A PAPAL HALL OF STATE: CEREMONY AND MULTIFUNCTIONALITY IN THE BORGIA APARTMENT

by

EMILY BROWN KELLEY

TANJA JONES, COMMITTEE CHAIR
HEATHER MCPHERSON
MINDY NANCARROW

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the joint program in Art History in the Graduate Schools of The University of Alabama and The University of Alabama at Birmingham

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2014
ABSTRACT

Situated on the second level (*piano nobile*) of the Vatican Palace, overlooking the south side of the Belvedere Courtyard, are eight rooms or *sale* that comprised the papal apartment of the Spanish native, Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia, born c. 1431; r. 1492-1503). These spaces once hosted powerful cardinals and heads of state for diplomatic or religious matters. They also served as Alexander VI’s private living spaces. During meetings or meals with the Borgia pope, guests encountered a visual array of opulent fresco programs that included fictive tapestries along the lower half of the wall surface, vibrant narrative lunettes on the upper half, and lavishly gilded vault programs decorated by Bernardino Pinturicchio (1454-1513) and his workshop during 1492-94. Combining iconographic study, examination of primary source documents regarding court ceremony and use of the space, and architectural analyses of Roman *palazzi* from the period, this thesis offers the first sustained consideration of the multiple, and often overlapping, functions that the eight rooms of the Borgia apartment likely served during Alexander VI’s pontificate. Such an effort is especially important as Alexander VI’s apartment in the Vatican Palace represents the oldest surviving decorated papal apartment in Rome. Sustained consideration of how the pontiff and his court likely utilized the spaces offers an unparalleled opportunity to gain a greater understanding of early modern papal ceremony. As this study demonstrates, each of the rooms served multiple and interrelated functions dictated by ceremony, etiquette and architecture.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband, Charley, who left the light on for me while I worked long nights. To my sweet girls, Lydia and Caroline, who pulled me away from the computer when I needed it the most. And lastly, to my mother, Patricia, who traveled with me to Rome and bought me everything I needed when our luggage never arrived.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It gives me great pleasure to thank all the members of my committee Dr. Tanja Jones, Dr. Heather McPherson and Dr. Mindy Nancarrow, for all their support and contribution to this thesis. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the chairman of my committee, Dr. Jones. I am indebted to Dr. Jones for her constant guidance, patience, enthusiasm, motivation, and immense knowledge during the past two years. I am also grateful to the University of Alabama Graduate School for their financial assistance during my research in Rome. Finally, I would like to thank Marco Pratelli for personally escorting me through the Borgia Apartment.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... ii
DEDICATION ................................................................................................................... iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................. iv
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ vi
1. INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 1
2. RECONSTRUCTION AND FUNCTION OF THE SALA DEI PONTEFICI .................... 17
3. FUNCTION OF THE PINTURICCHIO ROOMS ......................................................... 42
4. FUNCTION OF THE CAMERAE SECRTAE ............................................................ 67
5. CONCLUSION .......................................................................................................... 82
REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 85
FIGURES ..................................................................................................................... 92
## LIST OF FIGURES


1.2 Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace. Scala Archives………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………93


1.5 Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Santi*, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Scala Archives…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………95


1.10 *Sancta Sanctorum*, San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome, c. 1279…………………………………98

1.11 Images of the Popes, *Sistine Chapel*, Vatican Palace, c. 1483…………………………………98


2.2 Layout, *Old Vatican Palace*, Westfall, *In This Most Perfect Paradise*, 1974……………100

2.3 Layout, *Old Vatican Palace*, Westfall, *In This Most Perfect Paradise*, 1974……………101
2.4  *Sala dei Pontefici*, Borgia Apartment, Vatican Palace. North (far right) and West Walls, Scala Archives ................................................................. 102


2.7  Diagrams of the Popes, *Sistine Chapel*, Vatican Palace ........................................ 103

2.8  Papal Portrait Series, *Sistine Chapel*, 1481-83 ca. Vatican Palace ..................... 105

2.9  *Palcho Ceiling*. Vittore Carpaccio, *Birth of the Virgin*, Bergamo, 1504-1508 ...... 106

2.10 Soffito Ceiling With Shallow A Caselle; Giotto, *St. Francis appears to Pope Gregory IX in a Dream*, Upper Church, Basilica of S. Francesco, Assisi, ca. 1300 ....... 106

2.11 *Palcho Ceiling*, Camerino (1), Borgia Apartment, Vatican Palace .................... 107


2.13 Cubicolo of Nicholas V, Vatican Palace. Mid-Fifteenth Century, Scala Archives ...... 108


2.16 Beauvais Tapestry, *The Martyrdom of Saint Paul* (From the Series “The Life of Saint Peter”), Commissioned in 1462 for the Cathedral of St. Peter in Beauvais ............ 109


3.1 Layout, *Pinturicchio Rooms*, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897. fig. 1, Top: Before Reconstruction, Bottom: After Restoration... 110

3.2 Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, 1492, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, South and West Walls ................................................................. 111
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Resurrection, Sala dei Misteri</em>, 1492, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, West Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Sala dei Misteri</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, West and North Walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Sala dei Misteri</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Two Views of the South Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, Fictive Papal Tiara, <em>Sala dei Misteri</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, East wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Sala dei Santi</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, South Wall, Scala Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Sala dei Santi</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, South and West Walls, Ehrle and Stevenson, <em>Les fresques</em>, 1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Sala dei Santi</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Vault, Scala Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Dispute of Saint Catherine, Sala dei Santi</em>, 1492-1494, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, South wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Pinturicchio, <em>Sala delle Arti Liberali</em>, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Vault, Scala Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.14</td>
<td><em>Studiolo</em>, Ducal Palace, Urbino, 15th century, ca. 1479–82. Possibly designed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Raphael, Parnassus, <em>Stanza della Segnatura</em>, Vatican Palace, c. 1511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.17 Pinturicchio, *Sala del Credo*, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Vault, Author, August, 2014……………………………………………………………………………………. 120


3.19 Pinturicchio, *Sala delle Sibille*, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Vault, Scala Archives……………………………………………………………………………………. 121

4.1 Donato Bramante (1444-1514), *Plan of the Vatican Palace*, 287 A, Florenz, Galleria degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei disegni e delle stampe, date (?), Scala Archives……………… 122

4.2 Layout, *Camerino* (1), Rigobello 1938, Waarts, “The so-called (Bathroom of Pope Alexander VI),” 48………………………………………………………………… 123


4.5 Detail, *Camerino* (1), Rendiconti, “Camerette Borgia,” 243………………………… 125

4.6 *Camerino* (1), Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace. Author August, 2014, South Wall, Standing in the Entrance……………………………………………………………… 125

4.7 *Camerino* (1), Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace. Fire Place, East Wall, Author, 2014…………………………………………………………………………………… 126

4.8 *Camerino* (1), Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace. Far Right, Second Large Window, West Wall, Author, 2014……………………………………………………………… 126

4.9 *Camerino* (1), Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace. Ceiling, *Scala Archives*……….. 127


4.12 Baldassarre Peruzzi, *Perspectives’ Hall*, Villa Farnesina, c. 1510.......................... 128


4.15 *Camerino* (2), Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace, Ceiling. Author, Aug. 2014......... 130

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Situated on the second level (piano nobile) of the Vatican Palace, overlooking the south side of the Belvedere Courtyard, are eight rooms or sale that comprised the papal apartment of the Spanish native, Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia, born c. 1431; r. 1492-1503) (fig. 1.1). The apartment includes rooms that once hosted powerful cardinals and heads of state during audiences or meals with the Borgia pope as well as Alexander VI’s private living spaces. Five of the eight rooms in the apartment were decorated by Bernardino Pinturicchio (1454-1513) and his workshop between 1492 and 1494. These spaces, known collectively as the “Pinturicchio rooms,” are traditionally identified through their iconography; they are commonly referred to as the Sala dei Misteri (Hall of Mysteries), Sala dei Santi (Hall of Saints), Sala delle Arti Liberali (Hall of Liberal Arts), Sala del Credo (Hall of the Credo), and the Sala delle Sibille (Hall of Sibyls). An adjacent room, known as the Sala dei Pontefici, was decorated in the 1450s by an unknown artist. In these six rooms, accessible to visiting dignitaries and the papal court, guests encountered a visual array of opulent fresco programs that included fictive tapestries along the lower half of the wall surface, vibrant narrative lunettes on the upper half, and lavishly gilded vault programs. The final two rooms in the apartment, also likely decorated by Pinturicchio and his workshop, comprised the camerae secretae (the secret chambers) of the pontiff, and feature only a gilded vault program.

Best known today are the five Pinturicchio sale that still display radiant lunettes and decoration on the upper walls as well as gilded vaulting; along with the other sale, these rooms
are included in the Vatican Museums and house part of the Collection of Modern Religious Art (fig. 1.2). Combining iconographic study, examination of primary source documents regarding court ceremony and use of the space, and architectural analyses of Roman palazzi from the period, this study offers the first sustained consideration of the multiple, and often overlapping, functions that the eight rooms of the Borgia apartment likely served during Alexander VI’s pontificate. While prior studies have briefly addressed the functionality of individual sale within the apartment, there has not been a sustained consideration of the rooms’ interrelated nature and functionality as a pontifical apartment. Such an effort is especially important as Alexander VI’s apartment in the Vatican Palace represents the oldest surviving decorated papal apartment in Rome. Sustained consideration of how the pontiff and his court likely utilized the spaces offers an unparalleled opportunity to gain a greater understanding of early modern papal ceremony. As this thesis demonstrates, each of the rooms served multiple and interrelated functions dictated by ceremony, etiquette and architecture.

**Statement of Literature**

Existing literature addressing the Borgia apartment considers the patron, the artist, and the iconographic program of the Pinturicchio rooms. The Spanish-born patron, Rodrigo Borgia, was elected Pope Alexander VI in 1492. An invaluable source regarding Alexander VI’s pontificate remains Ludwig von Pastor’s *History of the Popes* (1923), a multi-volume study devoted to the history of the early modern papacy. Three volumes of Pastor’s monumental work address the Borgia pope’s election, action in the church, and patronage of art. In 1924, Peter De Roo produced the first comprehensive English-language study devoted to Alexander’s politics and the Borgia family lineage. During the mid-twentieth century, the Borgia family was a focus
of the Renaissance historian Michael Mallett (1969) who chronicled Alexander VI’s papacy within the context of the Renaissance and the Papal States of the fifteenth century.⁵

Immediately after Rodrigo Borgia was crowned supreme pontiff, he redecorated a large portion of the Vatican palace that was erected under Pope Nicolas V (r. 1447-1455); Pope Alexander also added a new tower, the Tower Borgia, at the same time.⁶ Alexander’s apartment thus included both pre-existing and newly constructed sale (fig. 1.3). Spaces previously utilized by Nicholas V included the Sala dei Pontefici, which was probably decorated c. 1450 and was not redecorated under Alexander, and the seven rooms decorated under Pinturicchio: the Sala dei Misteri, Sala dei Santi, Sala delle Arti Liberali, Sala del Credo, Sala delle Sibille and the two camere segreta. The final two rooms of Alexander VI’s apartment, the Sala del Credo and the Sala delle Sibille, were part of the newly built, adjacent tower (fig. 1.3). During the Borgia pontificate, visitors to the sale entered the space from the pre-existing, large ceremonial space called the Sala dei Pontefici (Hall of the Popes).⁷ Adjacent to the hall, the rooms proceed as the Sala dei Misteri, Sala dei Santi, Sala delle Arti Liberali, Sala del Credo and the Sala delle Sibille. As figure 1.3 illustrates, the two camere segrete (labeled 7 & 10 on this plan) were accessed via the Sala delle Arti Liberali.⁸

The artist Pinturicchio (Bernardino di Betti, b. 1454-1513), enjoyed great success as a painter and obtained several important papal and curial commissions in Rome, Siena and Umbria prior to his activity in Alexander VI’s apartment. Major projects included Pinturicchio’s role in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel under Sixtus IV (r. 1471-1484) and the decoration of the Villa Belvedere in the Vatican under Pope Innocent VIII (r. 1484-1492). The decoration Pinturicchio and his workshop carried out in the Borgia sale has been the focus of sustained scholarly consideration. F. Ehrle and E. Stevenson’s Les fresques du Pinturicchio dans les Salles
*Borgia au Vatican* (1898) was the first monograph devoted to the apartment. In addition to documenting the extensive restoration project carried out in the spaces between 1892 and 1897, Ehrle and Stevenson identified the images depicted in the rooms, naming each space based upon its iconographic theme. Their foundational work provided, for the first time, a detailed layout of the Vatican Palace as it existed under Alexander VI’s pontificate (fig. 1.1), as well as an architectural history.⁹

According to extant letters from Pope Alexander VI to Pinturicchio, the *Sala dei Misteri* (figs. 1.2 & 1.4) was the first room frescoed by the artist and his workshop.¹⁰ The *Sala dei Misteri* contains seven lunettes depicting events from the life of Christ and the Virgin. Beginning with the wall opposite the window and moving clockwise, these include the *Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration, Resurrection, Ascension, Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and Assumption of the Virgin.* The adjacent room, the *Sala dei Santi* (fig. 1.5 & 1.6), contains six lunettes illustrating episodes in the lives of various saints. Starting again with the wall opposite the window and moving counterclockwise these are *St. Catherine of Alexandria Disputing, The Meeting of St. Anthony and St. Paul the Hermit, The Visitation, The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian, St. Susanna being Spied on by Old Men,* and *The Flight of St. Barbara.*

The adjacent *Sala delle Arti Liberali* (fig. 1.7) includes seven personifications of the Liberal Arts sitting on thrones. Beginning with the wall opposite the window, moving counterclockwise, the subjects proceed as *Rhetoric, Geometry, Arithmetic, Music, Astronomy, Grammar* and *Dialectic.* The remaining two rooms each contain twelve lunettes depicting half-length figures holding fluttering scrolls. The *Sala del Credo* (fig. 1.8) includes Apostles and Prophets from the Old Testament arranged in groups. Starting with the wall opposite the entrance, moving clockwise, they are Andrew, Isaiah, James the Greater, Zachariah, Matthew,
Hosea, James the Less, and Amos; Philip, Malachias, Bartholomew, and Joel; Thomas, Daniel, Simon, Malachias, Thaddaeus, Zachariah, Matthew, and Abdias; and Peter, Jeremiah, John and David. The figures in the Sala delle Sibille (fig. 1.9), from the right side of the wall opposite the entrance and moving counterclockwise are Isaiah, Hellespontica, Micha, Tiburtina, Ezekiel and Cymmeria; Jeremiah, Phrygia, Hosea, Delphica, Daniel, and Erythrea; Haggai, Cumaea, Amos, Europea, Jeremiah, and Agrippina; and Baruch, Samia, Zachariah, Persica, Abdias and Lybica.

Following Ehrle and Stevenson, German art historians Ursula Paal and Sabine Poeschel each offered expanded analyses of the Pinturicchio sale. Paal’s dissertation, “Studien zum Appartamento Borgia im Vatikan” (1981), addressed the style and authorship of the decorative program in the Pinturicchio sale by attempting to identify each Umbrian artist in Pinturicchio’s workshop who participated in the decoration. Poeschel’s Alexander Maximus: Das Bildprogramm des Appartamento Borgia im Vatikan (1999) was the first study to provide an iconological analysis of Pinturicchio’s decorative scheme. The author considered the imagery in each room in relation to Alexander’s political position and religious objectives. Little study has been devoted to the other rooms in the apartment, the pre-existing Sala dei Pontefici and the two small rooms known as the camerae secretae.

No comprehensive, English-language study has been devoted to the Borgia apartment. American and British scholars have, instead, produced smaller, critical studies devoted to singular rooms in the main Pinturicchio decorative suite, overlooking the adjacent Sala dei Pontefici and camerae secretae entirely. Randolph N. Parks’ article, “On the Meaning of Pinturicchio’s Sala dei Santi” (1979), investigates the complex lunette program adorning the Sala dei Santi and suggests that the room’s overall program symbolizes divine assistance to Ecclesia in her temporal guise. Such studies are important for understanding that each sala
includes complex religious themes. Unfortunately, the Sala dei Misteri, Sala del Credo and the Sala delle Sibille have not been the subject of focused English-language study.

**Analysis and Methodology**

This thesis addresses how Pope Alexander VI might have utilized the apartment as a whole, an issue little considered in the past. Identifying the exact function of the various sale within the apartment has proved problematic for scholars for several reasons. First, primary source information regarding the function of the sale is scant. The only literature addressing the historical use of the rooms, both before and during Alexander’s pontificate, is a contemporary memoir written by the papal master of ceremonies, Johann Burchard (1440-1503). Unfortunately, Burchard’s diary entries during the Borgian pontificate focus largely on events that took place in the first room of the apartment, the Sala dei Pontefici. Second, the loss of original furnishings for all the rooms further complicates the task. Lastly, there is limited comparative material regarding the decoration and function of papal apartments in Rome prior to the fifteenth century. The final point is an especially important one, making the need for the present study clear.

