

# “Architects as Authors: from Blondel to Pugin”

Joseph Romano, Oberlin College

LES DIX LIVRES  
D'ARCHITECTURE  
DE  
VITRUVÉ  
CORRIGÉZ ET TRADVITS  
*nouvellement en François, avec des Notes  
& des Figures.*

Seconde Edition revueë, corrigée, & augmentée.

Par M. PERRAULT de l'Academie Royale des Sciences, Docteur en Medecine  
de la Faculté de Paris.



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Chez JEAN BAPTISTE COIGNARD,  
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**Unif Title** [De architectura. French](#)  
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POUR LE SECOND VOLUME  
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D'ARCHITECTURE,

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suivantes, par J. F. BLONDEL Architecte,  
dans son École des Arts.



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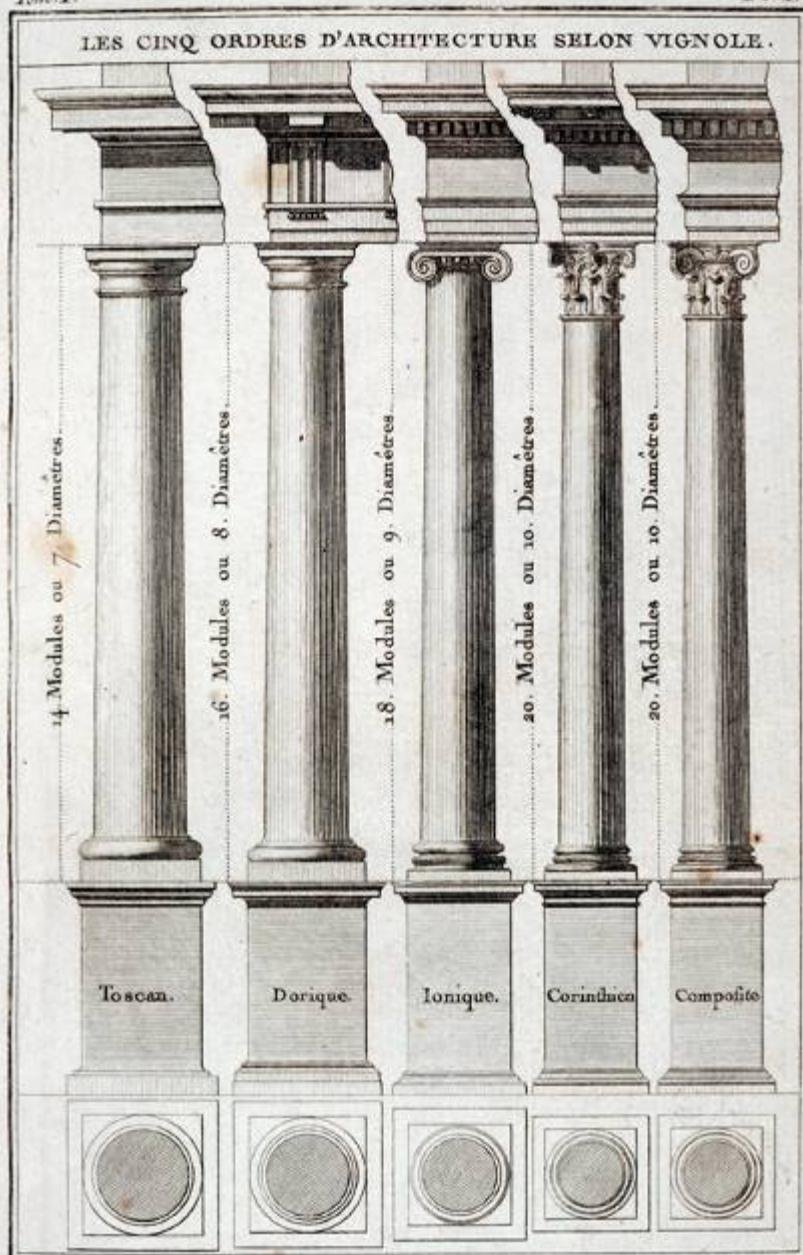
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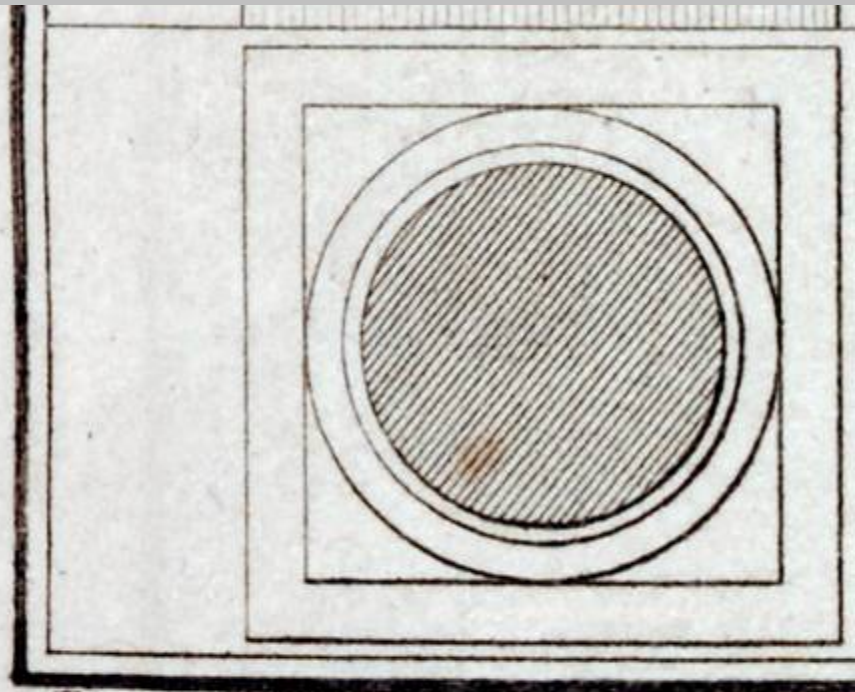
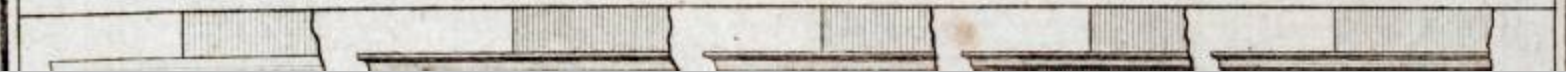
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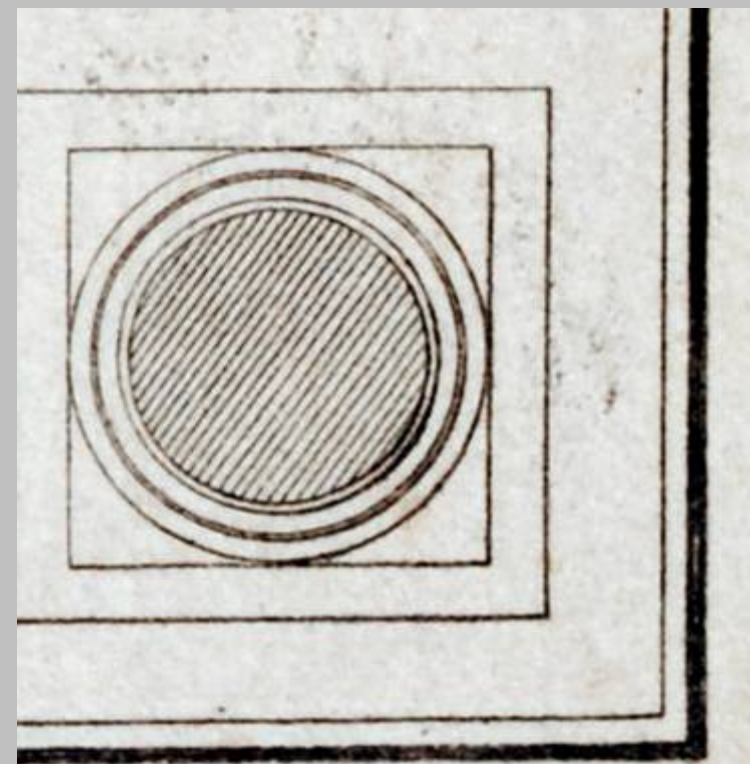




