the Medici Chapel of SS. Cosmas and Damian; it was subsequently moved and dismantled and the original location and reconstruction has remained controversial.\textsuperscript{514} In addition, the date of the inception


\textsuperscript{514} Parronchi ("Sulla collocazione originario,"130-40), deals with the tabernacle's original placement and assumes that it was first in the Medici Chapel dedicated to SS. Cosmas and Damian in San Lorenzo, but that it may have been originally intended for the "Old" Sacristy, behind the altar made by Buggiano in 1432, against the curved wall. In his 1980 article, "Un tabernacolo brunelleschiano," 239-355 (esp. 249f for the location in the Medici Chapel), Parronchi modifies his theory somewhat, and believes that Desiderio was not responsible for the central section of the tabernacle. Parronchi also assumed that it must have been
of the tabernacle is unknown, and it is difficult to determine if the Pietà and angels were originally part of the same ensemble, or made independently and subsequently added (Figure 213). Beck published two documents that pertain to Desiderio from the years 1460 to 1462,

executed before 1453, specifically, before Donatello’s return from Padua. Parronchi raised some basic issues. Did the tabernacle originally rest on an altar, or was it attached to a wall? He thinks it was attached to a wall, but he also observes that the two angels that form part of the tabernacle have been shaved in the upper back where wings have been removed (at some unknown time). This indicates that they were made as three-dimensional, free-standing images. Thus, they were originally closer in type to the free-standing angels on the Marsuppini Tomb than is usually recognized. He dates the carving of the tabernacle to the early 1450s, and considers the document stating that the tabernacle was "murato" in 1461 merely a terminus ante quem. See also Beck, "Desiderio," 203ff.

515 Beck, "Desiderio," Appendix 2, discusses the tabernacle of San Lorenzo in light of Parronchi’s studies. The tabernacle has been moved a number of times, and its original purpose, location, and appearance are open to question. Beck includes a valuable review of Desiderio’s life as known in the documents. Desiderio da Settignano was actually Desiderio di Bartolomeo; his father was Meo di Ferro. Antonio Filarete mentions Desiderio four times in his Trattato, but never mentions his death, which occurred on 16 January 1464 (1463 old style). (Beck believes that his failure to note Desiderio’s demise probably establishes a terminus ante quem for Filarete’s treatise.) Desiderio was well thought of in his own lifetime and after. However, documentation on his life is sparse and neither the year of his birth nor his training is firmly fixed. Beck speculates that Desiderio was born in 1432, though two catasti for Desiderio and his brother contradict each other regarding Desiderio’s age. (See Clarence Kennedy, "Documenti inediti su Desiderio e la sua famiglia," Rivista d’arte, XII, 1958, 51-70.) The San Lorenzo tabernacle of the Sacrament is one of only two extant monuments by Desiderio that are clearly supported by documents – the other is the tomb of Carlo Marsuppini in Santa Croce.
involving the repayment of loans or debts he had incurred. Most important to understanding Desiderio’s tabernacle, Beck publishes the documents concerning the installation of the high altar and the tabernacle in their original order. Regarding the ricordi made in 1461 by an earlier sacristan on the occasion of the consecration of the main altar, Beck believes “it becomes perfectly clear that Desiderio’s Tabernacle of the Sacrament was there.” Beck goes on to give the relevant text,

\[516\] See Beck, "Desiderio," Appendix I, Documents I and II. The first document relates to two small sums of money paid by Roberto Martelli and connects Desiderio to that patron - Beck uses this as evidence of Desiderio’s tie to the Martelli family and thus adds support to the attribution of the Martelli Young St. John the Baptist in the Bargello. The second document follows the first in the same record book of the Mercanzia and is dated to the year 1461 (Appendix I, Doc.II). In that document, Desiderio was required to pay a loan he had incurred with Domenico di Francesco speziale and it was partially paid, in the sum of three florins larghi to Antonio del Possaiuolo in Desiderio’s name.

\[517\] Beck, ibid., Appendix 2, 214. Although the ricordi had been previously published, Beck says, "they have not been presented in their proper order, that is to say as they originally appear on the page; thus the context has been lost and the location of Desiderio’s Tabernacle has never been properly understood." Schulz ("Glosses on the Career of Desiderio," 185) disagrees with Beck’s assumption that the concurrent dates of the documents lead to the inevitable conclusion that the high altar and Desiderio’s tabernacle were part of the same project. However, while Schulz (p.187-186) has a point in that it is surely not an inescapable conclusion, neither is it true that the report merely suggests that the those in charge of S. Lorenzo used the masons who had just finished erecting the altar who were "on the spot and temporarily unemployed...." and has "no bearing on the tabernacle’s site." The entries (see below) are beguiling: first, they include the information that work for the installation of the high altar took all the month of July; second, that the tabernacle for the Host was installed at the beginning of August; third, that the high altar was
numbered by him for "the sake of clarity" and not in the
document.\textsuperscript{518}

Building on Beck's study of the documents, Irving
Lavin constructs an argument regarding the tabernacle and
altar in San Lorenzo.\textsuperscript{519} A plan of San Lorenzo dated

not consecrated until August 9. There is a nine-day time
lag between completion of the altar and consecration, thus
it is a possibility that the wait was due to the completion
and installation of the tabernacle.

\textsuperscript{518} Beck, "Desiderio," note 34. BLF, ASL, No. 2192
(Entrata e uscita, 1456-1462), fol. 21v. All four items
have been published previously by Moreni, I, 15 and note 2.
Beck states that in item 3 he left out the word "detta". Other
small corrections have been made throughout. An
abbreviated version of the text in the correct order was
given by P. Roselli and O. Superchi, L'Edificazione della
basilica di San Lorenzo. Una vicenda urbanistica, Florence,
1980, pp. 127-28, without reference to Desiderio or the
implications for a larger plan by Cosimo de' Medici. The
document, numbered by Beck, is published as follows:

\{1 Pertutto il mese di luglio 1461 si muro' l'altare
magiore nostro.
\{2 Per tutto di' primo d'agosto 1461 fu murato
interamente il tabernacolo del Corpo di Cristo.
\{3 Domenicha adi' 9 d'agosto 1461 fu consecrato detto
altare maggiore per mano di Messer Orlando Bonarli
egregio dottore e archivescovo di Firenze e con grande
solennita' e processione del popolo e stendardo nuovo
facto da' popolani, e col capitolo della metropolitana
ecclesia e altri preti invitati collocamo in petto
altare tre corpi sancti ciae' San Marco Papa, Sancta
Concordia Martire, e Sancto Amato Abbate, e una
capsella plumbea bassa con reliquie di San Lorenzo, la
quale e' in una altra capsela plumbea magiore, nella
quale sono bossoli dodici di lengno quasi consunti per
la vetusta'; ne' quali e' polvere solamente senza altre
scrittura. La detta capsella grande e la piccola entrovi
con 12 bossoli trovamo nell'altare maggiore della chiesa
vecchia.
\{4 La detta consecrazione rogo' Ser Lotto di
Francesco Masi, popolano e notaio del capitolo.

\textsuperscript{519} Irving Lavin, "Donatello's Bronze Pulpits in San
Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso,
before 1499 and published first by Howard Burns, shows the church before the New Sacristy was built. Based on some unusual features of San Lorenzo, Lavin postulated the placement of the tabernacle and an iconographic program for the whole choir area.

The church of San Lorenzo is oriented to the west, as are a number of early Roman basilicas. In addition, the high altar was unusually situated in the fifteenth century. It was free-standing and the priest stood behind the altar, rather than in front of it, facing the assembly (versum populum). Further, the choir was installed in the apse behind the altar, rather than in the crossing.

As discussed above, the Sacrament tabernacle was in the Medici chapel in the south transept of San Lorenzo before


522 Ibid.
it was moved to its current location in the north side aisle. Lavin reiterates Beck's assertion that the tabernacle and the high altar must have been part of the same project and that, in addition, because the choir was installed in the apse, rather than in the crossing, the correlation of altar to tabernacle was made possible. However, Lavin differs from Beck in his theory regarding the precise placement of the tabernacle. While Beck believes that the tabernacle was placed on the altar, saying that the tabernacle was thick or broad enough to provide the stability necessary to rest on the altar,\textsuperscript{523} Lavin reasons that it would have made it awkward for the priest to perform the rite facing the congregation. He finds it "more likely that the tabernacle was placed behind the altar, allowing space for the celebrant between,"\textsuperscript{524} and cites the well-known series of drawings published by Kurz that incorporate tabernacles, based on Desiderio's model, on free-standing altars.\textsuperscript{525} Lavin adds support by looking closely at the early plan of San Lorenzo which shows the altar installation, asserting that a narrow rectangle behind the raised platform for the officiating priest, "must represent the parapet that

\textsuperscript{523} Beck, "Desiderio," 214.

\textsuperscript{524} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{525} Kurz, "A Group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar," 35ff. See also Doris Carl ("Der Hochaltar von Benedetto da Maiano," 21-60) for a free-standing altarpiece that reflects the types in the drawings.
supported the tabernacle.45 Lavin, "Donatello's Pulpits," 13.

45 Lavin, ibid., also cites the Pala d'Oro in San Marco, Venice and the reliquary altar of Orvieto. In addition, he finds the "coincidence of two facts concerning Donatello" important for proving his thesis. Donatello's abrupt abandonment of the project for the bronze doors of Siena cathedral in March 1461, and his return to Florence, provide evidence that the artist was "enticed home by some urgent task." Lavin concludes that the task was not merely the San Lorenzo pulpits but also, as Vasari's attribution contends, the supervision of the installation and remaining work on the high altar complex.

46 In addition to the Trecento precedents, as well as Donatello's Vatican tabernacle cited by Lavin (ibid.), if Lavin is correct in his assertion that Donatello designed the tabernacle, he would have had an important precedent in his own œuvre for a high altar complex with a eucharistic focus - the altar for the Santo in Padua.
connected to Medicean interests, is the best evidence to
date for including the tabernacle as part of the high
altar.\textsuperscript{529} In addition, it should be reiterated that
churches were adding more explicit eucharistic iconography
in every new high altar of the latter half of the
fifteenth century and frequently including the reservation
of the Host as a focal point.\textsuperscript{530}

The Iconography of the Tabernacle

In support of the evidence of an iconographic unity
in the decorative program of the eastern end of the church
of San Lorenzo, it is useful to look back on the
liturgical history of San Lorenzo to further elucidate the
meaning of the decorations of the mid-Quattrocento.
Discussing the development of the liturgy in San Lorenzo,
and particularly the role of lay patronage in that
development, Robert Gaston has investigated the wider
historical significance and understanding of the liturgy
within the community.\textsuperscript{531} He states that, "The very
terminology 'the liturgy' has the implication of
unchangeableness, of a monolithic, almost static

\textsuperscript{529} \textit{Ibid.}, 14-27.

\textsuperscript{530} For example, see Caspary's discussion in, "Kult und
Aufbewahrung," 118ff.

\textsuperscript{531} Robert Gaston, "Liturgy and Patronage in San Lorenzo,
Florence, 1350-1650," in \textit{patronage, Art, and Society in
Renaissance Italy}, ed. F.W. Kent and Patricia Simons,
However, he shows that not only was the liturgy mutable, but that lay influence on the liturgy was a part of the history of Renaissance Florence. He defines liturgy as "any ritualized act of Christian worship performed publicly or privately by an individual cleric or layman, or by groups of clergy or laymen; such acts may take place in any context, including churches, private homes and palazzi, civic buildings, confraternity halls or public streets and squares." This provides a broad scope for investigating the changing forms of art in Florence.

As in most widely accepted social conventions, contemporary comment on the liturgy itself was rare. In any society, widespread acceptance of any social formula mitigates against special notation of that practice, since the commonplace rarely provokes comment. Gaston's evidence and definition of the liturgy are of considerable importance to understanding the fast developing imagery of Sacrament receptacles and their incorporation into altars.

ibid., 114. In order to ascertain actual liturgical practice in Florence, Gaston has investigated the records of church councils, diocesan synods, the constitutions of individual churches, and to the records of meetings which disclose problems and conflicts arising from the liturgy. He states that much of the evidence disguises rather than reveals, and that it is very limited in its usefulness.

