Introduction

Within the architectural all’antica-discourse of the Renaissance, Vitruvius’s De Architectura, written in the time of Augustus, played a most significant role. Here Renaissance architects who sought to revive the ancient manner of building could find guidelines about the art of building of the ancients. Or at least they thought they could. Vitruvius’s text posed more questions than it offered answers. It was found to be obscure with its strange language and mixture of Greek and Latin terms.[1] But it was the most comprehensive text on ancient architecture to survive and therefore received an authoritative role. For many architects Vitruvius became a stable reference point, the Text, which could assist in explaining the half or completely buried ruins of ancient architecture as well as the many discrepancies that were observed, when architects, painters and humanists carefully studied the building relics of the past, especially in Rome.[2]

With the advent of printing, the difficulties in understanding Vitruvius formed the outset of a passionate Vitruvius-exegesis in the 16th century. The text was continuously translated, commented and illustrated.[3] The many studies and publications of Vitruvius were therefore indeed attempts to structure the ancient text, so that the material could be made accessible to a then-contemporary user.

The obscurity of Vitruvius’s text led to numerous interpretations of what he wrote. By focussing on Renaissance architects’ reading of a single passage in Vitruvius, namely his section on the atrium house in Book VI, Linda Pellechia has demonstrated how architects from Alberti to Palladio sought to explain Vitruvius’s words by reading other authors or by being inspired by Antique ruins. Consequently, very different looking atrium houses emerged, that confirm that Vitruvius as a source was obscure, but also exactly therefore flexible.[4]

Pellechia’s study has offered most valuable and profound insight into the process of Renaissance architects’ methods of reading through an overall philological approach. Reading, as Robert Darnton has pointed out, has a history, it changes and is shaped by cultural configurations. Sometime in the 16th century a privatisation of reading took place. Although reading was still also a social act done in groups, it became an increasingly more silent and private activity.[5] Reading in the early modern period was though first and foremost an activity, as demonstrated by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton.[6] Texts were not read passively, but most often with an aim to understand and learn something new. Notes and drawings done in margins of texts are traces of the reading act. They tell of the relationship between reader and text.[7] In this rather vibrating field between reader and text, Roger Chartier has argued that the physical form of the book establishes an order against which reading functions. The ways in which the content of books are organized and presented are therefore never neutral, but can guide and direct readers, arrange knowledge and influence thought patterns.[8]

Based on these ideas this contribution analyses the literary methods employed when Renaissance architects and humanists sought to come to terms with Vitruvius’s difficult text. The article will evolve around two case studies. The first examines certain annotations and autograph drawings that the Florentine architect Giovanni Battista da Sangallo (called “Il Gobbo”, 1496-1548) made in the Vitruvius-edition, which he possessed. A closer look at Sangallo’s no-
tes and drawings not only allows us to enter the private study space of a Renaissance architect, it also furnishes a key to understand the ways in which Vitruvius was read and comprehended. It is important to underline that the analysis in this connection is not a philological endeavour. Instead it seeks to view the structures within the act of reading.

In order to set Sangallo’s Vitruvius-studies into a broader context, the second case study turns to the vast Vitruvius-programme presented by the Academia della Virtù and to the many publications of Vitruvius’s De Architectura mainly in the first half of the 16th century – the time when Sangallo made his notes. This case study considers essential literary systematization tools of structuring the ancient source that became prevalent in layouts of printed Vitruvius-editions. The overall aim of the contribution is to explore mechanisms at play in the field between text, reader and layout and their potential impact on architectural thought in the Renaissance.

Giovanni Battista da Sangallo and his Sulpicio-Vitruvius

Giovanni Battista da Sangallo went from Florence to Rome in 1513 to collaborate with his brother Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1487-1546) in building as well as in surveying ancient monuments – a task that appears to have led both brothers to a close study of Vitruvius. Antonio intended to translate the ancient text, but all that remains of the project is his preface from 1539. From Battista’s hand, however, two partly manuscript translations of Vitruvius’s De Architectura remain as well as an annotated and illustrated copy of the first printed edition of Vitruvius’s text made by the Professor of Grammar Giovanni Sulpicio da Veroli and printed in Rome around 1486. According to Giovanni Battista’s will all three texts were donated to the Confraternità della Misericordia in S. Giovanni Decollato and in the 18th century the papers went into the holdings of Biblioteca Corsiniana in Rome where they are today. Giovanni Battista’s annotated Sulpicio-Vitruvius has been named the Corsini Incunabulum after the library where it is kept.

