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**'Luxury Production, Consumption and the Art Market in Early Modern Europe'**

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***The art consumption in the early modern Florence. The collections of  
the aristocracy in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries\****

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to examine the consumption of art as a luxury and cultural good by some of the most important aristocratic Florentine families from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the last few decades, economic and social historians have developed an increasing interest in consumption and material culture. These authors have shown that there was a significant increase in the abundance and variety of material goods in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1993 Goldthwaite shifted the focus onto Renaissance Italy, and particularly to Florence, where new consumption habits of the upper urban class flourished. The Florentine elites began to build new town palaces, hire more servants, buy more and more sophisticated domestic furnishings, invest in patronage and increase their expenditure on jewelry, dishware and clothes. More recently historians focused on the role of cultural goods, such as books, paintings, engravings, porcelains and chinoiserie. These goods were considered beyond their role of symbols of wellbeing and wealth. They began to be used as a means of communication between different social groups and individuals. These trends have deeply affected the European art market. Only recently Italian historiography addressed this topic, but a thorough understanding of such phenomenon, as Ormrod and Goldthwaite (1999; 2003) have highlighted, is still lacking, compared- for example- to the knowledge about the Golden Age in the Netherlands.

In an attempt to fill the gap, this research aims at reconstructing art collections of the most important Florentine families, such as the Martelli, Riccardi and Salviati, over the centuries. Reconstruction of the art collections of the most important Florentine households will be matter of significant importance towards understanding art consumption, as a luxury and cultural good, and its relevance in Florence, and more generally, in Italy in the modern age.

**Keywords:** consumption, economics of art, demand for art, cultural economics.

**1. Introduction.** As Richard A. Goldthwaite observed a few years ago, works of art have rarely been examined from a merely economic point of view, as simple products, separate from their esthetic value<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, an important structural change took place during the Italian Renaissance in the demand for art: besides the essentially public and religious demand, a new and consistent private and secular demand emerged. The production of objects of art became an important economic activity<sup>2</sup>.

It is only in the last 50 years that economic, social and art historians and economists have started to show increasing interest in the economics of art. For a long time, economic-historical investigations into the relationship between economy and art were of a macroeconomic nature. Interest was focused on the relationship between the employment of wealth in activities and works of art. Only over the last 20 years has interest gradually started to be focused on the local conditions of production and demand<sup>3</sup>. Collaboration between economic and art historians has produced new detailed research into the Dutch art market in the modern age, particularly in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This has generated overall estimates of demand for and supply of paintings, and reliable data for the cities of Delft and Amsterdam on the average number of paintings per household<sup>4</sup>, as well as evaluations regarding the change in subjects represented in the individual paintings<sup>5</sup>. A common characteristic of these

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600*, The Johns Hopkins University Press Baltimore-London 1993.

<sup>2</sup> J. K. Lydecker, *Patriziato fiorentino e la committenza artistica per la casa*, in *I ceti dirigenti della Toscana del Quattrocento*, Francesco Papafava Editore Firenze 1987, pp. 209-221. On the early secularisation of Florentine art, see: M. Wackernagel, *The world of the Florentine Renaissance Artist. Projects and patrons, workshop and art market*, Princeton University Press Princeton University N.J 1981 (1st ed. Leipzig 1938).

<sup>3</sup> R. Lopez, *Hard Times and Investment in Culture, The Renaissance: Six Essays*, H. Holt and Company New York 1962, pp. 29-54; W. Brulez, *Cultuur en getal. Aspecten van de relatie economie-maatschappij-cultuur in Europa tussen 1400 en 1800*, Nederlandse Vereniging tot beoefening van de Sociale Geschiedenis Amsterdam 1986 and the observations made on this subject by M. North, *Introduction*, in M. North (ed.) *Economic History and the Arts*, Böhlau Verlag Köln Wiemar Wien 1996, pp. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> In Delft from 1600 to 1675 an average of 10-20 units, in Amsterdam from 25 to 40, from J.M. Montias, *Artists and artisans in Delft: a socio-economic study of the seventeenth century*, Princeton University Press Princeton N.J. 1982 and idem, *Le marché de l'art aux Pays-Bas, XVe-XVIIe siècles*, Flammarion Paris 1996, pp. 55-90.

<sup>5</sup> D. Freedberg – J. de Vries (eds), *Art in history. History in art. Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture*, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities Santa Monica 1991; J. Loughman – J. M. Montias, *Public and private spaces: works of art in seventeenth-century Dutch houses*, Waanders Zwolle 2000; J. M. Montias, *Notes on Economic Development and the Market for Paintings in Amsterdam*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.); *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della "Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi" 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, Le Monnier Firenze 2002, pp. 115-130; J.M. Montias, *Art at auction in 17th century Amsterdam*, Amsterdam University Press Amsterdam 2002; N. De Marchi – C.D.W. Goodwin (eds), *Economic engagements with art*, Duke University Press Durham – London 1999; N. De Marchi – H.J. van Miegroet, *Art, Value, and Market*

analyses is the consideration of a work of art as an object or a furniture, without any aesthetic implications. Following this example, and more generally, following the new themes of the culture of consumption, recent studies have been undertaken by Berg, Clifford, Ormrod and Pears on England, Cecchini on Venice and Comanducci and Kuberski-Piredda on Florence<sup>6</sup>.

Recent international conferences (Florence, 2000 and Prato, 2001) highlighted the emergence of this new direction in research, above all of the economic-historical aspects of the economics of art, and in particular, of the Italian art market in the centuries of the modern age<sup>7</sup>. The Florentine art market, however, is still in need of further investigation. The Goldthwaite's question "*Why did Italy produce so much art in the Renaissance*" remains without a definitive reply.

The greater wealth of the Italian nobility with its early and strong urban connotation seems to have started the growing tendency to invest part of their new riches in the building of private palaces and decoration objects<sup>8</sup>. The growing demand for artworks appears connected to the increase in wealth, a necessary, but not sufficient element to explain the increased expenditure on the purchase of works of art. The characteristics of the economy of the Central-Northern Italy, that at the time was a leading economy in its growth phase, presented limited opportunities for cost-effective investment. Unproductive consumptions, of artworks in particular, was a means of cultural expression that in the urban space turned out

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*Practices in the Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century*, in "The Art Bulletin", 76, 1994, pp. 451-464 and M. P.J. Martenens – N. Peeters, *Antwerp Painting before Iconoclasm: Considerations on the Quantification of Taste*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.); *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della "Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi" 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, op. cit., pp. 875-894

<sup>6</sup> M. Berg and H. Clifford (eds), *Consumers and luxury: Consumer culture in Europe 1650-1850*, Manchester University Press Manchester-New York 1999; M. North – D. Ormrod (eds), *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800*, Ashgate Aldershot 1998; I. Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768*, Yale University Press New Haven - London 1988; I. Cecchini, *Quadri e commercio a Venezia durante il Seicento. Uno studio sul mercato dell'arte*, Marsilio Venezia 2000; R. M. Comanducci, *Fattori e garzoni al lavoro nelle botteghe d'arte*, in G. Fossi – F. Franceschi (eds), *La grande storia dell'artigianato*, vol. III, *Il Cinquecento*, Giunti Firenze 2000, pp. 40-55; S. Kuberski-Piredda, *Spesa della materia und spesa dell'arte. Die Preise von Altartafeln in der Florentiner Renaissance*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della "Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi" 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, op. cit., pp. 339-354.

