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Victor Plahte Tschudi
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INTRODUCTION

In 1679, the year before he died, Athanasius Kircher published *Turris Babel*, an account of the famous tower well known from the Old Testament as a symbol of humanity's hubris. As an introduction to his discourse on the tower itself, Kircher outlines the trajectory of a history of architecture, and like many such histories of the period, it starts with the so-called Seven Wonders of the World. By the seventeenth century, the seven wonders amounted to a fairly standard list of buildings of Mesopotamia and the Hellenic world. It is unusual therefore that Kircher includes a Roman monument, but it is wholly unprecedented that the one he includes is neither the famous Colosseum nor the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, but the little-known Theater of Marcus Scaurus.[1] The theater, according to Pliny the Elder, had 360 columns, thousands of statues, and many other spectacular features. Kircher – the Pliny of his own days – most surely identified with the ancient author's rebuke of Marcus Scaurus's extravagance: "For why did not the authorities stop his mad building project," asks Pliny. "How do vices infiltrate other than through official channels? How else have ivory, gold, and precious stones come to be used by private persons? Have we left anything wholly to the gods?" (36.5).[2] That costly and magnificent structures defy the divine was abundantly clear to Kircher and the Christians. Excessive building, whether in Babylon or Rome, met with certain destruction by an omnipotent God. That is why the most important feature of Scaurus's spectacular theater was that it no longer existed. Its exemplary extinction secured it a place in Kircher's moral tale. The theater illustrates an architectural history where Christian faith offers the firmest foundation, where modest monuments endure longer than majestic ones, and where immaterial visions hold stronger than solids. What makes buildings stand and why they fall down – remnants of a Renaissance discourse – were questions asked with a new urgency. Every building, right down to the beginning of history, was detained and tried at the court of Christian antiquarians. How Roman monuments were sentenced is this book's query.

The following chapters look at antiquity through the binoculars of the seventeenth century. Ancient Rome in the view of Giacomo Lauro, publishing at the beginning of the century, and of Athanasius Kircher, publishing toward its end, was populated by a classical architecture that to us does not seem

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classical at all, but extravagantly Baroque. One epoch layered on another offers no direct, transparent view of the ancient past, but one that is refracted by a period and a culture that saw differently. It is not *our* antiquity we shall revisit, but *theirs* we shall explore. In a historical landscape twice removed, monuments we think we know appear unrecognizable, and others, of which we were not aware, stand out in strangely familiar forms. What reaches us through these superimposed pasts is an image of antiquity doubly distorted, but only half acknowledged.

Because many seventeenth-century reconstructions so artfully defy common knowledge on the remains at the time, the question is on what basis they convey antiquity. Analyzing the elements of conjecture in the archaeological visions of Lauro and Kircher enables new levels of meaning to appear: Instead of being testimonies of failed archaeology, they emerge as complex architectural *concetti*, amalgams of poignant references responding to moral, political, and religious issues in the seventeenth century. As the Roman Baroque period produced and reproduced its own version of the past, one quite distinct from the Renaissance version, ideal reconstructions provided architects with dazzling forms and suggestive connotations that pointed as much forward in time as backward.

The transformation of ruined Rome to a spectacularly depicted *urbs antiqua* in print explains the ancient city's continuing survival as a point of reference in discourses on history, theology, and architecture in a period that in many respects appears to have turned its back on the classical legacy. Although departing from known facts, illustrations of Rome in maps, popular guidebooks, and antiquarian compendiums recombined evidence from several fields into precise and meaningful evocations. From the woodcut illustrations of the classically built never-never-land of Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) and Cesare Cesariano's illustrated edition of Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (1521), to Domenico Giuntalodi's majestically envisioned and beautifully articulated single-folio monuments from the 1530s and Sebastiano Serlio's virtuoso display of architectural projections of antiques in Book III of *L'Architettura* (1540), it was the graphically reproduced image that had reconstituted classical Rome and left a city not in marble, as Augustus famously once put it, but on copper. Gradually every brick of the real and imagined city was retraced and engraved, then printed, sold, copied, reprinted, and recopied in an ever-expanding fan of images. As a capital of print, Rome – once again – stretched out to the farthest corners of the continent, but this time pinned to the walls and placed on the bookshelves of a new pan-European audience of travelers and collectors. In maps, single folios, and illustrated books – through countless states and editions – the empire of the ancients was restored in black and white.[3]