Giovanni Sulpicio da Veroli had been involved with the literary and architectural circles of Federico da Montefeltro’s court in Urbino just as he had been connected to cardinal Raffaele Riario’s circle in Rome. Here he had worked together with the humanist Pomponio Leto (whom he mentions in the preface to his Vitruvius-edition) editing Frontinus’ De acquis urbis Romae. Sulpicio was thus deeply involved with the study of ancient texts on architecture. In his Vitruvius-edition, which he dedicates to Raffaele Riario, he maintains the Latin text and leaves out attempts to illustrate the work. Instead the text is set up with wide margins so that the reader, Sulpicio encourages, can add notes and thereby assist in establishing a more comprehensible Vitruvian text. His Vitruvius-version was therefore indeed meant to be marked with annotations, like a work-in-progress.

It may have been exactly these typographical traits that made Sulpicio’s Vitruvius attractive to Giovanni Battista. When he made his notes, in the timespan from the late 1520s to the late 1540s, various editions of Vitruvius already existed, some translated, some even commented and most of them illustrated. Fra Giocondo’s Latin Vitruvius-edition from 1511 and Cesare Cesariano’s translation and commentary from 1521 were both much studied and received their fame due mainly to the fact that they were illustrated and thereby clarified the ancient text visually.

The absence of illustrations in Sulpicio’s Vitruvius as well as the wide margin space meant that the reader was not visually guided towards a specific understanding while reading the text, and that there was room to add private notes. And Giovanni Battista passionately did so. The book, which measures 300x220 mm, consists of 112 printed leaves and 22 blank leaves. In the margins and on 20 of the blank leaves Giovanni Battista made in pen in light brown ink notes to the ancient text, partially translated certain sections (into vernacular Tuscan) and drew numerous illustrations to accompany the text.

Although a definite dating of Giovanni Battista’s drawings and annotations in his Sulpicio-Vitruvius has not yet, to my knowledge, been established, it has been suggested that the illustrations and
notes were carried out in different phases from the end of the 1520s to the late 1540s. \[15\] Judging from the drawing- and writing style employed in the book at least two different styles are discernable. A careful and neat style generally employed in the margins, and a more sketchy style used also in the margins and particularly on the interleaved folios.

Out of Vitruvius’ ten books Giovanni Battista made most of his annotations and drawings in Book III, which deals with the arrangements of temples and the ionic order (or genus, pl. genera which is the term used by Vitruvius) and in Book IV where the subject is the Doric and Corinthian orders. The remaining books are only sporadically annotated and some even completely without notes. That Giovanni Battista directed most of his attention to exactly these parts of Vitruvius’s work is indeed in line with the general interest of the Renaissance in the layout and ornaments of antique temples and orders.

In private dialogue with Vitruvius: Giovanni Battista’s reading of the Ionic order

But what did Vitruvius write and how did his reader Giovanni Battista respond to his text? In order to probe this question the following focuses on the architect’s reading of Vitruvius’s section on the Ionic order in Book III.

Turning to the page where Vitruvius begins his description of the Ionic order, Giovanni Battista has drawn a foundation trench with pilings in the left margin and two bases in the right margin of the page (fig. 1). The drawing of the foundation trench refers to Vitruvius’s discussion of this subject that immediately precedes his description of the Ionic order. In the drawings of the two bases, Giovanni Battista directs his attention to the concave torus and the convex scotia elements separated by the fillets interposed between the rounded forms. He leaves the column shafts only slightly indicated and writes the names of the two bases, the Attic base (“Basa acthigurge”) and the Ionic base (“Basa ionicha”) in the column space.

