

# Andrea Pozzo, *Rules and examples of perspective proper for painters and architects.*

Special Collections featured item for August 2008 by Ruth Gooding, Cataloguer.

**Andrea Pozzo. *Rules and examples of perspective proper for painters and architects, etc. : in English and Latin ; containing a most easie and expeditious method to delineate in perspective all designs relating to architecture, after a new manner ...* London : Printed by Benj. Motte ... Sold by John Sturt, 1707.**

**Item held in Henley Parish Library 30/07, University of Reading Special Collections Services.**



Andrea Pozzo [shown left] is doubly famous as both the creator of the fabulous *trompe l'oeil* painting in the Church of S. Ignazio in Rome, and as the author of *Prospettiva de' pittori e architetti*, which spread the influence of Italian Baroque throughout Europe. He is remembered as an extraordinarily versatile artist, working as an architect, painter, decorator, and art theoretician. Pozzo was born in Trento, in the foothills of the Italian Alps, in 1642. He received his first training as an artist there, following an unidentified teacher first to Como, and then on to Milan. In Milan, he joined the Society of Jesus on 25 December 1665, remaining a Jesuit lay brother all his life.

After a two year novitiate in Genoa, he became attached to the Casa Professa of S. Fedele in Milan in 1668. Apart from trips to Genoa and Venice, he stayed in Milan until 1681. Padre

Giovanni Paolo Oliva, a friend of the artist Gian Lorenzo Bernini, and the first Jesuit general to display a major interest in the visual arts, then summoned Pozzo to Rome. Oliva took every possible step to alter the appearance of the Jesuit churches, believing that:

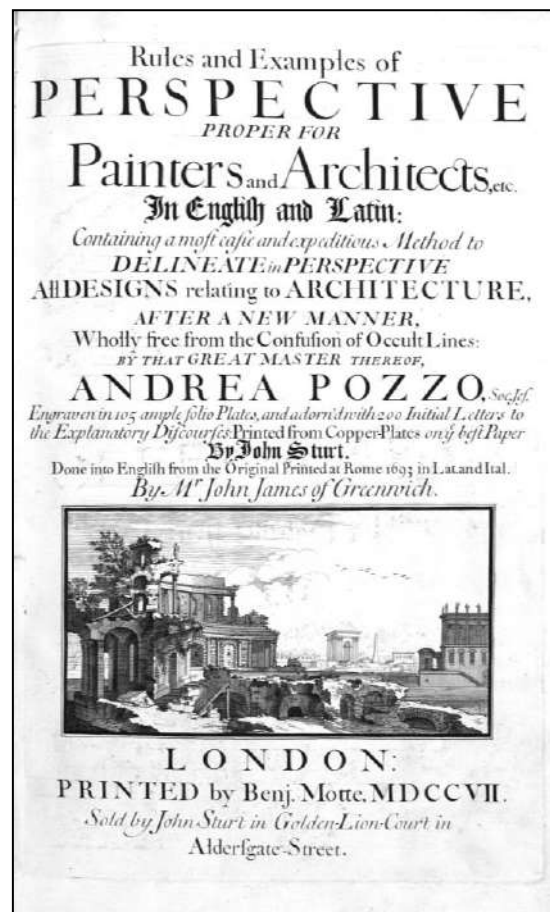
*'As they are solely dedicated to God, they cannot in any way attain the infinite merit of the Trinity either through their splendour or through the richness of their architecture and decoration. So it is that in our churches both Ignatius, our father, and all of us, who are his sons, try to reach up to the sublimity of God's eternal omnipotence with such appurtenances of glory as we can ...'*



In Rome, Pozzo was most closely associated with the churches of Il Gesù and Sant' Ignazio. His first work was as a virtuoso stage designer for the dramatic biblical pageants held at Il Gesù. His festival architecture blended with the real architecture. In 1684, he began work on the unfinished Sant' Ignazio, where a dome had been planned, but could not be built. Pozzo painted in perspective a flat piece of canvas to give the appearance of a dome [see photograph above]. The illusion, or *trompe l'oeil* (meaning '(it) fools the eye'), is composed around a central focal point, and a particular point is marked on the floor to indicate to the viewer where it is best to appreciate it. Pozzo then painted frescoes on the nave vault, depicting the Glory of St Ignatius Loyola and the missionary work of the Jesuit order. Frescoes in the choir show scenes from the life of St Ignatius. The whole depends on

quadratura illusionism. Mock architecture continues real architecture, and the fabric of the building seems to have become part of the heavenly realm.

