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## The Text and the Detail

### On methods of reading and systematizing Vitruvius in the Renaissance

#### Introduction

Within the architectural *all'antica*-discourse of the Renaissance, Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, written in the time of Augustus, played a most significant role. Here Renaissance architects who sought to revive the ancient manner of building could find guidelines about the art of building of the ancients. Or at least they thought they could. Vitruvius's text posed more questions than it offered answers. It was found to be obscure with its strange language and mixture of Greek and Latin terms.[1] But it was the most comprehensive text on ancient architecture to survive and therefore received an authoritative role. For many architects Vitruvius became a stable reference point, *the* Text, which could assist in explaining the half or completely buried ruins of ancient architecture as well as the many discrepancies that were observed, when architects, painters and humanists carefully studied the building relics of the past, especially in Rome.[2]

With the advent of printing, the difficulties in understanding Vitruvius formed the outset of a passionate Vitruvius-exegesis in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The text was continuously translated, commentated and illustrated.[3] The many studies and publications of Vitruvius were therefore indeed attempts to structure the ancient text, so that the material could be made accessible to a then-contemporary user.

The obscurity of Vitruvius's text led to numerous interpretations of what he wrote. By focussing on Renaissance architects' reading of a single passage in Vitruvius, namely his section on the atrium house in Book VI, Linda Pellechia has demonstrated how architects from Alberti to Palladio sought to explain Vitruvius's words by reading other authors or by being inspired by Antique ruins. Consequently, very

different looking atrium houses emerged, that confirm that Vitruvius as a source was obscure, but also exactly therefore flexible.[4]

Pellechia's study has offered most valuable and profound insight into the process of Renaissance architects' methods of reading through an overall philological approach. Reading, as Robert Darnton has pointed out, has a history, it changes and is shaped by cultural configurations. Sometime in the 16<sup>th</sup> century a privatisation of reading took place. Although reading was still also a social act done in groups, it became an increasingly more silent and private activity.[5] Reading in the early modern period was though first and foremost an *activity*, as demonstrated by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton.[6] Texts were not read passively, but most often with an aim to understand and learn something new. Notes and drawings done in margins of texts are traces of the reading act. They tell of the relationship between reader and text.[7] In this rather vibrating field between reader and text, Roger Chartier has argued that the physical form of the book establishes an order against which reading functions. The ways in which the content of books are organized and presented are therefore never neutral, but can guide and direct readers, arrange knowledge and influence thought patterns.[8]

Based on these ideas this contribution analyses the literary methods employed when Renaissance architects and humanists sought to come to terms with Vitruvius's difficult text. The article will evolve around two case studies. The first examines certain annotations and autograph drawings that the Florentine architect Giovanni Battista da Sangallo (called "Il Gobbo", 1496-1548) made in the Vitruvius-edition, which he possessed. A closer look at Sangallo's no-

tes and drawings not only allows us to enter the private study space of a Renaissance architect, it also furnishes a key to understand the ways in which Vitruvius was read and comprehended. It is important to underline that the analysis in this connection is not a philological endeavour. Instead it seeks to view the structures within the act of reading.

In order to set Sangallo's Vitruvius-studies into a broader context, the second case study turns to the vast Vitruvius-programme presented by the Accademia della Virtù and to the many publications of Vitruvius's *De Architectura* mainly in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – the time when Sangallo made his notes. This case study considers essential literary systematization tools of structuring the ancient source that became prevalent in layouts of printed Vitruvius-editions. The overall aim of the contribution is to explore mechanisms at play in the field between text, reader and layout and their potential impact on architectural thought in the Renaissance.

### Giovanni Battista da Sangallo and his Sulpicio-Vitruvius

Giovanni Battista da Sangallo went from Florence to Rome in 1513 to collaborate with his brother Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1487-1546) in building as well as in surveying ancient monuments – a task that appears to have led both brothers to a close study of Vitruvius.[9] Antonio intended to translate the ancient text, but all that remains of the project is his preface from 1539.[10] From Battista's hand, however, two partly manuscript translations of Vitruvius's *De Architectura* remain as well as an annotated and illustrated copy of the first printed edition of Vitruvius's text made by the Professor of Grammar Giovanni Sulpicio da Veroli and printed in Rome around 1486.[11] According to Giovanni Battista's will all three texts were donated to the Confraternità della Misericordia in S. Giovanni Decollato and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the papers went into the holdings of Biblioteca Corsiniana in Rome where they are today. Giovanni Battista's annotated Sulpicio-Vitruvius has been named the Corsini Incunabulum after the library where it is kept.

Giovanni Sulpicio da Veroli had been involved with the literary and architectural circles of Federico da Montefeltro's court in Urbino just as he had been connected to cardinal Raffaele Riario's circle in Rome. Here he had worked together with the humanist Pomponio Leto (whom he mentions in the preface to his Vitruvius-edition) editing Frontinus' *De aquis urbis Romae*. [12] Sulpicio was thus deeply involved with the study of ancient texts on architecture. In his Vitruvius-edition, which he dedicates to Raffaele Riario, he maintains the Latin text and leaves out attempts to illustrate the work. Instead the text is set up with wide margins so that the reader, Sulpicio encourages, can add notes and thereby assist in establishing a more comprehensible Vitruvian text. His Vitruvius-version was therefore indeed meant to be marked with annotations, like a work-in-progress.[13]

It may have been exactly these typographical traits that made Sulpicio's Vitruvius attractive to Giovanni Battista. When he made his notes, in the timespan from the late 1520s to the late 1540s, various editions of Vitruvius already existed, some translated, some even commented and most of them illustrated. Fra Giocondo's Latin Vitruvius-edition from 1511 and Cesare Cesariano's translation and commentary from 1521 were both much studied and received their fame due mainly to the fact that they were illustrated and thereby clarified the ancient text visually.[14]

The absence of illustrations in Sulpicio's Vitruvius as well as the wide margin space meant that the reader was not visually guided towards a specific understanding while reading the text, and that there was room to add private notes. And Giovanni Battista passionately did so. The book, which measures 300x220 mm, consists of 112 printed leaves and 22 blank leaves. In the margins and on 20 of the blank leaves Giovanni Battista made in pen in light brown ink notes to the ancient text, partially translated certain sections (into vernacular Tuscan) and drew numerous illustrations to accompany the text.

Although a definite dating of Giovanni Battista's drawings and annotations in his Sulpicio - Vitruvius has not yet, to my knowledge, been established, it has been suggested that the illustrations and

notes were carried out in different phases from the end of the 1520s to the late 1540s.<sup>[15]</sup> Judging from the drawing- and writing style employed in the book at least two different styles are discernable. A careful and neat style generally employed in the margins, and a more sketchy style used also in the margins and particularly on the interleaved folios.

