

4-1-1996

Review: The Architectural Drawings of Antonio da San Gallo the Younger and His Circle. Volume I: Fortifications, Machines, and Festival Architecture

George Gorse
Pomona College

Recommended Citation

Gorse, George. Review of "The Architectural Drawings of Antonio da San Gallo the Younger and His Circle. Volume I: Fortifications, Machines, and Festival Architecture," ed. N. Adams, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996), pp. 240-242.

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Pomona Faculty Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pomona Faculty Publications and Research by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

responsa and *takkanot* (ordinances). Further, Edwards' divisions obliterate all matter of distinction between different forms of Jewish life and expression, between Ashkenazic and Sephardic cultures, for example.

The orientation of the present book is, perhaps, more understandable given the views presented in the monograph on which it is based. In *The Jews in Christian Europe 1400–1700*, Edwards writes, for example, that “it is necessary to decide between the traditional Jewish date of the creation of the world by the Lord and the Christian date of the birth of Jesus Christ as the basic reference point. For practical purposes, however, the decision has already been made by the western dominance over the history of the world, which has been achieved, largely in a Christian tradition, over the last four or five hundred years.” Edwards goes on to state that “it will be noted that Jewish history in this period is here being defined in Christian terms.” Such perspective and shortcomings are, however unfortunate, not Edwards' alone; rather they seem to haunt much recent research and writing on late medieval and early modern Jewish history.

In the end, this book presents a very thoughtful presentation of sources, taken mostly from the Christian perspective, of Christian policies and actions towards Jews in the late medieval and early modern periods. Teachers or students interested in a wider exploration of Jewish history will, however, have to look elsewhere to have their needs met.

Dean Phillip Bell Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies

The Architectural Drawings of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and His Circle. Volume I. Fortifications, Machines, and Festival Architecture.
Ed. Nicholas Adams. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994. 522 pp. 472 illus. \$95.00.

This much awaited first in a most ambitious three-volume catalog of the architectural drawings of the Florentine-Roman architect, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1484–1546), comes at a bittersweet moment. After more than eighteen years of promoting high quality publications in the history of architecture, The Architectural History Foundation, under its able director Victoria Newhouse, closed its doors this year, having advanced its scholarly mission. This volume clearly graces this distinguished series of award-winning monographs, and one can only hope that the second volume on Sangallo's churches, in particular his twenty-six year work as architect of St. Peter's, and third on his palaces and antique studies will be completed expeditiously by MIT Press. This major project was also made possible by Challenge and Access Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which, at this point, we do not even know if it will exist to see the fulfillment of this major international scholarly collaboration.

International collaboration is the key concept here. There could not be a more qualified group of more than a dozen scholars from different countries, carrying out this mammoth corpus of more than a thousand drawings, fortunately concentrated in the *Uffizi Gabinetto dei Disegni* in Florence. Leading the Sangallo project, which finally puts this major architect and engineer into a cultural and art-historical context, is the codirector of the *Biblioteca Hertziana* in Rome, Christoph Frommel, himself a distinguished Renaissance architectural historian and Sangallo specialist. Frommel introduces the catalog with a perceptive essay on Sangallo's training in Florence under the influence of his architect uncles, Giuliano da Sangallo and Antonio da Sangallo the Elder, key figures under Lorenzo il Magnifico and Savonarola. As well as learning carpentry and stonemasonry in the workshop of Antonio the Elder on the new grand council chamber of the *Palazzo Signoria* for the Savonarolan republic 1496

to 1498, Sangallo gained the antiquarian classicism and Vitruvian theoretical perspective of Giuliano from the Laurentian period.

This combination of theory and practice informed Antonio the Younger's entire career, culminating in a never-completed commentary on Vitruvius in 1527-31, during a lull in commissions after the Sack of Rome, which contradicts the largely technical, craftsman image he suffers from in the literature to date, a result of his major contributions to military architecture and engineering during the Hapsburg-Valois Italian wars of the first half of the sixteenth century. This catalog and introduction rectifies this balance of theory and practice, humanist antique influence and workshop technique, which Antonio the Younger brought to Rome after 1499-1502, completing his artistic training in the cultural milieu of the "imperial papacies" of Alexander VI, Julius II, and Leo X: the *Renovatio Romae*, realized by the workshops of Bramante and Raphael in the *Fabbrica di San Pietro*, the centerpiece of this early modern image of Europe.

Of particular interest in Frommel's introduction is his discussion of the influence of Filippino Lippi's sketch style (and I would add Leonardo's dynamic movement drawings; see E. Gombrich, *Leonardo's Method for Working Out Compositions, Norm and Form* (1971), 58-63, on Sangallo's architectural drawings, which chronicle the process of invention from preliminary idea sketches to plans, elevations, sections, perspective and orthogonal sections, and three-dimensional wooden models: the progressive stages of Renaissance architectural planning. The large percentage of sketches in Antonio's extant graphic work is remarkable, and Frommel places him within a late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento disegno tradition, contributing to the history of architectural drawing, representation, and connoisseurship, pioneered by modern scholars, in particular Burckhardt, Geymuller, Giovannoni, and Lotz.