<sup>7</sup> S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della "Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi" 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, op. cit. and M. Fantoni - L. C. Matthew,- S. F. Matthew-Grieco (eds); *The Art Market in Italy 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Franco Cosimo Panini Modena 2003.

<sup>8</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *The Renaissance economy: the precondition for luxury consumption*, in *Aspetti della vita economica medievale, Atti del convegno di studi nel X anniversario della morte di F. Melis, Firenze-Pisa-Prato 10-14 marzo 1984*, E. Ariani e l'Arte della Stampa Firenze 1985, pp. 657-675 and Id., *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600*, op. cit., pp. 212-242.

to be more profitable, certainly in social and prestigious terms, than the purchase of new land or the establishment of business<sup>9</sup>. From the Renaissance onwards consumers began to express and to define themselves through the quality and the quantity of the luxury goods chosen: the commodity from its value of use became a bringer of meanings more wide and sophisticated, as taste, elegance, representation of themselves, and in more general terms *civilitéé*<sup>10</sup>. The Lipovetsky interpretation presents art collection as one of the peculiar features of modern luxury from the Renaissance to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, founded on an aristocratic and handicraft model<sup>11</sup>. This phenomenon highlights on the one hand the growing tendency towards the *aestheticization* and secularization of taste, and on the other hand the progressive intertwining of luxury with civilization. It was this change of luxury from public and periodic to private and ordinary that made luxury consumption a stimulus for the economic system.

This essay comprises forth sections: the first presents a general description of the different social and cultural aspects of art collecting in Florence in modern times. In the second section, the general characteristics of the painting collections are illustrated and particular attention is given to the collection of the Martelli, Riccardi and Salviati families over the period from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The third section attempts to analyze the economic value of the collections, followed by some concluding notes on the evolution and meaning of artistic collections of the Florentine nobility in the modern age.

### **1. The origins and the features of Florentine collections.**

For many centuries in the Grand-duchy of Tuscany, wealth and income were concentrated in the hands of a small group of families, and in particular, of those of the noble citizens of Florence who, from the Renaissance, onwards, above all from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, dominated the economic and social life of the State.

According to Goldthwaite's interpretation, it was this Italian aristocracy, and the Florentine aristocracy in particular, that produced a new consumer behavior, when the model

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<sup>9</sup> P. Malanima, *Uomini, risorse, tecniche nell'economia europea dal X al XIX secolo*, Bruno Mondatori Milano 2003, pp. 223-224.

<sup>10</sup> P. Burke, *Scene di vita quotidiana nell'Italia moderna*, Laterza Roma- Bari 1988, pp. 169-205.

<sup>11</sup> G. Lipovetsky, *Luxe éternel, luxe émotionnel*, in G. Lipovetsky – E. Roux, *Le luxe éternel. De l'âge su sacré ai tempes des marques*, Gallimard Paris 2003, pp. 46-71.

of expenditure that had been characteristic of feudal nobility changed during the Renaissance period<sup>12</sup>. The strong urban connotations, together with the affirmation of a new concept of urban culture and sense of nobility, were the basis for new consumption habits. In an urban context, the expenditures of the elite were stimulated by social competition and were redirected towards more numerous and sought after durable consumer articles rather than the services, that were typical of the previous feudal society. Consumption of luxury became a sign of distinction, a public demonstration of one's status. The increasing demand was sustained by an increased wealth of the richest echelons of society, who increased their individual level of expenditure thanks also to wealth generated the diffusion and evolution of financial services. According to some recent interpretations, the increase in the practice of credit from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards seems to have favored the increased demand for consumer goods<sup>13</sup>.

The basis of these new types of expenditure was linked to two ideological concepts and cultural principles: magnificence and liberality<sup>14</sup>. The first represented the exterior sign of magnanimity, and was considered a public duty, while the second concerned an individual's private behavior. Both were considered essential and necessary virtues required to live "honorably and nobly".

These two notions were mutated by the Aristotle Ethic and were re-elaborated by the noble and "economics" Renaissance treatises, which constituted the secular cultural basis of the elite of that period<sup>15</sup>. In the cultural matrix of consumption of the wealthy Italian classes

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<sup>12</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *The Renaissance economy: the precondition for luxury consumption*, in *Aspetti della vita economica medievale*, op. cit., pp. 657-675

<sup>13</sup> L. Jardine, *Wordly goods. A new history of the Renaissance*, W.W. Norton & Company New York-London 1996, in particular p. 98: «*The rise of paper transactions for financial expenditure of all kinds, in other words, encouraged the concept of "notional" expenditure, on which heavy borrowing depends*».

<sup>14</sup> On these concepts, see: G. Guerzoni, *Liberilias, Magnificentia, Splendor: The Classic Origins of Italian Renaissance Lifestyles*, in N. De Marchi – C.D.W. Goodwin (eds), *Economic Engagements with Arts*, op. cit., pp. 332-378, and dealing more generally with conspicuous consumption: P. Burke, *Il consumo di lusso nell'Italia del Seicento*, in *Scene di vita quotidiana nell'Italia moderna*, op. cit., pp. 169-189 and Id., *Res et verba: conspicuous consumption in the early modern Europe*, in J. Brewer - R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the world of goods*, Routledge London - New York 1993, pp. 148-161.

<sup>15</sup> See: C. Donati, *L'evoluzione della coscienza nobiliare*, in C. Capra – C. Mozzarelli - P. Schiera (eds); *Patriziati e aristocrazie nobiliari. Ceti dominanti e organizzazione del potere nell'Italia centro settentrionale dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, Libera Università degli Studi di Trento 1978, pp. 13-36 and D. Frigo, *Il padre di famiglia. Governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione dell'«Economica» fra cinque e seicento*, Bulzoni Roma 1985.

in the modern age, a man's virtues could be deduced from the quality of the objects he acquired and owned<sup>16</sup>.

A more specific cultural approach to the mechanisms of consumption from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries has been the basis of the most recent studies dedicated to this phenomenon; these focus on the mentality linked to the attitudes of consumers towards goods<sup>17</sup>. Aspects of material culture and society have now been associated with the market for culture. Attention is returning towards the value and significance associated by the different social groups and individuals with particular objects and consumer practices<sup>18</sup>. According to de Vries, it was this desire and need for new products that shifted the model of individual and family behavior of self-sufficiency towards market-orientated consumption and production<sup>19</sup>.

Amongst the main expressions of luxury consumption by the wealthy classes in the modern age were those of furniture and decoration, and in particular, the collection of works of art to be displayed in the household space. Consumption of these objects was one of the typical forms of the humanistic culture that was becoming diffuse with the Renaissance: the expression of a new cultural code based on the secularization of taste and on the achievement of individualism<sup>20</sup>. From the mid 16<sup>th</sup>, a new attention towards art and antiques collection therefore emerged, not linked to knowledge and understanding, but rather to the family's prestige, honor and decorum. Collecting became a weapon of social competition<sup>21</sup>.

Collecting in Italy took on absolutely new forms and methods compared to that found in other European countries, and between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries it produced the first examples of public museums, such as the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, which became a sort of

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<sup>16</sup> N. De Marchi, *Introduction*, in N. De Marchi – C.D.W. Goodwin (eds), *Economic Engagements with Arts*, op. cit., pp. 1-30.

