

Proposal for the International Conference

MATERIALITY AND CONSTRUCTION

Building site vocabulary – A Contribution to the Glossary of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque Building Trade

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This paper examines the terminology and practice of making *modani* during the 15th and 16th century. *Modani* were project specific, 1:1 scaled templates utilized by architects to conceive and communicate the profiles of stone cornices, column bases, and other architectural details. While the use of 1:1 scaled templates has been widely studied in the medieval context, their critical importance in the professionalization of architecture in the 15th century has been largely overlooked. Extant *modani* from the period are relatively scarce, with the most significant examples from Ammannati, Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane, and Michelangelo Buonarroti. Copious documentation in letters, treatises, and building ricordi, however, attest to a robust and refined practice of constructing architectural profiles via *modani* (known as *sagome* in the Veneto).

First drawn off-site and on paper, *modani* underwent a subsequent set of material translations onto tin or wood in preparation for the actual construction site. Although they were ostensibly tools for construction, new research has shown that *modani* provided a site for architectural invention as well, acting as a key instrument for extending architectural authorship onto the building site. Following the widespread reliance on 1:1 scaled drawings to study ancient building profiles, the making of *modani* became a critical practice for imagining new profiles as well. *Modani* also acted as key drawings in the communication of design intent and authorship to building patrons.

Offering new assessments, analyses of the terminology, and an updated bibliography, this paper offers the first comprehensive survey of *modani* and *sagome* in the Italian context. It adds new discoveries into how they were utilized by architects, their technological agency on the construction site, and the range and proliferation of their use as theoretical devices as well. In addition, it offers new connections in their use in related fields, particularly in bell casting.