After a long-drawn-out competition, Pozzo won the prestigious commission to design the altar for the tomb of the Jesuit founder, Ignatius Loyola, housed in the left transept of Il Gesù. Pozzo submitted twelve solutions; eleven projects were entered by others, including Sebastiano Cipriani and G.B. Origone. An exceptional number of craftsmen worked on the project. Although the design was relatively conventional, the whole was built from precious materials and designed to break every record for expense and rarity. Sourcing the materials took many years. Pierre Legros' statue of Saint Ignatius is made of silver, as are the angels surrounding it. A single block of lapis lazuli made up the globe beneath the figure of God the Father. At the same time Pozzo worked on the altar of San Luigi Gonzaga in Sant'Ignazio, with craftsmen moving between the two projects.



At this time, Pozzo was also running painting and architecture courses at the Collegio Romano, and working on his book *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* [see title-page of English version above]. The work was 'intended as a didactic introduction to perspectival architectural notation and includes, together with the basics of representational geometry, instructions for perspectival painting and for constructing stage designs.'<sup>i</sup> It was dependent on his other activities as Pozzo normally selected examples from his own work. The engraver was his

pupil, Vincenzo Mariotti. Following earlier authors, Pozzo's first volume is made up of illustrations on one half of a double-page spread, with short parallel texts in Latin and Italian on the other. The text is decorated with exquisitely engraved initials, as shown below in an example from the English version.

## Figura Vigesima prima.

*Optica imminutio capitelli Etrusci.*



*ADEM cum reliquis formâ  
eâdemque methodo capitella  
delineanda sunt: quum ba-  
beant ipsa quoque suum ci-  
matium quadratum, & sint  
rotunda. Linea plani solet  
in iis fieri altior lineâ horizontali: quia quum  
capitella imponenda sint columnis homine al-  
tioribus, plerumque apparent sublimiora nostris  
oculis.*

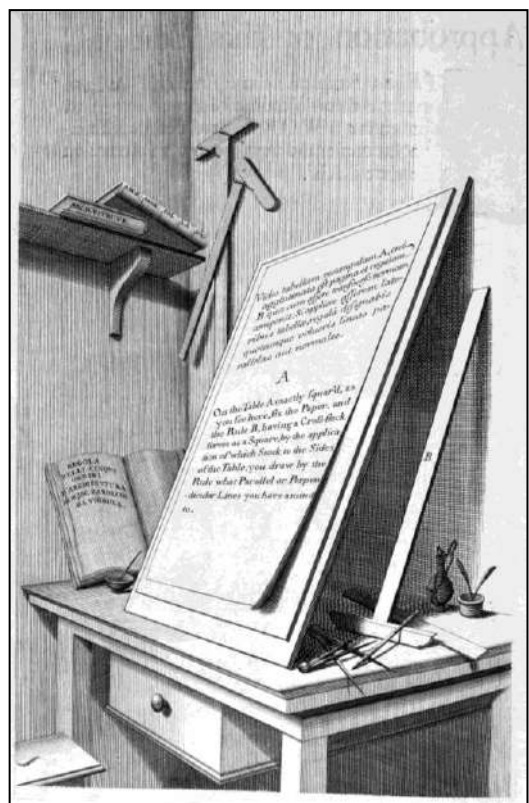
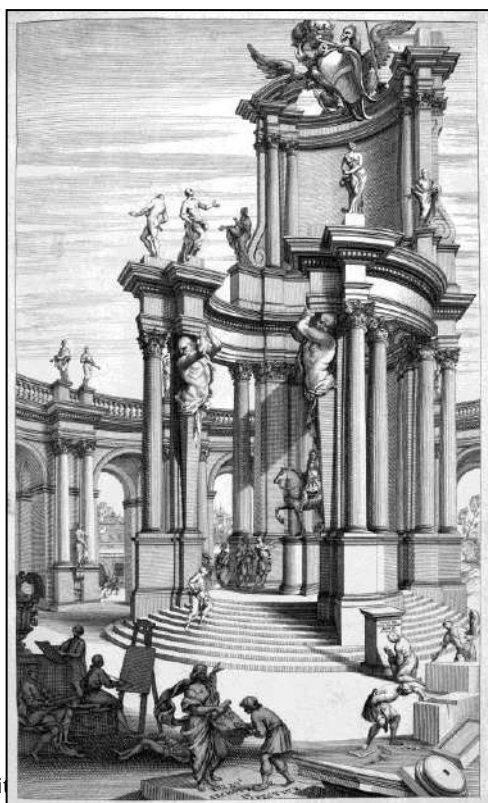
## The Twenty-first Figure.

