Borromini in Oppenord's Sketchbooks

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Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742), «génie vaste & fécond,» the great decorator-architect of the French re- 

gence, went to Rome at age twenty and spent seven 

formative years there from 1692 to 1699. Rome shaped 

him, and he is the conduit through which the innova-

tions of the high baroque pass, however briefly, into 

the bloodstream of the French rococo. His sketch-

books from the Roman years show many dozens of fa-

çades, doors, windows, ceilings, niches, tabernacles, 

tabernacles, toms, vases, torches, fountains and other 

decorative motifs, all drawn with great verve but with 

extraordinary accuracy as well. The Roman sketch-

books, usually studied from the point of view of 

Oppenord's formation, are also useful as records of build-

ings that had not yet changed much since completion. 

They are the closest we can come to a photographic 
campaign only two decades after the passing of the lead-

ing architects. It is this aspect of Oppenord, his fidelity 
as a witness in the 1690s, especially to the condition of 

Borromini's buildings, that I wish to pursue here.

Oppenord's Dutch father, Johan Oppen Oordt 
(c. 1639-1715) immigrated to Paris at about age thirty. 

His son Gilles-Marie was born there in 1672, and rais-
ed in the atmosphere of the artists' lodgings in the 

Louvre. The son's career was launched in 1692 when he 

was sent to Rome as a protégé of Edouard Colbert, 

Marquis de Villacerf, the surintendant des bâtiments, 

who followed his progress, as can we, in the frequent 
correspondence of La Teulière, who was director of the 

Académie de France à Rome from 1684 to 1699. 

La Teulière was an érudit but not an artist, and thus vul-

nerable to the endemic problem of Roman academics, 

complaints by artists that they were being led by a 

non-professional. But he knew painting and sculpture 

from the perspective of an informed dilettante, and for 

official purposes he believed in a strict formation on 

antiquity and the great masters of disegno. As he said to 

Louvois on accepting his appointment as director: 

«... et il est certain, Monsieur, que l'on s'est gasté le 

goût en ce pays [i.e., Italy], par la liberté que l'on s'y est 
donné d'abandonner l'Antique pour la sculpture et 
pour l'architecture et les manières de Raphaël et Mi-

chel-Ange, de Carrache et de leurs eschelles pour la 

peinture, afin de suivre présomptueusement un capri-

cer mal réglé ... »

By inviting him to dine with the French artists al-
though he was not at first a pensionnaire, and to partic-

ipate in their academy of the nude, La Teulière tried 
to take Oppenord's education in hand. To make him a 

well-rounded artist he had him copy after Raphael and 

the Carracci and draw ancient statuary. No architec-
tural education was available at the Académie, so La 

Teulière set Oppenord on the task of verifying 

Desgodetz's measurements of ancient buildings, which 

had set a new standard of precision a little more than a 

decade before but which now themselves were to be 
corrected in the unforgiving march of science. When 

the French ambassador, Cardinal de Bouillon, was 

charged by Innocent XII with the inspection of the an-
tiquities of Anzio he took Oppenord with him to make 
drawings, as he also did on a similar mission to Castel 

Gandolfo.

However, for all his veneration of the antique La Teu-

lière was sage enough to realize that Oppenord's talents 

would blossom more with the «antique modernes,» the 

architecture of the high Renaissance and even of the 

seventeenth century. He let him study the «grand amas» 
of prints and drawings he had collected to aid in 

the formation of young architects. It has recently been 

proposed that through the Accademia di San Luca 

Oppenord may have had some contact with Carlo 

Fontana, who encouraged his charges to educate them-

selves by drawing assiduously after the modern mas-

ters. Just as Fontana would later tell the young Juvara 
to forget all that he knew and draw after Michelan-

gelo, Oppenord was encouraged to draw details in the 

Palazzo Farnese. Modern Rome lay open to him like a 
textbook, and with immense energy he proceeded to 

absorb its lessons.

