

Giuliano da Sangallo

Florence

by CAROLINE ELAM

THERE HAS BEEN a surge of interest in the past few years in the work of Giuliano da Sangallo (c.1443–1516), with the appearance of a long-awaited monograph on his religious and domestic architecture by Sabine Frommel, and a book of essays on all aspects of his multifarious activity – as woodworker, sculptor, designer of fortifications, student of antiquity and architect to a succession of important patrons, including Lorenzo the Magnificent, Julius II as both cardinal and pope, and finally Leo X.¹ This summer saw an exhibition of drawings at the **Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence** (closed 20th August), accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue by its co-curators.²

As Sabine Frommel observes in her introduction, Giuliano is the earliest Florentine architect for whom we have a substantial body of drawings. This is thanks to several factors, including his own recognition of the importance of draughtsmanship for his self-image and his membership of a dynasty

of architects who preserved their family's drawings for posterity. Sheets by Giuliano, his brother Antonio the Elder, his son Francesco, his nephew Antonio the Younger – to name only the best-known family members – passed into the hands of the Medici, Vasari, Mariette and the historian and collector Heinrich von Geymüller before finding their way to the Uffizi, forming the substantial nucleus of its important collection of Renaissance architectural drawings. The family's sense of history also ensured the survival of a few precious sheets by Bramante, some of which were in this show.

It might then seem a straightforward matter to mount an exhibition of Giuliano's drawings. But there is one snag. By far the greatest number are in two bound compilations: the large Barberini Codex on parchment in the Vatican, and the much smaller 'Taccuino' in the Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati in Siena. (Both are fair-copy model books rather than sketchbooks.) In addition to a multitude of studies after ancient buildings in Rome, Campania and Provence, these volumes contain the only surviving drawings by Giuliano for the celebrated buildings and projects associated with Lorenzo de' Medici. Neither was lent to the exhibition and, even if they had been, only

a double spread from each could have been exhibited. In their absence, a large computer screen showed the complete contents of the Siena book and a few pages from the Vatican codex. Giuliano's study of the Antique is the subject of an exemplary discussion in the catalogue by Dario Donetti, who shows that the systematic study of ancient Roman architecture – charge of which Raphael was subsequently given by Leo X – really began in Giuliano's circle.

The installation was both decorous and dramatic. A small room facing the staircase was used to great effect to show the dismountable tiers of Giuliano's 1489 wooden model for Palazzo Strozzi,³ the only surviving model of a domestic building from Renaissance Florence, together with large-format drawings by Giuliano and his circle, most spectacularly a gigantic sheet dated 1513 for a Medici palace on Piazza Navona. Looking at this alongside the Palazzo Strozzi model, the function of such a drawing, complete with annotations of room functions, was evident – it would have had to be hung vertically on a wall, to display all its features to the patron. Also in this room were projected Václav Sedý's beautiful recent black-and-white photographs of Giuliano's surviving architecture, beginning with Palazzo Cocchi on



70. *Standing male figure* (?Bagoa, aide to Holofernes), attributed to Giuliano da Sangallo (or Antonio da Sangallo the Elder?). Black chalk, pen and ink with wash and white heightening, 39.3 by 27.1 cm. (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, 155F).



71. *Judith with the head of Holofernes and her servant Abra*. Attributed to Giuliano da Sangallo (or Antonio da Sangallo the Elder?). Black chalk, pen and ink with wash and white heightening, 37.7 by 27 cm. (Albertina, Vienna, inv. no.4862; exh. Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence).



72. Project for the façade of a della Rovere church, c.1507–09, resubmitted for S. Lorenzo, by Giuliano da Sangallo. Black chalk, pen and ink with wash over blind stylus, 59.1 by 61.4 cm. (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence, 278A).



73. Project for the façade of a (?) della Rovere church, c.1507–09, resubmitted for S. Lorenzo, here attributed to Jacopo Sansovino. Black chalk, pen and ink with wash over blind stylus, 40.6 by 48.2 cm. (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence, 277A).