*The Tuscan Capital in Perspective.*



THE Manner before deli-  
ver'd concerning Bases, is  
of the same Use in deline-  
ating Capitals; forasmuch  
as these also have their  
square Abacus, and their  
round Members. The Ground-line in  
Capitals is usually plac'd above the Hori-  
zon; because when they are set upon Co-  
lumnis which exceed a Man's Height, they  
are generally represented above the Eye.

There are two frontispieces, the first depicting a triumphal arch similar to Pozzo's designs for the Jesuits' Quarantore (Forty Hours) pageant in the Gesù [shown below left]. It includes a dedication to Leopold II of Austria. The second frontispiece [shown below right] shows educational equipment, with a desk, set squares, pens, ink and books on architecture, including Palladio's *Quattro libri*.





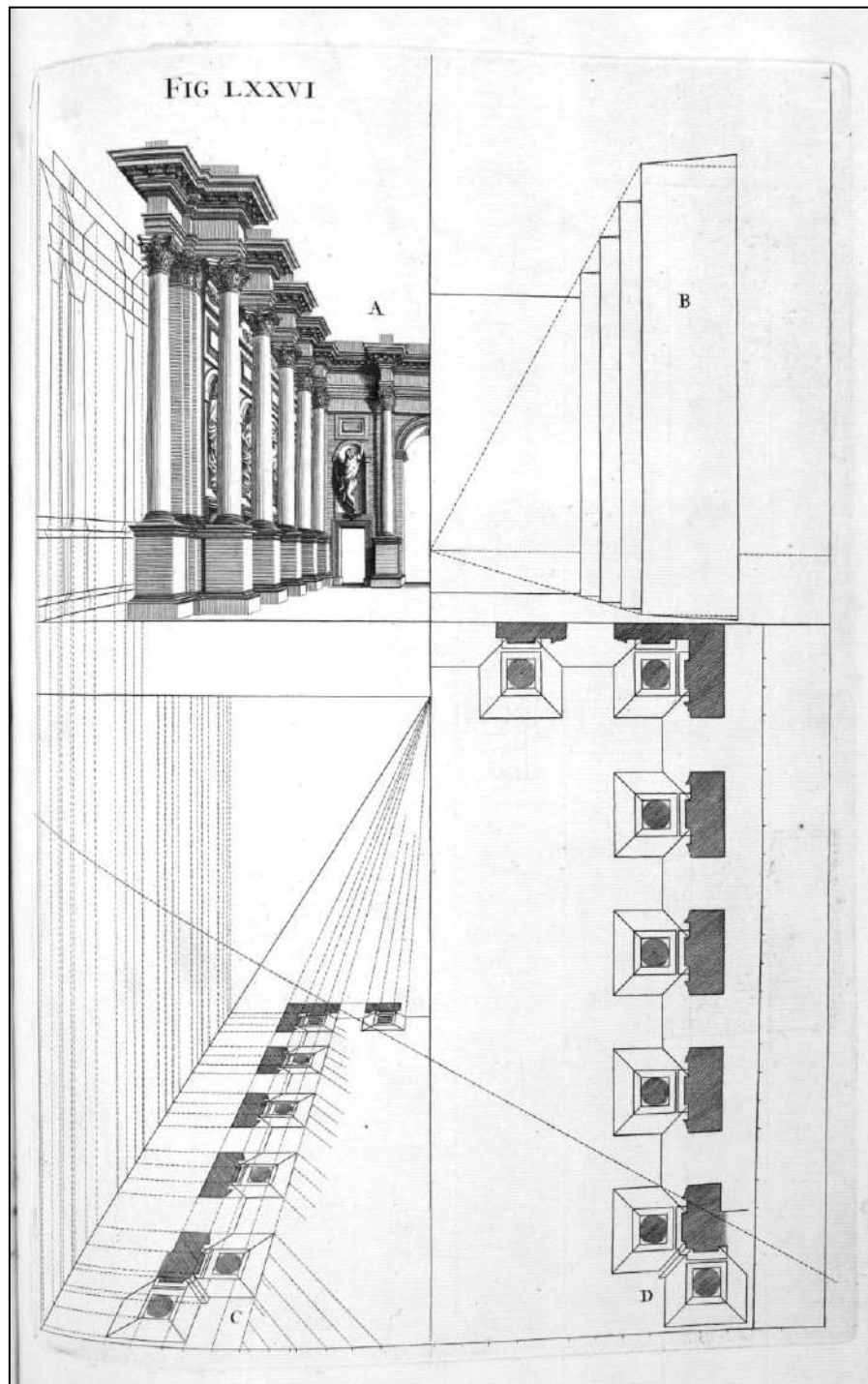
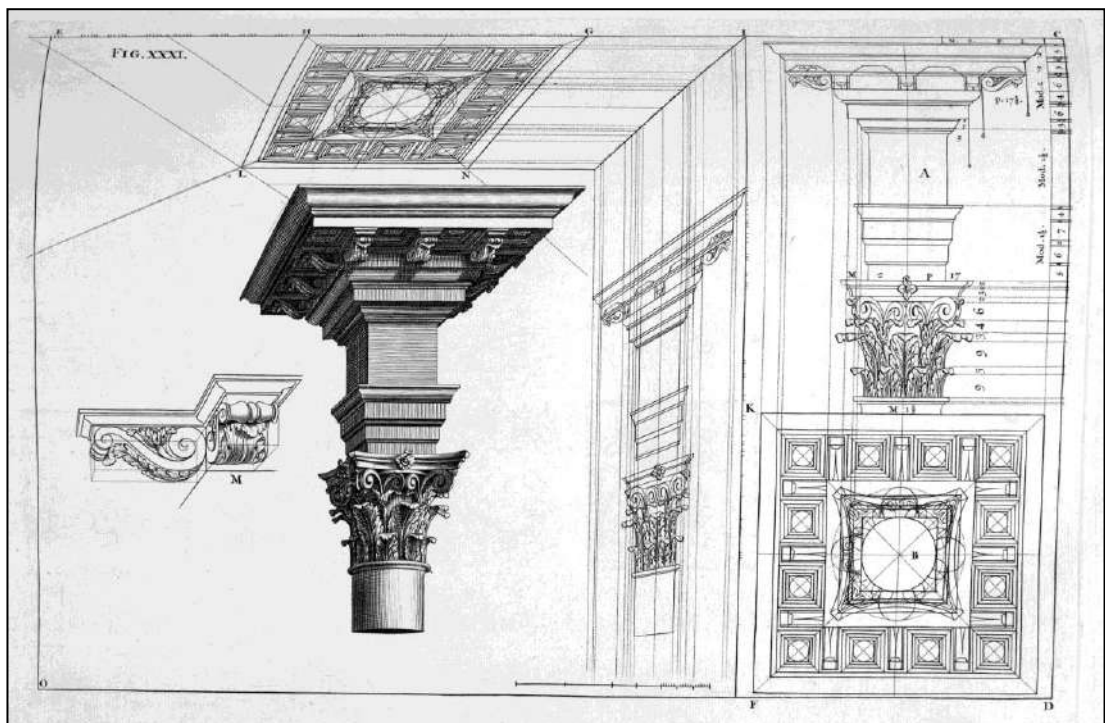
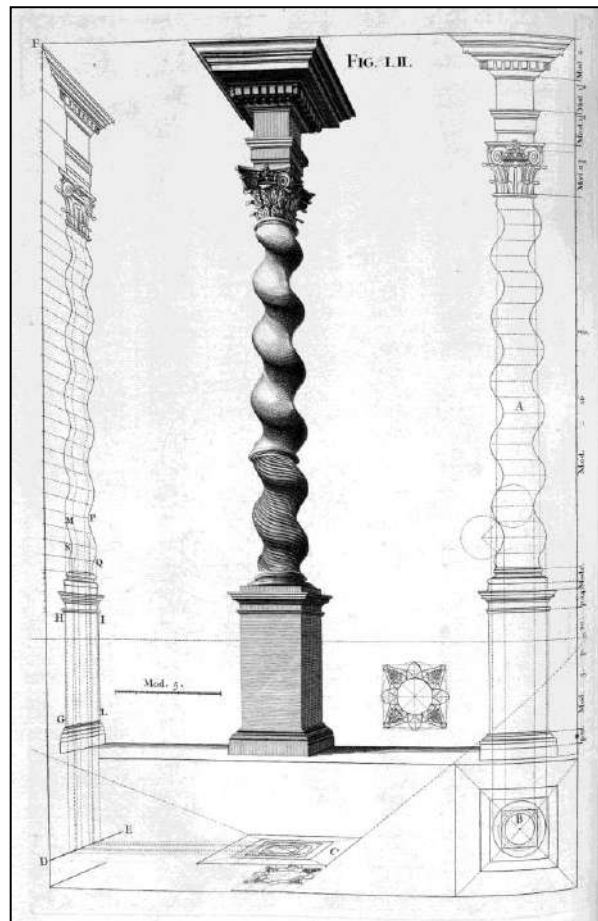


