

Paula Hohti Erichsen

# Artisans, Objects, and Everyday Life in Renaissance Italy

## The Material Culture of the Middling Class

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*The Material Culture of the Middling Class*

*Paula Hohti Erichsen*

Amsterdam University Press



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For my daughter, Venla



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# Acknowledgments

This book began many years ago at the University of Sussex as part of the *Material Renaissance* project, with a desire to investigate a group that was almost always overlooked in studies of the Renaissance, the ‘middling sort’ in Italian cities. The opportunity to work in close collaboration at this early stage of my career with some of the most accomplished material culture historians of the Renaissance was a truly unique learning experience. I feel privileged having been supervised and guided by so many great minds during this project. I am eternally grateful to my PhD supervisor, Professor Evelyn Welch, who has been my teacher, mentor and source of inspiration for over 20 years; and to the other members of the *Material Renaissance* project, in particular Patricia Allerston, Rupert Shepherd, Michelle O’Malley, Suzanne Butters, Mary Hollingsworth, Luca Molà, Valerie Taylor, Steve Wharton, Elizabeth Currie, Ann Matchette and Anna Melograni; and for the external examiners of my PhD thesis, Maurice Howard and Jacqueline Musacchio. Their encouraging attitude, constructive feedback and dedication to rigorous research have provided me with a great model and the best possible framework within which to grow as a researcher and develop my work in this book.

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What a journey this has been! During all these years I have got to know the Sieneese artisans and shopkeepers that are the subject of this book well, and have developed emotional bonds with many of them. Their life stories – frequently burdened by hardship and misfortunes – have often touched me. One of the most memorable moments was when I found the will of one of my booksellers, Bernardino di Matteo. He had suddenly fallen ill and drafted his last testament in a hurry, leaving his wife not only her dowry but also an extra 50 florins ‘in case she would remarry’. The care and goodness expressed by this modest bookseller towards his wife on the pages of his will truly touched me. I have often walked down the streets of Siena imagining what it might have been like for the bookseller and his fellow artisans to live in these humble neighbourhoods in this period and whether Renaissance culture mattered in these rundown streets at the edges of the urban Sieneese landscape. This book closes one chapter of my research. Thank you, and so long, Bernardino di Matteo, shoemaker Girolamo, innkeeper Marchione, tailor Pietro and my other friends; it has been a privilege to go through this journey with you. I bet none of you would have ever believed you would make it into the history books!

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# Notes on Money, Dates and Measures

## Money

During the medieval and early modern age, there were two different ways of expressing monetary value. The first was the money of account, mainly used in account books, inventories and merchant documents. The ratio between different coins of account was fixed. The *lira* contained 20 *soldi*, each worth 12 *denari*. Where values were given in inventories and account books in *lire*, *soldi* and *denari*, they were almost always recorded in money of account (*lire di conto*).

The second form was the much more volatile and changing gold and silver currencies themselves. Siena's own mint, the Bulgano, issued a number of coins, including gold florins and its equivalents, the ducat, and, from 1530 onwards, the *scudo*; as well as various coins in silver, billon or copper, such as the silver *grossi* and the small, low-value billon *quattrini*. The value of the gold florin depended on the daily rate of exchange, set by the Merchants' Court, the Mercanzia, in Siena, translating at approximately 7 silver *lire*. The value of the ducat and *scudo* were equivalent value to the florin.<sup>1</sup> Prices on the daily markets were quoted in silver currency (*lire di piccioli*).

In the text, payments or values in *lira* and *soldi* refer to money of account (*lire di conto*), unless otherwise stated.

For further information on Sienese money, see B.P. Strozzi, G. Toderi, and F.V. Toderi, *Le monete della repubblica senese* (Siena, 1992), and the discussion in Chapter 4.

Further reading on money and currency:

Borlandi, Franco (ed.), *El libro di mercatantie et usanze de' paesi*. Turin: Lattes, 1936.

Martini, Angelo, *Manuale di metrologia, ossia misure, pesi e monte in uso attualmente e anticamente presso tutti i popoli*. Turin: Loescher, 1883.

Spufford, Peter. *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Spufford, Peter, Wendy Wilkinson, and Sarah Tolley. *Handbook of Medieval Exchange*. London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1986.

## Dates

The Sienese year began on the Feast of the Annunciation, on 25 March. This meant that documents and events recorded between 1 January and 24 March carry the date of the previous year. The modern dates are used in the text, while both the original and modern dates are noted in the references.

## Unit of measurement

The *braccio* is unit of measurement used to describe the width or the length of textiles and furniture, literally referring to an 'arm's length'. In England, it was called an ell. The measures for the *braccio* in Italy were slightly different from that of the ell, and there were small differences even between different Italian regions. In Siena, one *braccio* was 60.1 cm.

<sup>1</sup> A document dated 15 June 1507, for example, stated a value of 6,837 *lire* for one *ducato*, see Milanesi, *Documenti*, III, p. 45. See also CDP 733, no. 240, 1550, 5r ('Lire 7 per ducato'). The value of the *scudo* varied in Siena in the first half of the sixteenth century between 7 and 7.5 *lire*. See examples in CDP 695, no. 29, 1536, 1v ('2 scudi = *lira* quattordici *soldi* 16); CDP 699, no. 6, 1537 ('*Estimata scudi* 15 cioè *Lira* 105'); (CDP 733, no. 240, 1550, 5r ('*Scudi* cinquanta d'argento di moneta di *Lira* 7 per ducato'); CDP 725, no. 81, 1547, 2v ('Una piastra d'argento valuta di uno scudo cioè lire 7').

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# Introduction

In a collection of poems published in 1582, the Bolognese blacksmith and writer Giulio Cesare Croce described in detail a richly furnished country residence near Bologna which belonged to the wealthy nobleman Monsignor Giovanni Battista Campeggi. Croce related that as he walked through the numerous bedrooms and halls, he was stupefied by the splendour around him, marvelling at the ‘astonishing’ and ‘precious’ artworks and furnishings. The sheer quantity of material objects contained in the villa is indicated by the fact that Croce’s description runs to 70 pages. They included paintings, linens, richly ornamented bedsteads and testers, silk-trimmed chairs, and various credenzas on which were displayed long, fine linen tablecloths, large silver basins blazoned with their owner’s arms, bronze vessels, cups, salt cellars and boxes, many different types of knives, spoons made of gold and silver, and plates arranged in triple rows.<sup>1</sup>

Croce’s poem is notable not only for the number of objects it describes but also for its focus on the household’s furnishings. The majority of the blacksmith’s observations are dedicated not to artworks and their makers but to describing beds, bedding, benches, ceramic vases, glassware, leather hangings, table carpets, white linen tablecloths, and similar goods.<sup>2</sup> Although we cannot be sure whether Croce ever actually saw Campeggi’s villa, his account offers important evidence of the central place that all kinds of material goods – from wall fountains to house furnishings – occupied in the Renaissance.

Giulio Cesare Croce lived in a world which was characterized by the increasing production and growing variety of material goods. In Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, the market for furniture and furnishings offered a plethora of domestically produced and imported wares that responded to different needs and tastes, ranging from commonplace tin and clay candle stands and drinking cups to elegant wares, such as glass vases, mirrors, painted or gilt ornaments, and tapestries decorated with classical motifs.<sup>3</sup> Contemporaries expressed amazement at the unprecedented abundance and quality of goods available in urban markets. Visiting Venice on his way to the Holy Land in 1494, the Milanese cleric Pietro Casola noted that:

Something may be said about the quantity of merchandise in the said city. [...] I was taken to see various warehouses, beginning with that of the Germans – which it appears to me would suffice alone to supply all Italy with the goods that come and go. [...] And who could count the many shops so well furnished that they also



1. Attributed to Michele Damaskinòs, *Marriage Feast at Cana*, 1560–1570. Painting, 85 x 118 cm. Museo Correr, Venice.

seem warehouses, with so many cloths of every make – tapestry, brocades and hangings of every design, carpets of every sort, camlets of every colour and texture, silks of every kind [...] and so many warehouses full of spices, groceries and drugs. [...] These things stupefy the beholder, and cannot be fully described to those who have not seen them.<sup>4</sup>

Goods flowed from merchants' warehouses to shops and markets, and from there to the palaces and residences of private citizens. The economic historian Richard Goldthwaite has demonstrated how domestic goods multiplied in this period. For example, the number of dishes acquired by high-ranking wealthy Italians for an extravagant meal, such as the Medici or the Este families, grew from a service of about 50 plates, two bowls, and four pitchers in the mid-fifteenth century, to over 600 pieces in the late sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Such material wealth, and aesthetic appreciation of it, is also visible in contemporary visual imagery. For example, a sixteenth-century Venetian painting of a fictional wedding, attributed originally to Michele Damaskinos, prominently displays many of the types of items that we encountered in Croce's poem, such as ceramic plates, glass jugs, brass basins, tablecloths, cutlery, and a credenza (Illustration 1).<sup>6</sup>

This world of goods and new consumption practices, driven by a fascination with novelty in dialogue with classical traditions and manifested through a wealth of objects, offered new possibilities for Italians to demonstrate their taste, power,

wealth, and influential connections.<sup>7</sup> But was this culture limited to the wealthy elites, or could men and women lower down the social scale – figures like Giulio Cesare Croce and his fellow artisans such as tailors, bakers, barbers, shoemakers, and butchers – also participate in the market for luxury goods and novelties and engage in Renaissance culture? Or was their role only to make, sell, look, admire, and wonder at the beautiful and opulent possessions of their rich contemporaries?

