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Vedute without Viewers

The Plague in Rome in Domenico Castelli's Drawings (1656-1657)

I. Introduction^[1]

Although the complexity of artistic production in the Roman context cannot be reduced to a mere reflection of the political and social changes of the 17th century^[2], the diachronic and cross-disciplinary analysis of the artistic and cultural events of the century can offer a privileged perspective for reassessing how theories and practices, or elements of resistance and discontinuity, contributed to the development of the culture of a particular historical period. Historical analysis must consider long-term cultural phenomena and how temporally and contextually limited trends emerge within them, necessarily revisiting conclusions for further analysis that can never be deemed definitive^[3].

The study of the representation of the city, juxtaposed with architectural production during times of social and political crisis, is perhaps the most evident confirmation of this. For this reason, this paper aims to briefly trace the trajectory of printed works focusing on the city, which found its epicentre of economic, political, and religious interest in Rome, marked by the brief episode of the plague of 1656–57.

The goal is not to demonstrate an indeterminable rupture in representational systems due to the epidemic, but rather to enrich their epistemological scope by arguing that the drastic social reorganisation during the epidemic was a consequence of architecture's role as the principal expression of prophylaxis policies. Furthermore, graphic representation did not fail to highlight the technical-spatial role of architecture — what we might today call social engineering or biopolitics — in proposing an economy of social and political survival in the Rome of Alexander VII. Nonetheless, this approach requires a necessary step back.

Rome in the 17th century

Baroque Rome in the 17th century has been considered the paradigm of the contemporary metropol-

is^[4]. The Roman empire of which the city remained symbolically heir was concretely founded on its infrastructural system of communication which radiated from the city to the ends of its most remote borders. The territory was governed by a legal system that will lay the foundations for the constitution of the modern European state. Despite the Medieval oblivion, Rome's uniqueness consisted of being the heir of a previous and extinct empire — something common to other cities — but at the same time in being the only city to have survived this collapse. The political and military influence of the Roman Empire was replaced by the religious authority embodied in the Holy Apostolic See. In the 16th century the Renaissance matured in Rome, and determined the emergence of the city as the undisputed centre of the arts in Europe. In the 17th century, the exceptional works of individual artists gave way to the systematic interventions on an urban scale. Especially in the case of Pope Alexander VII Chigi (p. 1655–67), the city changed again, and from a political-military nerve centre it became an architectural theatre of representation of a self-referential power that reached a level of magnificence without equal in the rest of Europe.

However, considering the economic, social, and political aspects, the history of Rome at the dawn of the 17th century followed a downward parable. The public debt initiated by Pope Clement VII in 1526 through the erection of the *Monte della Fede* grew exponentially by the end of 16th century. While the Pope Medici indebted the Apostolic Chamber through the sale of 2000 *luoghi di monte* for a total price of 200000 ducats at 10% interest, the complexity of the debt institution grew to such an extent that by the time of Alexander VII's death the Church had accrued a debt of 50 million ducats^[5]. The success of this form of investment was due to the administrative capacity recog-

nised to the Camera Apostolica^[6]. However, interest payments were not counterbalanced by investments but by further debt issuance—and the plague played a crucial role—making the institution subject to economic penetration by foreign banks.

From the political perspective, the papacy's temporal power faded on the European scene. The evidence included the diplomatic failure at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, and the Pope's absence at the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659. Both events saw cardinal Fabio Chigi as—failing or missing—protagonist. As Innocent X's diplomatic envoy in Münster, he failed to prevent the loss of the Roman Church's rights on the Protestant territories, and was absent during the armistice meeting that ended the Thirty Years' War between the Christian powers on the *Île des Faisans*.

Moreover, the city of Rome became the privileged site where foreign powers claimed the right of diplomatic extraterritoriality. Therefore, the Pope's jurisdiction lost control of a third of the urban territory, most of which was controlled by France and Spain, the same Christian Crowns that excluded the Pontiff from the negotiations on the European stage^[7]. Finally, the 17th century saw the outbreak of two raging plague epidemics that reduced the rising demographic parabola, disrupted trade, and therefore caused periods of severe famine.

The plague in Rome

The second plague outbreak of the century occurred in Rome in 1656, a year after the election of Alexander VII. As has been observed, the phenomenology of the spread of the plague in the early modern period has traditionally triggered a recurring narrative that places the accounts, and thus the counter-measures, in an ahistorical framework. The manifestation of the plague, and the concatenation of its causes and consequences, thus seem to emerge and arrange themselves on a backdrop that is more mythical than historical that remains constant: "The irruption of the scourge, introduced by an agent external to the city (ships, soldiers, beggars, goods) induces the latter to exorcise the evil through a series of collective expiations (processions, new cults), while the identification of an agent internal to the community triggers the persecution of the possible human spreaders of the epi-

demic (witches, anointers, Jews, heretics, revolutionaries)^[8]." The case of Rome was no exception.

The plague was apparently introduced from Nettuno by a fishmonger from Naples. The first victims, a hostess and her son, were identified on June 6, in the Rione Trastevere, a popular district on the right side of the Tiber^[9]. Soon after, her husband and innkeeper himself, got sick and died. Fear spread throughout the city, and with it, rumors also circulated about objects responsible in spreading the contagion. In his diary, Giacinto Gigli recounts how a sailor died at the Hospital of San Giovanni due to an infection caused by a ring with a ribbon sent to him by his wife. The ring also caused the death of another person in Trastevere, a place that increasingly seemed to be the receptacle and source of the epidemic.^[10]

The female origin of the object responsible for the contagion is confirmed by the account of the Jesuit Francesco Maria Sforza Pallavicino, who likens it to the mythological tale of the Shirt of Nessus^[11]. A mythological origin therefore, but supported by the cowardice of those patrons from Trastevere who, although they frequented the tavern at the origin of the contagion, fearing the inconveniences of quarantine, shunned the call to appear before the magistrate^[12].