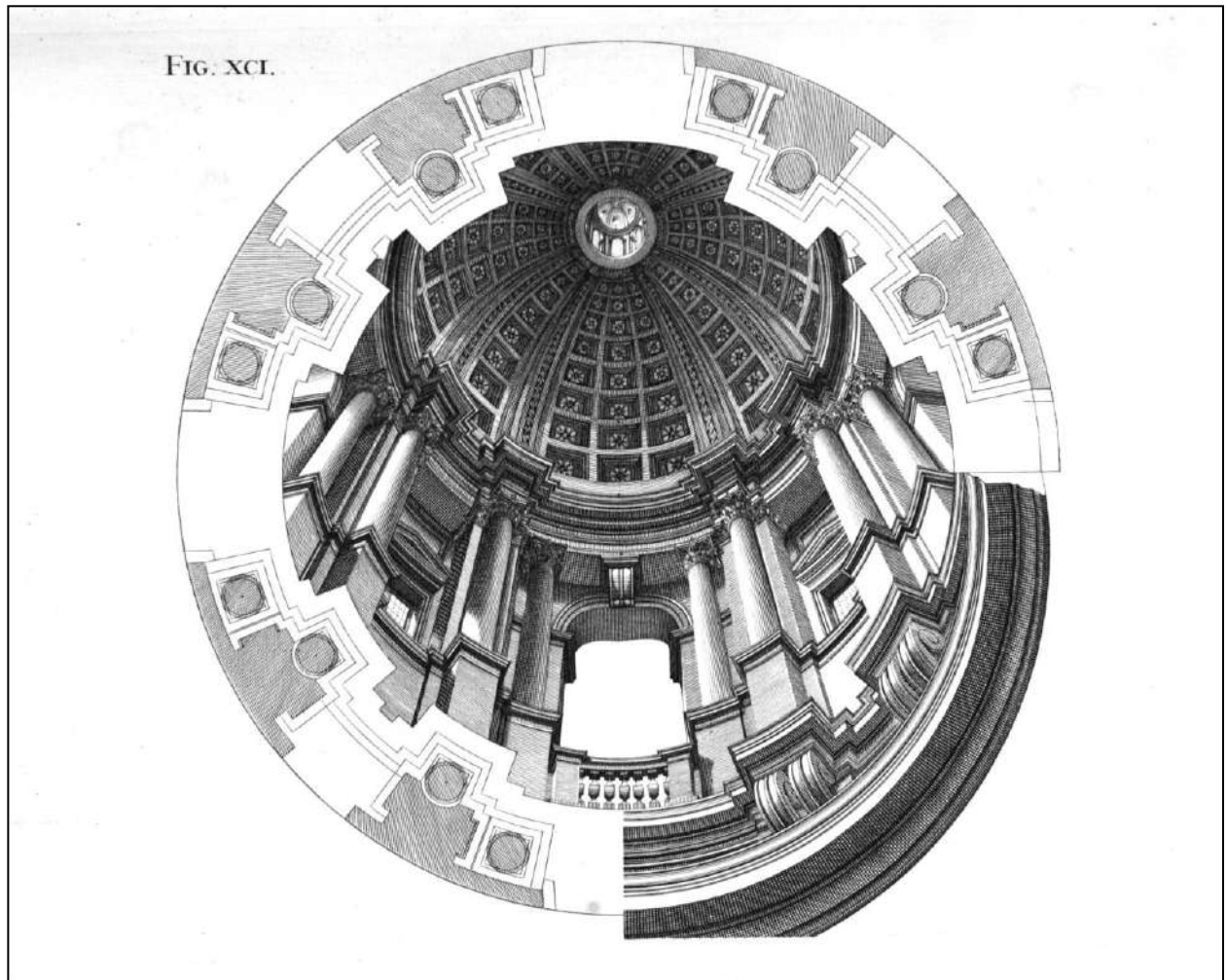
Fig. LXXVI showing 'The manner of delineating the Designs of Scenes'.