Jungmann (Pastoral Liturgy, New York, 1962, 64ff.) is cited as an example of a scholar who has a narrow view of lay participation and believes that the liturgy remained "clerical" because it was primarily performed by the clergy. See Gaston, "Liturgy and Patronage," 115.
While it is clear that in Florence the clergy desired the faithful to conform to papal stipulations regarding the liturgy, and the archbishop had to ratify all the constitutions of the churches under his jurisdiction, there were also substructures, determined by locale, under the larger observance of the Roman Rite. The most obvious and common variation can be seen in any Italian commune of the Renaissance in the veneration of local saints, who were included in the local festal calendar. Moreover, Florence had its own stational liturgy and a civic stational liturgy. The orders and parish churches had narrower stational liturgy. Of course, all of these substructures coincided to a certain extent. 534

Lay participation in the parish and church of San Lorenzo had increasing recognition by the clergy in the Trecento and early Quattrocento. During this period there were many chapels endowed by parishioners, and in 1415 the first lay operai were appointed. Gaston believes that the new church designed by Brunelleschi transformed the liturgy of San Lorenzo because "new chapels with new

534 The major feasts of San Lorenzo (found in the 1375 constitutions) are listed by Gaston ("Liturgy and Patronage," 117 and notes 16-18) as: S. Concordia, S. Lorenzo, Nativity of Christ, Resurrection Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, Epiphany, the first Sunday of Lent, Corpus Domini, and All Saints. The next class of feasts included those of the Virgin, some of which, he says, were given first-rank status at other Florentine churches. The new constitution of 1418 introduced a special office for the Vigil of the feast of S. Lorenzo; during that period discussion of a new church for the parish began (pp. 118-119). See also Trexler, Public Life, 2 and 73ff.
dedications to new saints entailed a radical reorganization of the festal calendar." The old prebends still existed, but they lost their preeminence. From the early Quattrocento on, the Medici and other influential families wanted to be associated with new aspects of the liturgy – Giovanni di Bicci de’ Medici took the sacristy burial chapel (with a canonry dedicated to St. John the Evangelist) and the adjoining chapel (with a canonry dedicated to saints Cosmo and Damiano). Cosimo acquired patronage rights to the Capella Maggiore in 1442.

This study has addressed the formulation of the all’antica style in terms of new liturgical needs in church furnishings. However, it should be underscored that changes in the liturgy were not solely determined by ecclesiastical authority. Lay influence on churches is a familiar idea to art historians, at least in the sense of lay commissions of works of art as an important part of


536 The document is published in Ginori Conti, La basilica di San Lorenzo, Florence, 1940, 240-245. It states: "...concessio dicte maioris capelle et navis in medio ecclesie consistentis usque ad altare maius antiquum eidem Cosimo et sui filiis et successoribus consignetur." (As cited by Gaston, "Liturgy and Patronage," 122.) See also Howard Saalman, "San Lorenzo: The 1434 Chapel Project," Burlington Magazine, 120, 1978, 361-364. Other important members of the parish of San Lorenzo bought chapels in the area of the crossing. Gaston ("Liturgy," 122), lists them as the Neroni, Ginori, Rondinelli, da Fortuna, della Stufa, Nelli, Ciai, and Luca di Marco. Their aim was to get as close as possible to the main altar.
visual history. The church of San Lorenzo in Florence is of particular interest to the art historian because of its status as the receptor of consistent Medici patronage. Just as the Renaissance style cannot be seen as a purely secular movement, new liturgical furnishings during the Quattrocento should not be viewed as a purely theological movement.

Patronage was one of the determining factors in the liturgical direction of the church of San Lorenzo, as well as a growing factor in the new formulation of the Renaissance style in the decades succeeding its first flowering. With the spread of the all'antica style and its increasing use in non-liturgical art, it is important to see classicizing liturgical furnishings in the light of these factors. Renaissance style was an important component in liturgical changes influenced by the important families of Florence. It seems important to question whether the new style had a meaning in this context.

There has been much valuable discussion of the placement of Cosimo's tomb directly in front of the high altar in San Lorenzo. Gaston calls it "an unduplicatable location and of profound liturgical meaning. Cosimo may have formed the idea while travelling in Germany...the
available models were royal burials." Gaston goes on to discuss the annual office for Cosimo, which has a distinctive feature where all the canons and chaplains (standing in the choir) held a lighted candle. While Gaston states that candles were required on the altar for the sacrifice of the Mass, he believes that they were very rarely handheld during church ceremonies. However, he fails to cite the major exception; as viewing the eucharistic sacrifice became increasingly an essential feature of the Mass, provisions had been made which called for an extra candle to be held by an acolyte close to the Host wafer as it was elevated. This practice can be seen in manuscript illuminations and appears to be the inspiration for the large statues of candle-bearing angels which accompany tabernacles for the Host in the fifteenth century. This type of angel can be found in San Lorenzo, standing to either side of Desiderio's elaborate tabernacle (Figures 215a-b). Parronchi first noted that the wings of the two full-length, standing angels had been sheered off, to him a clear sign that they were originally sculpted in the round. Earlier examples can be found in the Cathedral of Florence - the kneeling angels executed by Luca della Robbia were part of the decorative program.

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to augment the now lost Host tabernacle, created in 1446-47.\textsuperscript{538}

Cosimo, when devising his unique esequie, may well have had John XXIII’s funeral in mind as Gaston believes, but the association with the elevation of the Host may also have been a factor in the annual office. Indeed, if Beck and Lavin are correct in assigning Desiderio’s extraordinary Host tabernacle to the high altar of San Lorenzo, the connection becomes compelling. Gaston does not amplify his statement regarding the location of the tomb in a place of profound eucharistic meaning, and thus fails to give due prominence to this very liturgical emphasis. However, the essence of the honor in being close to the high altar was the association of the central mystery of the Roman rite, the proximity to the miracle of transubstantiation. Trexler has noted the frequency with which the Host was invoked in civic circumstances, its value in formal ritual, and as part of less formal, but no less ritualized, transactions.\textsuperscript{539}

There has been no thoroughgoing analysis of the iconography of Desiderio’s complex monument in San Lorenzo, especially in the context of other Host tabernacles. In this altar tabernacle, the sculptor

\textsuperscript{538} See discussion above and Gilbert "Saint Antonin de Florence et l’art," 9-18.

\textsuperscript{539} Trexler, \textit{Public Life}, 52-53, 55-56, 102, 116 and \textit{passim}. 
invents a fresh vocabulary for Host receptacles which is restated in a number of versions later in the century. Moreover, the probable use of the tabernacle as the focal point for an altar transforms the altarpiece into a unified eucharistic vision.

Desiderio's is the first extant perspectivized tabernacle; the often noted resemblance to the Trinity fresco is even more explicit when we realize that both monuments were part of an altar. Not only do both images focus on the Corpus Domini, but both altars would have been connected to a family tomb, since Cosimo de' Medici's tomb monument is in the floor of the choir of San Lorenzo. The connection to a tomb and altar provides an excellent motive for the formulation of this extraordinary iconography. In addition, the "top heavy lunette" is very similar to that of Donatello's Cavalcanti Altar and Mantegna's San Zeno Altar - again reiterating the connection to altarpieces with pronounced eucharistic iconography.

While it is not possible to reconstruct the altar-tabernacle with complete certainty, the main pieces of the puzzle are extant. The main body of the tabernacle is intact, with the exception of the sportello. The central area shows the influence of earlier tabernacles in the use of the adoring angels to either side of the doorway (Figure 216). However, the flowing movement found in the figures of these angels derives ultimately from
Donatello’s *Cavalcanti Annunciation*. Two other features are extraordinary: the fully developed perspective recession and the Infant Christ with the chalice. The Christ child as the Sacrifice in a chalice was a theme that can be traced to its fundamental theological notions. In Desiderio’s tabernacle, the Child in the chalice (see figure 214) can be compared to a category of eucharistic miracle in which the bread is transformed into a child on the altar at Mass.\(^{540}\) In a grotesquely physical imaging,

\(^{540}\) Parronchi ("Sulla collocazione originario," 136) suggests that the famous putto-like Blessing Christ that tops the tabernacle today is not the original created by Desiderio, but a replacement created by Baccio da Montelupo. Beck ("Desiderio," 210ff) also addresses this puzzling issue and concurs with Parronchi in the attribution of the figure atop the tabernacle. The substitution was made, according to Vasari (Bellorsi and Rossi, ed., *Vite*, 419) because Desiderio’s figure was deposited in the sacristry, to be used on the altar at Christmas. Parronchi cites the sacristan of San Lorenzo, Francesco Albertini (*Memoriale di molte statue e pitture che sono nell’inclyta ciptà di Florentia*, Florence, 1510, reprinted London, 1909): "La tavola marmorea del Sacramento con li suoi ornamenti e di Desiderio da Settignano excepto Christo sopra il calice, che e di tua mano [i.e. that of Baccio da Montelupo, referred to in humanist terms as Bartholomeo Lupio] quando fecesti il Crucifixo et li Angeli allo altare maiore al tempo fui sacrista in decta chiesa." Parronchi suggests that the Desiderio Infant, displaced by the current figure, is the marble Blessing Christ now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, sold in 1868 as a Baccio da Montelupo. Kurz, ("A Group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar," 35-53) also discusses the infant Christ of the tabernacle, a revered object used not only on the altar at Christmas, but carried in Savonarola’s procession for the burning of the vanities in 1497. Kurz attributes the current San Lorenzo figure to Desiderio. Most recently, Schulz ("Glosses on the Career of Desiderio," 179ff) reviews the issue of the infant Christ. She dates the documented figure by Baccio da Montelupo to c.1499-1500 when Albertini was sacristan. In a convincing analysis (pp. 182-186), Schulz compares the two figures in Cleveland and Florence to a firmly documented Bambino by Baccio which tops a tabernacle in the church of San Lorenzo in Segromigno...
the Child in the eucharistic legend was then used
literally as the Host and dismembered as the ritual
sacrifice.\textsuperscript{541}

Monte (near Lucca). She concludes that neither the
Cleveland nor the Florentine Christ figures can be
attributed to Baccio and gives the figure in Florence to
Desiderio. I concur with both Kurz and Schulz in their
attrition of the Christ in San Lorenzo to Desiderio.

\textsuperscript{541} Leah Sinanoglou, "The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A
Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays," \textit{Speculum},
XLVIII, 1973, 491ff. discusses a variety of these miracles.
"In one of the most bizarre, yet very common miracles of the
Middle Ages, the bread of the Eucharist is transformed
between the very hands of the priest at Mass into a small
living child, then slain and dismembered before the eyes of
the congregation. Commentators identified the child as the
Infant Jesus and often cited such miracles as proof that the
Mass is an actual re-sacrifice of the body and blood of
Christ." Sinanoglou's concern is English Corpus Christi
drama, but much of the material she uses comes from widely
distributed Latin tracts. Other types of literature, such
as Pseudo-Bonaventura's widely read \textit{Meditations Vitae
Christi}, emphasize the Child's humanity and, "...invites the
reader to a sentimental response. But the miracle of the
host become child is based on a harsher parallel tradition.
Medieval writings, from early Latin tracts to late English
popularizations, persist in conflating the Incarnation and
the Passion, fusing the Babe of Bethlehem and the
sacramental Victim of the Mass." Sinanoglou also cites the
979.) which tells of an aged and saintly Egyptian monk who
found himself unable to believe that the bread of the
Sacrament is indeed the body of Christ. Two of his fellow
monks tried to convince him, then pray for divine revelation
and accompanied him to Mass. When the loaves were placed on
the altar, the three monks saw a little boy laying there.
As the priest stretched out his hand to break the bread, an
angel of God came down from heaven and stabbed the Child
with a knife, catching His blood in a chalice. When the
priest broke the bread into small pieces, the angel cut up
the Boy's limbs. The doubting monk went forward to partake
of the Sacrament, and was given bleeding flesh, whereupon he
cried out, "Lord I believe that the bread laid on the altar
is Thy Body and the chalice Thy Blood." Upon these words,
the flesh mercifully reassumed the semblance of bread, he
communed, and the three returned to their cells praising God
for so effectively curing the old monk's unbelief.
Rising above the arch of the rounded pediment, the image is used in the San Lorenzo tabernacle as an explicit reference to the physical manifestation of the Species. At the apex of Desiderio's monument, the Child is triumphant and, with a gesture of benediction, he appears as the Eucharist. In addition, the related iconography of the "mill of the Sacrament" has been cited by Kurz in regard to this tabernacle with the Child at its apex. He connects this image with the German type, illustrated in a manuscript depicting an allegory based on the words, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).$^{542}$

In fact, in northern Europe, monumental sculpted altarpieces with that iconography were in use by at least the late the fifteenth century. For instance, the Mill of the Sacrament altar in Tribsees (Figure 217) presents an elaborate cycle that begins with Adam and Eve and the Annunciation to either side of the Salvator Mundi and culminates in the bottom center with the four Fathers of the Church holding a chalice from which springs the Child, with a gesture of benediction.$^{543}$

$^{542}$ See Kurz, "A Group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar," 48. Called the "Sakramentsmühle," it represents from top to bottom, an Annunciation, the Evangelists placing their gospels into a mill and, finally, the Eucharist emerging from the mill in the form of the Christ child in a chalice. See also Chapter One of this study for the Augustinian origins of the mill of the Sacrament.