Piazza S. Croce and Palazzo Scala for Lorenzo's chancellor (now more accessible than it has been for decades since its conversion into a hotel), and ending with the fortress of Pisa, with its magnificent vaulted spaces, where Giuliano's love of antiquity vied with his long experience as a military architect.⁴

In the Gabinetto Disegni's traditional display area, drawings associated with or recording Giuliano's activity were arranged in thematic and roughly chronological order: projects for Lorenzo de' Medici in the 1480s; studies from throughout his career of ancient architecture in Rome; his involvement with St Peter's, first under Julius II, then briefly under Leo X; other projects for Rome, few of which were executed; and the sequence of drawings he and his brother Antonio made for the façade of S. Lorenzo in Florence before Michelangelo was awarded the contract in December 1516. A concluding section examined the figural drawings ascribed to the Sangallo brothers. An added bonus was the presence of the Botticelli school tondo from the National Gallery, London (cat. no.11.9), displayed to make visible the contemporary inscription in large letters on the back of the panel, 'M Giuliano da Sanghallo'. The much-debated significance of this inscription (not in Giuliano's hand, and certainly not a claim to authorship) is briefly mentioned in the catalogue. It was interesting to see that the lettering runs diagonally across the panel, not orientated in the same sense as the painting, which the inscription probably therefore predates. It seems likely that Giuliano both commissioned the tondo for his collection and supplied the panel: if so, he surely made the frame, which alas does not survive.

It was disappointing that, apart from a brief introductory text, no explanatory information was provided on the labels, not even suggested dates for the drawings. For the average visitor, it must have been rather baffling. For the informed enthusiast of Renaissance architecture, however, it was a visual feast, enriched by the detailed arguments developed in the catalogue. Regrettably, the actual entries are restricted to notes of medium, dimensions, inscriptions and bibliography, leaving matters of dating, authorship and interpretation to the thematic essays. Nonetheless, this book is an indispensable addition to the literature. Much is discussed in it that could not be exhibited, but this review will confine itself to a few observations arising from drawings that were on display.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the show for non-architectural historians was the opportunity it offered to assess the Uffizi's group of ambitious figural drawings traditionally ascribed to Giuliano and to compare these with very similar sheets given to his brother Antonio the Elder. Two judicious loans from the Albertina, Vienna, rounded out the picture. In the catalogue Marzia Faietti scrupulously reviews the evidence and attributional history, pointing out the complex interchange of views on the subject at the beginning of the twentieth century

between the great Giuliano scholar Cornelius von Fabriczy, the Gabinetto's Director Pasquale Nerino Ferri and Heinrich Geymüller – not to mention Bernard Berenson, who included Giuliano in his 1903 masterwork on Florentine drawings, going through notable changes of mind in subsequent editions. Faietti arrives at a group of five drawings that could be by Giuliano, including the two from the Albertina. One of them certainly and three possibly – according to her ingenious new hypothesis – represent scenes from the story of Judith and Holofernes, vigorously drawn in pen and ink with wash, one showing a demented Laocoön-like figure, possibly identifiable with Holofernes's henchman Bagoa, maddened by his master's murder (no.11.1; Fig.70). Also shown were two of the three sheets in the Uffizi after figures in Donatello's bronze doors in the Old Sacristy of S. Lorenzo (nos.11.6 and 11.7), convincingly given to Antonio the Elder. One of the most fascinating aspects of both groups of drawings is their allegiance to quattrocento Florentine models by Donatello, Botticelli or Ghirlandaio, as is also the case with the secure figural drawings by Giuliano in the Barberini and Siena books, and

with sheets certainly by Antonio. There are problems, however, with the proposed division of hands. Three of the drawings attributed to Giuliano have sketches by Antonio on their versos,⁵ and the Albertina's *Judith* (no.11.4; Fig.71) is much more atmospheric in handling than the same figure in the same pose drawn in the Siena *taccuino*. Can both be by Giuliano? One route to answering this question may be via a more detailed consideration of the figural elements on architectural drawings by the brothers.