Pozzo begins by demonstrating Viator's distance point method - the convergence of the diagonals of a squared floor to a single point on the horizon. The distance between this point and the vanishing point is equal to that of the viewer from the picture plane. This is applied first to simple and then more complicated geometrical shapes, leading to patterns for pedestals.



Pozzo deals with columns [shown above (top)], bases, capitals [shown above (bottom)], and cornices, before going on to his characteristic illusionistic ceiling [see below]. As most buildings were symmetrical, he believed that it was normally only necessary to show half a

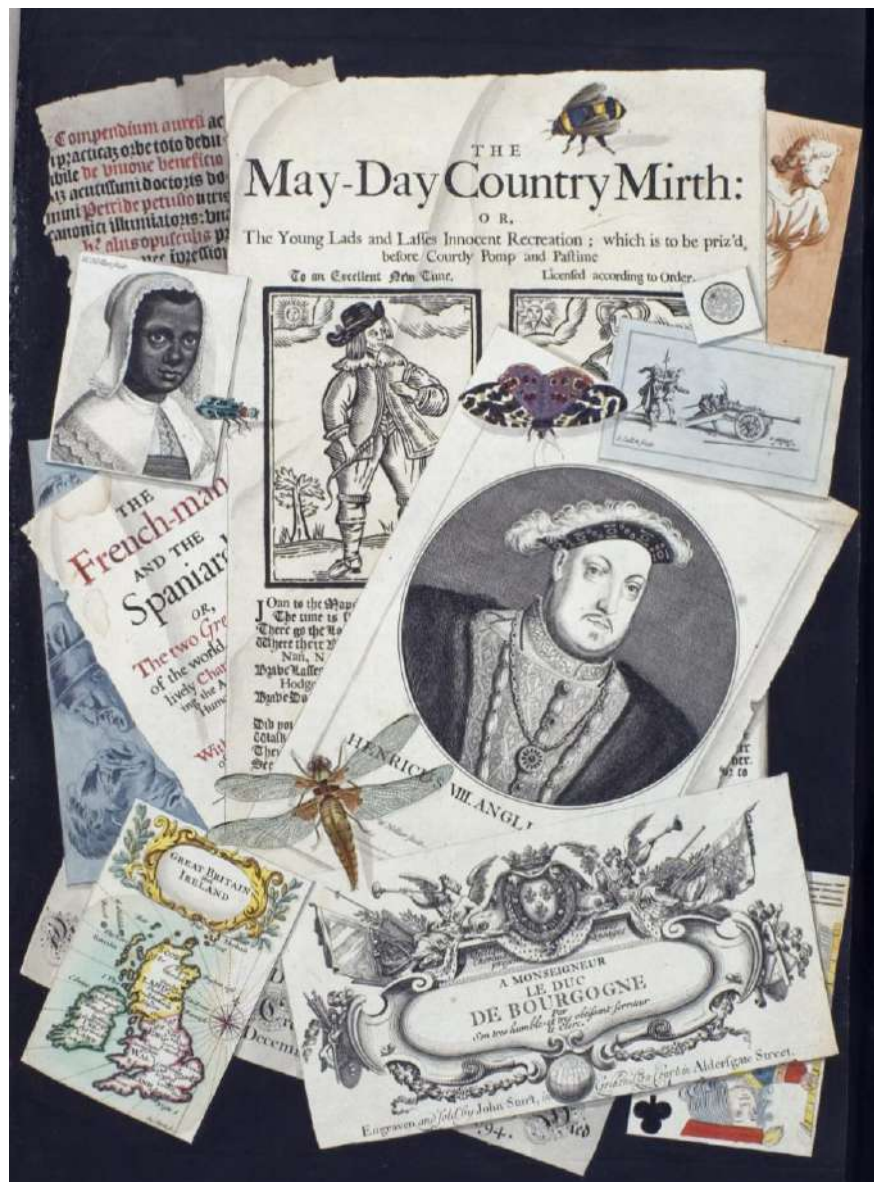
design. Indeed for high-ceilinged, rectangular rooms, the half-template might be halved again [see image of Fig. XCIX on page 9 below].