$^{543}$ See Braun, Der Christliche Altar, for a discussion of this altar and its iconography. See also Hahnloser, "Pietro Calzettas Heiligblutaltar im Santo zu Padua, Niccolo Pizzolo und das Berner Hostienmühlenfenster," 388ff.
In the San Lorenzo tabernacle, the classical architecture and decoration render a more compact eucharistic statement. Parallel in many ways to the northern type, the San Lorenzo image of the incarnate Christ as Eucharist can be seen as a vision of the Bread of the Word of God, revealed to the faithful. It provides a greater impact than previous tabernacles, which lack its combination of ample size and rich ornamentation. In its size and wealth of ornament, the San Lorenzo monument is related to the reliquary tabernacle-altar for the Cross in Impruneta. The pilasters, which serve as wall ends, are decorated with a complex combination of motifs, deriving ultimately from antique funerary monuments (Figures 218-220 and 223) as well as Donatello’s tabernacle in the Vatican (Figure 221). On Desiderio’s pilasters, intricate foliate and vine forms blossom out of antique vessels – kraters at the base and two-handled wine cups in the center. The theme is underscored on other surfaces of the San Lorenzo tabernacle as well. Smiling cherubim occupy the intervals between highly stylized motifs in the frieze. Vines terminating in rosettes and cornucopias capped by palmettes are all taken from antique funerary sculpture (Figures 224-225). In the middle of the frieze, rather than a palmette, an eternal flame all’antica (see Figure 222) underscores the meaning of the tabernacle. The arch of the barrel vault again corresponds to the triumph over death theme and, like the Impruneta chapels,
adds the image of fruit garlands to the symbolic program in the reliefs to either side of the Pietà. Donatello’s Cavalcanti Annunciation (see Figure 167) provides a fifteenth-century precedent for the pediment, derived from antique funerary altars.

Further, it seems likely that the perspective within the framework of the tabernacle was part of an overall iconographic program particularly connected to the body of Christ. Desiderio’s monument is the first extant Sacrament tabernacle to utilize this deep perspective, though many artists followed his example. The main prototype was that of the Trinity fresco in which Masaccio had used the perspective to emphasize the corpus Christi in front of the panelled wall. The barrel vault functions in this capacity in both the conceptual and visual modes. In addition, the symbolism was enhanced by classical architecture, as well as by the pictorial recession. As in the early classicizing Host tabernacles, Masaccio utilized antique motifs to strengthen the image and meaning of the body of Christ. And, similar to the entombment relief accompanying Donatello’s tabernacle for St. Peter’s, the funerary connection is explicit in the fresco because of the momento mori below. In San Lorenzo, of course, the tomb is that of Cosimo de’Medici. The enshrinement and protection of the body of Christ was linked by the great Florentine innovators to the iconography of antique and Early Christian death imagery,
not least of which was the convention of the door to
rebirth. The idea of a fictive chapel is one meaning for
the coffered barrel vault in Desiderio’s tabernacle, but
more specifically, in the context of a covering for the
Body of Christ it may refer to a stone ciborium or
tabernacle over an altar, like those in Impruneta and in
San Miniato al Monte. The barrel vaulted canopy was used
specifically to provide an appropriate covering for the
Holy of Holies in Early Christian usage. Like the late
antique/Early Christian funerary monuments which inspired
Donatello, the perspective tabernacle had important
associations with the foundations of Christianity. Unity
of vision and meaning, in the microcosm as well as the
macrocosm, informs the tabernacle in San Lorenzo.

Fifteenth-century theologians acknowledged the
parallels of architectural features to the Body of Christ
and, indeed, the parallel of pictorial images to the Image
of God. The architecture, figurative imagery, and
decorative motifs of the fifteenth-century tabernacle of
the Sacrament can be seen as the temporal image united
with the ultimate truth of the Eucharist. Striving for
conceptual and visual unity, the artist illustrated the
eucharistic theology of the Church in a way that would
most clearly and concisely reflect its intricate
relationships.

Nicholas of Cusa, while clarifying the relationship
between the human and divine nature of Christ,
demonstrates that contemporary theologians were not only aware of art as a simple didactic tool, but conscious of the more subtle relationships among maker, idea, and execution. In his tract, *The Vision of God* (finished c.1452), Cusa describes the union of human and Divine in the form of Christ:

For thou, Jesu, as God, dost understand all, and to understand in this sense is to be all. As Man thou understand all, and to understand in this sense is to be a likeness of all. For man only comprehendeth things by a likeness; a stone existeth not in human understanding as in its proper cause or nature, but as in its specific idea and likeness. Thus in thee Jesu, human intelligence is united unto the divine intelligence itself, even as a most perfect image unto the truth of its pattern. If I consider the ideal form of the coffer in the craftsman’s mind and the species of coffer made by that master most perfectly carrying out his idea, I learn how the ideal form is the truth of the species, and that only in this one master is it united unto it as truth is unto the image. So in thee, Jesu, Master of masters, I see that the absolute idea of all things, and with it what resembles it in species, is united in the highest degree.544

544 *The Vision of God*, Chapter XX, "How Jesus is Understood to Be the Union of the Divine Nature and the Human Nature." Cusa makes it clear that mankind cannot conceptualize without the image. Moreover, while Jesus as God is all things, Jesus as human is the image of the corporeal world since, without the image, humankind cannot comprehend. He uses the example of the coffer; the ideal in the mind of the maker is the true model and the image is only an imperfect reflection of the master’s plan.
CONCLUSION

Classical tabernacles of the Sacrament were an important new category of liturgical furnishing in the Quattrocento. Among the first monuments to combine all'antica sculpture and architecture, they were created by the finest artists of the era in response to the needs of evolving theological issues. Although many Quattrocento Sacrament tabernacles were lost, dismantled, or moved from their original locations after the edicts of the sixteenth-century Councils, the basic architectonic design and the emphatic visualization of the Eucharist were integral to creating the grand retables of the Counter Reformation. Indeed, fifteenth-century tabernacles were sometimes used as the focal point of new altarpieces.

The motivation for the creation of classical Host tabernacles in the fifteenth century is multifaceted - fundamental as well as complex theological issues were at stake. When viewed in the context of the remarkable intellectual and spiritual expression of the fifteenth century, Host tabernacles have a profound significance for the historian of Italian art. Although a fervent devotion to the Host continued to grow throughout the Middle Ages, in the fifteenth century the need to explicate and regularize that devotion led both artists and theologians to a more powerful means of expression. The initial
impetus for the use of classical models in liturgical furnishings was not limited to, or even predicated on, large-scale architecture. Instead, the structures that inspired most artists in the early fifteenth century in Tuscany were the same that had inspired their predecessors: late Antique and Early Christian funerary monuments.

It should be reiterated that initially the widespread and consistent rebirth of classicism in central Italy can be linked almost exclusively to monuments for liturgical use. This classicism coincided with the development of large-scale Renaissance Host tabernacles and was an integral part of their conception. Classical forms were used not in spite of the spiritual meaning but, in large part, to augment their religious character. The eucharistic focus of theology in the early Renaissance gives special meaning to the concurrence of the use of classicism and the formulation of the innovative and influential tabernacles for the Host.

Although Florentine patriotism has often been cited as an important influence on the revival of antique forms, it was not a phenomenon based solely on secular propaganda. The historical link to the founding era of Christian ritual was vigorously promoted in the Renaissance as a moral paradigm and as authorization for contemporary theological precepts. Preachers such as Giovanni Dominici were forceful, making it clear that true
nationalist pride was bound up with a life dedicated to the moral precepts of Christianity. Whereas all citizens may not have subscribed to such principles in deed, the appearance of Christian orthodoxy was an essential part of a successful public life; it was necessary that the New Rome be seen in the context of the Christian era, under the grace of God and sanctioned by patriarchal authority. In particular, the revival of antiquity in the visual arts could also be paralleled to the New Jerusalem, especially since Jerusalem, under Roman domination in the time of Christ, could be visualized in the context of classicism.

In a conflated ideal, civic implications of ancient origin were bound up with Christian iconography and assertions of patriarchal authority. Particularly appropriate in this cultural setting, the forms of funerary sculpture from the early days of Christianity were used for vessels intended to focus attention on the body of the Lord. The cycle of temporal life, death, and eternal life was the key to Christian worship in the late Middle Ages; more specifically, Christ's resurrection was identified with the recurrent miracle of transubstantiation. Classicism was utilized to enhance eschatological and eucharistic imagery at a time when their iconographic similarities were extensive. The dissemination and widespread acceptance of classicism was dependent on the Christian interpretation of the style.
Artists utilized these forms to amplify the meaning of death and rebirth in a Christian context.

By paralleling spiritual and political meanings in the early Quattrocento, all'antica monuments enhanced civic iconography in Florence, but were not dependent on secular interest in the antique. The tendency to link civic and religious interests was logical because in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, reciprocal reinforcement between secular power and spiritual power was the norm. Personal or communal assertion of divine protection and favor had a long-standing tradition. Spiritual historicism was extremely influential in the revival of antique style. Thus there is strong evidence that the comprehensive use of antique forms was not dependent on humanist endorsement or sanction. Instead, "humanists" came to incorporate a style that was adopted first by religious image-makers for specific iconographic purposes.

In the fifteenth century, images of the Real Presence were widespread, and they continued to grow in number and variety. Northern and Italian artists had similar sacramental concerns, but the specific forms utilized were based on their respective visual traditions. Artists in Italy asserted their visual heritage to find new and more potent means of expression; the all'antica style connected Italy to the early Christian era and could evoke an historic continuum. Eucharistic iconography played a
complex role in the revival of classical forms of fifteenth-century Italian sculpture. Many of the monuments that had a profound impact on the tide of classicism were linked to the presence of the Corpus Domini. Sacred images all'antica suited not only the commune of Florence, but other regions as well, leading to a more lasting revival than any previous era and transcending purely regional interests.

Classical Sacrament tabernacles of the Quattrocento hold a distinctive place in the history of liturgical furnishings. Created by artists of remarkable talent at a time of rapid stylistic change and during a crucial moment in liturgical history, the monuments were unique to their time. Yet the conceptual origins of these tabernacles had repercussions through the seventeenth century. The controversial issues of eucharistic worship were fought most fiercely during the precise the period in which these vessels were produced. Made to contain and interpret the spiritual core of the Church, individual houses for the Eucharist were essential to fifteenth-century worship and can be seen as a key element in the visual evolution of the Renaissance. With an economy of means, Sacrament tabernacles explicated the central mystery of Christianity with a rich and carefully structured symbolism that heralded a new era in liturgical monuments.
EPILOGUE

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF TABERNACLE ARCHITECTURE: THE ORSANMICHELE NICHE AFTER MID-CENTURY

Eucharistic reservation and its imagery in the context of early Renaissance classicism is the focus of the preceding study. In that context, the architectural tabernacle on Orsanmichele designed by Donatello for the Parte Guelfa was an essential monument, playing a pivotal role in the formulation of the new classical Sacrament tabernacles.