## Lower Social Groups and Renaissance Culture

In theory, someone like the blacksmith Giulio Cesare Croce should have been content to admire his superiors' possessions rather than attempting to emulate them. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century moralists and other writers on manners and education insisted that one's home, household decorations and clothes should all be commensurate with one's given status. It was unacceptable, they agreed, for commoners either to own or display such expensive furnishings such as silk hangings and silver plates, or to wear the sumptuous clothes that were reserved for the nobility. The Veronese scholar Silvio Antoniano made the point clear in the sixteenth century in his *Tre libri dell'educatione christiana dei figliuoli* (Three books on the Christian education of children, 1584), arguing that it would be entirely inappropriate for lower-ranking figures such as Croce to possess similar material and cultural items to his social superiors: 'That the small artisan would wish to be equal to the citizen, the citizen to the gentleman, the gentleman to the titled lord, and the latter to the prince; these are things intolerable and beyond reason, akin, I say, to thefts and robberies.'<sup>8</sup>

At the heart of Antoniano's statement was the late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century idea that material goods carried symbolic signs that pointed to the status of the individual or the family and defined one's place within the society. Houses and elaborate family possessions, from chests and sculptures to textile decorations and silverware, embodied the family's honour, status, and pride, and contributed to creating a sense of hierarchy among those individuals, groups, and communities that owned, used and saw them.<sup>9</sup> To encourage the appropriate decorum that Antoniano desired, city-states and towns across Italy issued sumptuary laws that placed clear restrictions upon the ownership and display of fine furnishings and fine garments.<sup>10</sup> In Siena, for example, legislation passed in the fifteenth century made it an offence for those with a taxable wealth below 500 *lire* to wear expensive clothing or display silk hangings in their homes. In 1548 new laws reiterated that individuals outside the governing class, including artisans, shopkeepers, and workmen, could not wear silk garments or velvet caps, shoes, and hose, or they would face a penalty of a substantial sum of 25 gold florins.<sup>11</sup>

Yet contemporary evidence, including prosecutions for the breaking of sumptuary laws, indicates that the ownership of a broad range of domestic goods, including novelties and luxuries that made the home comfortable and elegant, did spread across social classes. Preaching in Siena's Piazza del Campo in 1427, the fifteenth-century preacher Bernardino of Siena implied that almost everyone in the city was in possession of luxuries, a state of affairs he condemned: 'How can one describe the luxuries which one may often find not only in the palaces of the great but in the houses of the common citizens? Consider the size and softness of the beds: there you will find silken and linen sheets, with borders of fine gold embroidery, precious coverlets [...] painted and provocative of lust, and gilded and painted curtains.'<sup>12</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed elsewhere in Italy. In Venice, eulogist Francesco Sansovino claimed that luxuries and inessentials were dispersed across social classes, including the 'middling' and 'lesser sorts' of Venetians, 'because there is no one with a furnished abode so poor who does not have walnut chests and bedsteads, green woollen wall hangings, rugs, pewter and copper vessels, gold chains, silver forks, and rings, such is the constitution of this city'.<sup>13</sup>

Although both Bernardino of Siena and Sansovino may have exaggerated the extent of the ownership and dispersal of luxury goods to make their point about appropriate social and moral order, archival sources provide important evidence to support their rhetorical flourishes.<sup>14</sup> Documents recording household possessions suggest that notable quantities of expensive clothing, jewellery, and furniture were bought and used by ordinary artisans and shopkeepers, as well as by the wealthy elites, reinforcing the idea that a sense of comfort was shared across social divides. For example, the shoemaker Girolamo di Domenico, a resident in the modest Sienese neighbourhood of San Salvatore, who died in 1547, lived in an apartment comprising two bedrooms, a hall, and a kitchen. Not only was it furnished with two elaborate bedsteads, eight chests of different shapes and sizes, and a gilded painting of the Virgin, but its hall also contained a credenza, which was placed near an elaborate, framed textile hanging measuring 6 *braccia* (3.66 m) which displayed the coat of arms of his family. He had further enhanced the effect of comfort and modest prosperity by placing an ornamental tablecloth, a 'beautiful, decorated basin', and brass candlesticks on the credenza, and putting a set of steps or shelves above it. This allowed him to display further items – such as his brass ewer, a large metal plate, drinking glasses and painted terracotta jugs – that he may normally have kept stored in the cupboard below.<sup>15</sup>

Similar evidence of material comfort and cultured lifestyle can also be found elsewhere in Tuscany and in Venice. A moderately well-off Venetian woodcarver known as Andrea, originally from Faenza, owned several objects that are usually associated solely with Renaissance elites, such as marbled chests, knives and forks of silver, white maiolica ware, a writing desk, musical instruments, and several books, including Alberti's treatise on architecture.<sup>16</sup> The enjoyment that men and women of the



2. Vincenzo Campi, *St. Martin's Day*, also known as *Trasloco* ('Moving Home'), post 1572. Painting, 227 x 163 cm. Museo Civico Ala Ponzoni, Cremona.

artisan class took in their possessions is clearly expressed by the Venetian jeweller and poet Alessandro Caravia, who described a character deriving 'no other pleasure in this life, except from spending and bestowing gifts with cheer'.<sup>17</sup>

Although the size, style, and contents of homes varied greatly, all kinds of desirable material goods, including luxury objects, could be found in the chests and wardrobes of even the poorest artisans and peasants. Expensive fur cloaks were passed among workers in the Venetian Arsenal as part of their daughters' dowries, while fine items such as silk handkerchiefs and strings of pearls formed part of the inheritance of both urban rural ordinary families all over Tuscany.<sup>18</sup> In Siena, for example, a modest mid-fifteenth-century peasant farmer called Benedetto bought a belt, silver and gold buckles, and a pair of costly red stockings in instalments, and commissioned a local carpenter to make him a bedstead and a chest decorated with inlay, to store his linen and clothing, which cost him the equivalent of two young oxen or seven or eight pigs.<sup>19</sup> The transmission of material goods took place even further down the social scale, in part because relationships between masters and their servants were often close and long-lasting. Dennis Romano has shown that one Venetian servant named Zuan was named in his master's will as the recipient of a number of precious objects. These included bronze figurines, an inkwell, a globe, books, and medals that had been displayed in the master's study, as well as a painting of Saint Jerome and a mosaic of an unknown subject.<sup>20</sup> A painting by Vincenzo Campi, created in



1580, provides a visual image of the material world within reach of modest peasant or working families. Depicting a moment on 11 November, after the end of the harvest, when many families in the countryside traditionally moved house, the painting shows chests, metal buckets, and other household wares piled up on the back of a donkey. Open to public view, such possessions revealed much about a family and how it wished to present itself (Illustration 2).

Despite the clear evidence that a wide variety of goods, including luxuries, was disseminated widely across the social classes, the material culture of Italian Renaissance artisans, shopkeepers, and other lower-ranking individuals – how they actually lived, what they owned, and how they engaged with high culture – generally remains little studied and poorly understood.<sup>21</sup> Marginal groups outside the wealthy elites have been regarded as unworthy of study because of the assumption that ordinary Italians were too poor to qualify as ‘consumers,’ let alone to engage with luxuries or objects of high culture. It has been argued that the vast majority of people in late medieval and early modern Europe lived at the subsistence level, burdened with consumption taxes, rents, and obligations to their landlords or employers, with little money to spend on things other than on shelter, low-grade clothing and, above all, food.<sup>22</sup>

Ordinary people have been excluded from the history of Renaissance culture also because of the assumption that material objects and cultural patterns at the lower social levels were repetitious and mundane. At best, they represented a cheaper version or a ‘by-product’ of elite culture, characterized by social emulation and passive copying of the elites.<sup>23</sup> Such assumptions about the economic status and cultural behaviour of artisanal groups have meant that the role of ordinary Italians in the history of Renaissance material culture has commonly been dismissed – to use Sara Pennell’s term – as ‘small,’ with little historical and cultural explanatory value.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, in current research on the Renaissance, lower classes are often treated as makers or classified collectively as workers, without a proper investigation and understanding of their potentially diverse experiences of culture. Few have attempted to go beyond single case studies or economic statistics to understand, for example, how the cultural experience at the lower social levels differed from that of the elites, and what cultural practices and meanings were created and cultivated among the lower social groups themselves.<sup>25</sup> Generalizing statistics and models have given a misleading and simplified image of the experiences of lower classes and many historians continue to assume that the material and cultural Renaissance ‘made very little difference’ in the lives of ordinary men and women.<sup>26</sup>

As a result, it is not clear how lower-ranking men and women – such as the blacksmith and writer Giulio Cesare Croce or the shoemaker Girolamo di Domenico and their fellow aspiring artisans – were connected to the visual and material culture of the period, what kinds of lifestyle they enjoyed, and how they acquired, used, and understood the growing range of cultural objects available in the Renaissance marketplace.

