ARCHITECTURAL PRINTS

An exhibition of prints, drawings, and books of architectural subjects was opened on December 19 in the Print Galleries, K 37-40. Beginning about 1480, this exhibition illustrates the history of graphic architecture up to the end of the nineteenth century. At specifically architectural prints, which were made in the North, showed little of the Renaissance feeling. The picture chronicles, books about everything under the sun which were published to cater to the growing taste for general information, contained many views of cities and towns. Flat cardboard buildings were defined by the simplest wood-

WOODCUT FROM SERLIO’S ARCHITETTURA
(VENICE, 1569 EDITION)

the time of the earliest printing of architectural pictures, architecture was, in Italy, a subject of immediate and intense interest. Out of the Renaissance passion for classical architecture as seen in the remains of Roman buildings there had already come a new, self-conscious theory of architecture which was to develop and grow continuously in all parts of Europe for over three hundred years.

Graceful Renaissance buildings as well as ruined fragments of Roman arches occur in the backgrounds of fifteenth-century Italian prints and book illustrations. The earliest cut outlines and piled up in towers and peaks with no thought of perspective and in the earlier ones with only random verisimilitude. Many of these views in books were copied from whatever material was available—from earlier books or often, probably, from engravings or paintings now lost. Some of the views of towns in the Nuremburg Chronicle of 1493, which ambitiously covers remote parts of the world, are pure fancy and interchangeable under different names, although the local towns are fairly authentic and apparently drawn for the book. Others are copied from Breydenbach’s famous Pilgrim-

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age to the Holy Land printed in Mainz in 1486, which was remarkable among the picture travel books because its elaborate folding views of foreign towns were drawn from actual observation by an artist who went on the trip. The toy-village type of view continued to be a convention in the atlases for many years and passed on its rather appealing simplicity to the less conscientious of the topographical prints which were published in increasing numbers. More accurate views by men of real ability were soon issued by the print publishers to meet the growing demand for such pictorially widened horizons. The Gothic gables and castles, still untouched by the Renaissance style of the South, which in the backgrounds of the engravings of Dürer and Lucas of Leyden so enchanted the Italians that they transferred them to their own prints, are given full and careful treatment in Lautensack’s big, three-section views of Nuremberg of 1552. Rome, particularly its classical remains, was drawn and engraved again and again by Italians and by the Northerners who flocked there. In 1575 Lafreri, a Frenchman, published the great set Speculum Romanae magnificentiae, 118 engravings of Roman buildings and statues by various engravers.

Although Renaissance architecture was created with an artist’s freedom by men of originality who used classic conventions as the material for their own inventive imagination, it was thought about and studied as a scientific and God-given system. The manuscript of Vitruvius, an architect of Augustan Rome, was discovered in 1414. In it were written down rules for the construction of Roman buildings which became the bible of the later Renaissance architects. It was first printed about 1486 and then without illustrations, but many handsomely illustrated editions followed, like the Como Vitruvius of 1521, Barbaro’s edition of 1556, and Jean Martin’s French translation of 1547 with fine woodcuts by the sculptor Jean Goujon. Architects who had measured and studied Roman remains began to publish their own versions of classic rules, illustrated with woodcuts or engravings of the orders and of their own or antique buildings. Serlio’s Architettura, of which the earliest book was published in 1537, was soon translated into other languages, and was followed by numerous other Italian architecture books. The treatise of Philibert de l’Orme, court architect of Henry II, published in 1567, was the first important French architecture book and the earliest practical textbook of modern times for details of construction like stone-cutting or building a roof. Besides intelligible working designs for these everyday problems, he included woodcuts of his own work, like that of the entrance to Diane de Poitiers’ château of Anet with Cellini’s Nymph over the door. The supreme codifier of Renaissance architecture was Andrea Palladio, whose Quattro libri was published in 1570. He had been by no means hidebound in his practical application of classic rules in his buildings at Vicenza and elsewhere, and he might have been dismayed to find how strictly his hope “that the way of Building will be reduced to general Utility, and very soon arrive to that pitch of Perfection, which, in all Arts, is so much desired” was realized in after years. As it happened, the book that made it possible for any builder to put up a correct Palladian construction abstracted the Renaissance style into a rule-of-thumb system just as it was about to broaden out into the fine free orchestration of the baroque. But Palladio was translated and republished again and again. The first English edition came out in 1715 with Inigo Jones’s commentaries incorporated. Palladianism was typical of eighteenth-century England until it was reshaped by the stricter archaeology of the Classical Revival and buffeted by the romanticism of the Gothic.

