

Processing

The work "Columna Cochlis" by Pietro Bartoli is about the depiction of the Column of Marcus Aurelius in Rome. Bartoli made 80 drawings of the relief on the column, which are reproduced chronologically in the book. It is as if one were looking directly at the column without actually having seen it. You may notice things in the drawings that are lost when you look at the actual column. This is mainly due to the dimension and the overwhelming impression of such a monumental column. The book also contains some additional words written in Latin.

Since the content of this work is mainly about the illustrations and not about the text, I decided to focus on the manner in which the drawings were made.

Looking at the drawings, it can be assumed that Pietro Bartoli proceeded with some kind of printing technique. In fact, he used the copperplate engraving. Copperplate engraving, or chalcography, is an engraved printing technique that was used in the Renaissance to produce illustrations. To do this, one dug into a copper plate with a graver in order to remove parts. The negative of the desired image is scratched away in order to subtractively obtain the desired original image. This template absorbs ink, which is then printed onto the paper with a roller press.

Personally, I wondered why the author chose to use a printing technique. Since Pietro Bartoli was not only known as an engraver and antiquarian, but also as a draughtsman, it would have been rather likely that he would have made the documentation of the column as simple drawings. It might even have been quicker, since no two pages of the book look alike. He probably had to make each picture individually, i.e. scribe 80 plates. So I wondered what the advantage was of choosing the more demanding and complicated printing technique.

On the one hand, the copperplate engraving technique was very current and popular at the time of the Renaissance, among other things for the production of pictorial illustrations. Artists were specially commissioned by princes and rulers at that time to produce copper engravings. In depicting an important pillar, Bartoli was probably also concerned with choosing a concise method that would do justice to the esteem in which a past emperor was held. On the other hand, I suspect that Bartoli was also the publisher of his works and could thus quickly produce many copies using this technique. Since Bartoli was an artist and made the collection out of his own aspirations rather than a commission, he may have wanted more than one edition.

keywords: creation, drawings, chalcography