This book explores the development of the Italian Renaissance material culture and its circulation and meaning among the lower social groups, such as shoemakers, barbers, bakers, innkeepers, and tailors. Drawing on a rich blend of visual and archival evidence, it examines how ordinary Italian artisans and local traders engaged with and experienced Renaissance material culture; how small craftsmen and entrepreneurs and their families conducted their lives in Italy in the first half of the sixteenth century; how they furnished their houses and managed their domestic economies and consumption; how they socialized in their homes and celebrated their weddings; and how they engaged with the arts and with the markets for luxury goods.

The study will focus on the domestic interior and domestic goods – furniture, furnishings, art objects, religious items, and decorations that were found in Renaissance artisans' and shopkeepers' homes, sharing the belief articulated by Marta Ajmar and Flora Dennis, that 'it is through a domestic perspective that we can best illustrate how the wider cultural, artistic and socio-economic changes we associate with this period actually affected people's everyday lives'.<sup>27</sup> What makes material goods of the home a particularly important cultural reference is that domestic objects in the Renaissance period, as recent studies have shown, were not only active instruments for men and women to fashion identities, but they also played an important role in encouraging, celebrating, and commemorating rituals and events, facilitating social and material exchange, and communicating attitudes about oneself and the relationship to the surrounding world.<sup>28</sup>

## Artisans and Shopkeepers in Sixteenth-Century Italy

One of the challenges of studying non-elite groups is the difficulty of providing and defining appropriate categories so that it is clear what terms such as 'artisan', 'small shopkeeper' or 'middling class' denote.<sup>29</sup> Many historians define the classes of local artisans and shopkeepers simply based on measurable levels of wealth or income, assuming that most artisans, workmen and small shopkeepers belonged to the uniform class of 'the masses' (*popolo*), that is, those who had little wealth or property, some even living close to the poverty line.<sup>30</sup> This tendency to homogenize economic situations and positions within the social hierarchy disguises, however, the substantial differences between and within the various classes.<sup>31</sup> The working population, even within a single state, as Samuel Cohn has pointed out, was not a homogeneous group, economically, socially, or professionally.<sup>32</sup> In order to provide a definition for these individuals, who are often labelled 'the middling sort of people', it is necessary to understand something about the sixteenth-century social structure and about the fundamental attitudes by which it was underpinned.

Most work on early modern artisans and small shopkeepers has been carried out by historians of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. Such studies have highlighted the increasing gentility of shopkeepers, lawyers, notaries, and other



men and women who fell outside the framework of the English aristocracy.<sup>33</sup> In Italy, however, the situation was slightly different. There were no standard definitions of nobility and in many instances men who had begun their careers as soldiers might appropriate for themselves the title of 'lord'.<sup>34</sup> In Venice, and to some extent in Tuscany, furthermore, the republican governments did not exclude from the ruling patriciate class those whose income derived primarily from banking and trade.<sup>35</sup> What was seen at the time as a troubling potential for social mobility led to a high degree of concern in sixteenth-century Italy over establishing clear demarcations between the noble and the non-noble.

One increasingly sharp economic and social divide in Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, was made between those who operated as small-scale artisans and shopkeepers and those who ran large-scale wholesale businesses with an international dimension, resulting in a growing separation of merchants from artisans. The wool merchant who conducted complex operations on an international scale, importing wool from England and Spain and exporting fine cloth to the Levant, did not see himself in the same category as the retailer who sold small quantities of fabric directly to local clients.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of the 'middling' or 'artisanal' classes, therefore, denotes those who occupied an economic and social position between merchants, lawyers, and notaries, on the one hand, and workmen and day labourers, on the other. The terms are used specifically to describe craftsmen— 'skilled people who fashioned artefacts with their hands and tools without the aid of machinery' — as well as shopkeepers and local tradesmen who ran small commercial outlets.<sup>37</sup> Many of them owned their shops or were master artisans operating small workshops, but they include all those making products and selling goods and services on a small scale to a local customer base, such as dyers, painters, woodcarvers, locksmiths, barbers, papermakers, delicatessen keepers, and those offering lodgings.

This group, well analysed for England and France, has been surprisingly neglected in Italian Renaissance studies. While it is not surprising to find that there has been far more attention given to the political and courtly elites, it is noteworthy that there has been a similar focus on the bottom of the social hierarchy, with research on unskilled or semi-skilled workmen in the textile and construction industries, such as those manual labourers employed in the Arsenal.<sup>38</sup>

This concentration on either the lowest levels of the *popolo* or on the patrician elite, the so-called *ceto dirigente*, has led to a polarized vision of the society where skilled artisans and petty shopkeepers have either drifted downwards to join unskilled workers, servants, and the poor as the 'low' end of society or have moved upwards to merge with university doctors, lawyers, and notaries. Where research has taken place on the next step up the social ladder, looking at skilled artisans and tradesmen, the tendency has been to examine the institutional structures within which they operated, such as those of the guild or the confraternity, which has allowed for useful discussions of guild regulations and the workshop itself.<sup>39</sup> Only a handful of

historians – above all Samuel Cohn and Dennis Romano – have attempted to recover the experiences of the Italian working population by exploring the social and political networks of artisans and workers,<sup>40</sup> their collective mentality and other characteristics of their culture,<sup>41</sup> the nature of relationships within their families,<sup>42</sup> and the details of their daily lives and business activities, using criminal records, wills, private account books, and diaries.<sup>43</sup>

This book demonstrates that the middling classes of artisans and shopkeepers was a varied and dynamic group itself, whose ranks included, as Margaret Pappano and Nicole Rice and others have observed, at one end, the wealthy and prestigious goldsmiths and, at the other, indigent and even destitute members of the textile and building crafts.<sup>44</sup> Hierarchical differences can be observed not only between occupations and trades, but also between the positions that people occupied within a single trade. Artisans, journeymen, and apprentices each possessed very different status within their trade.<sup>45</sup> These distinctions were reflected in their income, level of wealth, and property, as well as in the power and social prestige they enjoyed within their own immediate group and the wider community.

The problem of how to define an ‘artisan’ or the ‘middling sort’ cannot be solved with a single answer that holds good for the entire class, the entire period, or all of Italy. The middling class of artisans, shopkeepers, and small local traders is, then, a collective term for a varied, complex, and dynamic social group, composed of men and women of many different degrees of economic, social, and professional status.

This study highlights the plurality of status and cultural experience. It demonstrates that, in order to understand the complex social and cultural layers that characterized the classes of artisans and shopkeepers, it is necessary to consider not only how ordinary artisans and small shopkeepers connected to Renaissance culture through their cultural artefacts and practice, but also to explore the social and cultural context that necessitated these experiences. This book, therefore, asks how the ordinary men and women who are the focus of this book conducted their daily lives, what their economic and social position in society was, how they managed their work, household economies, and consumption, and, more broadly, how they were regarded and described by the society in which they lived.

To do this, this study focuses on artisans, small shopkeepers, and local traders living in urban Siena, situated about 70 kilometres south of Florence – considered its ‘little sister’. Although Siena was the second-largest town in Tuscany, it has rarely featured in studies of the Italian Renaissance material culture. But as will become clear, Siena’s diverse middling population has much to tell us about the dynamics of material culture and everyday life in Renaissance Italy, both because the city was a lively centre of artisanal activity, as well as because its broad artisanal population left behind a notable collection of archival sources that illuminate how people lived, what they owned, and how they were connected to the values and ideals of Renaissance culture.



3. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good Government*, ca. 1337–40. Fresco. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

### Renaissance Siena and Its Artisans and Shopkeepers

Renaissance Siena in many ways was a typical Tuscan town, built on a hill and surrounded by a wall. Until 1555, it was a republican state, ruled not by a prince, but by a broad governing class made up of the city's most eminent families.<sup>46</sup> Despite being an important urban centre in Tuscany, it was still a relatively small town. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the city's population included 2789 tax-paying households (see Table 3, Chapter 2).<sup>47</sup> Approximately a third of these belonged to the ruling elite and the rest were, by and large, artisans, labourers, shopkeepers, traders, lower-ranking professionals, and minor clergy and other members of holy orders.<sup>48</sup>

Today, Siena is best known for the relatively lengthy period of political stability and prosperity that occurred in the first half of the fourteenth century. Under the rule of the Nine, a rotating group of magistrates each of whom governed in turn for two months, the city became one of the leading artistic and commercial centres of Tuscany.<sup>49</sup> Those who experienced this period often looked back on it with great nostalgia, remembering it as a time when, in the chronicler Agnolo di Tura's words, 'the Sienese and their city lived in great peace and tranquillity, everyone attended to his own business affairs both in the city and in the countryside, and all loved each other as if they had been brothers'.<sup>50</sup> This ideal image of social justice, unity, peace, and urban prosperity, one which was defined as much by shopkeeping as it was by aristocratic rule, was deeply embedded in the Sienese consciousness.<sup>51</sup> It is visually expressed in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good Government*, painted in 1338–1339 on the walls of Siena's Palazzo Pubblico. Farmers bring grain in the city, traders offer their merchandise for sales, a woman carries a basket of wares on her head, builders repair houses, and entertainers dance in the street – all symbolizing the harmony and justice which brought peace and prosperity to the city (Illustration 3).<sup>52</sup>