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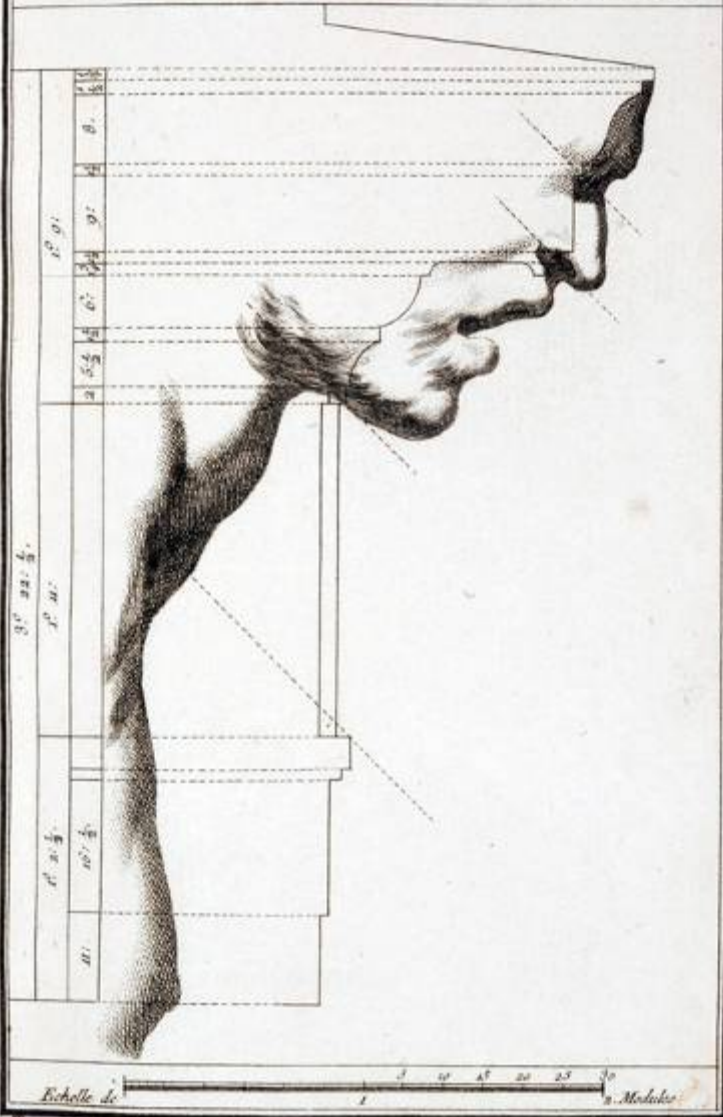


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The Seat of Her ROYAL HIGHNESS

The Princess Dowager of Wales.

BY

WILLIAM CHAMBERS,

MEMBER

Of the Imperial Academy of Arts at Florence, and of the Royal Academy of Architecture at Paris,

ARCHITECT

To the KING, and to Her Royal Highness the Princess Dowager of WALES.