Out of Vitruvius' ten books Giovanni Battista made most of his annotations and drawings in Book III, which deals with the arrangements of temples and the ionic order (or *genus*, pl. *genera* which is the term used by Vitruvius) and in Book IV where the subject is the Doric and Corinthian orders. The remaining books are only sporadically annotated and some even completely without notes. That Giovanni Battista directed most of his attention to exactly these parts of Vitruvius's work is indeed in line with the general interest of the Renaissance in the layout and ornaments of antique temples and orders.

### In private dialogue with Vitruvius: Giovanni Battista's reading of the Ionic order

But what did Vitruvius write and how did his reader Giovanni Battista respond to his text? In order to probe this question the following focuses on the architect's reading of Vitruvius's section on the Ionic order in Book III.

Turning to the page where Vitruvius begins his description of the Ionic order, Giovanni Battista has drawn a foundation trench with pilings in the left margin and two bases in the right margin of the page (fig. 1). The drawing of the foundation trench refers to Vitruvius's discussion of this subject that immediately precedes his description of the Ionic order. In the drawings of the two bases, Giovanni Battista directs his attention to the concave torus and the convex scotia elements separated by the fillets interposed between the rounded forms. He leaves the column shafts only slightly indicated and writes the names of the two bases, the Attic base ("Basa acthigurge") and the Ionic base ("Basa ionicha") in the column space.

When relating the drawings to what Vitruvius writes in the passage next to the illustrations it can be noticed, that although Vitruvius mentions the column as an important element – the element from which the bases take their proportions – Giovanni Battista barely suggests the columns and the relation between column and base. Instead his focus is on the constituent parts of the bases. Through this focus it is as if Giovanni Battista depicts the bases almost piecemeal in accordance with the text. Here Vitruvius writes:

*The height, if it is to be an Attic base, is to be thus divided: that the upper part is to be one-third of the thickness of the column, and the remainder left to the plinth. Taking the plinth away, the remainder is to be divided into four parts, and the upper torus is to be one-fourth: the remaining three-fourths are to be equally divided so that the one is the lower torus and the other the scotia (which the Greeks call trochilus) with its fillets.*<sup>[16]</sup>

Vitruvius continues this mode of description also when he subsequently accounts for the Ionic base. Here the proportions

*are to be so fixed that the breadth of the base each way is one and three-eighths of the thickness of a column. The height is to be like the Attic base; so also its plinth. The remainder beside the plinth, which will be the third part of the column's diameter, is to be divided into seven parts: of these the torus at the top is to be three parts; the remaining four are to be equally divided; one half to the upper hollow with its astragals and top moulding, the other half is to be left to the lower trochilus; but the lower will seem greater because it will have a projection to the edge of the plinth. The astragals are to be one-eighth parts of the scotia. The projection of the base will be three-sixteenths of the thickness of the column.*<sup>[17]</sup>

These passages, difficult to read and comprehend, provide an insight into Vitruvius' text in general as his architectural descriptions, and especially those of the

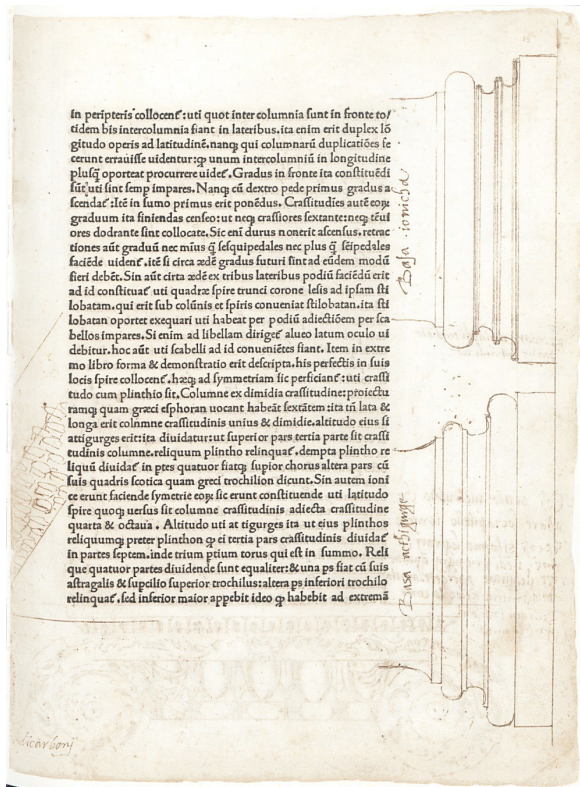


Fig 1: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.1-4, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome

orders, most often have the form of being a continuous dismantling of architectural wholes into detailed accounts of bases, column shafts, capitals, architraves and pediments. The proportion remarks that Vitruvius coins to each architectural element that he describes further underline this taking to pieces of architectural entities. It appears to be this breaking up of the architectural order that Vitruvius's verbal description brings about that directs or is carried on into Giovanni Battista's drawing mode with his emphasis on the individual elements of the bases.

Similarly, on the following page, where Vitruvius moves on to account for the Ionic capital, its abacus and volute, Giovanni Battista represents the main part of the capital in front view at the bottom of the page, like a cut out, with emphasis on the ornamental parts of the element (fig. 2). The annotations in the margin above and immediately in connection with the drawing of the Ionic capital in front view concern

