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## Giorgio Vasari and Niccolò Machiavelli's Medicean Appetite for Peace and Glory

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the literary and visual connections between war and peace as a cultural diplomacy made by both Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). The approach here is iconographical, focusing on three points. First, Machiavelli's notions of condottiere, virtù, and war and peace in *The Art of War* (1521) are discussed in relation to Renaissance imagery, particularly in that produced as a result of Medicean patronage. Second, Vasari's battle cycle in the Salone dei Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio (1555-60) in Florence is examined within the context of peace as revealed in Renaissance art and emblems. Finally, Vasari's assimilation of Machiavelli's notions of the art of war are interpreted in relation to the painting cycle, which visually embodies the paradox of war and peace discussed in Machiavelli's writing.

**Keywords:** Art of War, Florence, Fortune, Mercury, Virtue.

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"War produces thieves and peace hangs them."

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*

### 1.0 Introduction

This section consists of three parts. The first part deals with the historical background for warfare in Florence during the sixteenth century. The second part considers the Medici patronage of visual warfare as propaganda for military and political successes. This section focuses on Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Florence and eventually Duke of Tuscany, commissioning his court painter, Giorgio Vasari, the decoration a large salone (hall) with paintings of the Medicean successful battles against Pisa and Siena. Skillfully, Vasari captures the wishes of the Duke Cosimo through numerous drawings for frescoed paintings of the historical battles in the east and west walls in the Salone dei Cinquecento. Vasari demonstrates his masterful ability in visualizing the preparation for the combat as well as the complexity of warfare organization. His artistic strategy is the combination of actually attending the battle scene, viewing at

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first hand the war, as well as sending his assistants to draw aspects of the battle maneuvers, as well as being cultural informed about the Italian writings on military art. The third section confirms Vasari's source for understanding the complexity of a political and military warfare, which is through the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli or war and on princely governance. Machiavelli emphasizes two points, which necessary in being a good ruler and military leader, a princely warrior must honor and virtù.

This essay introduced for the first time Vasari's concept of diplomacy associated with Machiavelli's virtù (moral military virtue). Vasari as an artist wishes to honor his patron, Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Tuscany, through his drawings and paintings. Furthermore, the study indicated for the first time Vasari's cultural endeavors in visualizing military tactics and military formations, including the depiction of the first evening battle scene in the art of the sixteenth-century warfare. He masterfully explains through the visual medium of drawing an understanding of a battlefield. Noted in this essay are Vasari and his assistants' attendance at and visual participation to the battlefield; hence Vasari reveals in drawings an actual military event. In understanding Machiavelli's ideals about war and peace, Vasari also unveils, in his imagery about battles, the conceit of military honor (fortitude) and virtù (moral virtue) in the comportment of a condottiere (military leader and soldier) and ruler. For Machiavelli and Vasari, these assets are required for good and peaceful governance; hence the success of Cosimo I as ruler of Florence because he has cultivated and achieved these virtues. This essay continued to explore Vasari's visualization of war as a justification for Medicean achievement of peace.

Festivals, decorative cycles, pageantry and portraiture illustrated the grandeur of the Medici and the magnificence of Florence in the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> Humanist writings document the history of Florence as well as the political power of the Medici through their appetite for glory.<sup>3</sup> Since the fourteenth century, the Medici aspired to become a dynastic family by using their ability in commerce and political power. The Medici fabricated an image of glory for themselves through patronage of the visual and literary arts, connecting the past with the present by developing an ancestral connection with ancient Rome, by placing Medicean members in papal thrones, and by arranging marriages with prominent European families. The Medici transformed Florence into the cultural theater of Europe. Florence as an ideal city became the new Athens or the new Rome where humanists and artists united to record and invent a new iconography for Medicean history.<sup>4</sup>

During the sixteenth century, Italian warfare underwent significant alterations. For example, infantry became the means of war, firearms were employed in battles, new types of fortification change the architectural structure of the towns and army troops grew in size and expenses.<sup>5</sup> Italy, Florence in particular, became the European warfare arena "for the foremost conquests, most numerous momentarily decisive battles, most influential changes in weaponry and tactics were confirmed, most ghastly sacks took place."<sup>6</sup> The art of war became the art of peace. Theoretical and practical debates also developed on the art of war, involving the ecclesiastical and secular rulers, army officers, humanists and artists. Florentines, such as Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) in his writings and Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574)

<sup>2</sup>See Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450-1650* (London: The Boydell Press, 1984), 42-74 and 82-85, for a discussion of pageantry and politics. In 1535, Duke Alessandro de' Medici commissions Vasari to embellish lavishly the city of Florence with apparati and triumphal arches for the arrival of Emperor Charles V and Christopher Hibbert, *The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1974), 255-57.

<sup>3</sup>See Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1955), passim; John M. Currin, "Diplomacy," in Paul F. Grendler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, 6 vols. (New York: Scribners, 1999), II, 164-68; and Rene De Maulde-La-Clavier, *La diplomatie au temps de Machiavel*, 3 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 2012 a reprint 1892-1893 edition).

<sup>4</sup>See J. R. Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), viii; Hibbert, *The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall*, 255-57; <https://ebookbestdeal.us/index.php?q=artists-warfare-renaissance-jr-hale>; Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City States in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Random House, 1980), 310-311; <http://eeenep.typepad.com/blog/2013/04/download-power-and-imagination-city-states-in-renaissance-italy.html>; and Felicia M. Else, "Vasari, the River God and the Expression of Territorial Power under Duke Cosimo I de' Medici," in *Explorations in Renaissance Culture—Vasari in Cultural Context*, 73-87.