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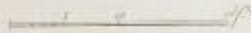
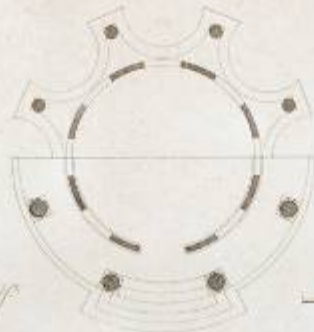
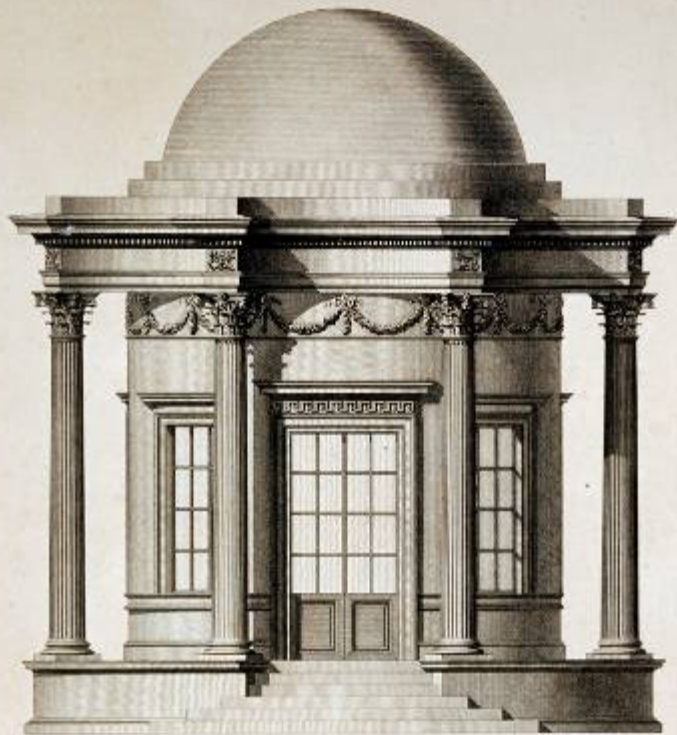
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MDCCLXIII.



*J. Chambers Architect*

*The Temple of the Sun*

*C. Beckwith Sculptor*



W. Marlow delin

A View of the Wilderness, with the Alhambra, the Pagoda and the Mosque

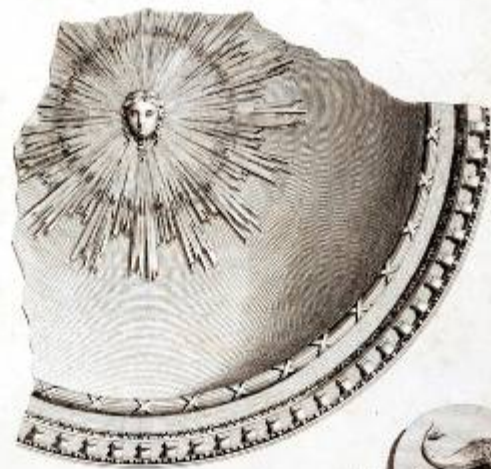
C. Rastler sculp



*The Ceiling, and Other Ornaments, in the Temple of the Sun.*

*Bas-reliefs in the  
Bozze of the Cells.*

*Cornice and Frieze round  
the Inside of the Cells.*



GLOSSARY  
OF  
ECCLESIASTICAL ORNAMENT  
AND  
COSTUME,

Compiled and Illustrated from Antient Authorities and Examples,

BY  
A. WELBY PUGIN, ARCHITECT,

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL ANTIQUITIES AT ST. MARIES COLLEGE, OSCOTT.

WITH EXTRACTS FROM THE WORKS OF

DURANDUS, GEORGIUS, BONA, CATALANI, GERBERT, MARTENE, MOLANUS, THIERS,  
MABILLON, DUCANGE, ETC.