The print industry did little to broaden insight on the remains. Almost on the contrary, it accelerated the demand for an instant archaeology, an antiquity

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that would sell and that appeared striking, complete, and – somewhat paradoxically – up to date. The medium of print needed and created a past that was reproducible and simplified. Whereas the number of exceptional antiquarians like Pirro Ligorio and Onofrio Panvinio remained consistently low, those fulfilling other roles – engravers, printers, editors, and publishers – multiplied. The dissemination and gradual corruption of the printed image entailed not only a consequent diminution of quality, but even more dramatically, the focus on the actual site also waned. One encounters a situation where the basis for the prints is no longer the monuments, but previous prints. Rome per se turns into a genre.

That is why this book claims that the reconstruction of Rome in print was very much contingent on printmaking itself. An investigation into the history and conventions of graphic reproduction reveals an image of Rome forged by genres born in printmaking, such as emblems and frontispieces, and readjusted to accommodate religious and secular authorities, as well as patrons, collectors, tourists, and profit-hungry editors. The combination of factors results in engraved architecture that represents the ancient models not archaeologically, but didactically – with the mission to flatter, instruct, convert. Traits that at first glance seem fantastic appear after scrutiny as calculated moves responding to the obligations and restrictions imposed by the print industry itself. The politics of publishing – to summarize this seventeenth-century practice – intervened in antiquarian practice on matters of printing privileges, princely patronage, and papal propaganda. In all this it was not Rome that became less "ancient" but antiquity that instead reemerged in a new guise. Rome in print, in other words, was a very different Rome from the one that the conscientious draftsman would portray or indeed the archaeologist could vouch for: It was an ancient Rome that originated in the Baroque and that in the final instance contributes to give meaning to that troublesome term.

LAURO AND KIRCHER

The century that extends from Lauro's composition of his first prints in the mid-1580s to Kircher's death in 1680 corresponds roughly to the period that historians in art and architecture term the "Roman Baroque."[4] Although Lauro was still active as a printmaker when the young Jesuit arrived in Rome in 1633, nothing suggests that they met. In addition to the mere fact that their careers overlap, the main reason to write a book about both is that their respective studies on antiquity form a continuation methodologically and ideologically. In other words, their reconstructions combine in a development on their own, offering a veritable manual to the historiographies of prints, antiquarianism, and architecture – not to mention the idea of the Baroque

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itself. Their reconstructions are complex, rich in references, and self-conscious of a print history that already at Lauro's time was more than a century old: Lauro transformed Roman types to an ideological vocabulary that would appeal to political and religious elites, whereas Kircher turned the entire legacy, including actual images borrowed from Lauro, into visually stunning allegories of patronage and theology.

The three books, or *libri*, of Giacomo Lauro's *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* were available on the market by 1615 and amount to a tour de force portrayal of Rome as he thought it looked at an unspecified point in time of its imperial heyday; they contain engraved and partly etched folios of nearly one hundred individual monuments accompanied by an explanatory text on folios that measure ca. 235 × 275 mm. Today dismissed as fantasies and largely overlooked as a source on ancient Rome, the series offered irresistible models for architects, antiquarians, painters, sculptors, and engravers in Italy and abroad for a century and half, going through several editions and countless imitations. The three Baroque architects Bernini, Borromini and Cortona, to whom I shall return, consulted and copied Lauro models for their own projects. So did the Austrian Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach and the Swedish court architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger. The reconstructions also offered models for painters, engravers, and stucco workers, including Jean Lemaire, Giacinto Gimignani, and Domenico Barrière, and they influenced generations of authors and editors of antiquarian publications from Giovanni Maggi and Andrea Fei to Athanasius Kircher. In short, Lauro's printed reconstructions cast their spell on the Baroque visual imagination and offered the seventeenth century its "official" past: They therefore hold the key to unlocking the secret of the period's reinvention of Roman antiquity.