<sup>5</sup>Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance*, viii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. 139.

in his paintings, aggrandizes and glorifies, albeit paradoxically, the Medici's power and patronage through the documentation of war and peace.<sup>7</sup>

In 1521, the Florentine humanist, politician, diplomat and writer, Machiavelli, clearly expresses these issues in his book on warfare, *The Art of War* (*Arte della Guerra*) published in Florence.<sup>8</sup> In *The Prince* (*Il Principe*, 1513-1532), Machiavelli honors enlightened monarchical leaders for their cunning and forceful guidance as the Medici rulers. And in the *Florentine Histories* (*Istorie di Firenze*, 1520-24), Machiavelli artfully compromises between Medicean power and the Florentine republicanism or “populism and elitism.”<sup>9</sup> **Advocating national militia, he rejects a mercenary army** because this construct weakens the power of the state and its leader. Giorgio Vasari, in his history paintings in the Salone dei Cinquecento of 1565-70 at the Palazzo Vecchio (Figs. 1-3), visually embodies the paradox of war and peace discussed in Machiavelli's *The Art of War*, *The Prince* and *Florentine Histories*.<sup>10</sup> This essay explores Vasari's visualization of war as a justification for Medicean achievement of peace, demonstrating Cosimo 1 de' Medici, Duke of Florence, and eventually Duke of Tuscany, art of cultural diplomacy and exceptional skills as a condottiere and leader of the patria (country).



Figure 1: Giorgio Vasari, Salone dei Cinquecento, 1555, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. (Photo credit: Liana De Girolami Cheney)

**In 1555, the duke commissions Vasari to restore and decorate the rooms of the palace with programs honoring**



Figure 2: Giorgio Vasari, West Wall, Salone dei Cinquecento, 1555, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. (Photo credit: Liana De Girolami Cheney)

<sup>7</sup>On Machiavelli, see Niccolò Capponi, *An Unlikely Prince: The Life and Times of Machiavelli* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2010), 37-54 and 105-28, on warfare and stagecraft; Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, 208-10, for an analysis of the concept of virtù in Machiavelli's *The Art of War*; and Robert Black, *Nicolaus Machiavellus: Historiar Scriptor* (London: Routledge, 2013), 30-70, on Machiavelli's art of diplomacy and chancery career. On Vasari, see Ugo Muccini, *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Palazzo Vecchio of Florence* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997), 88-123; Philip Jacks, ed., *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 163-219; and Henk Th. Van Veen, *Cosimo I De' Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 54-101.

<sup>8</sup>See Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 235-38, for a discussion of Machiavelli's chancery as Segretario Fiorentino during his writing of *The Art of War*, which was never published during his lifetime under his name. See also <http://yrexgowa.ru/vuzak.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>See Black, *Nicolaus Machiavellus*, 262.

<sup>10</sup>See Bondanella and Musa, trans. and ed. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, trans. ed., ix, for a discussion of the text. “*The Art of War*, composed of a preface and seven books, is written in the form of a dialogue, a form popular among many humanists of the period. The discussion of the art of war is set within a conversation among various friends who have gathered in 1516 at the Orti Oricellari, gardens belonging to Cosimo Rucellai, a Florentine gentleman, to welcome a well-known mercenary commander, Fabrizio Colonna.” In chapters 10 to 14 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli discusses military power. He says that weaponry is essential for self-respect and influence in achievement of peace in a state of war. See George Bull, trans., *Machiavelli's Prince* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961); Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Christian Gauss (New York: New American Library, 1952), 72-83, for a discussion of the different types of militia and mercenary soldiers; <https://www.google.com/search?q=Robert+Black+Nicolaus&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=machiavelli+the+prince+pdf>; Federico Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), 8-9; <https://www.questia.com/library/7512547/machiavelli-the-renaissance>; and Felix Gilbert, ed., *Niccolò Machiavelli's History of Florence and the Affairs of Italy: From the Earliest Times to the Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), for Machiavelli's *Florentine History* printed for the first time in 1532 simultaneously in Florence and in Rome; <http://online-pdf.co/machiavelli-and-guicciardini-politics-and-history-in-sixteenth-century-florence.html>

Florence and glorifying the Medici family for their cultural, political and military achievements.<sup>11</sup> In one of the main halls of the palace, the Salone dei Cinquecento, Vasari, with his assistants, visually records the historical war between Florence and Pisa, recalling a bitter war for Machiavelli, Florence and Siena.

The Salone dei Cinquecento (the Hall of the Five Hundred), originally called the Sala del Consiglio



Maggiore or Sala Grande, is built between 1495 and 1496. Its architect is Simone del Pollaiuolo, called “Cronaca,” who is assisted by Francesco di Domenico and Antonio da Sangallo. Under the guidance of the Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola, the hall was built to accommodate the supreme ruling body of 1500 members of the new Florentine Republic government. This established regime is ruled under the direction of Pietro Soderini, who aimed to prevent Medici’s political power and military governance. The Operai del Palazzo, the body that supervised construction and decoration, commissioned Leonardo and Michelangelo to represent two battle scenes where the Florentine demonstrated courage and alertness in warfare in 1503 and 1506.<sup>12</sup>

Both artists, however, never complete their commissions and their studies have ill fates. Leonardo portrays *The Battle of Anghiari* or *The Battle for the Standard*, which depicts Florence’s victory over a Milanese army in 1440 at Anghiari.<sup>13</sup> In 1603, Peter Paul Rubens composes a drawing supposedly based on Leonardo’s imagery. Leonardo composed several drawings for this battle.<sup>14</sup> Michelangelo illustrates *The Battle of Cascina*, which represents an episode of the war with Pisa in 1364 in which the Florentines are taken by surprise while bathing in the Arno. But they manage to defeat the Pisans despite their disadvantaged start. After this historical event, Aristotele da Sangallo (1481-1551) composed a study of bathers after Michelangelo’s design for the battle (presently this oil on panel is in the Collection of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall, North Norfolk, UK).

The present structure of the hall is the result of architectural and decorative changes made first by Baccio Bandinelli and Giuliano di Baccio d’Agnolo, and then by Giorgio Vasari and his assistants in the second half of the sixteenth century under the patronage of Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici.<sup>15</sup> Admiring the unfinished works of Leonardo, Vasari incorporates Leonardo’s composition of fighting horsemen and Michelangelo’s anatomical treatment of the soldiers’ bodies in his imagery of warfare.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>See Muccini, *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Palazzo Vecchio of Florence*, 88-123.

