

**Nicodemus Tessin the Younger. Royal Architect and Visionary**, Mårten Snickare (eds.); Stockholm: Nationalmuseum 2002; 239 S., 15 Farb- und 84 SW-Abb.; ISBN 9171006710; SEK 550,-

**Nicodemus Tessin the Younger: Sources Works Collections. Vol.I: Catalogue du cabinet des beaux arts 1712**, Per Bjurstöm/ Mårten Snickare (eds.); Stockholm: Nationalmuseum 2000; 278 S., 225 Farb- und 13 SW-Abb.; ISBN 9171006281

Vol. II: **Traictè dela decoration interieure 1717**, Patricia Waddy (ed.); Stockholm: Nationalmuseum 2002; 296 S., 16 Farb- und 80 SW-Abb.; ISBN 9171006575

Vol. III: **Travel notes 1673–77 and 1687–88**, Merit Laine/Börje Magnusson (eds.); Stockholm: Nationalmuseum 2002; 460 S., 16 Farb- und 109 SW-Abb.; ISBN 9171006729; All volumes: SEK 550,-

How often does one succeed in following the career of an artist in early modern Europe from his formative years to the heights of success? Seldom, but sometimes extant sources allow such rare occasions. A collection of manuscripts and books preserved in Stockholm offers just such a chance, to follow the architect and interior designer Nicodemus Tessin the Younger during most of his active life. The project to publish these sources was started in 2000. These rich documents have been meticulously edited; but what makes these volumes really worthwhile is the insight into the arts and culture of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe that the reader is able to gain through this architect's eyes.

Baron Nicodemus Tessin the Younger (1654–1728) was, during the decades around 1700, the most important court-architect and artist in Sweden. He was appointed Royal architect even before his return from a first study-trip through Italy in the years 1673–1677, and became City Architect of Stockholm and architect to the Court of Queen Hedwig Eleonora as well. His architectural oeuvre consists of the Royal Palace in Stockholm and a number of city-dwellings and villa's of Swedish nobles, which show how much his work had been influenced by Southern European visual culture. Also by the Danish King and a French nobleman projects were requested from Tessin. That he is discussed in general reference works such as Thieme-Becker and the *Dictionary of Art*, is not surprising<sup>1</sup>. He is also rightfully considered a primary figure in Scandinavian art around 1700, and recent studies, primarily in a Swedish, discussed his oeuvre and stature. In 1978, a monographic show in Stockholm was dedicated to his work, and in 2002, as companion to the publications under review here, another exhibition in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm also showed him as interior decora-

1 Thieme-Becker, vol. 32, 1938, p. 555–558, and *The Dictionary of Art*, J. TURNER (ed.), vol.30, 1994, p. 522–523.

tor, courtier, and theorist<sup>2</sup>. The English publication of »Nicodemus Tessin the Younger. Royal Architect and Visionary« accompanied the latter event, and constitutes a good introductory book on the architect and his career at the Swedish court. Here the reader will find that Tessin was more than a mere builder; he also designed most of the interiors, and supervised many ceremonial events to which he designed the theatrical settings.

But Tessin was more than a successful architect and entrepreneur in northern Europe; he was a voracious collector of books and prints, and also a meticulous writer of travel-diaries. Even after his return home from his travels, he was provided with (Frage MC) new material through his international contacts. When they could not obtain a published print of a certain object, a local artist would be ordered to provide a drawing. Over the decades, Tessin amassed in this way a wealth of information on the latest trends in architecture and interior decoration in the cultural capitals of Europe. His aim, of course, was to use these to devise a *décor* worthy of the absolutist pretensions of the Swedish Kings Karl XI and Karl XII, and illustrating the rise of Swedish power in international politics.

