

Pius a memorial of
his birth'. [2] in his

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Pius II was received in his town with joy, however, in this same travel, he became aware that most of his childhood friends became old or have died, and commented: ' At every step the Pope met with proofs of his own age and could not fail to realize that he was an old man who would soon drop ...'.

1 This impactful experience reveals that Pius was concerned about his own longevity, which was reflected in his plans for his everlasting town. Thus, the time spent in Corsignano was long and meaningful enough for Pius's decision to change the destiny of his beloved provincial village. Consequently, ' he decided to build there a new church and a palace and he hired architects and workmen at no small expense, that he might leave as lasting as possible a memorial of his birth'. 2 In his words, the Pope expressed his devotion to the place he was born and his resolution to make it memorable by erecting buildings that would transcend his own life, towards eternity. Works are thought to have begun on May 1459, the architect selected was Bernardo di Matteo di Domenico Gambarelli da Settignano (1409-1464), 3 called Rossellino, from Florence. He was a prominent architect and sculptor of his time, with a notable workshop and having worked in the Vatican with Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472). 4 One of his most famous sculptural works was the sepulchral monument to Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) in Santa Croce (Florence, 1444-1450).

5 However, even though Rossellino was the architect of Pienza's main complex, the idea and intention for the renovation came from Pius II. 6 A humanist Pope who had a specific view for his rebuilt. In his memoirs, he highlighted his delight to witness the rising of singular buildings in his native

soil. 7 In 1462, Corsignano name was changed to Pienza, the city of Pius, and gained the status of a bishopric.

8 At this same year, Pienza new centre was almost completed, apart from the upper part of the bell tower, to be completed in 1463. 9 The Pope expressed his delight with the construction as '... he carefully inspected all the details and did not regret what he had spent, ... the beauty and dignity of the buildings made him forget his annoyance at the cost'. 10 After, in his *Commentarii*, Pius II described Pienza's new palace and church in all their singularities, a feature that provides a nearly visual experience to the reader.

The main buildings were erected surrounding a non-symmetrical trapezoidal piazza (known today as Piazza Pio II) in the centre of the urbanistic project. Limited by a steep hill (Monte Piccone)¹¹ in one end and on the opposite side, by Pienza's main street (after named Corso Il Rossellino), which connects the two main gates of the town. To optimize the space, the architect positioned the gardens of the palace and part of the church on the hill, needing massive foundations for both. 12 Also, to adapt to the area of construction, the church was built on a north to south axis (entrance to apse), differing from the usual west to east implantation. 13 Thus, the Palazzo Piccolomini was built on the east side of the piazza, the Episcopal Palace (Palazzo Vescovile) on the west side, both on an angular position, diverging towards the cathedral. The Town Hall (the former Palazzo Pretorio)¹⁴ was built facing the street, on the north, and the cathedral is the focal middle point of the whole project. 15 Additionally, to emphasize the importance of the church, instead of being placed in the centre of the piazza,

the deep well is positioned in front of the Piccolomini palace, at the left corner of the square, not disturbing the perspective for the Duomo.

Furthermore, the prominence of the church is emphasized by the external material adopted, a 'white and shining' marble, in contrast with the brown stone of both palaces. 17 The reddish-brown stone of the piazza's pavement is divided in rectangular shapes made with grey stone, which create a depth sensation in an optical perspective. 18 1 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p. 102. 2 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p. 102.

3 For Bernardo Rossellino works and career see Mack, *Pienza*, pp. 32-36. 4 There is a discussion among scholars about the extension of Alberti's influence over Bernardo Rossellino project. For more see Christine Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eloquence, 1400-1470* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 100 and Luciana Finelli, *Pienza tra Ideologia e Realtà* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1979), pp. 120-127. 5 Renato de Fusco, *L'Architettura del Quattrocento, Storia dell'Arte in Italia* (Torino: UTET, 1984), p. 230. 6 Carli, *Pienza*, pp. 35; 93. 7 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p. 161. 8 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p.

259. 9 Carli, *Pienza*, p. 29. 10 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p. 282.

11 Mack, *Pienza*, p. 37. 12 Since its construction, the apse of the church suffered due to its unsuitable foundations. In 1545, an earthquake caused great damage. Pia Palladino, "' Pittura in una Casa di Vetro": un Riesame e una Proposta sul Programma Decorativo di Pio II per la Cattedrale di Pienza', *Prospettiva*, 1994, 100-108, p. 101. 13 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p. 286. 14

Carli, Pienza, p. 28. 15 Mack, Pienza, p. 93. 16 Pope Pius II, *Memoirs*, p. 286.
17 Mack, Pienza, p. 93. 18 Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich and Paul Davies,
Architecture in Italy, 1400-1500, Yale University Press Pelican History of Art
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 50.