The plague was not only perceived as a danger to life, but also as an obstacle to trade. Pallavicino hastened to exonerate his friend Alexander VII from his association with those who would have advised him to conceal the first signs of the spread of the disease. Such information would therefore have threatened trade relations with other countries, as well as seriously damaging the city's grain supply from the subjected cities. On the contrary, the Pope—in the Jesuit's laudatory account—did not want to shirk his responsibilities, and decreed the suspension of trade with Naples. Moreover, he arranged the borders' defence on a geographical scale, appointing three commissioners who were assigned to control the area from Montalto to Terracina, from Terracina to Rieti, and from Rieti to Ascoli and the Adriatic Sea^[13]. Finally, the Pope declared the state of emergency in the city of Rome by granting the legislative and governmental powers to the Congregation of Health.

II. Politics of Emergency under Pope Alexander VII

The Congregation of Health

The most conspicuous institution for the containment of the plague was the Congregation of Health (It. 'Congregazione della Sanità'), that was reactivated in May 1656. Originally, the Congregation was founded by Pope Urban VIII in 1630 with scope of facing the first great epidemic of plague of the 17th century. Part of the new course were eleven Cardinals^[14], the General Treasurer, and the Governor of Rome. The Congregation met regularly at the Quirinal, residence of Alexander VII. Other prelates also took part in the meetings, along with the Pope's brother Don Mario Chigi, the conservators of the Municipality, and two physicians. The Congregation was an institution directly answerable to Alexander VII, and therefore every governmental act had to be considered as the direct will of the Pontiff.

Although the Congregation had initially underestimated the risk of plague, failing to diagnose the case of the Trastevere family, it issued a series of coercive edicts from May 1656. The most restrictive ordinance regarded the segregation of Trastevere and the Jewish Ghetto. The first was isolated between June 22 and June 23, 1656. Cardinals Barberini, von Hessen, and Imperiali, in secret and at night, went to the site and with the help of soldiers, erected two concentric palisades known as the Trastevere fence, which remained in use until October 11. Cardinal Pallavicino commented that the purpose was to "amputate, according to the rules of surgery, the vitiated and ignoble part by the majority and the best of the body^[15]."

The Jewish Ghetto was segregated on July 18, and a lazaret was established within it. According to Gigli, there were initially no confirmed cases of the plague in the Ghetto, while Pallavicino emphasised that their separation from the rest of the city was a voluntary choice. The inclusion or separation of the sick bodies was crucial in the early modern strategies to face the plague. As Michel Foucault reflects: "The exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague do not bring with them the same political dream. The first is that of a pure community, the second that of a disciplined society. [...] The leper and his separation; the plague and

its segmentations. The first is marked; the second analysed and distributed^[16]." In this approach, the sick were not expelled from the city, but rather incorporated into it. This mechanism, which might seem practical, mirrors an immune-based approach: as 19th century virology would teach us, the inoculation of nonlethal virus quantities stimulates the formation of antibodies that can neutralise pathogenic effects at an early stage. To use the words of Roberto Esposito, "Life combats what negates it through immunitary protection, not a strategy of frontal opposition but of outflanking and neutralising. Evil must be thwarted, but not by keeping it at a distance from one's borders; rather, it is included inside them^[17]." Emblematic examples are the lazarets established by Gerolamo Gastaldi, a prelate with a background in jurisprudence, appointed as commissioner general of this institution. If only two of already existing structures converted into lazarets were outside the city (the monastery of San Pancrazio and the Casaleto of Pius V), the other ones were strategically located within the Aurelian Walls. In line with Foucault's interpretation, all of these became spaces where people (patients and medical personnel) were accurately divided between 'dirty' (It. "sporchi", meaning sick), and 'clean' (It. "puliti", suspected or convalescents). Therefore, San Pancrazio and the Casaleto were designated for the infected (later on, the former to the convalescents). In the city the buildings converted to lazarets were the whole Isle of San Bartolomeo (half for the "brutti", and half for the "puliti"); the Carceri Nuove in Via Giulia (for the convalescents of the Isle); the monastery of Sant'Eusebio (for the quarantine of the relatives of the infected), and that of San Giuliano (the first station for the infected from outside the city). Other structures were at Santa Maria della Consolazione, in the San Saba complex, in Vicolo del Carciofolo (today Vicolo Alibert), San Giacomo degli Incurabili, in the Palazzetto of Santo Spirito, at the Lateran, at San Michele in Sassia, and, finally, in Trastevere and in the Jewish Ghetto^[18].

In addition, nine of Rome's gates were closed and those that remained open (Porta del Popolo, Porta Angelica, and Porta San Giovanni) served as checkpoints for goods and people. Doctors and surgeons were forbidden to leave the city, while all public gatherings of people and even masses were suspended.-

The quarantine did not only concern the sick individuals, but was extended to the whole city, making it forbidden to visit others' houses. Capital punishment was instituted for those who did not submit to the restrictions of the Congregation's proclamations. Those whose punishment was changed to work in the lazarets had to proceed around the city with a cross so that the population could avoid them.

Medical culture during this era was still influenced by Hippocratic ideas concerning environmental conditions, such as site exposure to winds and air quality. The ancient tradition of Galen on the putrefaction of animal and vegetable bodies as a cause of pestilence continued to have an impact, and therefore the integration of the Presidency of the Streets with the administrative structure of the Masters of the Streets facilitated the establishment of the *Taxae Viarum*, which made citizens responsible for cleaning the streets and banks from the carcasses of slaughtered animals and various rubbish^[19]. This affected also the stray cats and dogs that were killed^[20].

Moreover, objects were considered vehicles for the transmission of contagion, and the dirt that invaded public and private spaces was identified as a contextual cause to support the miasma theory. For this reason, the practice of wearing a waxed jacket, on which infectious particles and fleas could not adhere, spread probably from France at the beginning of the 17th century^[21]. As Carlo Cipolla notes, in the Seicento, they were on the verge of discovering the causes of contagion, which was, however, hindered by the prevailing thought that fleas were annoying but harmless animals^[22].

Consequently, two structures for disinfecting goods ("spurghi"), like correspondence and clothes, were established outside the city, while the belongings of the infected people were burned. Finally, the plague as a deadly and symbolic phenomenon accentuates the belief that contagion can be transmitted through gaze^[23].