<sup>12</sup>See Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance*, 163-167, for an explanation of the history of these commissions and the circumstances of their failure. See also Jonathan Jones, *The Lost Battles: Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the Artistic Duel that Defined the Renaissance* (New York: Knopf, 2012), passim, for a crafty historical tale.

<sup>13</sup>In 1443, the Anghiari Master painted in a *cassone* (hope chest) another Florentine victory over Milan in 144. This *cassone* is in the National Gallery of Dublin, Ireland; see Fig. 200 in Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance*, 153.

<sup>14</sup>See Clair J. Fargo, ed., *Leonardo Da Vinci: Selected Scholarship: Leonardo’s Projects, c. 1500-1519* (New York: Garland Series, 1999), 39-127, for a discussion on the commission, location and technical matters on Leonardo’s battle.

<sup>15</sup>See Emanuela Ferretti, “Bartolomeo Ammanati, La Fontana della Sala Grande e le trasformazioni del Salone dei Cinquecento da Cosimo I a Ferdinando,” in *L’acqua, la pietra, il fuoco. Bartolomeo Ammannati scultore*. Exhibition catalog (Florence: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 12 May-18 September 2011), eds. B. Paolozzi Strozzi, D. Zikos, (Florence: Giunti, 2011), 37-43.

<sup>16</sup>See Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, ed. and trans. George Bull, 2 vols. (Baltimore, MD: Harmondsworth, 1965), II, 267, for Vasari praises Leonardo’s *Battle of Anghiari* for “the wonderful ideas he expressed in his interpretation of the battles.” It is impossible to conceive that Vasari painted over the few remaining fragments of Leonardo’s battle, a painter whom Vasari admired for creating the artistic criteria for the Renaissance. See Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists* online: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lives\\_of\\_the\\_Most\\_Excellent\\_Painters,\\_Sculptors,\\_and\\_Architects#Vers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lives_of_the_Most_Excellent_Painters,_Sculptors,_and_Architects#Vers)

Between 1565 and 1570, Vasari painted, with his assistants, in particular, with the aid of the drawings by Giovanni Battista Naldini (1537-1591), the left wall of the hall, three frescoes representing the war between Florence and Pisa (Figs. 1-3). The war lasts thirteen years (1496-1509) and ends with the Florentine conquest of Pisa.<sup>17</sup> The first episode represents the Florentine victory at Torre San Vincenzo, which took place on August 17, 1505. The Florentine cavalry, with their waving flags, burst from the forest and descend upon the fleeing Pisan troops. The second scene on the wall illustrates the episode where the Emperor Maximilian abandons the siege at Livorno in 1496. The emperor, an ally of the Pisans, is on horseback, dressed in full armor and bearing the commander's staff. He wears the symbol of the Order of the Golden Fleece around his neck, and his helmet bears the imperial two-headed eagle. Livorno's harbor is visible in the background of the scene. The Florentine banner with fleur-de-lis motif blows in the wind from one of its towers as a symbol of victory.

The third episode represents the siege and conquest of Pisa, which ended the war on June 8, 1509. The Florentine commander, Antonio Giacomini, appears at the extreme left of the painting dressed in a red and white checked tunic. His hat holds an unread message from the Signoria, which reaches him just as the battle began. After the Florentine assault and the victory which followed, Giacomini learns that the message contained orders him to retreat. Although he provided victory for the Florentine, his alleged disobedience forced him to withdraw from military life. In the fresco painting, the city of Pisa, surrounded by walls and divided by the Arno, is visible in the background of the fresco.

In the composition of the battle scenes, Vasari creates a continuous horizontal line binding together the three scenes on the walls, forming a compelling decorative unity and accentuating the monumentality of the cycle (Figs. 1-3). Employing a religious triptych format, he depicts two realms: a natural realm where the battles demonstrate the triumphs of the Florentines and of the Medicean military and political skills, and a metaphysical realm where the Medicean military struggles to defend the Florentine territory. Their courage and moral rectitude are rewarded under divine protection, similar to and alluding to the visual depictions of Christ's victory in resurrection triptychs.<sup>18</sup>

Vasari composes numerous drawings (*disegni*) for these battle scenes.<sup>19</sup> He succeeds in portraying a historical and topographical rendition of the warfare between Florence and Pisa and Florence and Siena, as well as a manual of information for military historians. For example, he depicts the visualization of military tactics, such as 1) representation of fortification and barricades to secure the city walls and to siege the enemy city, 2) a skillful placement of artillery and firearms in battle, the orchestration of the infantry and cavalry in the lines of defense, and 3) an active response to battle on the part of the army troops. In the vigor of the action, Vasari also illustrates the psychological preparation for going into battle, as trumpeters announce the military march and drummers with banners align themselves to energize the soldiers into combat. Stylistically, Vasari reveals his command of the fresco technique on a vast area and Mannerist ability to create a complex composition with an arrangement of large crowding of horsemen, horses, and military artillery, weaponry and camp formations. The accurate representation of contemporary weaponry (crossbow, pole axes, spears and halberds), plate armor, helmets and

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<sup>17</sup>The ceiling panels of the hall adjacent to this wall also contain representations of this war is excluded from the discussion in this essay. See Robert Williams, "The Sala Grande in the Palazzo Vecchio and the Precedence Controversy between Florence and Ferrara," in Jacks, ed., *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, 163-81, and See Ugo Muccini, *Il Salone dei Cinquecento in Palazzo Vecchio* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), 131-63, for illustrations of these images, 112-19. Vasari manifests his artist inventions as well as his mastery of warfare imagery, such as in *The Conquest of Cascina*, *The Conquest of Vico Pisano*, *The Battle of Barbagianni* (topographical depiction of the Campo Santo complex in the background), *The Assault on the Walls of Pisa* (most skillful representation of naval battle), *Antonio Giacomini Urging War Against Pisa*, and *The Victory of Florence over Pisa* (a similar composition to *The Universal Peace of 1546*, in the Palazzo della Cancelleria). In 1443, an anonymous painter depicts another Florentine victory over Pisa in 1406 in a *cassone*. This *cassone* is in the National Gallery of Dublin; see Fig. 199 in Hale, *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance*, 153.