The first Roman palace to act as the papal residence was the Lateran. During the early fourth century, the Lateran Palace and surrounding estates were gifted by the Roman Emperor Constantine I (272-337) to Pope Melchiades (r. 311-314). From that time until 1309, when the papacy relocated to Avignon, the Lateran served as the primary papal residence. Unfortunately, the appearance, function and decoration of the medieval Lateran Palace are largely unknown. Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585-1590) demolished the ancient residence between 1585 and 1587 and there are only sketchy descriptions of the palace interior in primary source documents.
The second Roman palace to act as the papal residence is that located on the Vatican Hill. From the sixth until the fifteenth century, the Vatican Palace was essentially used to accommodate popes during visits to the sacred site of St. Peter’s Basilica where, tradition holds, St. Peter was martyred and buried. Pope Nicolas III (r. 1277-1280) substantially remodeled and enlarged the palace. Pope Martin V (r. 1417-1431) was the first to consider the Vatican palace as a papal residence, following the papal return to Rome in 1420 from the Avignon exile (1309-1377). He found the Lateran palace dilapidated from years of neglect and fires. Although Martin V and his successor Pope Eugenius IV (r. 1431-1447) repaired the palace, Pope Nicolas V (r. 1447-1455) added considerably to the structure.

Despite limited documentary information, a few studies have attempted to identify the use of the individual spaces within the Borgia sale. In “L’Appartamento Borgia: Funzione e Decorazione,” (1980), Claudia Cieri first tried to identify the specific function of all eight sale, suggesting that the rooms performed similarly to the apartment of Pope Julius II (r. 1503-1513), decorated by Raphael and his workshop between 1511 to 1514. Julius II’s apartment is located on the third floor of the Vatican, directly above the Borgia apartment. Cieri was indebted to John Shearman (1971) who authored the first sustained consideration of the function of the individual spaces within Julius II’s papal apartment. Cieri’s analysis is problematic, however, as she attempts to draw a one-to-one comparison between Alexander VI’s second floor apartment and Julius’s later apartment above. In fact, there is not a direct correspondence between the spaces. Specifically, the papal bedchambers were in different locations and the rooms located in the tower in the Borgia apartment were functional spaces while the corresponding spaces on Julius’ level were not.
Two final studies that consider room function of the eight Borgia sale are Paal’s dissertation and Poeschel’s monograph. In addition to extrapolating information from Burchard’s diary, Paal published new primary source documents from the notary of the papal chamberlain Camillus de Beneimbenis (1464-1504) recording events that took place in the Sala dei Santi.\textsuperscript{23} Poeschel’s work relied primarily on the decorative program as an indicator of room function. While Paal and Poeschel’s efforts are invaluable to understanding the iconography and specific function for each room, these studies never considered the interrelated nature of the eight sale and how they functioned as a papal apartment.

Referencing a broader range of material regarding Roman palazzi and their ceremonial functions than has been brought to bear in previous studies, this thesis considers all of the spaces within the Borgia apartment and their interrelated functions. This effort relies on a range of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources, such as Burckhardt’s diary, are essential considering how the papal apartment functioned.

Secondary studies aid in reconstructing the original decorative programs and furniture of the Borgia sale. These studies also address how individual sale functioned in Roman Renaissance apartments. Christoph Frommel addressed cinquecento room function in his three volume work \textit{Der Römische Palastbau der Hochrenaissance} (1973).\textsuperscript{24} Patricia Waddy addressed space and functionality of cardinal’s palaces in \textit{Seventeenth-Century Roman Palaces} (1990).\textsuperscript{25} To do so, she relied upon a series of critical primary sources including Paolo Cortesi’s detailed description of the ideal Renaissance Roman palace, published as \textit{De Cardinalate} (1510).\textsuperscript{26} Waddy also considered Cesare Evitascandalo’s \textit{Maestro di Casa} (1598), Francesco Sestini da Bibbiena’s \textit{maestro di camera} (1621) and Francesco Liberati’s \textit{Il perfetto Maestro di Casa} (1658) which record how room furnishings were reflective of their owner’s status.\textsuperscript{27} Waddy’s
work is especially important to my own consideration of the rules of etiquette that regulated how guests entered and exited the *sale*, and how an early modern master might employ various spaces in an apartment.

Room function was important and highly regulated in cardinal’s palaces during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As Waddy delineates, the rooms that non-curia members, cardinals, or popes, entered within a state apartment indicated their social status and rank. The existing studies of Ehrle and Stevenson, Paal and Poeschel reconstruct the layout and original decorations of the Borgia Apartment and feature scattered references to the individual function of the eight *sale* it contains. This thesis builds on those prior studies, while referencing the primary and secondary sources noted above, to offer the first sustained consideration of how the spaces in the Borgia Apartment likely functioned as an interrelated whole.

Finally, as an aid to understanding and recreating movement between the spaces in the chapters that follow, I introduce and posit the movements and experiences of a hypothetical and privileged visitor to the Borgia Apartment, the Vice-Chancellor Cardinal Sforza (1455-1505). Waddy’s study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century etiquette handbooks, made clear that movement through a Cardinalate apartment was a highly regulated ceremonial process, based on rank and office.²⁸ Vice-Chancellor Sforza’s rank as second in command of the curia and head of the Apostolic Chancellery (Cancelleria) would have granted him access to the whole Borgia Apartment. He is the perfect guest to the Borgia Apartment because most callers never made it past the first room, the *Sala dei Pontefici*. In introducing Vice-Chancellor Sforza as a hypothetical visitor and recreating his encounter with each *sale* provides a vehicle for understanding the individual and interrelated function of each room. It also demonstrates the relation between papal ceremony and architecture.
As this thesis will demonstrate, each of the rooms in the Borgia apartment had multiple and interrelated functions dictated by ceremony, etiquette and architecture. Providing an analysis of how Alexander VI, and his court, likely utilized the whole Borgia Apartment, this thesis provides a greater understanding of the function and ceremony in early modern pontifical apartments, an issue little considered in the past.

Outline of Chapters

Following this Introductory Chapter, Chapter Two addresses the function of the Sala dei Pontefici and provides a reconstruction of its decorative scheme under Alexander VI. The decorative scheme in the Sala dei Pontefici, likely created c. 1450 under Pope Nicholas V, has not been reconstructed in previous literature. This effort is essential to understanding the function of the space and its relationship to the other sale. In 1500 the ceiling of the Sala dei Pontefici collapsed, destroying the decoration, killing three men, and injuring Alexander VI, who was in the space at the time.\textsuperscript{29} The room was repaired under Alexander, but Pope Leo X (r. 1513-1521) later completely redecorated the sala.\textsuperscript{30} Based on primary textual evidence, I suggest that the Sala dei Pontefici’s decorative program was similar to the imagery in the Sancta Sanctorum, executed under Pope Nicholas III (r. 1277-1280) (fig. 1.10), and to the imagery on the upper walls of the Sistine chapel (fig.1.11), completed under Sixtus IV (c.1483).

The second half of the chapter addresses the form and function of the Sala dei Pontefici. Here I suggest that the room was considered a sala grande in architectural terms and a “hall of state” in functional terms, a space where political power was exercised or claimed. For this effort I rely on primary source information from Burchard’s diary as well as Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge’s, Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300-1600 (1992).\textsuperscript{31}
Chapter Three considers the interrelated function and the multiple uses of the five Pinturicchio sale. To facilitate this effort, I rely on Waddy’s study of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century ceremonial books to posit how a privileged, hypothetical visitor, the papal Vice-Chancellor, might have moved through the spaces. In order to define the interrelated nature of the sale and how they functioned as a papal apartment, I utilize Burchard’s diary to reconstruct known functions that took place in the spaces as well as Poeschel’s analysis of the rooms’ decorative program and Frommel’s architectural analyses of Roman palazzi from the period. This study demonstrates that the rooms functioned in multiple and interrelated ways governed by ceremony and architecture.

Chapter Four discusses the function of the two remaining spaces in the apartment, the camerae secretae. Though prior studies have addressed their location and function in brief, this study offers the first sustained consideration and reconstruction of the function of these spaces. Because the spaces have been reconfigured in the intervening centuries, I rely on Burchard’s diary, two sixteenth-century floor plans of the Vatican Palace, and the restoration plan of Giovanni Carlo Rigobello (1937/38) to reconstruct the possible layout of the rooms as they existed under Alexander VI. I then reference the studies of Waddy and Frommel to suggest how Alexander VI might have used the camerae secretae and how the rooms may have worked in tandem with the larger, reception spaces (Pinturicchio rooms) of the Borgia Apartment. I will also address the complex issue of our modern conception of public vs. private spaces in relation to the realities of space, function and sixteenth-century aristocratic life in the apartment.

Reconstructing the camerini’s function is essential to understanding the role of a papal apartment and the intricate workings of papal ceremony as they likely represented the most “private” spaces of Alexander VI’s apartment.
Pinturicchio’s spaces for Alexander VI in the Vatican Palace represent the oldest surviving decorated papal apartment in Rome. Despite the importance of the Borgia sale to the history of papal residences, there has been limited consideration of how the sale functioned as a papal apartment. Reconstructing the organization and interrelated nature of the eight Borgia sale, this thesis provides a greater understanding of space and function in papal ceremony by demonstrating how the spaces were regulated in terms of access and flexible in terms of function. This study also aids in understanding the early modern papacy and the function of papal apartments.


3 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes, From the Close of the Middle Ages: Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, Vols. 3, 4 and 5, trans. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus (Great Britain: Butler & Tanner, 1923).


6 This section of the palace was a wing that Nicolas V added to the pre-existing Vatican Palace built by Nicolas III (r.1277-1280); see F. Ehrle and E. Stevenson, *Les fresques du Pinturicchio dans les Salles Borgia au Vatican* (Rome: Danesi, 1898), 8-9.


8 Adjacent to the *Sala delle Arti Liberali*, attached to the papal suite, are two additional rooms known as the *camerae segretae* or the secret rooms. Before 1974, the rooms were not open to visitors because they were connected to the Vatican library. The rooms have undergone several changes and adaptations over the centuries but they still retain their gilded wooden ceilings; see Ferrazza, *The Borgia Apartment*, 20. My reconstruction of the spaces was aided by my visit to the apartment in August, 2014.

9 A series of studies dedicated to Pinturicchio’s œuvre appeared in the late nineteenth century, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the decoration of the Borgia apartments in 1897. The following year the German scholar Ernst Steinmann produced the first comprehensive study dedicated to Pinturicchio; see Ernst Steinmann, *Pinturicchio* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klassing, 1898). Evelyn M. Phillipps incorporated Steinman’s foundational work into her comprehensive English-language monograph; see Evelyn M. Phillipps, *Pintoricchio* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901). See also Corrado Ricci, *Pinturicchio (Bernardino di Betto of Perugia): His Life, Work and Time*, trans. by Florence Simmonds (London: William Heinemann, 1902). Ricci investigates Pinturicchio’s works executed in the Sistine Chapel (1479-1482/3), the Bufalini Chapel (c. 1480’s), the Belvedere of the Vatican (1484), the Colonna Palace, the Penitenziere Palace, Santa Maria del Popolo, the Cathedral of Orvieto and the Borgia apartments. Pinturicchio’s incorporation of grotesque figures was the focus of J. Schultz, “Pinturicchio and the Revival of Antiquity,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25, no. ½ (1962): 35-55; Enzo Carli, *Il Pintoricchio* (Milano: Electa editrice, 1960). For recent literature dedicated to
Pinturicchio, see Claudia La Malfa, “Dating Pinturicchio’s Roman Frescoes and the Creation of a New, All’Antica Style,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 70 (2007): 119-141. La Malfa’s article chronicles important classical devices used in Pinturicchio’s works completed prior to the Borgia apartments; Holly Marguerite Rarick, “Pinturicchio’s Saint Bernardino of Siena Frescoes in the Bufalini Chapel, S. Maria in Aracoeli, Rome: An Observant Franciscan Commentary of the Late Fifteenth Century,” Ph.D. diss. (Case Western Reserve University, 1990).


14 The only exception to this claim is Joanne Cox’s unpublished MA thesis, which I have been unable to obtain; see Joanne Cox, “The Iconography of the Borgia Apartments,” (Master’s Thesis, University of London: Courtauld Institute of Art, 1982). Also it is worth noting that Fritz Saxl addressed the Borgia emblem’s multiple meanings exhibited throughout the Borgia apartments to highlight the historical and ideological figure of the pope; see Fritz Saxl, “The Appartamento Borgia,” in *Lectures*, 174-188 (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1957): 174-188.


19 Pope Symmachus (r. 498-514) was the first to construct a rudimentary palace next to St. Peter’s Basilica, located on the Vatican Hill in Rome, after he was dismissed from the Lateran palace for political reasons between 501-506; see Torgil Magnuson, The Urban Transformation of Medieval Rome, 312-1420 (Stockholm: Swedish Institute in Rome, 2004), 79.

20 This new wing held the earliest known Roman papal apartments. Their exact function and decoration is unknown because of sparse primary documents and the fact that they were renovated or redecorated over the centuries.


27 Cesare Evitascandalo, Dialogo del treciante (Rome, 1609) and Il maestro di casa, there are also subsequent editions; Francesco Sestini da Bibbiena’s masestro di camera (Florence, 1621) and subsequent editions in Rome and Viterbo, 1639; Francesco Liberati, Il perfetto Maestro di Casa (Rome, 1658). I did not utilize these sources first hand. Instead, I relied on Patricia Waddy’s study of these primary texts; see, Waddy, Roman Palaces, 1990.

28 Waddy, Roman Palaces, 3-13.

29 Poeschel, Alexander, 72.

30 Vital to reconstructing the room’s appearance are two sixteenth-century letters. Raphael Brandolinus Lippus, who was a witness to the ceiling collapse of the Sala dei Pontefici, described some of the original frescoes in his letter to Manfredo de Manfredis, ambassador of Ferrara. On this see, Poeschel, Alexander Maximus, 72. A letter by El Prete, a Ferrarese ambassador, to Marchesa Isabella Gonzaga describes the tapestries that once hung in the Sala dei Pontefici. The payment record for a new door in the Sala dei Pontefici, received in 1460, called the room the “Great Hall of Popes”; see, Ehrle and Stevenson, Les fresques, 17.
CHAPTER 2

RECONSTRUCTION AND FUNCTION OF THE SALA DEI PONTEFICI

This chapter provides the first reconstruction of the decoration and function of the Sala dei Pontefici, the large public entrance hall for the Borgia Apartment in the Vatican Palace (fig. 2.1). During Pope Alexander VI’s reign, the Sala dei Pontefici was the first room that official visitors to the apartment entered. Alexander VI received ambassadors and held consistories in the massive sala, which measures approximately 59ft x 38ft (labeled 1 in fig. 1.3). Unfortunately, the decoration of the Sala dei Pontefici as it existed under Alexander VI, likely completed c. 1450 under Pope Nicolas V (r.1447-1455), was lost when a violent storm hit the Vatican Palace on 29 June 1500, eight years into Alexander VI’s papacy. After that disastrous event, Alexander structurally repaired the papal hall and continued to utilize the space but never redecorated it. Under Pope Leo X (r.1513-1521), the current astrological frescoes in the vaulting were executed by Raphael’s pupils, Perino del Vaga and Giovanni da Udine, possibly between 1520 and 1521. While the sixteenth-century vault has been the subject of scholarly attention, the Sala dei Pontefici’s earlier decorative scheme and function as part of the Borgia Apartment remains largely ignored.¹ Reconstructing the decoration and function of the Sala dei Pontefici is important to establishing how the pope used the first room of his apartment and how visitors encountered the space, as well as those after it.

Earlier studies of both the Borgia Apartment and the Vatican Palace address the original appearance and function of the Sala dei Pontefici only in passing. Ehrle and Stevenson (1897) suggested that Nicholas V rebuilt the sala from the foundations of an older building.² Ehrle later found that the sala’s foundations date to the reign of Nicholas III Orsini (r. 1277-1280).³ Redig
de Campos (1974) went further, proposing that Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294-1303) was responsible for the room’s construction.⁴ Ehrle and Stevenson, as well as Poeschel (2003), published primary source documents indicating the use of the papal hall as a ceremonial space, but did not provide a sustained reconstruction and consideration of the space and its function.⁵

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the decoration of the space and its function as part of the Borgia Apartment, I first consider *quattrocento* sources describing the *sala’s* decoration, particularly the diary of Alexander VI’s Master of Ceremonies, Burchard, and a letter by Raphael Brandolinus Lippus (?-1517), a distinguished scholar and nobleman. Utilizing these, along with the prior analyses of Ehrle and Stevenson and Poeschel, and references to both earlier and later spaces such as the *Sancta Sanctorum* at the Lateran and the *Sistine Chapel* in the Vatican Palace, I offer a reconstruction of the *Sala dei Pontefici’s* decoration as it existed during the first eight years of Alexander’s VI’s pontificate. I suggest that the space was hung with heavy tapestries on the lower half of the walls, was decorated with frescoed papal portraits on the upper portions of the walls, and featured a flat wooden ceiling. Second, I consider the function of the space, referencing primary source documents as well as secondary literature by Starn and Partridge (1992) and others to argue that the *Sala dei Pontefici* functioned as a “hall of state.”

**The *Sala dei Pontefici*: Before the Borgia Pope**

Before moving to a focused reconstruction of the appearance and function of the *Sala dei Pontefici* under Alexander VI, it is essential to first offer a brief history of the Vatican Palace and the space prior to the Borgia pontificate. The history of the Vatican Palace, from its conception to the reign of Pope Alexander VI, spans nearly a millennium.⁶ The earliest documentation of the palace shows that Pope Symmachus (r. 498-514) constructed a rudimentary palace, known as an *episcopia*, next to the Vatican Basilica during 501-506.⁷ The Vatican Palace expanded during the
reigns of subsequent popes. Pope Innocent III (r. 1198-1216) made extensive alterations, the largest of which was the construction of a second story.