There were many large formal drawings that are now 

lost. In October 1694 La Teulière sent Oppenord to 

Caprarola to do studies after Vignola that eventually 
took four months to complete. Between April and 

July 1697 Oppenord prepared a large elevation of 

Borromini's Lateran nave. The drawing was complete 

down to the details of the Algardi-school reliefs and 

the roof trusses hidden above the ceiling, and there was 

also an elevation of the transept façade with its gigantic 

organ by Montano. From August 1697 to May 1698 

Oppenord was at work on large-scale drawings of
S. Andrea della Valle and especially of the Strozzi Chapel, then believed to be by Michelangelo. La Teulièrè thought that the most beautifully proportioned church in Rome after St. Peter’s was S. Ignazio, and so in September 1696 we hear that Oppenord has drawn it, including the unexecuted dome, taken from a model still visible in the church. None of these drawings have survived, although recently a large elevation of the Villa Giulia has been attributed to Oppenord.

When Oppenord first expressed the desire to visit the Veneto Villacerf wrote from Paris to express his skepticism. Palladio one could study perfectly well in the Quattro Libri. But La Teulièrè had been there in person and knew that the buildings in the flesh had a magic of their own. So Oppenord set off for five months in the Veneto, from 9 June to 11 November 1698. On the way there was a stop in Bologna to look at buildings thought to be by Bramante and Ligorio, and also in Forli and Padua. In Venice the letters mention drawings of Sansovino’s Procuratie Nuove and S. Giorgio Maggiore. He prolonged his stay in Vicenza week after week, and the letters mention assiduous drawing after Palladio and Scamozzi. But paradoxically, the sketchbook in Cambridge that records this trip is an eclectic mixture with a little Palladio and Scamozzi, even some Tullio Lombardo, but also a good deal of later architecture, like a gate in Macerata attributed to Bernini. The most vivid testimony to the two months spent in Vicenza is not a drawing of the Rotonda or the Basilica but a page devoted to Guarini’s newly completed church of S. Maria d’Araceli. One wonders sometimes if Oppenord, like some suspicious companies, kept two sets of books, one of Palladio and the classical tradition that his mentors revered, and others like those in New York and Berlin where baroque detail runs riot.

When he returned to Rome he petitioned Villacerf for four more precious months, which were granted. The second half of the Cambridge sketchbook is full of baroque detail from that time. But by now almost all the sand had run out, not only in Oppenord’s Roman hourglass but in those of his protectors. Villacerf soon fell from power and was replaced by Hardouin-Mansart. La Teulièrè was ungraciously sacked on 4 March 1699, and the last we hear of Oppenord in his correspondence is on 17 March. Months before the century’s end the twenty-seven-year-old artist was back in Paris.

There were so many drawings after seven years of work that La Teulièrè wondered how Oppenord would get them all home. What we have must represent only a small fraction of his total production. It does, however, show all of the qualities that La Teulièrè went out of his way to praise in letter after letter: grande facilité, une facilité d’exécution qui surprend, grande vivacité, du génie pour l’architecture, une imagination des plus fécondes, habileté de main suprême, goût et discernement.

With great verve and tenacity Oppenord sketched away while mounted on ladders, leaning over terraces, perched on steeples, loitering in vestibules, peering through telescopes and prowling through dark crypts with hand. La Teulièrè had to caution him about remaining out in the noonday heat of high summer. Indeed the thirsty Oppenord likes to show fountains and men drinking from wells.

The format of the sketchbooks is highly original. The Paris volume seems to come early, Sometimes just one or two details are arranged on the same sheet, but there can be startling jumps in scale in the objects depicted. A candelabrum can vie with a campanile on the same page. In the other sketchbooks the level of entropy rises. The pages are crowded but always in an artful way, and if there are no empty spaces there are no messy overlaps either. Small details constantly jostle larger slices of façades and interiors and each new fragment fits like a piece of a puzzle in the interstices left by a previous sketch. Details from buildings in entirely different parts of the city can be juxtaposed in this way, making identifications difficult. Oppenord loves the economy of the half-section and the half-elevation, sometimes creating strange hybrids by juxtaposing different half-doors or half-windows. He is highly attentive to molding profiles, often sketching them in plan, and the more sinuous and involuted the profile the more delectation he seems to take in it.