<sup>18</sup>A coincidental association is with Vasari's religious triptych format and Machiavelli's name symbolism. When decoded Machiavelli's original name is *mali clavelli* (evil nails), an allusion to Christ's passion. See Capponi, *An Unlikely Prince*, 5, for an explanation of Machiavelli's coat of arms and family origin.

<sup>19</sup>See Florian Härb, *The Drawings of Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574)*. (Rome: Ugo Bozzi, 2015), pp. 458-76.

combat boots is contrapuntal with the depiction of classical figures, revealing their muscular torso, exaggerated *contrapposto* stances, twisting and turning their bodies devoid of physical gravity.

In the construction of the battle scene, Vasari creates a stage setting for the viewer to visualize the experience as being there. His aim is to objectively instruct the viewer about the art of warfare, tactics and adroitness in combat, and not the sorrows and lamentation of war. He achieves these theatrical effects by creating a composition in which horizontal and diagonal movements interplay, by presenting in the foreground of the picture plane, the most dramatic moment of the combat, by freezing the moment of combat with exaggerated human responses, by parroting in reverse their action by monumentalizing the figures, and by decorating the surface of the painting with Mannerist colors. In order to expand the overall composition, Vasari designs a middle ground with numerous figures of smaller but equal size, using similar tonality of coloration, contrasting with a foreground of crowded large figures, painted with dissonant colors. A sharp diagonal movement separates the background, where a large group of army troops and cavalry converge in the cityscape and seascape of the enemy city. In this last section of the painting, Vasari is visually descriptive of the warfare strategies by illustrating architectural fortifications, viewing towers, placement of firearms and gun powder supplies, and military formations.

Although Vasari represents soldiers in contemporary military attire with classical embellishment, he provides a historical record of the militia's *modus vivandi*. For example, in the painting *The War with Pisa (The Defeat of the Pisans at the Tower of San Vincenzo)*, the foreground contains a central scene where two large horsemen, a Florentine and Pisan, are engaged in hand-to-hand combat. On both sides of them, falling horsemen are either fighting or dead. This action takes place at the baseline of the painting, where the horizontal movement encroaches with a circular movement, created by the implied sword fight of the horsemen in the center of the composition. In the background of the scene, the Pisan soldiers are preparing for battle. In the middle ground, however, Vasari depicts three military activities: Florentine and Pisan's cavalries in combat and Florentine foot soldiers attacking the enemy, while others attend to the camp's maneuvers.

On the opposite wall of the battles of Florence against Pisa, Vasari depicts another series of successful military combats of Florence against Siena. He further manifests his virtuoso artistic skills by orchestrating the vicissitudes of warfare during the day and night time, unprecedented in the representation of battles scenes in the sixteenth century. Once again, Duke Cosimo I asks Vasari to represent the major events of the war of Florence against Siena in the Salone dei Cinquecento. The duke had proudly fought and won the battle in 14 months (February 1554-April 1555). The depiction of these battle scenes is in contrast to the episodes representing the wars against Pisa, which took the Florentine Republic 13 years to win.

The first battle with Siena portrays *The Battle at Marciano* in Val di Chiana. Ordered ranks of Florentine troops force the Sienese, led by the Florentine in exile, Piero Strozzi, to retreat. A hand-to-hand struggle occupies the foreground. The two men on the ground at the center recall Leonardo's lost painting of *The Battle of Anghiari*. The next episode illustrates *The Conquest of Porto Ercole*. Led by the Marchese of Marignano, on horseback, the Florentine troops advance while heavy artillery shell the enemy fortification. The last episode represented on the wall depicts *The Conquest of Siena*, which took effect on April 17, 1555. The assault takes place at night by torch and lamplight where the Florentines soldiers climb the walls and part of the army is entering Siena through Porta Camollia.<sup>20</sup> Vasari's night scene is one of the most ingenious depictions of battles in the Cinquecento.



Figure 4: Giovanni Battista Naldini, *Battle Scene*, 1555, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. (Photo credit: Liana De Girolami Cheney)

<sup>20</sup>For example, see *The Conquest of Monastero*, *Cosimo I Planning the War with Pisa*, *The Conquest of Casole*, *The Triumphal Return of the Florentine Forces after the Victory over Siena*, *The Conquest of Monteriggioni*, and *The Defeat of Piero Strozzi in Val di Chiana*.

Together with his close erudite friends, Cosimo Bartoli (1503-72), Vincenzo Borghini (1515-1580), Giovanni Battista Adriani (1511/13-1579), and Duke Cosimo I, Vasari composed the program of the battle cycles in the walls as well as in the ceiling of the Salone dei Cinquecento. He describes the decorative cycle of the Salone dei Cinquecento in detail in the hypothetical dialogue with Duke Cosimo I's son, Francesco I, contained in his *I Ragionamenti*.<sup>21</sup>

Vasari understanding of warfare may derive from his own experience in viewing battle scenes as evidence from his drawings of *Maximilian Abandons the Siege of Livorno*, at the Cabinet des Dessins at the Louvre, and *The Siege and Conquest of Pisa*, a watercolor at the Farnesina in Rome.<sup>22</sup> He also sends his assistants, in particular, Alessandro del Barbieri and Giovanni Battista Naldini, to produce accurate sketches and drawings of the battlegrounds in Tuscany (Figs. 4 and 5),<sup>23</sup> and record actual combat in order to correctly transpose the realism of these drawings in the decorative cycle of the paintings for the Salone dei Cinquecento as in the drawings of *Siege and Conquest of Pisa* and *Maximilian Abandons the Siege of Livorno*, both at the Gabinetto dei Disegni, Galleria degli Uffizi. With the guidance of his assistants, Vasari wishes to depict an alive and realistic military combat, *ritratta dal vero* (alive portrayal) while painting the decorative cycles in the Palazzo Vecchio.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 5: Giovanni Battista Naldini, *Battle Scene*, 1555, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. (Photo credit: Liana De Girolami Cheney)