The small but significant literature on *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* tends to fall into two categories: The work is discussed in relation to printing and print history, or it is seen as a quarry of models for Baroque architecture. In a pioneering series of articles in *La Bibliofilia* published between 1927 and 1929 Thomas Ashby introduced the figure of Lauro to modern scholarship.[5] Ashby no doubt was motivated by his acquisition of a manuscript containing letters to Lauro, neatly transcribed by Lauro himself and now preserved in the British School at Rome, and referred to in this book as Lauro's "Album Amicorum." Governed by a positivistic ideal, Ashby set himself the daunting task of giving order to Lauro's gigantic output of prints; therefore he naturally treated the *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* most summarily. Yet the English scholar held it to be the most arresting part of Lauro's legacy and was able to identify its patrons, publishers, and financers. By comparing several copies he suggested there was a series of editions, thus establishing a publishing history that, although problematic, prevails today. Ashby even got as far as counting the number of folios contained in the work, but left it at that. What remained after Ashby,

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therefore, was to account for the individual prints and their meaning and influence.

The other scholar to have written individual articles on Lauro is Daniela Del Pesco. She approached *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* from a different angle in three articles that have in common a focus on Lauro's reconstructions as prototypes for Baroque architecture. The most substantial article of the three appeared in 1984, investigating Lauro's prints as models for the projects of Bernini, Cortona, and Borromini. In 1985 a short paper was published on the same theme, but here Del Pesco importantly emphasized how a Christian rhetoric permeates the reconstructions, and in 2000 she published a detailed investigation into the connection between Borromini and his circle and Lauro.[6] Evidently, Del Pesco went some way in the consideration of the individual buildings in Lauro's prints, an option left unexplored by Ashby. But so far they have not been discussed as what they truly represent, namely ancient monuments. It is Lauro's redefinition of Roman antiquity, even of the idea of history itself, that this book argues makes him a game changer in the Baroque period.

If the *Urbs Antiqua* of Lauro exists beyond the confines of archaeology, the question is where and when it did exist. In his most compelling designs Lauro maneuvered antiquities into a discourse that was decidedly contemporary, lifting Roman types out of an antiquarian discourse and into theological, moral, and political ones. These reconstructions, I shall argue, are no mere follies but rhetorical statements, masked as antiques, in the Catholic propaganda against infidels and heretics; in the dynastic aspiration of the Savoy and the Farnese to claim the position as heirs to the emperors; and in the rivalry between printmakers for the attention of sponsors to finance their publications. Reconstructions around 1600 took *sides*. To complete the series Lauro drew from a variety of sources that included printed maps, folios, emblem books, and texts from antiquity to 1600, as well as elements from architectural projects such as the basilica of S. Peter's, the Villa Borghese, and various palaces under construction across Europe. Evidence exclusively drawn from the antique, assembled by earlier generations of antiquarians, was simply not sufficiently compelling to engage the public of the new century. As I shall argue, for antiquity to continue to convince, and indeed to survive, it was necessary to select and recombine an amalgam of sources in a new meaningful whole. Allegory replaced archaeology in the mediation of Rome.

Athanasius Kircher's fame is stratospheric compared to Lauro, and the German Jesuit basks in the light of much scholarly attention.[7] Books, exhibitions, and conferences in the last decades have established Kircher as the essential figure of the seventeenth century and as iconic in the attempts to capture the essence of the Baroque both as a concept and as a period. As Jesuit, polyhistor, and author of more than thirty books on a range of topics, always teetering on the tightrope between originality and the spectacularly erroneous,