<sup>17</sup> M. Berg and H. Clifford (eds), *Consumers and luxury: Consumer culture in Europe 1650-1850*, op. cit., and in particular, M. Berg and H. Clifford, *Introduction*, pp. 1-17, and finally M. Berg – E. Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century. Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke-New York 2003..

<sup>18</sup> J. de Vries, *Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice*, in M. Berg – E. Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, op. cit., pp. 41-56.

<sup>19</sup> J. de Vries, *The industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution*, in "The journal of economic history", 54, 1994, pp. 249-270.

<sup>20</sup> G. Lipovetsky, *Luxe éternel, luxe émotionnel*, in G. Lipovetsky – E. Roux, *Le luxe éternel*, op.cit., pp. 46-71.

<sup>21</sup> G. Olmi, *Dal 'Teatro del mondo' ai mondi inventariati. Aspetti e forme del collezionismo nell'età moderna*, in P. Barocchi e G. Ragionieri (eds), *Gli Uffizi quattro secoli di una galleria. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze 20-24 settembre 1984*, Leo S. Olschki Firenze 1983, vol. I, p. 238.

worldwide benchmark model<sup>22</sup>. This phenomenon had a complex and varied aspect across different Italian States, making a single interpretation difficult.

Initially, collecting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was mostly concentrated on the ancient world, and particularly on ancient Greece, following the humanistic precepts of Brunni and Bracciolini. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the phenomenon started to widen to cover ever-increasing numbers and types of objects. This evolution has never been considered by art historians in conjunction with the parallel phenomenon of the specialization of the household space, which led to the significant increase in the number of rooms and determined specific functions of the single setting within the noble residences.

During the Renaissance, the private space of the rich Florentine families underwent change in three progressive phases: in the first phase, the chamber became an increasingly decorated interior space, in the second, the rest of the house slowly filled up with furniture and all types of object; and finally, in the third phase, the furnishings and decorations took on ever more sophisticated and elaborate forms and the interior space was subdivided according to increasingly specialized functions<sup>23</sup>.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Florentine collecting was already beginning to take on the characteristics of the galleries and the systematic gathering of art typical of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast to Rome, where collecting in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was mainly based on the retrieval of classical antiques, Florence presented both new elements and, above all, a wider variety. In Florence, collecting seemed to involve mainly paintings and modern sculptures, outwith the context of the *studioli* and the curiosities typical of the Renaissance age, related to the development and spreading of an artistic culture linked to historiography and treatises on art that for the first time presented non-experts with tools with which to judge and appreciate works of art from both the past and the present<sup>24</sup>. These assertions on private Florentine collecting have mainly been deduced from contemporary literary testimonies,

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<sup>22</sup> C. De Benedictis, *Per la storia del collezionismo italiano. Fonti e documenti*, Ponte alle Grazie Firenze 1998 (1st ed. 1991), pp. 9-28.

<sup>23</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *L'arredo del palazzo e il consumo dei beni*, in *Palazzo Strozzi metà millennio 1489-1989. Atti del Convegno di studi, Firenze 3-6 luglio 1989*, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana Roma 1991, pp. 159-166.

<sup>24</sup> A. Conti, *Alle origini della galleria*, in *Palazzo Vecchio: committenza e collezionismo medicei 1537-1610*, Centro Di Firenze 1980, pp. 245-250; R. P. Ciardi, *Interessi museologici nella storiografia artistica tra '500 e '600*, in "Museologia", 4, 1976, pp. 62-69 and A. Civai, *Dipinti e sculture in casa Martelli. Storia di una collezione patrizia fiorentina dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento*, OpusLibri Firenze 1999 pp. 56-57.

since studies by art historians on this subject have mainly concentrated on Medici collecting, ignoring any analysis of the consistence and general characteristics of the collections from the other great aristocratic Florentine families.

The first testimonies to the presence of art collections in the houses of the noble Florentine families go back to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and describe the collections of Matteo and Giovambattista Botti, Lodovico Capponi, Francesco and Lorenzo Salviati, Rodolfo Sirigatti, Baccio Valori and Bernardo Vecchietti<sup>25</sup>. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there were already more than 15 private artistic collections of significant value in Florence, but it was above all the palaces and sumptuous family residences that marked the city scene and in some way were the origin of so much luxury and wealth<sup>26</sup>.

In the ideology of the nobility of the ancient regime, the town palace was the most evident testimony to the prestige and splendor of the family<sup>27</sup>. Private Florentine architecture started to develop its own specific characteristics between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>28</sup>. Following this, starting from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continuing for the whole of the next century, the capital of Tuscany saw a new increase in the construction and renovation of noble palaces<sup>29</sup>. Restoration operations mainly involved an increase in the inhabited area and the addition of new decorative elements. Together with this new organization of the domestic space, contemporary testimonies revealed that a new type of more organized and systematic artistic collection started to affirm its presence: that of the

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<sup>25</sup> R. Borghini, *Il Riposo, in cvi della pittvra, e della scultura si fauella, de' piu illustri pittori, e scultori, e delle piu famose opere loro si fa mentione; e le cose principali appartenenti à dette arti s'insegnano*, Appresso (published by) Giorgio Marescotti Firenze 1584, pp. 13-15; pp. 19-22 and pp. 689-713 and F. Bocchi, *Le bellezze della Città di Fiorenza, dove a pieno di Pittura, di Scultura, di Sacri Tempij di Palazzi i più notabili e più preziosi si contengono*, Firenze 1591, pp. 83-84; pp. 84-89; pp. 178-185 and pp. 185-189.

<sup>26</sup> According to a rough calculation in the 1677 edition of the Bocchi guide edited by Cinelli, there were more than 9,000 houses, F. Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, Arnaldo Forni Editore Bologna 1974, anastatic reprint of the Giovanni Gugliantini edition Firenze 1677, p. 567.

<sup>27</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *The empire of things: consumer demand in Renaissance Italy*, in F.W. Kent-P. Simons (eds), *Patronage, art and society in Renaissance Italy*, Clarendon Press Oxford-New York 1987, pp.153-175; Id., *The Florentine palace as domestic architecture*, in "American historical review", LXXVII, 1972, pp. 977-1012.

<sup>28</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *La costruzione della Firenze Rinascimentale*, Il Mulino Bologna 1984, pp.17-50 and Id., *The Florentine palace*, op. cit., pp. 977-1012.

<sup>29</sup> It was exactly in this period that some of the most representative private palaces were built in the town: Covoni (1623), Fenzi (1634) and Corsini (1690-1697).

Gallery<sup>30</sup>. This French derived term was defined in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a “long corridor” with the double function of connecting two rooms and displaying an art collection: “a construction of rooms made to keep statues and paintings” used as “*di passeggio*”<sup>31</sup>. This was therefore an environment specially created around the nucleus of a preexisting artistic collection, reorganized, displayed and enriched. Its diffusion was rapid, and in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it became one of the main public areas of noble and royal households. In Florence in particular, the gallery constituted the typical expression of late Baroque and Rococo collecting, through an exhibition model with strong cultural reference, deriving from the Vasarian conception of historical knowledge of the art of drawing<sup>32</sup>.

