

Lievin Cruyl, *Prospectus Locorum Urbis Romae Insignium*, 10 etchings with frontispiece (ten impressions from the first edition of 1666, one from the second edition of 1692-8). offered by Plinio Nardecchia, Rome, \$35,000. Michael Miller, Assistant Curator, Department of Prints and Drawings.

In 1943 the Museum acquired eighteen monumental drawings of Rome signed and dated by Lievin Cruyl. The direction of the views is reversed, because they were the finished drawings after which a series of etchings of the city was to be produced. Three more of the series of drawings was acquired by the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, in 1949, bringing the total of surviving drawings to twenty-one. Ten of these views were published in 1666 by Giovanni Battista de Rossi, as the work under consideration, *Prospectus Locorum Urbis Romae Insignium*. Drawings for some of the etchings, which were executed by Lievin Cruyl himself, have not survived. Therefore the series as originally planned numbered at least twenty-five views. Problems arising from the intensely competitive world of print publishing in seventeenth century Rome were the cause of the reduction in the scale of the project. It also seems that the edition published was small, since the etchings are extremely rare today.

These views are not only extremely beautiful as objects in themselves, they are crucial documents of the most important building project of seventeenth century Italy, Pope Alexander VII's campaign to modernize and beautify the city of Rome. This ambitious project, which continued throughout Alexander's reign, was of central political significance. The Roman Catholic Church had lost much power and prestige since the Reformation. The cities of the Netherlands, freed from the Catholic domination of Spain, were projecting a proud, modern image through their cities, which became implicit symbols of their freedom from the Church. Furthermore, both Catholic and Protestant rulers in the north were actively building magnificent palaces for themselves and improving the capitals for their subjects. Unable to regain the actual power and influence he had lost, Alexander turned to the city of Rome itself, which was notorious throughout Europe as an unlivable conglomeration of filthy medieval streets amidst the

ruins of the ancient capital of the Roman Empire. Alexander planned to renovate the city in the most visible way possible, concentrating on the routes and localities frequented by official foreign visitors. It was essential, then, that this achievement be known not only to those who visited the city, but to people throughout the world, as well. This created the opportunity for entrepreneurs to profit for the need for images, maps, and guidebooks to the city. When Giovanni Battista de Rossi employed Lievin Cruyl, a young architectural draughtsman from Ghent, he worked in stiff competition with his cousin, Giovanni Giacomo de Rossi, who employed an Italian artist, Giovanni Battista Falda, to produce a much more extensive, but much less imaginative set of views of the city. Alexander intended his renovated Rome to be a grand Baroque theater. Cruyl's views project this quality through an unusual wide angle perspective, which had long been used by Dutch and Flemish artists in their rendering of their own cities. In this way the visual language used to express the civic pride of the newly independent cities of the Netherlands was put to work for the propaganda of their former oppressor.

Cruyl focussed on Alexander's building campaign and on other recent construction. The Rome we see in both the prints and the drawings is as up to date as possible. In fact some of the buildings depicted in his views had not yet been built and were rendered from the architects' drawings. Others were still under construction while Cruyl worked. The prints, in fact, occasionally show more advanced construction than the drawings on which they were based. This makes the etchings an invaluable complement to the drawings already in the Museum collection. Furthermore, since they were etched by the artist himself, they resemble the drawings in their sensitive rendering of light, atmosphere, and reflections in water. A second edition of the prints was published in the 1690's and a third in 1773. Successively the plates were extensively reworked. Ornaments and figures in contemporary dress were added and the tone was darkened. Although these are fascinating documents of evolving taste their character is

fundamentally different from the first edition in Cruyl's own hand. The set consists of a frontispiece and nine views from the first edition. One, that of Castel S. Angelo, has been lost and is made up by an impression from the second. These etchings are considered virtually unobtainable, and the Museum is fortunate to have acquired this set, which came to light as a consequence of the exhibition of the Cruyl drawings held at the American Academy in Rome in the winter of 1989.

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