With the baroque came exciting opportunities for the publication of sumptuous books of architectural plates. Rubens’s Palaces of Genoa, first published in Antwerp in 1622, brought the Italian baroque to the Low Countries, where it had an enormous influence, an evolution of which can be found in such later Dutch works as those of Pieter Post and Vingboons. William and Mary brought this Italianate Dutch style to England, and it is interesting to note that from what we know of the architecture of Williamsburg, Virginia, it showed many of the traits of its Dutch ancestry.

Sets of patterns for interiors, ceilings,
chimney pieces, and all the intricate exuberance of architectural ornament were published in profusion by the leading designers. In the great building period of Louis XIV flourished two inspired designers of architectural as well as other ornament, Jean of designs continued to be used and copied and imitated. Gradually in the nineteenth century the illustrated magazine took their place, and now photographic reproduction has put architecture on every table.

As architecture received wider publicity

Lepautre and Daniel Marot. Marot fled France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and became architect for William of Orange in Holland and England. The uninhibited realm of stage settings gave scope to the towering and dizzy fancies of the Bibiena family. Through the rococo period and Classical and Gothic Revivals these books in books, and as public and private ostentation were producing more and more grand houses and churches, the engravers of views turned their attention to the news value of the correct rendering of contemporary buildings. Du Cerceau’s Plus Excellents Bastiments de France, 1576 and 1579, with its hundreds of brilliant outline etchings of the
châteaux of the Valois kings—which show the pleasantly unorthodox French compromise between classic balance and their own cheerful irregularity—was one of the earliest of many such sets. In a more elaborate style, Perelle's countless plates celebrated the grandiose structures of the time of Louis XIV. Lively with coaches, processions, and minutely costumed little figures, and ornate with spreading gardens and luxuriant trees, they still have the downright characteristics of the great mass of topographical prints. The buildings stand out squarely and dominate the scene with something of the insistence and disproportion of a hotel advertisement. Composition and perspective are conventionalized to the purposes of display. In some of the big bird's-eye views, like those in Loggan's Universities, the point of vision shifts several times. These conventions are easily accepted, and the topographical views often boldly drawn and decorative. They are irreplaceable records of vanished construction as well.

Along with them was developing another type of architectural print which formed a natural part of the growth of landscape art. In the etched outline landscapes of Hirschvogel and Lautensack a village church or rustic cottage is often the focus of the composition. Hieronymus Cock, the industrious publisher of Antwerp, who gave the engravings after Brueghel to the world, etched a set of picturesque Roman ruins in 1550–1551, among the earliest prints of a subject which was to be vastly popular both in the North and in the South and continued to furnish a sentimental stage setting for landscape artists down through the eighteenth century. Brueghel's series of Praediorum villarum, village scenes centered about simple cottages and farms, were early examples of a type of print of rustic architecture which the Dutch etchers of the seventeenth century used again and again. Rembrandt, of course, made all other rustic etchings look thinly charming. The line between the picturesque architectural print, the kind of composition in which architecture is treated as a part of a picture, and the topographical informative view is sometimes not too definite. Hollar etched both among his hundreds of prints of almost every variety of subject.

His views of London streets with their hard, accurately drawn little buildings in stiff rows have a personal arrangement and a sense of place and atmosphere that make them hard to assign to either category. Piranesi came to Rome at a time when a new and more ruthlessly archaeological fervor for Roman antiquities was presaging the Classical Revival. His great series of hundreds of views of Rome, in which he etched all the classical buildings as well as panoramas of the streets and Forum, are antiquarian topography in scope and emphasis. But Piranesi had a fiery imagination and enthusiasm. No more picturesque and dramatic prints of architecture have ever been made. No one else has been able so to make buildings alive, each with its own personality. Canaletto's quieter and lovelier views of Venice, warm with clear and even sunlight, are of particular interest in the history of architectural prints because of his connection with England. He went there in 1746 and stayed several years. His influence on the typical English view was considerable.