FAITHFULLY TRANSLATED

BY THE REV. BERNARD SMITH,

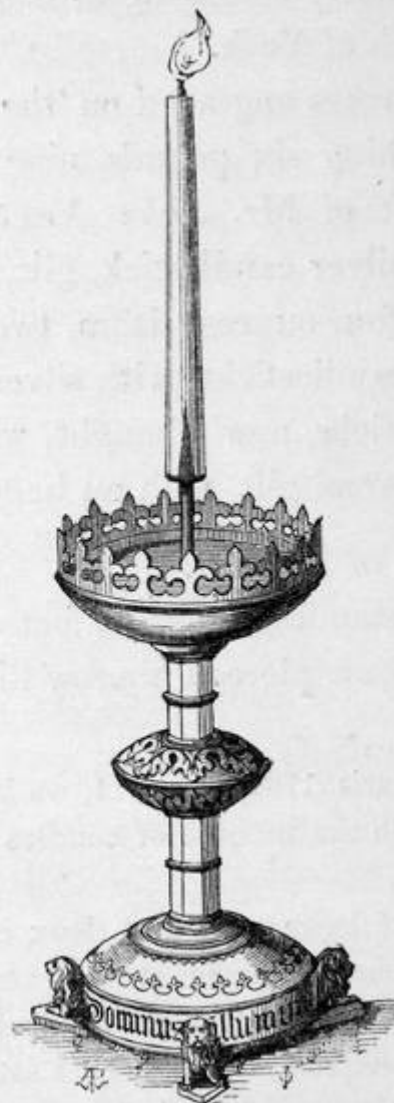
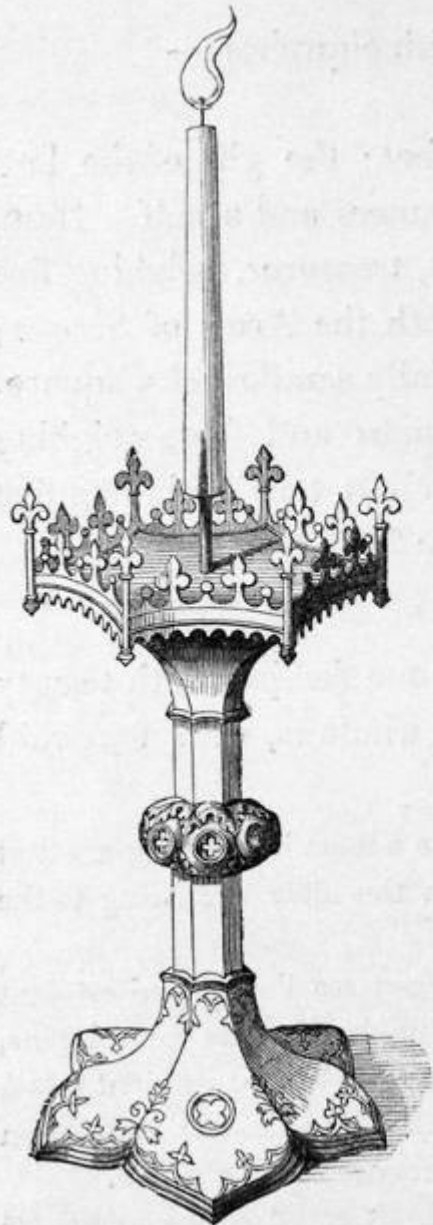
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LONDON:  
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The Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament.





CANDLESTICKS.