These innovations of page format look forward to the prints of Alessandro Specchi, and one wonders if there might not have been some direct contact. During the 1690s Specchi was working as draftsman and etcher for the publications of Carlo Fontana, and possibly the two young men came together under his common mentorship. Oppenord’s pages of sketches of ornament for S. Carlino (Fig. 1) seem to be direct precursors of Specchi’s plates in the Studio d’architettura civile. Specchi would take Oppenord’s fascination with molding profiles and turn it into a science, providing geometrical templates that are probably not far distant from those that architects used to design the moldings in the first place.

Among the modern architects whose work appears repeatedly in the Roman sketchbooks we find Del Duca, Maderno, Carlo Rainaldi, G. A. De Rossi and especially Cortona and Bernini. Almost the complete works in architecture by Cortona are covered, including the vanished Villa Sacchetti del Pigneto. Oppenord indeed had a portrait of Bernini hanging in his house when he died, and Bernini’s fountains later inspired a
Fig. 1 Gilles-Marie Oppenord, »Decorative details from the interior of S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane«. Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, Hdz. 2405.257
series of fountain drawings which have sometimes been given to Oppenord and sometimes to Watteau under Oppenord's influence. But the architect on whom Oppenord lavished most attention was Borromini. His drawings of S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane and S. Ivo alla Sapienza are of particular value in depicting the churches before subsequent changes. Details from S. Carlo are sketched on at least eighteen sheets. Oppenord must have climbed the church from top to bottom. In the crypt he sketched details that could only have been seen by torchlight, like the little curl in the arch over the monks' burial crypt on New York 57v (Fig. 2). Without knowing the geometric armature he drew an extraordinarily accurate plan of the crypt on New York 58r. It shows a large Trinitarian cross and splendore on the vault, proving that Borromini had indeed decorated a vault that is now bare. Inside the church Oppenord's eye picked out many details like the three-ringed sunburst in the sacristy niche (New York 37v) or the stucco frame of Mignard's fresco of the Annunciation over the main door, now gone (Berlin 25r, Fig. 1). Oppenord climbed to the cupola and sketched Bernardo Borromini's campanile and the various pots and torches that formerly made the sky-line of the church a blaze of fictive flame (Berlin 63v). The four flaming vases by Bernardo that used to adorn the balustrade on top of the façade are gone forever, and only a small fragment survives of the six slender candelabra that once crowned Borromini's lantern.

Berlin 85r shows the quarto or convent wing of S. Carlo as if in X-ray (Fig. 3, lower left). In a rapid sketch Oppenord condenses what must have been hours of exploration. On top is the library, and to the left the little terrace between the library and the cupola, complete with flowerpots on the parapet. Below the library are two stories of monks' cells with their service corridors, and below them is the refectory, shown in the decade before it was converted into a sacristy. The sketch is too summary to show Borromini's illusionistic coffering in the niche behind the crucifix or the angels' heads in the corners of the refectory vault. But it does show the crucifix in its original location, inserted into a masonry base that curls up in volutes and bends in a sinusoidal curve, the first in Borromini's œuvre. The credenzoni installed for the sacristy in 1710-12 now conceal all this and the crucifix has been raised up on a new wooden base. But the original masonry base is still there behind the furniture just as Oppenord shows it, complete with the skull, all smothered in centuries of dust. One can still make out the inscription, »DEDE-RUNT IN ESCAM MEAM FEL.« They gave Me gall to drink, referring to the sponge of vinegar at the crucifixion. On this note the monks consumed their simple fare.