But by the sixteenth century, when the shoemakers, bakers, and innkeepers who form the focus of this book lived, the political and economic climate was very different. A short period of relative prosperity and domestic peace during the political dominance of Pandolfo Petrucci, who ruled until 1512, was followed by crisis, which culminated in the loss of Siena's independence in 1555 and the city's sale to Duke Cosimo of Florence in 1557.<sup>53</sup> This meant that in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Sienese life was blighted by a remarkably high level of political instability and unrest. The structures of government were reformed several times, the families who ruled changed, and economic cultural, political, and social life were badly disrupted by warfare, famine, riots, and banditry. As the Sienese economy declined, the city's commercial life lost its international character and became almost entirely confined to local and regional markets. By this point, the city's population had decreased from the pre-Black Death figure of approximately 52,000 inhabitants to possibly under 20,000.<sup>54</sup>

Thus the artisans, shopkeepers, and small-scale traders studied in this book lived in one of the most unstable and turbulent periods in the history of Siena. Yet although this upheaval put a strain on the city's life, often disrupting the normal daily activities of the people, the political instability and the general decline in the economy did not put a stop to the commercial activity and cultural vitality of the city. The textile industry, and especially silk production, grew notably during this period, offering opportunities of work for an increasing number of artisans. In 1548, 173 Sienese household heads described themselves as weavers, of whom 58 were weavers of silks, velvets, or brocades; there were also ten spinners and seventeen dyers.<sup>55</sup> Other artisans and shopkeepers continued to do business, too. The cultural institutions of the city survived and the concern with the appearance of Siena was as real as ever. The most luxurious palaces in Siena – such as those of the Piccolomini and Petrucci families – were built in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The Sienese artist Domenico Beccafumi created some of his finest works, Orlando Malavolti wrote his Sienese history, and the academies of Intronati and Strozzi were founded during these years. Meanwhile, private Sienese families revelled in 'conspicuous consumption', furnishing their homes and palaces with luxury goods and dressing in expensive silks.

These cultural and commercial developments, occurring as the city was ravaged by political upheaval, meant that artisans and traders – who derived the bulk of their income from public and private commissions and from marketplace transactions – continued to enjoy favourable economic conditions as they found new opportunities for work. In this, Siena was not much different from other Italian cities of the period. The intense demand for luxuries to decorate the person, the home or the city – such as fine clothing and furnishing silks, paintings, furniture, and buildings – offered traders and skilled artisans the potential for great profit, from woodcarvers, furniture makers, painters, tailors, and goldsmiths to carpenters and masons.<sup>56</sup>

However, despite the demand for artisanal skill, the actual social and political status of artisans and shopkeepers in Sienese society was modest throughout the sixteenth century. Siena had a highly stratified political and social structure that, despite changing circumstances, consistently excluded non-nobles from positions of political authority. By the early sixteenth century, the gap between the large ruling class and the rest of the inhabitants grew wide.<sup>57</sup> The nobility had become a juridical class and was synonymous with Siena's traditional political divisions known as the *monti*. Membership in one of the four principal *monti* of the sixteenth century – the Gentiluomini, Reformatori, Nove and Popolo – became hereditary and a prerequisite for civic office holding.<sup>58</sup> The practical effect of this development was that artisans and shopkeepers, who did not hold surnames allying them with one of the families of the *monti*, were excluded from the full rights of citizens, which was a precondition for right to political participation. This marked a significant change in the social structure of the city. In the past, Siena had been divided more by geography than by any citywide shared sense of rank, class, or occupation. Residency had been the primary mechanism by which admission to full Sienese citizenship was determined, with the appointment of judges and other roles divided amongst the three main *terzi* of the city.<sup>59</sup> As a result, artisan participation in government had been relatively common. In the year 1380 alone, 42 members of the elected government were engaged in artisanal occupations, including shoemakers, doublet makers, and bakers.<sup>60</sup> But by the sixteenth century, it was not enough to own a house and be a taxpayer. At this stage, family affiliation became the key to patrician status and the middling classes of artisans and shopkeepers and others below them were deprived of their traditional rights to hold office.

Accessing the daily life and material culture of these marginalized groups can be challenging, because sources documenting the lives of ordinary people are limited. Despite a relatively widespread literacy and skills in accounting, Sienese artisans and shopkeepers did not record their lives to the same extent as the elites, nor did they have the same methods to conserve their documentation.<sup>61</sup> This book, therefore, puts together an extensive body of fragmentary archival evidence identified at the State Archives of Siena, most of which is previously unpublished, and combines this body of documentary sources with visual evidence and surviving objects in order to allow us to imagine what the objects, the city, its people, and their homes might have looked like.

The main body of evidence consists of post-mortem household inventories drawn up by the Sienese Court of Wards (Curia del Placito) after the head of a family had died leaving minors behind.<sup>62</sup> These documents offer detailed descriptions of all the goods that were present in a home when the head of the household died, from cheap pieces of linen to elaborate furnishings. The fifteenth-century fresco in San Martino dei Buonomini in Florence, painted by Domenico Ghirlandaio, depicts the process of taking an inventory. Two men in front of the widow examine the contents of a

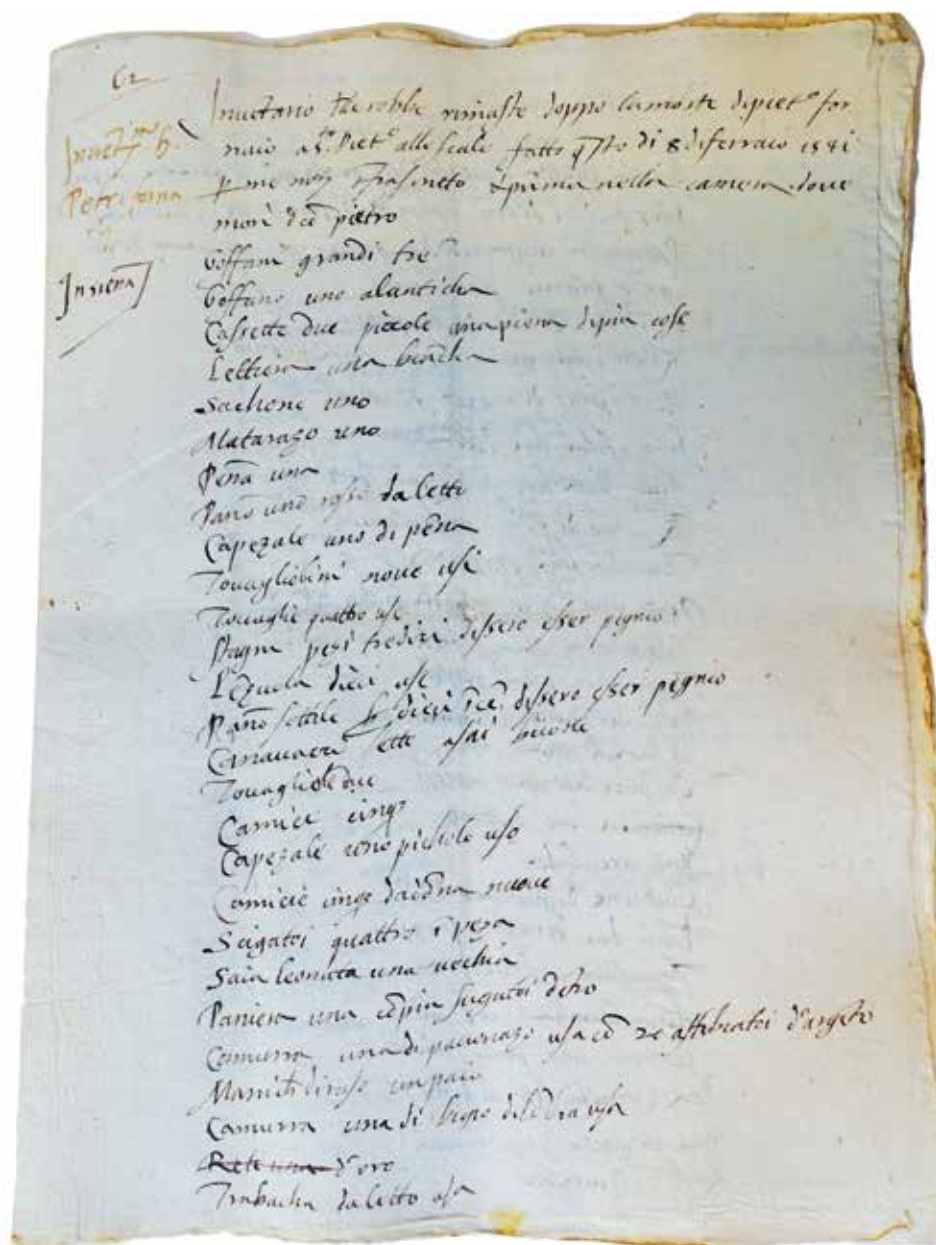




4. Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Inventory of a Legacy of the Magistrates*, late 15th century. Fresco. Florence, San Martino dei Buononimi.

chest, while a notary, on the left, notes down each item found in the house (Illustrations 4 and 5). Since the nature of the document was primarily economic, inventories often recorded items in great detail, mentioning where in the home they were found, their condition, the materials from which they were made, how they were decorated, and to whom they belonged.<sup>63</sup> Although inventories are often labelled as static sources, mere ‘snapshots of reality’ that are fixed in time and unable to capture change (whereas the home was a living entity constantly changing), in actuality, as Giorgio Riello has recently highlighted, inventories are materially rich sources. They provide information on the individual family’s material and economic conditions and daily life, including place of residence, property, the household, taste, furniture, relationship with objects, and religious values. Inventories also represent the family’s capacity to respond to the social and cultural values of time, and to the new patterns of domestic social life and social relationships that were created within the household and beyond.<sup>64</sup>

