

The Urban Development of Rome in the Age of Alexander VII

DOROTHY METZGER HABEL



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OF ROME IN THE AGE OF
ALEXANDER VII



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THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF ROME IN THE AGE OF ALEXANDER VII

This study considers the urban development of Rome in the mid-seventeenth century as conceived and guided by the Chigi pope, Alexander VII. Focusing on discrete zones within the city, including the Quirinal, the Piazza del Popolo, Piazza S. Marco, the Corso, and the Vatican, Dorothy Metzger Habel suggests that Alexander VII masterminded a new conceptualization of the city, which was grounded in the architectural formulae of late-antique Roman Asia. Under Alexander's watchful eye, Habel argues, architects and builders paid careful attention to the physical characteristics of particular sites and drew relationships between buildings within the urban fabric. These planning methods contributed formally and iconographically to the architectural future of Rome. Including an in-depth analysis of all available evidence – archival sources, working and presentational drawings, and the physical fabric of key monuments and their situations within the topography of Rome – Habel's book offers a new and innovative model for histories of urban architecture and planning.

Dorothy Metzger Habel is Lindsay Young Professor in the History of Art at the University of Tennessee. A scholar of Baroque architecture, she has contributed to the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *The Art Bulletin*, and *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst*. She is the recipient of grants from The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and numerous Faculty Development Awards from the University of Tennessee.

To Deedee, John and David

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Underlying every history is the theme of time. The research and writing of this book took just as long as it took Alexander VII and his team of architects and patrons to shape Rome, and we have all been the beneficiaries of what might seem further accidents of time. It has been my great fortune that Patricia Waddy's book on Roman palace design (1990) arrived just as I was turning my attention to the Chigi family's investigation of the real estate market in Rome in search of a suitable palace or two. Likewise, Tod Marder's extraordinary study of Bernini's *Scala Regia* (1997) appeared as I turned my focus to the larger urban context for Piazza S. Pietro. Together, these scholars organized two sessions at annual meetings of the Society of Architectural Historians to commemorate the 400th anniversaries of the births of Pietro da Cortona (1996) and Gianlorenzo Bernini (1998), and these provided timely opportunities for me to refine my thinking on Alexander's projects for Piazza Colonna and Piazza del Quirinale. The work of these two scholars has supported my own in other ways as well. To Patricia Waddy I owe countless insights offered on various occasions and in a number of different settings. As a reader of the draft, she is credited often in the notes that follow. She has shared generously her ideas and ways of thinking about buildings in Rome. Sharing archival tidbits with one another over recent years has been a source of great academic entertainment. She is also the person who pushed me to think, over a long lunch in Rome in a bar down the street from the Archivio di Stato in November 1994, of the consequences that Alexander's decisions at one site had for another. Her confidence in my work and her enthusiasm for it, even when I could feel my own flag, are deeply appreciated. Tod Marder's role was less direct, as the example and substance of his work encouraged me to refine my ideas and to sharpen my thinking about Alexander as a planner. I also thank John Pinto who was willing to listen, eager to help and always offered his good sense.

To my teachers and to earlier generations of scholars I also owe a remarkable debt. My first coach, John Varriano, was removed from the process of this book, but he schooled me in archival work in Rome, and many a time his tricks turned frustration to fortune. To Nathan Whitman I owe the lessons of learning to look carefully and with patience at works of art and architecture. The extensive formal analyses of drawings and buildings that follow are the products of his teaching. In the same vein Ward Bissell offered the model for

persistent and thorough research. Hellmut Hager, an important mentor as a senior scholar who continues to mine the archives, played a formative role when in 1982 I asked him to come with me to the Archivio di Stato to look at what I thought was a Carlo Rainaldi drawing for the facade of S. Lorenzo in Lucina. His encouragement to follow the trail of this drawing, now a minor part of the larger whole, remains in my mind an important moment. At far greater remove personally was Richard Krautheimer whose work on Alexander's Rome furnishes a critical base for all of us. The conception of this book also depends on his work on topography in *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (1983).

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASR	Archivio di Stato di Roma, Rome
NTAS	Notai del Tribunale dell'Acque Strade
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City
AVR	Archivio del Vicariato, Rome
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City
ASMVL	Archivio di S. Maria in Via Lata
BC	Biblioteca Corsiniana, Rome

The symbol ∇ is the sign for the monetary unit of a *scudo*.

A *palmo romano* (p.r.) is a unit of architectural measure. One *palmo romano* equals 0.2234 centimeters or about 9 inches. Ten *palmi romani* equal one *canna*.

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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