THE PRINT COLLECTION OF CASSIANO DAL POZZO

ARCHITECTURE, TOPOGRAPHY AND MILITARY MAPS

THREE VOLUMES

Mark McDonald

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The dal Pozzo print collection was unique in its scope and organisation. Some 3,000 prints are known, in fourteen albums and many loose impressions, mainly divided between the British Library and the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. Acquired from the flourishing printmaking industry of the time, the prints assembled by Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657) and his younger brother Carlo Antonio (1606–89) were largely documentary and carefully ordered by subject matter: costumes, religious processions and ceremonies, tombs and catafalsques, portraits, social and humorous subjects, architecture, topography, maps and military engagements.

This second and final part of the catalogue presents the architectural, topographical and military prints. Over 750 prints are devoted to ancient and modern Rome: from an album entirely dedicated to St Peter’s – the largest building project of the day – to another covering the major pilgrim and other churches in Rome, including exterior views, plans, altarpieces and statuary.

The palaces and villas of Rome are also well represented, including Fald’s famous Palazzi di Roma, while the ancient city is evoked through two compilations of sixteenth-century prints: Hieronymous Cock’s Roman ruins and the Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae with many reconstructions of ancient buildings. The collection stretched well beyond Rome, however, and included architecture in other Italian and European cities (including Rubens’s Palazzi di Genova and Perret’s engravings of the Escorial). The European theatre of war is represented in more than 600 prints recording major sixteenth- and seventeenth-century military engagements: an extraordinary assemblage that testifies to the popularity of this genre of printmaking that not only celebrated victory but provided the visual information to convey news of military events.

This ground-breaking catalogue will be an essential resource not only for students of prints, but for all those studying European visual culture in the seventeenth century.

Mark McDonald is Curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, responsible for Italian, Spanish, Mexican and early French prints and illustrated books. He joined the museum in 2014 after working at the British Museum as Curator of Old Master prints and Spanish drawings. His seminal work The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus: 1488–1539 won the Mitchell Prize for Art History (2004), and he has curated exhibitions at the British Museum and the Museo del Prado among others.
The ‘Museo Cartaceo’ (Paper Museum) is a collection of some 9,000 watercolours, drawings and prints assembled during the course of the seventeenth century by the Roman patron and collector Cassiano dal Pozzo and his younger brother Carlo Antonio. It represents one of the most significant attempts before the age of photography to embrace human knowledge in visual form. The collection documents ancient art and culture, architecture, zoology, botany, geology and social customs, and provides us with a major tool for understanding the intellectual concerns of a period during which the foundations of our own scientific methods were established. The catalogue raisonné gives unprecedented access to this major source of reference for the intellectual, cultural, artistic and scientific history of seventeenth-century Europe.

The Paper Museum is being published in 20 Parts divided into three series (18 Parts have been published to date): Series A, Antiquities and Architecture; Series B, Natural History; and Series C, Prints. Each part in a series is devoted to a particular area of the collection and the catalogues have been written by leading scholars in the relevant areas.

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This first Part of the prints catalogue presents ceremonies, costumes, portrait and genre prints; a remarkable proportion of the prints are not to be found in the existing literature and many constitute additions to the known works of major printmakers. Indeed Cassiano’s collection has been described (Print Quarterly) as ‘so far outside the common range of interest of print collectors both in the seventeenth century and today that a very high proportion of its contents is excessively rare and will only with great difficulty be found elsewhere’.

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An extraordinary achievement … The mass of new prints and wonderful illustrations (and thankfully the texts) will make this a landmark in print history. It will take the print world a couple of decades to digest the contents, but print history will never be the same after this.

Antony Griffiths, formerly Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum

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