Household inventories, then, allow us to ‘breathe a little social life’ into the private houses of Sienese artisans, shopkeepers, and traders.<sup>65</sup> When we ‘listen to the objects’ in these documents, as Erin Campbell has put it, we can capture not just the kinds



5. Inventory of the Pietro, a baker in San Pietro alle Scale, 1542. Archivio di stato di Siena, Curia del Placito 706, no. 62, 8 February, 1541/42.

and quantities of their domestic possessions, but also how material goods and possessions were interwoven with the activities and experiences at home. Inventories hint at how some of the finest wares of the household were displayed on the shelves and tables, glimmering in candlelight, bringing luminosity and grace to artisans' homes; they suggest how delicate small signs of luxury such as 'three golden angels' owned by the baker Pietro di Jacomo might have appealed to the senses; and how tables set with beautiful clean, fine linen tablecloths and specialized dinnerware, such as two cristallo glass cups (*tazzoni*) and a pair of salt cellars in the mattress maker Bernardino di Pietro's home, might have functioned as a media of domestic social and cultural exchange; they offer glimpses as to what the painting of the Virgin Mary, beautifully furnished with green taffeta curtains, a canopy of silk, and brass candle stands, owned by the barber Cesario di Albertino, can reveal about the owner's religious identity.<sup>66</sup> Inventories communicate that these spaces, domestic objects, and their appearance were full of personal, cultural, and social meaning.

Household inventories are combined with a number of other archival sources, including the Sienese fiscal registers, known as the Lira;<sup>67</sup> a civic register titled *Libro sopra gli oziosi* (*Book on Idlers*), compiled in 1548, which recorded the main source of income of all Sienese heads of household below the age of 50;<sup>68</sup> guild and sumptuary law records, as well as individuals' and families' personal documentation, such as tax declarations, account books, wills, and notarial contracts, in order to gain a sense of the economic and social factors that conditioned individual lives and the nature of artisans' and shopkeepers' cultural experience. Cross-referencing these sources allows us to study where individual artisans and their families worked, what their particular circumstances were in society and amongst their own social class, how much local artisans and small shopkeepers earned from work, how the family income could be supplemented by side activities such as pawnbroking, what necessities and non-necessities cost in sixteenth-century Siena, and how these were acquired, paid for, and used, as well as deployed at home and invested with meaning.<sup>69</sup>

This extensive body of documentary evidence is interpreted both in light of the Renaissance prescriptive literature and ideological works and visual images, as well as recent studies of material culture. The ambition is to evaluate how culturally specific social codes were codified in the artisanal practice, and to identify the multiple and complex layers of meaning that were associated with material possessions and issues of social class, status, and taste.

## The People and Contents of the Book

This book investigates the daily life and material culture of the middling classes of artisans and shopkeepers who operated locally based small shops and workshops in Siena in the first half of the sixteenth century. To select individuals in this study from



this diverse and dynamic group, Richard Marshall's classification has proved particularly useful. He identified the group consisting of true retailers, such as cheese sellers, cloth sellers, and grain dealers, who bought their products wholesale and made a profit though resale at a marked-up price; product retailers, such as tailors, candle makers, and doublet makers, who in addition to purchasing products for resale, added their labour to the process of production of some items (e.g. clothing, candles); artisans, such as members of the textile and building trades (such as masons and weavers) who sold their labour; and providers of services such as barbers and innkeepers.<sup>70</sup>

During the initial research carried out for this study in the State Archives of Siena, 221 inventories were identified belonging to families of shopkeepers, artisans, and traders (those identified with an occupation), drawn up from the beginning of the first half of the sixteenth century until the loss of Siena's independence in 1555.<sup>71</sup> This sample was then narrowed down to correspond with the population of locally based artisans and small shopkeepers. Although the entire group of Sienese artisans and shopkeepers consisted of men of varying economic and social condition, they all shared several specific features that set them below wealthy investors and entrepreneurs, merchants, professionals, and the ruling elites. To evaluate the status of the individuals and exclude potential investors in the trade, four key indicators of status were used as criteria for a middling rank 'artisan', when selecting individuals for the present study.

The first criterion was the inclusion of occupational labels next to the name in documentation that connected all the individuals in this book with manual work in one of the local craft shops, outlets, or service sectors in urban Siena. This meant that all practitioners of non-artisanal occupations both above as well as below artisanal status were excluded from the study. These included, on the one hand, professionals (notaries, lawyers, doctors, priests), wholesale merchants and apothecaries, and manufacturers in the textile and leather sector; and on the other, the city's day labourers and workers in the construction sites and the textile industry, as well as peasants, tenant farmers, and others who cultivated fields and vineyards and kept cattle in the countryside surrounding the city walls of Siena. Most of the latter appeared in documentation without surnames or occupational labels.

The second criterion was the absence of an established surname that connected individuals and families to Sienese ruling political factions (*monti*) and political power. In Siena, family names were a key indicator of rank and served as a passport to the broad ruling class and political participation. Although this book refers at times to interesting single examples and cases from more established artisan and trading families, such as that of Tommaso di Paulo Montauri, identified as a goldsmith, who was connected to the Monte del Popolo and was listed among the office holders of the Sienese Consistory for two terms in 1509 and 1524,<sup>72</sup> none of the local Sienese

artisans and shopkeepers included in the core analysis of this book had a proper surname that would connect them to Siena's ruling families and political life.

The third criterion was a relatively low socio-economic position – an indicator that was used to separate potential investors from the actual shop operators and manual workers. Although most urban Siennese locally based artisans and shopkeepers usually owned some property – which set them apart from the city's working poor – most of them held a relatively low level of taxable wealth, typically between 100 to 300 *lire*. The economic gap between the locally based artisan population and their social superiors becomes evident when artisanal wealth is compared with the average level of taxable wealth assigned for professionals, merchants, apothecaries, and prosperous entrepreneurs, some of whom might be identified in documentation with occupational labels, too, but who were nonetheless often members of established families and usually considerably more well off. Notaries, in the 1509 tax register, for example, were listed with an average taxable wealth of 468 *lire*, apothecaries with 548 *lire*, silk merchants with 611 *lire*, university doctors with 1204 *lire*, and cloth merchants with 1382 *lire*.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, this book has included haberdashers, cloth dealers, mercers, leather, wool and silk dealers, goldsmiths, and other occupations that might attract investors from members of prosperous families with caution, and only when the level of taxable wealth did not exceed 400 *lire*. If fiscal economic data was not available, the study evaluated the status of the individuals based on the information in their household inventories, and the wealth invested in immovable property and movable possessions.

Finally, the local artisans and shopkeepers selected for the present study were all male. This is not because women among classes of artisans and shopkeepers did not work or have important relationships with their material possessions. It is simply because information about women in historical sources is much harder, in this case, almost impossible, to find. This gap needs to be filled with care by paying close attention to what does survive.

This left 82 inventories, representing 28 different occupations, including the city's barbers, bakers, tailors, shoemakers, grocers, glassmakers, jar makers, innkeepers, and second-hand dealers (Table 1).<sup>74</sup> This sample is used to provide a broad overview of the material conditions and daily lives of Siennese artisans and shopkeepers.

Quantitative evidence is complemented by many examples of individuals as well as nine case studies of artisans or shopkeepers who between them occupied a range of different economic and professional statuses. Presented as a case study at the opening of a chapter and followed throughout the book, the reader will get to know closely these nine individual Siennese artisans or traders, including the shoemaker Girolamo di Domenico, the weaver Giovanni di Agniolino, the tailor Pietro di Ser Giovanni, the innkeeper Marchione di Paulo from Mulazzo, the baker Pietro from Voltolina, the second-hand dealer Vincenzo di Matteo, the professional musician Luzio di Paulo, the barber Cesario di Albertino, and the woodcarver Cristofano di Domenico, all living in

Table 1: Sample of 82 artisans and shopkeepers

Occupation	Number	Occupation	Number
Shoe- and slippermakers	11	Hosiers	2
Bakers	9	Jar makers	2
Delicatessen keepers	9	Saddle makers	2
Leather workers	5	Barrel makers	1
Innkeepers	4	Book dealers	1
Tailors	4	Carpenters	1
Barbers	3	Cobblers	1
Goldsmiths	3	Musicians	1
Masons	3	Mattress makers	1
Haberdashers	3	Painters	1
Saddlers	3	Rope makers	1
Shoe-vendors	3	Second-hand dealers	1
Wood carvers	3	Smiths	1
Butchers	2	Sword makers	1

Source: Curia del Placito, *Carte processuali e inventari*, 648–748 (1500–1555)

Siena in the first half of the sixteenth century. Their household inventories, listing all the material possessions they owned, can be found at the end of the book (Appendix).