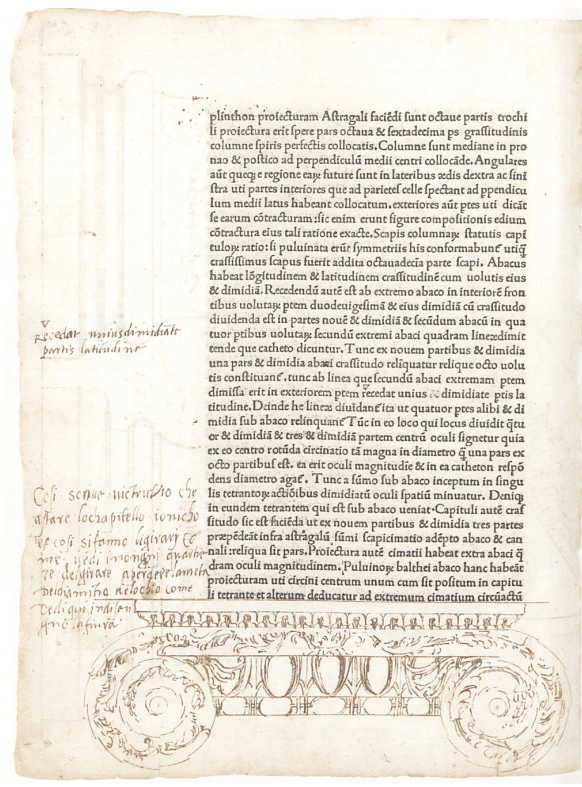
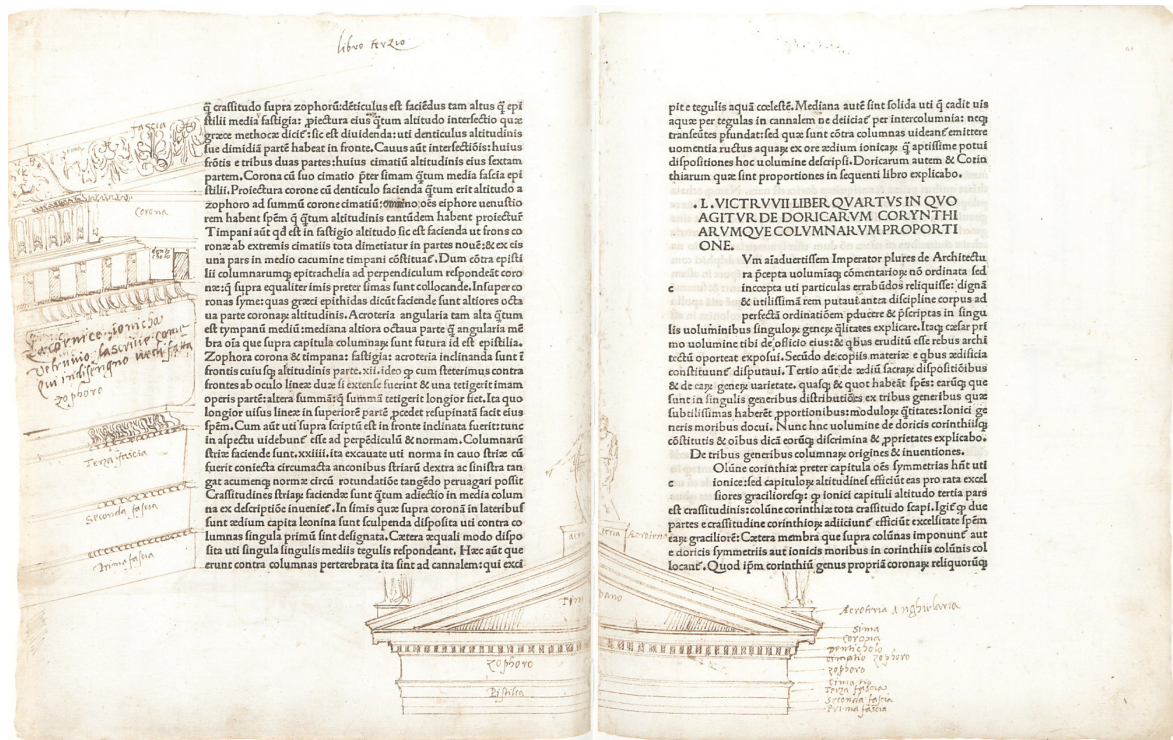


Fig 2: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome

matters of proportions regarding the abacus and its relation to the volutes as well as the proportions of the scrolls in connection with the volutes. In the annotation on the bottom of the page, Giovanni Battista directly refers to his drawing as a visualisation of the proportion of the scrolls of the volutes.<sup>[18]</sup> The annotations thus clearly reflect a concern with matters of proportions in relation to the details of the capital, present also in Vitruvius's meticulous description.

In the last section of Book III, Vitruvius's main emphasis is on a description of the Ionic entablature and tympanum. Giovanni Battista has here filled the left margin with a representation of a section of an Ionic entablature, viewed from the side and taking up all the margin space (fig. 3). On the drawn entablature's frieze section, Giovanni Battista ensures in writing that the drawing shows the Ionic cornice as described by Vitruvius.<sup>[19]</sup> The individual parts of the entablature are loosely drawn and although orna-





ments are sketched onto the separate elements, Giovanni Battista's real focus appears to be on the terminology, the names of each architectural member, that he thoroughly coins to almost all of the constituent parts of the entablature: "Corona", "denticholo", "Zophoro", "Terza fascia", "Secunda fascia", "Prima fascia". This occupation with architectural terms is also characteristic in the drawing, which covers the lower part of the page opening and represents an Ionic entablature in its context with the pediment (fig. 3). Correspondingly the names are here written, either directly on the elements themselves or next to the members and connected to them with a line.

Giovanni Battista's focus on the terminology indeed corresponds to Vitruvius's text, which is strongly dominated by architectural terms especially on the first half page directly next to the drawing in the margin (fig. 3). By coining the terms to the represented entablature, Giovanni Battista thus visualises the terminology employed in the text. Other subjects mentioned by Vitruvius in this last section of the Ionic order, such as the flutes of the columns (Book III.v.14), the mouldings and lions' head (Book III.v.15) and construction advice on how to lead away water through

Fig.3: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.8-13, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome

gutters (Book III.v.15); these subjects Giovanni Battista omits to comment on. Instead his attention is on the details that make up the entablature, emphasised by the coining of terms to each individual part and thereby reflecting not the whole content of Vitruvius's text, but rather his description mode.

Between Vitruvius's account of the Ionic capital and entablature are four interleaved pages that present a pause from Vitruvius's text, an intermezzo, where, on each page, Giovanni Battista draws one Ionic capital each time represented from a different angle. The pages are detailed close up views with additional notes (and at times partitions according to the instructions given by Vitruvius) (fig. 4 and fig. 5). The notes reveal that three of the capitals have been drawn from the Theatre of Marcellus, also designated "savelli" (i.e. Palazzo Savelli), and one has been represented according to Vitruvius's description. It is moreover from the notes that it becomes clear that

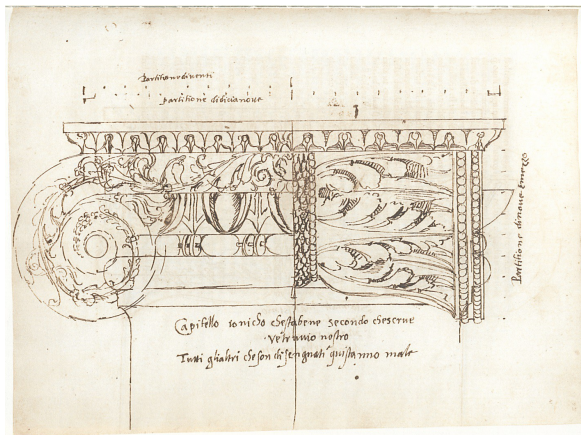


Fig. 4: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome

Giovanni Battista compares the real capitals to the instructions given by Vitruvius. In connection with the capitals that he draws from the Theatre of Marcellus, Giovanni Battista writes that they are bad (“male”), at times even very bad (“male malissimo”) according to Vitruvius, but good (“bene” or “apunto”) according to the Palazzo Savelli and the Theatre of Marcellus (fig. 5).[20] On his drawing of an ionic capital in split view (fig. 4), Giovanni Battista declares that this represented capital is well conceived according to what Vitruvius writes, and that all the other capitals drawn on the other pages are bad.[21]

The four pages indicate how intertwined the textual study of Vitruvius was with actual *in situ* investigations of the ruins, but also how Vitruvius acted like a reference point of rightness when judging architecture. That Giovanni Battista also writes that the capitals on the Theatre of Marcellus are good in their own right, although they stray away from Vitruvius's rules, indicates his acceptance of variations that differ from the ancient author.