In England the topographical print had been popular since the seventeenth century. A vast number of books were published of views of all parts of England and of the great English country houses, the Gentleman's Seats, which their owners could have illustrated on payment of a subscription fee. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the English landscape painters worked out a new technique of water color painting, which in turn occasioned a peculiarly English type of picturesque printed view. Paul Sandby, one of the earliest of the water color painters, introduced into England the recently discovered process of aquatint etching, which was to translate water color painting into printed form. Its imitative effect was often heightened by the use of hand tinting. Sandby's series of Picturesque Views in Wales, beginning 1775, were followed by a succession of handsome aquatint plate books, like Boydell's History of the River Thames, with prints after Farington's paintings, and Ackermann's lavish publications, such as The Microcosm of London, with plates by Pugin and Rowlandson. The finest and most personal of all the English printed views are Girtin's set of soft-ground
etchings of Paris which he made in 1802, shortly before his death. The plates were aquatinted later in England from a set of impressions that Girtin colored by hand.

At the time that mechanical methods of reproduction were stereotyping architectural instruction and advertisement, the so-called revival of etching, in the 1850's, put a renewed emphasis on prints of picturesque architecture. These nineteenth-century etchers were the artistic descendants of the Dutch etchers of the seventeenth century, particularly Rembrandt. Meryon was especially influenced by Zeeman's clean-cut Paris views. Although Meryon and Whistler had marked individual styles—in Whistler's case there was a progression of varying styles—they set the fashion for a distinct genre of architectural etching that still continues popular. In it architecture, from being the subject matter of clear and skillful exposition, became the stage setting for an exhibition of etching technique. Alice Newlin.

A GIFT OF LACE

For several years the Museum has exhibited as a loan in Gallery H 18 a number of fine laces from the collection of George Blumenthal, conspicuous among them splendid lengths of Italian needlepoint. Together with other examples which lack of gallery space has made it impossible to show continuously, these laces have now been generously presented to the Museum by Mary Ann Blumenthal (Mrs. George Blumenthal) and will be shown this month in the Room of Recent Accessions. The gift comprises more than seventy pieces representing drawnwork, cutwork, needlepoint, and bobbin techniques and extending in period from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century.

Ranking high in the collection are the great Venetian needlepoint laces of the seventeenth century, generally considered the supreme achievement of the Italian workers' art. Of these, there are many examples, varied in type and pattern. The piece illustrated (fig. 1) is a superb Venetian point in relief, sometimes held to be the richest and most complicated of all needlepoints. The heavy, foliated scroll, with its highly conventionalized flower, is worked in fine ribbed lines, so close and firm that the texture resembles that of cloth. The toile is lightened by lines of tiny pinholes, and the decorative effect is enhanced by a variety of fillings. The pattern is edged with a thickly padded cordonnet finished with delicate picots and connected by ornamented tie-bars. Besides these heavy, ivorylike points, there are delicate rose points, whose slender, foliated scrolls are powdered with raised, heavily fringed flower forms and connected by brides profusely ornamented with picots resembling snowflakes. Two wide flounces illustrate this lace in great perfection. In one of them a "candelabra" design of minute flowers and arabesques varies the pattern of floral scrolls, while in the other the design takes the form of flowering vases. In addition to these larger examples, there are in the same technique a group of narrow borders and a cap trimming combining lappets and ruffle in one piece.

Among the laces which preceded these fully developed and sophisticated types, one of the most interesting pieces is a sixteenth-century apron of cut-linen work and embroidery, undoubtedly once an accompaniment of a formal costume. Aprons of this elaborate and decorative character long formed part of fashionable dress. They were worn not only by the gentry but also by great personages—Queen Elizabeth in the sixteenth century, the daughters of Louis XIV in the seventeenth, and the ladies of the family of George III in the eighteenth. Aside from its interest as an accessory to costume, this piece is a fine example of work in the period when the lacemaker was dependent upon a linen foundation as a basis for her pattern. Small drawnwork squares form an all-over diamond-shaped design, each ornamented in the center by a cutwork square filled with needlepoint. The remaining portion of the linen is elaborately embroidered in satin and curl stitch. Curiously and perhaps fortunately, the apron was never finished, so that various stages of the work may be clearly seen—the outlining tracery of squares, one square with the threads drawn, the framework completed, and finally the whole rich and intricate pattern. A band

1 Acc. nos. 36.130.1–74.