This book is divided into three parts. The first part of this book focuses on the daily life of ordinary artisans and small shopkeepers, exploring not only what life was like in Renaissance Siena, but also how Siennese artisans were regarded and what their economic, political, and social status was in society. Illustrating the particular conditions with case studies of the shoemaker Girolamo di Domenico, the silk weaver Giovanni di Agniolino, and the tailor Pietro di Ser Giovanni, it begins, in Chapter 1, by mapping the occupational structure and the physical and social setting of the neighbourhood, examining what occupations constituted the middling classes of artisans and small local traders in sixteenth-century Siena, and where the majority of these lived. It continues, in Chapters 2 and 3, to explore issues of economic and social status, focusing on Renaissance attitudes towards manual work, the distribution of wealth and political power in Siennese society, as well as on the professional hierarchies and social mobility within the highly stratified artisan class itself. It demonstrates that, despite the association of Siennese local artisans and shopkeepers with manual labour, minor crafts, and trades, and marginal economic and political status in Renaissance society, Siena's artisans and shopkeepers formed a lively community of local crafts- and tradesmen with a prominent presence in all the neighbourhoods of the urban space. Most Siennese artisans and small shopkeepers, furthermore, owned property – usually their own house of residence and a small garden or piece of land – that secured them an economic position above the city's labouring

poor. This gave many ordinary artisans and shopkeepers a level of social standing in society. At the same time, however, the members of the middling classes of artisans and local traders made up a diverse social group with many gradations of status and wealth. The occupational stratification and social competition within artisan classes intensified in the sixteenth century when members of certain professions, such as tailors, artists, and barbers, tried to set themselves above artisan status by associating with domains of intellectual knowledge, such as medicine or 'design'.<sup>75</sup> Material goods and cultural practice, such as displaying refined clothing or playing musical instruments, played a crucial role in marking difference and making occupational stratification visible within the artisans' and shopkeepers' own ranks.

The second part of the book moves the discussion from issues of status and the nature and character of artisan classes to the economic context that conditioned the access of local Sieneese artisans and shopkeepers to material culture. It asks, could artisans and shopkeepers afford to spend money on more than the most essential items? Scholarship relying on measurable economic data, such as real wages or taxable wealth, tends to highlight the modest economic position of the lower social groups, arguing that most lower-ranking individuals did not qualify as consumers in the burgeoning Renaissance economy.<sup>76</sup> Drawing on the case studies of the innkeeper Marchione di Paulo from Mulazzo, the baker Pietro di Jacomo from Voltolina, and the second-hand dealer Vincenzo di Matteo, this part of the book investigates, first, in Chapter 4, how workshop hierarchies affected the status and economic conditions of individual artisans and shopkeepers, how much they were paid from work, and how workshops were run and organized. Chapter 5 continues with an examination of how families at artisan levels ran their household economies and acquired a range of material goods. Chapter 6, in turn, explores what types of luxury items and small personal belongings were exchanged and circulated in dowries at artisan levels and what these meant for families at the lower social rank. It demonstrates that, although artisans and small shopkeepers were usually paid little for their work, supplementary income and transactions based on advanced credit systems, bartering, and second-hand market purchases ensured that a wide range of articles, from artworks, painted chests, and dinner services to precious garments, jewellery, cosmetics, and mirrors, were available not just to the very wealthy but also to those with more modest means. Even the poorest artisans in this study could find ways to purchase little luxuries either by borrowing money from the state pawn bank or private moneylenders, or by paying for goods in instalments.<sup>77</sup> Some even raised extra cash by operating unofficial side activities, such as moneylending. The Sieneese innkeeper Marchione di Paulo, for example, ran a pawnbroking business, which generated a considerable sum of money that he used to improve his life and living conditions.<sup>78</sup>

The third and final part focuses on material goods and their uses and meanings within the domestic sphere, investigating how local Sieneese artisans and small shopkeepers connected to contemporary culture through their homes, material artefacts,

and domestic social and cultural practice. It begins, in Chapters 7 and 8, with an overview of both basic objects and furniture as well as decorative works and furnishings that were owned, used, and acquired by Sienese artisans and shopkeepers. Based on the sample of 82 Sienese artisan inventories and case studies of the barber Ceario di Albertino, the professional musician Luzio di Paulo, and the woodcarver Cristofano di Bartolomeo, it explores how homes at the lower social levels were made comfortable and presentable; how artisans and shopkeepers decorated their homes with artworks, decorative objects, and textile furnishings; and what kinds of pictures and books were owned by Sienese artisans and shopkeepers. It concludes, in Chapter 9, with a discussion of how these objects were put on display, and used to support domestic social occasions, commemorate rites of passage, facilitate social relations, and shape favourable images of the family itself.

This book demonstrates that the fascination with and access to the 'Empire of Things', identified by Goldthwaite over 30 years ago, was shared by the sixteenth century by at least some of the many ordinary urban Sienese middling class. The statistical and qualitative evidence gathered in this book shows a great accumulation of goods among diverse groups of artisans and small shopkeepers. This material abundance and the availability of goods made the artisans' and shopkeepers' home surprisingly comfortable and at times even modestly luxurious, even when economic conditions were humble.

This book, then, demonstrates that however important it might have been for political and social theorists like Silvio Antoniano or Bernardino of Siena to maintain the conceptual hierarchies that divided Renaissance society into two clear-cut categories of 'high' and 'low', a level of continuity can be identified in the Renaissance period between the culture of the elites and that of local artisans and shopkeepers.

Focusing on the material culture and lives of these men of different economic and professional statuses, some of whom were immigrants and poor, others modestly prosperous and powerful, and learning what their particular economic and material conditions were, who they connected with, what they owned, and what kind of lifestyles they led, allows us not only to understand the diversity and richness of artisans' and shopkeepers' cultural experience in sixteenth-century urban Siena, but it also enables us to engage with the artisans' individual experiences – their hopes and happiness, industry and inefficiency, fortunes and failures.

## Notes

- 1 Croce, *Descrittione del nobil palazzo*. For examples, analysis and description of the text, see Campbell, 'Listening to Objects', pp. 19–23.
- 2 Campbell, 'Listening to Objects', p. 20.
- 3 For the variety, see, for example, Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis, *At Home*; Lindow, *Renaissance Palace*; and Lydecker, 'Domestic Setting'.



- 4 Fortini Brown, 'Behind the Walls', p. 296.
- 5 Goldthwaite, 'The Economic and Social World', pp. 21–22. Multiplication of domestic goods has been identified as one of the most important features of the period, and is a key aspect in studies such as Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*; Jardine, *Wordly Goods*; and Ago and Raggio, *Consumi culturali*. For an analysis, see the essays in Ajmar-Wollheim, Dennis, and Matchette, *Approaching*; O'Malley and Welch, *Material Renaissance*; Welch, *Shopping*; Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis, *At Home*; Rosenthal, 'Cultures of Clothing'; Allerston, 'Wedding Finery'; Richardson, Hamling, and Gaimster, *Routledge Handbook*.
- 6 For a description of the setting and objects, see Campbell, 'Listening to Objects', pp. 15–18.
- 7 Also in the context of fashion, see Rublak, *Dressing Up*, pp. 1–31.
- 8 Quoted in Fortini Brown, 'Behind the Walls', p. 318, and Antoniano, *Tre libri dell'educatione*. For Renaissance attitudes, see also Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*; Barbaro, *De re uxoria*; Piccolomini, *La economica* and *Della institutione*; and for discussion and analysis, Frigo, *Il padre*, esp. p. 110; Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà*, pp. 60–61; Di Simplicio, 'Nobili e sudditi'.
- 9 For related literature and further discussion of consumption as a form of communication, see Burke, *Historical Anthropology*, pp. 132–133; and Hohti, 'Conspicuous Consumption', pp. 654–655.
- 10 Siena's sumptuary legislation has been the focus of a number of studies. For the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Bonelli-Gandolfi, 'La legislazione suntuaria' and 'Leggi suntuarie', pp. 287–291; Casanova, 'La donna senese'; Lugarini, 'Il ruolo degli "statuti delli sforgi"'; and for earlier periods, Ceppari and Turrini, *Il mulino*, and Mazzi, 'Alcune leggi suntuarie'. For a general overview of sumptuary laws in Italy, see Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary Law*; Hughes, 'Sumptuary Law' and 'Distinguishing Signs'.
- 11 Lugarini, 'Il ruolo degli "statuti delli sforgi"', p. 416.
- 12 Quoted in Musacchio, *Art and Ritual*, p. 7.
- 13 Quoted in Allerston, 'Wedding Finery', p. 33.
- 14 Allerston warns against taking such statements at face value, pointing out Sansovino's concern to portray Venice as a perfectly organized and harmonious republic, 'Wedding Finery', p. 33.
- 15 Archivio di stato, Siena, Curia del Placito 725, no. 70, 1547, 1r ('Una spalliera di tela dipenta con sue arme cioe con arme di detto Girolamo di braccia 6 in circa'). For studies of the material culture of artisans and shopkeepers in sixteenth-century Siena, and the wealth of domestic objects and decorative wares found in their possession, see Hohti, 'The Inn-keeper's Goods', 'Artisans, Pawn-broking', and 'Conspicuous Consumption'; and for their fashion and clothing, Hohti, 'Dress, Dissemination, and Innovation', and the ERC-*Refashioning the Renaissance* -project database, accessed at <http://refashioningrenaissance.eu/> (available for public in 2022).
- 16 Palumbo-Fossati, 'L'interno della casa', pp. 122–134; for evidence elsewhere in Europe, see Sarti, *Europe at Home*, p. 123.
- 17 Point made and quoted in Allerston, 'Wedding Finery', p. 32.
- 18 Studies addressing the material culture of artisans and workers include, Palumbo-Fossati, 'L'interno della casa'; Pavanini, 'Abitazioni'; Allerston, 'Clothing' and 'Wedding Finery'; Cavallo, 'Artisan's Casa'; and more recently, Farrell, 'The Materiality of Marriage'; and among artists and architects, Nevola, 'Lots of Napkins'; Hüttinger, *Case*

*d'artista*; Rosenthal, 'The House of Andrea Mantegna'; Coor, 'Inventory of Neroccio di Bartolomeo'; and Carl, 'Das Inventar der Werkstatt'. For arsenal workers, see Davis, *Shipbuilders*, pp. 100–102; and for studies of Tuscan rural population, Malanima, *Lusso dei contadini*, esp. p. 11 and 47; Mazzi and Raveggi, *Gli uomini e le cose* and 'Masserizie'; and for the transmission of property and testamentary bequests by ordinary men and women, see Cohn, *Death and Property* and *Cult of Remembrance*; and Cavallo, 'What Did Women Transmit?', pp. 39–40. See also the groundbreaking work carried out by scholars for early modern England, in particular Styles, *The Dress of the People*.