After mid-century the ownership of the niche on Orsanmichele was transferred from the Parte Guelfa, the figure of St. Louis was removed, and a new sculpture was placed in the aedicula. Nonetheless, the visual association of the niche with Sacrament receptacles appears to have remained active. Although this aspect of Quattrocento tabernacles of the Sacrament - the long-lived visual influence of the niche - has not been identified in previous scholarship, there is substantive evidence to suggest that artists continued to understand the connection between these sculptural forms. 545

545 Research regarding this aspect of the Orsanmichele niche resulted in a paper given in 1988 and is published as an essay in the combined Acts of the two conferences (at Provo in 1988 and the Villa i Tatti in 1989) commemorating Verrocchio’s 500th centenary ("The Corpus Verum: Orsanmichele, Tabernacles, and Verrocchio’s Incredulity of Thomas,"Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Sculpture, ed. S. Bule, Florence, 1992, 33–49); the present chapter represents a condensed and updated version of that essay.
In one of the most extraordinary manifestations of this connection, the architecture of the niche was utilized to enhance and enrich a new sculpture commissioned by the Mercanzia, who purchased the niche in 1459. This monument, Verrocchio’s Christ and Doubting Thomas, placed in the niche on the feast day of San Giovanni Battista in 1483, has been frequently admired as a work of great visual power (Figure 226). Recently, the sculptural group has been studied in terms of its political content, particularly in the context of Medici corporate commissions (see notes 530 and 532 below).

I believe, however, that much of its power for the fifteenth-century viewer stemmed from less tangible circumstances. The idea of tacit communal awareness of form has been suggested frequently in this study and it is evident that the process of cultural knowledge is an important factor in the multi-layered meanings of many Renaissance Christian monuments. It is my contention that the full measure of Verrocchio’s achievement has gone

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546 Luca Landucci, *Diario Fiorentino dal 1450-1516*, Florence, 1883, 45. Landucci’s diary entry for 21 June 1483 states:

In a tabernacle in Orto Sa’Michele there was placed the figure of St. Thomas beside Jesus, and the Jesus in bronze is the most beautiful thing imaginable and the finest head of the Savior that has yet been made; it is by Andrea del Verrocchio.

Both the birth and death of John the Baptist were celebrated in Florence. His birthdate is celebrated in June and the feast of the Decollation is celebrated on August 29.
unrecognized because the iconographic associations of the architectural enclosure, an integral part of its conception, have not been acknowledged. This chapter will examine the special visual history that served as a foundation for the monument's Christian meaning.

The creation of the Christ and St. Thomas entailed the incorporation of implicit meanings and deeply ingrained visual images that charge the sculptural group with eucharistic content. Verrocchio's group and the fifteenth-century connotations of Thomas's doubt will be explored in the context of the setting at Orsanmichele and its visual association with Sacrament tabernacles. Interrelated threads will be pursued and their connections traced; in this light, the existing architecture can be seen as a potent ingredient in the Mercanzia's commission. The unique setting will elucidate a complex intermingling of form and meaning in a work that depended largely on a common cultural experience for its impact.

There are many unusual factors that must be identified in order to determine the specific content of Verrocchio's sculpture. First, it should be reiterated that the figures of Christ and Thomas were designed for and placed in an already existing niche on Orsanmichele. As discussed in Chapter Two of this study, the Parte Guelfa niche was the earliest structure to be completed in the new classicizing architectural style of the early
the niche was an extraordinarily important monument for Renaissance artists.

As we have seen, the tabernacle at Orsanmichele was originally owned by the Parte Guelfa and held the image of their patron saint, the bronze St. Louis of Toulouse by Donatello. It was eventually ceded to the Mercanzia, the powerful merchant tribunal of Florence. Verrocchio’s sculpture was a supremely public expression of the Mercanzia’s prominence, as it had been for the Parte Guelfa. The Mercanzia underscored their new position.

For a thorough discussion of this niche see Janson, Donatello, 50-55. As Janson demonstrates, the documents regarding the Orsanmichele niche prove that the work was initiated after 1420 and finished by late 1425. For a more recent examination, see Zervas, The Parte Guelfa Niche, passim. See Greenhalgh, Donatello and His Sources, 73; Caplow, Michelangelo and H. Saalman, "Filippo Brunelleschi: Capital Studies," Art Bulletin, XV, 1959, 115-17.

The Mercanzia was the merchant tribunal, comprised of six laymen, that presided over disputes between guilds and made judgments in mercantile disputes with foreigners. There was no appeal from their decisions. The Medici family appears to have been increasingly involved with the Mercanzia in order to have another agency to assert their own power. In 1471, Lorenzo planned to abolish the office of Judge of Appeal, and as Sacramori reported everything was decided "by a sign from Lorenzo" (who, he states, had attempted to divert some of the funds of the Parte Guelfa and the Sei di Mercanzi, and to limit the authority of the Otto di Guardia.) In 1477, the office of Podesta was abolished and some of the authority passed on to the Sei di Mercanzi. (See A. Brown, Bartolomeo Scala, Chancellor of Florence: The Humanist as Bureaucrat, Princeton, 1979, 68, 290-91, and 337. See also Martines, Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence, 68 and Zervas, The Parte Guelfa Niche, passim.

The Mercanzia negotiated for three years with the Parte Guelfa regarding this niche, from about 1460 to March 1463 when the niche which was already empty (the St. Louis of Toulouse by Donatello was subsequently placed over the main portal of Santa Croce.) Piero de' Medici was one of five
in Florentine society by commissioning the first truly
narrative group on the exterior of Orsanmichele, designed in conformity with the existing architecture of
the niche. Significantly, the subject of the incredulity
of Thomas had never been used before in so monumental a
form in Italian sculpture; nor had the theme ever been
isolated from a larger narrative context in a

members of the committee appointed to commission a new
sculpture for the Mercanzia. (See G. Passavant, Verrocchio, London, 1969, 176-77 for a summary of the negotiations and
a bibliography of the literature regarding the Mercanzia
niche.) It is clear from the document recording the
Mercanzia’s decision to commission a new sculpture for the
niche, that they meant to assert their status in Florence. As
the document of their meeting of 29 March 1463 states:
"considerantes...quod in dicto tunc muro vacuo approneretur
alia statua et seu figura aliqua digna et verabilis ut est
in alio tabernaculo ibidem circhum circha positum. Et
considerantes quod locus est dignissimus it etiam reputation
Universitatis debet excedere alia inferiores." (As
reproduced in Pope-Hennessy, Italian Renaissance Sculpture, 13.)

549 The only other sculptural group on Orsanmichele up to
that date was the Stonemason’s Quattro Coronati by Nanni di
Banco. (For Nanni di Banco see Pope-Hennessy, Italian
Gothic Sculpture, 43-45 and 217-219.) The figures in this
group, however, do not interact; instead, each figure is
psychologically separate from the others.
sculpture. In every regard, the Mercanzia’s sculptural group was unique.

Scholars have discussed this work extensively in formal terms and have noted the ingenious solution employed by Verrocchio for placing two figures in a niche designed for only one. However, the placement of the

The closest sculptural precedent is probably Tino di Camaino’s tomb of Gastone del Torre in Sta. Croce, Florence. Tino’s sculptural relief in marble of the Incredulity of Thomas is part of a larger narrative which decorates the base of the tomb (see Figure 229). See Valentiner, Tino di Camaino, 52-61, plates 21 and 23. For a concise discussion of Verrocchio’s possible pictorial antecedents see Dario A. Covi, "Verrocchio and Venice, 1469", Art Bulletin, LXV, 1983, 258-60, note 51. Covi particularly notes a mosaic in San Marco that includes the inscription from John 20:28 in Latin, as does Verrocchio’s monument. The New Testament passage forms the major portion of the inscriptions on the garments of Christ and Thomas. Professor Covi has been extremely kind, as always, in conversations regarding Verrocchio’s formal influences and the sculptures for Orsanmichele.

John Paoletti ("'ha fatto Piero con volontà del padre...' Piero de'Medici and Corporate Commissions of Art," Piero de'Medici "il Gottoso (1416-1469). Art in the Service of the Medici, ed. A. Beyer and B. Boucher, Akademie Verlag, 1993, 221-250, forthcoming) discusses representations of Christ and Thomas and the selection of the subject for the Mercanzia’s sculpture. (Professor Paoletti generously sent me a copy of this article prior to its publication.) He cites (p.231, note 48 ) several painted images connected to the Mercanzia, but finds that given the lack of documentary evidence, the only extant image which appears certain to have decorated the Palazzo della Mercanzia before Verrocchio’s commission was the half-length figure of the Redeemer still seen on the facade (although much damaged).

See for example Pope-Hennessy, Italian Renaissance Sculpture, 40, who states that: "...the commission...obliged him to design a sculpture for a tabernacle with strong architectural idiosyncracies, and second, it imposed the duty of placing two figures in a niche designed for one.... Verrocchio set his Christ with right hand raised against the back wall of the niche...and his St. Thomas facing inwards to the left, half in and half out of the tabernacle. In this way he reduced the significance of the architectural
figures was far more than a clever solution to a technical problem. The choice of the subject and the placement of the two figures were purposefully and inextricably linked with their setting. As John Paoletti and Andrew Butterfield have recently demonstrated, the political implications of the group and its place on Orsanmichele were essential to its conception.\footnote{John Paoletti, ("'...ha fatto Piero,'" 231ff.) discusses the history of the subject in light of its civic iconography of justice, citing a lost fresco of the \textit{Incredulity} (c.1385) in the Sala dell'Udienza dei Signori of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, as well as the text from Sacchetti's \textit{Rime} which accompanied it. In addition, there were a number of other images of the Incredulity in town halls in central Italy. Paoletti goes on to discuss the church of San Tommaso in Florence under Medici patronage. The church had a fresco (attributed to Uccello) of the \textit{Incredulity of Thomas} over its door. Paoletti believes that the Medici were actively appropriating a civic iconography for a family church and also cites the civic institution of the feast of St. Thomas under Cosimo's tenure as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia in 1435. Andrew Butterfield, "Verrocchio's Christ and St. Thomas: chronology, iconography and political context," \textit{The Burlington Magazine}, 34, 1992, 225-233, has studied the niche in the context of its Mercanzia patronage and its Medici influence. These studies underscore the complexity of this monument and provide a civic and political corollary to the spiritual content.} Because of its status as an important civic monument, it has been easy for scholars to overlook the spiritual nature of the sculptural group, as well the Christian context of the setting. Dario Covi has discussed Verrocchio's use of the niche in terms of the "closed door" before which Christ..." (italics mine).
appeared to the Apostles,553 but otherwise the sculptural group has never been studied in conjunction with the specific Christian iconographic connotations of its architectural enclosure.554 Verrocchio's group, however, cannot be fully understood without taking the setting or the spiritual meaning into account. The architecture of Donatello’s niche was part of a complex typological assertion, an amalgam of civic and religious meaning (see Chapter Two of this study). Significantly, the existing niche on Orsanmichele was not only an object of political

553 Covi, "Verrocchio and Venice," 259-60. Covi states: "To be sure, in Verrocchio's sculpture the idea of the door is barely suggested, but the frame of the tabernacle and the molding on its interior wall; and the tabernacle, we know, is not Verrocchio's work. But Verrocchio must have been alert to the possibility of exploiting the design of the existing tabernacle in order to allude to an important feature in the Gospel story: Christ's miraculous appearance in the room with his Apostles through closed doors.... He could thus make his remarkable composition serve an iconographic function as well as the noted formal one of fitting two nearly life-size statues in a niche originally planned for one." I concur with Professor Covi that Verrocchio used the niche to imply the closed doors of John 20:26. As I will demonstrate, the use of the existing architecture for this specific allusion was only part of a larger iconography based on the implications of the structure as a whole.