It seems that it was the introduction of these new spaces that drove the aristocratic families to increase their acquisitions of pictures and works of art, which the galleries of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries displayed with an unprecedented variety and richness<sup>33</sup>. It was no chance occurrence that the Bocchi guide compiled by Cinelli in 1677 showed a notable increase in the number of private collections; it was at this stage that those of Riccardi, Martelli, Gerini and Niccolini made an appearance<sup>34</sup>. The increasing interest in fine art and artistic culture was also borne out by some important political, legislative and organizational interventions relating to local art by the Medici family, which founded the *Accademia dell'Arte del Disegno* in 1563 and from, 1571 onwards issued a series of proclamations to defend the city's artistic heritage. It is worth remembering the law of 1602 which banned the

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<sup>30</sup> W. Prinz, *Galleria storia e tipologia di uno spazio architettonico*, edited by C. Cieri Via, Edizioni Panini Modena 1988 (1st ed. Verlag-Berlin 1977), where little was said on the Florentine galleries, except for a brief reference to the setting up of the Uffizi Galleries, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> M. Mosco, *Gallerie e quadrerie del Sei-Settecento*, in *La Galleria Palatina. Storia della quadreria granducale di Palazzo Pitti. Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Sala delle Nicchie 23 settembre 1982-31 gennaio 1983*, Centro Di Firenze 1982, pp. 26-30. For definitions of the term see: V. Scamozzi, *Idea dell'Architettura universale*, Venezia 1615, part I, Book II, chap. XVIII, p. 305 and G. Nencioni, *La 'galleria' nella lingua*, in P. Barocchi – G. Ragionieri (eds), *Gli Uffizi quattro secoli di una galleria*, op. cit., pp. 17-48.

<sup>32</sup> A. Conti, *Alle origini della galleria*, in *Palazzo Vecchio: committenza e collezionismo medicei 1537-1610*, op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>33</sup> It was not by chance that in the definition of a real collector, Pomian makes the precision that one only becomes a collector when one builds a wall with the precise aim of hanging a picture, i.e., when spaces are specifically created and destined to the protection and exhibition of collected objects: «*Ornare, disponendo quadri e sculture, significa [.....] rompere la monotonia dei muri vuoti che già esistono e che bisogna rendere piacevoli. Nei musei e nelle grandi collezioni private invece, si innalzano o si sistemano muri per disporvi delle opere*», K. Pomian, *Collezione*, in *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, Einaudi Torino 1978, vol. III, p. 330.

<sup>34</sup> F. Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, op. cit., (edizione del 1677), p. 371; pp. 195-199; pp. 404-405; pp. 406-407 and pp. 557-559.

free exportation of paintings by the “Old Masters” outwith the Grand-duchy, including those by Michelangelo, Raffaello, Andrea del Sarto, Rosso Fiorentino, Leonardo, Pontormo, Tiziano, Agnolo Bronzino and Parmigianino<sup>35</sup>.

It was the example of the last of the Medicis, from Cosimo II to Cosimo III, that stimulated the patronage initiative of the Florentine nobility towards increasing their prestige through artistic culture<sup>36</sup>. Cosimo III in particular had a fundamental role in reorganizing the Grand-duchy collections both in the Uffizi Gallery and in the Medici villas of Topaia, Ambrogiana, Careggi and Castello, and more generally by artistic sponsorship through the Accademia Medicea foundation in Rome.

Although it has been well recognized that art consumption, and above all that associated with the domestic space, has been customary for the wealthy upper classes since the Renaissance, very little is yet known about its entity and its precise characteristics.

## **2. The art consumption of the Florentine aristocracy: the painting collections of the Riccardi, Salviati and Martelli families from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.**

Among the most important Florentine art collections in one of the main city guides of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were those of the Riccardi, the Salviati, and the Martelli families<sup>37</sup>. At this time the Riccardi and the Salviati, after the Medici house, were the richest and most celebrated families of the entire Grand-duchy. According to an estimate from 1769, among the 21 richest noble families in the city, the Riccardi and the Salviati were at the top

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<sup>35</sup> A. Emiliani, *Leggi, bandi e provvedimenti per la tutela dei beni artistici e culturali negli antichi stati italiani 1571-1860*, Edizioni Alfa Bologna 1978, pp. 32-34. However this ban was not applied to portraits, or landscape paintings or small devotional paintings “da mettere da capo al letto”(to hang above a bed). The duty of invigilating the exportation of works of art was given to the Accademia del Disegno, F. Borroni Salvatori, *Le esposizione d'arte a Firenze dal 1674 al 1767*, in “Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz”, XVIII, 1, 1974, pp. 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> S. Rudolph, *Mecenati a Firenze tra Sei e Settecento. I: i committenti privati*, in “Arte Illustrata”, 49, 1972, pp. 228-241; Id., *Mecenati a Firenze tra Sei e Settecento. II: aspetti dello stile Cosimo III*, in “Arte Illustrata”, 54, 1973, pp. 213-228; M. Mosco, *Dalla loggia alla galleria: l'antica galleria di Cosimo II a Palazzo Pitti*, in *La Galleria Palatina. Storia della quadreria granducale di Palazzo Pitti*, op. cit., pp. 31-32; M. Chiarini, *Cosimo III e la raccolta delle raccolte di famiglia*, in *La Galleria Palatina. Storia della quadreria granducale di Palazzo Pitti*, op. cit., pp. 50-53; E. Fumagalli, *Collezionismo mediceo da Cosimo II a Cosimo III: lo stato degli studi e le ricerche in corso*, in O. Bonfait - M. Hochmann - L. Spezzaferro - B. Toscano (eds), *Geografia del collezionismo. Italia e Francia tra il XVI e il XVIII secolo. Atti delle giornate di studio dedicate a Giuliano Briganti (Roma 19-21 settembre 1996)*, École française de Rome Roma 2001, pp. 239-255.

<sup>37</sup> F. Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, op. cit. (edition 1677), p. 567.

of the list, with an income equal to over 20,000 scudi each<sup>38</sup>. The Martelli family occupied a lower position, after Rinuccini, Corsi and Capponi, with an annual income around 7,000 scudi.

A recent study on the collection of these families from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century has pointed out various analogies<sup>39</sup>. This research mainly considers the inventories of their urban palaces in Florence, integrating them where possible with other types of archive document, such as patrimony estimates, accounting books, notary acts and miscellaneous documents. The study of demand consists of the analysis of expenditure flow, which is transformed into goods and objects. The best instrument for this type of investigation is accounting books; any variation in the different categories of expenditure made by the individuals or by the family can be reconstructed from the ledger books. However, analysis based on this source is often too long and complex, and is sometimes difficult to perform due to an incomplete chronology in the documentation. Therefore recent studies on material culture and art consumption have mainly used post-mortem inventories, that have been mostly derived from notary archives<sup>40</sup>. This type of source, as de Vries also pointed out, poses an economic problem linked to the concepts of *stock* and *flow*: the inventories describe the stock in a given moment, but do not permit a view of the flows<sup>41</sup>. At the same time, however, the accounting books do not permit a punctual and precise analysis of single purchases, and do not supply a detailed description of the various works of art that were bought, or, above all, provide a description of those already in

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<sup>38</sup> V. Pinchera, *Lusso e decoro. Vita quotidiana e spese dei Salviati di Firenze nel Sei e Settecento*, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa Pisa 1999, pp. 25-31. and J. Boutier, *Construction and anatomie d'une noblesse urbaine. Florence à l'époque moderne (XVe-XVIIIe siècles)*, Thèse de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales 1998, vol. II, pp. 233-249.