- 19 Balestracci, *Renaissance*, pp. 29–31.
- 20 Romano, 'Aspects of Patronage', pp. 716–717, and *Patricians and Popolani*.
- 21 This has been noted in several studies, for example, in Rosenthal, 'Cultures of Clothing', p. 461; Cohn, *Death and Property*; and Marshall, *Local Merchants*. In his chapter 'Whose Renaissance?', Richard MacKenney notes the extent to which Renaissance studies have been limited to the narrow social and economic elites, see his *Renaissances*, pp. 29–30. Significant exceptions to this are those studies, listed above in note 18, which focus on cases beyond the wealthy elites. For a synthesis of studies on artisan ranks, see Franceschi, *Oltre il 'Tumulto'*, pp. 290–300; and Cavallo, 'Artisan's Casa'.
- 22 Ferraro, 'Manufacture and Movement', p. 96. Goldthwaite had a more positive view, claiming that, in the Renaissance period, the middling classes of artisans and shopkeepers began to appear in the markets for luxury goods 'perhaps for the first time in history', but his claim is not supported by concrete evidence. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*, p. 47.
- 23 Social emulation has been an influential theme in studies of consumption since the publication of *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, edited by McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb in the 1980s. The concept has been widely discussed and debated since then in, for example, Weatherhill, 'The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour'; Fairchild, 'Production and Marketing'; and Shammass, 'Domestic Environment'. Surveys of the extensive literature can be found in Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism'; Fairchild, 'Consumption'. For a useful critique, see Clunas, 'Modernity Global and Local'. Competitive consumption and emulation have often been outlined as the main driving force behind Italian Renaissance material culture, especially in studies of consumption. For an overview of research on Renaissance consumption, see Datta, *Women and Men*, p. 91; and for a critique and discussion of the concept of social emulation, see Hohti, 'Conspicuous Consumption'.
- 24 Pennell, 'Mundane Materiality', p. 228.
- 25 Most studies of Renaissance and early modern material culture that have focused on the non-elite, though extremely insightful and valuable, have been based on a limited range of documents or single cases studies and examples.
- 26 Ferraro, 'Manufacture and Movement', p. 98; Braudel, *Civilization*, p. 282. For a contrasting view, see the Introduction of Richardson, Hamling, and Gaimster, *Routledge Handbook*.
- 27 Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis, 'Introduction', p. 12.
- 28 Studies of material culture, domestic interior and decorative arts – and the meanings and functions that were associated with them – have become an extensive field of inquiry in early modern studies in the past 30 years, as a number of scholars have



- focused on material objects and what they indicated, for example, of value systems, attitudes, status, family relations, or sensory worlds. Central works for Italy include, Ajmar-Wollheim and Dennis, *At Home*, Lindow, *The Renaissance Palace*; Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior*; Thornton, *Scholar*; Syson and Thornton, *Objects of Virtue*; Musacchio, *Art and Ritual*, and *Art, Marriage, and Family*; Fortini Brown, 'Behind the Walls'; Findlen, 'Possessing the Past'; Lydecker, 'Domestic Setting'; Campbell, 'Listening to Objects'; Campbell, Miller, and Consavari, *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior*; Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*; O'Malley and Welch, *Material Renaissance*, Quiviger, *Sensory World*; Rublack, 'Matter in the Material'; and, recently, Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home*.
- 29 The terms *artist* and *artisan* have long been subject to varying constructions, see Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture', p. 1. There has been a lot of discussion among social, economic, and cultural historians about the complexity of social class and about the difficulty of providing appropriate definitions. See Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, pp. 11 and 115, and *Death and Property*, p. 125.
- 30 For example, see Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti'.
- 31 Cavallo (*Artisans of the Body*, p. 91) points out the drawbacks of attributing a particular degree of status to an entire social group as well as seeing status as a fixed and unchanging quality. For a discussion of diversity among artisan classes, see Dolan, 'Artisans', p. 174; and Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture'.
- 32 Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, pp. 11 and 115, and *Death and Property*, p. 125.
- 33 Barry and Brooks, *Middling Sort of People*. Many definitions have been offered for the group, its identity, and its membership. For the historiography of the 'middle sort' and the many attempts to produce accurate definitions of the group, see French, 'The Search'; and Hunt, *The Middling Sort*.
- 34 For a discussion of the problems of appropriating titles see Lippincott, 'Genesis and Significance'.
- 35 Frigo, *Il padre*.
- 36 For hierarchies of occupation, and the difference between a wealthy entrepreneur and an artisan, see Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', p. 76; and Hicks, 'Sources of Wealth', p. 31. Social divisions among merchants and artisans were codified in some cities, such as Florence, where their activities were divided into 'major' and 'minor' guilds. See Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture', pp. 474–475.
- 37 For a discussion, see Farr, *Hands of Honor*.
- 38 Davis, *Shipbuilders*; Pullan, 'Wage-Earners'; Cohn, *Laboring Classes*. This is explained, in part, by the political importance of events such as the 1378 revolt of the wool-workers, the Ciompi in Florence and its equivalent in Siena, the revolt of the Compagnia del Bruco that took place earlier in 1371. For Florence, see Brucker, 'Ciompi Revolution'; Rutenberg, *Popolo e movimenti*; and for the Bruco in Siena, see Hook, *Siena*, p. 162; Wainwright, 'The Testing of a Popular Siennese Regime' and 'Conflict'; Bowsky, 'Anatomy of Rebellion'.
- 39 For a broad study of artisans and guilds, see Degrassi, *Leconomia artigiana*; Mackenney, *Tradesmen* and "In Place of Strife", pp. 17–22; Datta, *Women and Men*, especially pp. 96–130. For Siena, see Banchi, *L'arte della seta*; Rossi, 'Arte e corporazioni'; Prunai, 'Appunti sulla giurisdizione' and 'Notizie sull'ordinamento'; Milanese, *Documenti*.



- 40 See Cohn, *Laboring Classes*; Romano, *Patricians and Popolani*.
- 41 Cohn, *Cult of Remembrance and Death and Property*.
- 42 Haines, 'Artisan Family Strategies'; Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*; Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture'.
- 43 Marshall, *Local Merchants*; Tuliani, *Osti*.
- 44 Pappano and Rice show how status 'often correlated with refinement of skills or rarity of materials, and translated into levels of wealth and influence'. See Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture', p. 475. For a discussion of diversity, see also Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*, p. 91.
- 45 Datta, *Women and Men*, pp. 96–128. See also Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, pp. 66–71; Romano, *Patricians and Popolani*, pp. 89–90, and 156; Marshall, *Local Merchants*, p. 27.
- 46 For a broad study on the history of Siena, see Hook, *Siena*.
- 47 Based on the Sienese fiscal register, the Lira of 1509 (no. 111–113), see further discussion in more detail in Chapter 2.
- 48 Isaacs has identified at least 833 Sienese heads of household as belonging in 1509 to one of the four principal political factions. Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', p. 57.
- 49 Siena was one of the most important commercial and banking centres of Europe between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries; subsequently it suffered economic and political eclipse and entered in a period of relative obscurity. For the medieval art, politics and finance in Siena, see, for example, Hook, *Siena*, pp. 13–52; Norman, *Siena, Florence and Padua*; Bowsky, *Medieval Italian Commune*, 'Buon Governo', and *Finance*.
- 50 Quoted in Hook, *Siena*, p. 32.
- 51 Rubinstein 'Political Ideas', pp. 189–194.
- 52 For the iconography, see Hook, *Siena*, pp. 82–83, and Tuliani, 'Il Campo', p. 81. There is an extensive literature on this cycle, for example, Skinner, 'Ambrogio Lorenzetti' and 'Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Buon Governo Frescoes'.
- 53 Siena became completely merged with the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in 1559. For this, and the Petrucci regime and the following political crisis in Siena in the first half of the sixteenth century, see, for example, Hook, *Siena*, pp. 195, 172–232.
- 54 The urban population in Siena numbered 52,000 before the arrival of the Black Death in 1348 when it fell by almost a half. See Bowsky, 'The Impact of the Black', p. 11. In the sixteenth century, Siena's population, including the countryside immediately surrounding the city, has been calculated as being 19,260 in 1501–1510, and as having increased to 23,544 in 1511–1520 (the calculations were based on the average number of baptized individuals). Of these, possibly less than 15,000 lived inside the city walls. See Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', p. 41; and Pardi, 'La popolazione', p. 110. The war with Florence of 1552–1557 devastated the population of Siena both in the city and the countryside. As a result, the population sank below even its Black Death level (13,679) in the city. See Cohn, *Death and Property*, pp. 122–123. Hicks provides a good overview of the fifteenth-century demographic statistics in his 'The Sienese State', p. 77.
- 55 Quattro Censori 5, *Libro sopra gli oziosi*, 1548. This contradicts the widely held view that Siena's cloth industry never recovered from its decline in the fifteenth century, put forward in, for example, Hicks, 'The Sienese State', p. 77.
- 56 Similar shifts in consumer demand were taking place elsewhere in Italy and Europe. For example, Goldthwaite identifies an impressive increase of men in the middling ranks of skilled workers in Florence in the Renaissance period, especially those