The gaze of Alexander VII

The gaze is the central protagonist of a dream described by Alexander VI in a letter to his nephew, Cardinal Flavio Chigi^[24]. The dream begins with an encounter between the two, whose path is blocked at the exit of Porta del Popolo by guards stationed at the

gates ('rastelli'). Recognised by a prelate, the emergency setting transforms into the desired urban reality, and the two proceed along the streets of Babuino, Condotti, and the Corso, before dining together. From the balcony of the Quirinal overlooking the city, they continue their journey towards Piazza Navona and Piazza di Spagna, via Ripetta to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, crossing Ponte Sant'Angelo and walking along the Lungara, encountering ladies in carriages and drinkers at taverns. However, the plague abruptly shatters the dream, infiltrating Alexander's visions. Houses are barred with the inscription "Sanità"; stretchers carrying the infected pass by, accompanied by men in waxed suits; the entrances to palaces, churches and the gate leading to the Ghetto are sealed; and "nothing is heard but talk of the sick, the dead, and the lazarets^[25]."

In his dream, Alexander clearly mentions the things he has recently seen: the shock of the scenes produced by the epidemic creates vivid images in his imagination. However, what is more important is how his state of joy is associated with walking –almost flying– through the streets and squares that he would contribute to designing and making an essential part of his urban project just a few years later. Equally emblematic is the scene of the view of Rome from the balcony of the Quirinal, a palace that dominates the city from the highest hill, which he, as the first Pope, chose as his residence as the sovereign of Rome^[26].

It is in the Quirinal Palace, specifically in his chamber, that Alexander VII keeps what is likely the first wooden model of the entire city of Rome, as reported by Ferdinando Raggi, the agent of the Republic of Genoa: "The Pope has all of Rome crafted in wood in a most distinguished and curious chamber, as one whose greatest ambition is to beautify the City [...] and he discusses it as if he were about to enter it^[27]."

The Chigi papacy was thus a period in which the gaze became a tool for planning as well as orientation, and due to the plague, the city itself became a device for observing and controlling the social body. On one hand, in the 17th century, the representation of the city and its monuments continued to be a means to exhibit a reality to be admired, in line with previous centuries^[28]. On the other hand, prints and engravings increasingly became an operational tool that influenced

the shared set of values of the time, to the point that the building activity of Alexander VII shaped what became customarily defined ‘Roma moderna’^[29].

III. Engravings in the Early Modern

To understand the historical perspective on the immaterial and physical condition of an urban context, it is essential to consider the production of visual material through which an era represented the city, from technical, commercial, and cultural viewpoints. Without delving into a phenomenology of spatial perception, it is useful to recall how contemporary individuals’ exposure to images dramatically differs from that of individuals of any other historical period.

Beyond social class, which obviously made a significant difference, the number of images and the duration of exposure were extremely limited compared to contemporary standards. This consideration underscores the potential impact that the representation of the city had on the understanding and depiction of a space that was typically constructed through direct experience.

In this context, Rome, as the primary destination for pilgrims and antiquarians across Europe, became the paradigmatic site for the development of printmaking, the most widespread method of reproduction until the advent of photography. In this field, alongside reproductions of famous artworks and contemporary artists’ *invenzioni*, views of ancient buildings and city maps constituted a significant portion of the commercial sector.^[30]

Initial developments in the 16th century

The flourishing of graphic production, particularly with the De Rossi workshops that sought papal privilege for the representation of the city, disseminated the image of Rome to a vast audience of visitors who increasingly crowded the city and directly contributed to its wealth. However, the production of maps also had its historical legacy.

Traditionally, late medieval city representations incorporated a cosmic order that corresponded — through symbolism, graphic conventions, etc.— to the *mappae mundi*. During the early Renaissance, however, some architects employed trigonometric and topographic concepts to develop representational mod-

els where spatial relationships between different points transcended mere symbolic connections. Foremost among them was Leon Battista Alberti, who in his *Descriptio Urbis Romae* (1443–55) described the trigonometric methodology that allowed him —although a true graphic representation has never reached us— to reconstruct the Rome of the 15th century. A well-known example is Leonardo’s plan of Imola, created during his service to Cesare Borgia in 1503. As has been remarked, the plan of Imola is the first ichnographic plan, meaning a representation that incorporates “a new conceptual attitude toward the representation of cities, in which quantitative topographical relationships were given visual priority over both symbolic values and the actual appearance of the city^[31].”

Leonardo’s first ichnographic map, as well as Leonardo Bufalini’s plan of Rome from 1551, do not rely on the human gaze, just as late medieval maps did not. Instead, the certain and measurable spatial and temporal dimension of a represented phenomenon replaced the symbolic or experiential dimension of medieval representations. More generally, the representation of urban space in the 17th century benefited from the development of printing techniques which, in the absence of other means of instant reproduction, became a widespread commercial phenomenon. The first to understand its potential was Raphael, who undertook engraving to promote his paintings. The peculiarity of this activity lay in the fact that he entrusted his preparatory drawings to a circle of engravers —among them Marcantonio Raimondi. Subsequently, he handed the engravings to a printer and then took care of selling the finished product. This artistic and entrepreneurial procedure shaped the printing system of the following decades.

Several other publishers, printers, and sellers entered the market, whose complexity was based on the sale and use of already produced engravings — the case of the purchase of Raphael’s plates by the Milanese Antonio Salamanca is emblematic— as well as the roles played by these three figures. In particular, the printer and the publisher were the key figures: the former was the one who simply managed the act of printing from a plate in his possession. However, this did not necessarily mean that the printer owned the plate. More likely, it was the publisher who some-

times used the services of a restorer to modify the names engraved on the copper by previous printers and publishers in the case of purchased plates^[32].

Thanks to a series of phenomena —Raphael being the first, and the second being the massive presence of pilgrims— Rome became the centre of engraving production in the 16th century. The activity of publishers and printers such as Antonio Lafrery, Antonio and Mario Labacco, Stefano Duchet, and others anticipated what, in the 17th century, became an almost monopolistic production centre, namely the De Rossi workshops located near Santa Maria della Pace and in Piazza Navona.

