would need to be linked specifically to seventeenth-century Rome to be meaningful. Is an impression of Gilles’s work to be found in the Vatican Library among the erstwhile Chigi books?

And even though an inscription whose text Alexander VII drafted (218, fig. 159) referred to the Corso as a “hippodrome,” Habel stretches too far in writing that the Roman street resembles “in form and function an ancient hippodrome” (248). The thoroughfare’s long and narrow dimensions offered no space for running laps or for sitting turning posts (metae) and barriers (careceres), so any direct formal association to ancient hippodromes is ruled out. Alexander VII’s “hippodrome” metaphorically corresponds to fact, for the Corso was used for those one-way races of riderless horses later immortalized by painters such as Théodore Géricault and Horace Vernet. The pope saw to the dismantling of a Roman arch, effected some small-scale interventions, and planned others that never took effect, all with the goal of widening and straightening the street; those activities, however, did not “establish the Corso as a hippodrome” (251).

Habel reminds us that Alexander VII had “a large wooden model of the city with buildings made to be movable pieces” (9). He gazed at Rome as it spread, majestic, beneath the Quirinal, and would have seen from its windows some buildings had they been realized. Documents also record the pope’s brisk walks through Rome. Interactive and interconnected, his focused studies and expansive experiences found complex parallels in the creative means—financial, legal, quid pro quo, and mildly coercive—devised to push forward building projects. That some remained on paper speaks not necessarily to failed ambitions but to an active intellectual engagement with architecture, which takes its first form on paper. The often engrossing details of Habel’s narrative turn on the scrutiny of workaday drawings that were not produced to captivate the eye, yet nonetheless arrest one’s attention.

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Giovanna Curcio, editor
II Tempio Vaticano 1694. Carlo Fontana

Students of Italian architecture generally and of St. Peter’s specifically have an important new tool with the republication of Carlo Fontana’s magisterial Tempio Vaticano of 1694. Overseen by Giovanna Curcio, this edition—the first in three centuries—presents Fontana’s entire Italian text and seventy-nine original plates, prefaced by a substantial set of essays by leading scholars that doubles the book’s usefulness, solidity, and certainly its beauty. In a sense it is two or even three volumes in one, providing an important historical treatise, an extensive interpretive commentary, and an overview of current thinking about the topographic and architectural features Fontana examines.

II Tempio Vaticano is among the most important architectural texts of its generation, highlighting a triumph of the Renaissance and Baroque but presaging the new concerns and perspectives of the eighteenth century. As the preeminent teacher and practitioner of late-seicento Rome, Fontana (1638–1714) was instrumental in transmitting the legacy of Gianlorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona, and Carlo Rainaldi—each of whom he collaborated with—to students including Fischer von Erlach, James Gibbs, Filippo Juvarra, and Alessandro Specchi, who engraved the plates for the current treatise. Fontana’s star was rising in 1694, when he was elected principe of the Accademia di S. Luca; on the death of Mattia de Rossi three years later he would finally become head architect of St. Peter’s. Although his project was first conceived to counter rumors about the building’s instability, it soon became, as Curcio puts it, “the first conscious systematicatization of architectural knowledge based on the great experiments of the seventeenth century” (xv). The resulting folio, with its parallel Latin and Italian texts, was intended for wide diffusion among Europe’s literati, and its republication offers the chance to reassess its methods, ambitions, and impact.

While not quite a misnomer, Fontana’s title (roughly, The Vatican Temple and Its Origin, with the Most Conspicuous Ancient and Modern Structures Inside and Outside of It) is at best an approximation of his volume’s scope. Ever the educator, Fontana approached St. Peter’s as a glorious case study through which to present his vision of architecture and the architectural profession. He divided his text into seven books plus a preface on comparative measurements, a clue to the nuts-and-bolts perspective that pervades his study. The first book surveys the historical topography of the Vatican zone, with emphasis on the circus of Caligula and Nero and other features that would determine the basilica’s location and form. The second offers an overview of the Constantinian church, leaning heavily on annotated plates inspired by earlier scholars, from Tiberio Alfarno to Martino Ferrabosco to Giovanni Falda. This provides the occasion for a brief study of secular basilicas in the ancient world, leading Fontana to claim, in a rare incursion into architectural symbolism and ecclesiastical politics, that Constantine chose this form to signal Peter’s status as the “most sovereign prince of the apostles.” Book three discusses the relocation of the Vatican obelisk by Carlo’s antecedent Domenico Fontana, whose famous machinery was newly and amply engraved based on the latter’s 1590 treatise. Curcio’s essay in this section is particularly helpful in showing how Fontana used the obelisk episode (“this glorious and singular deed by a truly great man”) not just to bolster family pride but as a better model for modern professional practice than more recent, and often less successful, interventions.