- working within luxury trade. Goldthwaite, 'The Economic and Social World', p. 18; See also Farr's work for Dijon, France, in 'Consumers, Commerce, and the Craftsmen', pp. 146–149.
- 57 For the *Cittadini/popolo* distinction and the political system that marginalized the socially humble, see Ascheri, *Siena e il suo territorio*, p. 35, and *Il Rinascimento*, p. 13.
- 58 Hook, *Siena*, pp. 160–161. For the four (traditionally five) principle *monti*, and their characteristics, roles and functions, see Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', p. 56; Hicks, 'Sienese Society', p. 414; Shaw, 'Memory and Tradition', p. 225.
- 59 For the Sienese 'popular government' of the fourteenth century, see Shaw, 'Memory and Tradition', p. 223; Wainwright, 'The Testing of a Popular Sienese Regime' and 'Conflict and Popular Government'; Bowsky, 'Anatomy of Rebellion'; and Ascheri, *Siena nel Rinascimento*, pp. 414–416. The overall loss of artisan political power is discussed in Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture', p. 482.
- 60 See examples of *calzolaio*, *fornaio*, and *farsettaio* in the list of *riseduti* in ASS, Concistoro, MSS, A.81, 21v–22v. See also Hook, *Siena*, p. 102. The artist Lippo Vanni served on the supreme magistracy in 1360 and 1373, and Luca di Tommè in 1373 and 1379.
- 61 Although literacy and the practice of keeping detailed accounts was relatively widespread among artisan groups, little information concerning the private lives or the business affairs for Siena's artisans and shopkeepers has survived. See Hicks, 'Sources of Wealth', p. 20; Haines, 'Artisan Family Strategies', p. 164. Only a few surviving account books from the sixteenth century can be identified for Sienese small-scale retailers, for example, Ospedale 1176, no. 5, 1532–1540; Patrimonio Resti 222, 1539; Archivio di Opera del Duomo 156, no 826: 2, 1506–1511; and Opera del Duomo 162 (3056), 1524–1532.
- 62 These inventories are included in the files of the local Office of the Wards, and preserved in the Archivio di stato, Siena, Curia del Placito, Carte processuali e inventari (referred to hereafter as CDP). For the surviving inventories in the first half of the sixteenth century, see CDP, *Carte processuali e inventari*, 650–750; and for the institution, see Zdekauer, 'Il costituito dei placiti' and 'Il costituito dei consoli'. A similar office of the wards, the Magistrato dei Pupilli, operated in Florence and Venice. These are discussed in Lydecker, 'Domestic Setting', pp. 15–23; Musacchio, *Art and Ritual*, pp. 5–6; and Thornton, *Scholar*, p. 16. The statutes of the Florentine office for the period 1388–1534 have been published by Morandini, 'Statuti'.
- 63 For a discussion of household inventories, see Kemp, *Behind the Picture*; Musacchio, *Art and Ritual*, pp. 5–6; Lydecker, 'Domestic Setting', pp. 12–18; Palumbo-Fossati, 'L'interno della casa', pp. 112–113.
- 64 Riello, 'Things Seen and Unseen', p. 127.
- 65 Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*, p. 238.
- 66 Baker, CDP 706, no. 62, 1541/42, 2r ('Tre angeli doro grande due grandi e un picholo'); mattress maker, CDP 699, no. 18, 1537, 1v–2r ('Due tazzoni di cristallo Dorati and Due salettieri di cristallo'); barber, CDP 733, no. 240, 1550, 3v ('1 paio di tenduccia di taffetta verde da madonna con padiglione di seta et candelieri indorati'). This passage is inspired by Erin Campbell's beautiful work on how domestic goods evoked senses, and were connected to the many layers of experience and beliefs. See her article 'Listening to Objects'.

- 67 The Sienese tax registers, known as the Lira, survive for 1509, 1531, and 1549, and they are found as Lira 111–113, *Registri*, 1509; Lira 122–124, *Registri*, 1531; and Lira 132, *Registro*, 1549. The registers of Lira have been deployed in this book in two ways. On the one hand, these have been used to explore more general issues about artisans' and shopkeepers' status and wealth in sixteenth-century Siena; and on the other, the Lira has been used in combination with inventories to identify the individual circumstances of the deceased artisans and shopkeepers. This is important because, in the absence of surnames, the names of ordinary artisans and shopkeepers in documents are often inconsistent, unclear or incomplete. It is equally difficult to establish an individual's particular socio-professional circumstances with precision. Even when the owner's full name and profession were noted, these descriptions were usually vague. The term *lanaiolo*, for example, which often referred to a wool merchant or an entrepreneur, could equally be applied to a wool-worker who occupied a much lower position within the industry. For the origins and general character of the Lira, see Banchi, 'La Lira'; Bowsky, *Finance*; Hicks, 'Sources of Wealth'; Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti'; and Catoni and Piccini, 'Famiglie e redditi'.
- 68 Quattro Censori 5, 1548; the statutes are transcribed in Lugarini, 'Il ruolo degli "statuti delli sforgi"', pp. 418–420. The register *Libro sopra gli oziosi* was compiled by the Sienese Quattro Censori in 1548, after the publication of a new law against 'idleness', which stated that all Sienese male householders between the age of 16 and 50 years, 'regardless of condition, status, or order', were required to declare their trade or main source of income. The failure to do so, or fraud, resulted in a fine of 25 florins. This register has been very useful to gain a more accurate sense of the number of practicing artisans and shopkeepers in sixteenth-century Siena, as well as the character and composition of their classes.
- 69 The surviving tax declarations, which include Sienese heads of household's personal declarations of all taxable property and family conditions, are fragmented, but the surviving ones for the sixteenth century are found in Lira, *Denunzie*, 234–244. Artisan contracts, such as marriage and dowry settlements, can be found in the State Archives of Siena's notarial records, such as, for example, the marriage contract drawn up between the baker Giorgio di Giuliano and the barber Marcantonio di Bernardino Barbieri in Notarile antecosimiano 2180, *Scritta di Parentela*, Marcantonio Barbieri, 13 March, 1567/68. Sumptuary law material in Siena is relatively rich. The Quattro Censori, nos. 1–6, 1548, includes statutes, secret denunciations, registers of prohibited garments, and court cases; Balia 1114 and 822–831 includes provisions, while the Biccherna includes records of registering prohibited garments (Biccherna 1082, 1083, 1084, *Marcature delle vesti*, 1561–1563). The guild records are mostly destroyed for our period, but some survive in the files of Sienese guilds (*arti*) and, if cases were disputed, in the Merchants' Court (Mercanzia), conserved at the State Archives of Siena. Finally, the Sienese family archive, Famiglie senesi, contains some account books, such as the accounts of the Baroncini shoe shop, discussed in Chapter 4.
- 70 Marshall, *Local Merchants*, p. 35.
- 71 These inventories were found from Curia del Placito, *Carte processuali e inventari* 677–748 (1528–1553).

- 72 Concistoro, MSS. A.81, 64r and 65r, Tommaso di Paulo di Tommaso Montauri. For the background and political standing of the Montauri, see Ilari, *Famiglie*, p. 234. In addition, tax records indicate that most notaries and professionals above artisan status, even if they were recorded in the document with an occupation, allied to Siena's ruling families. See, for example, Quattro Censori 5, 1548; *Libro sopra gli oziosi*, and Concistoro, MSS A81. See also the discussion in Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti', pp. 73–79.
- 73 Lira 111–113, *Registri*, 1509.
- 74 For more, see CDP 677–748 (1528–1553).
- 75 For the concept of *disegno*, and the traditional humanist-Renaissance principle that divided the professional activities in liberal and mechanical arts, see Ajmar, 'Mechanical *Disegno*', p. 1; and Pappano and Rice, 'Medieval and Early Modern Artisan Culture', pp. 480–481. In the context of tailor's work, see Currie, 'Diversity and Design'.
- 76 Ferraro, 'Manufacture and Movement'.
- 77 Carboni, 'Converting Goods'; Muzzarelli, 'From the Closet'; and Hohti, 'Pawn-broking'.
- 78 CDP 687, no. 20, 1533; and Hohti, 'The Inn-keeper's Goods'.