When relating the drawings to what Vitruvius writes in the passage next to the illustrations it can be noticed, that although Vitruvius mentions the column as an important element – the element from which the bases take their proportions – Giovanni Battista barely suggests the columns and the relation between column and base. Instead his focus is on the constituent parts of the bases. Through this focus it is as if Giovanni Battista depicts the bases almost piecemeal in accordance with the text. Here Vitruvius writes:

\[\text{The height, if it is to be an Attic base, is to be thus divided: that the upper part is to be one-third of the thickness of the column, and the remainder left to the plinth. Taking the plinth away, the remainder is to be divided into four parts, and the upper torus is to be one-fourth: the remaining three-fourths are to be equally divided so that the one is the lower torus and the other the scotia (which the Greeks call trochilus) with its fillets.}\[16\]

Vitruvius continues this mode of description also when he subsequently accounts for the Ionic base. Here the proportions

\[\text{are to be so fixed that the breadth of the base each way is one and three-eights of the thickness of a column. The height is to be like the Attic base; so also its plinth. The remainder beside the plinth, which will be the third part of the column’s diameter, is to be divided into seven parts: of these the torus at the top is to be three parts; the remaining four are to be equally divided; one half to the upper hallow with its astragals and top moulding, the other half is to be left to the lower trochilus; but the lower will seem greater because it will have a projection to the edge of the plinth. The astragals are to be one-eighth parts of the scotia. The projection of the base will be three-sixteenths of the thickness of the column.}\[17\]

These passages, difficult to read and comprehend, provide an insight into Vitruvius’ text in general as his architectural descriptions, and especially those of the
orders, most often have the form of being a continuous dismantling of architectural wholes into detailed accounts of bases, column shafts, capitals, architraves and pediments. The proportion remarks that Vitruvius coins to each architectural element that he describes further underline this taking to pieces of architectural entities. It appears to be this breaking up of the architectural order that Vitruvius’s verbal description brings about that directs or is carried on into Giovanni Battista's drawing mode with his emphasis on the individual elements of the bases.

Similarly, on the following page, where Vitruvius moves on to account for the Ionic capital, its abacus and volute, Giovanni Battista represents the main part of the capital in front view at the bottom of the page, like a cut out, with emphasis on the ornamental parts of the element (fig. 2). The annotations in the margin above and immediately in connection with the drawing of the Ionic capital in front view concern matters of proportions regarding the abacus and its relation to the volutes as well as the proportions of the scrolls in connection with the volutes. In the annotation on the bottom of the page, Giovanni Battista directly refers to his drawing as a visualisation of the proportion of the scrolls of the volutes.[18] The annotations thus clearly reflect a concern with matters of proportions in relation to the details of the capitol, present also in Vitruvius’s meticulous description.

In the last section of Book III, Vitruvius’s main emphasis is on a description of the Ionic entablature and tympanum. Giovanni Battisti has here filled the left margin with a representation of a section of an Ionic entablature, viewed from the side and taking up all the margin space (fig. 3). On the drawn entablature’s frieze section, Giovanni Battista ensures in writing that the drawing shows the Ionic cornice as described by Vitruvius.[19] The individual parts of the entablature are loosely drawn and although orna-
ments are sketched onto the separate elements, Giovanni Battista’s real focus appears to be on the terminology, the names of each architectural member, that he thoroughly coins to almost all of the constitutive parts of the entablature: “Corona”, “denticholo”, “Zophoro”, “Terza fascia”, “Seconda fascia”, “Prima fascia”. This occupation with architectural terms is also characteristic in the drawing, which covers the lower part of the page opening and represents an Ionic entablature in its context with the pediment (fig. 3). Correspondingly the names are here written, either directly on the elements themselves or next to the members and connected to them with a line. Giovanni Battista’s focus on the terminology indeed corresponds to Vitruvius’s text, which is strongly dominated by architectural terms especially on the first half page directly next to the drawing in the margin (fig. 3). By coining the terms to the represented entablature, Giovanni Battista thus visualises the terminology employed in the text. Other subjects mentioned by Vitruvius in this last section of the Ionic order, such as the flutes of the columns (Book III.v.14), the mouldings and lions’ head (Book III.v.15) and construction advice on how to lead away water through gutters (Book III.v.15); these subjects Giovanni Battista omits to comment on. Instead his attention is on the details that make up the entablature, emphasised by the coining of terms to each individual part and thereby reflecting not the whole content of Vitruvius’s text, but rather his description mode. Between Vitruvius’s account of the Ionic capital and entablature are four interleaved pages that present a pause from Vitruvius’s text, an intermezzo, where, on each page, Giovanni Battista draws one Ionic capital each time represented from a different angle. The pages are detailed close up views with additional notes (and at times partitions according to the instructions given by Vitruvius) (fig. 4 and fig. 5). The notes reveal that three of the capitals have been drawn from the Theatre of Marcellus, also designated “savelli” (i.e. Palazzo Savelli), and one has been represented according to Vitruvius’s description. It is moreover from the notes that it becomes clear that...
Giovanni Battista compares the real capitals to the instructions given by Vitruvius. In connection with the capitals that he draws from the Theatre of Marcellus, Giovanni Battista writes that they are bad (“male”), at times even very bad (“male malissimo”) according to Vitruvius, but good (“bene” or “apunto”) according to the Palazzo Savelli and the Theatre of Marcellus (fig. 5). [20] On his drawing of an ionic capital in split view (fig. 4), Giovanni Battista declares that this represented capital is well conceived according to what Vitruvius writes, and that all the other capitals drawn on the other pages are bad. [21]