This latter branch included Gianbattista De Rossi, whose activity lasted until 1672 and encompassed the publication of maps of the city of Rome —such as the one engraved by Lieven de Cruyl in 1665— and antiquities, and his son Matteo Gregorio, who was active until the end of the century. More prolific was the enterprise established next to Santa Maria della Pace, whose founder was Giuseppe De Rossi, who likely began the fortunes of the workshop by acquiring plates in the early 17th century. His son, Giovanni Giacomo, was the most active protagonist of the Roman scene. His prints were produced between 1638 and 1691 and were engraved by illustrious authors such as Giovanni Battista Falda^[33]. The fortunes of the Pace branch continued under the aegis of Giovanni Giacomo's son, Domenico, who continued the work until 1720^[34]. The catalogue he printed with the available subjects is vast and includes city and geographical maps, battle scenes, modern architectures, antiquities, copies of artistic works, and portraits of princes, Popes, and other religious figures, 'invenzioni', 'vedute', and, not least, scenes of relevant events^[35].

Documenting the plague

Among these events, the plague of 1656–57 was one of the most extensively covered socio-political phenomena of the 17th century^[36]. The epidemic's origins and effects were addressed in political, diplomatic, and medical literature. Within the latter field, new treatises and manuals were reprinted and written.^[37] From a legal perspective, the Congregation of Health issued and disseminated more than 350 edicts, regulations, and briefs^[38]. Their communication soon took over the

urban space, utilising traditional gathering places such as churches, main streets, and squares to reach individuals, who were subject to capital punishment in case of transgression. Consequently, the urban perception changed radically: both public and private spaces were meticulously aligned with the results of the emergency bureaucracy established by the Pope and implemented by Gerolamo Gastaldi^[39]. Evidence of this geometrisation of the legal and administrative production of the Congregation of Health is provided by a series of prints attributed to Louis Rouhier and published by Giovanni Giacomo de Rossi, later included in Gastaldi's *Tractatus de avertenda et profiliganda peste politico-legalis*^[40].



Fig. 1: Louis Rouhier, and Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi, *Ordini diligenze e ripari fatti con universal beneficio dalla paternità di N.S. PP. Alessandro VII et eminentissimi cardinali della santa congregazione della sanità per liberare la città di Roma dal contagio*, February 1657. Acquaforte e bulino, 418 x 528 mm. (Print I)

These three prints are arranged in four (the first) or five (the second and third) horizontal strips with captions illustrating the measures implemented by the Congregation against the plague epidemic. Three main themes emerge throughout the prints: health legal devices manifested as social segregation and disinfection of objects; the pervasive normative framework and the punishment of transgressors; and finally, the city as a space of conflict. Evidence of the first theme is found in the upper strip of the first print (fig. 1), where the social body afflicted by the disease and housed at the Island of San Bartolomeo proceeds towards San Pietro in Montorio to begin the 'dirty' convalescence at

San Pancrazio. Other groups descend from the latter to head to the Carceri Nuove to start the ‘clean’ quarantine. Architectural references such as the Acqua Paola, the dome of St. Peter’s, and the top of Castel Sant’Angelo emerge from the rugged landscape of the hill, indicating that the first health safety measures were implemented outside the city.

Segregation within the Aurelian Walls is clearly depicted in the second strip of the first sheet, where Don Mario Chigi, the Pope’s brother, is portrayed in a carriage distributing alms to people secluded inside their homes. His Holiness the Pope surrounded by soldiers is the second notable figure depicted, blessing the newly established lazaret and purging facilities at San Bartolomeo and the Marmorata. Rouhier also covers the nighttime view of the city, where people are seen chanting the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, and *De Profundis*, while a carriage transports corpses to the banks of the Tiber, and the “sbirri” and the commissioner patrol the empty streets. The first sheet concludes as it began, with two emblematic scenes outside the walls. The first is outside Porta del Popolo: the walls become a boundary enclosed by palisades, where provisions allowed into the city are measured. Most notably, coins are dipped in vinegar to prevent their infectious potential, as with other objects. Finally, at Porta Pia, another gate filters the entry of livestock traded from the countryside.



Fig. 2: Louis Rouhier, and Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi, *Ordini diligenze e ripari fatti con universal beneficio dalla paterna pietà di N.S. PP Alessandro VII et eminentissimi cardinali della santa congregazione della sanità per liberare la città di Roma dal contagio*, February 1657. Acquaforte e bulino, 418 x 528 mm. (Print II)

In the second print, the movement and transport of objects and people are represented through a strategy that transforms the emergency into the processional

imaginary (fig. 2). The visual narrative implies the representation of the body from the discovery of the infection to its becoming part of a regimented social class, to its removal through burial in mass graves near San Paolo fuori le Mura. The “analysis and distribution” evoked by Foucault clearly emerges from the crowds directed from the lazaret to the Carceri Nuove for quarantine. This is also evident in the separation of Christian and Jewish corpses on barges headed to the two mass graves at San Paolo, where they will be further separated.

Another major theme is the relationship between normative enforcement and punishment, whose visual evidence exploits the public space of the city to enhance its effects. The city thus becomes a palimpsest for communicating the assumption of legislative and governmental power by the Congregation. An example is a group reading a proclamation from the Congregation posted on a wall, or another group fleeing from the action of the “sbirri.” In the third print, finally, the transgressors of the Congregation’s law are publicly hanged, shot (“archibugiati”), or beheaded (fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Louis Rouhier, and Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi, *Ordini diligenze e ripari fatti con universal beneficio dalla paterna pietà di N.S. PP Alessandro VII et eminentissimi cardinali della santa congregazione della sanità per liberare la città di Roma dal contagio*, February 1657. Acquaforte e bulino, 418 x 528 mm. (Print III)

This excess of punishment is symptomatic of how the spread of the plague marks the moment in Italy when traditional civic powers —the curia in the case of Rome— are stripped of power by health institutions through violence^[41]. In this way, the city during the plague emergency becomes a space of conflict where

surveillance's gaze becomes both a tool for controlling and defining what exceeds the prevailing authoritarian power, and a means of providing an example of what happens in case of transgression of the imposed norm.

The demand for the relationship between urban structure and science is clear: in Rouhier's etchings, circulation in public space is regarded as a form of threat to health safety, and, therefore, it is challenged in favour of devices of containment and segregation.

IV. Domenico Castelli

The same devices of segregation and control, visually purified from social and legal consequences, were designed and represented by Domenico Castelli in 47 full-page illustrations published posthumously in Gastaldi's *Tractatus de avertenda et profliganda peste politico-legalis* in 1684.

