



ROMA NOLLIANA

EXHIBIT FOR THE NOLLI CONFERENCE

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INTRODUCTION

“La grande pianta del Nolli del 1748 divide come colonna miliare, la serie delle piante di Roma in due lunghi periodi; nell’anteriore prevale il criterio artistico, nel posteriore lo scientifico”

Domenico Gnoli, *Mostra di Topografia Romana*, Roma, 1903; (catalog for the exhibit held in Rome at the Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele II)

As Domenico Gnoli points out, Nolli’s Grande Pianta is a landmark in the history of city images as well as being the most influential plan in the long series of maps of the city of Rome which come after his. His predecessors are few, and Nolli himself pays tribute to only one: Bufalini. It is remarkable to note that while after 1748 ichnographic maps (i.e.: plan-maps) of Rome prevail, between Bufalini’s plan of 1551 and Nolli’s plan of 1748 there appeared only four of these:

- Alò Giovannoli 1616. Cm. 52 x 39 (Frutaz CXLIV)
- Matteo Gregorio de Rossi 1668. Cm. 169 x 129 (Frutaz CLVII)
- Antonio Barbey 1697. Cm. 53.5 x 58 (Frutaz CLXII)
- Nicolas de Fer 1700. Cm. 24 x 31 (Frutaz CLXIII)

Of these four, only De Rossi’s and Barbey’s plan bear any relationship to Nolli’s work. Giovannoli’s is a reduced, though updated version of Bufalini (showing the scheme of Sixtus V’s urban plan); de Fer’s map is too sketchy and lacking in detail to be considered in this context. De Rossi’s map is really a hybrid: a plan-map with selected monuments depicted in perspective. Part of its importance in relation to Nolli is that it picks up on Bufalini’s device of showing churches in plan. Barbey’s map, which is probably influenced by that of De Rossi, employs the same technique, and extends it to the depiction of major palazzi. Nolli seems to have adopted this technique and combined it with the detailed information on villa gardens and planting which De Rossi was able to show in considerable detail on his large map.

Nolli was not the first major map-maker to be followed by a host of imitators. The same happened to Bufalini. After a half-century during which no maps of any kind were made of contemporary Rome (at least none that have survived), in 1551 Bufalini published the first ichnographic plan of the city since the 3rd century Forma Urbis. Since the latter is only fragmentary, Bufalini’s is the first complete ichnographic map of Rome available. In the half-century following Bufalini, we get no less than twenty maps of the contemporary city, most of them using Bufalini as a base, but none of them an ichnographic plan.

The technique used by these map-makers was to keep Bufalini’s network of streets (with all its inaccuracy) and to depict buildings three-dimensionally on each block. Notable among

these are Fabio Licinio (1557, Frutaz CXV), Francesco Pacciotti (1557, Frutaz CXVI), anonymous (1562, attributed to Giovanni Antonio Dosio, Frutaz CXVIII), and Etienne Dupérac (1577, Frutaz CXXVII). Dupérac is the only one of these that varies the orientation of his map: West instead of East. Mario Cartaro probably used Bufalini's map to develop his large plan of city, but he tried to correct some of the more glaring inaccuracies of that map (1576, Frutaz CXXVI). For example, he shows equal angles between the three streets of the Piazza del Popolo trivium, instead of Bufalini's incorrect unequal angles.

In 1593, a new type of map was developed by Antonio Tempesta who took Bufalini's network of streets and compressed it vertically while keeping the horizontal scale constant. The result is a long horizontal rectangular map instead of Bufalini's approximate square. To keep within that rectangle, Tempesta rotated Borgo nearly 90° clockwise. Buildings are shown in perspective but the author took care to prevent them from hiding the streets. Tempesta's vertical compression is not consistent: the lower half of the map is less compressed than the upper half. This meant that the lower, inhabited part of the city could be shown in more detail. The overall effect is a perspective image of the city viewed from the top of the Gianiculum hill.

Like Bufalini, Tempesta had his followers. The 1625 map by Giovanni Maggi (Frutaz CXLVII), the largest map of the city to be produced (cm. 224 x 428), uses Tempesta's vertical compression technique. So do G. Van Schayck (1630, Frutaz CXLVIII), Lievin Cruyl (1665, Frutaz CLIV), and Federico Agnelli (1666, Frutaz CLV). Copies and updates of Tempesta's own map appear in 1640, 1662 and 1693.

Competing with the Tempesta-type map during the Seicento were developed versions of Cartaro's large map of 1576. Belonging to this group are Matteo Greuter (1618, Frutaz CXLV), Francesco de Paoli (1623, Frutaz CXLVI), Johannes Blau (1663, Frutaz CLIII), and Giambattista Falda with his large and small maps (1667 and 1675, Frutaz CLVIa and CLVIII).

All of these were view-maps, particularly appreciated by pilgrims and tourists who understood them better than they did ichnographic images (Frutaz vol.I,p.22). It is significant in this respect that Nolli's ichnographic map did not have a commercial success in his own time. To this day, the Grande Pianta is appreciated largely by architects, cartographers and scholars of Roman topography and urbanism. Nonetheless, as noted above, maps of Rome after Nolli are more often than not plan-maps rather than view-maps.