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Kircher has been a feast to explore for historians of various sciences, including geology, medicine, and metallurgy, as well as for experts in Egyptology, linguistic, and music, to mention a few. Kircher's research on Roman antiquity forms but a small part of his rich oeuvre and is confined mainly to the book *Latium* published in 1671. His reconstruction of monuments forms even a smaller part and boils down to a handful of examples. Only two villas in Tivoli are the subject here. Yet they fulfill the potential of the seventeenth-century reconstructive genre in two quite exceptionally ingenious displays of allusions that weave together ancient and contemporary references, mundane and religious concerns, in a densely packed allegory of the Jesuit antiquarian's own reality, and that are executed in specially commissioned and visually stunning graphic reproductions. The villa reconstructions – overlooked in scholarship – mark a highpoint in an appropriation of the past that might best be termed "Baroque."

Although, as mentioned earlier, there is no evidence that Lauro and Kircher met, they connect on various points. On a basic level, their overlapping careers in Rome were rooted in the same milieu of publishers and collectors: The publishing house of Vitale Mascardi, for example, issued a late edition of *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* and also several works by Kircher in the 1650s, and Duke Ferdinand Albrecht Brunswick-Lüneburg, who acquired a copy of Lauro's book in 1663, corresponded with the Jesuit.[8] In fact, Lauro and Kircher's respective relationships to their benefactors demonstrate an increasing professionalization: Whereas Lauro sought compensation from sponsors *after* he had printed the work, Kircher secured financing before he even started writing. From the perspective of patronage, then, the reconstruction of Roman monuments went from the readjusted to the entirely custom-made, from the dedication of single folios to whole volumes produced with a specific patron in mind. Lauro and Kircher demonstrate, in slightly different ways, that no such thing as an independent print antiquarian existed; independency had simply no place in the tight economic, social, and political structure that made the publication of this material possible at all.

Lauro and Kircher depended on identical antiquarian sources, notably Pirro Ligorio's manuscripts and publications; however, these were sources that, in a next step, both manipulated and recombined in order to connect antiquity to a grand providential history governed by the Christian God. For underneath the plethora of apparent evidence, the same conception of history permeates the argumentation of both Lauro and Kircher. The references that first Lauro and then Kircher make to Augustine's *City of God* and Cardinal Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici* were moral dictums that reminded readers of imperial Rome's unavoidable downfall, but admittedly also redeemed the guilty pleasure it was to reconstruct it, in a profession controlled by papal censorship. On an unprecedented level of erudition and eloquence Kircher completes Lauro's

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reinvention of antiquity not only by literally copying his work but, more importantly, by also systematizing and perfecting the notion of history that lay under it.

By connecting Lauro's first attempts at a synthesis to Kircher's learning, this study ambitiously aims to define the particular view on architectural history at work in the Roman Baroque. This view evolved around a paradox: Divine providence governed history and also architectural history, so why had it allowed pagan Rome to exist? The revisions to the past needed in response to this question were a primary concern for Roman historians and antiquarians alike. Revelation, not excavation, seemed to have held the answer. Characteristically, Lauro includes as an introduction to his work an image of the prophecy of Daniel famously predicting the Roman Empire's overthrow. To a modern reader there is an obvious contradiction in flagging the collapse of ancient Rome in a book that after all is concerned with its reconstruction. Under the same auspices, when Kircher explains to a friend in a letter that his roaming around the countryside of Lazio was guided "not so much by human as by divine instinct", it says a great deal about the powers the Jesuit believed stood by him in his reorganization of the past.[9] This study thus aims to insert in the history of antiquarianism that missing but essential stage I name "Baroque," which turned sites into signs and advanced ancient monuments – *ex eventu* – as vehicles for Christian truths. Already apparent with Lauro, the approach reaches a spectacular conclusion with Kircher. Where Lauro added the occasional forewarning of the advent of Christ, Kircher envelops antiquity as such in a narrative of Christian triumph. In short, this book investigates how Baroque Rome placed antiquity not so much in architectural history as in a theology that combined Jesuit missionary thinking with a neoplatonic theory of the origin of architecture.