554 There was at one time much discussion among scholars regarding possible changes in the niche initiated by Verrocchio, but Janson (Donatello, 45-46 and 50-55) demonstrated that the niche remained substantially the same one as Donatello used for his figure of St. Louis in the 1420s. Bennett and Wilkins (Donatello, 74), however, in a brief insightful statement concerning the power of the political connotations of the figure of St. Louis and its ultimate removal from the niche say that, "It is tempting to view Donatello's St. Louis of Toulouse as too strong a political statement, and therefore one that needed to be removed - either to erase or to underscore its message."
peculiar subject of incredulity was chosen.\textsuperscript{557} In his monograph on Verrocchio, Charles Seymour briefly noted that the subject of doubt and proof was appropriate to an institution whose function included the weighing of evidence.\textsuperscript{558} Since Thomas's insistence on concrete visual proof was certainly significant in the limited context of the patron's communal function, it is a point well taken.\textsuperscript{559} However, Seymour also notes a contradictory

\textsuperscript{557} No document has been found that specifically delineates the commission, nor are the sculpted figures identified in extant documents until 1479. The first document of March 1463 (see note 536) indicates only one figure, as does the first recorded payment to Verrocchio of 15 January 1466 (old style). "Andrea di Michele vocato Verrocchio, intagliatore, lire 300 piccole, dovute a lui dagli operai del pilastro seu tabernacolo peruna statua di bronzo a lui allocata dagli anzidetti operai." For the publication of the known documents (up to 1968) regarding Verrocchio's sculptural group, see C. von Fabriczy, "Donatellos Hl. Ludwig und sein Tabernakel," 242-61 and G. Passavant, Andrea del Verrocchio als Maler, Dusseldorf, 1959, 221-22, Documents X-XII. See also J. Gaye, Carteggio inedito d'artisti del secolo XIV, XV, XVI, vol. 1, Florence, 1839, 370. Dario Covi was able to pin down the date of the commission more precisely with his discovery of a document of 14 May 1466, appointing a new member of the operai, that indicated a sculptor had not yet been chosen: "Et que statua et seu figura nondum est facta neque locata quod fiat." (See "The Date of the Commission of Verrocchio's 'Christ and St. Thomas,'" The Burlington Magazine, CX, 1968, 37.)

\textsuperscript{558} C. Seymour, Sculpture of Verrocchio, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1971, 58.

\textsuperscript{559} John Paoletti ("...ha fatto Piero, 231-236) shows that the civic iconography and Medicean interests played an important part in the selection of the subject, though his article does not emphasize the iconographic origins of this civic iconography. Butterfield ("Verrocchio," 230ff.) finds that Florentine images of the Doubting Thomas are significant in terms of their use in courtrooms and sale dell'cadienza, personifying clemency and the desire for truth. In addition, St. Thomas was a favored saint of the Medici; the feast of St. Thomas became a communal festival
theme; the inscriptions emphasize not physical evidence, but faith in things unseen. Seymour summed up his discussion of the iconography by saying, "The sculptor was thus faced with a double problem: to preserve intact the drama of the incredulity and its corollary of Christian faith; and to fit two figures into a space designed for one figure only."

There is, indeed, as I will demonstrate, more than one level of meaning in this sculptural group. There are fundamental issues in the fifteenth-century concept of the incredulity of Thomas, both popular and doctrinal, that profoundly affected the sculpture. In fact, Thomas's doubting of Christ's resurrection carried a connotation of such profound significance and contemporary relevance that it automatically informed any visual presentation of that subject. And, contrary to dealing with the preexisting architectural setting as a "problem" that the sculptor was compelled to downplay, I will show that the two figures may have been commissioned precisely because Verrocchio was to use the original niche. These two factors, the contemporary context of the doubtful Thomas and the

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in 1435. Butterfield notes that the festal calendar was reorganized in 1460 and the feast was not celebrated after that time. However, he does not explain this suspension of the feast in light of the Christ and Thomas on Orsanmichele. Butterfield goes on to show that Thomas was not only specially venerated by the Medici but, in addition, that the apostle's doubt (as a search for truth) may have been used as symbol for the justice of the rule of the Medici.

560 Seymour, Verrocchio, 58.
contemporary context of the physical setting - the Orsanmichele niche - are interwoven and together form an iconographically unprecedented monument.

**Inscriptions on the Christ and St. Thomas**

To demonstrate the spiritual principles underlying the conception of the Mercanzia’s sculpture it is necessary to examine the inscriptions on Verrocchio’s figures. Though partially obscured within the folds of the garments, they help to signal the existence of other levels of meaning that have not been previously ascribed to the work (Figure 227). On the border of Christ’s robe, from John 20:28-29, are the resurrected Christ’s words to Thomas: *QVIA VIDISTI ME THOMA CREDISISTI* and *BEATI QVI NON VIDERVNT ET CREDIDERVNT*. On the border of Thomas’s robe, from the same scriptural passage, is the apostle’s cry of recognition and contrition: *DOMINUS MEVS ET DEVS MEVS*. Finally and perhaps most significant, in a departure from John’s text, the inscription on Thomas’s robe ends with the words, *ET SALVATOR GENTIUM*. From a fifteenth-century theological point of view, the inscriptions emphasize the value of faith in Christ’s resurrected state, the belief in the fulfillment of his promise without the benefit of physical evidence (and at the same time providing physical evidence), and so contributed an ironic counterpoint to the Mercanzia’s mundane function.
In particular, with the words ET SALVATOR GENTIVM, rather than those of John 20:31, "Christus Filius Dei," Thomas acknowledges Christ's role as Redeemer, and sets the sculpture apart from a simple exposition of the gospel text or of the Mercanzia's role in Florentine society. The eternally resurrected Christ (usually bleeding into a chalice), depicted as the Redeemer of mankind, was an important image in the fifteenth century; it was a potent reference to the Body of Christ in the most spiritually, intellectually, and physically accessible form - the Eucharist. This notion of the eucharistic Redeemer, as a subject for devotional meditations as well as a subject for artists, was well-established in the Quattrocento. There were a number of popular stories, mostly dating from the Trecento, that help to shed light on the meaning of these Eucharistic images.

The True Presence, the Theme of Doubt, and the Bleeding Host

As we have seen, the devotional stories that correspond to the bleeding Redeemer were primarily concerned with establishing the Eucharist as the actual body of Christ. Moreover, the most consistent element in these stories is that of the doubter of the True Presence. Doubt as a thematic element was incorporated into a great number of popular stories and visual images used to illustrate the veracity of the Host as the body of Christ. Most important for this discussion, these devotional
themes directly link two essential concepts: the subject of doubt and the Eucharist.

The Mass of St. Gregory was one such story that became a subject for artists as well as preachers; it reinforced the idea of the timeless Redeemer corporally experienced by the faithful through the Eucharistic ritual. In this tale, established particularly in Rome, Christ appears miraculously on the altar when the patriarch, Gregory the Great, prays that the Lord provide proof of the Real Presence to a doubting acolyte. The visual images of this miracle are explicit in their portrayal of the Risen Christ bleeding into a chalice; the figure of Christ takes the place of the eucharistic wafer on the altar. The Eucharist was firmly implanted in the Florentine popular imagination; its devotional cults had been established long before the fifteenth century.

561 For images of the Mass of St. Gregory see the exhibition catalogue Die Messe Gregors des Grossen, passim. A particularly valuable discussion of the Mass and related imagery see Eisler, "The Golden Christ of Cortona and the Man of Sorrows, Part I," 110. Eisler finds that the Vanucci reliquary in Cortona, with its full-length standing Man of Sorrows, refers implicitly to the Mass of St. Gregory. He notes that not only were many indulgences granted for the veneration of this subject, but that the "appearance of Christ was often shown as the sudden coming to life of a Man of Sorrows regularly upon the altar." For an essention discussion of the iconography of the Mass of St. Gregory see J.A. Endres, "Die Darstellung der Gregorrmesse in Mittelalter," Zeitschrift fur Christliche Kunst, XXX, 1917, 146-56. In addition, see C. Bertelli, "The 'Image of Pity' in Santa Croce in Gerusalemmme," Part I, passim.

562 For the history of Eucharistic cults and imagery in Florence see Borsook, "Cults and Imagery," 147-202. For a more general discussion see Browe, Die Verehrung der
The worship of the Host as a physical manifestation of the Lord had been deeply instilled by a number of different means. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two of this study, early fifteenth-century directives of the popular and influential preacher, Bernardino da Siena, emphasized the importance of the consecrated Host as the unmediated presence of God in the Church.  

A decade later, at the Council of Florence held in 1437-1439 the subject of the Eucharist was one of the most important concerns. Elaborate sculpted monuments devoted to the reservation of the Host became widespread and the potency of the Host as an overriding concept remained a force throughout the fifteenth century. Moreover, interest in the Eucharist had continued to grow until contemporary

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Eucharistie im Mittelalter, 33.


See Gill, Council of Florence, esp. 266 and 274ff. See Chapter Two of this dissertation for a detailed discussion of the conciliar concerns with the Eucharist.

Throughout his study, Public Life in Renaissance Florence, Richard Trexler discusses the role of the body of Christ as a pervasive unifying concept that bound Florentines together on all levels. Among many others, Trexler cites the chronicler Piero Vaglienti ("Fratre Girolamo Savonarola Giudicato da Piero Vaglienti, Cronista Fiorentino," ed. L. Randi, Rivista delle Biblioteche, IV, 1893, 49-63) who emphasized the potency of the Host in providing a cultural unity for its citizens even up to the last days of social upheaval. Trexler (p.496) records that as Savonarola proceeded from Piazza S. Marco the crowd was prepared to stone him. For protection Savonarola held the Host over his head and the crown could not harm him - they found themselves "powerless before the real presence."
concerns in the 1460s were expressed in intricately argued theses regarding, among other issues, the reabsorption of blood lost by Christ during the Crucifixion. This controversy over the Holy Blood was only part, albeit an extreme example, of the generally lively interest in issues regarding the precise substance of the Host. It should be underscored that in this atmosphere of the mid-1460s, Verrocchio was commissioned to create the Mercanzia's sculpture.

Stories of eucharistic doubters, used didactically to establish the miraculous corporeality of the Host, were widespread in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Mass of St. Gregory, as already noted, initiated a whole category of images related to the worship of the Eucharistic Christ. Perhaps more powerful because of its geographic and historic proximity to Quattrocento Florentines, as well as its implicit didactic role as proof to doubters of the true presence, was the story of

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the Mass of Bolsena. According to popular belief, the miracle was a major factor in Urban IV's institution of the Feast of the Corpus Christi, one of the most important public celebrations in Florence and in other cities. The miracle was credited with initiating the writing of Thomas Aquinas' office of the Mass of the Corpus Domini. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the story of the miracle of Bolsena was one of the most commonly recounted of Host miracles.

The large reliquary made of silver and enamel, dated 1337, represents the Passion of Christ and the miracle. The frescoes (1357-64) in the later chapel also represent the miracle. See the discussion of the influence of the tabernacles in Orvieto in Chapters Four and Five of this study. The miracle itself, as a historical fact, is not supported by strong evidence, nor is the tradition altogether consistent. The miracle is related in the inscription on a slab of red marble in the church of Santa Christina in Bolsena and is of a later date than the 1328 canonization of St. Thomas Aquinas. The oldest dated record is contained in the enamel "histories" that adorn the front of the reliquary (1337-39). It should be noted that in the narratives of the miracle cited by Fumi (Il Santuario del SS. Corporale nel Duomo di Orvieto, Ricordo del XV Congresso Eucaristico di Orvieto, Rome, 1896, 73) the reliquary is called "tabernaculum D.N.J.C.", or "tabernaculum...pro D.N.J.C.", or, again, "tabernacolo del Corpo di Xpo."

For the history of the legend and the history of the chapel of the Sacrament devoted to the miracle see Fumi, Il Santuario, 22 and 75-76 and for the inscriptions on the marble tabernacle dedicated to the Corporale, see Fumi, 111-117.

See Borsook "Cults and Imagery," 149-50; Trexler Public Life, passim and plate 16 which illustrates the Corpus Christi procession in Florence.

As well as the miracles, the chapel frescoes (1357-64) represents, among other scenes, Urban IV's command that Thomas Aquinas write the office of the Corpus Domini (see Fumi, Il Santuario, 22). Gregory XI, in a Brief of 25 June 1337, gives a short account of the miracle, and many
of the stories was a priest who, while performing the Catholic rite at the church of Santa Christina in Bolsena, doubted the corporeal presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist (Figure 228). When the Host began to bleed onto the corporal on the altar, the previously doubt-filled priest was immediately convinced of the actuality of the Transubstantiation. As one version of the story states, like the apostle Thomas, the doubtful priest exclaimed, "Dominus meus et deus meus," in recognition of the True Presence. Along with the important account of doubt references to it are found in the fifteenth century. For example, see the sermons of the Dominican preacher Leonardo Mattei of Undine ("In festo Corp. Christ, XIV, ed. Venice, 1652, 59) and St. Antoninus of Florence ("Chronica", III, 19, xiii, 1); the latter, however, does not say (as the local legend recites) that the priest doubted the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, but merely that a few drops from the chalice fell on the corporal. There is also evidence to suggest that Verrocchio knew first-hand of the miracle of Bolsena as represented in Orvieto. A document of 1461 regarding a competition for the design for the Oratorio della Madonna della Tavola in the Cathedral of Orvieto says, "Desiderio scultori pro uno designiio facta pro dicta capella. Andrea Michaeli pro uno desegno pro dicta capella. Juliano Leonardi de Florentia pro I designo pro supradicta capella." The three artists named are Desiderio, Verrocchio and Guilian da Maiano, thus suggesting that Verrocchio may well have visited Orvieto Cathedral in his quest for the commission of the Oratorio and would certainly have noted the important chapel dedicated to the relic. For more on the relic and the monuments dedicated to it see Fumi, Il Duomo di Orvieto, 433; for the design for the Oratorio see Beck, "Desiderio (and Pollaiuolo): Problems," note 20.

