

## Giovanni Ricci

### The collector who coveted Chiusi's "antiquities"

Giovanni Ricci was born in 1497 in Chiusi, where Pierantonio di Montepulciano and his Sieneese wife Marietta "had taken refuge to escape the plague and war." Coming from an affluent family, his father provided him with teachings in bookkeeping to make him "a man particularly skilled in financial matters of the Ecclesiastical State." Well-received in Rome by Alessandro Farnese and Anton Maria Ciocchi Del Monte, in 1515, he entered the service of the latter (aiding the steward Ascanio Parisani), to whom he acknowledged having "given him bread and existence for twenty years."

After Parisani became the general treasurer and steward of Paul III, Ricci assisted him as a bookkeeper. Under Clement VII, he was appointed secretary of the Monte della Fede in 1532, obtained the parish of San Vincenzo (diocese of Chiusi) in 1525, and the archpriesthood of the collegiate church of Santa Maria Assunta in Montepulciano in 1533. These benefits led him to entrust Baldassarre Peruzzi with the construction of the palace in Montepulciano.

Paolo III considered him a "capable person, for the speed with which he is accustomed to go and return," making him "constantly run post" with administrative and diplomatic tasks, from organizing supplies for the papal army to frequent trips to Naples and the Marches. In 1537, Ricci joined the service of the Apostolic Camera, then, for 20,000 ducats, he acquired a benefice in 1542. His missions in search of peace between France and Spain intensified, albeit without results. Giovanni Ricci became the bishop of Manfredonia (1544-1545) and Chiusi (1545-1554), despite being a nuncio and collector in Portugal, from where he only departed in 1550, leaving "the office unburdened of everything, having, by the grace of God, brought an end to all tedious affairs." He was created a cardinal with the title of San Vitale (1551) by Pope Julius III, who said that "in his palace and house, no one should be superior to him, and that his doors should never be closed to speak to him."

Several times close to the papacy with the consent of Philip II and the support of Cosimo I, being a person "who has no enemies and is kept plain and sweet," in 1565, he obtained thirty votes in the conclave out of the necessary thirty-four. Among the opposers was Cardinal Borromeo, who considered him unworthy due to a son he had with a Portuguese woman. This behavior did not prevent him from enjoying the trust of the stern Pius V, the new pope. From 1568, and at least until 1571, he served as the cardinal inquisitor and, in the anti-Turkish League, was tasked with "finding money" to arm the papal galleys. As a reward for his services, Pius V, who had issued a license to excavate on his behalf in 1569, gifted him archaeological artifacts. In the conclave that elected Gregory XIII (1572), Ricci was still hindered by Carlo Borromeo. However, he has gone down in history for prestigious residences and collections of art and antiquities, sparing no effort to procure furnishings and services from talented artists for the powerful. He surrounded himself with literati such as Giacomo Marmitta (his secretary), Giovanni Della Casa, Pietro Aretino, Paolo Manuzio, and had Filippo Neri as his spiritual guide.

Giovanni Lippi managed his apartment and the papal one in the palace of the Prefecture of the Pontifical Household. He designed the current Villa Medici on the Pincio, which, after his death in 1568, his son Annibale oversaw the works. Giovanni and Annibale likely worked on the former residence of Antonio Sangallo the Younger on Via Giulia, which, along with other adjacent properties, was transformed into the luxurious Ricci palace (owned by the Sacchetti family since 1649).

Even greater notoriety came from his collections: around a hundred portraits of illustrious men, including two by Hieronymus Bosch, numerous antiquities, tables of inlaid marble, porcelain, animals (especially parrots), plants (including rare essences cultivated in the villa on the Pincio), and exotic objects he had

discovered in Portugal. He was skilled at securing pieces that interested him and profiting from the sale of the rest.

There is suspicion regarding the artifacts that had left Chiusi during that period. The Sienese physician Giacomo Gori wrote: "There are not many antiquities at present because, in the ruins that were made of this City, the majority were taken to Rome and other places, and some remained underground, of which some are still found, and not long ago, certain marble statues were found, which were sent to Siena, and a bronze statuette of about half a cubit, which was sent to the Most Serene Grand Duke of Tuscany. There are currently some ancient baths in the Fortress, and some are in the Garden formerly owned by Cavalier Deifebo Dei."

Testimonies of the city were restored by the areas affected by the fortifications during the war in Siena: those adjacent to the city walls and along the firing lines of the fortress, as well as the extensive vacant areas that were previously occupied by vineyards, gardens, and squares, whereas before they were occupied by palaces and houses "which were vacated by the French in the year 1554" for military reasons (Forts, Fortress, The Golini and episcopal gardens, the locations Violella, Santissima Annunziata, and Santi Lazzaro, Badiola, Giovancorso, as also evidenced by a drawing by Peruzzi. Ruins of buildings emerged, along with marbles related to floors, coverings, and furnishings, decorative and structural elements (including columns), in a period when Giovanni Ricci did not yet have the privilege of being involved in excavations in Rome, nor the subsequent opportunities arising from the role of pontifical commissioner for roads, ports, rivers, and sources. Interestingly, a few days after the election of Paolo IV Carafa (of whom the cardinal of Montepulciano had been the most influential opponent in the conclave), the Apostolic Camera granted "Monsignor Flaminio Filiuccio, bishop of Chiusi," the freshly appointed successor of Ricci, the license to excavate "circum circa vineam quam habet in monte Aventino."

Giovanni Ricci may have taken advantage of his episcopate in Chiusi to satisfy personal needs, but he did not neglect the economic needs of a diocese extending into the Val di Chiana in Siena and that controlled by Florence, such as in the territory of Asciano della Corgna, nephew of Pope Julius III, future marquis of Castiglione, Chiugi, and Castel della Pieve (later becoming Città della Pieve along with the diocese, born as a offshoot of the Chiusi diocese). Montepulciano, under the Medici, made a significant leap from "land" to "city": it transitioned from the prebend of the Arezzo diocese to the abbatial title added to the collegiate; then the promotion to prelature nullius diocesis, directly subject to the Holy See. Other privileges followed until, thanks to the pressures of Cosimo I and Ricci himself, in 1561 Pius IV established the diocese, taking eleven parishes from Chiusi and eight from Arezzo. Ricci served as apostolic administrator there (1561–1562) before becoming, from 1567 until the day of his death, Archbishop of Pisa, where he founded a college for students from his hometown. Montepulciano granted his heirs tax exemption and the right to participate in council meetings.