

Vari disegni de architettura ornati de porte / inventati da Bernardino Radi

Bernardino Radi's book is a collection of entrance and gate situations in the 17th century. It is imaginable that his study served as a catalogue for his clients or as a memoir passing down knowledge to further generations. I used Alice's search engine for following entries; 'Entrance situation in the Renaissance', 'Ornaments on Entrances' and 'Printing techniques'. I will discuss the book findings in relation to Radi's work in the following paragraphs.

In a passage of the book 'the Gothic' the author Frankl describes an entrance situation of a church that was built during the Renaissance. To design proper architecture one has to follow the ancient principles defined by Vitruvius. He mentions architectural terms as order (proportion), symmetria and decor (correctness). In the Renaissance architecture tries to imitate the antique building culture. Radi was influenced by this spirit of time. All his design proposals in the book follow a strict building code of proportion and symmetry.

In the book 'The stones of Venice' written by Ruskin a similar topic is discussed. One paragraph describes where a specific object, in that case the cross, should be placed. It has to be placed either in the center of the archivolt of doorway or in the first story above the windows. The entrance is the architectural component of the house where certain ideology and standards are conveyed. People that enter the house are immediately confronted with the status of the owner and what the house stands for. Similar to Radi's entrance illustrations where symbols like firepots, lionheads and other ornaments decorate the entrance facade.

But what is the meaning behind an ornament?

In the book of 'Thousand and one nights' the protagonist runs through the street crying;
"Ah her loveliness! Ah her stature! Ah her perfect grace! Ah her ornaments!"

The protagonist talks about a woman's grace making an analogy by referring to design. Therefore I interpret that ornaments are used as an aesthetical component that express the significance of beauty in architecture.

Radi's catalogue was probably used to set a certain standard how proper entrances should be built (decor). Those standards and norms were defined by authorities and intellectuals. In the Book of Van Eck 'Eighteenth Century Architecture' he discusses that it was in the interest of the state and church to enforce norms to the broad population from urban to provincial areas.

Books and printing techniques played a major role for spreading the knowledge and building conventions. Through the ability of printing information networks beyond elites of wealth and education were established.