571 I. Taurisano, "Per la festa di S. Tommaso d' Aquino," Il Rosario Memorie Domenicane, XXXIII, 1916, 114-115. It seems apparent that the story of the Mass of Bolsena, rather than other Host miracles, was repeated frequently by Dominicans because it was alleged to have been associated closely with the writing of Thomas Aquinas' office of the Corpus Domini. In addition, in the mid-fifteenth century,
and proof told in the Mass of St. Gregory, the story of the bleeding Host of Bolsena connects the subject of doubt, and particularly the apostle Thomas's disbelief, directly to the Eucharist.

Various versions of the miraculous Mass of Bolsena, some more explicit than others, were current in Florence throughout the fifteenth century. The pervasive concern with the physical as well as the spiritual presence of Christ in the Host occasioned the biblical story of incredulity to be inextricably bound to the contemporary dogmatic meaning of the Resurrection. Thus a strong link was also forged between Thomas the Apostle's doubt and eucharistic iconography. Not only was the visualization of the risen Christ used repeatedly in the context of the Sacrament, but also the biblical exemplar of inadequate faith, Thomas, shared in the eucharistic leitmotif. It is clear, therefore, that any representation of Thomas in his role as the doubter of the risen Christ,\textsuperscript{572} would conjure

the Dominicans were involved in the controversy regarding the Holy Blood (see note 546 above) and the emphasis on eucharistic issues was an important factor in the Order's political life. The Mass of Bolsena could be regarded as one of the Dominican order's claims to fame in the arena of eucharistic miracles and instigated the Order's legendary contribution to Christian theology. It was in Dominican interest to keep the story alive, since it reminded the viewer or listener of the preeminence of the Offices for the feast of the Corpus Christi attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas.

\textsuperscript{572} Thomas's role as doubter was predominate in the Quattrocento and asserted itself in images depicting other moments of his life. One obvious example is the apocryphal scene, most publicly represented on the Porta della
up these ingrained associations. Because of contemporary spiritual concerns, both the patron and artist of a commission intended to represent Thomas’s doubt would be well aware of this culturally pervasive meaning, since it was part of a larger cultural meaning. While still a common symbol for unfounded disbelief in our own secular age, we have largely divested the doubting Thomas metaphor of its specific didactic usage. However, in fifteenth-century Florence, with its cultural integration of religion into daily life, Thomas’s doubt, whatever other connotations it may have accumulated, still related directly to the important issue of Transubstantiation, the ritual equivalent of the Resurrection. Thus Verrocchio’s commission to sculpt the figures of Christ and Thomas, including the inscriptions that make its intent explicit, was colored by its contemporary eucharistic context.

The Orsanmichele Niche as a Setting for Christ and the Doubtful Thomas

While the fifteenth-century understanding of the Incredulity provides a cultural context in which to view Verrocchio’s figures, there is another pressing reason to reevaluate the sculptural group. The physical setting of Mirandola of Florence Cathedral, in which the Virgin passes down her girdle as proof of her bodily assumption. Among others, a more explicit reference to the doubt of the Resurrection/Transubstantiation, one finds the same theme in Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper in the Cenacolo of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, where the figure of Thomas indicates his need for proof with a rhetorical gesture.
the Christ and Thomas greatly increased the potency of the eucharistic associations and provided another compelling motive for the decision to use this particular scene involving Thomas. The old Parte Guelfa niche was a monument of special historical significance; when viewed in context it becomes obvious that this niche was an important part of Verrocchio's iconographic program. It is my contention that it was used to connect, visually and intellectually, the implicit contemporary meaning of Thomas's incredulity with the presentation of Verrocchio's Resurrected Savior as the eucharistic Christ of the Mass.

Although the niche was originally meant to house an altogether different sculpture, Verrocchio was able to meaningfully integrate the existing structure with his sculptural group. The sculptor's ability to achieve an iconographic interdependency between figures and architecture was due to a long-standing visual relationship between the niche and sculpted tabernacles of the Sacrament. As we have seen, the basic architectural forms and decorative motifs of Host tabernacles were derived from antique funerary sculpture and related to the Orsanmichele niche. Because of this crucial connection between the architectural surround of the niche and Sacrament tabernacles, the existing architecture of the
Mercanzia's niche became an essential iconographic ingredient in the final form of Verrocchio's group.573

The niche had made a startling impression on the artistic population of Florence; in a single monument it set forth the general visual principles for Quattrocento furnishings. A combination of pilasters, spiral colonettes, triumphal arch, and triangular pediment, served as a foundation for the additional funerary motifs derived from classical commemorative monuments. It provided not just an appropriate setting for a patron saint, be also enhanced the meaning of the whole sculpture. As we have seen, the Host receptacle generally immured in the wall near the altar (and occasionally free-standing), assumed unprecedented dimensions, sculptural enrichment, and a new, more explicitly eucharistic iconography in the early Renaissance in Florence. Ever more elaborate tabernacles were commissioned from leading

573 A number of scholars have noted the visual connection between Host containers and the orsanmichele niche. In his seminal study on Host tabernacles, Caspary (Sakramentstabernakel, 13), connects the niche to a number of different tabernacles. More recently, Pope-Hennessy (Luca della Robbia, 33) states that the architecture of Luca's marble tabernacle at Peretola, commissioned for the church of Sant'Egidio in Florence in 1441, had two precedents, the Parte Guelfa niche on Orsanmichele and the painted surround of Masaccio's Trinity fresco in Santa Maria Novella of the mid-1420s. However, scholars have not addressed the question of a possible iconographic connection which naturally arises concerning the formal derivation, particularly in light of the fact that artists who established the classicizing tabernacle-type seem to have been well aware of the funerary application of these motifs. For a discussion of the niche see above, Chapter Three, esp. pp. 120ff. and 153ff.
artists, and one can trace their stylistic and iconographic consolidation (and variation), but the classicizing architectural formula endured.

Receptacles for the storage of the consecrated Host were ubiquitous and venerated monuments in the Quattrocento, and though their individual importance was later undermined by the Counter-Reformation,\textsuperscript{574} to the faithful of fifteenth-century Florence they were of far greater visual and ecclesiastical significance than their treatment in the context of Renaissance sculpture would seem to indicate. Throughout the Quattrocento, the importance of these monuments was tied to a constant emphasis placed on the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ. Not only was the Corpus verum the subject of much sermonizing by the most influential preachers of the day,\textsuperscript{575} but in Florence there were private uses of the consecrated Host wafer, as well as civic directives regarding proper respect for the "Body of Christ."\textsuperscript{576} It is hardly surprising that artists sought a distinctive form in which to house the Eucharist - one that would make its meaning explicit. Its substance involved the whole cycle of redemption achieved by means of Christ’s

\textsuperscript{574} Caspary, \textit{Sakramentstabernakel}, 9, note 21.

\textsuperscript{575} See Chapter One of this dissertation for a discussion of the role of preaching in the popular concept of the Eucharist. For an example of this kind of sermonizing see San Bernardino, \textit{Prediche}, 211-212.

\textsuperscript{576} Trexler, \textit{Public Life}, 55.
humanity, from Incarnation through Entombment and Resurrection and finally, in its ultimate ritual form, Transubstantiation.  

Host Tabernacles and the Orsanmichele Niche in the Second Half of the Century

While scholars have noted the motif-borrowing from the Orsanmichele niche in the genesis of wall tabernacles, there has been no art historical recognition of a renewed interest in the niche formula in the second half of the fifteenth century. However, artists of this period manifestly understood the original visual connection between Eucharistic receptacles and the Orsanmichele niche. This knowledge on the part of later Quattrocento sculptors is integrally bound to our thorough understanding of the singularly timely meaning of the life-like figures of Christ and Thomas on Orsanmichele.

This continuation of artistic interest can be established by looking at Florentine tabernacles of the 1460s. Of special interest is an example from the church

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By the 1460s the cycle of redemption in the iconography of Sacrament tabernacles found a new means of expression with large tabernacle/altar ensembles (see Chapter Seven above). In one of the most elaborate tabernacles Desiderio sculpted not only more traditional symbols of the Eucharist, but also included the new element of the infant Christ standing in a chalice at the top of the structure. See Kurz ("A group of Florentine Drawings for an Altar," 48) for his discussion of the image of the "Sakramentsmuhle." and pp. 324-325 above for a more extensive discussion of the cycle of redemption as exemplified by the Child in the chalice.
of Santa Chiara in Florence, attributed to Antonio Rossellino and his shop, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Figure 230). In this tabernacle, all of the traditional motifs standardized by Bernardo's shop are used once again and, in addition, a newly revived structural motif makes its appearance. Spiral columns placed within the larger fluted pilasters, in imitation of the Orsanmichele niche, appear for the first time. This specific combination of architectural elements cannot be found on earlier extant tabernacles. In the Santa Chiara tabernacle, this redirecting of artistic attention to an earlier visual source is particularly clear and

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578 Caspary Sakramentstabernakel, 26, reproduces this tabernacle and concurs with the Victoria and Albert Museum attribution to Antonio Rossellino, as does A.D. Fraser Jenkins, "A Florentine Marble Tabernacle with a Door by Francesco Granacci," Burlington Magazine, CVII, 1975, 44-47. Because of certain inconsistencies in its execution, despite its overall quality, the tabernacle appears to be a workshop production.

579 The tabernacle, dated in the mid to late 1460s, was purchased with the Cappella Maggiore and the high altar of the church of Santa Chiara, and is mounted in the central part of Leonardo Tasso's high altar. (See Pope-Hennessy, Catalogue of Italian Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1964, vol. I, 128-129, and 177-179.) The conservation report states that an examination of the altar structure confirmed that it was designed as a setting for the tabernacle. Paul Williamson, Curator of Medieval Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum very kindly allowed me to inspect and photography this tabernacle, made the conservation report available to me, and obtained additional measurements of the flanking pilasters and columns. It should be noted that the spiral colonettes do not adhere completely to those of the Orsanmichele niche. Instead, the tabernacle sculptor used a corinthian type capital rather than the awkwardly compressed, composite ionic volutes of the niche.
demonstrates that Florentine artists, working in close proximity to Verrocchio,\textsuperscript{580} were still well aware of the formal relationship between these important monuments.

As we have seen, the Orsanmichele niche as well as other contemporary monuments of the 1420s, provided one of the models for a new visual formula for Sacrament tabernacles. Because the formula was not slavishly adhered to, but altered according to the iconographic and economic needs of different ecclesiastical sites and decades, it would be understandable if sculptors had never again referred back to the Orsanmichele niche as a source of inspiration for Host tabernacles. Instead, what one finds is an unusual circumstance in which a second generation Florentine sculptor alters an established shop type to adhere more closely to its artistic heritage, demonstrating an active interest in and knowledge of the visual connection between the Orsanmichele niche and

\textsuperscript{580} Verrocchio appears to have had close contact with the major sculptors of tabernacles. Even aside from the question of his training, Andrea was given the commission for the tomb of Piero and Giovanni de' Medici after the installation of Desiderio's tabernacle in the chapel adjacent to the "old" Sacristy. (For the Medici tomb see Passavant, \textit{Verrocchio}, 12-14 and 172-173; Seymour, \textit{Verrocchio}, 52; for the most recent discussion of the tomb see Wendy Stedman Sheard, "Verrocchio's Medici Tomb and the Language of Materials," \textit{Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Sculpture}, 63-90.) In addition, Luca della Robbia, whose shop had created numerous Host tabernacles and related monuments, received the commission to provide the Mercanzia with a coat of arms for the Orsanmichele niche, the Parte Guelfa's having been previously eradicated. For the coat of arms see Pope-Hennessy, \textit{Luca della Robbia} and Passavant, \textit{Verrocchio}, 176.
eucharistic receptacles. As with any Florentine citizen, the Rossellino’s familiarity with the niche is easily accounted for, because the Parte Guelfa possessed a place of great honor and prominence on Orsanmichele, the central niche on the main route between the Piazza del Duomo and the Piazza della Signoria. In addition, it is evident that the commemorative motifs of Donatello’s setting for St. Louis were thoroughly absorbed by mid-century into the vocabulary of these important church furnishings and had become a part of many Florentines’ daily visual experience. While there may have been no specific iconographic connection beyond the general commemorative meaning of classicizing funerary motifs, with the passage of time and the creation of hundreds of Tuscan wall tabernacles, the structure became an integral part of the complex symbolism regarding the Eucharist.