Castelli (1582?–1657) was an architect originally from Melide in Ticino, and present in Rome since 1611. Under Pope Urban VIII until his death, he held the role of 'misuratore' (responsible for assessing the work done by masons, stonecutters, and stucco workers on various building sites) and superintendent of his palaces^[42]. From 1624 to 1657, he worked almost continuously as an architect for the 'Fabbriche della Reverenda Camera apostolica'^[43]. Castelli also worked for the secular part of the municipal government of Rome: in July 1631, he was appointed by the Conservators of the 'alma città di Roma' as the architect of the *Studium Urbis*, a position he held until September 1632, when he was succeeded by Francesco Borromini^[44].

Starting in 1646, he was part of a list of architects used by the Presidency of the Roads, collaborating with well-known architects such as Carlo Maderno and Borromini himself. His strategic role in urban space management is confirmed by a series of additional roles he held, as evidenced by the petitions of various professionals seeking to fill his positions after his death: architect of the Acqua Paola, the Capitoline Hill, and the waters (Chiane, Fiumicino, Ponte Felice, and similar); as well as for the Archconfraternity of the SS. Annunziata, the Hospital of San Giacomo degli Incurabili, the monastery of San Silvestro, the monastery of

the Virgins, the monastery of San Cecilia, and the Archconfraternity of the Gonfalone^[45].

Therefore, thanks to his extensive experience, Castelli was appointed by Gerolamo Gastaldi as the architect of the prophylaxis systems required by the Congregation of Health. However, this was not the only reason: apparently, the strategic and artistic plans of Alessandro VII for the city of Rome had been developed before the advent of the plague, and those entrusted with implementing them —Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Pietro da Cortona— were precautionarily placed under strict quarantine at the Palazzo di Montecavallo^[46].

Consequently, Domenico Castelli was designated as the architect to operate in the field, as a handwritten account by him, preserved in the Apostolic Library, illustrates his direct involvement in the realisation of the architectural and urban devices depicted in the *Tractatus*^[47].

Castelli and the plague

The *Tractatus* was an accurate description of the evolution of the plague of 1656–57 in Rome, its outcomes in terms of the sick and dead, the related medical theories and practices, the organisation of lazarets, and the measures issued by the Congregation through the drafting and dissemination of 245 edicts concerning the epidemic^[48].

The abilities of Gastaldi were immediately recognised by Alexander VII, to the extent that Pallavicino recounts how the Pope was astonished that some men blind in one eye —such as the Ligurian prelate— could see better than others with both eyes available^[49]. The innovation in Gastaldi's actions lay in prevention, which was a direct consequence of the penetration of the concept of contagion into the mentality of common people, a concept coined only a century earlier by Girolamo Fracastoro^[50]. This prevention involved the prior separation of individuals considered healthy, suspected, and confirmed sick, and the consequent segmentation of the sick population through phases of quarantine for illness and convalescence.

The edicts issued by the Congregation, with the obvious influence of Gastaldi who had become the general health commissioner, included the control and description of objects and people through the city's open

gates. Double “cancelli” were created so that people and goods coming from outside would not encounter those inside. It was ordered that “no one should be allowed to enter without a bulletin, in which the name, surname, homeland, age, stature, hair colour, and origin of each person were expressed^[51].”

This precise analysis and description of possible vehicles and objects of contagion reveal a scientific method in the approach to the disease, which would form the basis for a true statistical method. Those hospitalised in the lazarets were registered in a special book with their “name, surname, age, homeland, and domicile. A bulletin with a string was then attached to their neck, repeating these indications, to identify them. In case of death, the day was noted in the mentioned book, marking the indication with a cross^[52].” Additionally, Gastaldi imposed a moral and legal obligation on all citizens to report suspected cases, the sick, and deaths (even of non-suspects) to a notary of the ‘rione’^[53]. Finally, burials at San Paolo fuori le Mura took place in mass graves where the corpses were distinguished by religious belief into Catholics (numerically counted) and Jews (more numerous but not counted)^[54].

Domenico Castelli’s drawings constituted the architectural and spatial representation of Gastaldi’s actions. The arrangement of the defence measures follows repetitive patterns and is adapted to the pre-existing conditions, as confirmed by the descriptions^[55]. The authorship of the 47 drawings is acknowledged by detailed descriptions of all the architectural and urban interventions written by the architect^[56]. The drawings employ various representation techniques and depict urban areas, buildings, or mechanisms at different scales and for different purposes. Both urban-scale, architectural, and object-like devices can be categorised into four groups according to their function: *filtering*, *disinfecting*, *segregating*, and *removing*.

Filtering

Filtering affects both people and goods and is implemented at all levels, often intertwined with the other categories. The primary filtering device is delegated to the eight gates that remained open. An example is Porta del Popolo, one of the three designated access points for individuals from outside the city (the others

being Porta Angelica and Porta San Giovanni). This gate served as the primary entry point from the north into the city via the Flaminia. Castelli presents two drawings: the internal view^[57], displaying the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo against the Aurelian Walls and the gate’s intrados. It showcases a recent architectural arrangement by Bernini, created for the triumphal entry of Queen Christina of Sweden in December 1655, featuring the papal mountains’ coat of arms and the Chigi star emblem. On the outside (fig. 4), Castelli depicts three wooden “casini” covered with boards, serving as shelters for the Commissioner, the Prelate deputy, and the soldiers, respectively. Opposite these structures, towards the outside, are the “obices” (obstacles) and the “cancelli”, which are the access gates.

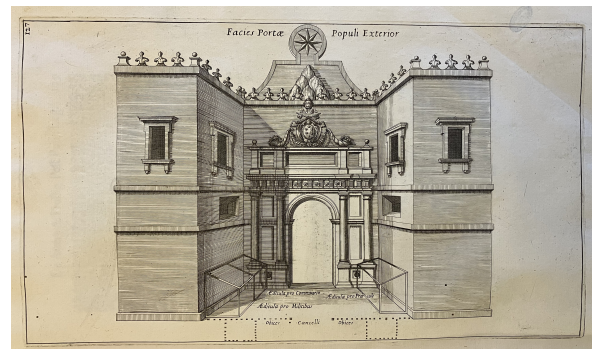


Fig. 4: Domenico Castelli, *Facies Portæ Populi Exterior*. Acquaforse e bulino. In: Gerolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus*, p. 127.