Tessin was, after his first study-trip of 1673–1677, also sent to England and France in 1677–1680, and a second time to Italy, France and Germany in 1687–1688. During these travels, and thanks to his own initiatives and social contacts, he had visited most of the courts of his time, with the aim to develop a style as artist which would visualize the political claims of the Swedish Crown. A result of his success was that he came to play a role as officeholder at the court as well, and being raised to the status of nobility. His son Carl Gustav Tessin, although destined by his father to become an architect, finally made a career as ambassador to the Swedish king at the French and Prussian courts.

While Nicodemus Tessin has predominantly been studied in the Swedish context thus far, the importance of the sources transcends the national borders. The holdings and writings of Tessin, nowadays preserved in the Royal Library, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and the National Archives in Stockholm, especially prove this point. The present series of editions under the main title »Nicodemus Tessin the Younger – Sources Works Collections« offers this material to the modern reader in the original languages, in each case preceded by an introduction in English, and followed by a critical apparatus<sup>3</sup>. Through these sources, the development of Tessin as an artist can be followed in its various stages. Taken together, they prove that Tessin was the artist-courtier *par excellence*; his clever use of the artistic sources amassed during his life was the basis for his success, which expressed itself in the social standing he and his family reached. His own palace, opposite the Royal Palace of Stockholm, was visual proof of this.

The first volume of the series »Sources Works Collections«, entitled »Catalogue

2 For the exhibition of 1978, see the catalogue: A. BÖRTZ-LAINE (ed.): Nicodemus Tessin d. y. 1654–1728: en utställning anordnad av Nationalmuseum : Tessinska palatset; Stockholm 1978.

3 The series consists of four projected volumes; the last will contain a selection of Tessin's architectural drawings, scheduled to appear in 2003 under the title »Architectural Drawings«.

du cabinet des beaux arts 1712«, is a reprint of an inventory published in 1712, in which all the books, prints and drawings present in the »Cabinet des beaux arts, & des sciences« were enlisted. Its title-page proudly stated that these »pertained to Baron Tessin«, while juridically they belonged to the »Sur-intendant de Battiments & Jardins Royeaux de Suede«, in other words, to the functionary and not the person; these books had been collected by Tessin with the financial means of the royal Treasury. The inventory was printed for a number of reasons. Firstly, it presented the library as a touchstone for future architects, against which they could measure their own knowledge of the sources. Secondly, it indicated the gaps in the holdings which others could help to fill, by pointing out new publications to Tessin, or by sending him these works. When Tessin's son Carl Gustav went on his own Grand Tour in 1714, he took a copy along with the express obligation to find additional material; and it is the inventory he took along with him, and into which he wrote his remarks, that is published here in facsimile. Thus, this edition not only documents the holdings in 1712, but also the later history of the collection, including the later additions.

What did an architect need to know, according to Tessin? The sections and their respective length in the inventory allow us a good insight. General matters of architecture – Vitruvius to begin with, followed by Palladio, Vignola and others – constituted the basis. Tessin had acquired various editions in multiple languages, which raises the question whether this was for the variations in the written interpretations, or rather for the images that these books contained<sup>4</sup>. After the initial encyclopedic works, this first section also contained books on mathematics, engineering, and particular architectural details such as the construction of vaults.

The second and third sections discussed the most important building-types: churches, chapels, palaces, public and private buildings. The fourth and fifth sections contained books on the interior and exterior spaces that determined the visitor's impression: stairs, portals and entrance-halls, gardens, fountains and cascades. Only then followed a more general section on interior decoration, and furniture. The next seven sections discussed works of art and crafts that provided the more exclusive elements for interior design: paintings, sculpture, works in precious metals, and drawings that would serve as examples and inspiration. The last eight sections of the inventory were concerned with social events and festivities. Princely receptions, tournaments, theatrical and musical plays, masquerades, coronations, fireworks up to funerals were discussed in the books that made up these sections.