The four pages indicate how intertwined the textual study of Vitruvius was with actual in situ investigations of the ruins, but also how Vitruvius acted like a reference point of rightness when judging architecture. That Giovanni Battista also writes that the capitals on the Theatre of Marcellus are good in their own right, although they stray away from Vitruvius’s rules, indicates his acceptance of variations that differ from the ancient author.

By bringing the field studies into the textual reading of the ancient text, Giovanni Battista’s Sulpicio-Vitruvius is not merely about studying past architecture, it also engages in a then-contemporary architectural discourse concerned with all’antica-architecture and associated issues of decorum and licentia – issues which in the architectural field often took Vitruvius as their yardstick. [22] This was also the case for Giovanni Battista when he in a letter (dated late 1546-1547) to Pope Paul III condemned the cornice on Palazzo Farnese as being a bastard (i.e. a mixture of elements from various orders) according to the rules of Vitruvius. Despite the fact that Giovanni Battista does not mention names, it is Michelangelo’s cornice that he refers to, most likely in a defence of his brother Antonio, who was behind the other parts of the façade. [23]

When considering the relation between Vitruvius’s text and Giovanni Battista’s reading of it based on his drawings and annotations, it seems that Giovanni Battista has an overall focus on and interest in the architectural detail. This emphasis may reflect Vitruvius’s text itself manifested through the ancient author’s description method. But it may also, and at the same time, spring from an exceedingly thorough reading of the text generated by owning the book privately and therefore being able to return to the text over and over again, in calm and possibly after having discussed matters with fellow architects.
Arranging Vitruvius for the public: Accademia della Virtù and published Vitruvius-editions

Around the time when Giovanni Battista made his private notes in his Sulpicio-Vitruvius, the ancient architect’s text was indeed subject to scrutiny in a more public way as well, revealed explicitly by the extensive Vitruvius-project launched by the Rome-based Accademia della Virtù. This academy was a loose organisation of mainly humanists, churchmen, painters and architects who gathered in Rome at the house of the Sienese humanist Claudio Tolomei. In November 1542 the academy presented its Vitruvius-programme in a letter written by Tolomei to Count Agostino de’ Landi. The project never fully materialised, and all that survives is Guillaume Philandrier’s extensive commented Latin Vitruvius-edition from 1544. However, Tolomei’s letter throws light on some of the methods behind the programme.

Similar projects had also been formed in Milan around Cesare Cesariano’s illustrated translation of Vitruvius from 1521, in Vicenza around Giangiorgio Trissino, in Padua around Alvise Cornaro and in Venice around Daniele Barbaro. At times the projects resulted in published Vitruvius-editions. Cesariano’s illustrated Vitruvius from 1521 appears to be a result of such work, and Daniele Barbaro’s 1556-Vitruvius grew through intense cooperation with the architect Andrea Palladio. Other published Vitruvius-editions were printed as well. Besides Giocondo’s version from 1511, an edition by Durantino from 1524, which combines Cesariano’s translation and Giocondo’s illustrations was published, as was a commented translation of Vitruvius’s first five books by Giovanni Battista Caporali in 1536.