In the same manner, Machiavelli draws from his chancery and military experience in writing about warfare. Machiavelli's political duties in the Florentine chancery provide him with limited practical military excellence, but his first official mission in 1498, governmentally involves him in the war with Pisa. In 1505, he is authorized to raise a body of militiamen from among the Florentine citizenry. His faith in a nonprofessional army was strengthened when his troops take Pisa in 1509. His militiamen, however, are no matches for the seasoned professional soldiers who attacked Florence in 1512 and restored the Medici to power. Ironically, many years after the death of Machiavelli, Florence becomes a duchy under the leadership of the Medici, first with Alessandro de' Medici in 1536 and then with Cosimo I Duke of Florence

<sup>21</sup>See Giorgio Vasari, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, ed. Gaetano, 9 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1970-79 reprint of 1875-95), VIII, *I Ragionamenti*, 123-29. Hereafter Vasari-Milanese. See also, Emilie Passignat, "I Ragionamenti di Giorgio Vasari: il manoscritto degli Uffizi e i due progetti editoriali," in *Giorgio Vasari La Casa, Le Carte, Il Teatro della Memoria*, eds. Silvia Baggio, Paola Benigni, and Diana Toccafondi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2015), 183-202.

<sup>22</sup>See Vasari-Milanese, *I Ragionamenti*, VIII, 220. Vasari acknowledges how demanding the task of an artist is in creating accurate history paintings and actual portraits (*ritrattare dal vero*). He says that an artist must study the past in order to interpret the present, as he prepares for the paintings of Palazzo Vecchio by "reading ancient and modern histories of the city and by searching out and studying works for documentary purposes."

<sup>23</sup>In the Gabinetto dei Disegni e Stampe in the Galleria degli Uffizi, there are two Naldini's battle drawings composed in black ink and red pencil on white paper (Inv 654 F; and Inv 652 F), see Mario Salmi, ed. *Studi Vasariani: Atti del convegno internazionale per il IV centenario della prima edizione dell' vite del Vasari* (Florence: G. S Sansoni, 1952), Figs. 13 and 14, and 284-85. See also Muccini, *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Palazzo Vecchio of Florence*, 120, and Muccini, *Il Salone dei Cinquecento in Palazzo Vecchio*, 134.

<sup>24</sup>See Vasari-Milanese, *I Ragionamenti*, 123-29; and Muccini, *Il Salone dei Cinquecento in Palazzo Vecchio*, 131-63; and Muccini, *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Palazzo Vecchio of Florence*, 88-116. Employing the terminology of *ritrarre* (portray), Vasari continues with the Florentine linguistic tradition. In *Purgatorio* (XII. 64-7), Dante states: "Qual di pannel fu maestro e di stile/che ritraesse l'ombre e' tratti ch'ivi/mirar fareno un ingegno sottile?" ("What master of the brush or stylus could portray the shadings and the outlines here?") See Simon A. Gilson, "Divine and Natural Artistry in the *Commedia*," in *Nature and Art in Dante*, eds. Daragh O'Connell and Jennifer Petrie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), 173. See also, the Quattrocento commentator of Dante's *Divine Commedia* (Florence 1481), Cristoforo Landino defines *ritrarre*: "diciamo ritrarre quando o el pittore o lo scultore rassempla alcuna cosa della propria similitudine in forma che nell'opera sua si conosca chome in sé medesimo" ("we call portray when a painter or a sculptor makes something of the same likeness so that the work can be identified as similar"), in Cristoforo Landino, *Commento sopra la Commedia*, ed. P. Procaccioli, 4 vols. (Rome: Salerno, 2001), I, 336. See Dante's *Divine Comedy*, <https://justcheckingonall.wordpress.com/2008/02/28/complete-dante-alighieris-divine-comedy-in-pdf-3-books/>

and Siena, who then establishes permanent residency in the Palazzo Vecchio, which was once the seat of the Florentine Republic.<sup>25</sup>

Vasari's design for the horizontal movement of the combat scene derives from Giulio Romano's *Battle of Constantine* (in turn, based on Raphael's drawings) of 1522-24, in the Sala of Constantine at the Vatican. The bloodshed and brutal hand-to-hand combat depicted in Romano's painting is contrasted with the lavish ornamental border that denotes a paradox between the triumph of victory and the reality of warfare or the creation of a tapestry or a painting. There are not actual records for this battle of 312, with the exception of a legendary recount in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* on the True Cross' saga. Romano interprets Eusebius' saga by fancifully portraying the glorification of Constantine's vision of the cross and guidance for defeating Maxentius at the Ponte Milvio. Subsequently, this historical victory permits Christians to practice their religion in the Roman Empire. Although Vasari praises Romano's inventive tapestry design and liveliness of action as "a guiding light for all who had to paint similar kinds of battle after him," he portrays warfare based on historical facts and recording contemporary militia in a triptych stage, alluding to hanging tapestries.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Romano, in the Salone dei Cinquecento, in employing a fictive tapestry design, in a triptych format, Vasari unifies the three battle scenes: in the background with the depiction of an extended high horizon line within the picture plane, and capturing a natural luminosity, transforming light effects from dawn to dusk. While in the middleground, he composes a congested space with a considerable gathering of military troupes and war mechanizations. And he completes his dramatic composition by portraying in the foreground the engagement of a combat. Employing a horizontal movement, Vasari depicts the action of the warfare in left and right large panels to converge toward a central small panel where the leadership for the engagement into war is originated.