By the thirteenth century, the small *episcopia* was transformed into a palace consisting of a grand complex of buildings that stretched from the portico of the basilica to the Vatican Hill. Innocent III was the first pope to reside at the Vatican for any length of time. Innocent died before completing his second story addition leaving his successor, Pope Nicholas III (Orsini, r.1277-1280), to complete the construction. During the three short years of Nicolas III’s reign, he planned to transform the palace into a fortified residence fitted with battlements and guarded by angled turrets surrounding the *Cortile del Pappagallo* (fig. 2.2). Nicholas was unable to complete his “*palatium novum*,” but finished a part of the palace’s east wing. That wing became the ceremonial nucleus of the palace and includes the rooms known today as the *Sala dei Paramenti, Sala del Pappagallo, and Camera Audientiae* (fig. 2.3). These three rooms precede the Borgia *sale* and, under Alexander VI, were used in conjunction with his apartment during important ceremonies and festivities. The fourteenth century was a turbulent time for the church and the Vatican Palace. Both the Avignon exile (1309-1377) and the Great Schism (1378-1417) left Rome’s churches and palaces to fall into decay. The Vatican Palace suffered from neglect during the period but once Pope Martin V (r.1417-1431) returned to Rome in 1420, he found the structure more serviceable than the Lateran and installed the papal curia at the Vatican. Although Martin V and his successor Pope Eugenius IV (r.1431-1447) repaired the palace, neither considered the Vatican his residence when in Rome. It was not until the pontificate of Pope Nicholas V (Parentucellui, r. 1447-1455) that the papal residence was officially moved to the Vatican, making it Rome’s epicenter. From that point on St. Peter’s and the Vatican became the ultimate goal of pilgrims and ambassadors who came to the holy city.
Pope Nicholas V created an ambitious plan for the Vatican Palace. His chief works included a three-story north wing added to Nicholas III’s medieval eastern wing and an extensive decorative program for both. The original decorative program for the large ceremonial room, the Sala dei Pontefici, intersects both Nicholas III’s and Nicholas V’s building campaigns.\textsuperscript{19}

**The Sala dei Pontefici: History and Reconstruction**

The earliest available information regarding the construction and decoration of the Sala dei Pontefici comes from previous studies of the sala’s masonry and scattered fifteenth-century documents, some of which were compiled and published by Ehrle and Stevenson and Redig de Campos.\textsuperscript{20} The room’s architectural history is ambiguous because of its location in the Vatican Palace. The Sala dei Pontefici terminates the Vatican Palace’s east wing and begins its north wing; as such, the sala functions as a nodal space between two distinct ceremonial cores of the palace (fig. 2.3). The ceremonial cores are divided into the older, larger halls built by Nicholas III (r.1277-1280) and the smaller intimate sale of Nicholas V (r. 1447-1455) which consists of the Sala dei Misteri, Sala dei Santi, Sala delle Arti Liberali, Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille in the Borgia Apartment. Despite its position, existing studies establish that either Nicholas III or Boniface VIII constructed the Sala dei Pontefici and that Nicholas V later reconstructed the Sala dei Pontefici.\textsuperscript{21}

Of particular importance to reconstructing the Sala dei Pontefici are primary source accounts regarding the storm that hit the Vatican Palace on 29 June 1500 and took the lives of fifteen men in the space. Several letters from survivors, as well as an excerpt from the diary of Alexander VI’s Master of Ceremonies, Johann Burchard, provide clues to the Sala dei Pontefici’s decoration.\textsuperscript{22} What follows is my own condensed description of the event compiled from the following sources: a letter written by Alexander himself to Angelo Leonini, the Bishop
of Thioli, and his orator in Venice, dated 4 July 1500; a letter written by Francesco Capello to the Florentine Signoria dated 29 June 1500; and lastly, a letter from Raphael Brandolinus Lippus to Manfredo de Manfredi, ambassador of Ferrara, dated 18 July 1500, and an entry taken from Johann Burchard’s diary.23

At five o’clock in the evening on 9 June 1500, Pope Alexander VI held a private audience in the Sala dei Pontefici. Several members of the papal curia were present including the Cardinal of Capua, the cameriere segreto, Gesoare Poto, and the secretary to the Florentine embassy, Francesco Capello.24 During the meeting the pope sat on a red velvet baldachined throne at the far end of the Sala dei Pontefici. Suddenly the sky darkened, thunder roared and huge hailstones started falling noisily on the roof of the palace; at the same time a strong wind shook the building to its foundations.25 On the order of the pope, two secretaries rushed to the bay windows to close them. However, at that very moment, the fireplace, which stood like a tower over the roof of the room above the Sala dei Pontefici, known as the Pontefici Superior (now known as the Sala di Constantino) (fig. 2.3), crashed into the Pontefici Superior, killing fifteen people including Lorenzo Chigi (elder brother of Agostino Chigi, a merchant prince and papal banker). The weight of the crash caused the Pontefici Superior’s floor to collapse, and a heavy beam from the ceiling of the Sala dei Pontefici landed at the pope’s feet.26 Alexander was saved from being crushed as the baldachin of his throne and the heavy wall tapestry behind it formed a protective blanket over him. The Cardinal of Capua, also in the space, managed to save himself by rushing to one of the two still extant window alcoves along with Poto and Capello.27

In addition to detailing the collapse of the Sala dei Pontefici’s ceiling, these accounts provide essential information regarding the room’s appearance under Alexander VI’s pontificate. They make clear that the room was furnished with a red velvet throne with an attached
baldacchino and that the papal hall had two large window alcoves, a fireplace, a wooden ceiling, frescoed decoration on the walls, and was hung with heavy tapestries. Based on these sources and the current appearance of the space, I suggest that the room featured, from floor to ceiling: large vertical tapestries with religious imagery, papal portraits in ten lunettes spanning the upper-half of the walls, and a flat wooden ceiling. This assertion is further supported by Peter Thornton’s, *The Italian Renaissance Interior* (1991). According to Thornton’s discussion on the embellishment of *cinquecento palazzi*, this particular interior arrangement was considered the norm.

**Tapestries**

Fifteenth-century accounts detailing the fatal event that destroyed the *Sala dei Pontefici*’s original ceiling explain that thick tapestries helped to save the pope from being crushed under the *sala*’s heavy beams. In addition, the Ferrarese ambassador, El Prete, reported in a letter to Isabella Gonzaga, dated 2 January 1502, that tapestries once hung in the *Sala dei Pontefici*. Lastly, there is an extant record noting that the first two halls in Alexander VI’s cardinal palace, today known as the Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini, were decorated with heavy tapestries. This evidence suggests Alexander VI’s ownership of such objects and that the *Sala dei Pontefici* was decorated with large hanging tapestries. An analysis of fifteenth-century wall hangings aids in suggesting the appearance of those in the space.

Studies devoted to Renaissance wall hangings indicate that they were functional, decorative, and, at times, incredibly expensive. Not only were they mostly imported from the Netherlands, but tapestries were made from different materials and consisted of different shapes. Some were taller than they were wide, while others maintained a horizontal shape. The classes of textiles ranged from lightweight materials like linen and silk, which were perfect for summer
weather, to heavy woolen material or velvet for the winter months. The tapestries could be costly due to the labor and amount of gold or silver threads that might be incorporated into the decorative program.

Papal records and inventories indicate that several popes commissioned their own tapestries for parts of the Vatican Palace. In the fifteenth-century, tapestries were commissioned by Martin V (r.1417-1431) after his return from Avignon. Once Martin V entered Rome, he ordered Flemish tapestries in high numbers. Nicholas V spent immense sums on eighteen tapestries containing both secular and religious content. Pius II (r.1458-1464) ordered tapestries with scenes depicting the creation of heaven and earth as well as the life of St. Peter. Pope Sixtus IV commissioned seventeen tapestries, three of which contained representations of the Jewish war under Titus and Vespasian. Innocent VIII (r. 1484-1492) commissioned fifty new tapestries, six of which were devoted to the life of Hannibal. The war theme of heroes did not differ from the palace decorations of the condottieri. For example, the Urbino military captain, Federico da Montefeltro (1422-1482), had a series of wall hangings with motifs of the Trojan War. The subject matter that adorned the tapestries located in Alexander VI’s cardinal palace, the Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini, is not known. Only one account reports that they contained historical subjects.

The fact that many popes commissioned their own wall hangings for the palace shows how prestigious tapestries were. Unfortunately, tapestries were extremely fragile and often damaged. Because of this, the closest example of a series of tapestries commissioned for the palace dates to the early sixteenth-century.

The Sistine Chapel tapestries, which remain in the Vatican collections and were designed by Raphael for Leo X, suggest the caliber of lavish wall hangings that once hung in the papal palace (fig. 2.15). Raphael was commissioned in 1515 to design a set of tapestries depicting The
Acts of the Apostles for the Sistine Chapel. However, there could be a correlation between the chapel’s early sixteenth-century tapestries and the tapestries that hung fifteen years earlier in the Sala dei Pontefici. It is important to establish that Raphael’s designs were the single most important factor that changed the course of tapestries fundamentally. Before Raphael, tapestries only possessed a two-dimensional character. An example is the fifteenth-century Beauvais tapestry, "The Martyrdom of Saint Paul" (from the series "The Life of Saint Peter"), commissioned in 1462 for the Cathedral of St. Peter in Beauvais (fig. 2.16). The Beauvais tapestry is large and the figures in the scene fill the entire picture frame. Raphael’s imagery was, for the first time, three-dimensional. This is evident with less emphasis on large figures close to the picture plane. The Sistine tapestries feature beautiful landscapes and vistas that stretch beyond the room. Also, Raphael’s designs changed the manner in which tapestries were to be seen, hung together in a continuous band round the walls.

There are no extant records to indicate the subject matter of Alexander VI’s tapestries. After considering quattrocento tapestries and the changes made by Raphael at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it can be assumed that the tapestries in the Sala dei Pontefici were a combination of the size, material, and the religious imagery of the Beauvais tapestries and the Sistine Chapel tapestries. The tapestries in the Sala dei Pontefici probably hung close together in a continuous band. The long, vertical walls under the lunettes in the Sala dei Pontefici suggest that the tapestries in Alexander VI’s hall were probably largely vertical with two-dimensional religious scenes. It seems likely that Alexander VI commissioned new tapestries for the papal hall when he began decorating his apartment. The popularity and amount of prestige attached to acquiring new tapestries during the quattrocento is widely documented. Also, Alexander VI was carving out his own space of religious and political authority in the Vatican Palace.
Consequently, the decoration in the Sala dei Pontefici provided an outlet to glorify and legitimate his papal authority.

**Frescos**

The Sala dei Pontefici’s frescoes, under Alexander VI, were apparently comprised of a series of papal portraits. The frescoes were more than likely located in ten lunettes above Alexander VI’s tapestries. The sala’s present vault supports this assumption (fig. 2.4). In the ten triangles above the room’s lunettes are Latin inscriptions citing the deeds of ten popes. The inscriptions are arranged chronologically around the room and include: Pope Stephen II (r.752-757), Adrian I (r. 772-795), Leo III (795-816), Sergius II (r.844-847), Leo IV (r.847-855), Urban II (r. 1088-1099), Boniface IX (r.1389-1404), Nicholas III (r. 1277-80), Gregory XI (r.1370-1378), and Martin V (r. 1417-1431) (fig.2.5).42

Primary source documents confirm that the papal portraits once surmounted the inscriptions. The earliest known document referencing the Sala dei Pontefici is a payment record for a new door, ordered in 1460 under the reign of Pius II (r.1458-1464), for the “Great Hall of Popes.” 43 This aligns with Raphael Brandolinus Lippus’s letter to Manfredo de Manfredi, ambassador of Ferrara, 18 July 1500, which describes the disastrous collapse of the room and notes that the sala featured elegantly painted frescoes with images of different popes gilded with various colors.44 Agostino Taja (1750) first established a connection between the images of the popes recorded in Lippus’s letter and the surviving inscriptions. Taja noted the inscriptions give “the praise of popes who had their portraits there.”45 Importantly, the extant inscriptions do not relate to the constellations depicted in Leo X’s later and now extant astrological vault program in the space.46 It seems likely, then, that the inscriptions are remnants of the program that existed
prior to the ceiling collapse and were once paired with papal portraits located in the room’s ten lunettes.

A passage from Giorgio Vasari’s (1511-1574) *Life of Giovanni da Udine* (1487-1564) also affirms that papal images decorated the space. According to Vasari:

Clement VII (r. 1523-1534) having then been elected Supreme Pontiff, with whom Giovanni had a strait bond of service, he returned immediately from Udine, whither he had gone to avoid the plague, to Rome;…They [Giovanni and Perino del Vaga] had also to paint the walls of that same hall, on which Giotto, according as is written by Platina in the *Lives of the Pontiffs*, had formerly painted some Popes who had been put to death for the faith of Christ, on which account that hall was called for a time the Hall of the Martyrs.”

Vasari’s belief that Giotto was responsible for the room’s frescoes was challenged when Ehrle and Stevenson found that Platina (1421-1481) wrote in his *Life of Benedict XII (1334-1342)*

“Istum pictorem illa aetate egregium ad pingenda martyrum historias in aedibus ab se structis conducere in animo habuit.”

An English translation reads, “He contracted a famous painter of that age, to draw the histories of the martyrs in the house that he built, but was prevented by death.” From this, the authors deduced that Platina referred to frescoes in the Papal Palace at Avignon where Benedict XII (r. 1334-1342) reigned as supreme pontiff. Whether Giotto was responsible for the frescoes in the palaces of Avignon or Rome is highly debatable, but Vasari’s and Platina’s accounts prove useful for indicating that large ceremonial halls in papal palaces, whether in Rome or elsewhere, were frescoed with images of popes. Considering these sources alongside Lippus’s letter and the ten inscriptions located over the lunettes, it seems likely the ten lunettes in the *Sala dei Pontefici* contained papal portraits that spanned the upper-half of the wall. However, one question remains. What did the papal portraits look like?

Two extant cycles are especially helpful in the effort to reconstruct the appearance of the *Sala dei Pontefici*’s papal portraits. The first is a cycle of papal portraits located in the *Sancta*
Sanctorum in the chapel of San Lorenzo at San Giovanni in Laterano (fig. 2.6). The images are located on the chapel’s north wall, in the intermediate register between a lunette and a marble revetment. The papal imagery dates to as late as the sixteenth century, but represents an update of earlier images, dedicated to the same subjects and in the same location, first executed c. 1278 under Pope Nicholas III. As a cycle of papal portraits pre-dating those in the Sala dei Pontefici, those in the Sancta Sanctorum offer important evidence regarding the appearance of the papal portraits in the Sala dei Pontefici’s lunettes before they were repainted in the pontificate of Pope Nicholas V.

During the mid-fifteenth-century reconstruction of the Sala dei Pontefici, under Nicholas V, the frescoes were more than likely repainted and expanded. This is evidenced by the fact that Popes Gregory XI (r. 1370-1378) and Pope Martin V (r. 1417-1431), whose reigns date after Nicholas III, are currently cited in the sala’s final two triangles (fig. 2.5). The portraits were not likely moved, however, remaining on the upper-half of the wall. The new papal imagery in the sala possibly resembled the papal portrait series in Pope Sixtus IV’s decorative program for the Sistine Chapel, likely created around 1483.

The papal portrait series in the Sistine Chapel, executed under Sixtus IV (r. 1471-1484), is the second extant cycle helpful in hypothesizing the appearance of the frescoes in the Sala dei Pontefici under Alexander VI. Today, the Sistine Chapel features full-length portraits of popes standing in painted niches located on the chapel’s north, south and entrance walls (fig. 2.7 & 2.8). The imagery is situated in the intervals between the chapel’s windows (fig. 1.11). The Sistine portraits postdate Nicholas V’s reign, but they are a possible indicator of the Sala dei Pontefici’s papal imagery for several reasons. First, Pope Sixtus IV both used and highly admired the Sala dei Pontefici, suggesting that the imagery there may have, at least partially,
inspired the decoration of Sistine Chapel. An account dated 9 August 1483, states Sixtus IV celebrated the anniversary of his papal assumption ‘in the Pontifical Hall.’\textsuperscript{56} The pope also purchased nine beams belonging to the Sala Pontificum dated 23 November 1471.\textsuperscript{57} This purchase indicates the room’s ceiling was either repaired or reconstructed, and as a direct effect, the sala’s lunettes were possibly repainted similar to the papal series in the chapel. This is hypothetical, but given the similar appearance of the papal portraits in the Santa Sanctorum and in the Sistine Chapel which span the years of 1483-1585, the latest dating of the Lateran Chapel frescoes, the Sala dei Pontefici’s lunettes more than likely resembled these papal portraits (figs. 2.6 and 2.8).

The exact papal portraits present in the Sala dei Pontefici’s lunettes, during the eleven years under Alexander VI’s reign, are not known. Presently, the lack of evidence suggests that firmly identifying those included may be impossible. The contribution of this study lies in confirming that papal portraits were likely present and their location on the upper-half of the walls.

Ceiling

Several studies devoted to the Vatican Palace and the Borgia Apartment note that the Sala dei Pontefici’s original ceiling was flat and wooden.\textsuperscript{58} As was noted earlier, an account record, dated 23 November 1471, confirms that nine beams were purchased for the Sala Pontificum (Pope’s Hall).\textsuperscript{59} Based on this, it is likely that the ceiling resembled one of two distinct designs commonly used in Italy during the quattrocento. The basic form was the palcho, also known as a beamed ceiling.\textsuperscript{60} The palcho exhibited large beams, or joists, that carried the main weight of the ceiling (fig. 2.9). The soffito ceiling was the alternative design. It was a coffered, wooden membrane composed of framed panels, originally of equal size, suspended
Essentially, the soffito was a suspended ceiling that covered the large joists with a wooden grid-like framing of shallow panels known as a caselle.