The organisation of Porta Pia is more complex^[58]. Located to the east, in an agricultural area, it included a palisade and an area for sheep grazing with access to the Via Pia towards Santa Costanza. The existing architecture housed the keeper’s dwelling, the refectory, the commissary and porters’ cubicle, and space for the soldiers. The outer part served as a place for trading livestock, which was subject to inspection upon entry.

The third gate depicted is the 16th century Porta San Giovanni (then erroneously called Porta Celi-montana). The gate is shown only from the outside, and the position of the “casini” for the militia is indicated beside the rusticated pillars^[59]. While Porta San Giovanni was the physical entrance to the city, the boundary where the exchange of goods (“grascia”) took place was moved immediately outside, at the in-

tersection of the main road and the bridge over a small stream called Marana[60]. There, a market for supplies was designed. It was enclosed with fixed barriers to separate the citizens from outsiders. A large shelter made of interwoven wood was erected there, where merchants and livestock could gather and take shelter from the rain. Another similar, but larger, structure was built in the countryside, divided into two cells, where crops and grains could be stored during bad weather. A small house was also prepared for the commissioner, next to the riverbank, serving as a common water source and washhouse[61]. Filtering measures were also applied to the other access route, the Tiber River (fig. 5). To prevent boats from entering, a rope was stretched at Porta Portese, which was controlled on both banks and supervised by officials (see also fig. 3, 5th row).

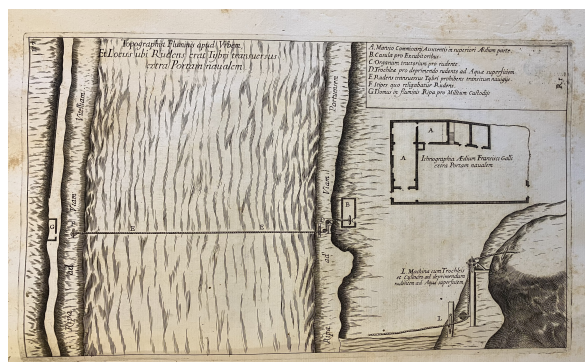


Fig. 5: Domenico Castelli, *Topographia Fluminis apud Urbem, Et Locum ubi Rudens erat Tybri transversus extra Portam navalem*. Acquaforte e bulino. In: Gerolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus*, p. 157.

Disinfecting

Since the beliefs of the time regarded objects as potential carriers of the virus, the layout of locations and the design of devices for handling objects and goods were of great importance in the strategy set by Gastaldi, and therefore 15 of Castelli's 47 drawings concerned disinfection, then called "spurgare".

The Tiber River served as the primary route for provisioning the city, and all goods needed to undergo inspection and disinfection: upon landing on the riverbank, goods were deposited in an open area enclosed by palisades whose access was forbidden to Roman citizens. Along the Via Flaminia, stables were provided for livestock, and a buffer for trading functioned as filter between the countryside and the city domain. On

the opposite side of the road towards Porta del Popolo, on a property belonging to the Colonna family, an existing building was adapted by Castelli to house boilers ("caldare") for heating water to boil objects or create steam for disinfecting foodstuffs[62].

Disinfection also extended to the clothing of those interned in the lazarets. All clothing items were transported outside the city walls to specially prepared locations and laid on wooden frames for disinfection using perfumes and vapours. On the property of the Sanesio family, on the land between the Tiber River and the Via Flaminia, a pool was constructed for washing clothes. Meanwhile, even the horses became potential 'suspects' and had to be monitored within a designated building (fig. 6)[63] while inside the Aurelian Walls—but nonetheless within the "disabitato"—the vast Baths of Caracalla were used to lay out the purged clothes arriving from the lazarets[64]. The washing of this large quantity of clothes required the presence of running water. For this purpose, buildings were identified in the Marana area south of Porta San Giovanni, where fulling mills were constructed and installed[65]. In the same area, a building was used to disinfect correspondence and gold or silver coins found in the letters, that were stacked on a sieve next to which fires were lit to fumigate the room[66].

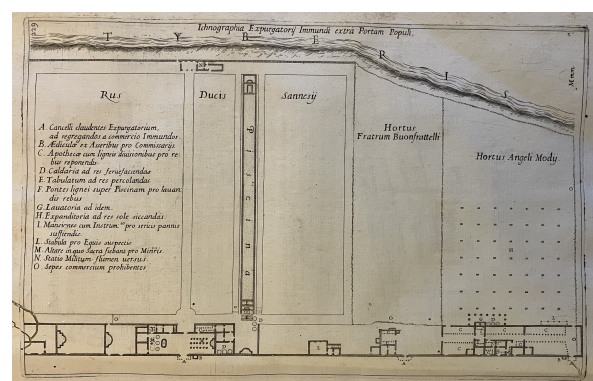


Fig. 6: Domenico Castelli, *Ichnographia Expurgatorij Immundi extra Portam Populi*. Acquaforte e bulino. In: Gerolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus*, p. 229.

Segregating

As mentioned earlier, the Congregation's strategy to combat the plague involved quarantine as a measure of enforced segregation for both the sick and those suspected of being sick. Gastaldi's motto was to pro-

tect the healthy rather than to cure the sick. This necessitated the separation of the sick from the healthy. Specific areas of the city were isolated, such as Trastevere[67] and the Ghetto, and lazarets were established. The first of these was the Island of San Bartolomeo, now known as Tiber Island. As the number of infected individuals grew, other structures were converted into lazarets. Castelli's representations include Santa Maria della Consolazione where men and women were divided[68]; Casaletto of Pio V[69], San Pancrazio[70]; the Carcere Nuovo of Via Giulia, having separated baths for men and women[71]; the Monasteries of San Giuliano and Sant'Eusebio[72]; the San Saba complex[73]; and San Giacomo degli Incurabili for the beggar women[74]. All of these structures, except for two, were located within the city walls.

In addition to the pragmatic nature of this group of drawings, which served to define the spaces appropriated by Gastaldi and designated for lazarets, it is noteworthy that Castelli predominantly employs plan projection, with the exception of an external view of the Carcere Nuovo of Via Giulia. The drawings completely forgo the representation of the context—including the view of the prison— while incorporating elements such as the metric scale and the designation of functional spaces.