Apart from showing Tessin as voracious in his interests, and how meticulous he went ahead in maintaining the collection, the inventory of 1712–1714 reflects his diverse obligations at the Swedish court – not only designing the residence, but also the ceremonies staged in and around it. The books represented not only a source of knowledge, he must have consulted them regularly for his own projects. Quite a num-

---

4 For the importance of images and the relative importance of the text in the later seventeenth century with respect to architectural treatises, see A. HOPKINS & A. WITTE: From deluxe architectural treatise to practical manual: the Dutch editions of Scamozzi's »L'idea della Architettura universale«, in: *Quaerendo* 26,4, 1996, p. 274–302.

ber of the books, prints and drawings mentioned in the inventory have been preserved in the National Library of Stockholm.

The third volume to appear in the series, the »Travel Notes 1673–77 and 1687–88« is the most extensive source on Tessin's formation and artistic ideas. It contains the integral text – written in German, with portions in French and Italian – of two educational tours, of which excerpts have been published at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>5</sup>. In contrast to the earlier publication, Tessin's diary is here presented together with plates of the drawings in the original manuscript, and including all the marginal information, which throws light on the economy and practical sides of travelling as well.

On his first trip abroad, Tessin traveled through Denmark, Germany and Austria to Italy, reaching Rome in 1673, where he remained for four years. The account of this first trip is rather scanty; of the long period in Rome only a few letters to his parents have survived. However, he made a wealth of drawings, of which examples were sent home. In this way, Tessin recorded exterior and interior of many churches and palaces he managed to gain access to in Rome and beyond. The written introductions from the Swedish king and queen and the contacts he established to Christina of Sweden provided him the necessary introductions. The latter also brought him into contact with the aged Bernini and the younger Carlo Fontana, in whose studios Tessin spent some time working. By copying and measuring famous works of architecture and sculpture in Rome, he perfected his drawing-skills and his knowledge.

The travel-account of this first trip still reflected his young and dependant attitude, in the neat accounts of distances and costs. When he jotted down more than the usual places he saw, the general interests shine through. In Sicily, for example, he recorded military information – five war-vessels in the harbor of Castel Vetrano, and armory for 50.000 man in the fortress of Malta – and economic and political facts – like the Archbishop of Palermo having an income of 18.000 *scudi* a year. In many respects, the account reflected the general phenomenon of travel-accounts in the late seventeenth century, in which young noblemen were supposed to set down their observations on the Grand Tour. Tessin's notes, as many other travel-accounts, followed the guidebooks that were read as preparation for the trip<sup>6</sup>.

The second trip to Italy, in 1687–88, was far more meticulously recorded by Tessin, who by then had a trained artist's eye for the details. What makes this second travel-journal so resourceful to the modern scholar is exactly the scrupulous account

5 These had been published in 1914 by OSVALD SIRÉN under the title »Studieresor i Danmark, Tyskland, Holland, Frankrike och Italien: Anteckningar, bref och ritningar«, containing only the German, and not the French and Italian portions of the text.

6 That Tessin followed the recommendations given to youngsters going on the Grand Tour is obvious from the list he included at the beginning of his diary, where he enumerated all the points and details he should note while travelling; see p. 31–33. On guidebooks and their influence on the travel-accounts of the seventeenth century, see LUDWIG SCHUDT: *Italienreisen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*; Vienna 1959, the various articles in Z. VON MARTELS (ed.): *Travel fact and travel fiction: studies on fiction, literary tradition, scholarly discovery and observation in travel writing*; Leiden 1994, and the introduction to M. PFISTER (ed.): *The fatal gift of beauty: the Italies of British travellers: an annotated anthology*; Amsterdam 1996.

of and judgement on everything he saw, and all the places he was able to visit. Thanks again to his standing as courtier of the Swedish King, and probably the contacts he himself had maintained with artists since his first stay in Rome, almost none of the noteworthy places remained closed to him.