Both ceiling designs were impressive and used for any size room. The exposed beams of the palcho were very striking to quattrocento visitors. The heavy joists suggested the patron’s wealth, especially if used in a large room, since such logs were imported. Palcho ceilings were also painted and gilded for added extravagance. A perfect example is the heavily encrusted palcho still present in Alexander VI’s first camera segreta (fig. 2.11). The first camera segreta is a small private room, adjacent the Sala delle Arti Liberali, in the Borgia Apartment which demonstrates that even smaller, more intimate rooms, displayed palcho ceilings. An example of a large decorated quattrocento palcho is present in the ceremonial room, known as the Sala del Pappagallo, located in the Palazzo Venezia (fig. 2.12). The whole ceiling, including the exposed beams, was painted with intricate designs. If the Sala dei Pontefici featured a palcho, it most likely resembled the ceiling in the Sala del Pappagallo.

The suspended soffito ceiling was a softer design and was more easily decorated because of its even surface. An example of this type of ceiling in a small intimate room in the Vatican Palace is found in the cubicolo of Nicholas V (fig. 2.13). Before the mid-fifteenth century, the panels of the soffito usually featured shallow coffering, scarcely set back behind the level of the surrounding framework (fig. 2.10). The design of the soffito eventually became impressive when a variant of the suspended ceiling was developed for larger rooms. By the 1450’s, soffito ceilings were outfitted with deep coffering, bolder ribs, or framing, as well as embellished with stucco, bosses or rosettes as additional ornament. A fifteenth-century example of this design is found in the large papal ceremonial room known as the Sala Regia, located in the Palazzo
Venezia (fig. 2.14). If the Sala dei Pontefici exhibited a soffito, it most likely resembled the ceiling in the Sala Regia because these rooms were similar in size and function.

There is no evidence to suggest that Alexander VI redecorated the Sala dei Pontefici after the disastrous ceiling collapse. However, Burchard’s diary indicates that Alexander VI’s successor, Pope Julius II (r. 1503-1513), consecrated six bishops in the Sala dei Pontefici in the spring of 1504 and that he held grand banquets in the papal hall for small groups of honored guest.66 This proves that the room was in continued use during the early years of Julius II’s reign. From this, it is easy to assume the sala’s decoration was restored at some point. However, this is hypothetical because the lunettes were again destroyed during Leo X’s pontificate as a means to execute a new decorative program for the entire Sala dei Pontefici which was never completed.67 Eventually, the room’s empty lunettes were filled by Pope Pius IV (r.1559-65) with large yellow, painted shells which can be seen in figs. 2.1 & 2.4.68 Today, the shells are gone, revealing the bare wall beneath; however, the once frescoed papal portraits were no doubt intended to exalt the identity and status of its patron, a pope.

The Sala Grande and the “Hall of State”

With the Sala dei Pontefici’s Borgia decoration realized, the function of the room can be more fully considered. Here I rely on primary sources and secondary studies that consider Roman Renaissance etiquette and the function of cinquecento palazzi to suggest that the room might be considered a sala grande in architectural terms and a “hall of state” in functional terms. A Roman Renaissance hall of state is an unconsecrated space where political power was exercised or claimed.69 While all the rooms in the Borgia apartment might be considered a hall of state in regard to their intended function as the pope’s camera audientiae (audience rooms), I
propose that, under Alexander VI, the Sala dei Pontefici functioned as the pope’s primary “hall of state,” an assertion confirmed by the size, location and recorded use of the space.

In their essential study of three Italian palazzi, Arts of Power: Three Hall of State in Italy, 1300-1600 (1992), Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge suggest that early modern halls of state, commissioned by popes, cardinals, or communal officials, shared several common features. First, and foremost, they contained some type of throne that functioned as a seat of authority. Second, the spaces featured a rectangular footprint which created a line of sight to the seat of authority. Lastly, the entrance was usually off to one side in accordance with strict etiquette for approaching the master of the apartment. As the description of the Sala dei Pontefici provided in the preceding pages suggests, and the remaining pages will demonstrate, the space conformed to each of these requirements.

Patricia Waddy’s (1990) study of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Roman etiquette handbooks and Christoph Frommel’s (1973) study of Roman Renaissance architectural treatises suggest that Roman papal or cardinalate halls of state were typically the largest room in the master’s apartment, known as the sala grande. Waddy delineates that, in the papal capital, the cardinal or papal apartment was a highly regulated space that received ambassadors and courtiers. Whether for business or personal matters, callers to the apartment normally entered the sala grande first and were bound to an elaborate etiquette of moving through the subsequent spaces. Burchard’s diary provides an example of the relation between the Sala dei Pontefici’s architecture and the etiquette that governed the guests entering the sala.

On 3 June 1490, Pope Innocent VIII (r. 1484-1492) was in the Sala dei Pontefici surrounded by cardinals and his court. According to Burchard, two groups of ambassadors, called the ultramontains and the citramontains, representing most of the sovereigns of Europe,
were gathered in the *Chamber du Perroquet* (see number 5 in fig. 1.1) waiting to be introduced to the consistory in the *Sala dei Pontefici*. Before they entered, Innocent VIII sent the Cardinals of Anjou and of Lisbon to ask the ambassadors to accept that the *ultramontains* ambassadors would sit to the pope’s right side while the *citramontains* would sit to his left. Both groups consented, but Burchard immediately raised a second question. Who would enter the room first? Neither group wanted to give way to another. Finally, it was decided that the *ultramontains* deputies would pass through the *Audience Hall* (see number 6 in fig. 1.1) and enter the *Sala dei Pontefici*’s south wall door. The *citramontains* would advance through the parallel external dressing room (*loge*) which was to the right of the *sala*. However, the latter passage was longer and the *citramontains*, fearing that their *ultramontains* colleagues would enter first, began to run and leapt at the door, located on the east wall of the *Sala dei Pontefici*. As a result, both groups entered simultaneously. This anecdote regarding entry into the *sala grande* demonstrates how strict protocol and the prestigious location and size of a space governed papal ceremony.

In an effort to better understand how the location and dimensions of a space as well as etiquette governed movement through, and interactions within the *Sala dei Pontefici*, this chapter introduces a historical and privileged guest, Alexander VI’s Vice-Chancellor, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza (1455-1505) and suggests the ways in which he might have moved through the spaces. The Vice-Chancellor was the most powerful official position in the papal state, aside from the pope, that was responsible for processing papal bulls, briefs, and letters of the Apostolic Chancellery (Cancelleria). Cardinal Sforza’s rank gave him a high degree of access and freedom of movement throughout the Borgia Apartment.

According to the layout of the Vatican Palace, Cardinal Sforza’s visit to the Borgia suite would have begun at the palace’s entrance (see figure 1.1, C). The Cardinal would have likely
veered to the right, crossed a portion of the courtyard (marked D, 1.1), traversed the long loggia, and finally passed through the old ceremonial rooms of Nicholas III known as the Chambre des Parements, Camera Pappagalli and Camera Audientiae (marked 4, 5 & 6 in fig. 1.1). Etiquette dictated that the Vice-Chancellor would have been officially received in the apartment’s sala grande, the Sala dei Pontefici.

Measuring 59ft x 38ft, the rectangular hall might be considered the sala grande of the Borgia apartment since it is the largest room of the Borgia Apartment and it is the first space high ranking visitors, such as the Vice-Chancellor, likely entered. Frommel’s study of Roman Renaissance architectural treatises demonstrated that the sala grande was the public entrance for the master’s apartment and its location played an important role in accommodating large ceremonies and banquets as well as guests entering the suite. Nicholas V’s main architectural advisor, the Italian architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), claimed that the sala grande should occupy a central and easily accessible location so the space could be readily accessible to courtiers and petitioners. Here we might recall the nodal position of the Sala dei Pontefici between the older ceremonial halls of Nicholas III and the more private rooms of the Borgia apartment.

Burchard’s diary further supports the assertion that the space might have functioned as a hall of state. According to Burchard, the Borgia pope had a movable throne that was positioned against the center of the wall left of the entrance (fig. 1.3). An example of what Alexander VI’s throne most likely resembled is depicted in Melozzo da Forlì’s portrait of Sixtus IV dating to 1477 (fig. 2.17). Based on the sala’s dimensions there was a significant longitudinal axis that allowed distinguished guests to approach Alexander VI on his throne. Burchard also noted several occasions when the Sala dei Pontefici was used for significant acts of civil government
and religious ceremony. It was the seat of both the public and secret Consistory, an assemblage of cardinals in council around the pope, and it held several receptions including the appointment of Nicola Orsini to *Capitano generale della Chiesa*, 3 April 1494. Another notable reception held in the Sala dei Pontefici honored Alexander VI’s son Jauffre Borgia of Aragón and his new wife who, according to Burchard, made a solemn entry into Rome on 20 May 1496. After the couple was escorted through the Vatican Palace, they entered the Sala dei Pontefici to find the pope seated on his throne surrounded by eleven cardinals. This anecdote demonstrates how the Sala dei Pontefici held the privileged position of receiving visitors to see the pope.

Burchard reported two important religious ceremonies were held in the Sala dei Pontefici. During the Feast of the Holy Cross, on 3 May 1499, Alexander VI was seated on his throne surrounded by seven cardinals. Those gathered included ambassadors to the court of Rome from all over Europe, over forty prelates and courtiers, as well as five hundred people of all different ranks. Around 4:30 pm, a small and very young speaker, no more than ten years old, dressed in the habit of St. Dominic, spoke and recited for two long hours a discourse on the Passion. According to Burchard, the child spoke with such ease and grace that all assistants stood amazed. The ritual blessing of *Agnus Dei* was celebrated on 4 April 1499. For this event, Burchard described the use of a large table, about three rods long (over 6 meters). The table was adorned and located in front of the fireplace, between the room’s two windows.

Primary sources, as well as the room’s size and location, indicate that the Sala dei Pontefici more than likely functioned as Alexander VI’s *sala grande*. Considering the significant acts of civil and religious ceremonies that were documented in the space, coupled with the recorded function of a *sala grande*, the Sala dei Pontefici might have functioned as Alexander VI’s primary hall of state, an issue little considered in the past.
As this chapter demonstrates, considering the few extant *quattrocento* accounts relative to the room’s ceiling collapse, a picture of the room’s original tapestries, frescoes and ceiling emerges that exalted the papacy. Consideration of the *Sala dei Pontefici*’s function as a hall of state aids in understanding the essential function of a papal apartment as a space where political power was exercised and claimed. Finally, considering the location of the *Sala dei Pontefici* provides a foundation for deciphering the interrelated function of the whole apartment as the *sala* served an essential function of receiving guests to the Borgia Apartment.

Ehrle and Stevenson, Les fresques, 8-9; Ehrle and Stevenson, Gli affreschi, 60.


Ehrle and Stevenson, Les fresques, 17-20; also, Poeschel, Alexander Maximus, 72-75.


Magnuson, Studies, 79 and 100. The original dimensions and location of the episcopia are not known. The episcopia was first enlarged during the pontificate of Pope Leo III (r. 795-816). Leo III added a grand triclinium (dining hall) including an apse and mosaic decoration for the arrival of Charlemagne in 800; see also, Torgil Magnuson, The Urban Transformation of Medieval Rome, 312-1420 (Stockholm: Swedish Institute in Rome, 2004),79.

Magnuson, Studies, 100. The Vatican Palace was expanded during the reigns of Pope Eugene III (r.1145-1153) and Innocent III (r.1198-1216). Innocent III made extensive alterations to the nucleus of Leo III’s Palace.

Westfall, Perfect Paradise, 130.


Westfall, Perfect Paradise, 130.
Magnuson, Studies, 103.


17 Westfall, *Perfect Paradise*, 130.


19 Magnuson, Studies, 123. The only decoration in Nicholas V’s private apartment that survives virtually untouched today is his private chapel known as the Cappella di Niccolò V. It was decorated with frescoes between 1447 and 1449 by Fra Angelico and his pupils.


21 Magnuson, Studies, 105.

22 The room was most often referred to as the *aula pontificium* and the *sala di papa*; see, Claudia Rousseau, “Cosimo I de Medici and Astrology: The Symbolism of Prophecy,” Ph.D diss. (New York: Columbia University, 1983), 154.

23 The first three sources are identified by Ehrle and Stevenson; see Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 18-19. For a full English translation of the event; see, Pastor, *The History of the Popes, From the Close of the Middle Ages: Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, vol. 6, trans. by Frederick Ignatius Antrobus (Great Britain: Butler & Tanner, 1923), 78.; Peter De Roo, *Material for a History of Pope Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Times*, Vol. 5 (Bruges: Desclées, de Brouwer, 1924), 67-68. Claudia Rousseau provides additional names of members involved with this event; see Rousseau, “Cosimo I,” 155. Poeschel noted the letter from Raphael Brandolimus Lippus to Manfredo de Manfredi, ambassador of Ferrara dated 18 July 1500; Poeschel, *Alexander Maximus*, 72-73.


27 Rousseau “Cosimo I,” 155.

29 Thornton, Renaissance Interior, 33-59.

30 Poeschel, Alexander, 73; S. El Prete, letter to Isabella Gonzaga dated 2, January 1502. Mantua, Gonzaga-Archiv: […] el papa fece levare madama Lucretia e mandorla in la salla dei papi questa sala era aparata de coltine doro molto belle facte per papa Innocentio,” in Ferdinand Gregorovius, Lucrezia Borgia: secondo documenti e carteggi del tempo (Florence, 1874), 416.

31 Magnuson provided an English translation of Pastor’s original publication of the record; Magnuson, Studies, 240.


33 Thornton, Renaissance Interior, 48.

34 Thornton, Renaissance Interior, 48.

35 Poeschel, “Appartamento Borgia,” 57.


37 Magnuson, Studies, 240.

38 Campbell, Tapestry, 3. For more information on the original order of the tapestries and their relationship to the decorative scheme of the Sistine Chapel see, John White and John Shearman, “Raphael’s Tapestries and Their Cartoons,” The Art Bulletin 40, no. 3 (1958): 193-221.

39 Thornton, Renaissance Interior, 49.


41 Thornton, Renaissance Interior, 49.

42 Rousseau, “Cosimo I,” 158.

43 Ehrle and Stevenson, Les fresques, 17.


53 Triff, “Rhetoric,” 104.


55 Originally the papal series began with an image of Christ as the first pope located in the center of the altar wall and continued with representations of St. Peter (r. 32-67) through the papacy of St. Anacletus (r. 76-88). These images, however, were destroyed when Michelangelo painted the *Last Judgment*. Currently the papal series starts with an image of St. Anacletus (r. 76-88) on the chapel’s north wall and ends with St. Marcellus I (r. 308-309) on the east wall (fig. 6).


60 Thornton, *Renaissance Interior*, 53.


63 Also known as Palazzo di San Marco, the Palazzo Venezia was another pontifical palace built in the second half of the fifteenth century by Pope Paul II (r. 1464-1471) beside the church of S. Marco; see, Magnuson, *Studies*, 220.

64 Thornton, *Renaissance Interior*, 56.


66 Rousseau, “Cosimo I,” 156.

67 Rousseau, “Cosimo I,” 158.


71 These standards were taken from Starn and Partridge, *Arts of Power*, 1.


77 The measurements were taken from Salvatore Volpini, *Description of the Borgia Apartments Restored in the Vatican Palace* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1897), 5.


CHAPTER 3

THE FUNCTION OF THE PINTURICCHIO ROOMS

Having reconstructed the now-lost decoration and addressed the function of the Sala dei Pontefici, the first room of the Borgia Apartment, this chapter considers the ceremonial and interrelated function of the five sale in the Borgia Apartment today commonly identified as the Pinturicchio rooms (fig. 3.1 & 1.3). These spaces, as we saw in Chapter One, are immediately adjacent to the west wall of the Sala dei Pontefici and proceed to the northwest in a linear fashion, one opening onto the next. The first three rooms are the Sala dei Misteri, Sala dei Santi, and Sala delle Arti Liberali; the three spaces are approximately equal in size, measuring 32ft x 26ft. The final two rooms, the Sala del Credo and the Sala delle Sibille, are located in the “Torre Borgia,” built by Alexander VI between 1492-94. At the northwest terminus of the apartment, the Sala del Credo and the Sala delle Sibille are slightly higher than the other rooms and measure 39ft x 23ft and 26ft x 23ft respectively. Under Alexander VI, the five Pinturicchio sale functioned as spaces where the pope met, entertained or dined with visiting dignitaries and members of the papal court. During a visit with Alexander for religious or diplomatic matters, distinguished guests encountered fresco programs that included fictive, frescoed tapestries along the lower half of the wall surface, vibrant narrative lunettes on the upper half, and lavishly gilded vault programs.

Existing studies of the Pinturicchio sale consider the function of the individual spaces. As was noted in Chapter One, Claudia Cieri (1980) attempted to reconstruct the function of the rooms following John Shearman’s (1971) reconstruction of Pope Julius II’s later apartment on
the third floor.¹ Cieri’s one-to-one comparison between Alexander VI’s second floor apartment and Julius’s apartment above is problematic because there is not a direct correspondence between the spaces. Ursula Paal (1981), too, addressed room function analyzing Burchard’s diary and analyzing the layout of the apartment.² Building on previous studies, Sabine Poeschel (1999) was the first to consider the decorative program of the spaces as an indicator of function.³ While these studies are invaluable to understanding the iconography and function of each room, they do not consider how guests moved through the spaces or, importantly, how the sale might have functioned in tandem.