Frommel's introduction also outlines the provenance of the Sangallo drawings, entering the Grand Ducal collection from the architect's descendants as early as 1574, and the critical state of research, added to by the succeeding introductory essays by Nicholas Adams and Simon Pepper on Sangallo's fortification drawings, building upon their earlier collaborative publication of the fortifications of Renaissance Siena. Adams and Pepper bring a precision to the discussion of military architecture that permeates this volume, both in their introductory essay and succeeding catalog entries, which sets out the major revolution of gunpowder and cannon warfare from the early fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries, rapidly transforming medieval corner towers and thin curtain walls into more integrated and dynamic, offensive diamond-shaped bastions and low escarpment walls with advance ditches, a more comprehensive treatment of fortifications and topographic setting. One sees this integration of site in the wide range of topographic surveys and technical fortification drawings with ballistic firing lines—the Renaissance military version of one-point perspective—in the catalog entries, a dynamic relationship of exterior defense and internal urban environments, including piazzas, streets, palaces, barracks, and residents. The enclosed Renaissance garrison city became a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Closing the introductory essays are case studies by Hildegard Giess of Sangallo's fortifications of Castro and Nepi north of Rome for Pope Paul III and Pier Luigi Farnese, which document the architect's universal interest in military engineering, science and technology, urbanism, mapmaking, and ducal iconography, incorporating major features of the former Etruscan hill towns into his designs. And a final essay by Gustina Scaglia puts Sangallo's drawings of machines, instruments, and tools into context of classical to Renaissance treatises on technology, in particular the fifteenth-century Siense Francesco di Giorgio Martini, further illuminating the importance of these figures who have traditionally been overshadowed by the "major masters" of Italian Renaissance architecture. The result is a more balanced per-

spective on the period, with Renaissance “triumphalism,” art, humanism, and science in the service of the state as a work of art being the common leitmotiv of this rich volume of drawings for fortifications, machines, and festival architecture. More than simply a specialized study, this volume opens up vistas into all fields.

George L. Gorse **Pomona College**

Die Legende von der “Neuen Welt”: Montaigne und die “littérature géographique” im Frankreich des 16. Jahrhunderts. Angela Enders. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993. vii + 289 pp. n.p.

Most critics maintain one of the following tenets: (1) Montaigne was a pioneer of cultural relativism; (2) he was the first French author to confront the Old World with the New; (3) he created the *bon sauvage* myth. Enders’ thesis holds that Montaigne’s New World essays, “Des Cannibales” and “Des coches,” were not that original. She demonstrates this by examining the cosmographers and travel logs known to French readers.

The cosmographers, Belleforest, Benzoni (revised and corrected by Chauveton), and Gómara, write in terms of Old World power politics. Gómara, former secretary and chaplain to Cortés, defends Spanish behavior in Mexico and Peru. Chauveton, survivor of a Spanish massacre of French settlers in Florida, writes in opposition to Gómara. Both authors see the Indians as inferior, but see positive characteristics that Columbus had noted: simplicity, innocence, courage, robustness, contentedness.

The chief travel writers are André Thevet and Jean de Léry. Léry, one of the sources of the *bon sauvage* myth, is too factual to have formulated the myth, but he furnishes the material for humanistic readers to do so. He describes the Tupinamba tribe in Brazil as robust, athletic, attractive, long-lived—because free from envy, greed, and mistrust that plague Europeans. Tupinamba also display honesty, hospitality, courage, happiness, natural modesty, etc. Léry, however generally praises Indians to highlight European vices. Thevet spent only two months in the New World, and his main purpose is to present “choses non encores veues.” He never idealizes the Indians, but believes Europe could profit from them.

Ronsard’s two poems “Les îles fortunées” and “Complainte contre fortune” are the only literary works that mention the New World, and in them, Ronsard evokes the classical Golden Age. Montaigne is the first French literary figure who confronts the worlds. His New World essays demonstrate the relativity of cultural value judgments, but Agrippa, Des Périers, Bodin, and Pasquier were relativists before him; Pasquier in his letters compares Indians and Europeans to the detriment of the latter.

Despite his claims, Montaigne is not describing any real place or people. His is a land of milk and honey, with no mention of Léry’s/Thevet’s brackish drinking water, swamps, heat, humidity, and swarming insects. The natives are likewise “sanitized,” without flaw, though Montaigne carefully explains their cannibalism as a revenge-ritual, contrasting favorably to French atrocities in the Religious Wars. He assimilates the Indians to the Greeks and Romans, attributing to them the same virtues. He opposes nature and art, finding nature superior in every way, though his natural men are not without arts. The Indians are without laws because they live according to natural law, for Europeans an impossible ideal. They embody the “good old days,” the Golden Age when everything was better.

Montaigne models himself on Castiglione’s *cortegiano*, who becomes the French *honnête homme*. Courage, moderation, and the knightly skills (the hunt, dueling, dancing, respect for women)—all virtues to be found in Montaigne’s Indians—also form a part of *honnêteté*. Elsewhere, Montaigne differentiates between the *moi public* and the *moi privé*. The private self