By bringing the field studies into the textual reading of the ancient text, Giovanni Battista's Sulpicio-Vitruvius is not merely about studying past architecture, it also engages in a then-contemporary architectural discourse concerned with *all'antica*-architecture and associated issues of decorum and licentia –

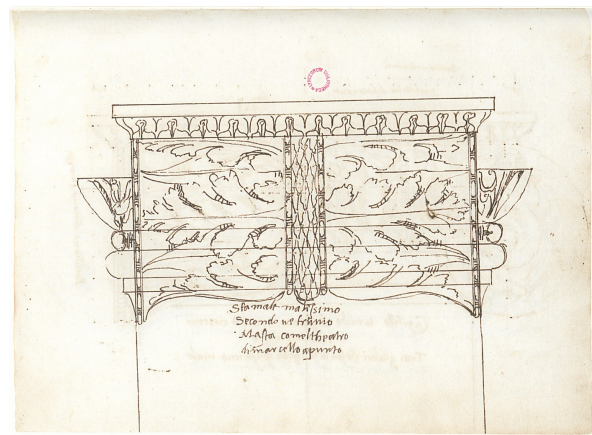


Fig. 5: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome

issues which in the architectural field often took Vitruvius as their yardstick.[22] This was also the case for Giovanni Battista when he in a letter (dated late 1546-1547) to Pope Paul III condemned the cornice on Palazzo Farnese as being a bastard (i.e. a mixture of elements from various orders) according to the rules of Vitruvius. Despite the fact that Giovanni Battista does not mention names, it is Michelangelo's cornice that he refers to, most likely in a defence of his brother Antonio, who was behind the other parts of the façade.[23]

When considering the relation between Vitruvius's text and Giovanni Battista's reading of it based on his drawings and annotations, it seems that Giovanni Battista has an overall focus on and interest in the architectural detail. This emphasis may reflect Vitruvius's text itself manifested through the ancient author's description method. But it may also, and at the same time, spring from an exceedingly thorough reading of the text generated by owning the book privately and therefore being able to return to the text over and over again, in calm and possibly after having discussed matters with fellow architects.

## Arranging Vitruvius for the public: Accademia della Virtù and published Vitruvius-editions

Around the time when Giovanni Battista made his private notes in his *Sulpicio-Vitruvius*, the ancient architect's text was indeed subject to scrutiny in a more public way as well, revealed explicitly by the extensive Vitruvius-project launched by the Rome-based Accademia della Virtù. This academy was a loose organisation of mainly humanists, churchmen, painters and architects who gathered in Rome at the house of the Sienese humanist Claudio Tolomei.<sup>[24]</sup> In November 1542 the academy presented its Vitruvius-programme in a letter written by Tolomei to Count Agostino de' Landi.<sup>[25]</sup> The project never fully materialised, and all that survives is Guillaume Philandrier's extensive commented Latin Vitruvius-edition from 1544. However, Tolomei's letter throws light on some of the methods behind the programme.

Similar projects had also been formed in Milan around Cesare Cesariano's illustrated translation of Vitruvius from 1521, in Vicenza around Giangiorgio Trissino, in Padua around Alvise Cornaro and in Venice around Daniele Barbaro.<sup>[26]</sup> At times the projects resulted in published Vitruvius-editions. Cesariano's illustrated Vitruvius from 1521 appears to be a result of such work, and Daniele Barbaro's 1556-Vitruvius grew through intense cooperation with the architect Andrea Palladio. Other published Vitruvius-editions were printed as well. Besides Giocondo's version from 1511, an edition by Durantino from 1524, which combines Cesariano's translation and Giocondo's illustrations was published, as was a commented translation of Vitruvius's first five books by Giovanni Battista Caporali in 1536.<sup>[27]</sup>

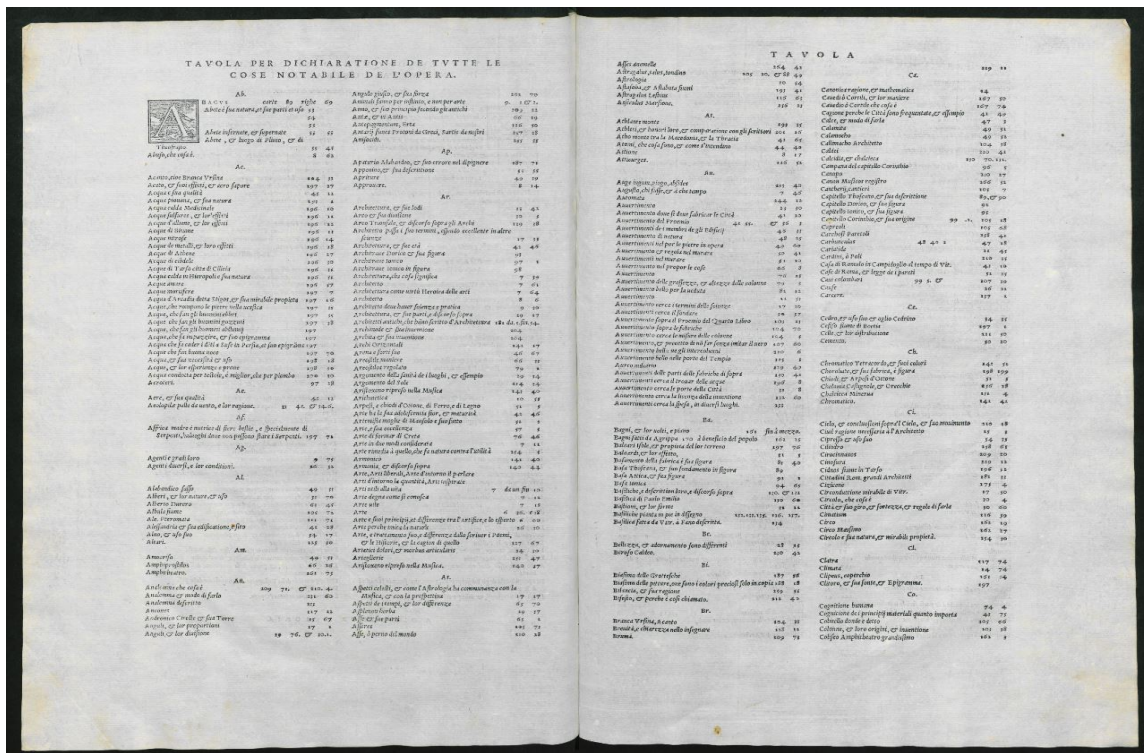
Although Giovanni Battista was not himself official member of the Accademia della Virtù, his brother Antonio da Sangallo the Younger worked with the group.<sup>[28]</sup> Moreover, painters and architects who were not members participated in the association's meetings.<sup>[29]</sup> Giovanni Battista is likely to have been one of them due to his close collaboration with his brother Antonio and his personal interest in Vitruvius.