Books four and five, the enterprise’s ostensible core, offer a comprehensive description of the basilica complex as Fontana knew it, beginning with the piazza, façade, and scala regia before proceeding to the narthex, naves, drum, dome, windows, confessio, and other inter-
nal features. Each is delineated in meticulous measured drawings, interspersed with perspective views for those less conversant with architectural drafting.

Yet for all his apparent inclusivity, Fontana gives a selective history, to say the least: after devoting three chapters to the roof trusses of Old St. Peter’s, he skates over the long period from the papacy of Nicholas V to that of Paul V, with its dozen corresponding architects, in just two paragraphs. In Fontana’s version, New St. Peter’s seems to have grown organically into its current perfection, with little mention of the tortuous, at times chaotic design process that created the structure we see today. Where he is forced to confront controversies over design or technical execution, as with Bernini’s aborted bell tower, his unorthodox piazza obliqua, or the axial discrepancy between Carlo Maderno’s nave and the relocated obelisk (issues helpfully addressed by Sarah McPhee, Tod Marder, and Christof Thoenes in the essays), Fontana seizes the opportunity to reinforce proper practice even if it means finding fault with his precursors. His complex relation to Bernini and his legacy (discussed specifically by Curiro, Hellmut Hager, Marder, and McPhee) is a leitmotif of this section, which also presents the author’s own plans to complete St. Peter’s Square with a third arm and create a second, secular piazza stretching all the way to the Tiber. Even if Fontana knew that his scheme was utopian, he relished the chance to demonstrate how a single, judicious intervention could simultaneously supply the missing bell tower, fulfill the piazza’s liturgical function, and provide a suitably magnificent approach to the entire Vatican complex.

Although focused on St. Peter’s, Fontana was equally concerned with how his subject stacked up against its greatest formal and symbolic precedents. His sixth book therefore compares St. Peter’s in size and cost to its ultimate prototype, the Temple of Solomon, occasioning an excursion on the value of the ancient talent and the rise of gold prices—attributed in part to the excessive luxury and decoration associated with recent tastes. Abandoning the Vatican entirely, Fontana’s final book presents new reconstructions of the Republican, Agrippan, and imperial Pantheons as well as several other ancient temples, ending with a discussion of the cupola of Florence Cathedral. Far from diluting his point, these comparative sections help Fontana establish the basilica’s classical pedigree while defending it from Lutheran critiques about its expense, an effort that won him a noble title from the newly converted Augustus the Strong. Most of all, these apparent digressions help Fontana present the building as the apogee of millennia of architectural progress and experimentation. This helps explain the writer’s occasionally polemical tone while highlighting his tendency to see St. Peter’s as a lens through which all core architectural principles and techniques—from sitting to symbolic citation to cost calculations—might be studied.

Important as it was, Fontana’s volume remained a luxury product whose dual-language format occasionally proves unwieldy. Rather than produce a facsimile, Curiro and his publisher opted to transcribe and reset Fontana’s Italian text, updating punctuation (but not spelling) and correcting obvious errors, while preserving the original page references in Fontana’s table of contents, index, and list of illustrations (the interpretive essays, too, refer solely to the 1694 pagination). This helps condense the text section (tinted cream to distinguish it from the commentary) and perhaps promote legibility, but it may confuse users expecting a coherent modern edition.

To use Fontana’s auxiliary matter, one must ignore the volume’s apparent pagination and locate the original page numbers, with their odd gaps, in margins already occupied by the seventeenth-century source citations as well as modern cross-references to the plates. The latter have unfortunately been removed from their original positions in the text and grouped after each chapter, a technical expedient that subverts Fontana’s didactic clarity by severing his explanatory keys—sometimes widely—from the relevant image. And it is downright cumbersome for a reader seeking a figure cited in the essays or the (modern-looking) list of illustrations; having discovered that the reference is not to this edition, one must first locate the 1694 pagination, only to be forwarded to yet another, modern page number hidden amid the relocated folding plates. A few plates cut off the original numbering entirely. It might have been better to reproduce all of Fontana’s front and end matter in facsimile to lessen confusion, or to have followed a single editorial approach over the hybrid attempted here. The plates themselves, however, are uniformly of very high quality and printed on substantial coated stock, most at two-thirds scale, which is essential for appreciating their graphic achievement and, in many cases, for reading detailed captions. That is itself a significant accomplishment and will help put Fontana’s images, many of which are familiar and routinely reproduced, back into their original discursive context.