<sup>39</sup> V. Pinchera, *Il consumo di arte a Firenze in età moderna. Le collezioni Martelli, Riccardi e Salviati nei secoli XVII-XVIII*, in "Discussion papers del Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche-Università di Pisa", n. 51, 2004 and Id., *La domanda d'arte in Italia in età moderna. Nuovi equilibri economici e sociali*", forthcoming in *Tra vecchi e nuovi equilibri economici. Domanda e offerta di servizi in Italia in Età moderna e contemporanea, Atti del Convegno della Società degli Storici dell'Economia, Torino, 12-13 novembre 2004*.

<sup>40</sup> M. S. Mazzi, *Gli inventari dei beni. Storia di oggetti e storia di uomini*, in "Società e storia", VII, 1980, pp. 203-214 and A. J. Schuurman, *Gli "inventari post-mortem"*, in "Quaderni storici", XLIII, 1980, pp. 210-218.

<sup>41</sup> J. de Vries, *Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy, in early modern Europe*, in J. Brewer - R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the world of goods*, op. cit., pp. 85-132

the possession of the family. In order to remedy these problems the inventories were mainly being used, via the construction of a specific database<sup>42</sup>.

**Table 1. Numerical consistence of the collections for the years studied**

<b>Riccardi</b>	<b>1612</b>		<b>1715</b>	<b>1752</b>	<b>1814*</b>
	149		457	603	474
<b>Salviati</b>	<b>1654</b>	<b>1686</b>	<b>1711</b>	<b>1757</b>	<b>1775</b>
	200	214	317	438	422
<b>Martelli</b>		<b>1682</b>		<b>1771</b>	<b>1826</b>
		126		516	376

\*The collection had already been partially sold at auction.

**Sources:** Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Martelli; Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Riccardi and Archivio Salviati.

The first common data regards the quantitative development of the painting collections, which started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and became particularly strong during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its peak in the middle of that century.

The phenomenon brought to light in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Vincenzo Giustiniani of this new use of “parare compitamente i palazzi cò quadri”<sup>43</sup>(completely covering the walls of palaces with pictures) in Italy and France, became evident in the noble residences of Florence during the following century, when the pictures became concentrated in a few of the most important rooms and took on the characteristic “a incrostazione” (encrustation display) of the Baroque period, visual testimony of which is shown in the representations by Gian Paolo Pannini.

It was therefore in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that paintings reached their apex of ostentatious and decorative value, and this trend was not limited to Florence, but could also be found in other parts of Italy, as the observations of an English traveler showed when she visited a noble residence in Venice:

<sup>42</sup>This considered some fundamental characteristics: i) subject categories; ii) attribution; iii) placement; iv) evaluation and finally v) a complete transcription of the description of the work of art, so as to evidence the distinction between originals and copies, size, type of execution (canvas, wood, paper), the shape and type of frame. In this way, having a significant amount of information and parameters with which to identify a work of art, it becomes possible to follow its passage through the centuries within the domestic walls, its possible removal or movement to other residences.

<sup>43</sup> V. Giustiniani, *Discorso sopra la pittura*, (circa 1610), in A. Banti (ed.), *Discorsi sulle arti e sui mestieri*, Sansoni, Firenze 1981, p. 45.

*The Venetians cover their walls with pictures, and never think their apartments properly finished until they have such as shall fill all the spaces from the top to bottom, so as completely to hide the hanging*<sup>44</sup>.

Although they had taken on an important function in the domestic space, the paintings still constituted a single body together with the rest of the decoration of the residence. Only with the setting up of real museum walks inside the noble residences did the pictures really become of the surrounding furniture and decorations, following the new illuminist cultural principles from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This phenomenon is also demonstrated by the compilation of separate estimates for the painting collections, such as the “Inventario dei migliori quadri della Casa Salviati” (Inventory of the best paintings of the Salviati family) compiled by the painter Vincenzo Meucci in 1769, followed by the diffusion of catalogues, above all from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the illustrated catalogue of the Martelli painting collection, and those that followed later of the Gerini and Rinuccini galleries<sup>45</sup>. It was this arrangement of the Baroque galleries that induced a sort of selection of the works within the art collections. Together with the characteristics of variety and richness, a new element linked to the quality and the originality of the artwork started to appear. It was not by chance that the new figure of art expert and appreciator began to appear, which, in the case of Giuseppe Miller for the Martelli family or Ignazio Hugford for the Corsini family, offered their paid advisory services to set up galleries and assist in purchasing new works of art<sup>46</sup>.

Another common aspect of the collections of the Riccardi, Salviati and Martelli families was a similar qualitative development of the collections. As observed in the case of the Dutch cities of the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while collections grew, their composition in terms of subject mutated. The relative importance of religious paintings and family portraits declined while that of history, landscapes and genre subjects increased. From the starting point of simple buyers, the Florentine nobility seemed to have acquired over time a

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<sup>44</sup> Passage taken from F. Haskell, *Patrons and painters. Art and society in Baroque Italy*, Yale University Press New Haven and London 1980, p. 261, translated and cited in C. De Benedictis, *Per la storia del collezionismo italiano. Fonti e documenti*, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>45</sup> *Catalogo dei quadri ed altri oggetti alla Galleria Rinuccini per comodo dei signori che favoriscono a visitarla*, Firenze 1845 e *Catalogo e stima dei quadri e bronzi esistenti nella Galleria del Sig. Marchese Giovanni Gerini a Firenze*, Firenze 1825.

<sup>46</sup> U. Medici (ed.), *Catalogo della Galleria dei Principi Corsini in Firenze*, Stabilimento Tipografico Mariani Firenze 1880, p. 7.

degree of culture and artistic sensitivity which led them to become interested above all in the more modern subject matters and the best known painters. This phenomenon, which was not limited to the Florentine area but extended across a much wider European context, has been commonly defined as the secularization of taste: it reached its peak in the art collections of the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, where landscapes, nature and genre scenes were much more popular and common than religious paintings<sup>47</sup>. Starting mainly from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Florence also saw the achievement of a new hierarchy of taste, which was developed above all under the influence of the Flemish painters and paintings, and through vivacious and wider artistic offerings (see Table 2).

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<sup>47</sup> J. Muller, *Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands: Ownership and Display of Paintings in Domestic Interiors*, in P. Sutton (ed.), *The Age of Rubens. Catalogue exhibition*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston 1993, pp. 195-205 and M. North, *Art Markets*, in T. Holger Bochert (ed.), *The Age of Van Eyck. The Mediterranean World and Early Netherlandish Painting 1430-1530*, Thames & Hudson London 2002, pp. 52-58.

**Table 2. The evolution of subjects of painting collections (%)**

<b>Riccardi</b>	<b>1612</b>		<b>1715</b>	<b>1752</b>	<b>1814</b>
Religious subjects	16.5		21.0	12.4	18.5
History	11.3		19.2	20.7	28.6
Landscape	9.0		15.4	22.0	17.2
Portrait	36.8		17.1	19.5	8.0
Genre	25.6		25.2	23.4	27.7
Other subjects	0.8		2.1	2.0	---
Total	100.0		100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Salviati</b>	<b>1654</b>	<b>1686</b>	<b>1711</b>	<b>1757</b>	<b>1775</b>
Religious subjects	56.1	45.0	25.3	24.7	19.1
History	11.2	22.7	26.9	20.1	18.1
Landscape	10.1	12.8	22.6	25.0	23.6
Portrait	14.6	9.5	9.8	12.5	17.6
Genre	4.0	7.6	11.8	14.4	20.6
Other subjects	4.0	2.4	3.6	3.3	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Martelli</b>	<b>1682</b>		<b>1771</b>		<b>1826</b>
Religious subjects	35.8		17.8		17.6
History	11.7		15.4		20.4
Landscape	16.7		33.3		34.0
Portrait	18.3		16.1		6.8
Genre	16.7		15.9		21.2
Other subjects	0.8		1.5		---
Total	100.0		100.0		100.0

**Sources:** Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Martelli; Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Riccardi and Archivio Salviati.