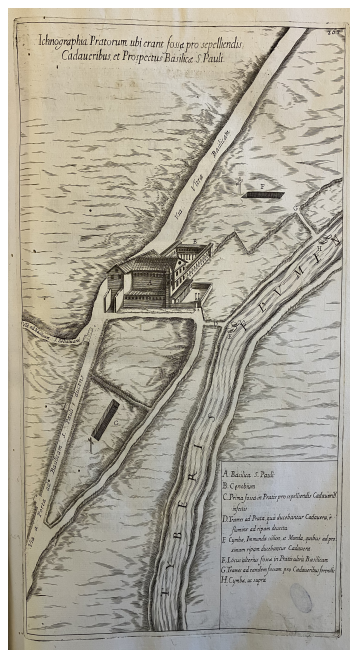


Fig. 7: Domenico Castelli, *Ichnographia Pratorum ubi erant fossæ pro sepeliendis Cadaveribus, et Prospectus Basilica S. Pauli*. Acquaforse e bulino. In: Gerolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus*, p. 267.

Removing

Finally, the clothing and belongings of the infected were incinerated, while the bodies of the deceased were initially transported on a barge along the Tiber and then on carts (fig. 2) for burial in two large mass graves near San Paolo fuori le Mura (fig. 7). The final depiction by Castelli stands out from all others, being the only aerial view that considers the landscape as the ultimate place following the ordeal of the plague. Nonetheless, the pragmatic minds of the duo Gastaldi and Castelli do not dwell, as in the case of Louis Rouhier, on the representation of social implications, and, therefore, do not depict the intensification of emotions. On the contrary, the few written notes in this drawing indicate how even the large scale of the landscape becomes a device in the service of the long therapy implemented by the Swiss architect, where even the concealment of the corpse and its covering with quicklime responded to the belief that the disease could reawaken in a short time. This approach demonstrates how Castelli's representations incorporate the tools of a scientific technique—obviously shaped by the knowledge of the time—that had a specific governmental purpose, namely to regulate society during a crisis such as the plague. And it is for this reason that the Swiss architect's drawings were never published as standalone sheets, but found their *raison d'être* in accompanying Girolamo Gastaldi's medical treatise.

Vedute without viewers

What differentiates this epidemic from previous ones is that in the 17th century, the "spatialisation" of knowledge occurred, which, according to Foucault, "was one of the factors in the constitution of this knowledge as a science"[75]." According to the French philosopher, the epistemological revolution in the sciences could not have occurred without incorporating spatial notions and references. Natural sciences were thus founded on the priority given to the observation of natural phenomena. This led to the ability to discern differences, that is, to classify the elements studied. Finally, spatialisation is achieved through the representation of the phenomenon, and in this, the printing technique played a decisive role.

In the case of the plague in Rome, the alliance between medical knowledge and spatial management

played a crucial role in transforming the epidemic crisis into a form of power in the hands of the Congregation, and thus the Pope, as the Congregation was a direct emanation of his authority. This power adopted the empirical method of observing the phenomenon of contagion, adapting its jurisprudence to this observation. This resulted in social classification based on religion (Christians and Jews), morality (prostitutes were expelled, beggars removed from the streets), gender (women were excluded from public space), control (doctors, policemen, notaries, commissioners were designated), as well as actual health (healthy and sick individuals) and presumed health (suspects and “brutti,” those who had contact with the sick). These scientific procedures were echoed in printed publications: manuals, treatises, pamphlets, as well as briefs and edicts, and finally drawings of urban and architectural devices that ultimately made the social reorganisation perfectly superimposable on the physical space of the city.

In this sense, Castelli's representations contain a variety of subjects. First, they are obviously representations of Rome, like the views of Giovanni Battista Falda. However, unlike these, their purpose was not large-scale commercial printing, nor the direct representation of the Pope's achievements. Rather, they were the pure representation of the Congregation's normative choices. Second, the drawings contain — and do not anticipate— prescriptions formulated in political settings: they are the visual vehicle of norms established to limit the use of urban space by people. They define the paths and positions of the subjects in charge of controlling the same space. Thus, the norm, the prohibition, (and by difference, what deviates from the norm) is represented. Third, Castelli appropriates the *veduta* as a type of representation: but his *vedute* are devoid of viewers. Unlike the commercial views of the 17th century, these drawings do not involve the point of view of an observer looking at the city, but imply the scientific gaze of medicine that ‘visits’ the sick social body of Rome, apparently absent, but which, on the contrary, exists and is subject to its techniques of analysis and treatment.

The ‘vedute without viewers’ are the association of views, plans, and technical devices combined into a single corpus of drawings. In this sense, in the repres-

entation of reality (classical views), the geometric and ‘spatialising’ rigor of the plans insinuates itself, constructing a discourse where a particular medical condition, and thus social and governmental, is associated with the position in space. Meanwhile, technical devices such as grates for fumigating correspondence or those for diverting the stream's water into the sewers demonstrate how Castelli (and thus the Pope through Gastaldi) implemented —and drawing is a fundamental tool— “a practical rationality governed by a conscious goal^[76].”

V. Conclusion

The epidemic of 1656–57 struck Rome at a particularly significant historical moment. Domestically, the papacy was experiencing an economic crisis, while on the European front, its political influence was being overshadowed by the very Christian powers —France and Spain— on which the Pope relied in his battle against the Reformation. Moreover, the legal status of the city of Rome was contested. The development of the concept of extraterritoriality had allowed the expansion of diplomatic quarters through the imposition of the *franchises du quartier*. Rome had become the centre of European diplomacy: the major European kingdoms maintained diplomatic missions within the urban territory. However, this implied the presence of a potential internal enemy for the Papacy that required to be managed and countered. Consequently, political strategies for governing the territory and society were necessary, which Alexander VII would manifest through the architectural and urban works that characterised his *Roma Moderna*.