His knowledge and perception of details was conspicuous wherever Tessin went. When he visited the palace of Het Loo in the Netherlands, he remarked that the fountains did not reach a sufficient height to make them impressionable, and he meticulously described the system with counterweights to keep the sash-windows opened; in Honselaersdijk near The Hague, Tessin noted that the dining-room was used during the evening-dinner by the Prince and Princess together, but for lunch by the Princess alone<sup>7</sup>. When Tessin arrived in Paris, he admired the building-works on the Dome des Invalides, with particular attention for the apparatus devised to transport the building-materials from the ground to the higher levels where they were needed<sup>8</sup>. In the Hotel de Mailly, Tessin was guided by the painter Camot who had done the interior decoration of the building, and of whom it was noted that »he might like to come to Sweden«<sup>9</sup>. – Tessin was always on the lookout for foreign artists who could help him raise the level of the visual arts in Sweden. Of course, the palace and gardens of Versailles were the most important study-objects in France, where especially the water-conduits to supply the fountains, and the lay-out of buildings and grounds were scrutinized.

Attention for detail came especially to the fore in Italy, the country that Tessin regarded as the most influential in courtly matters. In the Roman Palazzo Altieri, for example, Tessin was able to visit almost all the rooms of the state-apartments, where he had enough time to take notes of everything; from the collection of paintings and the furniture to the fabrics used to cover the walls, and the carpets laying on the floor. He sometimes related forms of decoration to functional aspects: because of the state of mourning, two rooms in this palace had been completely emptied, the only extant furniture being chairs with black covers. In the library, Tessin noted that the ceiling had been designed by Bernini with stucco *putti*, with silver stars, golden fringes, and light-blue draperies<sup>10</sup>. From such infinitely detailed descriptions it must be concluded that after returning home every evening, Tessin must have worked at the notes he had taken during the day, resulting in accurate descriptions which allow the present-day reader almost literally to accompany Tessin on his visits to these palaces.

The third and ultimate stage of Tessin's career is evoked in the second volume of the series, »Traictè de la decoration interieure 1717«, which illustrates how Tessin re-assembled knowledge accumulated from his studies, trips and books into a coherent treatise. This French treatise set out to incorporate previously detached fields: that of architecture, interior design, and movable furniture. In three sections, Tessin argued from the fixed elements of decoration to artistic embellishment in non-fixed form –

7 See p.144.

8 See p.161–156, with plates of the drawings that Tessin made of these constructions.

9 See p.171: »der wohl nach Schweden möchte kommen«.

10 See p.316.

sculptures and paintings in galleries – and the movable and practical furniture – fabrics, chairs and beds. Whereas the first section reasoned from categories – ceilings, loges, staircases, doorframes, cornices and marble incrustation – the latter two discussed examples one by one. This meant, that one room in a given palace could be treated in all three sections; first the painted ceiling, then the sculptures placed in it, and lastly the chairs and tables positioned against the walls.

For example, Palazzo Barberini in Rome – from which Tessin took many examples – is first discussed in the first section with regard to the ceiling of the *salone* by Cortona, a fireplace in this hall designed by Bernini and the smart solution for its sloping *cortile*, then for the wealth of paintings and other works of art in its galleries, and finally in the third section for the use of brocades and other fabrics, and a table made of precious stones<sup>11</sup>. To the modern reader this seems a fractured approach, but for Tessin it was the epitome of his work: finding for all situations of interior design the right, and most importantly, impressive solutions.

While he wrote the treatise, as Tessin noted in the letters to Carl Gustav, there was no book that discussed these various aspects of interior decoration; architects had previously said something about the application of painting of fresco in buildings, or the organization of the rooms in the building, but none had combined this with the right kind of the furnishings and furniture. On the basis of his many visits to the cultural capitals of early modern Europe, the meticulous accounts he had kept, and the large collection of books and prints, Tessin could write this »Traictè« from his own chair, while he was confined to his house by gout.