## 2.0 Methodology

This study incorporated and benefited from the research of Peter Godman (1998); Ugo Muccini (1977); Pia Cuneo (2001); Henk Th. Van Veen (2006); Niccolò Capponi (2010); Robert Black (2013); and Florian Härb (2015). The approach to this study is art historical, employing the comparative method, which combines visual and stylistic observations with contextual cultural meanings or iconography. Giorgio Vasari's images of the battle scenes between Florence and Pisa and Florence and Siena for the Salone dei Cinquecento at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence are stylistically examined in terms of the cultural style of the sixteenth century (Cinquecento). This examination consists of two parts. The first part deals with an analysis of the visual elements such as design of the composition, treatment of the figures, treatment of the space, handling of the color and line. The stylistic examination also includes the analysis of the principles of design such as balance, proportions and unity in the overall composition. The depiction of the battle scenes is stylistically examined in relation to the sixteenth-century artistic convention. Comparisons are made with artists who previous depicted battle scenes such as Giulio Romano's *Battle of Constantine* at the Vatican, and with Vasari's assistants such as Giovanni Batista Naldini who drew actual events of battle scenes for the Vasarian commission of the Salone dei Cinquecento (The Hall of the 500).

The second part consists of an iconographical interpretation about the content or the meaning of the narrative story in the imagery. Vasari's paintings of the battle scenes are studied in reference to the Medicean patronage, and the Florentine cultural background of the Renaissance, including the available sources in art, literature and philosophy such as the study of antiquity, emblematic references and literary texts on war and peace, e.g., Niccolò Machiavelli's writings on the art of war and peace. This iconographical interpretation includes two considerations. One of the considerations deals with the

<sup>25</sup>See Black, *Nicolaus Machiavellus*, 30-70; Capponi, *An Unlikely Prince*, 105-28; and Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, 191-218

<sup>26</sup>For certain, Romano, and in particular Vasari, draw inferences from the battle scenes of Piero della Francesca's fresco cycle on the Legend of the True Cross in the Church of Saint Francis at Arezzo (Vasari's natal city), such as the horizontally stretched battle scene, the classical poses of the soldier, and the diabolic behavior of individuals in a war. See Jan L. de Jong, *The Power and the Glorification: Papal Pretensions and the Art of Propaganda in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn State University Press, 2013), passim, for a discussion on Romano's Sala di Costantino.



study about Vasari's undertaking the commission received from Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Florence, for the decoration of one of major halls in his palace, the Palazzo Vecchio.

The other iconographical consideration analyzes the meaning of the battle scene and the political significance of war as a sign of peace for the Duke of Tuscany; hence, the selection of the imagery for the battles is discussed in relation to the Florentine Renaissance cultural and literary milieu. The most important literary source of influence for Vasari's creation of the concept of warfare is Machiavelli's writing on the *Art of War*. A brief analysis of this text is compared with Vasari's visual imagery of battles. Machiavelli's concepts of honor and virtù for a ruler and a soldier are considered. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that art through visual imagery can convey the same meanings as literature and the combination of both fine arts assist in understanding the art of the battlefield in the Cinquecento; hence, both Vasari's and Machiavelli's quest is to please and aggrandize the Medici family.

### 3.0 Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Art of War*

Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Art of War (Dell'arte della Guerra)* of 1516, which is dedicated to Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, a Florentine patrician. The book consists of a theoretical discourse composed of a preface underlining the essential interdependence of political and military affairs in dialogue form. The succeeding sections of the dialogue address: 1) the problems of the citizen soldier, 2) arms and military training, 3) the role of artillery and the ideal army in battle, 4) advice to military leaders, 5) spoils, supplies, and tactics in hostile territory, 6) establishing camp, winter campaigns, strategy, and psychological warfare, and 7) the defense and siege of cities, rules for war, a portrait of the ideal general, and the hope for a rebirth of ancient military valor in Renaissance Italy. The ideas contained in this work on war and military life provide for an understanding of Machiavelli's most important concepts in political theory as well as the importance of the unity of politics and military science.<sup>27</sup>

*The Art of War* contains three fundamental statements which elucidate Machiavelli's concept of warfare. One account focuses on the relationship between virtù and Fortuna in a section of the second chapter in the book.<sup>28</sup> The other two sections derive from the seventh chapter, enumerating the qualities of the ideal military leader and calling for classical military skill in Renaissance Italy, through an imitation of ancient military institutions.<sup>29</sup> Since Roman times, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE), Roman humanist, lawyer, philosopher and statesman, couples the figure of Fortuna with the notion of virtù, a human manly energy or ability capable of confronting fortune's power. Virtù is considered the cultivation of courage, rational wisdom, master of passion, and selfless devotion either to private or public duty. During the Renaissance, Humanists embraced this concept as a manifestation of good rulers or *condottieri*, mercenary captains or captains of fortune.<sup>30</sup> Machiavelli, in particular, appropriates these notions in his writings, while Vasari visually captures this conceit in the depiction of the heroic battle scenes as well as in the portrayal of Duke Cosimo I as ruler and condottiere.<sup>31</sup>

Machiavelli's distrust of *condottieri* and mercenary armies and his belief in the ineffectiveness of artillery in a modern army led him to commit serious tactical blunders and to ignore the actual developments evident in the armies. His dislike of mercenary troops was motivated more by his humanistic

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<sup>27</sup>See Bondanella and Musa, ed., and trans. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, viii; and Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, 8-9.

<sup>28</sup>See Klaus Heitman, *Fortuna und Virtus: eine Studie zu Petrarca's Lebensweisheit* (Köln: Boehlau, 1958), 18-19; Hanna Finchel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 138-69; and Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 311-17; for a discussion on virtù and Fortuna, Anthony J. Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 63-85 on Fortuna and 86-101 on virtù.

<sup>29</sup>*The Art of War* was published in 1521. It was translated into French in 1546, English in 1566 and 1573, Spanish in 1536 and 1541, and German in 1623, and read widely throughout the nineteenth century.