Thus it was instructive to be able to make comparisons across the room with the superb array of proposals for the façade of the Medici church of S. Lorenzo, submitted to Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de' Medici before Giuliano's death in 1516 and assembled by him into an annotated group. These are lucidly discussed in an essay by Donetti, building on the excellent analysis in Georg Satzinger's book of 2011.⁶ Satzinger has shown convincingly that U280A (no.7.3; Fig.74), a grandiose, fully orthogonal project with two improbable campanili, is not, as traditionally thought, by Giuliano but instead by Antonio. It is noteworthy that the figure of St John the Baptist on the right-hand side of the

pediment is very similar in pose to the 'Bagoa'. The notion that Antonio's line is harder than that of Giuliano is not supported by the corresponding figure on the left, a ruminative St John the Evangelist, whose sensitive treatment recalls the Albertina *Judith*. Also made clear in this display (and touched on in the catalogue) was that a third hand was responsible for U277A (no.7.1; Fig.73), which is an earlier project recycled by Giuliano for the S. Lorenzo competition – its companion, U278A, by Giuliano himself (no.7.1; Fig.72), has a just visible della Rovere coat of arms. Satzinger has tentatively suggested that U277A might be by the young Jacopo Sansovino, who, Vasari tells us, lodged with Giuliano da Sangallo in Rome (c.1506–07). This can be supported by comparison of the swaying figures on the cornice with Sansovino's early sculpture, and by similarities in conception and draughting with a much later design in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for the Loggetta in Venice, attributed to Sansovino by Paul Davies.⁷ U277A was the most influential of all these projects on Michelangelo's first design for the S. Lorenzo façade, which won him the contract. (If it is by Sansovino, the fury he expressed to Michelangelo at being left out of the project becomes even more comprehensible.) It is a reminder that Giuliano's formulation of an architectural system that combined a strict tectonic framework with festive, triumphal arch-like sculptural decoration was to have a decisive impact on the architecture of the next generation. In this and so many other ways, Giuliano is much more than a quattrocento architect who failed to make the transition to the 'High Renaissance'.

¹ S. Frommel: *Giuliano da Sangallo*, Florence 2014; A. Belluzzi, C. Elam and F.P. Fiore, eds.: *Giuliano da Sangallo*, Milan 2017. A book by Cammy Brothers, *Giuliano da Sangallo and the Ruins of Rome*, is eagerly awaited

² Catalogue: *Giuliano da Sangallo. Disegni degli Uffizi*. By D. Donetti, S. Frommel and M. Faietti. 190 pp. incl. 104 col. pls. + 13 b. & w. ills. (Giunti and Firenze Musei, Florence, 2017), €35. ISBN 978-88-09-85698-1.

³ An important new study of the model by Amanda Lillie and Mauro Mussolin is in Belluzzi *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp.210–29.

⁴ The full sequence of photographs is reproduced in *ibid.*, pp.10–72.

⁵ These are the 'Bagoa' (Fig.70; no.11.1); Uffizi 262F, *Three female figures with putti* (no.11.8); and Albertina inv. no.48, *All'antica military scene (soldiers in front of Holofernes's tent?)* (no.11.5). The sketch of the Laocoön group in an elaborate niche on the verso of the Albertina drawing could be as late as 1531 (as noted in the catalogue, p.148, note 57). It is possible that Antonio inherited these sheets from Giuliano and reused them. There are black chalk sketches of tritons and nereids (tinted with red chalk, as in Antonio's drawings) on the verso of Uffizi 616O, *Group of warriors* (no.11.2), a pendant to the Albertina drawing.

⁶ G. Satzinger: *Michelangelo und die Fassade von San Lorenzo: zur Geschichte der Skulpturenfassade der Renaissance*, Munich 2011.

⁷ P. Davies: 'A project drawing by Jacopo Sansovino for the Loggetta in Venice', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 136 (1994), pp.487–97.



74. Project for the façade of S. Lorenzo, Florence, by Antonio da Sangallo the Elder (inscribed by a later hand GIVLIANO [P]A SAN GALLO). 1516. Black chalk, pen and ink with wash over blind stylus, 64.2 by 58.7 cm. (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence, 280A).