I suggest that the Pinturicchio rooms each served multiple and interrelated functions. In order to demonstrate this thesis, this chapter recreates the movements of a privileged, hypothetical visitor, the papal Vice-Chancellor, through the spaces. As we saw in Chapter Two, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza (1455-1505) served as Vice-Chancellor to the Borgia pope. He represents, for us, an extraordinary guest because, while most callers never made it past the Sala dei Pontefici, the Vice-Chancellor’s rank as second in command and head of the Apostolic Chancellery (Cancelleria) would have granted him access to all the Pinturicchio rooms.

According to Patricia Waddy’s (1990) study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century etiquette handbooks, most notably Cesare Evitascandalo’s Maestro di Casa (1598), Francesco Sestini da Bibbiena’s Il maestro di camera (1621), and Francesco Liberati’s Il perfetto Maestro di Casa (1658), access to rooms in a cardinalate apartment was highly regulated by ceremony based on rank and office.⁴ Even members of the household staff, such as chamber assistants and pages, were limited to the rooms which their title granted access. For example, assistants for the sala grande, known as palafrenieri, were to stay in the sala unless they were given a specific task requiring those to enter the succeeding rooms.⁵ Assistants for the remaining rooms in the
apartment were known as *gentilhuomini* (gentlemen), *camerieri* and *anitutanti di camera* (chamber assistants).

Suggesting the potential movements and experiences of Vice-Chancellor Sforza through the apartment begins with his progress from the *Sala dei Pontefici* into the *Sala dei Misteri* and relies upon a series of primary and secondary sources including Burchard’s diary; the earlier investigations of the single rooms by Cieri, Paal, and Poeschel; and studies of court ceremony and spaces by Waddy and Christoph Frommel (1986). As the Pinturicchio rooms represent the heart of the oldest surviving decorated papal apartment in Rome, reconstructing the function of the spaces, particularly considering movement between them, offers invaluable insights regarding papal ceremony and the use of papal apartments.

**Sala dei Misteri**

Burchard’s diary indicates that, under Alexander VI, guests leaving the *Sala dei Pontefici*, such as Vice-Chancellor Sforza, entered the adjacent *Sala dei Misteri* (fig. 3.2). Moving through the doorway into the *Sala dei Misteri*, the Vice-Chancellor would have encountered frescoed decoration consisting of frescoed images of cabinets on the lower-half of the walls and seven lunettes depicting scenes from the life of Mary and Jesus on the upper-half. Entering from the *Sala dei Pontefici*, the Vice-Chancellor’s line of sight included, straight ahead, the exit door and a view through to the successive Pinturicchio rooms (fig. 3.2). Immediately above the exit door was the lunette depicting Pope Alexander VI as witness to *Christ’s Resurrection* (fig. 3.3). On the Vice-Chancellor’s right was a large window, overlooking the Belvedere courtyard, with a lunette featuring a scene of *Christ’s Ascension* directly above (fig. 3.4). On the south wall, to his left, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen a small passage door leading to the *camera audientia* (room preceding the *Sala dei Pontefici*) and a large fireplace
ornamented with a fictive tapestry (fig. 3.5). Moving into the space, if the Vice-Chancellor looked back towards the Sala dei Pontefici, the east wall displayed a fresco depicting the papal tiara in a fictive cabinet (fig. 3.6). This east wall also features two lunettes depicting the Assumption of the Virgin and the Descent of the Holy Spirit. Looking up, the ceiling displayed a double groin vault, divided by a transverse arch, adorned with several frescoed and gilded bulls and eight Old Testament prophets (fig. 3.7).

Various readings of the Sala dei Misteri’s function have been proposed based on Burchard’s descriptions of events in the sala under Pope Innocent VIII and its decorative scheme. These studies generally identify the space as a camera audientiae and a salotto/sala seconda, a small or “second” room that served as an antechamber. Building on Shearman’s study, Cieri suggested that the Misteri was Alexander VI’s camera audientiae because it was located directly under Julius II’s Stanza d’Eliodoro, which functioned as a camera audientiae. Poeschel interpreted the space as a camera audientiae because the Sala dei Misteri’s decorative program teaches the supremacy of the pope which, the author stated, was ideal for the receptions of Christian ambassadors and rulers. Paal identified the Sala dei Misteri as a salotto (sala seconda) because it is adjacent to the sala grande. Etiquette books, architectural treatises and the fact that Alexander VI’s portrait is displayed in the space, suggest that indeed the Sala dei Misteri functioned as a camera audientiae and in architectural terms a salotto. However, Cieri, Poeschel, and Paal never addressed how the Sala dei Misteri was used or how it functioned in conjunction with its adjacent rooms, the Sala dei Pontefici and the Sala dei Santi.

Considering the function of a sixteenth-century camera audientiae and the decoration of the space enables a reconstruction of how the Sala dei Misteri likely served as a camera audientiae. According to Waddy’s study of seventeenth-century etiquette handbooks, most
notably the *Il maestro di camera* by Sestini (1621), the *camera audientiae* was a room used to hold an audience with the master of the apartment. The papal humanist and writer, Paolo Cortesi (1471-1510), provided insight into the location and decoration of a cardinal’s ideal Renaissance *camera audientiae* in *De Cardinalatu* (1510), a text published immediately after the author’s death. Cortesi stated that the audience room should be immediately adjacent the *sala grande*, without intervening anterooms. In addition, Cortesi specified that the paintings adorning the walls should show the “prince” (in this case the pope) giving an audience. The *Sala dei Misteri* is located immediately adjacent the *Sala dei Pontefici* and, as previously noted, the lunette above the *Sala dei Misteri*’s exit door depicts Pope Alexander VI as a witness to Christ’s Resurrection (fig. 3.3). This is a notable portrait of Alexander VI because it is the only depiction of the pope in the apartment. Though the pope is not displayed “giving an audience” as Cortesi suggested, he is presented as a worthy, pious man who witnessed Christ’s Resurrection, therefore solidifying his role as pope. An additional symbol of authority is present with a depiction of Alexander VI’s papal tiara located in the space next to the door leading to the *Sala dei Pontefici* (fig. 3.6). Since Alexander VI’s portrait and papal tiara were powerful symbolic reminders of Alexander VI’s power in the Christian Church, their presence in this space suggests that the room likely served as a *camera audientiae*.

Waddy suggests that, during an audience with the master of the apartment, guests entered through the *sala grande* and were received in the adjacent *camera audientiae*. This movement can be applied to the layout of the Borgia Apartment. After arrival, the Vice-Chancellor might have been greeted at the door of the *Sala dei Pontefici* and then escorted to the *Misteri*, where he was received by the pope. Extant inventories from sixteenth-century *palazzi* show that the *camera audientiae*, adjacent the *sala grande*, was typically equipped with very modest
furnishings. As such, we might imagine that the Sala dei Misteri, serving as an audience hall, would have been arranged with enough chairs to accommodate a more private audience with the pope than those in the sala grande. As Waddy delineates, given the rank of the Vice-Chancellor, and the presumed need for privacy in his meeting with the pope, the Sala dei Misteri’s portiera (door hanging) would have been lowered at the beginning of the interview. At the close of the meeting, the portiera was raised and Alexander VI might have escorted Cardinal Sforza back through the Sala dei Pontefici. Both upon entering the space from the Sala dei Pontefici and returning to it upon departure, the Vice-Chancellor would have been reminded of the pope’s position, via Alexander VI’s portrait and the frescoed image of his tiara. Such a message was a key element in the function of the space as an audience hall.

Primary source evidence suggests that, in addition to its function as an audience hall, the Sala dei Misteri functioned as a serving room or salotto/sala seconda in architectural terms when it was used in tandem with large banquets held in the Sala dei Pontefici. According to Frommel’s study of sixteenth-century architectural treatises detailing the construction of Roman palazzi, the salotto, also labeled a sala seconda, was adjacent the sala grande and functioned as a serving room/waiting room during large banquets held in the sala grande. Burchard gives one example of the Sala dei Misteri functioning as a serving room. Burchard recounts that, under Innocent VIII, the signing of the contracts and the celebration of the engagement of Gérard Usodimare and Théodorine Cibo’s daughter, on 16 November 1488, took place in the room overlooking the vineyard, immediately after the Sala dei Pontefici, that is to say the Sala dei Misteri. After the wedding ceremony, Innocent VIII went back with the young couple, cardinals, bishops, and other guests to the room adjacent to that of the Sala dei Pontefici, in other words the Sala dei Misteri, where three tables were set up for the wedding feast. A similar event was
celebrated in the *Sala dei Misteri* on 3 June 1492, with the engagement of Don Louis of Aragón with Baptistine Cibo.\(^\text{18}\)

From these events and the known furnishings of a contemporary salotto the hypothetical function of the *Sala dei Misteri* as a salotto under Alexander VI can be established. During a banquet in the *Sala dei Pontefici*, servants likely furnished the *Sala dei Misteri* with large moveable tables to supply food and drink to the guests. In order to resupply the tables without entering the *Sala dei Pontefici*, servants could have entered the *Misteri* through the private door located at the intersection of the south and east walls (fig. 3.5).\(^\text{19}\) This private passage opened to the pre-existing room adjacent the *Sala dei Pontefici* which Burchard often referred to as the *camera audientiae* (numbered 6 in fig. 1.1). Thus, during large banquets in the *Sala dei Pontefici*, the *Sala dei Misteri* no longer functioned as a *camera audientiae* because it assumed the role of a serving room.

Another function of the salotto (*sala seconda*) was as a drawing room, or waiting room.\(^\text{20}\) Frommel found that sixteenth-century architectural treatises indicate that a salotto functioned as a waiting room because the space was located between the *sala grande* and the private rooms of the master.\(^\text{21}\) The *Sala dei Misteri* likely functioned as such, being located between the *Sala dei Pontefici* (*sala grande*) and the rooms in the Borgia Apartment considered private because of their more limited access. For example, if an ecclesiastical ceremony, such as a secret consistory, took place in the room adjacent to the north side of the *Sala dei Misteri*, the *Sala dei Santi*, the cardinals might have waited in the *Sala dei Misteri* to be received in the *Sala dei Santi*. Waddy suggests that the cardinals might have had access to board games like chess, and spiritual or historical books for reading while waiting in a salotto.\(^\text{22}\)

Here again, the *Misteri*s decoration,
notable for including Alexander VI’s portrait and papal tiara, would have served as a reminder of Alexander VI’s status as head of the Christian Church to guests.

**Sala dei Santi**

If, rather than exiting back through the *Sala dei Pontefici*, the Vice-Chancellor continued into the apartment, he would have passed through the *Sala dei Misteri* and entered the adjacent *Sala dei Santi* (figs. 3.8 & 3.9). Then as now, the room featured frescoed imagery on the lower half of the walls, intended to imitate tapestries, and seven lunettes above with scenes from the life of various saints. Upon entry, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen a lunette depicting *The Visitation* on the west wall, above the exit door. To his right was the room’s only window, overlooking the Belvedere court, with the *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* above. To the far left, on the south wall, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen a fireplace and a large lunette depicting *The Dispute of Saint Catherine*. The double groin vault above, then as now, features a transverse arch frescoed with scenes from the myth of the Egyptian god Osiris (fig. 3.10).

Existing studies have variously identified the *Sala dei Santi* as a *saletta*, signature room, *camera audientiae* and library/*studiolo* (study). Paal identified the *Sala dei Santi* as a *saletta* (a smaller room adjacent to a *salotto*) because it is adjacent the *Sala dei Misteri* which is considered a *salotto*. In addition, Paal argued that the space served as a signature room because of a contemporary document detailing the signing of a contract in the space.23 Poeschel claimed that the *Sala dei Santi* was a lounge and/or a reception room (*camera audientiae*) for important guests because its unusual decorative program was politically sensitive and could only be understood by a select group of people.24 Poeschel suggested that each lunette depicted the papal policy and goals of Alexander VI by the particular events and figures portrayed in each scene. In addition to its decorative scheme, etiquette books and sixteenth-century architectural treatises
suggest that the Sala dei Santi might have been used as a camera audientiae. Rather than serving a singular function as library as Paal and Poeschel suggested, I contend that the Sala dei Santi was utilized as a joint saletta, camera audientiae, and signature room.\textsuperscript{25} This assertion is based on a comparison of Frommel’s reading of the sixteenth-century architectural plans of Roman palazzi with the room’s location, taking into account as well as the decoration of the space.

The location and decoration of the Sala dei Santi support the reading of the room as multifunctional, suggesting that, at times, it might have served as both a saletta and a camera audientiae (fig. 1.3 & 3.8). Frommel identified the saletta as a smaller room independent of the sala grande that functioned similarly to a salotto as a space for small audiences that might also act as a waiting room.\textsuperscript{26} The location of the Sala dei Santi between the Sala dei Misteri and the Sala delle Arti Liberali aligns with that definition. The decoration of the Sala dei Santi, executed in vibrant colors with raised decorations in gilt, portrays the lives of various saints and biblical characters. Poeschel’s iconological study suggests that the room’s imagery corresponds to the political goals and conflicts of Alexander VI’s pontificate.\textsuperscript{27} As Poeschel delineates, the decorative program was complex and intended for a selected group of people.\textsuperscript{28} For example, the Dispute of Saint Catherine is a theme that fits well with the role of Alexander VI, whose mission was directed toward fighting against the infidels and the affirmation of certain dogmas of faith (fig. 3.11).\textsuperscript{29} Also, the sala’s ceiling depicts the Myth of the Egyptian god Osiris which refers to the legendary lineage of the Borgia family.\textsuperscript{30} The politically sensitive program and theme of Borgia origins further suggests that the Sala dei Santi was likely an important reception room for highly ranked guests who could have understood the imagery.

Lastly, a record from Alexander VI’s papal notary, Camillo Beneimbene (Camillus de Beneimbenis), indicates that the pope also likely used the Sala dei Santi as a signature room.
According to Beneimbene, on 2 September 1500, the marriage contracts of Angela Borgia and Francesco Maria della Rovere were signed in the “secunda cam [era] nova post aulam Pontificum,” the Sala dei Santi.\textsuperscript{31} Based on this, it can be assumed that, under Alexander VI, the space might have held the meetings of the Signatura, the supreme tribunal of the Curia.\textsuperscript{32} Under Alexander VI, the demands of the Signatura were so large that its pleas were subdivided into Signatura iustitiae, presided over by a cardinal, and a Signatura gratiae, presided over by the pope.\textsuperscript{33} If the Sala dei Santi functioned as Alexander’s signature room, the Signatura gratiae meetings were probably held in this space.

Reference to Waddy’s study of etiquette handbooks and information regarding the history of the Signatura gratiae allows us to posit how the cardinal members, as well as Vice-Chancellor Sforza, likely moved through the Borgia Apartment. Upon arrival, the cardinals would have entered the Sala dei Pontefici where a gentleman called a palafrenieri would have escorted them to the adjacent Sala dei Misteri.\textsuperscript{34} While waiting for the Signatura to convene, the cardinals might have played games or read from books there. According to the papal scholar G. Moroni, the room holding the Signatura required a papal throne, a table on a daïs and long table with benches for the cardinals.\textsuperscript{35} Although, to my knowledge, there is no extant inventory of the furnishings of the space under Alexander VI, it seems likely, if the room indeed held the Signatura meetings, that the Sala dei Santi was also equipped with this furniture.

Location, decoration and primary source texts suggest that the Sala dei Santi likely served, at times, as a camera audientiae, a saletta (waiting room) and/or a signature room. Based on Frommel’s study of the given functions, I suggest that the sala served as a camera audientiae if the pope held a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor in the space. However, if the pope held an audience in the adjacent room, the Sala delle Arti Liberali, the Sala dei Santi was likely utilized
as a waiting room. Lastly, when the Signatura met, the Sala dei Santi served as a signature room. Recreating the room’s multiple functions demonstrates that the Sala dei Santi was governed by its location in the apartment, etiquette, and the particular event held in the space.

**Sala delle Arti Liberali**

Continuing through the apartment, our privileged guest, Vice-Chancellor Cardinal Sforza, would have next entered the Sala delle Arti Liberali (fig. 3.12). Passing into the space from the Sala dei Santi, the Vice-Chancellor would have faced a space lined, on the lower half of the walls, with frescoed images of *opus sectile*, resembling the circular stone patterns on medieval floors. Seven lunettes containing enthroned allegories of the Liberal Arts spanned, then as now, the upper-half of the walls. Directly ahead, on the west wall, the Vice-Chancellor would have faced a lunette depicting the *Allegory of Music* enthroned above the exit door. On his right, the room’s window, overlooking the Belvedere court, featured the *Allegory of Astronomy* in the lunette above. On the south wall, to his left, was a fire place, ornamented with a fictive, frescoed tapestry and a door leading to the pope’s two private chambers known as the *camera segreta* (the secret chamber) (labeled 7 & 10 in fig. 1.3). Looking up, Vice-Chancellor Cardinal Sforza would have seen a central transverse arch dividing two double groin vaults with a large octagon in the center (fig. 3.13).

Various readings of the space have interpreted the Sala delle Arti Liberali as a signature room, living/dining room and library/studiolo. Cieri argued that the Sala delle Arti Liberali functioned as Alexander VI’s signature room because, according to Shearman, Julius II’s later Stanza dell’Incendio, located directly above Alexander’s Sala delle Arti Liberali, served as the meeting room for the tribunal of the Signatura gratiae.\(^3^6\) I disagree with that interpretation because there are no primary sources to suggest that the Sala delle Arti Liberali functioned in
this way. There is, however, the record by Beneimbene, as we saw in the discussion of the Sala dei Santi, which suggests Alexander’s signature room was located in that space.