Although Giovanni Battista was not himself official member of the Accademia della Virtù, his brother Antonio da Sangallo the Younger worked with the group. Moreover, painters and architects who were not members participated in the association’s meetings. Giovanni Battista is likely to have been one of them due to his close collaboration with his brother Antonio and his personal interest in Vitruvius.

The Vitruvius-project that the Accademica della Virtù presented in Tolomei’s letter embodied translation, annotation, explanatory word-lists, and illustrations of the ancient author’s work. The programme comprises eight assignments. The first assignment concerns a commentary in Latin of the difficult sections in Vitruvius’s text to be supplied with figures. The second issue is the making of a critical Vitruvius-edition substantially illustrated. The third and fourth assignments are two word lists containing the Latin and Greek terms from Vitruvius’s text. The aim of the production of these lists is, writes Tolomei, to elucidate the many obscure expressions that Vitruvius uses. The fifth aspect of the academy’s project is a rewrite of Vitruvius’s books into a purer and better Latin and it leads to the next part of the project, which concerns a translation of Vitruvius into Tuscan with two additional word lists. Tolomei stresses the importance of these word lists. The first list will alphabetically record the architectural terms mentioned by Vitruvius so that all parts are given their proper names. In cases where it is impossible to find a Tuscan expression attempts should be made to extract the words from other reliable sources. The list is useful, states Tolomei, for those who wish to express themselves literally or orally about architecture in Italian. The second list, also in Italian, is to be illustrated and will contain all architectural parts such as the column shaft, the base, the capital and all its elements. The seventh assignment is the making of a book, which collects all the Vitruvian principles and compares these with examples from ancient architecture in order to explicate discrepancies between textual source and ruin fragments. The final part of the academy’s programme is a study of ancient buildings in Rome intended to comprise historical and architectural descriptions and illustrations of the so-called marble plan, the remains of the city’s buildings as well as those structures, which have completely vanished.

The overall intention of the vast Vitruvius-project of Accademia della Virtù was thus to make Vitruvius’s text accessible and comprehensive through a general systematization via translations, word lists and visualisations of the text. Although the project sought also to compare text and ruin fragments, the programme appears to be principally a philological project concerned with words and architectural terms in particular. The prominence of alphabetical word lists, four in total, can be seen as a
symptom of the importance given to architectural terms. The word lists represent an organisation principle and a method to systematize Vitruvius’s text. Based on the difficulties with understanding the text a potential reader would most likely use these word lists as an important tool to access the text. The reader would thus be guided into the text via the architectural term, detail or part and not through general and homogenous typologies such as, for example, the temple or the house. Especially the word list that was to accompany the Tuscan translation represents such a principle of arrangement. Tolomei writes that the purpose of the list is to create more clarity and better use. He continues to state that this list would be organised according to the part, such as the column with its base and capital, and that all the individual members of these parts would then be named and shown in an illustration, so that the reader when looking at the illustration would immediately recognise the names of the individual architectural pieces. This unrealised list indeed seems to correspond to Giovanni Battista’s efforts to name each part of the Ionic entablature and pediment in his Sulpicio-Vitruvius.

The use of word lists and its similar associate, the index, can be observed to be a central feature characteristic of the printed Vitruvius-editions as well. Manuscript versions of the ancient author’s text throughout the Middle Ages often contained an index over the individual chapters of Vitruvius’s text.[32] This is also the case in Sulpicio’s Vitruvius, which contains a three-and-a-half page long table of content without page number references at the beginning of the book. It appears to be Fra Giocondo’s use of an index that inspired later editors such as Cesariano, Philandrier and Barbaro.[33]