A N A P O L O G Y

FOR

**The Revival of Christian Architecture**

IN

**ENGLAND.**

BY

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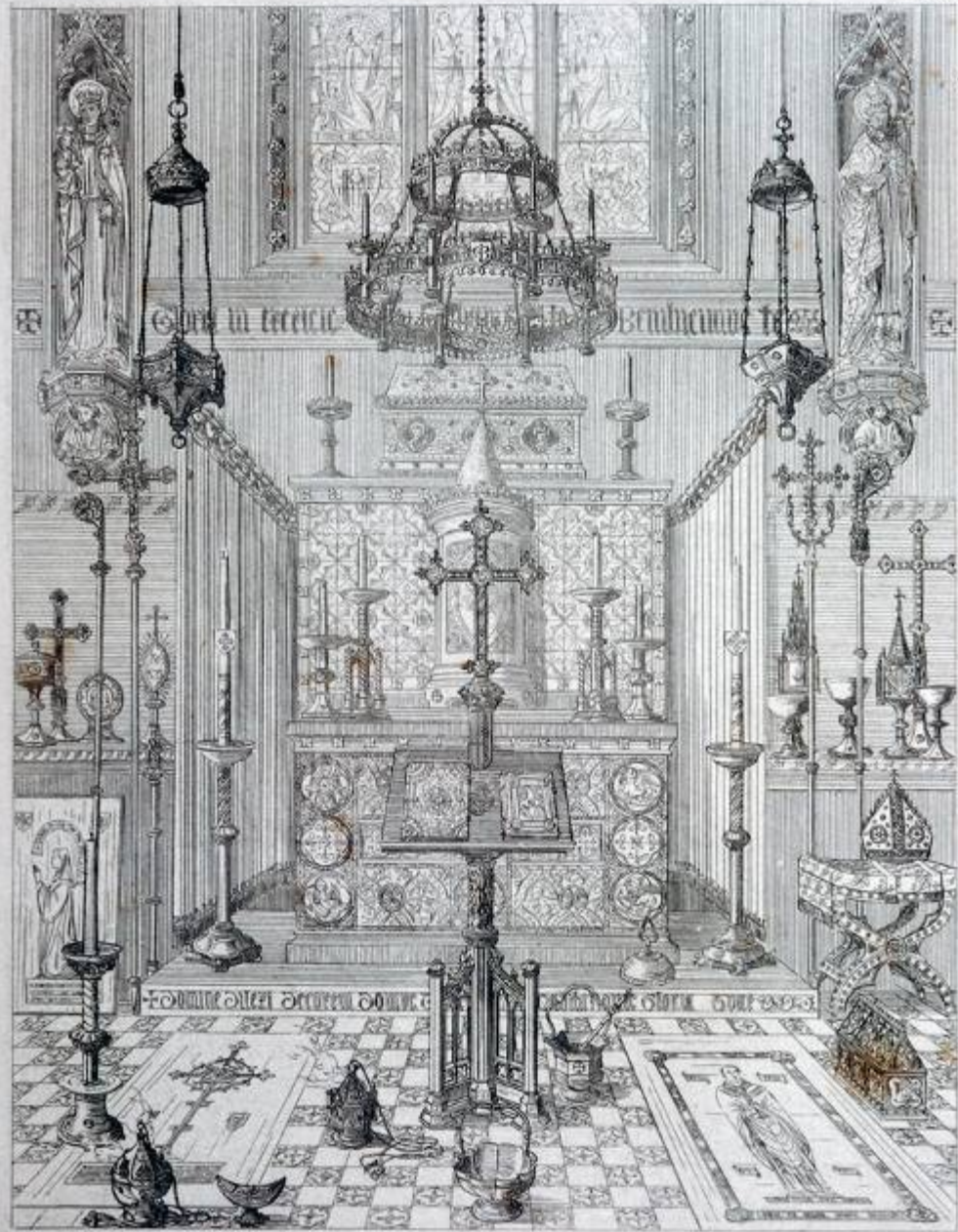
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† CHURCH EYRIGORE REVIVED AT BIRMINGHAM 1828





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## **Architects as Authors: From Blondel to Pugin**

**(text accompanying this PowerPoint Presentation)**

Joseph Romano

The idea for this presentation came from working on a collaborative project with the Department of Art, the Art Library, and the Oberlin College Special Collections Library. With some modest grant money, a new digital camera, and student help about 1500 book plates were digitized and made available for a fall 2007 semester course titled "Architecture of the Enlightenment". In this brief presentation I hope to touch upon some of the challenges entailed in regard to organization, cataloguing, work flow etc., but I also want to share some of the actual content both visually and thematically.