Paal assumed the Sala delle Arti Liberali served as Alexander VI’s living room because Burchard reported the space contained a bed at the death of Alexander VI. Burchard stated that on 18 August 1503, upon the death of Alexander VI, the pope was placed on a bed [also interpreted as a stretcher] in the “camera ante sala” [anticamera], or the room in front of his camera. But reading the space as a bedchamber is problematic as there is no way to verify if the bed was a permanent fixture or if it was only a setup for transporting the pope on that, single, and final, occasion.

The most convincing of earlier suggestions regarding the function of the space are those who see it as a dining room or library. Paal also argued that the Sala delle Arti Liberali was Alexander’s dining room because Burchard reported that when Julius II resided in the Borgia Apartment, from 1503-1505, he dined in the space. Poeschel suggested that the Sala delle Arti Liberali was Alexander’s studiolo/library because the room’s lunettes depict the seven Liberal Arts. In point of fact, there are no extant documents claiming that the sala held the pope’s private library or acted as a study (studiolo). I do, however, tend to agree with Poeschel’s argument. This is based, in part, on the fact that numerous Renaissance studioli were decorated with the theme of the seven Liberal Arts, including the studiolo commissioned by Federico da Montefeltro (1422-82) in Urbino (fig. 3.14) and the Stanza della Signatura in the Vatican Palace, considered by Sherman to be Julius II’s library, features images of the muses (fig. 3.15).

Again, I suggest here as with the previous rooms, based on the Sala delle Arti Liberali’s location, decoration and primary source texts, that the sala had multiple functions. Specifically, I
propose that the Sala delle Arti Liberali was considered an *anticamera* in architectural terms and likely served as a *studiolo/library* and, at times, a dining room.

According to Thornton (1991) and Frommel’s study of *cinquecento palazzi*, an *anticamera* [from the Latin *ante* = next to or up against], also known as an anteroom or antechamber, was directly associated with the master’s *camera* (bed chamber).\(^{41}\) In an apartment an *anticamera* was utilized in much the same manner as a *salotto/saletta* because its functions included, but were not limited to, a waiting room/drawing room, reception room, and dining room.\(^{42}\) The *Sala delle Arti Liberali* was, as we have seen, situated in front of the pope’s private bed chamber (*camera secreta*). The placement of the space is also consistent with that of a library. In order to reconstruct the use of a space with this joint function, I address the function and requirements of a Renaissance *studiolo*, library, and dining space.

In a *quattrocento* Roman apartment, a library held the master’s private books and was reserved for his/her private use.\(^{43}\) In addition, a *studiolo* was a space of refuge for solitary study.\(^{44}\) Two primary sources suggest that Alexander VI might have utilized one of the rooms in the Borgia Apartment as a private library/*studiolo*. The humanist and historian, Jacopo da Volterra (1434-1516), noted that before Alexander VI became pope, the cardinal owned a private collection that included books of all kinds and precious vases.\(^{45}\) Burchard later mentioned, in his report of the pope’s death on 18 August 1503, that Alexander VI’s vases were located in the Apostolic Palace.\(^{46}\) From this it might be assumed that Alexander VI’s book collection was in the Borgia apartment. These extant sources do not indicate which room in the Borgia Apartment served as a library or *studiolo*, but the location of the *Sala delle Liberali Arti*, as well as its decorative scheme, suggests that the space likely served as such.
The papal humanist and writer Cortesi provided insight to the ideal location of a *studiolo* in a *quattrocento palazzo*. In the *De Cardinalatu* (1510), Cortesi suggested that the master’s *studiolo* should be in the immediate vicinity of the bedroom.\(^{47}\) A notable example is Piero de Medici’s (1416-1469) *studiolo* at the Palazzo Medici in Florence, commissioned in the 1450’s. Piero’s *studiolo* was located next to his bedroom.\(^{48}\) This aligns with the placement of the *Sala delle Arti Liberali* adjacent to the pope’s bedroom (number 7 & 10 in fig. 1.3). However, the *Sala delle Arti Liberali*’s large footprint suggests that it could have also accommodated the requirements of a library. The *Sala delle Arti Liberali* measures 32ft x 26ft making it considerably larger than Federico da Montefeltro’s small *studiolo* in Urbino, which measures 16ft x 12ft.\(^{49}\) Based on the fact that a sizeable collection, which sometimes included manuscripts as well as various natural and artificial curiosities, could easily fill only a few bookcases and the fact that most books were stored in lecterns, the *Sala delle Arti Liberali* could have easily accommodated Alexander VI’s private book collection.\(^{50}\)

Cortesi, in his *De Cardinalatu*, indicated that a Cardinal’s library was to be used free of charge by qualified persons for the purpose of their education.\(^{51}\) If the *Sala delle Arti Liberali* held Alexander VI’s private book collection, we might imagine that elite humanists visited the *sala* to read from the pope’s distinguished library. Two papal humanists who might have accessed Alexander’s private library and its rare books are Adriano Castellesi (1461-1521) and Paolo Cortesi. Castellesi enjoyed Alexander’s patronage from the 1480s till the pope’s death in 1503.\(^{52}\) Cortesi was also employed at the papal court until Alexander’s death.\(^{53}\) Based on the inventories of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century libraries and *studioli*, when the scholars accessed the room to read from the Borgian collection, the space was likely arranged with appropriate chairs, tables and writing desks.\(^{54}\) Also, the papal librarian might have been present
to supply a catalogue to the collection.\textsuperscript{55} If the sala also functioned as Alexander VI’s studiolo, the room would have contained tables, cabinets, desks, bookshelves and book-chests for storing papers and rare objects.\textsuperscript{56} The space also probably had antique sculpture, maps, gems and a foot warmer for comfort while reading.\textsuperscript{57}

A Consideration of primary source texts and the multiple functions of a \textit{cinquecento} anticamera suggest that the \textit{Sala delle Arti Liberali} also likely served as Alexander VI’s private dining room. According to Burchard, on 9 April 1504, after Julius II consecrated new bishops in the hall of the Pontiffs (\textit{Sala dei Pontefici}), the pope invited the new bishops and the cardinals to dinner. Burchard continues that during the dinner, the pontiff sat alone at a traditional square table while the cardinals sat at a separate table. Both tables had been “prepared in the usual room, near the Tower” (the \textit{Sala delle Arti Liberali}).\textsuperscript{58} However, the new bishops sat in the next room, the first of the Tower (the \textit{Sala del Credo}). What is relevant to this discussion is Burchard’s description of the \textit{Sala delle Arti Liberali} as the “usual” room for dining. Theoretically any room in the apartment could have served as a dining room. However, further evidence supports its function as such since the \textit{Sala delle Arti Liberali} can be considered an anticamera which is associated with serving as a dining room. Finally, the sala’s large footprint could have easily accommodated a dining table in addition to its library/\textit{studiolo} furnishings.

\textit{Sala del Credo & Sala delle Sibille}

Ascending six steps, the Vice-Chancellor might have exited the \textit{Sala delle Arti Liberali} and entered the first room of Alexander VI’s tower, the \textit{Sala del Credo} (fig. 3.16). Moving through the doorway, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen large square panels on the lower-half of the walls and twelve lunettes depicting half-length figures of Prophets and Apostles holding scrolls on the upper-half. Since the room has a rectangular plan and the entrance is on the far
south end of the space, the Vice-Chancellor would not have had a direct view of the next room as he had, previously, with the first three Pinturicchio rooms. Instead, directly ahead, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen a lunette depicting the Prophets and Apostles Jacobus Major and Zechariah. To his left was a large window, overlooking the Cortile del Portoncino, and two lunettes depicting John and David and Peter and Jeremiah. Across the room on the north wall, to the Vice-Chancellor’s right, was another window, with a view of the Belvedere courtyard. The window was framed with two stone benches and two lunettes depicting Philip and Malachi and Bartholomew and Joel. Next to the latter lunette, on the far, east wall, was a third window with an additional view of the Belvedere. Looking up, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen a ceiling displaying a series of decorative triangles and circles (fig. 3.17).

Previous studies of the Sala del Credo do not address its function individually. Instead, Cieri, Paal and Poeschel consider how it functioned in tandem with the adjacent tower room, the Sala delle Sibille (fig. 3.18). If the Vice-Chancellor continued to move through the apartment he would have entered the Sala delle Sibille which featured painted fictive tapestries on the lower walls and twelve frescoed lunettes containing half-length figures of Prophets holding scrolls recording the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah on the upper-half. Directly across from the entrance, the Vice-Chancellor would have seen a lunette of the prophets Cimuria and Ezechiel. To his right, there was a window with a view of the Belvedere courtyard and three lunettes above, depicting Phrygia and Jeremia and Delphica and Hosea and Erythraea and Daniel. On the far south wall, to the Vice-Chancellor’s left, he would have seen the room’s exit where a “secret” staircase led to the Cortile del Portoncino. On this same wall were three lunettes depicting Lybica and Obadja and Persica and Sacharja and Samia and Baruch. The room’s flat ceiling displayed a gilded circular and diamond pattern (fig. 3.19).
Prior studies have suggested that the tower rooms were used as *studioli, guardarobae* (wardrobe rooms/cloakrooms/secret treasure rooms), and *dietrocamere* (rear *anticamere*). Paal argued that the two tower rooms probably functioned as *studioli* because of their location at the end of the apartment. But, as we have seen, Alexander VI’s *studiolo* was most likely located in the Sala delle Arti Liberali. Cieri interpreted the tower rooms as *guardarobae*, drawing a one-to-one comparison to the rooms directly above on the third floor which, extant documents indicate, were used as such by Pope Innocent VIII, Pope Julius II and Pope Leo X. Though Cieri’s analysis is based on the later apartment of Julius II, located above the Borgia Apartment, the location and function of sixteenth-century *guardarobae* suggest that indeed the tower rooms might have served as such. Based on Burchard’s diary and the location of the rooms, Poeschel suspected the tower rooms were *dietrocamere*. The rooms’ decoration supports this assertion. However, I again suggest that the rooms likely had multiple functions. I propose that the Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille might be considered *dietrocamere* in architectural terms that likely served as joint *guardarobae*, dining rooms, and/or guest rooms in functional terms.

Both the rooms’ location in the apartment and documentary evidence regarding the activities that took place in the spaces identify them as *cinquecento dietrocamere*. The sixteenth-century architect Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554) labeled the rooms located in the rear-end of apartments as *dietrocamere*. According to Frommel’s study of *cinquecento palazzi*, *dietrocamere* functioned the same as *anticamere*, serving as waiting rooms/drawing rooms, reception rooms, dining rooms, and because sometimes they contained a *letto* (bed), as guest rooms. Burchard’s diary supports this reading. As the reader may recall, Burchard noted one occasion when Julius II and the Cardinals dined in “the room near the tower (Sala delle Arti Liberali) and the new bishops dined in the adjacent tower room (Sala del Credo). In addition,
Burchard reported that the death of Alfonso of Aragón, Duke Biselliarum and the Prince of Salerno, took place in one of the tower rooms. According to Burchard, on 18 August 1500, Alfonso “who [...] was seriously wounded and later in the new tower, over the common cantinam [storage space associated with the kitchen] [...] was strangled in his lecto (might be translated as bed or on the couch).” From these sources it might be assumed that dining in the Sala del Credo was reserved for lower ranked guests and that there was a guest room in the tower. Since it can be assumed from Burchard’s entry that the Sala del Credo was used as a dining room, the adjacent Sala delle Sibille might be considered Alexander VI’s guest room.

The location of the tower rooms, away from the pope’s private bedroom, is consistent with guardarobae. Inventories of cinquecento palazzi show that guardarobae were usually set apart from the rooms of the apartment because they were either one (guardaroba) or multiple spaces (guardarobae) used to store personal and household goods of all sorts. These items might include jewelry, clothes, laundry, chairs, tapestries, armor, weapons and saddle. Writing on room function in the late sixteenth century, Cesare Evitascandalo listed the several general requirements of a guardaroba. In Maestro di Casa (1585), Evitascandalo reported that guardarobae should be large and spacious, furnished with cupboards and a big table for brushing and folding things. Evitascandalo continues that a guardaroba should have an adjacent room for goods to be grouped according to kind or value and stairs by which large and bulky objects could easily be moved. Stairs could also serve for the master’s discreet movements in and out of the apartment. While incorporating these general requirements, I suggest that the Sala del Credo can be considered the first guardaroba (1) because it is the largest of the two rooms and the first entered, sequentially. Because of this the Sala del Credo probably contained a large table for sorting large household goods. Conversely, given its smaller size and access to private
stairs, I suggest that the Sala del Sibille was the guardaroba (2). Because of this, it was probably outfitted with a smaller table. Since this room evidently served as a guest room at times, the space was also likely equipped with a bed. The private staircase, exiting the Sala delle Sibille, would have enabled guests to move in and out discreetly as well as helped servants move furniture and tables for dining and entertaining in and out of the apartment.

The decorative programs in the Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille further suggest that the rooms likely served as dietrocamere/guardarobae. The theme of Hebrew prophets flanked by pagan sibyls was not unusual, but was, in fact, popular in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century. A prominent example is this theme in the Sistine Chapel executed by Michelangelo in 1512. However, Borgia Apartment scholars have long-noted that the execution of this theme in the tower rooms is “weak” in comparison to the representations of the previous three Pinturicchio rooms. The tower rooms display only half-length figures of Prophets and Apostles holding scrolls which lack the narratives present in the Sala dei Misteri, political agenda and exaltation of the Borgia family as in the Sala dei Santi or the themes present in the Sala delle Arti Liberali. Since the tower rooms might be considered guardarobae, which were used as storage rooms, their decorative programing supports the fact they were probably not exposed to visitors as much as the other Pinturicchio rooms. Conversely, the rooms were painted and not left bare like the guardarobae in Julius II’s apartment above, which, coupled with primary sources, indicates that the Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille more than likely functioned as dietrocamere by accommodating lower ranked guests who dined or slept in the Borgia Apartment.

Building on previous studies addressing the function of the Pinturicchio rooms while considering court ceremony and fifteenth-century palace function, this chapter posits the
interrelated and changeable function of the Pinturicchio sale. Following the progress through the space of Vice-Chancellor Sforza, a model and hypothetical visitor, and through different scenarios recreated for each room, we have seen that reference to rules of etiquette and protocols of behavior, the location and decoration of the spaces as well as the events held there, offer insights into their function. Utilizing this method, I have suggested that the Sala dei Misteri, Sala dei Santi and Sala delle Arti Liberali might be considered anticamerae and salotti in architectural terms, but they all served as camera audientiae in functional terms. Conversely, they likely had individual functions relevant to an audience room, signature room and library/studiolo-dining room. Finally, the Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille might be considered an anticamera in architectural terms and guardaroba in functional terms. Yet, individually they likely also served as a dining spaces and guest rooms. These different combinations indicate the interrelated uses of the Pinturicchio rooms and how the spaces likely functioned in tandem.
Though the handbooks were published after the fifteenth century, movement through Roman apartments essentially remained the same over the centuries. Though the handbooks were published after the fifteenth century, movement through Roman apartments essentially remained the same over the centuries. Though the handbooks were published after the fifteenth century, movement through Roman apartments essentially remained the same over the centuries.

Frommel, *Römische Palastbau,* 70; also see, Waddy, *Roman Palaces,* pg. 6, 10. Waddy discusses how the second room of an apartment functioned as a serving room during banquets in the *sala grande.*

Primary source documents confirm that this room contained a second door located in the corner of the south and east walls and provided a direct access to the *camera audientiae.* This access is still visible today, but it is no longer in use. In the eighteenth century the passage was used as a closet. During Alexander’s reign it allowed individuals to enter the room without passing through the *Sala dei Pontefici.* Contemporary records reveal that the corner door helped

20 Frommel, *Römische Palastbau*, 70.


25 Based on Shearman’s study of Julius II’s apartment and a contemporary event that took place in the adjacent room, the Sala delle Arti Liberali, under Pope Pius III (1503), Cieri interpreted the Sala dei Santi as Alexander VI’s library/study; see, Cieri, “Funzione,” 17-18. Cieri’s analysis is problematic for three reasons. First, drawing a one-to-one comparison of Julius II’s Stanza della Segnatura, which according to Shearman functioned as a library/study, to Alexander VI’s Sala dei Santi is problematic because the apartments do not directly correspond. Second, Burchard’s report that Pius III (r.1503), who lived in the Borgia Apartment from 22 September 1503 - 18 October 1503, used the Sala delle Arti Liberali as a signature room instead of the Sala dei Santi is problematic because Pius III was in ill health when he entered his pontificate. This might account for why the pope chose to hold all his meeting in the room closest to his bedroom, the Sala delle Arti Liberali. Lastly, the decoration in the Sala delle Arti Liberali is comprised of themes represented in contemporary studioli making it a more logical candidate for Alexander’s library/studiolo.


31 Paal found the report in the notary’s records; see Paal, “Studien,” 166.


34 Waddy, *Roman Palaces*, pg. 7, 8.

36 Ernest Steinmann also suspected that this room served as the *signatura gratiae* because there are five octagons in the transverse arches that represent Lady Justice. However, the frescoes date from the time of Gregory XIII (1572-1585). See, Ernest Steinmann, *Pinturicchio* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klassing, 1898).


40 In his 1957 lecture, F. Saxl also suggested that the *Sala delle Arti Liberali* functioned as Alexander IV’s library-studio; see, Saxl, *Lectures*, 174-188.


44 Frommel, *Römische Palastbau*, 73.

45 Poeschel, *Alexander*, 82.

46 Poeschel, *Alexander*, 82.

47 Poeschel, *Alexander*, 82.


54 These particular furnishings were found in the inventories of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century libraries and studioli; see, Waddy, Roman Palaces, 55, 307; and Frommel, Römische Palastbau, 90.