In general the indexes and wordlists of printed Vitruvius-editions were thorough undertakings. Fra Giocondo’s index is seventeen pages, Cesariano’s twelve, of which the first ten pages are words and terms and the last two pages an index over the chapters of Vitruvius’s text.[34] Philandrier’s two in-
dices are particular comprehensive. The first is a 32 page-long alphabetical index to Vitruvius’s ten books and Philandrier’s annotations. It is followed by a four-page index over the Greek words used in Vitruvius. [35] Barbaro’s Vitruvius-version from 1556 also has two indexes placed at the back of the book: A one-page index of the content of Vitruvius’s books, that is not alphabetized and without page number references, and a nine-page alphabetical index with very precise page references (fig. 6). This index has the title: “Tavola per dechirarione de tutte le cose notabile de l’opera”. That these indexes were indeed significant is stressed by the fact that they are even mentioned on the frontispiece of Barbaro’s book. Directly under the book’s title is written: “Con due Tauole, l’una di tutto quello si contiene per i Capi nell’Opera, l’altra per dechiarazione de tutte le cose d’importanza”. [36] Also Durantino mentions, as part of his book title, that the work contains an alphabetical word list as a helping tool to access Vitruvius’s text.[37]

Fra Giocondo mentioned the illustrations as part of the title of his printed Vitruvius, and it was, as pointed out earlier, the inclusion of illustrations as a new feature that contributed to the work’s distinction. Some 45 years later in Barbaro’s Vitruvius-edition, it appears that the index had come to play a role parallel to Giocondo’s illustrations. It was a tool to clarify the text for the reader.

The production of word lists and indexes, a textual analysis in itself, became remarkably desirable in textbook production and the editing of classical authors with the advent of printing. The technical potentials offered by movable types made it possible not only to reproduce word lists easily, but also to arrange the material on the page with clarity and make use of the alphabetical organisation principle.[38] The overall consequence of such systematizing tools, represented by the word lists and indexes that became essential in Accademia della Virtù’s Vitruvius programme as well as in the printed Vitruvius-editions of the 16th century, is that they bring about a focus on the naming of the individual parts of structures, on single words and architectural terms. As a device to create clarity for the reader, as Tolomei and Barbaro expressed it, word lists and indexes guide the reader into Vitruvius’s body of text, not randomly, but through the architectural part rather than through references to architectural wholes such as buildings or typologies. As prevalent organization techniques, word lists and indexes give preference to the architectural detail.

Concluding remarks

In the cases of Giovanni Battista’s reading and editorial decisions, the accentuation of the detail appears to be generated from the intense reading of Vitruvius’s text and manifested as tools to clarify and systematize the work. It is from the encounter with what is written that the focus on the detail emerges. Such a prevailing concern with the architectural detail is current in Vitruvius’s text on various levels. It is present at the level of the work’s overall composition; if we are to believe Vitruvius, he states that he has set out to compose a single corpus of architecture based on scattered sources.[39]

However, the emphasis on the architectural detail comes to the fore in Vitruvius’s description mode. As demonstrated in his account of the ionic order, the description takes on the form of being an incessant undoing of architectural entities into bits and pieces underlined by proportion remarks that are built into his account. It can be argued that such a description method springs from the fact that the object of the description is an ornamental architectural element, the ionic order. Nevertheless, this description technique is characteristic of Vitruvius’s text in general. In his account of the house, for example, Vitruvius restrains from describing the house as a coherent entity, but focuses instead on specific rooms in isolation without mentioning how these individual units are related.[40] The emphasis on the architectural detail brought about in Giovanni Battista’s studies as well as in the Vitruvius-publications can thus be said to be latent present in Vitruvius’s books themselves.

In the all’antica-discourse of the 16th century an accentuation of the architectural part was present almost as a premise through the study of ancient ruins that most often existed only in a fragmentary form. Besides, although the core of all’antica-discourse within the architectural field was to recuperate ancient
architecture, the aim was never a strict imitation, but rather new interpretations based on additions, omissions and selections. Ancient building relics, as open referents, complied with such aims – as did Vitruvius’s text due to its obscurity. Architectural practice of the 16th century in many ways was a bricolage activity, to borrow a term from Alina Payne. Mario Carpo has demonstrated that similar strategies are implemented and propagated with the printed architectural treatise in the Renaissance, Sebastiano Serlio’s in particular. In his book Architecture in the Age of Printing, Carpo argues that the media change from script to moveable type brought about “a new image-based architectural method”, and that the presentations of fragmentary ancient building elements on the pages in Serlio’s treatise represented “a catalogue of ready-made parts” that could be used according to the judgment of the architect. The fragmented ruins, Vitruvius’s obscurity, as well as the printed architectural treatise with its exhibition of separated Antique building elements, make the accentuation of the architectural detail brought to light here, seem if not obvious, then perhaps at least part of a broader cultural context. All these aspects, in each their way, made strategies of combination as a creation method within the field of architecture stand out clearly.

