

Learning architectural perspective from the draughtsman of the great Turgot map of Paris

BRETEZ, LOUIS. *La Perspective Pratique de l'Architecture. Contenant par leçons une manière nouvelle, courte et aisée pour représenter en perspective les ordonnances d'architecture & les places fortifiées. Ouvrage très utile aux peintres, architects, ingénieurs, & autres dessinateurs.*

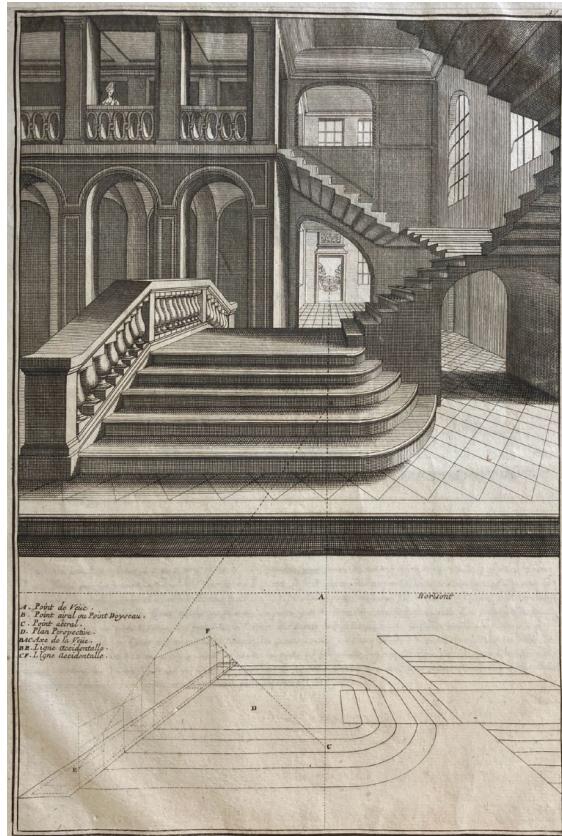
Paris, Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1751. Second edition.

(42.5 x 28 cm). Folio. Frontispiece engraving, title (letterpress), 1 leaf for the preface and privilege, 2 leaves entirely engraved with explications of the plates, and 57 full page plates. (52 plus 5 new plates at the end)

Untrimmed. *Temporary wrappers post-dating the engravings (produced with waste sheets from 1802).*

Exlibris stamp 'Rattier' on titlepage and a few times throughout. Some occasional staining at the beginning of the work, edge soiling and wear to some of the leaves, wrinkling to the last few leaves and, as the plates are untrimmed, some frayed edges, covers rubbed, nonetheless a well-preserved copy.

\$2,600



The author of this important work for learning architectural perspective is Louis Bretez, the draughtsman and cartographer commissioned by Michel-Étienne Turgot for the celebrated *Plan de Paris* (1734-39). The work is a textbook for the practical learning of perspective drawing in architecture and contains lessons taught through the study of the classical orders of architecture and fortifications. The course begins with the principles of geometry, and then gives examples and instruction for drawing columns, arches, vaulted ceilings, staircases, theater perspectives, military perspectives, and fortifications.

The present work was first published by Bretez in 1706, and contained slightly different preliminary matter, including a dedication to the Duc d'Orléans. The preface and the privilege in both editions maintain the same text, but are different settings of type, as is the title page. A comparison of our copy with the 1706 copy at Arsenal (Gallica) and the Getty copy (Hathitrust) suggest that the two editions only differ in these letterpress preliminaries and the five extra engravings included at the end of the 1751 edition. As for the engraved prints themselves, we know that the publisher of our 1751 second edition, Charles-Antoine Jombert, acquired them when he bought "the stock, prints and the bookshop of [Jean-Pierre] Mariette, [which consisted] of works on architecture, painting, ornaments, and drawing" in 1750 (cf. Jombert's *Avis au Public* (1750), in which he announces the acquisition).

*Traité de Perspective pratique, appliquée à l'Architecture.
Par M. Bretez. in folio, avec près de soixante Planches. Nou-
velle Edition. sous presse.*

[Gallica.bnf.fr : Avis au public. Charles-Antoine Jombert, libraire du roi (Paris, 1750).]

Curiously, we note that in our copy all the engravings are printed on the same watermarked paper, thus the five supplementary prints, which do not feature in the 1706 first edition, must have been printed contemporaneous to the initial 55 plates. Whether the 1751 edition comprised new strikes, perhaps done by Mariette, or remaindered leaves from the 1706 first edition, is an investigation we leave to scholars.