The Vitruvius-project that the Accademia della Virtù presented in Tolomei's letter embodied translation, annotation, explanatory word-lists, and il-

lustrations of the ancient author's work. The programme comprises eight assignments. The first assignment concerns a commentary in Latin of the difficult sections in Vitruvius's text to be supplied with figures. The second issue is the making of a critical Vitruvius-edition substantially illustrated. The third and fourth assignments are two word lists containing the Latin and Greek terms from Vitruvius's text. The aim of the production of these lists is, writes Tolomei, to elucidate the many obscure expressions that Vitruvius uses. The fifth aspect of the academy's project is a rewrite of Vitruvius's books into a purer and better Latin and it leads to the next part of the project, which concerns a translation of Vitruvius into Tuscan with two additional word lists. Tolomei stresses the importance of these word lists. The first list will alphabetically record the architectural terms mentioned by Vitruvius so that all parts are given their proper names. In cases where it is impossible to find a Tuscan expression attempts should be made to extract the words from other reliable sources. The list is useful, states Tolomei, for those who wish to express themselves literarily or orally about architecture in Italian. The second list, also in Italian, is to be illustrated and will contain all architectural parts such as the column shaft, the base, the capital and all its elements. The seventh assignment is the making of a book, which collects all the Vitruvian principles and compares these with examples from ancient architecture in order to explicate discrepancies between textual source and ruin fragments. The final part of the academy's programme is a study of ancient buildings in Rome intended to comprise historical and architectural descriptions and illustrations of the so-called marble plan, the remains of the city's buildings as well as those structures, which have completely vanished.<sup>[30]</sup>

The overall intention of the vast Vitruvius-project of Accademia della Virtù was thus to make Vitruvius's text accessible and comprehensive through a general systematization via translations, word lists and visualisations of the text. Although the project sought also to compare text and ruin fragments, the programme appears to be principally a philological project concerned with words and architectural terms in particular. The prominence of alphabetical word lists, four in total, can be seen as a





symptom of the importance given to architectural terms. The word lists represent an organisation principle and a method to systematize Vitruvius's text. Based on the difficulties with understanding the text a potential reader would most likely use these word lists as an important tool to access the text. The reader would thus be guided into the text via the architectural term, detail or part and not through general and homogenous typologies such as, for example, the temple or the house. Especially the word list that was to accompany the Tuscan translation represents such a principle of arrangement. Tolomei writes that the purpose of the list is to create more clarity and better use. He continues to state that this list would be organised according to the part, such as the column with its base and capital, and that all the individual members of these parts would then be named and shown in an illustration, so that the reader when looking at the illustration would immediately recognise the names of the individual architectural pieces.[31] This unrealised list indeed seems to correspond to Giovanni Battista's efforts to name each part of the Ionic entablature and pediment in his Sulpicio-Vitruvius.

Fig. 6: Index in: Daniele Barbaro/Vitruvius, *I dieci libri dell'architettura di M. Vitruvio tradutti et commentati da Monsignor Barbaro eletto Patriarca*, in Vinegia per Francesco Marcolini, MDLVI (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Sig. 2o Wo 1824).

The use of word lists and its similar associate, the index, can be observed to be a central feature characteristic of the printed Vitruvius-editions as well. Manuscript versions of the ancient author's text throughout the Middle Ages often contained an index over the individual chapters of Vitruvius's text.[32]

This is also the case in Sulpicio's Vitruvius, which contains a three-and-a-half page long table of content without page number references at the beginning of the book. It appears to be Fra Giocondo's use of an index that inspired later editors such as Cesariano, Philandrier and Barbaro.[33]

In general the indexes and wordlists of printed Vitruvius-editions were thorough undertakings. Fra Giocondo's index is seventeen pages, Cesariano's twelve, of which the first ten pages are words and terms and the last two pages an index over the chapters of Vitruvius's text.[34] Philandrier's two in-



dexes are particularly comprehensive. The first is a 32 page-long alphabetical index to Vitruvius's ten books and Philandrier's annotations. It is followed by a four-page index over the Greek words used in Vitruvius. [35] Barbaro's Vitruvius-version from 1556 also has two indexes placed at the back of the book: A one-page index of the content of Vitruvius's books, that is not alphabetized and without page number references, and a nine-page alphabetical index with very precise page references (fig. 6). This index has the title: "Tavola per dechiratione de tutte le cose notabile de l'opera". That these indexes were indeed significant is stressed by the fact that they are even mentioned on the frontispiece of Barbaro's book. Directly under the book's title is written: "Con due Tauole, l'una di tutto quello si contiene per i Capi nell'Opera, l'altra per dechiaratione di tutte le cose d'importanza". [36] Also Durantino mentions, as part of his book title, that the work contains an alphabetical word list as a helping tool to access Vitruvius's text. [37]

Fra Giocondo mentioned the illustrations as part of the title of his printed Vitruvius, and it was, as pointed out earlier, the inclusion of illustrations as a new feature that contributed to the work's distinction. Some 45 years later in Barbaro's Vitruvius-edition, it appears that the index had come to play a role parallel to Giocondo's illustrations. It was a tool to clarify the text for the reader.

The production of word lists and indexes, a textual analysis in itself, became remarkably desirable in textbook production and the editing of classical authors with the advent of printing. The technical potentials offered by movable types made it possible not only to reproduce word lists easily, but also to arrange the material on the page with clarity and make use of the alphabetical organisation principle. [38] The overall consequence of such systematizing tools, represented by the word lists and indexes that became essential in Accademia della Virtù's Vitruvius programme as well as in the printed Vitruvius-editions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is that they bring about a focus on the naming of the individual parts of structures, on single words and architectural terms. As a device to create clarity for the reader, as Tolomei and Barbaro expressed it, word lists and indexes guide the reader into Vitruvius's body of text, not randomly, but

through the architectural part rather than through references to architectural wholes such as buildings or typologies. As prevalent organization techniques, word lists and indexes give preference to the architectural detail.