Berlin 89r can be complemented by matching it with New York 38r (Fig. 4), a complex page that shows the facciatella or side façade of S. Carlo on Via Sistina. This drawing proves something we would not otherwise know, namely that the fourth storey of the facciatella must have been added by Bernardo when he rebuilt the campanile in 1670. Otherwise the first view of it is a drawing of the early eighteenth century, and it was removed by the end of the nineteenth. On the top left of the same drawing Oppenord shows the stanza, a tiny room of 1634–35 at the level of the library. It was demolished in this century, but it is important for its small curved façade, another precocious example of Borromini's signature motif.

At S. Ivo Oppenord's sharp eye missed no cherub's head, no flaming crown, no palm branch or acorn, no oak or laurel wreath. He must have perched on the cornicione inside the church to sketch the two alternate decorative patterns of the gyes of the vault, which he brilliantly unites on a single sheet (Berlin 24r). He has a special feeling for symbolic detail. On Berlin 55v he carefully draws the ornament over the southeast portal — the winged laurel wreath, the book with scales and sword, and the snake contemplating its image in a mirror — which Borromini used to say something about legal education at the Sapienza (»Here one gets an inspired laurea in jurisprudence«). Berlin 53v (Fig. 5) is the best rendering of the symbolic portal on the piano nobile of the Sapienza. It clearly shows the shield with Medusa's head for Wisdom surrounded by the emblems of law (the fasces), medicine (the book with »SALVS«), geometry (a ruler and compass), and arithmetic (a scroll with two magic squares in which the rows and columns should all add up to the same number).

One of major themes of S. Ivo is ascent to a goal. Oppenord gives us a precious clue about how this ascent
Fig. 3 Oppenord, «Section through the monastery of S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane», lower left. Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, Hdz. 2405.85r
was actually made. New York 37r (Fig. 6) shows the flying buttress that Borromini built in 1659–60 between the Biblioteca Alessandrina and the cupola of S. Ivo. The buttress has steps and doubled as a bridge to the vault of the cupola; a symmetrical buttress-bridge on the south is visible on old photographs. Iron railings helped the visitor cross these bridges to the lead-covered roof of the cupola, which was stepped to aid ascent up to the level of the lantern. One of the lantern piers had a hollow core with 37 iron rungs to make the climb up to a little conical chamber, which is described in the documents as "il stantiolo tondo cavato in mezzo al massiccio del muro che fa finimento dove sono le corone dove che puol fermare e riposare quelli che saglioni sopra detto finimento e poi uscire e caminare per tutto."  

Oppenord certainly made the ascent and, in an amazing X-ray view of the lantern, shows the chamber full of fellow climbers (Berlin 84γ, Fig. 7). From the stantiolo one went out onto the spiral ramp and made three turns before ducking back inside, into a cylindrical hollow from which one could pull oneself up into the flaming crown at the top. The faceted jewels that decorated this "crown turned like a screw" are shown on top of the sheet, and at the right, the flaming crown of laurel to which one climbed. This was an ascent, vicarious for many but real for some, and very real indeed for Oppenord, to an inspired laurea. Palaces, thought not as easy of access as the churches, were not hermetically sealed to a young French artist with a smile and a sketchbook. We are fortunate that he ventured into Palazzo Falconieri and tarried on the staircase to sketch some of Borromini’s most elaborate portals, all of which vanished when the palace was restored by the Medici del Vascello in 1891–95.  

Berlin 4r (Fig. 8, left half) shows a strange pseudo-door blocked by a wall in which there is a hollow shell. The doorframe has an arched lintel that bends up and around a large palmette which is resketched more precisely in the middle of the sheet. The motif of the shell pierced by an oculus comes from Pirro Ligorio, but whenever Borromini uses it it is in conjunction with stairs. For example, such a shell would have provided light to a mezzanine above the staircase of the
niches of different design in the side walls of the Falconieri vestibule, and it is these that interested Oppenord. Berlin 4r shows one of them (Fig. 8, lower right). The pediment of the niche sports the knightly helm or morrione with its falconcino, much like the helms one can still see in some stuccoed ceilings of the river wing of the palace. Such heraldic pomp was popular with an aristocracy aping chivalric values. G.A. de Rossi later imitated it in a door in Palazzo Altieri, with a much larger pile of weapons, and Oppenord himself took up the motif again after he returned to France. At Palazzo Falconieri the accounts reckon up 29 palmi of laurel festoon for each of these niches, much of it hanging free. We are fortunate that they caught Oppenord’s eye, since they did not hold up over time. His use of wash conveys the three-dimensional quality of these festive hangings, and their fragility.