Any discussion about architects as authors must begin with Vitruvius who wrote the only architectural treatise to have survived since antiquity. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio was a Roman military engineer and architect who wrote "De Architectura" in 10 volumes during the first C BCE. This treatise, which was dedicated to the Emperor Augustus, was only rediscovered during the Renaissance and Leon Battista Alberti, or one of his contemporaries, wrote the first translation of it in the 15th C. The illustrations to "De Architectura" were lost prior to their rediscovery and do not survive. Given an opportunity to reconstruct images lost from their associated text, writers and artists have produced several visual interpretations based on Vitruvius's writings, such as Leonardo's famous Vitruvian man, inspired by the concept of ideal proportion as based on the human figure and as described in the third volume from "De Architectura"



Claude Perrault, who designed the east wing of the Louvre, wrote a translation of Vitruvius' 10 volumes in 1674 for King Louis XV. Here we have his titlepage and frontispiece as digitally captured from an original volume printed as a 2nd edition and housed in the Oberlin College art library. (Nikon D80 10 megapixel camera and a 55 mm macro lens) The titlepage, as usual, mentions all the pertinent information in regard to its publication noting that this translation has been revised, corrected, and augmented by Claude Perrault. In the frontispiece we see a group of allegorical figures presenting Vitruvius's treatise to the French Monarchy, in the background are three examples of Perrault's architecture; the east wing of the Louvre, the Observatory, barely visible in the background, and an unbuilt triumphal arch with its paired Corinthian ordered columns. In the middle ground we see a vista of 17th century activity. This may be a translation of Vitruvius, but essentially it belongs to the oeuvre of Perrault and the realm of the French monarchy. A typology has been drawn. Vitruvius's treatise, although primarily a codification of Greek and Roman architectural forms, dedicates itself to the Emperor Augustus and the glories of the Empire. Perrault's book, although a translation of Vitruvius, is intended for the glory of France and its Monarchy.

An architect, may serve as an author, but an architect's primary language is visual. An author translating text may strive for literal transposition, but if this author is also an architect interpretive recognition is also important. To the librarian the author of this treatise is Vitruvius Pollio, even though this book was printed about 1700 years after the death of Vitruvius. Here we see a library record from OBIS, Oberlin's OPAC along with is a detail of text from the list of a few dozen titles that were selected for digital capture at the request of our architectural historian. Whether one considers Perrault the author, as our historian, or Vitruvius, as our library cataloguer, is not important as an access issue. A search of either name will access the data record, but these different points of view regarding authorship parallel the difference between pedagogy and librarianship. Pretty much everything we need to know about this book in regard to its access, or any book for that matter as listed in OCLC, World Cat, Ohiolink etc. is succinctly, consistently, and dutifully entered by a trained cataloguer. However, once we attempt to construct specific data elements for the individual plates within the book, the level of cataloguing can become downright unwieldy. This is not to say that there aren't tools to assist us; there are models for data structure such as our own VRA core, authority lists and thesauri, as well as categories for describing works of art. Projects of this nature become difficult due simply to the volume of work involved and the dearth of resources.

Jacques-Francois Blondel was an 18th C architect from a family of architects. He is most famous for his influence upon a generation of architects who studied with him in Paris and took his course devoted exclusively to the study of architecture as part of the Ecole des Arts. As a Teacher, Blondel was a strict classicist in the manner of Claude Perrault. Through Blondel French Neo-Classicism spread beyond France. One of his most famous pupils was William Chambers, the English architect to the Royal Family whose book on Kew Gardens we will look at shortly. Blondel's "Du Cours d'Architecture" was published in six volumes starting in 1771 and completed by his assistant Patte after the architect's death. The book contains the lessons that Blondel gave at the Ecole des Arts in 1750 and the following years. Here we see two title plates, one for the second volume and another for the sixth volume. Here again the information needed to catalog the book is pretty straight forward. The attempts at cataloguing will indeed get a lot more challenging, and tedious, as we move on towards the individual plates and beyond the book per se.