During this period, another internal enemy emerged that would affect the entire Roman society: the plague epidemic. Alexander granted full legal and governmental powers to the Congregation of Health, which, in turn, acted on the ‘sick’ social body by imposing governmental techniques that entailed the total reorganisation of public and private spaces. Medical science became the right hand of the actions of a prelate with a doctorate in law, Girolamo Gastaldi, who implemented it through the separation of the sick from the healthy, the confinement of the former, and quarantine for the latter. This governmental technique of society was not possible without adopting a different ‘gaze’ on the city,

capable of imposing 'norms' on the randomness of the late-medieval city and the diversity of the recent foreign presence in Rome. In this sense, the techniques of medicalization are not solely associated with pure welfare and the health of the population, as evidenced by the massive and pervasive deployment of the police force by the Congregation.

This gaze became, therefore, Alexander VII's tool for achieving his future architectural development plan for Rome, whose ambition cannot be deciphered without considering the experience of spatial governance during the biennium of the plague. Contributing to this was the brief but crucial work of Domenico Castelli—who likely died of this disease in 1657—whose drawings and *vedute* without viewers marked a pivotal shift in the urban policies of 17th century Rome.

Endnotes

1. This work was supported by the Carlsberg Foundation under Grant CF23-1239.
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12. Ibid., p. 16.
13. "Congregazioni della Sanità tenute nel palazzo di Monte Cavallo, e loro risoluzioni" (Cartaceo; fascicoli legati, Roma, 1656), Fondo Corsini, Cors. 170 (34 C 6), ff. 1r-162r, 227r-251r, 253r, 335r, Biblioteca dell'Accademia nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, f. 14. Mentioned in Pietro Savio, *Ricerche sulla peste di Roma degli anni 1656-1657*, in: *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* XCV, 1974, pp. 113–142.
14. Francesco Barberini, Giulio Sacchetti, Gilberto III Borromeo, Decio Azzolini, Lorenzo Imperiale, Federico Pietro Sforza, Pietro Vito Ottoboni, Camillo Astalli, Giovan Carlo de' Medici, Marcello Santacroce and Friedrich von Hessen. In Savio 1974, pp. 113–142.
15. Sforza Pallavicino 1839, p. 8.
16. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York 1995, p. 198.
17. Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, Cambridge 2011, p. 8.
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20. "Chig.H. III.57" (Roma, Agosto 1660), Chig.H. III.57, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: f. 481v.
21. On the introduction of the waxed jacket during the plague epidemics, see C. Salzmann, *Masques portés par les médecins en temps de peste*, in: *Æsculape* (22), 1932, pp. 5–14, and more recently Herbert J. Mattie, *Men in Tights: Charles De Lorme (1584–1678) and the First Plague Costume*, in: *European Journal for the History of Medicine and Health*, 81 (1) 2023, pp. 1–13. The practice of wearing a wax jacket in 1656–57 Rome is demonstrated by Gastaldi who explains that physicians "praeferri iubebat facem ardentem et cera, & vas aceto plenum, in quod immittebat manus antequam appropinquaret ad aegrotum, pulsus tentandi causa; indumentum sibi aptaverat e lino novo infusa cera macerato." Gerolamo Gastaldi, *Tractatus de avertenda et profliganda peste politico-legalis eo lucubratus tempore, quo ipse loemocomiorum primo, mox sanitatis commissarius generalis fuit, peste urbem inadueniente anno MDCLVI & LVII*, Bononiae 1684, p. 70. The passage is mentioned in Carlo M. Cipolla, *Il pestifero e contagioso morbo: Combattere la peste nell'Italia del Seicento*, Bologna 2012.
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24. Alessandro VII, "Chig.H. III.57" (Roma, 1656), Chig.H. III.57, ff. 493v-498v, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
25. Ibid., f. 497r.
26. For a discussion on the choice of the Quirinal as Alexander VII's residence, see Maarten Delbeke, *The Art of Religion: Sforza Pallavicino and Art Theory in Bernini's Rome*, London 2012.
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53. Sonnino 2006.
54. For an estimate of the dead in the Jewish Ghetto, see Sonnino 2006.
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Figures

Fig. 1: Louis Rouhier, and Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi, *Ordini diligenze e ripari fatti con universal beneficio dalla paterna pietà di N.S. PP Alesandro VII et eminentissimi cardinali della santa congregazione della sanità per liberare la città di Roma dal contagio*, February 1657. Acquaforse e bulino, 418 x 528 mm. (Print I)

Fig. 2: Louis Rouhier, and Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi, *Ordini diligenze e ripari fatti con universal beneficio dalla paterna pietà di N.S. PP Alesandro VII et eminentissimi cardinali della santa congregazione della sanità per liberare la città di Roma dal contagio*, February 1657. Acquaforse e bulino, 418 x 528 mm. (Print II)

Fig. 3: Louis Rouhier, and Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi, *Ordini diligenze e ripari fatti con universal beneficio dalla paterna pietà di N.S. PP Alesandro VII et eminentissimi cardinali della santa congregazione della sanità per liberare la città di Roma dal contagio*, February 1657. Acquaforse e bulino, 418 x 528 mm. (Print III)

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Abstract

Architectural historiography has considered 17th-century Roman art and architecture as a form of self-celebration for the Pontiff, the Roman *curia*, or one of the city's renowned noble families. Consequently, the major achievements in the representation of architecture and the city—from Tempesta, Maggi, and Greuter to Falda and Cruyl—have been linked to the same historiography. Scholars have attributed the technical development and content depicted in 17th-century maps and views to the recognition of built space as an element inseparable from the rise in power of the emerging social classes of the time. These representations constructed an image of Rome designed to orient masses of pilgrims along the stages of the Christian faith, to legitimise papal power through association with the glory of Imperial antiquity, or more simply, to show the emergence of new powers on the Roman scene. However, social, economic, and biological crises bring about new forms of representation that often contribute to readjusting policy objectives and values in relation to the built environment. The plague epidemic of 1656–57 in Rome was one such disruption. The architectures designed by Domenico Castelli to control, separate, disinfect, and dispose of goods and people produced a new cartography of Rome, often

disconnected from the baroque epic. Moreover, Castelli's series of 47 full-page engravings (some of which are still unpublished) contained in the posthumous *Tractatus de avertenda et profliganda peste politico-legalis* (1684) by Gerolamo Gastaldi exemplify a new representation of Roman urban space. Therefore, this contribution aims to show how the plague became the phenomenon through which the techniques and purposes entrusted to architectural representation, as developed by Domenico Castelli, determined a point of discontinuity in the history of urban representation of Rome that historiography has not yet fully considered.

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