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Timo Strauch, Der Codex des Antonio da Faenza: Die Traktatsammlung eines Künstlers im frühen 16. Jahrhundert, 2 vols, Petersberg, Michael Imhof Verlag, 2019

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The volume's editor, Konrad Ottenheim, explains this sense of continuity in a thoughtful introduction. While we now associate the period 800–1200 with the Middle Ages, according to Ottenheim early modern writers usually considered it an extension of a protracted ancient past. What counted as 'antique' architecture thus was highly elastic. A reason for this, as Ottenheim contends, was that Renaissance patrons and builders did not possess the sharp style consciousness we do today. So long as they boasted certain basic physical features, such as massive ashlar walls and vaults, many pre-Renaissance buildings could enjoy the status of antiquities. One might take the argument further. Many Christians would have considered the post-pagan culture of the early Middle Ages morally superior to that of classical antiquity — not a moment of decadence, but an improvement on what came before.

The introduction is followed by fifteen excellent essays spanning European contexts from Sicily to Scandinavia, grouped into two sections. The first section assesses how Renaissance elites sought to link themselves — by lineage, succession or fealty — to earlier medieval rulers and dynasties by emulating the buildings associated with these powers. The second section considers Renaissance architecture inspired by Romanesque buildings that early moderns mistook as older works. The essays in the latter section are fascinating but introduce a conceptual contradiction. From the perspective of early modern designers and patrons, the architecture discussed here would have been deemed classical rather than 'Romanesque' in inspiration, since its models were celebrated not as medieval, but as true antiquities.

Taken together, the volume's essays raise several key questions. One is whether works of Romanesque Renaissance architecture possessed a clear-cut iconography. Many of the authors argue that early modern patrons consciously emulated certain Romanesque forms and structures to convey specific political messages. Others, however, complicate this view. For instance, Ian Campbell questions the relevance of political symbolism for Scottish castles of the later Renaissance, finding no 'single explanation' for their abundant medieval details. Similarly, Marco Nobile and Emanuela Garafolo challenge the long-standing assumption of an ideological or identitarian basis for the persistence of 'Norman' forms in early modern Sicily. In many cases, they argue, such forms represent cases of survival rather than self-conscious revival, as well as a broader period taste for stylistic eclecticism.

Such eclecticism opens possibilities for expanding the volume's framing of the Romanesque. Traditionally omitted from this designation are impressive European monuments realised under Islamic patronage on the Iberian peninsula and in Sicily before the Norman conquest, precisely during the 'Romanesque' centuries covered by the volume. While rarely described as such, many of these Islamic structures could justifiably be termed Romanesque, inspired as they were by earlier Roman monuments. No less than those of pagan antiquity, such structures were for later Christian builders objects not only of suspicion, but also of admiration, preservation and imitation.

Perhaps the volume's most fundamental contribution is its call to look beyond style as the salient lens of art-historical analysis. The historical references in Renaissance buildings are too chronologically jumbled to embody a coherent paradigm of stylistic classification, at least as practised by modern archaeologists and art historians. The challenge, then, is to formulate an alternative visual-material grammar and to recover the elusive formal logic lurking behind the buildings' apparent referential illogic.

In response to this, the volume's contributors offer several alternative analytical strategies. One is to consider the significance of typological emulation. As Sanne Maekelberg and Krista De Jonge show, the construction of non-functional keeps imparted a chivalric gravitas to early modern Netherlandish country houses, even when they shed the stylistic and defensive hallmarks of their medieval prototypes. This was also the case for centralised buildings, as Ottenheim, Eliana Carrara, Emanuela Ferretti, Hubertus Günther and Lex Bosman demonstrate, following in the footsteps of Richard Krautheimer. Early modern viewers related all manner of centralised architecture — from earlier pagan temples, bathing chambers and mausolea to later Christian churches, chapels, chapter houses and baptisteries — despite their vastly dissimilar appearances and uses.

Other contributors consider how Renaissance builders forged direct material connections with the past. Through the use of spolia, early modern buildings not only looked like medieval or ancient monuments: they literally contained or consisted of them. In some examples, spolia took their most legible shape as epigraphic stones embedded in new walls, as demonstrated by Stephan Hoppe and Bianca de Divitiis, respectively, for the late fifteenth-century Burghausen castle in Bavaria and Venosa cathedral in southern Italy. (Fascinatingly, as de Divitiis reveals, sixteenth-century builders even added faux spolia to the gates of Apulian towns such as Foggia and Andria, which copied inscriptions from the time of Frederick II.) In other instances, we find the reuse of older walls and vaults constructed from large masonry blocks. This is because monumental stonework, as Ottenheim promises to explore in a future publication, bore strong connotations of antiquity for early moderns. Such connotations would explain why Spanish *conquistadores* in the Andes marvelled at the giant ashlar works of indigenous builders: classical by virtue of their materials, scale and construction, though non-European in origin.

To absorb fully the lessons of this stimulating volume will mean constructing an alternate taxonomy to that of style — a Borgesian encyclopaedia of morphological and chronological categories meaningful to the eyes of early modern viewers, even if alien to our own.

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Reviewed by MARIA BELTRAMINI

Antonio Liberi da Faenza (1456/7–1535) is not a name familiar to architectural historians. He does not appear in either of Giorgio Vasari's editions of the *Vite* (1550 and 1568), or in the standard, modern textbooks on Italian Renaissance artists and architects. For much

of his life he remained a provincial figure. Born in Faenza, close to the Adriatic coast north of Rimini, he worked as a painter and architect in his home town as well as in other cities in Romagna and further afield in the Marche around Ancona, and in Umbria and Lazio. Yet this otherwise unremarkable artist-architect deserves recognition for having produced a remarkable book — a sort of illustrated treatise — that has survived in manuscript form. Begun in around 1516, it is dedicated to a range of architecture-related topics such as arithmetic, geometry, the orders, lettering for inscriptions, optics and perspective, but it also has recipes for pigments and even a portolan chart.