Here is the First Plate from the First Volume of Blondel's Treatise "Cours d'Architecture". Although the plate has been strategically selected by Blondel, the image in the plate is based on Jacopo da Vignola's version of the Five Vitruvian Orders. The drawing or design of the plate is not by Blondel, but by Bonnet, a French draftsman, and the actual plate was engraved by Michelinot, a rather famous French engraver. So here we have a plate in a book selected by Blondel according to Vignola, but after Vitruvius, and designed by Bonnet, but engraved by Michelinot. Now how much of this information we would want to record in our image data record depends less upon the level of thoroughness or richness we would desire as it does upon staff time and resources. Historically, the library world has developed a level of specialization not usually found in the vr community. Our library has a director of cataloguing and a team of full time trained cataloguers, but our visual resources staff includes myself, a part-time assistant and a couple of work study who are responsible for photography, scanning, digital image editing, the creation of course related web sites, and yes image cataloguing. Time permitting, I'll speak to this issue a little later on. Here is another plate from the same volume, but with yet a different engraver and designer. This is a plate after Vincenzo Scamozzi, a 16th C Italian architect. Here is another example from "Cours d'Architecture" but here the actual design of a ceiling is by Blondel. which perhaps is more significant and should be noted.



Blondel's influence was profound. As previously mentioned William Chambers was a student of Blondel. This is the titlepage from a book documenting the edifices at Kew Gardens designed for Augusta, Princess Dowager of Wales and of which Chambers was the principal architect. Unlike Blondel's treatise, Chambers architectural group was responsible for all the drawings although a number of engravers worked on the actual production of the book. Here is a plan and section of the Temple of Mars at Kew Gardens. Although trained in the Neo-Classical architectural manner of Blondel, Chambers was an internationalist. He was born in Sweden of Scottish parentage, studied in Paris, worked in England, and travelled widely including journeys to India and China. His eclecticism proved very popular for Garden architecture as can be seen in this view at Kew Gardens with the Alhambara, Pagoda, and Mosque, sort of an 18th C Las Vegas. Chambers also documented specific building details such as these for the Temple of the Sun at Kew Gardens. Chambers book, in spite of its traditional looking titlepage, is not as staid as earlier architects' books. His eclecticism brings an exotic flavor to much of the imagery.

August Welby Pugin, a mid 19th C English architect, was an advocate of the Gothic Revival movement. Although an architect, he was also a professor and a very religious man who converted to Catholicism. Here we have the title page and frontispiece to his Glossary of Ecclesiastical ornament, a very different type of architects' book. His "Apology" published in 1843 - espoused his views on the nobility of Gothic architecture. Pugin, who is most famous for designing the Houses of Parliament, rejected Neo-classicism because of its "Paganism" as he perceived it. Yet when we look at this plate displaying church furniture and objects we can't help but be struck by his use of one - point perspective which I find quite curious. One point perspective is utterly humanist in conception. Perhaps something we wouldn't expect from someone imbued with such a medieval sense of religiosity, yet perspective theory, such a classical tenet philosophically, didn't seem to bother Pugin, In fact he embraced it as a tool. Pugin's rejection of Neo-classicism was clearly ideological in nature. Here again we see a fine example of one-point perspective as used in this plate entitled "The Current Revival of Christian Architecture". Classical in structure, but Gothic in its verticality and high horizon line.

When we think of architect's books we often think of serious treatises with schematic illustrations, but a collection of architects' books may vary widely. Architects are essentially artists, and as artists they may work in many media. They can be skilled draughtsmen, print makers, and also painters. I would like to close with two images that are not from artists books and do not belong to Oberlin's collections, but seem to summarize the arc of architectural theoretical development from Blondel to Pugin and beyond. Here is Thomas Cole's "Architect's Dream". Cole, an American painter famous for his landscapes as a founding member of the Hudson River School was born in England and once aspired to be an architect. This painting is roughly contemporary with the work of Pugin. Here we see the "Pagan" architecture on the right beginning with Egyptian styles in the background and moving forward with a pastiche of classical structures which are contrasted with the Gothic structures on the left. And finally I close with a contemporary image, Julee Holcomb's 2006 digital photograph also titled "The Architect's Dream" and inspired by Cole's painting of the same name.

*Acknowledgments:*

*I want to thank John Harwood, OC Department of Art, for his help with this paper, and Barbara Prior, OC Art Library, for her help in making the architect's books available for this project.*