From this perspective, Lauro's *Temple of Honor and Virtue* and *Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus*, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, as well as Kircher's *Villa of Quintilius Varus*, analyzed in the last chapter, can be seen as theological exercises. Separating these two seventeenth-century scholars from the antiquarian circles of the Renaissance was the publication of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* in 1548. The founder of the Order of the Society of Jesus offered a momentously influential but very simple manual for reaching religious enlightenment. Imagining scenes connected to Christ and biblical events, down to the level of architectural details, was fundamental in Loyola's instructions and paved the way for envisioning yonder places not in any objective way but as personally instructive examples. Apart from the fact that drawing these designs itself would be seen as an act of religious meditation, I believe that Loyola, as much as antiquarians like Pirro Ligorio, prompted the Christian rhetoric and eccentric solutions in many Baroque reconstructions. This is no mere speculation considering the fact that Lauro was helped out by the theologian André

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Bayam in writing the texts to *Antiquae Urbis Splendor*. Bayam's contribution, as we see later, almost hijacked the enterprise to serve the Christian Catholic mission of conversion. Kircher was himself a Jesuit, obliged almost to advance the legacy of his society's founder, even when incising metal.

ANCIENT ROME'S THIN LINES

Prints, that cavalier definition, are in more precise terms mechanically produced images impressed on paper (or some other printable material) distinguished by the materials and methods of incision. Wood, copper, and copper layered with wax required different carving skills that commonly might be termed engraving. To identify the individual techniques behind engraved reconstructions is not always easy, nor is an aim in itself in this book, except for when the quality and nature of the incision may illuminate the architecture represented. Moreover, techniques were often used in combination and also in imitation of each other, in the manner in which flexible etching copycatted laborious, revered copper engraving. But most of all, incisions – of all kinds – imitated drawing.

Drawing and engraving are deceptively similar. The history of architectural drawing is not the subject of this book, but one point needs to be made. From the Renaissance onward drawing was a means not only to record ancient monuments but also to understand them. Filippo Brunelleschi, Ian Campbell points out, learned of Roman antiquities through drawing them, and in the grand collaborative project to reconstruct ancient Rome, sanctioned by Pope Leo X and headed by Raphael, the actual reconstruction hinged on the development of sophisticated projections.[10] It is true that drawn motifs occasionally were corrupted in the process of being copied from one manuscript to the other, as Christopher S. Wood reminds us.[11] Yet, the draftsman could, if he willed, relate to the monument with an intimacy a printmaker never could attain – retracing the contours of actual solids.

Incising is also a form of delineation, but the reality it conveys is studio-made. The process of making an engraving boils down to metalworking and to a set of skills altogether different from the ones required to capture three dimensions convincingly. One never incises a monument "live" in the way the draftsman sketches his motifs on paper. But graphic techniques, too, in their own particular way, were used deliberately, if not rhetorically, to convey a specific image of ancient Rome: Girolamo Franzini's schematic woodcuts of architecture, for example, which illustrated his guidebooks to Rome from 1588 onward, have failed to impress scholars and connoisseurs (see Figs. 17 & 77).[12] Yet their artlessness might have been strategic: The almost exaggerated simplicity of the around forty reconstructed monuments arguably imitates the architectural representations found on ancient coins, which were a highly

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esteemed source material at the time. Mimicking the technique of impressing images on metal would enhance the content's "authenticity" and the pretense that the monuments were copied from the antique.

Thirty years later, the startlingly impressionistic architectural views in Giovanni Maggi's *Aedificiorum et Ruinarum Romæ ex Antiquis atque Hodiernis Monimentis*, published in 1618, create the illusion that his imaginary reconstructions were rapidly sketched in situ observations of the kind a travelers' sketchbook would contain (see Figs. 20 & 38).[13] To emphasize the connection, Maggi included in his views the image of tourists and artists shown precisely in the act of observing. Both Franzini and Maggi, some decades apart, appealed to visual paradigms dominant in their periods, which affected their very delineation. In broader terms, the shift from coins to artist's impression, as pictorial guarantors, indicates a culture moving away from the sixteenth-century cataloging of remnants to the seventeenth-century grand tour traveler's eyewitness aesthetics.