From the analysis of the evolution of the noble Florentine painting collections emerges a sort of direct nexus between the development of the domestic environment and the formation and the preparation of the art collections. In the three cases analyzed, the expansion of the picture gallery was always connected with the restoration and the rearrangement of the inner spaces of the palaces. The setting up and the expansion of the work of art collections, according to Marina Bianchi, creates new functions and new synergies within and among objects<sup>48</sup>. The evolution of collecting is associated with the parallel phenomenon of the specialization of the domestic space, which remarkably increased

<sup>48</sup> M. Bianchi, *Collecting as a Paradigm of Consumption*, in "Journal of Cultural Economics", 21, 1997, pp. 275-289.

the number of spaces and determined the specific functions of single rooms inside the noble residences<sup>49</sup>. The changes involved the specialization of the domestic rooms, with the furniture and the decorations making recognizable private spaces and dividing them from that of the parlour. Within the transformation and the expansion of the domestic rooms, the pictures modified their own function, acquiring an increasing relevance as furnishing objects. While in the late Middle Ages the paintings had above all a religious function - generally pictures of religious subjects, especially images of Our Lady and the Saints - remaining in the narrow field of the bedrooms, in the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries they gradually assumed an independent decorative function<sup>50</sup>. The shape and the subject of the pictures became more varied and the frames more elaborated and more expensive. Finally the paintings moved from the private rooms to the rest of the house. Therefore, the origin of the extension and the propagation of the house's functions and its inner spaces were determined by the pressure of durable goods that they carried to the creation of new rooms, such as sitting and dining rooms, galleries and libraries<sup>51</sup>. According to Pearce, the household collections themselves became space-defining tools, identifying and differentiating the use of space<sup>52</sup>. Initially, such changes concerned the urban societies, but gradually, in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, they also involved rural ones<sup>53</sup>. A recent study on the cult of images in the houses of the Valdinievole (a country area near Pistoia) in Tuscany of the 17<sup>th</sup> century has brought to light the spread of paintings and religious objects, and also of pictures of secular subject in the outlying sites and belonging to modest families<sup>54</sup>. The same outcomes, although in a different context - in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Rome - were recently

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<sup>49</sup> A. Blok, *Dietro le quinte: compare la sfera del privato*, in M. Aymard (ed.), *Storia d'Europa. 4. L'età moderna, secoli XVI-XVIII*, Einaudi Torino 1995, pp. 597-622

<sup>50</sup> M. North, *Art Markets*, in T. Holger Bochert (ed.), *The Age of Van Eyck*, op. cit., pp. 52-58 e Id., *Introduction*, in M. North (ed.), *Economic History and the Arts*, op. cit., pp. 1-6.

<sup>51</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600*, op. cit., pp. 224-242.

<sup>52</sup> S. Pearce, *On Collecting. An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, Routledge London-New York 1995, p. 257.

<sup>53</sup> P. Malanima, *Il lusso dei contadini. Consumi e industrie nelle campagne toscane del Sei e Settecento*, Il Mulino Bologna 1990 and Id., *Changing patterns in rural living conditions: Tuscany in the eighteenth century*, in A. J. Schuurman - L. Walsh (eds), *Material culture: consumption, life-style, standard of living 1500-1900, Proceedings Eleventh International Economic History Congress Milan, September 1994*, Università Bocconi Milano 1994, pp. 115-124.

<sup>54</sup> A. Menzione, *Immagini sante e altre immagini nelle case di Valdinievole nel secolo XVII*, in "Bollettino Storico Pisano", LXXII, 2003, pp. 113-145, and about the Tuscany case also P. Carofano - F. Paliaga, *Pittura e collezionismo a Pisa nel Seicento*, Edizioni ETS Pisa 2001.

illustrated by Renata Ago with regard to the cultural consumption of pictures and books of modest Roman citizens<sup>55</sup>. Such diffusion, according to Ago, derives from the relative low cost of the paintings.

### 3. The economic value of the art collections.

The economic appraisal of the pictures and in general of artworks consumption in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries appears a problematic issue. Prices were dependent upon numerous elements: the picture's format, its execution (copy or original), the frame, the state of conservation and above all whether it could be attributed to a known painter. They were also affected by extra-economic elements, such as the status of the owner of the painting or who executed it<sup>56</sup>. Therefore it becomes difficult to calculate the real value of the pictures. One the ways used to achieve this is by comparing the price of the works of art with the development of commodity prices in general. However, a large database is necessary for meaningful comparisons to be carried out. Recently Clifford introduced a faster and simpler solution to provide an immediate idea of the value of luxury goods, such as work of art. She proposes a comparison between the purchase prices of the objects that belong to the same category of assets bought by one family in a limited period of years in the same market place<sup>57</sup>. This methodology is ingenious because it avoids the need for a large number of unavailable variables, such as the general trend of prices, the costs of other consumer goods and the variety and quality of luxury goods.

Despite its limits, this methodology supply an order of size of the market prices in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, allowing to the aim comparisons with the wages of craftsmen and agricultural workers of the time (see Table 3).

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<sup>55</sup> R. Ago, *Collezioni di quadri e collezioni di libri a Roma tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, in "Quaderni Storici", XXXVII, 2002, pp. 379-403 and Id., *Il gusto delle cose. Una storia degli oggetti nella Roma del Seicento*, Donzelli Roma 2006.

<sup>56</sup> I. Cecchini, *Quadri e commercio a Venezia durante il Seicento*, op.cit., pp. 236-249 and C. De Benedictis – R. Roani, *Riflessioni sulle "Regole per comprare, collocare e conservare le pitture" di Giulio Mancini*, Edifir Firenze 2005, pp. 45-46.

<sup>57</sup> H. Clifford, *A commerce with things: the value of precious metalwork in early modern England*, in M. Berg – H. Clifford (eds), *Consumers and luxury: Consumer culture in Europe 1650-1850*, op. cit., pp. 147-168, the same comparative method is adopted by L. Tagliaferro, *Collezionismo dell'aristocrazia genovese*, in *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della "Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi" 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, op. cit., p. 545, table 1.

**Table 3: Market prices of different works of art and furniture (1681-1690)**  
**[expressed in Florentine lire (7 lire= 1 scudo) and number of days of work]**

Good	Price	Year	No. of days of work of an agricultural worker	No. of days of work of a mason
Two marble heads by Giovan Battista Foggini	Lire 98	1680	140	49
Two marble statues by Baldassar Permoser	Lire 308	1681	440	154
Painting by Salvatore Rosa	Lire 175	1690	250	88
Painting by Onorio Marinari	Lire 175	1690	250	88
Hangings	Lire 245	1690	350	123
Four-poster bed	Lire 42	1690	60	21

**Sources:** Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Martelli; Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Riccardi and Archivio Salviati.