<sup>30</sup>See Joseph Jay Deiss, *Captains of Fortune* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1967), 27-30, for a discussion of Machiavelli's criticism of the mercenary captains and their inability to defend any state in Italy.

<sup>31</sup>See Howard R. Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), 13.

preoccupation with the concept of civic virtue (Roman *virtù*),<sup>32</sup> which was fostered by a citizen militia rather than by a reasoned and dispassionate study of the actual military institutions of his day.<sup>33</sup> For Machiavelli, *virtù* “is a talented will power in great political affairs, the stuff of leadership and success.”<sup>34</sup> *Virtù* is associated with two conceits: moral goodness, an individual body or soldier fitness, and civic humanism, an individual spirit or soldier’s *esprit de corps*. For Machiavelli, moral goodness must be inborn in a soldier for warfare to triumph, while moral virtue is associated with patriotism, this blend manifests civic humanism,<sup>35</sup> hence, an appetite for personal and public glory.

Machiavelli also connects *virtù* with chance or *Fortuna*, the personification of Luck in Roman religion, which “is the sum of forces lying beyond *virtù*—forces hostile, neutral or helpful, but always changing.”<sup>36</sup> Hence, for him, virtue triumphs over fortune by adjusting through circumstances and over time. In the *I Ragionamenti*, Vasari associates *virtù* with a Mercurial aspect of *Fortuna* to be emulated by all princes “who ought to know, understand, love and delight themselves in, and for all the arts and fine inventions as does the Duke Cosimo I.”<sup>37</sup> In the *Salone dei Cinquecento*, Vasari visually captures *virtù* in the depiction of the soldiers’ military attire, movements and postures, and the *esprit de corps* in the manifestation of the soldiers’ actions and participations and construction of battlefields.

Paradoxically, Machiavelli highly praised the brilliant *condottiere*, Giovanni delle Bande Nere (John of the Black Bands, 1489-1526), and Florentine army commander for the Medici, for his bravery, fieriness and audaciousness.<sup>38</sup> In *Nicolaus Machiavellus: Historiarum Scriptor*, Robert Black presents a different view. He focuses on the protagonists in the dialogue in *The Art of War*, who are the *condottiere*, Fabrizio Colonna (1450-1520), and the Florentine nobleman, Cosimo Rucellai (1490s), a close friend of Machiavelli who died at a young age. In the dialogue format of the Roman historians, Titus Livius (Livy 59 BCE-17 CE) and Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE), Machiavelli says that he composed *The Art of War* in Bernardo Rucellai’s gardens, where members of the Accademia Platonica gathered in its early formation.<sup>39</sup>

Machiavelli’s evaluation of military science in Renaissance Italy is colored by ideological concerns and political preferences. His empirical observations are often distorted by the ideas he discovers in the classical treatises on warfare and military leaders, such as Fluvius Vegetius Renuatus, *Rei Militaris* of fourth century and Sextus Iulius Frontinus, *Strategemata* of late first century.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in art Giorgio Vasari

<sup>32</sup> See Anglo, *Machiavelli*, 124, quoting Machiavelli. “Because in commonwealths for the most part *virtù* is honored, in kingdoms it is feared; whereby growth that in the one virtuous men are nourished, in the other they are extinct.” See also Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 208-10, for an analysis of the concept of *virtù* in Machiavelli’s *The Art of War*, and Capponi, *An Unlikely Prince*, 125-28, on Roman civic virtue and militia.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the armies of Cesare Borgia, which Machiavelli praises, were composed not of the duke’s own subjects, as he imagined, but of professional mercenaries. Moreover, the bloodless battles he describes with contempt in several of his works and which he attributes to these mercenary troops were not, in fact, as bloodless as he imagined. See Anglo, *Machiavelli*, 116-42.

<sup>34</sup> See Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 311.

<sup>35</sup> See Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 197.

<sup>36</sup> See Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 311, and Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 47-52.

<sup>37</sup> See Vasari-Milanesi, *I Ragionamenti*, 199.

<sup>38</sup> See Deiss, *Captains of Fortune*, 245-87, on Giovanni de’ Medici (1489-1526) or Giovanni delle Bande Nere. “In 1526, while visiting the Black Bands troops in Milan, Machiavelli writes to the Giovanni de Medici in Florence, “Giovanni delle Bande Nere is all strength and bravery. In this camp, he is feared by friends and enemies alike.” Out of admiration, a friendship develops between the two men, having extensive conversation on the renowned book, *The Art of War*. One day Giovanni delle Bande Nere, wanting to be humorous and to demonstrate the gap between warfare practice and theory, allows Machiavelli, the sedentary soldier, to drill 3,000 soldiers under the broiling July sun in Milan. After two hours, Machiavelli has only succeeded in creating a chaotic spectacle, unable to impose his own advice in the field. With only the sound of a drum and the force of his personality, the *condottiere* restores military order. Machiavelli is more than pleased that his hero has saved him from further embarrassment. See Deiss, *Captains of Fortune*, 243.

<sup>39</sup> See Black, *Nicolaus Machiavellus*, 214-15, citing Machiavelli.

<sup>40</sup> See Anglo, *Machiavelli*, 118; and Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance*, 31-179, for a discussion on the impact of classical writings in Florentine humanism and Machiavelli’s writings. See also Maurizio Viroli,

seeks inspiration in the battle scenes represented in monuments, relief sculpture and paintings by ancient, Renaissance and contemporary artists, for example: 1) in ancient Roman architecture and sculpture such as the Column of Trajan, the Column of Marcus Aurelius, the Arch of Constantine, and Roman sarcophagi with battle scenes, and 2) in Renaissance and Mannerist painted cycles by Paolo Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* of 1435-50, at the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Pietro della Francesca's *Battle of Constantine* and *The Victory of Heraclius over Chosroes* of 1460 in Church of San Francesco in Arezzo, and Giulio Romano's *Battle of Constantine* of 1523-24 in Sala di Costantino at the Vatican.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Under the influence of the Humanist tradition, Vasari, too, personifies excellence in military warfare. The *condottiere* in Vasari's painting does not depend on the whimsicality of Fortuna, but rather on his military training and skills to lead his army forces to victory. Instead of Fortune, Vasari employs Mercury, the god of cunning and intellectual astuteness, to assist the soldier to win the war.