The rhetoric of the graphic techniques suggests that *style* is a conscious choice. Ignoring for a moment Lauro's shortcomings as a draftsman, his antiques are always recognizable, because the bold yet simple solutions manifest typologies of buildings more than individual archaeological sites. Temples, palaces, theaters, arches, villas become in Lauro's visual formulas "gestures" that the city – ancient and new – could add to its urban repertory. The use of *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* as a stylistic manual, an architectural book of manners, might explain its success across Europe. Representations of buildings that no longer exist are bound to build on conventions rather than on solids. For Lauro, moreover, reconstructing lost antiques meant reenvisioning them as "Christian" – a concern I think extended also to the style of depiction. Lauro's simplistic types suggest a conscious aim to steer away from a formal likeness to the monuments as signs, allowing for a deeper meaning – the iconography – to emerge. Thus, the departure from physical evidence, as well as from precise drawing, contributed to turn Rome into a new and fundamentally incised city.

A similar grading of the graphic expression pervades Kircher's books. The striking differences in quality displayed across his architectural illustrations, I shall contend, were always carefully calculated. The style of depiction, ranging from the rudimentary to the elaborate, tends to reflect the moral value of the architecture represented – an imperial palace and a saint's sanctuary invited different degrees of technical brilliance.

The architectural projections composed around the triad – *plan*, *elevation,* and *section-cut* – which had been developed by Renaissance architects and theorists, were part of the conventions of representations that passed from drawing to engraving. But whereas these conventions were absolutely essential in the draftsman's translation of a built structure into two dimensions, they served no such function in the process of printmaking. Lauro often copied

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these perspectives as "quotations" of a structural analysis that he himself had no part in and in fact did not fully comprehend, but which placed his oeuvre in a proud tradition of the illustrated architectural treatise of the Renaissance. For Lauro, Kircher, and others it was therefore not a question of translating solids onto paper, but of imitating such translations. They produced architectural drawings – in perspective and elevation – even though the actual model had long vanished. Thus, the pictorial convention itself constituted the skeleton, the essence, of the built work, instead of offering a mere means to project it.

Moving from conventions to formats, the dimensions of the printed page were at times to blame for distorting antiques, and seventeenth-century publications can be seen to regroup Roman monuments in new "topographies" conditioned on book production itself. The often reduced (and sellable) book sizes, together with there being only a limited number of illustrations, forced printmakers to reassemble in a single image buildings that in previous publications had been illustrated individually. The architecture was clipped, distances reduced, and landscapes merged in urban views that book production invented. For example, Andrea Fei's *Ritratto di Roma antica*, compiled by Pompilio Totti and published in 1627, rearranged, reduced, and foreshortened an already reconstructed past to accommodate the required pocket-sized format. Rome itself was refounded as visual fiction.

Still, the constrictions of the trade were not the only agents of change, and they were not even the most decisive ones. Prints, as opposed to drawing, were intended for wide distribution and were therefore also more suited for carrying messages to a broad audience in an age when religious propaganda from Rome peaked and publications became effective weapons in the showdown between Catholic and non-Catholic Europe. In addition, book production depended on financing from princely patrons, and Roman monuments were scrupulously reconstructed to look like palaces and villas that just had been or were about to be realized. Books and prints tricked sovereigns from Turin to Stockholm into believing they ruled their own *Roma antica*, which instead had been invented backstage by shrewd printmakers.

Technique, conventions, formats, as well as the obligations and restrictions of the publishing trade, recast the imperial capital on terms laid out not by remains, not even by drawing, but by their representation in print. In the final assessment engraving produced not an antiquity, but a non-antiquity, as carefully and deliberately constructed as the real city itself.

PRINT ANTIQUARIANISM

In *Antiquae Urbis Splendor* Lauro names the learned Guido Panciroli as one of his sources, and in 1612 Panciroli wrote, "Printing was the one universal language that taught how to preach to different nations the greatness of the

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