This dissertation examines the catafalque erected for the reburial of Pope Paul V in S. Maria Maggiore on January 30, 1622. The catafalque, commissioned by the pope's nephew Scipione Borghese, was only the second catafalque ever built for a pope. It was a large tempietto type structure, fashioned of wood and plaster and covered with black cloth and candles. It was constructed by Sergio Venturi and Giovanni Battista Soria and adorned with thirty-six sculptures by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. These details are known to us through a funeral book, the Breve Racconto della trasportazione del corpo di Papa Paolo V della Basilica di S. Pietro a’ quella di S. Maria Maggiore, Con Oratione recita nelle sue Esequie, and alcuni versi posti nell’Apparato, written by the poet Lelio Guidiccioni which contains extensive descriptions of the monument and obsequies as well as eighteen engraved plates of its architecture and sculpture. Further details are found in the eye witness accounts of Giacinto Gigli and Paolo Alaleone as well as payment records preserved in the Borghese Archives. These sources allow us to reconstruct the appearance and iconography of Paul's catafalque.

Meaning is created through formal choices in the architectural design of the catafalque and the sixteen personified virtues which adorn it. While the iconography is not explicitly dealt with in the Breve Racconto, the visual clues are reinforced by poetry and scriptural quotations which appear both on the actual monument and in the funeral book. The iconography of the catafalque stresses the Borghese family's Romanitas and underscores the importance of Paul's patronage in both purifying the Roman Church and ushering in a new Golden Age. This dissertation begins by investigating the context of Paul's reburial. Chapter one looks the protocol surrounding the death and burial of seicento popes. It examines how Paul's obsequies fit into this tradition and where his catafalque sits in the trajectory of the development and use of catafalques for ecclesiastical funerals. Chapter two looks at the Breve Racconto and evaluates the accuracy of both the text and its author. Particular attention is paid to Guidiccioni's intellectual pursuits and his relationship with both Scipione Borghese and Bernini. Chapter two is devoted to Scipione Borghese and his patronage of art and architecture. Chapter three rehearses the history of the Borghese family, Paul's accomplishments as pope and his patronage. It also considers his presentation in contemporary panegyric. Chapter four outlines the appearance of the catafalque. Its form echoes both Imperial mausolea and early Christian martyria. Through this formal mimicry the very architecture becomes a metonym for the Pauline resurgence of Rome; it indicates Paul's physical and spiritual restoration of the early Church and also the new Golden Age ushered in by Borghese munificence and patronage. Chapter five tackles the question of the catafalque's authorship. It examines the involvement of Venturi, Soria and Bernini, attempting to reconcile the style of the building with each of their known works. Chapter six is devoted to the iconography of the sculptured virtues. It starts by considering the history of defining a ruler through his virtues and the appearance of these virtues in art. It then investigates the choice and portrayal of the sixteen virtues in this catafalque. The virtues chosen are ostensibly organized around the exegetical conceit of the Four Daughters of God, clearly suggesting Paul's triumph as pope and Christian prince. But many are also closely associated with Augustus and the Imperial cult and there is a clear undercurrent stressing Paul's Romanitas and comparing his reign to that of his imagined Imperial forbearers. This theme is familiar from Borghese panegyric, and presumably intended to further the reputation not only of the pope but also of his surviving family members.
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Iconography, as a branch of art history, studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images: the subjects depicted, the particular compositions and details used to do so, and other elements that are distinct from artistic style. The word iconography comes from the Greek εἰκών ("image") and γράφειν ("to write"). A secondary meaning (based on a non-standard translation of the Greek and Russian equivalent terms) is the production of religious images, called "icons. In architecture, the Greek achievement has been identified since ancient Roman times with the creation of the three classical architectural orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Actually, there are only two, the Corinthian being a variant of the Ionic. The Doric (so named because its home is a region of the Greek mainland) may well claim to be the basic order, since it is older and more sharply defined than the Ionic, which developed on the Aegean Islands and the coast of Asia Minor.