Between 1680 and 1690 the annual real wage of a “mason” in Florence, supposing that he was working for 260 days, varied between 520 and 564 lire<sup>58</sup>. The wage of the agricultural workers was much lower and at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was attested to be around 196 lire for 260 working days. There was, however, large variation in prices: in 1658 a painting commissioned by the Salviati family directly to the painter Giovanni Montini cost 2,450 lire (350 scudi), while in 1710 the purchase of a group in bronze with various figures executed by Massimiliano Soldani came to 5,600 lire (800 scudi)<sup>59</sup>. These were considerable sums, but very far away from the 7,000 ducati paid in 1660 by Gio Filippo Spinola for a painting by the famous painter Veronese<sup>60</sup>.

Although in recent years research on the prices of the works of art over the centuries to the modern age has increased, it still has not produced conclusive results<sup>61</sup>. The attempt by

<sup>58</sup> P. Malanima, *L'economia italiana. Dalla crescita medievale alla crescita contemporanea*, Il Mulino Bologna 2002, pp. 421-425.

<sup>59</sup> V. Pinchera, *Lusso e decoro. Vita quotidiana e spese dei Salviati di Firenze nel Sei e Settecento*, op.cit., pp. 136-141.

<sup>60</sup> P. Boccardo, *Il collezionismo della classe dirigente genovese nel Seicento*, in O. Bonfait - M. Hochmann - L. Spezzaferro - B. Toscano (eds), *Geografia del collezionismo. Italia e Francia tra il XVI e il XVIII secolo*, op. cit., p. 139 e R. A. Goldthwaite, *L'economia del collezionismo*, in P. Boccardo (ed.), *L'età di Rubens. Dimore, committenti e collezionisti genovesi*, Skira Milano 2004, pp. 13-21.

<sup>61</sup> C. R. Marshall, 'Senza il minimo scrupolo'. *Artists as dealers in seventeenth-century Naples*, in "Journal of the History of Collections", 12, 1, 2000, pp. 15-34; R. E. Spear, *Scrambling for Scudi: Notes on Painters' Earnings in Early Baroque Rome*, in "Art Bulletin", LXXXV, 2, 2003, pp. 310-320, and the essays of the section "prices" in M. Fantoni - L. C. Matthew, - S. F. Matthew-Grieco (eds); *The Art Market in Italy 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries*, op. cit., pp. 151-212.

Gerin-Jean to construct a hierarchy of the value of the works of art in Medicean era does not use elements of comparison between the prices of the artworks and the economic reality of the time, making difficult to use of the collated data<sup>62</sup>. Another methodology of research to provide an appraisal of painting is the one supplied from data on valuations of estate inventories, although these sources cannot be regarded as totally reliable. The valuations were probably placed under the real market prices and generally the prices of the pictures increased in proportion to the worth of the estate as a whole<sup>63</sup>. This source allows a greater homogeneity and uniformity of the data and, according to North, still provides the best overview of long-term price fluctuations in the art market<sup>64</sup>.

Generally the values of the art collections were calculated with the estimates of the “masserizie” (household goods), from which the silverware and the gold were excluded. The paintings and the works of art were considered part of the household goods. In 1693 the estimate of the household goods of the urban palaces and the villas of the Salviati family amounted to 83,300 scudi, and that of silverware to 2,975 scudi, of a total of 86,280 scudi. Purchases completed between 1693 and 1720 amounted to 8,050 scudi, making a final sum of 94,330 scudi, corresponding to approximately 27% of the personal property and 6% of the inheritance<sup>65</sup>. The case of the Riccardi has similar features. In 1719 the value of their household goods was 131,360 scudi, in addition to 77,600 scudi of silverware, gold and jewelry, making a total of 208,960 scudi, corresponding to 28% of the personal property and approximately 12% of the inheritance.

In the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the expenditure on household goods by the members of the Salviati family was in constant increase: from an annual average of 352 scudi between 1600 and 1650, it rose to 1,076 annual scudi between 1654 and 1693, accounting for approximately 12% of the ordinary expenses. The furniture of the palaces, therefore, seems to represent a meaningful part of the total wealth of the aristocratic families at the time. It must

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<sup>62</sup> P. Gerin-Jean, *Prix des œuvres d'art et hiérarchie des valeurs artistiques au temp des Médicis*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion Paris 1992.

<sup>63</sup> J. M. Montias, *Artists and artisans in Delft: a socio-economic study of the seventeenth century*, op. cit., p. 189. My data seems to confirm this fact. A kitchen by Caravaggio purchased in 1669 for more than 70 scudi, was valued a century after at only 20 scudi.

<sup>64</sup> M. North, *Art and commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, op. cit., pp. 82-105.

<sup>65</sup> V. Pinchera, *Il consumo d'arte a Firenze in età moderna. Le collezioni Martelli, Riccardi e Salviati nei secoli XVII-VIII*, op. cit., pp. 15-23.

be kept in mind than such and estimate considered the value of the household goods and furnishings of the palaces, and included the paintings. The probate inventory compiled by the painter Vincenzo Meucci in 1755 “of the best pictures of the Excell. Salvati house” featured 240 paintings of “a low and moderate” total valuation of 5,650 scudi. A list of the picture gallery of the Salviati palace in Florence written up 20 years later, in 1775 – by the painter Vincenzo Gotti with the relative prices established by two experts- comprised 420 paintings with a total value around to the 7,000 scudi, equal to approximately 40% of the estimate of the furniture of the residence. Such a value appears rather large, compared with that of the picture gallery of the Genoan family of the Brignole Sale, which represented 13% of the value of their household goods, according to their inheritance records of 1717<sup>66</sup>.

The record of the “General inventory of all personal goods, that is, pictures, books, gems, idols, medals, prints” of the Marquis Vincenzo Riccardi, compiled at his death in 1752 provides a clearer appraisal of the real importance of the picture gallery in the total value of personal goods (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Appraisal of the “personal goods” of the Marquis Vincenzo Riccardi (1752)**

<b>Goods</b>	<b>Value in scudi</b>	<b>%</b>
Paintings (n=200)	2.087	12,6
Marbles and bronzes	380	2,3
Porcelains	114	0,7
Silverware and gold	404	2,4
Gems	6.797	41,0
Gold Medals	4.119	25,0
Corals and ivories	418	2,5
Furniture	215	1,3
Copper and brass	45	0,3
Arms	623	3,8
Clothes	650	3,9
Books and codes	398	2,4
Books of prints	173	1,0
Prints	130	0,8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16.553</b>	<b>100,0</b>

**Source:** Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Riccardi.

<sup>66</sup> L. Tagliaferro, *La magnificenza privata. “Argenti, gioie, quadri e altri mobili” della famiglia Brignole-Sale. Secoli XVI-XIX*, Marietti Genova 1995, p. 27.