The Grande Pianta is known for its remarkable accuracy, far exceeding that of earlier maps of the city, and not significantly improved upon since. But if accuracy were its only attribute, this map would be unremarkable among a number of others. What really makes it stand out is the wealth of detailed information to be found on the twelve sheets. No other map of the city approaches the Grande Pianta in this respect. A few examples will suffice to make this point about fine details:

- a) the small corner fountain of the bees at the corner of Via Sistina and Piazza Barberini (now moved to the Via Veneto corner)
- b) the bollards separating Piazza Borghese from Via del Clementino
- c) the four dots in Piazza S.Pietro which determine the arcs of the four-centered oval defined by the colonnades

On a larger scale, Nolli records otherwise unnoticeable asymmetry in the Spanish steps and Piazza del Campidoglio. But perhaps Nolli's greatest contribution is the identification of semi-public space in the form of church interiors, and palace courtyards, entries and stairways. Until relatively recently courtyards were accessible to the public, so the white areas in the Grande Pianta represent

The first of those to benefit from Nolli's work was Piranesi. Whereas Piranesi was ready to criticize Nolli's work, he did not seem to have been averse to appropriating some of it, without acknowledging his debt to his former collaborator. Nolli's influence on 19th century maps is seen explicitly in images like Ruga's 1823 plan where the author refers to Nolli by name, and implicitly in the same map-maker's 1824 plan, the 1829 Census plan, and Letarouilly's 1841 plan. This is only a small sampling of over fifty such maps before 1870. After that date, when Rome becomes the capital of unified Italy, a new type of map emerges: the Piano Regolatore or master plan (A.Ceen, *Urbs Nova*, 2001). While this type of plan continues to be based on Nolli's cartography, which remains in use by the city until the 1970s, its purpose is now prescriptive rather than descriptive. The introduction of lithography allowed the use of multiple colors, used in defining different aspects of the city's planned growth. Colored maps are not easily compared to black and white ones.

Piano Regolatore maps influenced many late 19th and early 20th century plans of Rome, which carried indications of the planned urban expansions. The explosive growth of the city after that time produced maps which had to cover so large a district that the historic city tended to disappear in an area many times its size. Consequently comparison of these with earlier maps like Nolli becomes difficult if not pointless.

CATALOG

Cat. 1

GIAMBATTISTA NOLLI (1701-1756)

1748

NUOVA PIANTA DI ROMA (*Grande Pianta*)

Cat. 2

PERCIER et FONTAINE

1809

CHOIX DES PLUS CELEBRES MAISONS DE
PLAISANCE DE ROME ET DE SES ENVIRONS

Planche III, Vue générale de la maison de plaisance du prince Albani

Cat. 3

MARIANO VASI (1744-1820)

1818

NUOVA RACCOLTA DI CENTO PRINCIPALI VEDUTE ANTICHE

E MODERNE DELL'ALMA CITTÀ DI ROMA E LE SUE VICINANZE
DISPOSTE SECONDO IL METODO DELL'ITINERARIO DI ROMA

Villa Albani

Façade of the Casino

Cat. 4

GIAMBATTISTA NOLLI ? (1701-1756)

1751

Pianta de' fili, et altro conceduti alli RR.PP.

d° S. Dorotea in Trastevere, l'Anno 1751

Cat. 5

GIOVANNI BATTISTA FALDA (1648-1678)

1665

IL NUOVO TEATRO DELLE FABRICHE, ET EDIFICI...

ALTRA VEDVTA DEL CAMPIDOGLIO

Copy of Falda view by Matteo Gregorio De Rossi

Cat. 5

GIOVANNI BATTISTA FALDA (1648-1678)

1665

IL NUOVO TEATRO DELLE FABRICHE, ET EDIFICI...

ALTRA VEDVTA DEL CAMPIDOGLIO

The house in which Nolli lived.

Cat. 6

GIO. BATTISTA PIRANESI (1720-1778)

1756

LE ANTICHITA` ROMANE

Tom. I, Title Page, Tav. II, III, IV, V, VI, VII

Cat. 7

GIO. BATTISTA PIRANESI (1720-1778)

1762

from *Il Campo Marzio dell'Antica Roma*

Tab. XVI

Cat. 8

GIO. BATTISTA PIRANESI (1720-1778)

ca. 1774

PIANTA DI ROMA E DEL CAMPO MARZO

Cat. 9

PIETRO RUGA (active early 19c.)

1823

Nuova Pianta di Roma Moderna estratta dalla grande
del Nolli corretta ed accresciuta de' nomi delle contrade

Cat. 10

PIETRO RUGA (active early 19c.)

1824 (dated 1843 on the map)

PIANTA DELLA CITTA DI ROMA

CON LA INDICAZIONE DI TUTTE LE ANTICHITA E NUOVI ABBELLIMENTI

Cat. 11

PAUL LETAROUILLY (1795-1855)

1838

PLAN DE ROME MODERNE

Avec les changemens et les Accroissemens nouveaux

Cat. 12

PAUL LETAROUILLY (1795-1855)

1841

PLAN TOPOGRAPHIQUE DE ROME MODERNE

Avec les changemens et les Accroissemens nouveaux

Cat. 13

ANONYMOUS

1829

Pianta Topografica di Roma della Direzione generale del Censo

Cat. 14

UMBERTO NISTRI

ROMA DALL' AEROPLANO

1919

Published by Umberto Nistri [Aerofotogrammetrica, Roma]