## Concluding remarks

In the cases of Giovanni Battista's reading and editorial decisions, the accentuation of the detail appears to be generated from the intense reading of Vitruvius's text and manifested as tools to clarify and systematize the work. It is from the encounter with what is written that the focus on the detail emerges. Such a prevailing concern with the architectural detail is current in Vitruvius's text on various levels. It is present at the level of the work's overall composition; if we are to believe Vitruvius, he states that he has set out to compose a single corpus of architecture based on scattered sources. [39]

However, the emphasis on the architectural detail comes to the fore in Vitruvius's description mode. As demonstrated in his account of the Ionic order, the description takes on the form of being an incessant undoing of architectural entities into bits and pieces underlined by proportion remarks that are built into his account. It can be argued that such a description method springs from the fact that the object of the description is an ornamental architectural element, the Ionic order. Nevertheless, this description technique is characteristic of Vitruvius's text in general. In his account of the house, for example, Vitruvius restrains from describing the house as a coherent entity, but focuses instead on specific rooms in isolation without mentioning how these individual units are related. [40] The emphasis on the architectural detail brought about in Giovanni Battista's studies as well as in the Vitruvius-publications can thus be said to be latently present in Vitruvius's books themselves.

In the *all'antica*-discourse of the 16<sup>th</sup> century an accentuation of the architectural part was present almost as a premise through the study of ancient ruins that most often existed only in a fragmentary form. Besides, although the core of *all'antica*-discourse within the architectural field was to recuperate ancient

architecture, the aim was never a strict imitation, but rather new interpretations based on additions, omissions and selections. Ancient building relics, as open referents, complied with such aims – as did Vitruvius's text due to its obscurity. Architectural practice of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in many ways was a *bricolage* activity, to borrow a term from Alina Payne.[41] Mario Carpo has demonstrated that similar strategies are implemented and propagated with the printed architectural treatise in the Renaissance, Sebastiano Serlio's in particular. In his book *Architecture in the Age of Printing*, Carpo argues that the media change from script to moveable type brought about "a new image-based architectural method", and that the presentations of fragmentary ancient building elements on the pages in Serlio's treatise represented "a catalogue of ready-made parts" that could be used according to the judgment of the architect.[42] The fragmented ruins, Vitruvius's obscurity, as well as the printed architectural treatise with its exhibition of separated Antique building elements, make the accentuation of the architectural detail brought to light here, seem if not obvious, then perhaps at least part of a broader cultural context. All these aspects, in each their way, made strategies of combination as a creation method within the field of architecture stand out clearly.

When it came to finding a systematization scheme, the approaches of Vitruvius himself and of his readers in the Renaissance to dismantle entities and to categorise elements deeply intertwined. Perhaps the Vitruvian scrutinisers were motivated by a culture where the concept of the detail or fragment was ubiquitous.

## Endnotes

1. Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, ed. and tr. by Giovanni Orlandi and Paolo Portoghesi, 2 vols, Milan 1966, VI.1: "Oltra di questo ci era ancora, che egli non haveva scritto molto ornamente. Conciosia che egli parlava, di maniera, che a Latini pareva che e' parlasse Greco, & a Greci pareva che egli parlasse Latino; Ma la cosa stessa nel dimostrarci si fa testimonianza, che egli non parlò nè Latino, nè Greco; di modo che egli è ragionevole, che egli non scrivesse a noi, poiche egli scrisse di maniera, che noi non lo intendiamo [...]."
2. Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 15-51.
3. For a chronological and commented overview over printed Vitruvius-editions see: Luigi Vagnetti and Laura Marcucci, *Per una coscienza Vitruviana. Regesto cronologico e critico delle edizioni, delle traduzioni e delle ricerche più importanti sul trattato latino De architectura libri X di Marco Vitruvio Pollione*, in: *Studi e documenti di architettura*, 8, 1978, pp. 11-195. For studies of Vitruvius in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, see, for example: Carol Hersell Krinsky, *Seventy-Eight Vitruvius Manuscripts*, in: *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 30, 1967, pp. 36-70; Lucia A. Ciapponi, *Fra Giocondo da Verona and His Edition of Vitruvius*, in: *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 47, 1984, pp. 72-90; Vassili Pavlovitch Zoubov, *Vitruve et ses commentateurs du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in: *La science au seizième siècle*, Paris 1957, pp. 69-90; Manfredo Tafuri, *L'architettura del Manierismo nel Cinquecento europeo*, Rome 1966, pp. 187-216; Gabrielle Morolli, *L'architettura di Vitruvio. Una guida illustrata*, Florence 1988; Pier Nicola Pagliara, *Vitruvio da testo a canone*, in: Salvatore Settis (ed.), *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana. Dalla tradizione all'archaeologia*, Turin 1986, vol. 3, pp. 5-85; Georgia Clarke, *Vitruvian Paradigms*, in: *Papers of the British School at Rome*, vol. 70, 2002, pp. 319-346; Georgia Clarke, *Roman House – Renaissance Palace. Inventing Antiquity in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 284-290. Recently the vast and important collection of Vitruvius-editions of the Bibliothek Werner Oechslin has been digitalised and made accessible via the following direct links: <http://www.e-rara.ch/vitruviana/nav/classification/5987941> and: <http://echo.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/content/florentinecathedral/oechslin>.
4. Linda Pellechia, *Architects Read Vitruvius: Renaissance Interpretations of the Atrium of the Ancient House*, in: *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 51, no. 4, dec. 1992, pp. 377-416. On the subject of the architect as reader, see: Sarah McPhee, *The Architect as Reader*, in: *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 68, no. 3, 1999, pp. 454-461.
5. Roger Chartier in: *A History of Private Life*, vol. 3, *Passions of The Renaissance*, ed. by Roger Chartier and translated by Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge Mass. / London, pp. 124-127.
6. Robert Darnton, *Toward a History of Reading*, in: *Wilson Quarterly*, 1989, pp. 87-102; Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "Studied for Action": *How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy*, in: *Past & Present*, no. 129, 1990, pp. 30-78; Anthony Grafton,