Fig. 5  Oppenord, »Detail from the interior of S. Ivo,« top; »Emblems from the double door on the piano nobile of the Sapienza«, bottom. Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, HdZ. 2405.53v

Casa dei Filippini, while another can still be found at the entrance to a spiral staircase in the Lateran. The shell portal on Berlin 4r was also sketched about a decade after Oppenord by a draftsman in the circle of Juvarra, in a sketchbook now in the Vatican. Elizabeth Howard recognized that the Vatican sketch went together with a Borromini drawing in the Albertina (1669) which shows a circular iron grille meant for an oculus and inscribed, »Al entrata(?) della S[cala] / Sig.re Falconi-ere.« So together three drawings by Borromini, Oppenord and someone close to Juvarra give us a good idea of what this vanished mock-door looked like. But where exactly in Palazzo Falconieri was it? I would offer the suggestion that it was in the ground floor vestibule of the staircase, and that the shell-oculus lighted the space under the upper ramp.

On mounting the staircase the visitor saw, on the landing outside the main salone, two elaborate niches (each with the Falconieri arms) flanking a splendid portal of marmi mischi with a great stucco falcon and the inscription »HORATIVS FALCONERIVS« in letters tinted to look like bronze. The arrangement derives from the similar way niches are paired around the door of the salone in Palazzo Farnese. There were two more niches of different design in the side walls of the Falconieri vestibule, and it is these that interested Oppenord. Berlin 4r shows one of them (Fig. 8, lower right). The pediment of the niche sports the knightly helm or morrione with its falconcino, much like the helms one can still see in some stuccoed ceilings of the river wing of the palace. Such heraldic pomp was popular with an aristocracy aping chivalric values. G.A. de Rossi later imitated it in a door in Palazzo Altieri, with a much larger pile of weapons, and Oppenord himself took up the motif again after he returned to France. At Palazzo Falconieri the accounts reckon up 29 palmi of laurel festoon for each of these niches, much of it hanging free. We are fortunate that they caught Oppenord’s eye, since they did not hold up over time. His use of wash conveys the three-dimensional quality of these festive hangings, and their fragility.

On the landing of the secondo piano nobile there was a prospettiva of stucco painted to look like travertine, a motif which disguised the fact that the door leading into the long galleria was off-center (Berlin 4v, Fig. 9). Juvarra shows another such prospettiva somewhere in the palace in his sketchbook in the Metropolitan Museum. In a building that was full of irregularities wherever old walls were joined to new, Borromini obviously found it useful to imitate the most proto-baroque trick of Sangallo’s Farnese. Whether Oppenord was allowed to penetrate into the rooms with the famous emblematic ceilings commemorating Cardinal Lelio Falconieri we do not know, but a page in the Paris sketchbook (88r) suggests that he at least climbed to the river loggia where he could sketch the family arms from close up.

Oppenord is not prone to sketching plans, especially of palaces. But on Berlin 85v (Fig. 10) he made an exception for which we may be thankful, namely Borromini’s Palazzo del Banco di Santo Spirito in Piazza di Monte Giordano. The façade design was worked out in a series of drawings from the Archivio Spada published by Heimbürger-Ravalli, and Borromini’s final design is known from a drawing in the Albertina. For a Vitruvian pope who was critical of his flights of fancy Borromini decided to behave with complete decorum. It is his most Bramantesque palace, employing a tall Doric order inspired by the long-vanished choir of St. Peter’s, with windows in the metopes like Palazzo Caprini.