By 1466, when Verrocchio was commissioned by the Mercanzia to sculpt their patron saint, due to the proliferation of classicizing receptacles, Florentine artists were visually accustomed to the format of these monuments and would have automatically associated the structure and motifs of the niche with eucharistic iconography. The veneration of the Host was largely a visual experience in the fifteenth century; it was most
important to see the Host during the elevation at mass.  

This circumstance provided an opportunity for Verrocchio to create an extraordinary sculptural statement.

The providential interrelationship amongst the niche, the figures of Christ and St. Thomas, and Sacrament tabernacles would have been intelligible to any Florentine of conventional church-going habit, since the images this interrelationship evoked concerned some of the central theological issues of the day. It is my belief that Verrocchio availed himself of the relationship in order to unite the theme of the doubting Thomas with the eucharistic implications of the niche. In order to understand their impact on Verrocchio's monument, it is important to review the system of symbols on Host receptacles.

Rich with meaning, both implicit and explicit, a Christian classicizing "tabernacle" of any type - church edifice, niche, or container for the Host - is a sanctuary, particularly a sanctuary for the body of Christ. In this way, all tabernacles are on some level related. The visual format of Host receptacles set forth the process by which the faithful could achieve ideal accord with God in the New Covenant, as established by Christ in his institution of the Eucharist and his promise

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Dumoutet, Le Désir de voir l'hostie, passim. For the viewing of the Host see also pp. 35-36, 51-55, and 76-78 of this dissertation.
of redemption through the miracle of resurrection celebrated perpetually in the Mass. By the mid-fifteenth century the tabernacle structure itself, with its sculpturally enriched exterior, had the advantage of an iconography so well known that anyone could immediately associate the exterior symbols with the contents of the interior.

With variations for the specific needs of its location, the iconography of the Corpus verum, often underscored by an Eagle of St. John on the console, is reiterated in every part of the sculptural unit: the God the Father in the pediment blesses and sanctions the Sacrifice, the angels focus on the sportello in adoration, and the sportello itself. The door was set apart from the surrounding marble or limestone, and often held an explicit reference to the eucharistic Christ. The surrounding classical motifs, reinforced the central commemorative and resurrectional meaning. In addition, because the Host receptacle provided a kind of tomb for the body of Christ, these motifs served to highlight the implicit connection of the tabernacle to the Holy Sepulchre. In an altar retable for San Gregorio in Celio, Rome, the connection between the tabernacle and the Holy Sepulchre is clearly envisioned on the vertical axis

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582 For this iconography, related to the Gnadenstuhl, see Freiberg, "Tabernaculum Dei," 26.

Indeed, since the consecrated Host was reserved inside the tabernacle, rather than on display (as in a monstrance on the altar), the entire sculptural program of Sacrament tabernacles created a poignant visual stand-in for the Host.

The intimate relationship between the sacred contents and the external system of symbols of Sacrament tabernacles is crucial to this discussion of the meaning of Verrocchio's Christ and Thomas. The artistic recognition and continued derivation of the structure and fundamental funerary motifs from the Parte Guelfa niche for use in Sacrament tabernacles, facilitated an association of the niche with a eucharistic iconography. The niche's relief sculpture, nearly identical with many Sacrament tabernacles, could be read in Quattrocento Florence with the same eucharistic meanings. In addition, the triangular pediment of the niche contained a representation of the Trinity. This symbol would have been particularly fortuitous for the iconographic program of the Mercanzia's sculpture because the Eucharist was considered to be a glorification of the Trinity.544

544 Schmaus, "La Trinite et L'Eucharistie," 699-707. The three-headed Trinity also appears on a small ciborium attributed to Filarete, now in Vienna. (See Middendorf, "Un Rame inciso del Quattrocento," 273-279.) The representation of the Trinity with three faces does not appear very often on extant Sacrament receptacles in Florence after mid-century. This circumstance is probably due to St. Antoninus who disapproved of the symbol as a doctrinally incorrect way of depicting the Trinity (see above pp. 285f and notes 456-457).
Further, considering the nature of the sculpture that Verrocchio was commissioned to insert into the niche, one finds an additional and even more explicit visual parallel.

In Sacrament tabernacles, the use of a standing figure of the Risen Christ was one type of eucharistic image depicted on the sportello. The fundamental characteristics of this type of standing full-length Christ can be found, quite early in the evolution of the fifteenth-century tabernacle, on the sportello of incised copper that was part of Bernardo Rossellino's tabernacle for the Badia in Florence (see Figure 149). The gilded figure of the Redeemer would have been the central focal point in Bernardo's receptacle, as it was in many later tabernacles. This type of timeless devotional image of Christ, bleeding into a chalice, is related to Verrocchio's Savior, both because of the formal equation of Host tabernacles to the niche and a thematically similar representation of the image of Christ. Each provide proof of the corporeal presence of Christ and focus on the wounds which yield evidence of the resurrection; both offer their bodies to the faithful for redemption. By the time Verrocchio's sculptural group was finally finished in 1483, the image of the standing

See Middeldorf (as in Note 564, above), 273ff, for a discussion of this sportello in the context of other Redeemer figures. See also Schulz (Bernardo Rossellino, 93-95).
Redeemer had been absorbed into a type of Roman Sacrament tabernacle. This variety, in which the bleeding Christ often stands in the lunette above the sportello, furnishes a widespread, contemporary prototype for visualizing Christ in his miraculous and perpetual resurrection (Figure 232).

Reflections of Verrocchio's figure of Christ are numerous, but one particular image from the early sixteenth century has extraordinary relevance to the present discussion. Baccio da Montelupo, the same sculptor who is documented as having made a replica of the infant Christ for Desiderio's tabernacle in San Lorenzo, Florence, created a Sacrament tabernacle (Figure 233) for the church of San Lorenzo in Segromigno Monte (near Lucca). While the iconography of this tabernacle is based in part on Desiderio's tabernacle for San Lorenzo in Florence, since it includes an infant Christ at the apex of the pediment, it is also clearly derived from the niche

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586 Anne Markham Schulz originally brought this tabernacle to my attention in a talk given at the Verrocchio conference of 1988. Schulz discusses this tabernacle in relation to the issue of the infant Christ in "Glosses on the Career of Desiderio da Settignano," 179-188 (esp. pp. 182-186). For other reflections of Verrocchio's Christ figure see Alan Phipps Darr, "Verrocchio's Legacy: Observations Regarding His Influence on Pietro Torrigiani and Other Florentine Sculptors," Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Italian Sculpture, 125-139. See also Seymour, Verrocchio, for images that show the influence of Verrocchio's figure.

587 Schulz ("Glosses on the Career of Desiderio da Settignano," 183), cites documents that record the commission from Baccio da Montelupe in 1518 and payment for it during the following year.
on Orsanmichele. The triangular pediment contains the outmoded representation of a three-headed Trinity a là Donatello (by the sixteenth century truly an anomaly), and the central area contains a three-quarter length man of sorrows, bleeding into a chalice. This awkward, ill-proportioned Host receptacle plainly demonstrates the eucharistic perception of Verrocchio's beautiful monument.

Another point must be made concerning the unveiling of the sculptural ensemble on Orsanmichele. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in his diary Landini records that the sculpture was revealed to the public on the birth day of the Baptist in June 1483. San Giovanni Battista was associated in several ways with eucharistic iconography; moreover, the day of the Baptist's birth generally coincided with the octave of Corpus Domini. Thus the day the Mercanzia chose to reveal the completed Christ and St. Thomas fell within the annual observance of the most consequential and public celebration of the Eucharist.

The Iconography of Verrocchio's Incredulity of Thomas

Underscored by the eucharistic implications of its formal connection to Host tabernacles, the iconographic program of niche and sculptural group together effectively provide the double, if contradictory, impact of the physical proof of the Resurrection and the lesson of

588 As in note 527 above.
perfect faith in Christ as Redeemer. These implications were further promoted by the inclusion of the biblical passage and made manifest by the addendum "Et Salvator Gentium." Rather than the single figure of the Mercanzia's patron saint, Thomas, there could be no more appropriate sculpture for this setting than the Savior in the context of a large Sacrament tabernacle.

The visual equivalency between the Orsanmichele niche and Sacrament tabernacles was so firmly entrenched by the second half of the century, that by the time the Mercanzia took possession of the niche, the implicit parallels must have been accepted by artist and patron alike. When the need for a new sculpture arose, specifically intended by the Mercanzia to exceed in magnificence the sculptures of the surrounding guilds, this long-standing relationship was fully exploited. Moreover, the connection was made even more obvious because of the time of year chosen for the unveiling; like Landini, the populace of Florence would have been impressed by the sheer beauty of the sculpture and would have seen it in the context of the octave of the Corpus Domini when eucharistic awareness was at its annual zenith.

Verrocchio integrated his figures into the existing niche in an unprecedented way in order to invoke the visual equivalence. Christ stands on a low pedestal

589 For the Mercanzia's intentions see note 529 above.
inside the niche, exhibiting his wounds, in the space analogous to the focal point, the sportello, in Host tabernacles (Figure 234). Thomas is relegated to the ledge outside the aedicula, penetrating the viewer’s space, and directing us to the image of Christ within the tabernacle (Figure 235). To ensure the viewer’s identification of the Real Presence, a timeless reality is denoted in Christ’s serene visage and in the slow rhythmic forms of his drapery. Verrocchio juxtaposed this eternal image of the risen Christ to the livelier reality of the vibrantly human, halo-less Thomas. He leans inward, like the angels focusing on the door of Eucharist receptacles. The monument consolidates a complete iconographic statement in the architecture and the interaction of Christ and Thomas. Verrocchio thus represents a multifaceted eucharistic vision; Christ is not only like the sportello Redeemer of Host tabernacles but, in addition, he resides in the tabernacle like the Host (Figure 236). Illustrating the words of the inscription, "Et Salvator Gentium," the Savior, with a gesture of benediction, offers the elements of his body for the redemptive benefit of the faithful who accept his resurrection, without direct physical evidence, in the form of the transubstantiated Host (Figure 236).

The notion of the whole and uncorrupted Body is found in the Orsanmichele niche in the intrinsic spiritual content of the Incredulity of Thomas. As we have seen,
the figure of Thomas directs the viewer, both physically and symbolically, toward the Real Presence of Christ in the tabernacle, and instructs the faithful in the meaning of the manifestation of the resurrected Savior offering his body for the redemption of mankind. Thus Verrocchio’s aesthetic resolution also serves to assert its specific eucharistic meaning: through Christ’s sacrificial death, not only is his rebirth in the Resurrection implicit but, in addition, despite earthly mortality the redemption and spiritual rebirth of mankind is guaranteed through the Savior’s body as the transubstantiated Host.