The manuscript has only relatively recently become known to scholars. It was acquired by John Bury on the London art market in 1991 and remains in private hands. After Bury acquired it, his son Michael wrote an introductory article that appeared in *Annali di Architettura* in 1996, but since then no one has attempted to analyse the drawings or text systematically or to reconstruct the author's heterogeneous artistic persona. So Antonio da Faenza has remained a relatively obscure figure, notwithstanding new attributions and serendipitous discoveries that have enlarged his oeuvre over the past three decades.

That situation has now been brilliantly remedied by Timo Strauch, the project director of *Antiquitatum Thesaurus* (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften), who has published the codex in two weighty volumes. The first addresses Antonio's long professional career, his painstaking attempts at self-fashioning and his intellectual ambitions in the cultural context of the papal states during the early sixteenth century. This same volume includes an appendix of documents, many of them previously unknown, as well as a full and rigorously researched catalogue of his surviving and lost works. The second volume contains a facsimile of the codex along with a full transcription of the text and a full commentary addressing both text and illustrations.

The first volume opens with a much-needed assessment of Antonio's life and achievements. Little is known of his artistic education. He was first mentioned in Pesaro in 1494 when, already in his late thirties, he was employed as master mason to build some vaults in a local nunnery. In 1507 he was in Velletri, an important bishopric around thirty miles south of Rome, where he was described as an expert in the art of painting (*peritus in arte picture*) and where he also designed a structure to stage Passion plays for a local religious confraternity. Strauch debunks recent claims that he was involved in the construction of a *teatro all'antica*, and enjoyed the favour of the cardinal Raffaele Riario, recipient of the first printed edition of Vitruvius's *De architectura*. Still, his residence in Velletri (which lasted until 1513) brought him very close to Rome and exposed him to the influence of the figurative and architectural revolution triggered by the giants of the *maniera moderna* — as Vasari later called it — Bramante, Raphael and Michelangelo.

The following decade, Antonio was settled with his workshop in Ancona, working principally in the vast basilica in Loreto; here he painted new organ shutters, commissioned by Pope Julius II, a tour de force of painted architecture completed in 1514. Despite such prestigious commissions, Antonio kept in touch with his provincial clientele and went on painting conventional altarpieces with monumental frames reminiscent of those by Perugino, Signorelli and Lotto in various small towns

in the Marche and in Umbria. It was in Montelupone, near Macerata, in 1516 that he encountered the learned Franciscan friar Fra Giovanni Antonio da Camerino, who probably ignited in him the passion for academic study — geometry, architecture and perspective — which perhaps inspired him to compile his own 'treatise'.

In 1526, Antonio returned to Faenza to design the bell tower of St Peter's cathedral, an assemblage of Bramantesque and Raphaellesque architectural motifs. A project drawing presented to the town council still survives and bears his name followed by the title 'architect'. Work on the campanile eventually began in 1533, and it was in Faenza that he died in the spring months of 1535.

Overall, the critical appraisal of Antonio's earnest artistic production as painter and architectural designer makes it clear that his magnum opus is the codex. Although unfinished, this work occupied the last twenty years of his life and reoriented his career towards the ideal of the *doctus artifex* who, while practising art, questioned the foundations and scope of artistic production. An inventory of Antonio's possessions drawn up soon after his death reveals precious technical objects such as an astrolabe and a watch, a great number of drawings, ancient *bronzetti* and coins and, most of all, an astonishing number of books, which fed the desire to enhance his theoretical education on arts and sciences that was central to the composition of his own manuscript.

The biographical section is followed by an analysis of the codex, which confirms the attribution and clarifies the chronology, as well as providing a detailed description of its structure and an exhaustive discussion of its varied contents. The topics addressed by the codex are written in a clear, even elegant *volgare* and are illustrated with beautiful drawings, all interesting contributions to their respective fields of endeavour; but it is the section dedicated to architecture, the longest of all, that excited Antonio the most and consequently becomes the focus of Strauch's discussion. In the sixty central pages of the manuscript, Antonio offered an illustrated exposition of the main themes of Books III and IV of Vitruvius's *De architectura* — namely the different kinds of columns and their proportions — illustrating their use through drawings of various types of building that merge ancient and modern models with surprising originality. In doing so, he signalled that his intentions were not merely erudite, but that he wanted to guide practice by offering compositional models for others to follow. These models drew on a vast architectural culture that ranged from Leon Battista Alberti, Francesco di Giorgio Martini and Luca Pacioli to Bramante and Raphael. They were produced long before Sebastiano Serlio's *Seven Books* began to appear in the late 1530s.

Given its early date, a number of questions spring to mind. Why did Antonio undertake such a demanding enterprise? Was it to provide his collaborators with a useful handbook? Or had he a well-cultivated patron in mind whom he wanted to gratify with a refined, intellectual gift? Or did he recognise around him a growing interest and market for knowledge, especially architectural knowledge, that he planned to exploit by publishing his writings in print, but died before he could do so? Strauch's impressive publication — which brings this fascinating treatise to wider public attention — gives us the most up-to-date and sharpest critical tools with which to try to find the answers.

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