However, it was not the aim of Nicodemus Tessin to expose himself as learned architect and artist: he wrote the book to further his son's career in the arts. It was to help Carl Gustav, at that moment on his own Grand Tour, to direct his attention, and to note where changes had occurred – Nicodemus urged him to send him regular reports with his observations. The manuscript was indeed edited by Carl Gustav, as marginal notes indicate. The result would have been a joint cooperation that would give his son a good headstart for his artistic career. The treatise was never published, however, as Carl Gustav embarked upon a purely diplomatic career, and never became his father's successor as court architect.

The three sources on Tessin published thus far have been edited with meticulous attention, doing justice to the text itself – preserving Tessin's sometimes faulty orthography – and to the original appearance of the manuscripts. The original pagination has been indicated, and marginal notes have been printed next to the main text. The »Catalogue des livres, estampes & desseins [...]«, presents the original pages of the printed book in facsimile, with the inserted pages on which Carl Gustav Tessin noted the books bought during his Grand Tour to add to the collection. In all three volumes, the original text is preceded by modern introductions placing the material in its historical context, and explaining the editorial choices. It has been attempted to intervene

11 See the pages 83, 144, 153, 159–163 and 259–260.

as little as possible; the contents have been made accessible in an exemplary way by indexes on places, works of art and artists.

The series »Sources Works Collections« allows the modern reader more than a glance into the world of a late seventeenth-century Swedish architect of international standing. While Tessin's position at court may have surpassed that of the average court-artist, his case shows in an extreme form what the general trend and customs of such a position entailed<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, the two manuscripts and the facsimile published thus far contain a wealth of material readily accessible to students of the Dutch, German and Italian late Baroque, on the function of the visual and decorative arts in the service of political and sociable life around 1700.

ARNOLD WITTE  
*University of Amsterdam*

12 For the position of early modern artists at court, see especially MARTIN WARNKE: Hofkünstler. Zur Vorgeschichte des modernen Künstlers; Köln 21996 (1980).

**Günter Passavant: Wolf Caspar von Klengel, Dresden 1630 – 1691. Reisen – Skizzen – Baukünstlerische Tätigkeiten; München Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 2001; 472 S., 360 SW-Abb., 26 Farbtaf.; ISBN 3-422-06299-8; € 102,-**

Vor nunmehr 45 Jahren erschien in den Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig eine Studie des Dresdner Architekturhistorikers Eberhard Hempel unter dem Titel »Unbekannte Skizzen von Wolf Caspar von Klengel«<sup>1</sup>. Erstmals wurde darin Skizzenmaterial des kursächsischen Oberlandbaumeisters und späteren Oberinspektors aller Zivil- und Militärgebäude veröffentlicht, das bereits 1925 von Walter Boll im Bestand der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart entdeckt und inzwischen uneigennützig der Dresdner Architekturgeschichtsforschung in Form von Fotokopien zur Verfügung gestellt worden war. Allerdings konnte Hempel nur einen kleinen Teil dieser zur sogenannten Sammlung Nicolai gehörenden Zeichnungen vorstellen. Für eine ausgewogenere Beurteilung des Klengelschen Schaffens, das man ohne die Kenntnis des zeichnerischen Nachlasses bis dahin sehr unterschiedlich bewertet hatte, bot die knapp gefaßte Arbeit dennoch einen grundlegend neuen Ansatz.

Nun liegt endlich in der gründlichen Bearbeitung von Günter Passavant der gesamte Bestand der Stuttgarter Klengelzeichnungen publiziert vor. Im Vorwort weist Passavant auf die lange Entstehungsgeschichte des Buches hin. Bereits in den 1960er Jahren auf das Material aufmerksam geworden, hat er sich daraufhin während seiner Tätigkeit am Kunsthistorischen Institut in Florenz immer wieder mit den italienischen Reiseskizzen Klengels beschäftigt. Aber erst nach Beendigung der Florentiner

1 EBERHARD HEMPEL: Unbekannte Skizzen von Wolf Caspar von Klengel, in: Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Phil.-hist. Klasse, Bd. 59, H. 4; Berlin 1958.