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Masterpiece makers: the role and legacy of the Della Volpaia family in the production of scientific instruments in the Renaissance

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Between the XV e il XVI century, three generations of architects, engineers, and manufacturers of machines, clocks, astronomical and measuring instruments stood out in the Della Volpaia family. The Salviati, Rucellai, the Medici, and other Florentine noble families estimated their works. Many members of the Della Volpaia family were in relationships with numerous established artists, such as Verrocchio, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the Sangallo family. These artists, in turn, sometimes favored the fortune of friends, such as the painter Francesco Salviati and the sculptor Niccolò Pericoli, better known as Tribolo, presenting them to their powerful protectors. This talk aims to reconstruct the flourishing activity of the Della Volpaia family through the published and unpublished documents and, above all, through their workshop notebooks that provide valuable information passed down from generation to generation. On several occasions, Benvenuto, Eufrosino, and Camillo Della Volpaia faithfully transcribed the papers and notes of their father Lorenzo, in some cases updating them in the light of new inventions. The corpus of the drawings and annotations of the Volpaia consists of a central nucleus of four manuscripts kept in Florence, in the Biblioteca Laurenziana and the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, and Venice, in the Biblioteca Marciana. The latter, the Codice Marciano 5363, is the most important and was transcribed by Carlo Pedretti in 1953 and is currently under review (publication expected in 2023).

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