The commercial potential of Pozzo's work was recognized very early by his first printer, the Bohemian, Johann Jakob Komarek. In 1700, a second volume was published in both Latin-German and Latin-Italian parallel texts. Between 1700 and 1725, Pozzo's book was translated into six more modern European languages, mostly in quartos deriving from the Augsburg 1708 Latin-German edition. Illustrations were used as sources for buildings in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Latin America and in India, as well as in China and much of Europe. Interestingly, the writer Rodney Palmer points out that an indicator of its influence is that much that is absent in Pozzo's book is also lacking from all Portuguese eighteenth-century ceiling painting.

The University of Reading holds a copy of the Latin-English edition, printed at London in 1707, and with the English title, *Rules and examples of perspective proper for painters and architects, etc.* This was based on the *editio princeps* of 1693, which had a greater emphasis on

architecture than the second edition of 1702. The book was translated by the architect John James, who was later to design St. George's, Hanover Square, London and Standlynch, near Downton, Wiltshire. "At the request of the engraver", the edition was approved by Christopher Wren, John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor. John Sturt, the engraver, was also responsible for selling the book. Instead of Leopold II, the edition was dedicated to Queen Anne. Palmer comments that "the involvement of architectural authors and illustrators in the English edition of Pozzo reveals the extent to which they considered his *Perspectiva* to be part of their programme to disseminate European architectural models in Britain." The Reading copy has an interesting additional feature in the form of a hand-coloured *trompe l'oeil* picture of scraps, book pages and various insects [see below], which has been bound in at the front of the book. The provenance of this extra leaf is uncertain as it is not signed, but it may have been inspired by Pozzo's work, or bound into the work as a curiosity relating to the art of *trompe l'oeil*.

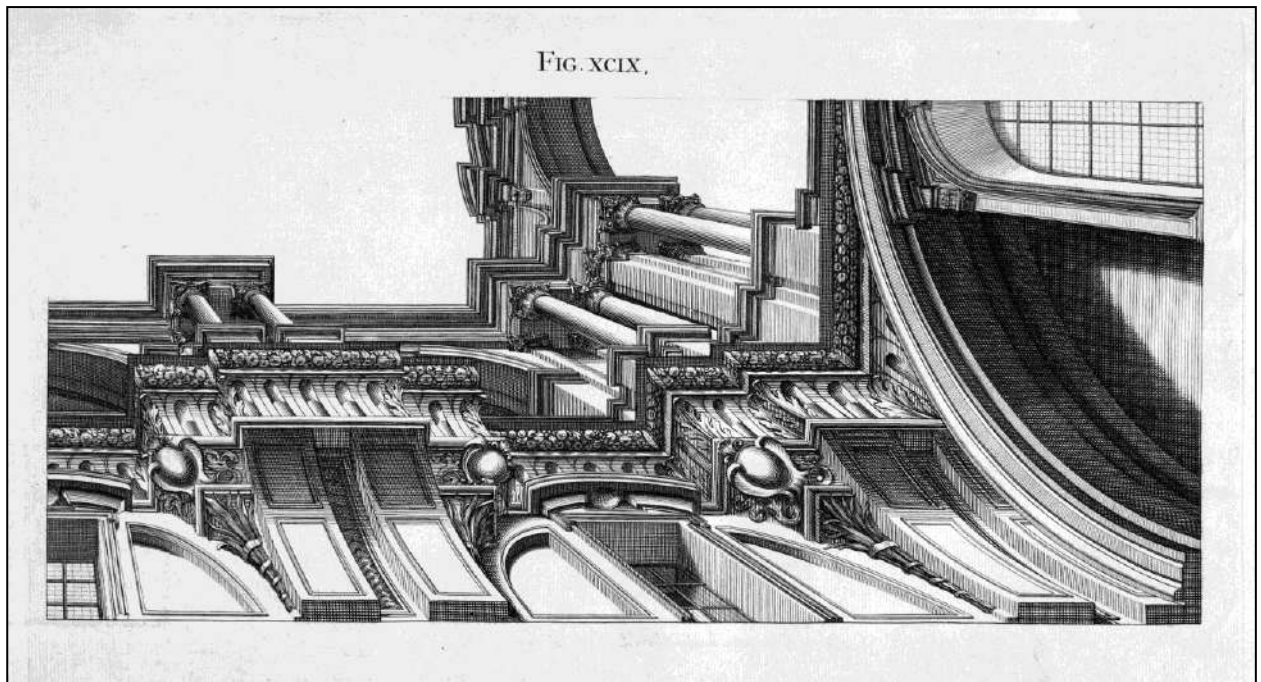




Pozzo left Rome for Vienna in 1703, spending the next six years working on the Jesuit church there and decorating the Marmorsaal of the Liechtenstein garden palace. He died in Vienna in 1709, where he was buried with great honours in the Jesuit church.