55 Waddy, Roman Palaces, 55.

56 For a complete discussion on the furniture found in a Renaissance studiolo see, Dora Thornton, The Scholar in his Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997), 53-75.

57 These are common items listed in inventories for studioli; see, Waddy, Roman Palaces, 308; Frommel, Römische Palastbau, 90; and Thornton, Scholar in his Study, 99-125.


59 Burchard reports that these stairs where used as an exit for staff; see Poeschel, Alexander Maximus, 85. Writing in the eighteenth century, Volpini noted the existence of an entrance to the Apartment, on the side of the steps leading to the tower, that eventually fell into disuse; see Volpini, Description of the Borgia Apartments, 25; also Cieri, “Funzione e Decorazione,” 17.

60 For Paal’s analysis of the two tower rooms see, Paal, “Studien,” 171-172.


62 For Poeschel’s interpretation of the decorative schemes in the tower rooms; see, Poeschel, Alexander Maximus, 85.

63 I utilized Thornton’s analysis of Sebastiano Serlio, Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva, vol 7 (Rome: 1537, 1575); see, Thornton, Italian Renaissance Interior, 295.

64 Frommel, Römische Palastbau, 72.


66 Poeschel, Alexander, 85.

67 Frommel, Römische Palastbau, 78. Patricia Waddy also provides a list of goods stored in a guardaroba; see, Waddy, Roman Palaces, 39.

68 Waddy, Roman Palaces, 39.

69 Waddy, Roman Palaces, 39.
70 Rowland, *Culture*, 46.

71 Ehrle and Stevenson, Cieri, Paal and Poeschel all suggested the decoration in the tower rooms to be a weak artistic program.
CHAPTER 4

THE FUNCTION OF THE CAMERAE SECRETAE

As the reader will recall, the previous chapter followed the progress of our ideal visitor, Vice-Chancellor Sforza, through the five Pinturicchio sale as a means of reconstructing their ceremonial and interrelated functions. This chapter extends that effort, considering the function of the two smaller rooms in the Borgia Apartment, adjacent to the Sala delle Arti Liberali, that are known as the camerae secretae (camerae segretae) [secret rooms], Sale delle Guardie Nobili or simply the camerini, or “little rooms” (numbers 7 & 10 in fig. 1.3). Under Alexander VI, the two rooms comprised a narrow wing that extended south from the Sala delle Arti Liberali and connected to a part of the palace constructed under Nicholas III (r.1277-1280) (fig. 4.1). The exact date the wing was constructed is unknown, but Vatican Palace scholar Deoclecio Redig de Campos (1967) suggested construction might date as early as the reign of Nicholas V (r.1447-1455) and as late as the reign of Pope Paul II (r.1464 - 1471).¹ The layout and decoration of the wing, as it existed under Alexander VI, has changed over the centuries due to the renovations made by different cardinals who used it as a private residence. But, based on two sixteenth-century plans of the Vatican Palace and the restoration efforts of the rooms by Giovanni Carlo Rigobello in 1937/38 (fig. 4.2), it seems likely that the small wing might have consisted of two rooms and service stairs under Alexander VI.²

Relying on Burchard’s diary and the rooms’ location, previous studies devoted to the Borgia Apartment have addressed the function of the camerae secretae in passing. Ehrle and Stevenson (1897) first suggested that Alexander VI used the camerae secretae as his private residence.³ Ursula Paal (1981) considered the function of the camerae secretae in the context of
sixteenth-century Roman palazzi layouts. Claudia Ceri (1980) and Sabine Poeschel (1999) addressed function, comparing the camerini to the known spaces in the Vatican Palace that Sixtus IV, Nicholas V and Julius II chose as their private residence. While these studies considered the function of the camerae secretae in brief, the authors did not offer a sustained consideration of how Pope Alexander VI might have utilized these spaces or how they functioned in tandem with the entire Borgia Apartment. As the camerini likely represented the most “private” spaces of Alexander VI’s apartment, reconstructing their function is essential to a complete understanding of the papal apartment and the intricate workings of papal ceremony.

One challenge to defining the camerae secretae as “private” and the other Borgia sale, the Sala dei Pontefici and the five Pinturicchio rooms, as “public” lies in the fact that those terms were not defined in the late fifteenth century as they are today. Reference to Patricia Waddy’s (1990) study of Roman etiquette handbooks and Burchard’s diary aids in understanding this issue. As Waddy makes clear, movement through a cardinal’s apartment was highly regulated, indicative of the social status and rank of a guest. Though the function of a cardinal’s apartment was slightly different from a papal apartment, the layout and movements through the apartments were similar. Both Burchard’s diary and Frommel’s (1973) study suggest that both cardinalate and papal apartments began with a “public” sala grande that was followed by subsequent “private” rooms. The terms “public” and “private” become convoluted in today’s vernacular when considering cinquecento documents that confirm the rooms labeled “private” functioned as camerae audientiae, in other words, rooms where high ranking dignitaries or guests might be received. Further, Burchard referred to the five Pinturicchio rooms following the Sala dei Pontefici, as the “cameram suam secretam” or “secret rooms.” However, the reader may recall from Chapter Three that the Pinturicchio rooms more than likely functioned as camerae
audientiae which might be considered “public” spaces by today’s standards. Thus, Burchard’s reference suggests that the spaces following the Sala dei Pontefici, which he labeled “secret,” offered a much higher degree of access to callers to the apartment than we would expect in any space labeled “secret today.”

In this context the camerini, situated deep in the Borgia Apartment behind the Sala delle Arti Liberali, might be considered Alexander VI’s most private spaces. It was likely in these spaces that the pope’s personal activities, hygienic and otherwise, took place. Here, again, we should recall that the pope did not have what we might call a “private” life today, perhaps even in such personal moments. Ceremony and etiquette dictated nearly every aspect of the pope’s daily life. In her study of the daily activities of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cardinals, Waddy notes the constant presence of attendants, chamber maids, and gentlemen that assisted, as well as accompanied, a cardinal throughout daily rituals. These included even the most personal matters of bathing and dressing. Thus, we should consider the camerini Alexander VI’s “private” spaces, but only in the context of degrees of access. Meaning, only the most privileged of guests, like Vice-Chancellor Sforza, in addition to a select group of attendants, might have accessed these spaces.

To provide the first sustained consideration of the function of these “private” spaces, this chapter relies on a series of primary and secondary sources. Burchard’s diary and two sixteenth-century floor plans of the Vatican Palace aid in reconstructing the layout of the rooms. Rigobello’s twentieth-century restoration of the rooms provides evidence regarding the decorative scheme of the first camerino (1). Building on the prior studies of Ehrle and Stevenson, and Poeschel, I suggest that the first camerino (1) was Alexander VI’s bedroom and the second camerino (2) was his guardaroba/dietrocamera. Lastly, referencing Waddy’s study
of court ceremony and Frommel’s study of sixteenth-century palazzi, I consider how Alexander VI might have utilized the camerae secretae both individually and in tandem with the larger, Borgian reception spaces.

**The First Camerino**

Again, we return to Cardinal Sforza, the Vice-Chancellor, as a means of considering access, movement, and experience in the Borgia Apartment and the camerini in particular. Two sixteenth-century floor plans indicate that the pope’s privileged guest, the Vice-Chancellor Sforza, would have accessed the first camerino (1) through a small door to the right side of the Sala delle Arti Liberali’s fireplace (fig. 4.3 & labeled entrance in fig. 4.2). The restoration of the room in 1937/38 indicates that, after moving through a small passage (labeled B in fig. 4.2) and standing in the camerino (1), the Vice-Chancellor was probably greeted with frescoes that spanned the entire wall, depicting architectural elements in the form of pilasters and arches. The decoration began at the floor and reached to the beams supporting the ceiling. In between the pilasters were landscapes with tall trees (figs. 4.4 & 4.5). Directly ahead, on the south wall, the Vice-Chancellor probably saw a wide stone arch that led to a small alcove (fig. 4.6 & labeled F in fig. 4.2) and to the far right of the wall, the entrance to the passage that led to the camerino (2). To his left, on the east wall, there was a fireplace (fig. 4.7). To the Vice-Chancellor’s right, the west wall, he saw two large windows that overlooked the Cortile Borgia (fig. 4.8). Directly above the cardinal was an elaborate palcho ceiling decorated with the Borgia coat of arms (fig. 4.9).

Based on Burchard’s diary and previous readings of the function of camerino (1), I propose that the space was Alexander VI’s bedroom, commonly known as a camera. According to Burchard, on 18 August 1503, at about five o'clock in the evening, after Alexander VI’s death,
the pope was moved to a bed that was set-up “in alia camera ante salam, qua mortuus est,” (in the anti-room in front of the room where he died). After the body was cleaned and dressed, Burchard reported that Alexander was transported through several rooms that included: two cameræ (which he does not name), the Sala dei Pontefici, the camera audientiae and the Sala dei Papagalli, (“His peractis, portavimus eum per duas cameræ et aulam Pontificum et cameram Audientie ad Papagallum,”) (see the rooms labeled III, II, I, 6, 5 in figure 4.10). By retracing Burchard’s description, Ehrle and Stevenson, Cieri, Paal and Poeschel deduced that Alexander VI died in the camerino (1). They concluded that the two cameræ Burchard did not name were the Sala dei Misteri and the Sala dei Santi since they precede the Sala dei Pontefici in terms of exiting the apartment. Therefore, the Sala delle Arti Liberali must have been the “alia camera ante salam” where Burchard stated Alexander VI’s body was cleaned and clothed.

In addition to Burchard’s reference, Cieri and Poeschel suggested that the camerino (1) was Alexander VI’s camera because of its size. Measuring 26ft x 16ft, the camerino is significantly smaller than the five main rooms of the Pinturicchio sale, a characteristic of fifteenth-century cameræ. Further, the room had several similarities with the private bedroom of Nicholas V. Nicholas V’s camera and Alexander VI’s camerino (1) both exhibit a low wooden ceiling and the patrons’ coat of arms over the rooms’ door and fireplace.

According to Frommel and Thornton’s (1991) study of sixteenth-century accounts, the heart or nucleus of the master’s apartment was the camera. As Thornton makes clear, Roman palazzi layouts and cinquecento descriptions of the space show that the camera was usually smaller than the other rooms in the apartment and it contained the master’s bed (letto) as well as furniture for lounging. These smaller spaces played an important role in the overall function of a Roman Renaissance apartment because they were where the master slept, lounged and even
entertained guests. These three functions indicate that the *camera* likely served a multifaceted role. According to Waddy’s analysis of Evitascandalo’s revised edition of the *Maestro di casa* (1596), Evitascandalo highlighted the potentially convoluted use of such a space by describing the uses of a *camera* without distinguishing between an audience room and bedroom. Since the *camerino* (1) might be considered Alexander VI’s *camera*, based on Burchard’s account and its similarities to Pope Nicholas V’s *camera*, it seems likely that the space [the *camerino* (1)] was utilized as both a bedchamber and an intimate audience chamber.

Primary source accounts and the room’s decoration support the suggestion that the *camerino* (1) was more than likely also used as a *camera audientiae*. According to Burchard, on 31 December 1495, Roman city officials were furious at Alexander VI for declining to give his annual oath to the city. Later, Alexander received the angry officials in his *cameram [camera]*. This account suggests that the officials met with Alexander VI in the *camerino* (1), which, as we have seen, also served as his bedchamber. In addition, Frommel’s study of Roman *cinquecento palazzi* found a contemporary report made by an unknown Venetian ambassador, dated 1505, that suggests a cardinal’s *camera* functioned as a meeting room (*camera audientiae*). According to the report, the unknown ambassador stated that he meet with an unidentified cardinal in the “*Camera del Cardinale*” located in the Palazzo Venezia. This demonstrates that the cardinal’s bedroom was the meeting space which made the room a *camera audientiae*.

In an attempt to reconstruct the furniture such a multifunctional space might have held I rely on Frommel’s study of sixteenth-century inventories detailing the type of furniture included in a *camera*. A notable example is the 1524 inventory of Cardinal Fieschi’s Roman *palazzo* which reported that the cardinal’s *camera* contained a four-poster bed with curtains, armchairs and chest of drawers. Based on the cardinal’s inventory and additional sixteenth-century
camere inventories, we might hypothesize that the camerino (1), under Alexander VI, was likely equipped with at least a gilded four-poster bed with curtains (bed hangings) made of gold cloth and silk, a couch, armchairs, and chest of drawers (containing his clothes).

Since privacy and security were of upmost concern in palazzi, the camera was considered the safest place in the Roman Renaissance apartment to keep valuable possessions. As such, the camerino (1) might have contained some of the pope’s most valued possessions. The location of the space behind the Sala delle Arti Liberali likely offered more security. Additionally, the security of the room supports the theory that Alexander VI’s more personal hygienic activities took place in this space. According to Loes L. Waarts (2003), the space labeled D in figure 4.2 was more than likely Alexander VI’s bathroom. Waarts’ theory supports the multifunctionality of the camerino (1).

Consideration of the camerino (1)’s decoration further suggests that it likely functioned as a camera audientiae. As we have seen, the camerino (1) featured a beautiful, serene landscape motif (figs 4.4 & 4.5). A similar fresco program is also located in the Roman Palazzo dei Penitenzieri’s sala grande (1480-1490)(fig. 4.11) and in the Roman Villa Farnesina’s main salone on the piano nobile, Sala delle Prospettive (1509)(fig. 4.12). These two rooms likely functioned as spaces to hold audiences because they were one of the largest rooms in the palace. Based on this comparison, the camerino (1)’s decoration suggests that it was intended to be viewed by an audience. Since Burchard suggested that the camerino (1) functioned as such, a hypothetical visit considering the movements of the Vice-Chancellor to the space can be reconstructed.

Roman etiquette handbooks, as summarized by Waddy, offer insights regarding how Vice-Chancellor Sforza likely moved through the Borgian rooms to reach the camerini. Once the
Vice-Chancellor arrived at the Borgia Apartment he would have been greeted at the door of the 
Sala dei Pontefici and escorted by the palafrenieri assistant to the Sala dei Misteri. From the 
Misteri, a gentiluomo (gentleman page) might have escorted the Vice-Chancellor through the 
Sala dei Santi and Sala delle Arti Liberali. Once in the Arti Liberali, the gentiluomo more than 
likely stopped at the entrance to the first camerino. As Waddy delineates, there were different 
methods of reception to a camera. It is possible that the master (in this case Alexander VI) could 
have greeted the Vice-Chancellor at the room’s entrance. It is also possible that the cameriere 
(chamber assistant) could have introduced the Vice-Chancellor into the space. Once the Vice-
Chancellor was in the camerino (1) the meeting would have been more of an intimate affair since 
the space was small and doubled as the pope’s bedroom.

The Second Camerino

Located behind the camerino (1) is a smaller room also today called a camerino (2) 
(number 10 in fig. 1.3). As of today, to my knowledge, there are no recorded measurements for 
this space during the Borgia Pontificate. This is possibly due to the fact that the room was 
rigorously altered over the centuries. This presents a challenge in reconstructing the camerino 
(2)’s layout, decoration and function as it existed under Alexander VI. Bramante’s layout of the 
Vatican Palace, dating to the beginning of the sixteenth century, indicates that the camerino (2) 
was a separate room located behind the camerino (1) (fig. 4.1). However, the layout of the room, 
from the plan for the conclave that elected Pope Pius V (20 December 1565 to 7 January 1566) 
includes a small passage leading to the camerino (2) and a set of stairs in the space (fig. 4.13). 

Today, the camerini (2) is accessed by a small passage that connects the two camerini. 
The space features a beautifully gilded, wooden coffered ceiling that includes the Carafa family’s 
coat of arms, identified with Vincenzo Carafa (1477-1541) who received the cardinalate in 1528
The room also currently includes two windows and a wide staircase that takes up most of the footprint (fig. 4.16). Rigobello offered no clues regarding the room’s layout or decoration under Alexander VI since he did not include the *camerino* (2) in his restoration report of 1938 (fig. 4.2). The restorer Ottemi della Rotta, who worked in the space in 1973, made some helpful notes on the appearance of the space. According to Rotta, the walls were never decorated. Rotta also noted that the room did not contain a fireplace and the space consisted of service stairs that led to the Museum of Religious Arts. Since the *camerino* (2)’s layout and decoration, under Alexander VI, are not secure, prior studies have attempted to determine the room’s function by utilizing Burchard’s diary and the room’s location.

Burchard describes the looting that took place in the apartment after the death of Alexander VI noting that there was a locked room behind the pope’s bedchamber that contained money and precious gems. Burchard referred to this room as the *locus post cameram pape* (the room behind the pope’s *camera*). The author’s entry of 18 August 1503 reports that after Cesare Borgia (1475-1507), the son of Alexander VI, learned of the pope’s death, he quickly sent a strong squad of armed men to occupy the papal apartment and secure its possessions. The leader of the armed men, Micheletto, threatened Cardinal Casanova to obtain keys to the small room “behind” the chamber of the pope, “*omnes et portas respondentes to exitum habitationem pape*.” Once Micheletto had received the keys and entered the space he took two cases containing about one hundred thousand ducats. Based on this account, and the room’s location behind Alexander VI’s *camera* (*camerino* (1)), Ehrle and Stevenson, as well as Poeschel, suggested that the *camerino* (2) functioned as a *guardaroba*. Sixteenth-century *palazzi* layouts and contemporary accounts suggest that the master’s *guardaroba* was usually located at either the end of or in a hidden part of the apartment because the room stored personal and household
goods of all sorts.\textsuperscript{34} From this, I agree that the \textit{camerino} (2) likely functioned as a \textit{guardaroba}. In addition, based on the room’s location and size, I suggest that the room might be considered a \textit{dietrocamera}, in architectural terms, that was not generally accessed by guests.