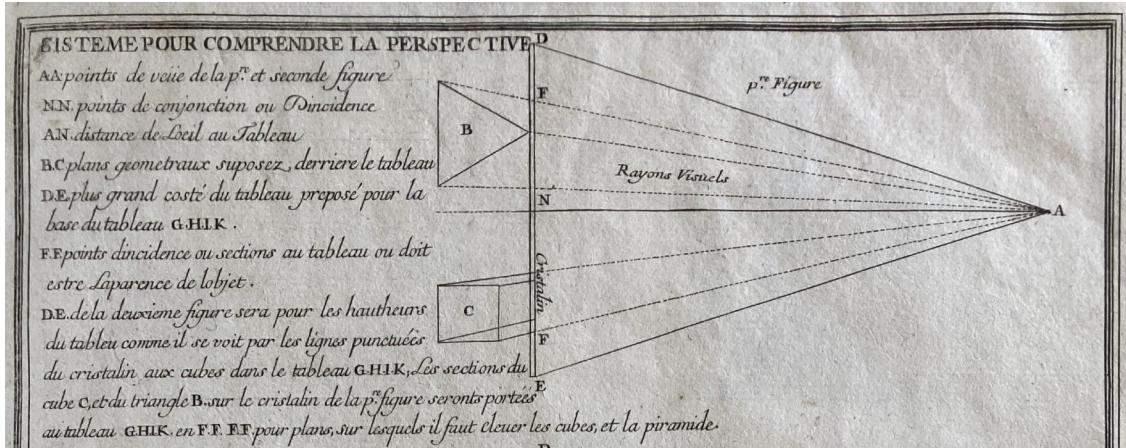


Plate 2, shown above in detail, explains both how to understand perspective as well as how to render drawings using that knowledge, in articulate and precisely drawn examples. The volume comprises more than 50 full page engravings with different lessons ranging from simple shapes to complex architectural constructions.

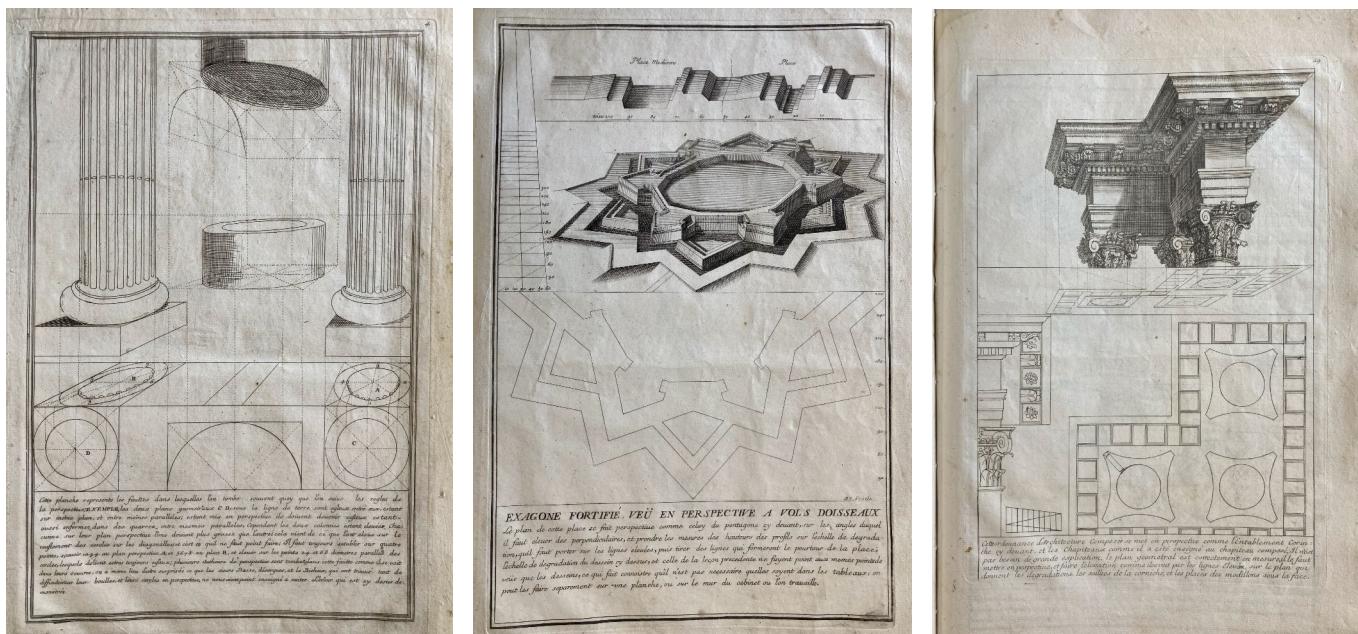
Tracing the history of a book: Temporary binding in sheets printed a century after the original plates

Below: the binding waste and the frontispiece.

Our copy is bound in temporary wrappers backed with printer's waste sheets from *Bulletin des Lois de la République Française*, Paris, 1802, indicating that the plates survived together unbound from their time in the hands of the bookseller Mariette (prior to 1750), and then to Jombert. The volume also survived the French Revolution, receiving its present rudimentary binding, some 50 years after Jombert first brought them out in 1751, and nearly 100 years after Bretez first issued the work.



The handsome and expertly drawn prints are beautifully engraved:



Louis Bretez (d.1737) was a draughtsman, engraver, cartographer, and professor of perspective at the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture de Saint-Luc (Paris), who was commissioned by Turgot in 1734 as a draughtsman for the celebrated birds-eye-view atlas of Paris.

Fowler 66 (for 1st ed. 1706), Berlin Kat. 4727 (for 1st ed. 1706); Cicognara 821.

