

DRAWINGS IN GREEK AND ROMAN ARCHITECTURE

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Cover: P. Oxy. LXXI 4842 The upper sections of two Corinthian unfluted columns with their capitals are represented, as well as an architrave with upper taenia and a frieze with a decoration of shoots of acanthus: from an Oxyrhynchus Papyrus of around AD 140.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is the survey of all the evidence, both visual and written, related to ancient drawings with architectural contents in the ancient Greek and Roman world.

An introductory chapter provides preliminary information about ancient architectural drawings and gives a short history of the consideration of this issue in the scholarly world.

A first chapter concerns the treatises written by ancient Greek architects about monuments they built. The ancient evidence concerning these books is analytically considered and the question as to whether these books included drawings of the described projects is discussed.

A second chapter concerns the illustrations which were included in the *de architectura* by Vitruvius but did not survive in the manuscript tradition. The problem of understanding what these drawings looked like is considered.

Then a third chapter concerns the possibility that other treatises about architectural matters after Vitruvius were provided with illustrating drawings.

A fourth chapter focuses the literary genre of the descriptions of architecture in the Greek and Roman world: the issue as to whether these evocations of monuments were accompanied by drawings is thoroughly discussed.

The fifth chapter concerns another literary genre: that of the so-called ‘gromatic’ writings, *i.e.* of treatises concerning agricultural colonies of the Roman world. In the manuscript tradition, these treatises are accompanied by miniature representations of a few colonies.

The possible relationship of these illustrations with drawings of buildings in books on architectural matters is discussed.

The sixth chapter is a collection of the literary and epigraphical references to drawings of architecture: in most cases, these drawings were projects submitted by architects to landowners or patrons of monuments to be built.

The seventh chapter is a survey of the archaeological evidence of this genre of drawing.

The above outlined systematic presentation of the evidence concerning architectural drawings leads to the establishment of a chronological sequence of the collected material. Moreover the issue about how projects' drawings looked like is investigated. A list of functions justifying the surviving architectural drawings is attempted.

Critical conclusions about how these drawings shed light on the status of architects and craftsmen in antiquity as well as concerning the existence of drawings with artistic purposes in antiquity are suggested.

Finally a catalogue of a *corpus* of 55 ancient drawings of architectural patterns is provided: all the items of the catalogue are illustrated.

The visual evidence included in this catalogue ranges from the 4th c. BC to AD 5th c. and has been found in monuments from Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, the Syrian region, Egypt, Rome and central Italy, northern Africa, Hystria and *Noricum*.

The architecture on which these figures are incised include temples, amphitheatres, burial monuments and quarries, while some examples are found on marble and clay mobile supports as well as on papyri.

It is hoped that this book will make use of the above considered evidence easier for scholars to access, thus promoting scholarly discussion about architectural drawings in antiquity.

Introduction

The aim of this essay is to study the drawings of architecture in the Greek and Roman World.

While there is a huge bibliography about built architecture and at least partially preserved buildings of the classical past, the interest of scholars for drawings of architecture has been much smaller.

This fact is due to the circumstance that until a few decades ago very few drawings of buildings had been noticed. Moreover these representations were not very impressive and could easily be thought to constitute a 'minor' genre of visual evidence of the ancient world.

This prejudice has no reason to exist because, as will be shown below, the drawings were salient and meaningful moments of the architectural activity in ancient times from several view points: projects of buildings usually were shown and visualized through drawings, moreover craftsmen often employed in building activities incised on walls drawings of the architectural elements to be done. It is necessary to specify that not always are these sketches of high quality: however they are crucial documents in order to understand how building enterprises worked at the times and in given regions.

Moreover the use of drawings was adopted systematically by state administrations, especially at Rome, in order to represent buildings subjected to taxation as well as to make land registers.

Sometimes, legal acts concerning property of real estate also contained drawings of these buildings.

The 'free' drawing of architecture for artistic reasons is rarely evidenced, as will be shown below, but a couple of documents suggest that even this genre of drawings existed.

Finally with the decline of the ancient world, the nostalgia for monuments of the past probably leads to the creation of drawings of renowned architecture, which are targeted by art tourism. In these cases drawings had the function of modern souvenirs.

These few anticipations are meant to suggest the importance of this visual genre in the ancient culture and thus to justify the followings pages.

The importance of drawings in the architectural activity of the Hellenistic world had been brought to the attention of the scholarly community especially by Lothar Haselberger, who throughout the 1980s and 1990s of last century published the most important construction drawings of the Didymaion (for a list of his relevant publications, see note 110). The notion that drawings were a necessary step toward the making of a building led to the publication of a *corpus* of architectural drawings in the ancient world: this catalog was made by Joachim P. Heisel, *Antike Bauzeichnungen*, Darmstadt (1993). Heisel's catalog was very important, moreover it has not been substituted by a more recent one and thus even now is a useful research tool: in this essay it is cited often.

However during the last decades the archaeological evidence of architectural drawings became richer thanks to new discoveries. Moreover, in Heisel's book the references to architectural drawings in epigraphic and literary *testimonia* did not receive enough consideration.

Finally, there are literary genres which have to do with architectural drawings and had not been treated in that worthy book: these literary branches are the treatises of architects about their own creations, Vitruvius' handbook about architecture, the descriptive or ekphrastic literature and finally the gromatic treatises. On the contrary the scientific need to consider these themes for a better understanding of the origins and of the fortune of architectural drawings in the Greek and Roman world is one of the reasons which justify this new book.

Finally the publication of the papyrus of Artemidorus led the renowned scholar Salvatore Settis (see note 1) to a reevaluation of the art of drawing as an important branch of the visual arts of the ancient world. Although Settis focused especially on drawing as a preliminary moment in the making of painting and sculpture, the understanding of the phenomenon of drawing architecture is crucial also in order to appreciate the various functions of drawings in the ancient visual culture.

This essay has been written in the years 2014 and 2015 thanks to a contract from the Center of Vitruvian Studies based in Fano (Italy). I wish to thank Prof. Salvatore Settis, Prof. Pierre Gros, Prof. Paolo Clini, the Count Luciano Filippo Bracci, Dr. Dino Zacchilli and many other scholars who made this institution a very 'nutritious' centre of learning.

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Athens, 9 October, 2015

Antonio Corso

Drawing images was a widespread practice in the ancient world.¹

However the evidence concerning drawings of architecture has never been the object of a comprehensive and organic research.

Filling this gap in the studies of the visual culture of the ancient world is exactly the purpose of this essay.

¹ See S. Settis, 'Il contributo del papiro alla storia dell'arte antica', C. Gallazzi *et alii* (a c. di), *Il Papiro di Artemidoro*, Milano (2008) 579-610.