When it came to finding a systematization scheme, the approaches of Vitruvius himself and of his readers in the Renaissance to dismantle entities and to categorise elements deeply intertwined. Perhaps the Vitruvian scrutinisers were motivated by a culture where the concept of the detail or fragment was ubiquitous.

Endnotes
1. Leon Battista Alberti, De re aedificatoria, ed. and tr. by Giovanni Orlandi and Paolo Portoghesi, 2 vols, Milan 1966, VI.1: “Oltra di questo ci era ancora, che egli non haveva scritto molto ornamente. Conciosia che egli parlava, di maniera, che a Latini pareva che e’ parlasse Greco, & a Greci pareva che egli parlassero Latino; Ma la cosa stessa nel dimostrarsci fa testimonianza, che egli non parlò nè Latino, nè Greco; di modo che egli è ragionevole, che egli non scrivesse a noi, poiché egli scrisse di maniera, che noi non lo intendiamo [...]”


11. Giovanni Battista da Sangallo’s texts in the Biblioteca Corsiniana (the library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei) are: Mss. Cors. 1846 and 2093 (manuscript translations), and M$50.F.1 (annotated and illustrated copy of Sulpicio’s Vitruvius). The latter was published in facsimile in 2003 as: Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003. In the following I will quote it as: Corsini Incunabulum. On the Corsini Incunabulum in general, see: Rowland 2003, pp. 1-29; Morolli 1988, pp. 87-140.


18. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations, III.v.5-8: “Recedar minusdimitiade partis latitudino”: “Cosi scrive vetrucio che a stare lo chapitello ionicho et cosi si fanno il girare come vedi in onghi quatiere del girare a perdere la metà Del diametro de’l ochio come vedi qui in disengno la f(i)gura.”


20. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations (selected), III.v.5-8: “Sta male malisimo secondo vetrucio Ma sta bene secondo E’ savelli apunto Come quelli Del theatro di marcello” / “Male stanno secondo vetrucio E sta bene secondo E’ savelli di roma E’l theatro di Marcello” / “Sta male malisimo Secondo vetrucio Ma sta com’e’l theatro de Marcelis apunto.”

21. Corsini Incunabulum, Giovanni Battista’s annotations, III.v.5-8: “Capitello ionicho che sta bene secondo che scriva Vetrucio nostro Tutti gli altri che son disengnati qui stanno male.”


23. About the cornice, Giovanni Battista, among other things, writes: “Qui non è qualità nessuna, perché l’opera è faccia della buona memoria secondo le regole di Vetricuro et questa cornice è faccia più presto al modo barbaro c’altrimenti [...] le spetie delle cornice son tre: doriche, joniche e corethie. Questa vostra non è dorica, né jonica né corinthia, è faccia bastarta a volontà che tocca alli huomini.” The letter, Cod. Ashb. 639, fol. 145 v, is held at the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Torce and has been transcribed in: Pier Nicola Pagliara, Alcune minute autografe di G. Battista da Sangallo. Parti della traduzione di Vitrucio e la lettera a Paolo III contro il comincione michelangioloce di Palazzo Farnese, in: Architettura Achivi. Fonti e storia, 1982, 1, pp. 33-34, here at p. 33. Pagliara dates the letter to late 1546 or early 1547 at p. 28.


27. Fra Giocondo/Vitruvius M.D.XI; Cesariano/Vitruvius 1521; Durantino/Vitruvius, M. L. Vitruvio Poliione De architettura traducto di Latino in volgare dal vero esemplare con le figure et lo soi loci con mirando ordini insinuito: co la sua tabula alfabetica per la quale potrai facilmente trovare la moltitudine de li vocaboli a li soi loci con suma diligentia esposti: [...] Venetia: in le Case di Ioane Antonio & Piero Fratelli da Sabio 1524; Carporali/Vitruvius, Archittetura con il suo commentato e figure. Vitruvio in volgar lingua raportato per M. Gianbatatia Caporali di Perugia, Perugia: Stamperia del Conte Iano Bigazzini 1536; Daniele Barbaro/Vitruvius, I dieci libri dell’architettura di M. Vitruvio tradutti et commentati da Monsignor Barbaro eletto Patriarca, in Vinegia per Francesco Marcolini, MDLVI.