As the reader may recall, I proposed in Chapter Three that the \textit{Sala del Credo} and \textit{Sala delle Sibille} might have functioned as Alexander VI’s \textit{guardarobae} based on their location and decorative programs. However, primary sources indicate that princely apartments were not limited to one or two \textit{guardarobae}. Waddy’s study of seventeenth-century records found that both the Palazzo Borghese and Palazzo Barberini alle Quattro Fontane had multiple \textit{guardarobae}.\textsuperscript{35} An extravagant, albeit later, example is the Palazzo Barberini, built 1581-86, also known as the “Casa Grande” ai Giubbonari. While living in the enlarged palace in 1671, Cardinal Antonio Barberini utilized over seventeen rooms as \textit{guardarobae} to store his numerous possessions.\textsuperscript{36} Sixteenth-century texts also indicate it was common for Roman palaces to have multiple \textit{guardaroba}. Evitascandalo’s \textit{Mastro di Casa} indicates that an apartment with more than one \textit{guardarobae} helped to divide all the master’s household items according to kind or value.\textsuperscript{37} Based on these multiple primary sources, the Borgia apartment, theoretically, could have had multiple \textit{guardarobae}. Two primary source accounts detailing Alexander VI’s possessions in his cardinal palace further support this theory and suggest the \textit{camerino} (2) functioned as such.

Before he was elected Pope Alexander VI, Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia served as Vice-Chancellor (1459-1492) to Pope Innocent VIII (r.1484-1492). As Vice-Chancellor, Cardinal Borgia lived in the Palazzo della Cancelleria Vecchia (today known as the Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini, or Borgia Palace) between 1462 and 1492.\textsuperscript{38} Cardinal Ascanio Sforza visited the Borgia Palace and left a description of the palace’s interior which indicates Cardinal Borgia had an
assortment of expensive furniture and decorations. According to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza’s letter to his brother Lodovico il Moro of Milan, dated October 1484;

The house was superbly furnished. The first hall was hung all round with tapestries representing historical subjects; behind this hall there was a smaller one, also completely hung with tapestries, upon whose floor lay carpets which matched the other decorations; there was a bed with a canopy of crimson satin, and a sideboard, full of beautifully worked vases of gold and silver, and a great number of other plates, pots and bowls, which were very beautiful to see. After this, there were two more rooms, one decorated with very fine tapestries and carpets, and a bed with a canopy of Alexandrian velvet; and another one even more decorated than those already mentioned, with a bed covered with golden brocade, whose coverlet was lined with sable and had golden fringes; in the middle, there was a table covered with Alexandrian velvet, and highly and ornamented chairs well in keeping with all the rest.39

I suggest that if Alexander VI brought these furnishings with him to the Borgia Apartment, the bigger items such as his tables, chairs and tapestries were more than likely divided and stored in the Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille, whereas the smaller items such as vases, silverware and money were stored in the camerino (2). Support for this claim is found in Burchard’s inventory of the camerino (2). According to Burchard, on 19 August 1503, the day after Alexander VI’s death and the looting by Micheletto, the cardinals went to the papal apartment to take inventory. In the room “post cameram pape” [camerino (2)] the cardinals found twenty-five thousand ducats, beautiful linens, several precious stones and rings, and about twenty secret documents.40 The presence of money, jewels, and secret documents in the space suggests that Alexander VI used the camerino (2) as a smaller, highly guarded guardaroba.

Just as the other rooms in the Borgia Apartment likely served multiple functions that can be considered in architectural terms, the camerino (2)’s location demonstrates that the space might be considered a dietrocamera. As the reader will recall, I argued in Chapter Three that the Sala del Credo and Sala delle Sibille might be considered dietrocamere in architectural terms because of the rooms’ location at the end of the apartment. Primary sources and the rooms’
decoration indicated that the *Sala del Credo* and *Sala delle Sibille* likely functioned as a dining room and guest room. However, based on the *camerino* (2)’s location and Burchard’s reference to the security of the room, the space might be considered a *dietrocamera*. Further analysis of the room’s decoration and layout, as it existed under Alexander VI, would aid in a complete understanding of the *camerino* (2)’s additional functions. Unfortunately, sparse primary source documents and subsequent restoration efforts hinder an accurate reconstruction of the room. Therefore, the multiple functions of the *camerino* (2) and its interrelated nature to the Borgian rooms are considered in the context of a *dietrocamera* that served as a *guardaroba*.

Relying on Waddy’s study of Roman etiquette handbooks and Frommel’s study of *quattrocento* palace function as well as the rooms’ location, this chapter demonstrates that the two small *camerae secretae*, adjacent the *Sala delle Arti Liberali*, likely functioned as Alexander VI’s “private” spaces in the Borgia Apartment. I proposed multiple functions for each *camerino*. The first *camerino* (1) likely served as Alexander VI’s bedroom and *camera audientiae*, while the *camerino* (2) probably functioned as a joint *guardarobadietrocamera*. With these multiple functions finally realized, the *camerino* (1) might be considered a “public” space in today’s vernacular because it likely worked in tandem with the Pinturicchio rooms. However, the space was more than likely considered “private,” during Alexander VI’s reign, because it held the highest degree of access. In this context, the *camerino* (2) was never considered public because it functioned as a highly guarded storage room. Considering how Alexander VI likely used the *camerini* aids in understanding the interrelated nature of the Borgia *sale* and how the whole apartment was utilized during papal ceremony.

Loes L. Waarts, “The so-called ‘Bathroom of Pope Alexander VI’,” in *Functions and Decorations: Art and Ritual at the Vatican Palace in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 47-56, ed. by Tristan Weddigen, Sible de Blaauw and Bram Kempers (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2003). Measurements of the *camerae segretae* were taken in 1937/38 by Giovanni Carlo Rigobello. See figure 4.3. I could not access this study, but Rigobello’s measurements and layout of the rooms are included in Loes L. Waarts study; see, Waarts, “Bathroom,” 48.


Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 20

Waddy, *Roman Palaces*, 47.


Waarts, “Bathroom,” 50. According to Waarts, the decoration in this room was attributed to Pinturicchio because it resembles work done by the artist in the Palazzo Domenico della Rovere, also called the Palazzo dei Penitenzieri.

In the restoration of 1937/38, the trace of a wide arch was found on the southern wall of the first *camera secreta*. This arch led to an alcove which appeared to be part of the room; see, Waarts, “Bathroom,” 50


1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14


22 For Frommel’s multiple lists of inventories found in sixteenth-century *camerae* see; Frommel, *Römische Palastbau*, 71.


24 See note 2.


27 When I visited the space in August 2014, the *camerino* (2) largely consisted of a modern marble stair case.


29 I could not access O. della Rotta’s notes directly. Instead, I rely on Poeschel who included some of Rotta’s notes in her study of the space; see Poeschel, *Alexander*, 88.


40 Cieri, “Funzione,” 17.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This thesis offers the first sustained consideration of the multiple functions that the eight rooms of the Borgia Apartment served during the pontificate of Alexander VI (r. 1492-1503). It also provides the first reconstruction of the decoration and function of the Sala dei Pontefici, as well as the function of the camerae secretae. Such an effort is especially important as Alexander VI’s spaces in the Vatican Palace represent the oldest surviving decorated papal apartment in Rome. By providing an analysis of how Alexander VI, and his court, likely utilized the whole Borgia Apartment, this study offers a greater understanding of function and ceremony in early modern pontifical apartments, an issue little considered in the past.

Prior studies devoted to the Borgia Apartment discuss the individual function of the eight Borgia sale in brief and rarely consider the rooms in tandem. Though these studies are invaluable to understanding the iconography and specific function of each room, this thesis offers the first consideration of the interrelated nature of the eight Borgia spaces and how they functioned coherently as a papal apartment. To do so, it references a broader range of material than previously considered, including primary sources such as Johann Burckhardt’s diary and sixteenth-century etiquette books, as well as secondary sources, including studies addressing Roman Renaissance Palace function.

To advance understanding of the interrelated nature of the sale, this thesis introduced a hypothetical, highly-ranked guest to the Borgia Apartment, the Vice-Chancellor Cardinal Sforza. Recreating Vice-Chancellor Sforza’s movements through the apartment demonstrates how the
constraints of papal ceremony and the location, size and decoration of each room determined how the spaces were employed both individually and concurrently. Further, it suggests that each sala had multiple functions that might be understood in both architectural terms (i.e. saletta) and functional terms (i.e. Library). As such, this thesis provides an extended analysis of the relation between the ceremonial and architectural functions of a papal apartment.

Existing studies devoted to the function of the Borgia Apartment are limited to German, French and Italian languages. This thesis offers the first English language study devoted to the function of the space. Despite the limited comparative material regarding the decoration and function of papal apartments in Rome prior to the fifteenth century, this study also offers a greater understanding of the relation of architecture and early modern papal ceremony. Reconstructing the organization and interrelated nature of the eight Borgia sala demonstrates the role of a Roman papal apartment in a Renaissance palace and the intricate workings of papal ceremony. This analysis is especially important to advancing our knowledge of quattrocento palace function because it demonstrates the multiple and interrelated functions spaces served.

Further study devoted to the Borgia Apartment could address the relation of the sala to the entire Vatican Palace and basilica, a project beyond the scope of the present study. A close analysis of the relationship between the ceremonial rooms (labeled 8, 5, 4 in fig. 4.16) adjacent the Borgia Apartment could extend our knowledge of the function of the whole. In addition, further research devoted to the Borgia Apartment could profit from a broader analysis of the “public” and “private” functions of the sala. In Chapter Four, I briefly mentioned how the camera secretae (camerini) might be considered “public” and “private” rooms simultaneously, but I did not apply this analysis to the five Pinturicchio rooms. An in-depth analysis of the public
vs private nature of the whole apartment would contribute to the emerging research on the relation of architecture and acts of diplomacy.

Finally, additional study might consider the Borgia Apartment in the context of prior papal palaces. As the reader may recall, in Chapter One I noted that there is limited comparative material regarding the decoration and function of papal apartments in Rome prior to the fifteenth century. However, an analysis of the Lateran Palace, Palazzo Venezia and Avignon Palace could provide insights to the origin and evolution of papal apartments, thus providing a deeper understanding of papal ceremony.
REFERENCES


Figure 1.1 Layout, Old Vatican Palace, 1492-1503. Ehrle and Stevenson, 1897.

I. Sala dei Pontefici
II. Sala dei Misteri
III. Sala dei Santi
IV. Sala delle Arti Liberali
V. Sala del Credo
VI. Sala delle Sibille

VII & VIII. Stanze delle Guardie Nobili (camerae secretae)
Figure 1.2. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace. Scala Archives.
Figure 1.3. Diagram, Borgia Apartment, 1492-1503. Poeschel, Alexander, 300.
Figure 1.4. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.

Figure 1.5. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Santi*, Scala Archives.
Figure 1.6. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Santi*, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.

Figure 1.7. Pinturicchio, *Sala delle Arti Liberali*, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.
Figure 1.8. Pinturicchio, *Sala del Credo*, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.

Figure 1.9. Pinturicchio, *Sala delle Sibille*, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques* 1897.
Figure 1.10. *Sancta Sanctorum*, San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome, c. 1279.

Figure 1.11. Images of the Popes, *Sistine Chapel*, Vatican Palace, c. 1483.
Figure 2.1. *Sala dei Pontefici*, Borgia Apartment, Looking West, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.
Figure 2.2. Layout, Vatican Palace, Westfall, *In This Most Perfect Paradise*, 1974.
Figure 2.3. Layout, Vatican Palace, Westfall, *In This Most Perfect Paradise*, 1974.
Figure 2.4. *Sala dei Pontefici*, North (far right) and West Walls, Scala Archives.

Figure 2.5. Erasmo Pistoles, Engraving, *Sala dei Pontefici* vault, 1829-1838. Mary Quinlan-McGrath, “The Sala dei Pontefici Vault,” 176.
Figure 2.6. Papal frescoes, the Sancta Santorum, North Wall, Rome.
Figure 2.7. Diagram of the Popes, *Sistine Chapel*, Vatican Palace.
Figure 2.8. Papal Portrait Series, *Sistine Chapel*, ca. 1481-83, Vatican Palace.
Figure 2.9. *Palcho Ceiling*. Vittore Carpaccio, *Birth of the Virgin*, Bergamo, 1504-1508.

Figure 2.10. *Soffito Ceiling With Shallow A Caselle*; Giotto, *St. Francis appears to Pope Gregory IX in a Dream*, Upper Church, Basilica of S. Francesco, Assisi, ca. 1300.
Figure 2.11. *Palcho Ceiling*, *Camerino* (1), Borgia Apartment, Vatican Palace, ca. 1492-1494.

Figure 2.13. *Cubicolo* of Nicholas V, Mid-Fifteenth Century, Vatican Palace. Scala Archives.

Figure 2.15. Lowest panel, Sixteenth-Century Tapestries, *Sistine Chapel*, designed by Raphael.

Figure 2.16. Beauvais Tapestry, *The Martyrdom of Saint Paul* (from the series "The Life of Saint Peter"), Commissioned in 1462 for the Cathedral of St. Peter in Beauvais.
Figure 2.17. Melozzo da Forlì, *Sixtus IV Enthroned*, Pinacoteca, Vatican, 1477.

Figure 3.1. Layout, Pinturicchio Rooms, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897. fig. 1, Top: Before Reconstruction, Bottom: After Restoration.
Figure 3.2. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, 1492, West Wall.

Figure 3.3. Pinturicchio, *Resurrection, Sala dei Misteri*, West Wall, 1492.
Figure 3.4. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, North and West Walls.

Figure 3.5. *Sala dei Misteri*, Two Views, South Wall. Left: Corner Passage Door to the *Camera Audientiae*. Right: the view of the fireplace on the same wall to the right.
Figure 3.6. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Misteri*, Fictive Papal Tiara, East Wall.
Figure 3.7. Pinturicchio, Ceiling, *Sala dei Misteri*. Two Views, Between Central Arch, Scala Archives.
Figure 3.8. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Santi*, South Wall, Scala Archives.

Figure 3.9. Pinturicchio, *Sala dei Santi*, South and West Walls, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.
Figure 3.10. Pinturicchio, Ceiling, Sala dei Santi, Top: North Ceiling, Right: South Vault, Scala Archives.
Figure 3.11. Pinturicchio, *Dispute of Saint Catherine*, 1492-1494. *Sala dei Santi*, South wall.

Figure 3.13. Pinturicchio, Ceiling Two Views, *Sala delle Arti Liberali*, Scala Archives.
Figure 3.14. *Studiolo*, Ducal Palace, Urbino, ca. 1479–82. Possibly designed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini.

Figure 3.15. Raphael, *Parnassus, Stanza della Segnatura*, Vatican Palace, c. 1511.
Figure 3.16. Pinturicchio, Sala del Credo, Ehrle and Stevenson, Les fresques, 1897.

Figure 3.17. Pinturicchio, Sala del Credo, Ceiling, Author, August, 2014.
Figure 3.18. Pinturicchio, *Sala delle Sibille*, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.

Figure 3.19. Pinturicchio, Ceiling, *Sala delle Sibille*, Scala Archives.
Figure 4.1. Donato Bramante (1444-1514), *Plan of the Vatican Palace*, 287 A, Florenz, Galleria degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei disegni e delle stampe, date (?). Scala Archives. The Blue Arrow is Pointing to the *Camere Secretae*. 
Figure 4.2. Layout, Camerino (1), by Rigobello 1938, Waarts, “The so-called (Bathroom of Pope Alexander VI),” 48.

Figure 4.4. Original Decoration, *Camerino* (1), Rendiconti, “Camerette Borgia,” 1939, 241.
Figure 4.5. Detail, *Camerino* (1), Rendiconti, “Camerette Borgia,” 1939, 243.

Figure 4.6. *Camerino* (1), Author August, 2014, South Wall, Standing in the Entrance. The Far Left is a Modern Passage of the Original Alcove. The Far Right is the Passage to the *Camerino* (2).
Figure 4.7. Camerino (1), Fire Place, East Wall, Author, 2014.

Figure 4.8. Camerino (1), Far Right, Second Large Window, West Wall, Author, 2014.
Figure 4.9. Ceiling, *Camerino* (1), Scala Archives.

Figure 4.10. Layout of the Old Vatican Palace, 1492-1503, Ehrle and Stevenson, *Les fresques*, 1897.

C. Entrance to the palace; D. Courtyard; 4. *Chambre des Parements*; 5. *Sala dei Pappagalli*; 6. *Camera audientiae*; I. *Sala dei Pontefici*; II. *Sala dei Misteri*; III. *Sala dei Santi*; IV. *Sala delle Arti Liberali*; V. *Sala del Credo*; VI. *Sala delle Sibille*; VII. *Camerino* (1); VIII. *Camerino* (2)
Figure 4.11. *Sala Grande*, *Palazzo dei Penitenzieri*, c. 1480. Poeschel, Alexander, 316.

Figure 4.12. Baldassarre Peruzzi, *Perspectives’ Hall*, Villa Farnesina, c. 1510.
Figure 4.13. Plan Vatican Palace, Conclave of the Election of Pope Pius V, 20 December 1565 to 7 January 1566. Taken from Poeschel, Alexander, 1999, 309.

Figure 4.14. Camerino (2), Far Left: Stairs, Right: Window, Author, Aug. 2014.
Figure 4.15. Ceiling, *Camerino* (2), Author, Aug. 2014.