- Renaissance Readers and Ancient Texts: Comments on Some Commentaries*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1985, pp. 615-649.
7. Since the 1990s there has been a scholarly focus on marginalia, cf. for example, Jardine and Grafton 1990; William H. Sherman, *John Dee, the Politics of Reading and Writing in Renaissance England*, Amherst MA 1995; Helen J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*, New Haven 2001; William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*, Philadelphia 2008.
  8. Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books. Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Stanford 1992 (French 1st ed. 1992), pp. 1-23.
  9. Pier Nicola Pagliara, *Giovanni Battista*, in: *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. by Jane Shoaf Turner, 34 vols, London 1996, vol. 27, pp. 747-749; Pier Nicola Pagliara, *Studi e pratica vitruviana di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane e di suo fratello Giovanni Battista*, in: *Les traités d'architecture de la Renaissance: Actes du Colloque tenu à Tours du 1er au 11 juillet 1981*, ed. by Jean Guillaume, Paris 1988, pp. 179-206; Per Gustav Hamberg, *G.B. da Sangallo detto Il Gobbo e Vitruvio. Con particolare riferimento all'atrio di Palazzo Farnese a Roma e all'antico Castello Reale di Stoccolma*, in: *Palladio*, VIII, 1958, pp. 15-21.
  10. Antonio da Sangallo's preface to his translation of Vitruvius has been transcribed in: Paola Barocchi (ed.), *Scritti d'arte del cinquecento*, 3 vols, Milan and Naples 1977, vol. 3, pp. 3028-3031. The preface, Cod. Magliabechiano C, is held at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence.
  11. Giovanni Battista da Sangallo's texts in the Biblioteca Corsiniana (the library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei) are: Mss. Cors. 1846 and 2093 (manuscript translations), and MS.50.F.1 (annotated and illustrated copy of Sulpicio's Vitruvius). The latter was published in facsimile in 2003 as: *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and auto-graph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003. In the following I will quote it as: Corsini Incunabulum. On the Corsini Incunabulum in general, see: Rowland 2003, pp. 1-29; Morolli 1988, pp. 87-140.
  12. Ciapponi 1984, pp. 72-73; Pagliara 1986, p. 32; Margaret Daly Davies, *Opus Isodomum at the Palazzo della Cancelleria: Vitruvian Studies and Archaeological Antiquarian Interests at the Court of Raffaello Riario*, in: Silvia Squarzina (ed.), *Roma – Centro ideale della cultura del antico*, Milan 1989, p. 448; Vagnetti and Marcucci 1978, pp. 185-195; Rowland 2003, pp. 1-11.
  13. Corsini Incunabulum, Sulpicio's preface: "sua in marginibus spatial feruabuntur: ut quom vel nostro vel aliorum studio edentur in lucem. [...] litteratos omnes in quorum manus volumina haec pervene[rint] velim oratos: dent nobiscum op[er]am ut habeat[ur] hic auctor emendatissimus: & sic suis undique partibus absolutus: quod quides spero fore brevi." Rowland 2003, p. 2.
  14. Fra Giocondo/Vitruvius, *M. Vitruvius per locondum solito castigatur factus cum figuris et tabula ut iam legi et intelligi possit*, Impressum Venetiis [...] M.D.XI. Cesariano/Vitruvius, *Di Lucio Vitruuio Pollione de Architectura Libri Dece traducti de latino in Vulgare raffigurati: Comentati: & con mirando ordini Insigniti: per il quale facilmente potrai trovare la moltitudine de li abstrufi & reconditi Vocabuli a li soi loci & in epsa tabula con summo studio expositi & enucleati ad Immensa utilitate de ciascuno Studioso & beniuolo di epsa opera*, Como 1521.
  15. Ian Campbell and Arnold Nesselrath, *The Codex Stosch. Surveys of Ancient Buildings by Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, in: *Pegasus. Berliner Beiträge zum Nachleben der Antike*, Heft 8, 2006, pp. 20-34, see pp. 20 and 34. As Campbell and Nesselrath point out, Pier Nicola Pagliara has proposed that Giovanni Battista worked on the Corsini Incunabulum before 1531 until the late 1530s. Pagliara bases his proposition on dating Giovanni Battista's different handwriting styles, cf. Pagliara 1988, p. 181 and Pagliara 1996, p. 748. Ingrid D. Rowland has suggested that the earliest drawings and annotations were made in the 1520s and the latest around 1546-1548, cf. Rowland 2003, pp. 27, 34. Rowland thereby seems to follow Christoph Luitpold Frommel's discussion of Giovanni Battista's handwriting in: *The Architectural Drawings of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and His Circle*, ed. Christoph Luitpold Frommel and Nicholas Adams, Cambridge Mass. / London 1994, vol. 1, pp. 1-61, at p. 45.
  16. Corsini Incunabulum, Vitruvius, III.v.2: "Altitudo eius, si attigures erit: ita dividatur: ut superior pars tertia parte sit crassitudinis column[a]e. reliquum plintho relinquat[ur]. dempta plintho reliquu[m] dividat[ur] in p[ar]tes quat[tuor] fiatque sup[er]ior chorus altera pars cu[m] suis quadris scotia quam gr[a]eci trochilion dicunt." English translation from: Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, ed. and translated by Frank Granger, 2 vols, Cambridge Mass. and London 1931-1934, III.v.2.
  17. Corsini Incunabulum, Vitruvius, III.v.3: "[...] sym[metri]a eor[um] sic erunt constituend[a]e uti latitudo spir[a]e quoqueversus sit column[a]e crassitudinis adiecta crassitudine quarta & octava.