The artist took full advantage of the opportunity provided by the subject of doubt and the contemporary connection between the ubiquitous Host receptacles and the architecture of the niche. In the context of a tabernacle for the Body of Christ, Verrocchio’s Savior appears to Thomas, the archetypal doubter, as the physically evidenced Christ of the Resurrection and as the Corpus Verum of the Eucharist. Andrea del Verrocchio provided his patrons with a sculptural ensemble that, by its unique interweaving of form and content, could not be effectively copied, nor could it be equalled.
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b. St. Clare Repelling the Saracens with the Host (Detail of Figure 4a)
5. Altar stem, Baptistery, Baptistery, Ravenna
6. a. Pyx (Suspensorium), Bargello, Florence

b. Baldachin with hanging pyx over altar, 15th c., Book of Hours of King René of Anjou
7. **Christ in Majesty between Old and New Law**, 
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8. Cosmati School, Sacrament Tabernacle, SS. Cosmas and Damian, Rome

9. Sacrament Tabernacle, Gothic Wooden Aumbry, Wenduyne
11. Monstrance, French, Wadsworth Atheneum, Cambridge, Massachusetts

14. Master of St. Francis
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68. Detail of Figure 67
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71. Filarete (attributed), door to Host tabernacle (with Man of Sorrows, Annunciation, and Trinity), c. 1438-47, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

72. Detail of Figure 63
73. a. Antique Sarcophagus, Camposanto, Pisa

b. Detail of "door"

74. Detail of Figure 67
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84. Donatello, Crozier, detail, Orsanmichele, Florence
85. Pietro Lorenzetti (shop), Last Supper, Lower Church, Assisi
86. a. Monstrance, German, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge
86. b. Monstrance (with Baptism), Flemish or German, late 15th C., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
87. Chalice, Sienese

87. b. Nino Pisano, Redeemer with Chalice, Cathedral, Orvieto
88. Marble Krater, neo-Attic, Camposanto, Pisa
89. Tomb Monument, 1st c. C.E., Villa Albani, Rome

90. Cinerary Urn of Zetho Corinthus, Camposanto, Pisa
91. Throne of Saturn, fragment of the "Ravenna Thrones," Museo Archeologico, Venice

92. Benedetto da Maiano, Ciborium, San Domenico, Siena
93. Vecchietta, Ciborium for Host, Duomo, Siena
94. Tino da Camaino and Andrea della Robbia, Tabernacle, Altar, and Baptismal Font, Montepulciano

95. Giovanni della Robbia, Font and Tabernacle, San Giovanni Battista, Galatrona
96. Faith with Chalice, Baptistery Font, Siena

97. John the Baptist, Baptistery Tabernacle, Siena
98. David, Baptistery Tabernacle, Siena
99. *Madonna and Child*, Baptistery Tabernacle, Siena
100. Annunciation to Zacharias,
Siena Baptistery Font
101. Tabernacle of the Corporal (front), Cathedral, Orvieto
102. Tabernacle of the Corporal (back), Cathedral, Orvieto
103. Retable, St. Martin's, Landshut

104. Retable (drawing from Braun), St. Martin's, Landshut
105. Diagram of Host Reservation in Retable, Ebsdorf
   a. Door to Host reservation
   b. Back of retable with access to Host
   c. Cross section of Host tabernacle
106. Jan and Hubert van Eyck, Ghent Altarpiece, San Bavo, (formerly San Giovanni Battista), Ghent
107. Reconstruction (Lotte Brand Phillip), Ghent Altarpiece

108. Spanish Artist, Fountain of Life, Prado, Madrid
109. Sacrament House, Collegiate Church, St. Peter, Louvain
110. Donatello, *Feast of Herod*, Baptistery Font, Siena

111. Ghiberti, *Baptism of Christ*, Baptistery Font, Siena
112. Font and Tabernacle (with Crucifixion fresco), Baptistery, Siena
113. Donatello, Tabernacle of the Sacrament, Sagrestia dei Benificiati, St. Peter’s, Rome
114. a. Altar and Choir, San Clemente, Rome
114. b. Host Tabernacle, San Clemente, Rome
115. a. Cosmati School, Sacrament Tabernacle, SS. Cosmas and Damian, Rome

b. Altar Retable, S. Maria in Aracoeli, Rome
116. Chapel of the Miracle, Cathedral, Orvieto

117. Tabernacle, Chapel of the Miracle, Cathedral, Orvieto
118. a. Tomb Altar, Louvre, Paris

b. Tomb Altar, Lateran Museum, Rome
118. a. Tomb Altar, Louvre, Paris

b. Tomb Altar, Lateran Museum, Rome
119. Instruments of Sacrifice, fragments from frieze, Museo Capitolino, Rome
121. Antique Sarcophagus, King Minos Preparing to Make Sacrifice, Villa Borghese, Rome

122. Roman Sarcophagus, 3rd C., Sant’Agnese fuori le mura, Rome
123. Detail of Figure 113, putti in socle

124. Roman Sarcophagus, 3rd C. (formerly in Cathedral), Museo, Diocesano, Cortona

125. Roman Sarcophagus (lid), SS. Cosmas and Damiano, British Museum, London
126. Detail of Figure 113, upper portion with entablature and pediment

127. Sarcophagus (with eros on lid), Vatican Museum, Rome
128. Detail of Figure 113, Entombment
129. Meleager Sarcophagus, Wilton House, Wiltshire, England

130. Meleager Sarcophagus, Torno Collection, Milan
131. Tino da Camaino, Tomb of Cardinal Ricardo Petroni, Duomo, Siena
132. Donatello, St. Mark, Orsanmichele, Florence
133. a. Sarcophagus, Vatican, Rome

b. Roman Sarcophagus, Camposanto, Pisa

c. Detail of 133b
134. B. Rossellino, frieze from Sacrament Tabernacle, fragment, Badia, Florence

135. B. Rossellino, console from Sacrament Tabernacle, fragment, Badia, Florence
136. Antique Sarcophagus (with 14th c. inscription), Camposanto, Pisa
137. a. Cinerary Urn of Scribonia Hedone, Camposanto, Pisa

137. b. Cinerary Urn of Zetho Corinthus, Camposanto, Pisa
138. a. Bernardo Rossellino (workshop), Sacrament Tabernacle, Pieve di San Giovanni Battista, Remole
b. Detail of 138a
139. Donatello, niche for St. Louis, Orsanmichele, Florence
140. Bernardo Rossellino,
Palazzo della Fraternità, Arezzo
141. Bernardo Rossellino, Tabernacle of the Sacrament, (Santa Maria Nuova), now in Sant’Egidio, Florence
142. Detail of Figure 141, pediment

143. Detail of Figure 141, Host and chalice
144. Luca della Robbia, Sacrament Tabernacle, formerly in Sant' Egidio, Florence, now in Santa Maria, Peretola
145. Antique Funerary Altar, 1st c. C.E., Villa Albani, Rome

146. Tomb of the Savelli Family, S. Maria in Aracoeli, Rome
147. Detail of Figure 144, pediment
148. Detail of Figure 144, central part of tabernacle
150. Pyx suspended over altar, ms. illum., 14th c.
151. Christ as the eucharistic Man of Sorrows, woodcut
title page of Savonarola Tractato della Humilità

152. St. Francis Master,
Miracle of San Damiano,
Upper Church, Assisi
151. Christ as the eucharistic Man of Sorrows, woodcut title page of Savonarola Tractato della Humilità

152. St. Francis Master, Miracle of San Damiano, Upper Church, Assisi
153. Ghiberti, *Sportello*, for S. Maria Nuova, Florence
154. Christ in Majesty, apse, Sant'Angelo in Formis
155. Christ in Majesty, apse, Santa Pudenziana, Rome
156. Giotto (attributed), Stefaneschi Altar, Vatican Museum, Rome
157. Jan and Hubert van Eyck, Christ, Ghent Altarpiece, San Bavo, Ghent
159. Tabernacle, French, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

158. Pyx with Christ Enthroned, Bargello, Florence
160. Melchizedek as Priest Holding Host,
Biblia Pauperum, Landesbibliothek, Weimar
161. Detail of Figure 144, sportello and dove

162. Francesco Granacci, painted Man of Sorrows, sportello (installed in 15th c. tabernacle), National Museum, Cardiff
163. Sacrament Tabernacle, late 15th c., San Giovanni dei Genovesi, Rome

164. School of Francesco di Simone, Sacrament Tabernacle, Cathedral, Cortona
166. Vierge Ouvrante,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
a. closed
b. open
168. Sacrament Tabernacle, Sant'Eugenio, Villa di Monastero, Siena

169. Sacrament Tabernacle with Annunciation (Gothic aumbry), Sainte Vérone, Leefdael
170. Sacrament Tabernacle with Annunciation (Gothic aumbry), Church of the Holy Spirit, Rothenburg ob der Tauber
171. Early Christian Sarcophagus with Annunciation (originally for Braccioforte Chapel), Ravenna
172. a. Arch of the Argentarii, Rome

b. Detail
173. Cinerary Altar of C. Julius Hermes, Vigna Codini, Rome

174. Cippe of Julia Victorina (back), Louvre, Paris
175. Cinerary Urn, Roman, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris
176. Dionysian Sarcophagus (formerly in Capitoline Museum, Rome), Louvre, Paris
178. Sacrament Tabernacle with Annunciation, San Francesco Romana, Rome

179. Desiderio da Settignano, Sacrament Tabernacle, San Lorenzo, Florence
182. Madonna Tabernacle, Collegiata, Impruneta
183. a. Sarcophagus, Christian, 270-280 C.E., Camposanto, Pisa

183. b. Sarcophagus, 3rd century C.E., Camposanto, Pisa
184. Donatello, tabernacle for Parte Guelfa, Orsanmichele

185. Fra Angelico, Linaiuoli Altar, Florence
186. Torrigiani Madonna, Bargello, Florence

187. Luca della Robbia, Madonna and Child, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
188. Agostino di Duccio, *Madonna and Child*, Bargello, Florence

189. Jean Fouquet, *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, Hours of Étienne Chevalier, Musée Condé, Chantilly
190. Mary as Priest distributing Host, Louvre, Paris
191. b. Luca della Robbia, Candle-bearing Angel, Duomo, Florence
192. Chapel of the Madonna, Collegiata, Impruneta
194. Frieze, Chapel of the Madonna, Collegiata, Impruneta
196. Luca della Robbia, St. Luke and St. Paul Tabernacle), Chapel of the Madonna, Collegiata
197. a. Madonna and Child
(above Chapel entrance),
Collegiata, Impruneta

b. Madonna and Child
(facing nave),
Collegiata, Impruneta
198. Chapel of the Crucifix, Collegiata, Impruneta
199. Tabernacle of the Crucifix, Collegiata, Impruneta
200. a-b. Details of adoring angels

201. Chapel of the Crucifix with original frieze
202. Donatello, High Altar (front), Sant'Antonio, Padua
203. Reconstruction of Santo High Altar (Janson)

204. Donatello, High altar (back), Sant’Antonio, Padua
205. Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d’Alemagna, 1443, Retable with tabernacle
206. Sportello, High Altar, Sant’Antonio, Padua

207. Giovanni Bellini, Redeemer, National Gallery, London
208. Donatello, Madonna and Child
Enthroned, High Altar, Sant’Antonio, Padua
209. Cinerary Altar of the Vitalis, Vatican, Rome

210. Sarcophagus (end), c.250 C.E., Camposanto, Pisa
211. Donatello, *Miracle of the Mule*,
High Altar, Sant'Antonio, Padua
212. Desiderio da Settignano, Sacrament Tabernacle, San Lorenzo, Florence
213. Desiderio da Settignano, Pietà, San Lorenzo, Florence

214. Christ Child, detail of Sacrament Tabernacle, San Lorenzo, Florence
215a-b. Acolyte angels, detail of Figure 212

216. Angels adoring Sacrament
217. Mill of the Sacrament, central part of Altar, Tribsees
218. a-b Tomb Altar of T. Flavius
Aug. L. Philetus, Vatican, Rome

219. Cinerary Altar of Stlaccia Elpis and Stlaccius Euthychus,
1st century C.E., Camposanto, Pisa
222. Cinerary Altar of Stlaccia Elpis and Stlaccius Euthychus, 1st century C.E., Camposanto, Pisa

223. Tomb Altar of M. Antoninus Januarius, National Museum, Naples
224. Tomb stele, (inscription effaced), Lateran Museum, Rome

225. Tomb Altar, Vatican, Rome
227. Inscription, detail of Figure 226

228. Miraculous Mass of Bolsena, Chapel of the Miracle, Cathedral, Orvieto
229. Tino da Camaino, detail, Tomb of Cardinal Petroni, Duomo, Siena
231. Altar and Host Tabernacle, San Gregorio in Celio, Rome

232. Sacrament Tabernacle, San Giovanni dei Genovesi, Rome
233. Baccio da Montelupo, Sacrament Tabernacle, San Lorenzo, Segromigno Monte

234. Detail of Figure 221