The book’s interpretive section is almost as long as the text and is divided into two parts. The first six essays, plus a chronological table, set Fontana and his treatise into a broader technical, theoretical, and historiographical framework, summarizing current scholarship and preparing readers to approach his opus. Thoenes leads off with a succinct overview of literature on St. Peter’s, conjuring a virtual “Petrine Library” in eight well-stocked bookcases. Surveying representative titles and approaches from the Liber Pontificalis through Panvinio’s De primatu Petri to modern art history and archaeology, Thoenes’s admirable essay is likely to be of wide interest and usefulness. Narrowing the focus, Hager provides an essential roadmap to Fontana’s text with an updated extract of his 1992 study in Baroco roman e l’Europa; besides putting essential facts at our fingertips, this essay helpfully addresses sections of Tempio Vaticano—like that on the Pantheon—that are not covered in the later topographical com-
mentary (see below). Arnaldo Bruschi continues in the historical vein by asking how Fontana formulated architectural rules based on approved ancient practice and, occasionally, modern departures from it. Two contributions by Curcio are particularly new and insightful. In the first ("La misura nelle Fabbriche Magnifiche") she demonstrates the persistence of Albertian ideas about architecture and architects to Fontana’s core notion of measurement, with special reference to his views of Bernini. The second, written with Norbert Grillitsch ("Il testo e le immagini"), complements Filippo Camerota’s overview of Renaissance geometric drawing by surveying Fontana’s literary and graphic sources in detail. Taking readers behind his ambitious list of authorities (some clearly cited at second hand), Curcio and Grillitsch reveal the distinctly visual, not theoretical, grounding of Fontana’s anti-quaritanism. In addition to illuminating the tacit historical arguments in complex plates like the "Plan of the Constantinian Basilica" (1694 ed., 89; 2003 ed., 75), the commentators invoke the concept of montage to show how Fontana collects, corrects, and integrates diverse sources into spectacular visual panoramas like that encompassing Michelangelo’s apse and his own proposed terzo braccio (1694 ed., foldout pl. at 425; 2003 ed., 271–73). That savvy synthesis, for Curcio and Grillitsch, lies at the heart of Fontana’s textual and design method.

The remaining eleven essays contextualize Fontana’s description of St. Peter’s in light of modern scholarship, digesting and/or refocusing problems several authors have treated in detail elsewhere. Without trying to prove him right or wrong, these contributions sharpen our sense of what Fontana chose to see and how he opted to present it. Six have a historical slant. Archaeologist Filippo Coarelli presents current thinking about the Vatican Circus and related structures, while Sible de Blauuw highlights Fontana’s comparative lack of interest in Old St. Peter’s and his failure, common to later generations, to appreciate its formal innovations. Cristiano Tessari summarizes the planning of New St. Peter’s, speculating on Fontana’s noteworthy silences, and Curcio, as noted, reviews the triumphant moving of the obelisk. Reversing the medal, Thoenes analyzes Maderno’s supposed “mistake” in aligning the nave (the culprit, pace Carlo, is Domenico’s misplaced obelisk), while McPhee highlights Fontana’s contradictory thoughts about the demolished campanile. Though the tower marred the ensemble, it was beautiful, and could and should have been saved; professionally, Bernini was both the victim of Maderno’s bad foundations and blame-worthy for not having addressed and solved the problem at the outset. The remaining essays discuss specific parts of the complex. Chiara Baglione treats the sacre grotte and confessioni; Marder the piazza, colonnade, and scala regia (where, as the author shows, Fontana’s mix of praise and respectful criticism of Bernini was not devoid of self-promotion); and Hager the dome and the terzo braccio, again digesting and updating an important previous study. The illustrations in this half of the book are of superb quality, the rich halftones capturing the subtle washes and precise pen lines of Fontana’s preparatory drawings from the Palazzo Real in Madrid that are liberally interspersed throughout the essays.

The only downside of such an ample interpretive program is a heft (over eight pounds) that makes the book too heavy to be held or read without a stand. It might help to divide text and commentary in future editions, but at $99 the volume is a bargain and not to be quibbled with. Some inconvenience may be inevitable in such an ambitious project. Fontana reiterated the challenges at the end of his volume, noting that St. Peter’s itself was “so worthy, conspicuous, magnificent, and immense as to frighten the very greatest talent who even contemplates it.” Curcio and her team, who have not been frightened, have produced a book indispensable for future scholarship on Fontana and his beloved basilica.

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American Architecture and Settings

Maurie D. McInnis

The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston

Stephanie E. Yuhl

A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston

When America declared its independence from Great Britain, Charleston, South Carolina, was one of the fledgling nation’s largest cities and, on a per capita basis, its wealthiest. When South Carolinians ignited America’s civil war by firing on the Union garrison at Fort Sumter in the spring of 1861, Charleston was still rich but had ceded its preeminent place in Southern politics, culture, and business to other cities. Still later, in the decades that separated two twentieth-century wars, Charleston’s cultural guardians embarked on a campaign to stimulate memories that recalled the city’s lost greatness and to revive a