28. This is known from Girolamo Garimberti’s treatise De regimienti publici de la città (1544), fol. 1r-3r, cf. Margaret Daly Davies (ed.), Archäologie der Antike. Aus den Beständen der Herzog August Bibliothek 1500-1700, Wiesbaden 1994, pp. 15-16.


31. Tolomei in: Barocchi 1977, vol. 3, p. 3041: “Et per maggior chiarezza ed utilità si farà uno altro vocabolario volgare per ordine d’i strumenti o di parte; come per esempio, pigliando la colonna con la sua base, e il suo capitello e ponendola in figura, si dichiararanno parte a parte tutti i suoi membri, come il zocco, la luna, il tondello, il collarino, e oltre di mano in mano; in tal modo che, ponendo la figura dinanzi agli occhi, subito si conoscerà come si dominand ciascuna sua parte.”


34. Fra Giocondo / Vitruvius M.D.XI; Cesariano / Vitruvius 1521.

35. Guillaume Philandrier/Vitruvius, M. Vitruvii Pollionis De Architettura Libri Decem Ad Caesarem Augustum. [...] Cum Graeco pariter &
**Figures**

Fig. 1: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio’s Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.1-4, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 77.)

Fig. 2: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio’s Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 78.)

Fig. 3: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio’s Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.8-13, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, pp. 84-85.)

Fig. 4: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio’s Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 81.)

Fig. 5: Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, Annotations and autograph drawings in his version of Sulpicio’s Vitruvius *De Architectura*, III.v.5-8, The Corsini Incunabulum, MS 50 F.1, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome (Vitruvius/Sangallo, *Vitruvius. Ten books on architecture. The Corsini Incunabulum with annotations and autograph drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, ed. with an introductory essay by Ingrid D. Rowland, Rome 2003, p. 82.)

Fig. 6: Index in: Daniele Barbaro/Vitruvius, *I dieci libri dell’architettura di M. Vitruvio tradutti et commentati da Monsignor Barbaro eletto Patriarca*, in Vinegia per Francesco Marcolini, MDLVI (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Sig. 2o WO 1824).

**Summary**

For Renaissance architects, Vitruvius acted as the stabilé point of reference, at times even as a rule, in connection to the heterogeneous ancient remains that were visible amongst the Roman ruins. The circumstance that Vitruvius’s text itself was a literary palimpsest formed the outset of a passionate Vitruvian exegesis. The many studies and publications of Vitruvius in the 16th century can therefore be perceived as efforts to arrange the ancient source in such a way that it became more comprehensible to a 16th century user. Based on two case-studies, the article explores
the literary methods employed when Renaissance ar-
chitects and humanists sought to come to terms with
Vitruvius’s difficult text. The first turns to the private
study space of the Florentine architect Giovanni Bat-
tista da Sangallo. Through formal observations con-
cerning the notes and autograph drawings that the ar-
chitect made in his own Vitruvius, this case-study at-
tempts to establish a relationship between a textual
description mode that enhances the detail and the
reading act. In order to set this investigation of the
field between text and reader into a broader context,
the second case-study turns to then-contemporary
studies of Vitruvius directed for the public, such as
the Vitruvius-programme of the Accademia della Virtù
and the many publications of Vitruvius in the first half
of the 16th century. By focussing on essential literary
systematization tools of structuring the ancient source
that became prevalent, this case-study explores tex-
tual mechanisms at play with the advent of printing
and their potential impact on Renaissance architectu-
ral thought.

Author
Rikke Lyngsø Christensen (PhD) studied art history at
the universities of Aarhus, Leicester and Copenhagen.
She wrote her PhD on the subject of creative proces-
ses in Italian architecture of the 16th century, and is
currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Royal Danish
Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture in Co-
penhagen. Besides Italian Renaissance architecture,
Rikke’s research interests include the production of
architectural history, architectural drawings and ek-
phrasis.

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