- Altitudo [ita] uti attigures ita ut eius plinthos reliquumque pr[a]eter plinthon quod ei tertia pars crassitudinis [columnae] dividat[ur] in partes septem. inde trium p[ar]tium torus qui est in summo. Reliqu[a]e quat[t]uor partes dividend[a]e sunt [a]equaliter: & una p[ar]s fiat cu[m] suis astragalis & supe[r]cilio superior trochilus: altera p[ar]s inferiori trochilo relinquat[ur]. sed inferior maior appa[re]bit ideo quod habebit ad extremam plinthon proiecturam[.] Astragali faciendi sunt octav[a]e partis trochili proiectura erit spere pars octava & sextadecima p[ar]s grassitudinis column[a]e spiris perfectis collocatis.”
18. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations, III.v.5-8: ”Recedar minusdimidiate partis latitudino”. ”Così scrive Vitruvio che a stare lo capitello ionico et così si fanno li girari come vedi in ongni quartiere del girare a perdere la metà Del diametro del’occhio come vedi qui in disegno la f[ig]ura.”
19. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations, III.v.8-13: ”la cornice ionica Vitruvio la scrive come Qui in disegno vedi fatta.”
20. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations (selected), III.v.5-8: ”Sta male malissimo secondo Vitruvio Ma sta bene secondo E’ savelli appunto Come quelli Del teatro di Marcello” / ”Male stanno secondo Vitruvio E sta bene secondo E’ savelli di roma E’l teatro di Marcello” / ”Sta male malissimo Secondo Vitruvio Ma sta come ’l teatro di Marcello appunto.”
21. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations, III.v.5-8: ”Capitello ionico che sta bene secondo che scr[iv]e Vitruvio nostro Tutti gli altri che son disegnati qui stanno male.”
22. Payne 1999, pp. 15-33, 52-60.
23. About the cornice, Giovanni Battista, among other things, writes: ”Qui non è qualità nessuna, perché l’opera è facta della buona memoria secondo le regole di Vitruvio et questa cornice è facta più presto al modo barbaro c’altrimenti [...] le spetie delle cornice son tre: doriche, joniche e corinthie. Questa vostra non è dorica, né jonica né corinthia, è facta bastata a volontà che tocca alli huominj.” The letter, Cod. Ashb. 639, fol. 145 v, is held at the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence and has been transcribed in: Pier Nicola Pagliara, *Alcune minute autografe di G. Battista da Sangallo. Parti della traduzione di Vitruvio e la lettera a Paolo III contro il cornicione michelangiolesco di Palazzo Farnese*, in: *Architettura Archiv. Fonti e storia*, 1982, 1, pp. 33-34, here at p. 33. Pagliara dates the letter to late 1546 or early 1547 at p. 28.
24. Pagliara 1986, pp. 67-72; Payne 1999, pp. 26-27; Margaret Daly Davies, *Zum Codex Coburgensis: Frühe Archäologie und Humanismus im Kreis des Marcello Cervino*, in: Richard Harprath and Henning Wrede, *Antikenzeichnung und Antikenstudium in Renaissance und Frühbarock*, Mainz 1989, pp. 188-191.
25. Tolomei’s letter has been transcribed and commented in: Barocchi 1977, vol. 3, pp. 3037-3046. Besides Tolomei’s letter Margaret Daly Davies lists two other main sources to Accademia della Virtù: Giorgio Vasari’s *Vite* and Luca Contile’s letter, cf.: Daly Davies 1989, p. 188.
26. Pagliara 1986, passim; Payne 1999, pp. 29-31.
27. Fra Giocondo/Vitruvius M.D.XI; Cesariano/Vitruvius 1521; Durantino/Vitruvius, *M. L. Vitruvio Pollione De architectura traducto di Latino in volgare dal vero esemplare con le figure e li soi loci con mirando ordini insignito: co la sua tabula alfabetica: per la quale potrai facilmente trovare la moltitudine de li vocaboli a li soi loci con summa diligentia esposti*: [...], Venetia: in le Case de Ioane Antonio & Piero Fratelli da Sabio 1524; Corporali/Vitruvius, *Architettura con il suo comento e figure. Vitruvio in volgar lingua raportato per M. Gianbatista Caporali di Perugia*, Perugia: Stamperia del Conte Iano Bigazzini 1536; Daniele Barbaro/Vitruvius, *I dieci libri dell’architettura di M. Vitruvio tradutti et commentati da Monsignor Barbaro eletto Patriarca*, in Venetia per Francesco Marcolini, MDLVI.
28. This is known from Girolamo Garimberti’s treatise *De regimenti publici de la città* (1544), fol. 1r-3r, cf. Margaret Daly Davies (ed.), *Archäologie der Antike. Aus den Beständen der Herzog August Bibliothek 1500-1700*, Wiesbaden 1994, pp. 15-16.
29. Daly Davies 1989, p. 189.
30. Tolomei in: Barocchi 1977, vol. 3, pp. 3038-3042.
31. Tolomei in: Barocchi 1977, vol. 3, p. 3041: ”E per maggior chiarezza ed utilità si farà uno altro vocabolario volgare per ordine d’istrumenti o di parte; come per esempio, pigliando la colonna con la sua base, e ’l suo capitello e ponendola in figura, si dichiarano parte a parte tutti i suoi membri, come il zocco, la luna, il tondello, il collarino, e oltre di mano in mano; in tal modo che, ponendo la figura dinanzi agli occhi, subito si conoscerà come si domandi ciascuna sua parte.”
32. Krinsky 1967, pp. 54-66.
33. Ciapponi 1984, p. 86; Francis J. Witty, *Early Indexing Techniques: A Study of Several Book Indexes of the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries* in: *Library Quarterly*, XXXV, no. 3, 1965, pp. 141-148.
34. Fra Giocondo / Vitruvius M.D.XI; Cesariano / Vitruvius 1521.
35. Guillaume Philandrier/Vitruvius, *M. Vitruvii Pollionis De Architectura Libri Decem Ad Caesarem Augustum*. [...] *Cum Græco pariter &*



*Latino indice locupletissimo*, Lugduni apud Ioan. Tornaesium. M.D.LII.

36. Daniele Barbaro/Vitruvius MDLVI.
37. Durantino/Vitruvius 1524: "[...] *co la sua tabula alfabetica: per la quale potrai facilmente trovare la moltitudine de li vocaboli a li soi loci con summa diligentia esposti* [...]."
38. Elisabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Cambridge 1979, 2 vols, vol. 1, pp. 83-103.
39. Vitruvius/Granger 1931-34, Book IV, preface; Pierre Gros, *Structures et limites de la compilation vitruvienne dans ses livres III et IV du De architectura*, in: *Latomus*, 34, 1975, p. 986.
40. Vitruvius/Granger 1931-34, Book VI.iii-v.
41. Alina Payne, *Creativity and bricolage in architectural literature of the Renaissance*, in: *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 34, 1998, pp. 21-28.
42. Mario Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing*, Cambridge Mass. 2001 (Italian 1st ed. 1998), passim, p. 46.

## Figures

Fig. 1: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.1-4, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 77.)

Fig. 2: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 78.)

Fig. 3: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.8-13, The Corsini Incunab-

ulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, pp. 84-85.)

Fig. 4: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 81.)

Fig. 5: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio's Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 82.)

Fig. 6: Index in: Daniele Barbaro/Vitruvius, *I dieci libri dell'architettura di M. Vitruvio tradutti et commentati da Monsignor Barbaro eletto Patriarca*, in Vinegia per Francesco Marcolini, MDLVI (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Sig. 2o WO 1824).

## Summary

For Renaissance architects, Vitruvius acted as the stabile point of reference, at times even as a rule, in connection to the heterogeneous ancient remains that were visible amongst the Roman ruins. The circumstance that Vitruvius's text itself was a literary palimpsest formed the outset of a passionate Vitruvian exegesis. The many studies and publications of Vitruvius in the 16<sup>th</sup> century can therefore be perceived as efforts to arrange the ancient source in such a way that it became more comprehensible to a 16<sup>th</sup> century user. Based on two case-studies, the article explores

the literary methods employed when Renaissance architects and humanists sought to come to terms with Vitruvius's difficult text. The first turns to the private study space of the Florentine architect Giovanni Battista da Sangallo. Through formal observations concerning the notes and autograph drawings that the architect made in his own Vitruvius, this case-study attempts to establish a relationship between a textual description mode that enhances the detail and the reading act. In order to set this investigation of the field between text and reader into a broader context, the second case-study turns to then-contemporary studies of Vitruvius directed for the public, such as the Vitruvius-programme of the Accademia della Virtù and the many publications of Vitruvius in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By focussing on essential literary systematization tools of structuring the ancient source that became prevalent, this case-study explores textual mechanisms at play with the advent of printing and their potential impact on Renaissance architectural thought.

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### Title

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