The personal painting collection of the Marquis Riccardi did not constitute a significant component of his personal wealth, as the data in Table 4 show. Gems and medals accounted for 66% of the total, far exceeding the share of the other items. The important intrinsic value of these goods realized in precious materials suggests that they were considered beyond their value, for use as hedge funds. Nevertheless the picture gallery of the Marquis Riccardi represented a remarkable value in relation to the relative lack of intrinsic value of the materials, in particular in relation to the value of furniture, clothes and books. It remains to be explained whether the painting collections represented their value in their entirety or as single objects. In the personal picture gallery of Marquis Riccardi the most valuable painting was a large one (cm 170x130) by Pompeo Batoni entitled the “Liberal Arts” estimated at 300 scudi. The others with significant valuations were: an oval-shaped picture (cm 130) by Pompeo Batoni representing the “Holy Conversation” valued at 60 scudi, a Rembrandt with the subject of an “old woman plucking a fowl” (cm 170x150) and a small one of a “Lady playing guitar” by an unknown painter estimated at 50 scudi. The value of over 64% of the paintings of the Marquis’ art collection was less than 10 scudi, and the 33% below 50 scudi. This pattern was not only true of the Marquis Riccardi collection. In fact we have similar results from the distribution of value of single paintings in the Riccardi and Salviati collections (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Distribution of the value of the single painting in the Riccardi and Salviati picture gallery (1715-1775)**

Family	Year	0 - 9 scudi	10 - 49 scudi	50 - 99 scudi	100 - 199 scudi	più di 200 scudi
Riccardi	1715	35%	40%	14%	7%	4%
Salviati	1775	40%	49%	7%	4%	0%

According to Goldthwaite this kind of consumption - painting collection - demonstrated taste more conspicuously than wealth<sup>67</sup>. These objects of art were in fact in many cases relatively inexpensive, and their value seldom reflected their cost. The real value of the painting collections was not the intrinsic value of the materials, but their significance and function. The utility of investing in art was mainly symbolic. Purchasing artworks was a

<sup>67</sup> R. A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600*, op. cit., pp. 248-249.

means of expressing and accumulating symbolic capital<sup>68</sup>. In this sense there was a real difference between the paintings and the silverware, the gold and the gems, which can be regarded mostly as hedge funds.

A strength of this argument, it is the evidence in the appraisal record of the fall in price of furniture over time, calculated as equal to 2/3 of the value in the course of a 100 years. The value of the art collections over the centuries was strictly connected to the care and the restoration of the artworks. In a note of “the paintings to be restored” of 1769 of the Salviati family, the gross amount of the restoration for 70 paintings was about 206 scudi and the value of the paintings around 978 scudi, equal to more than 20% of the total value. The cost of the restoration in more than 50% of the cases varied from 15% to 30% of the value of the single painting.

**Final remarks.** In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century a number of rulers and aristocratic collectors decided to make their more accessible by publishing catalogues and by issuing sets of engravings that reproduced the collections in whole or in part<sup>69</sup>. This represented a new way of considering the painting collections and symbolically marked the beginning of the progressive decline of interest in art collecting by the aristocracy. Therefore, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the gradual institutionalization of knowledge and the organization and opening of public museums started to restrict private collections<sup>70</sup>. The diffusion of new laws to preserve the artistic patrimony, particularly from the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century, under Leopold II of Lorena, put heavy restrictions on individual actions<sup>71</sup>.

This outline description of the painting collections of the Florentine aristocracy does not intend to exhaust the definition of the features of the demand for works of art in Italy in

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<sup>68</sup> W. Blockmans, *Demand for Artwork in the Medieval Period, a Power Point Presentation*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della “Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi” 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

<sup>69</sup> J. Brewer, *Positioning the Market: Art, Goods and Commodities in Early Modern Europe*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Economia e arte secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della “Trentatreesima Settimana di Studi” 30 aprile-4 maggio 2001*, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>70</sup> G. Olmi, *Dal ‘Teatro del mondo’ ai mondi inventariati. Aspetti e forme del collezionismo nell’età moderna*, in P. Barocchi e G. Ragionieri (eds), *Gli Uffizi quattro secoli di una galleria. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze 20-24 settembre 1984*, op. cit., pp. 233-269 and C. De Benedictis, *Per la storia collezionismo italiano*, op. cit., pp. 134-144.

<sup>71</sup> A. Emiliani, *Leggi, bandi e provvedimenti per la tutela dei beni artistici e culturali negli antichi stati italiani 1571-1860*, op. cit., pp. 62-66.

the modern age, but rather to offer some preliminary suggestions. Recent works on other cities, such as Rome, Naples and Venice, pointed up common characteristics of the period, in the quantitative and qualitative development and in the social dimension of this phenomenon<sup>72</sup>.

Beginning with the Renaissance, the art consumption symbolized the expression of a cultural process, relative to the achievement and the expansion of a new market of goods connected with a new culture of consumption found in the circle of Italian urban society. In the urban societies of the Central-Northern Italy, luxury consumption, marked by the emergence of art as a category of goods, became a mark of distinction, a public display of one's status. Starting with the Renaissance, the sector of luxury goods in the Italian economy took a particular form and began to show a dynamic ability to expand the variety and the quantity of its products, refining the quality. The growth of luxury consumption did not represent a real change in the economic system because of widespread urban poverty and the scanty purchasing power of the peasants and their handicraft model; instead luxury consumption was a cultural basis for the achievement afterwards of modern consumer society: the "taste of goods"<sup>73</sup>. The whole of industrial activities and trade services connected to this phenomenon allowed the main urban economies of Central-Northern Italy to constrain their decline, defining some features of subsequent Italian industrialization<sup>74</sup>. The development of the domestic demand for luxury goods, according to Ago, seems to have partially redressed the fall of the foreign demand and to have allowed the resistance of GDP until the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Italian economy shifted towards a state of backwardness<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> R. Ago, *Il gusto delle cose*, cit.; V. Abbate (ed.), *Aspetti del collezionismo in Italia da Federico II al primo novecento*, Regione Siciliana Trapani 1993; O. Bonfait, M. Hochmann, L. Spezzaferro and B. Toscano (eds), *Geografia del collezionismo. Italia e Francia tra il XVI e il XVIII secolo*, op. it.; O. Raggio, *Cultura aristocratica e gusto privato. Storia di una passione alla fine dell'Ancien régime*, Marsilio Venezia 2000 and M. P. Donato, *Il vizio virtuoso. Collezionismo e mercato a Roma nella prima metà del Settecento*, in "Quaderni storici", 115, 2004/1, pp. 139-160.

<sup>73</sup> W. Sombart, *Luxus und Kapitalismus*, Duncker & Humblot Munich 1913.

<sup>74</sup> R. Ago, *Il gusto delle cose*, op.cit., pp. 121-123; Id., *Economia barocca. Mercato e istituzioni nella Roma del Seicento*, Donzelli Roma 1998, pp. 5-60 and C. Poni – G. Mori, *Italy in the longue durée: the return of an old first-comer*, in M. Teich – R. Porter (eds), *The Industrial Revolution in National Context. Europe and the USA*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge 1996, pp. 149-183.

<sup>75</sup> After the "golden age", from the late Middle Ages to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Central-Northern Italy experimented with the "silver age": until 1750 the GDP per capita of the Central-Northern Italy economy was

The demand for art in Italy in modern times did not change significantly the economic trend, but rather left a valuable tangible cultural capital, which in the course of time achieved an even more remarkable economic importance<sup>76</sup>.

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second behind the Netherlands and on a par with the United Kingdom: P. Malanima, *Measuring the Italian Economy. 1300-1861*, in "Rivista di storia economica", XIX, 3, 2003, pp. 265-295.

<sup>76</sup> R.A. Goldthwaite, *Economic Parameters of the Italian Art Market (15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, in M. Fantoni - L. C. Matthew, - S. F. Matthew-Grieco (eds); *The Art Market in Italy 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries*, op. cit., pp. 423-444, in particular pp. 441-443.