i. Grove Art Online

[http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T069154?q=pozzo+andrea&search=quick&pos=1&\\_st=1#firsthit](http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T069154?q=pozzo+andrea&search=quick&pos=1&_st=1#firsthit) [accessed 02/06/08]



*Fig. XCIX showing 'Another Quarter of the whole Design'.*

## References

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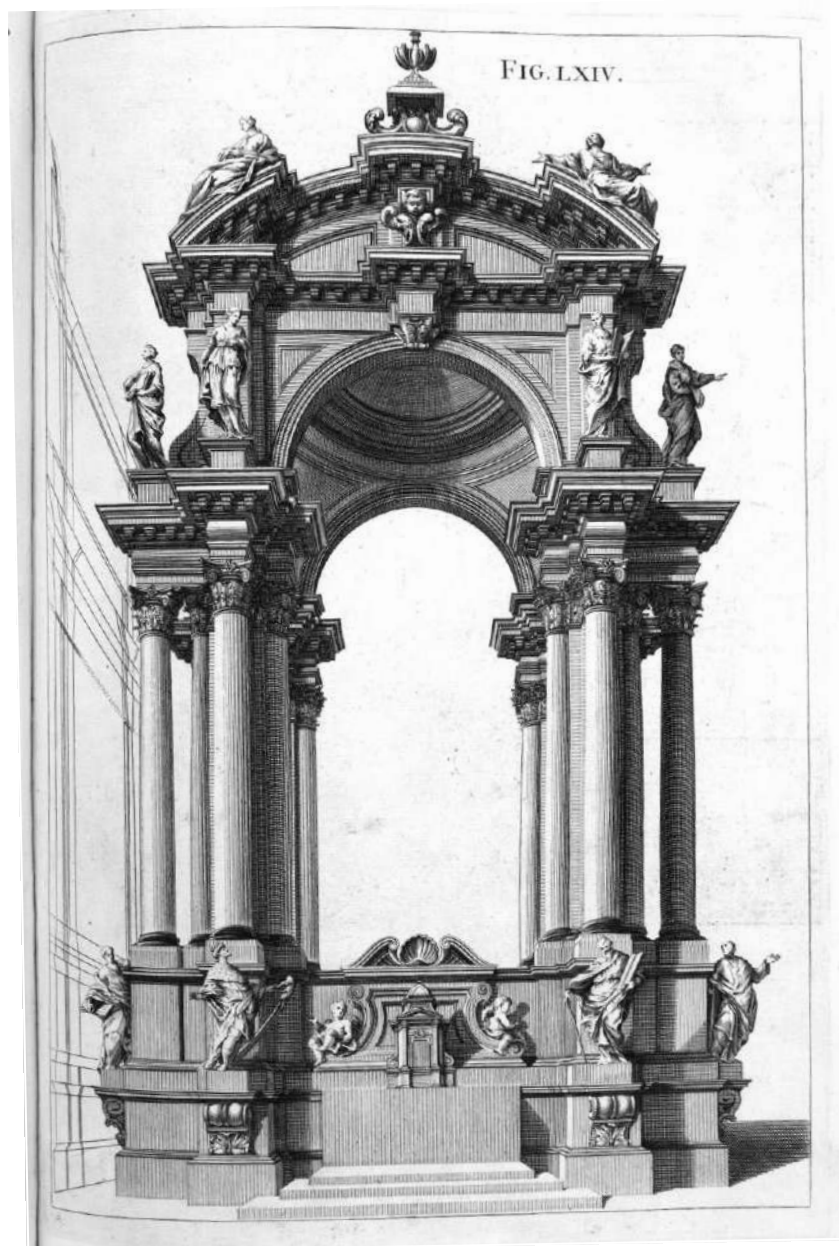


Fig. LXIV showing 'A square design in perspective' which  
"may serve for the Design of a great Altar in a Church".

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