Ideally, the end of warfare results in the destruction of evil and the restoration of peace, justice and harmony, on the cosmic, social and spiritual planes. War is the defensive manifesting of life itself.<sup>41</sup> The opposite of war is peace. Warlike enthusiasm is expressed symbolically as rage, heat and fire. Peace extinguishes the fire. In warfare, the enemy, the sacrificial victim, is pacified by death. The true conqueror is the person who possesses peace of mind. The sixteenth-century artist, in particular, Vasari, responds to these notions of war and peace in depicting decorative cycles on pageantry,<sup>42</sup> battles as well as in the portrayal of his leaders as Cosimo I de' Medici and Alessandro de' Medici.<sup>43</sup>

It is not clear whether Vasari read all Machiavelli's writings. His Medici patronage and humanistic circle, however, indicate that he had knowledge of Machiavelli's military and political ideas, in particular his concept of Fortune.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, in *I Ragionamenti*, Vasari stresses that in painting "everything must have meaning (*tutto ha da aver significato*),"<sup>45</sup> as well as the importance of consulting Florentine historical sources.<sup>46</sup> Thus Vasari, like Machiavelli, composes a paradoxical Medicean symbol of glory and the Medicean appetite for this glory, where the artistry of warfare is glorified for the sake of peace and good government, where an absolute ruler, Duke Cosimo I, is praised for his *virtù*, and where dynastic government is celebrated as an attribute of a flourishing city, Florence. Machiavelli and Vasari both

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*Redeeming The Prince: The Meaning of Machiavelli's Masterpiece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3, 111 and 115, for a discussion on the importance of Livy in Machiavelli's *The Art of War*.

<sup>41</sup>See Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1994), 1078.

<sup>42</sup>See Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450-1650* (London: The Boydell Press, 1984), 82-85, for a discussion of pageantry and politics. In 1535, Duke Alessandro de' Medici commissions Vasari to embellish lavishly the city of Florence with apparati and triumphal arches for the arrival of Emperor Charles V.

<sup>43</sup>See Laura Corti, *Vasari: Catalogo completo dei dipinti* (Florence: Cantini, 1989), 15; and M. Campbell, "Il Ritratto del Duca Alessandro de' Medici di Giorgio Vasari," in *Studi* (1981), 339-59.

<sup>44</sup>See van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici*, 68, where he notes the influence of Machiavelli's writings, in particular, *The Prince*, on Jacopo Nardi's biography of 1548 on the condottiere Giacomini. Vasari depicts the valor Giacomini in the salone. See also Heitman, *Fortuna und Virtus: eine Studie zu Petracas Lebensweisheit*, 18-19; and Hanna Finchel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*, 138-69.

<sup>45</sup>See Vasari-Milanesi, *I Ragionamenti*, VIII, 220, "Io mi preparava per l'invenzione di questa sala nel leggere le storie antiche e modern di questa città" ("I was preparing for the invention of this hall in reading ancient and modern histories of this city"). Vasari's manner of composing images for a program as a compendium of visual iconography parallels and derives from the literary practices of Andrea Alciato, Vincenzo Borghini, Annibale Caro, Vincenzo Cartari, Francesco Colonna, and Pierio Valeriano. Vasari is particularly influenced by the writings of Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo delle imprese militare et amoroze* (Lyons: Guillaume Rouille, 1557).

<sup>46</sup>See Vasari-Milanesi, VIII, 199, where Vasari mentions the chronicler, Giovanni Villani (1280-1348, *New Chronicles*), and the historian, Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540, *History of Florence*), for the *invenzione* in the history paintings of the salone. See also Gilbert, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini*, 105-37, for the influence of Guicciardini on Machiavelli's historical writings.

manifest in their writings and artistic endeavors the Florentine civic humanism of honor and gain (*honore et utile*), which was “highly prized and craved by every Florentine,” and most of all by the Medici.<sup>47</sup>

In the fresco paintings of the Salone dei Cinquecento, Vasari, as an artistic political *impresario*, employs the visual arts to project the political power of the Medici court, in particular, Cosimo I. In each wall of the salone, the imposing and monumental frescos are transformed into a triptych design of hanging tapestries and banners of victory. The narrative scenes are of victorious battles demonstrating the mastery of warfare by Florentine military leaders and army soldiers. Although the moral conceit is a Machiavellian justification of warfare for the sake of peace, Vasari theatrically promotes the Medicean superiority in military training, strategic tactics, and organized militia. The embellished military attire for the soldiers and accrements for the horses imply a stage for a joust or tournament rather than a mortal battle. Like Machiavelli, Vasari’s goal is to compose a series of epic vignettes in a heroic history painting, which allude to Florentine civic humanism.<sup>48</sup> In this quest, Vasari is paralleling the festive and peaceful pageantry of the Magi’s procession (*Journey of the Magi to Bethlehem* of 1459-1461) by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Medici Chapel at Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence. Gozzoli honors the diplomatic skills of the Medici in bringing reconciliation between the Christian and the Byzantine churches at the Council of Florence of 1453, while Vasari glorifies the cunning of a Medici ruler, Cosimo I, in warring against Pisa and Siena, a personal and historical political triumph for the Medici family and Florence.

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<sup>47</sup>See Capponi, *An Unlikely Prince*, 7, and Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 6-52.

<sup>48</sup>See Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini: pensiero politico e storiografia a Firenze nel Cinquecento* (Turin: Einaudi 2012, from the translation of *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 136, for a discussion on how Machiavelli views any political action as being part of a historical web.

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