Oppenord’s elevation shows some changes to the façade. In the original design there was to be a portal surmounted by two Abundance figures with cornucopias and the arms of the bank between them. Oppenord shows a different portal with rustic blocks, metopes and an impressive piattabanda but no figures. Falda creates confusion by showing the palace with shops in
Fig. 6  Oppenord, «Section through north wing of the Sapienza and elevation of S. Ivo», New York, Cooper Hewitt Museum, 1960.112.37r, detail
one of his prints but without them in another. It seems that it was begun without shops, of which the bank had no need. But after a little more than a year of construction the bank pulled out of the enterprise and the building was reluctantly acquired by the Marchese Orazio Spada, who converted the front rooms to shops in order to maximize rental income. Oppenord definitively shows a generous "boutique" made up of two rooms, with a public door on the piazza and a private entrance from the courtyard, as well as space for a small staircase leading up to the mezzanine. The Borromini drawings and Falda show a pleasant terrace at roof level, with a parapet bearing Alexander VII’s inscription and arms. But by Oppenord’s time the terrace had been converted into an extra storey.

Oppenord’s plan, even though it is only a half-plan, is precious because it is the only one known before the radical transformations effected by Gaetano Koch for the Counts Bennicelli at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed Borromini had packed many ideas into a small space, full of feigned symmetries that look forward to the ingenious site planning of Giovanni Antonio de Rossi in the next generation. There is one brilliant touch that is worth special attention. The small apse that stands between the atrium and the shop is labelled "courtile," which means that it was open to the sky like the large "courtile" at the back of the palace. Thus the dark atrium would have been dramatically lit by a shaft of light coming down on one side from an opening next to the roof terrace. Was the plan symmetrical with a light well on the other side? It does not seem so. But in cases like this, one’s gratitude to Oppenord is tinged with mild annoyance at his economies of paper and time.

Oppenord returned with his drawings to Paris in 1699. At first there was no place for him in the official establishment set up by Hardouin-Mansart. His early commissions and projects were perforce ecclesiastical, such as the altars for the Parisian churches of St. Germain-des-Prés, the Carmes Déchaussés, and Saint Jacques de la Boucherie, as well as for the Chapel of Saint-Jean-du-Veau in Amiens Cathedral. He learned to etch and supervised the publication of Girardon’s sculpture gallery in the Louvre. His "floruit" came in the regency of 1715-23, with the patronage of Pierre Crozet, through whom he became friends with Watteau, and even more of the Duc d’Orléans, whose Grand Apparment in the Palais Royal was Oppenord’s triumph. He made designs for the Eglise de l’Oratoire Saint-Honoré but they failed to win acceptance. He was the architect of Saint Sulpice from 1723/25 to 1732, designing parts of the nave, transept, choir, altar and circular communion chapel, but coming to grief with a heavy lead-covered belfry over the crossing, which had to be dismantled in 1731. After his death in 1742, it was the drawings that bore up Oppenord’s reputation. His only student, Jacques-François Blondel, had grave reservations about his architecture but said that he was still s’un des plus grands dessinateurs de ce siècle. Dezallier d’Argenville elaborated on this theme:

"Oppenord dessinait figure comme un peintre, & l’ornement dans la dernière perfection. On estime fort ses dessins à la plume et l’encre de la Chine, ils ont fait seuls sa grande réputation. Leur touche hardie et séduisante empêchait qu’on ne s’aperçût qu’ils ne faisaient plus le même effet dans l’exécution. L’auteur en étoit très jaloux, et savoit en tirer un fort bon parti."

It was said that even those most outspoken against his architecture were willing to pay their weight in gold for the drawings. Many went via Charles-Gustave Tessin to Stockholm, and nearly two thousand were bought by the engraver Gabriel Huquier, who had already published the "Moyen Oppenord" during the artist’s lifetime. In 1744 Huquier published the "Petit Oppenord," fourteen suites of etchings from the Roman sketchbooks. Not much here relates to Borromini, but there are five etchings of the tombs and papal monuments in the Lateran, done after a sketchbook that seems not to
Fig. 8  Oppenord, »Two doors in Palazzo Falconieri; gate of Villa Panzani, top right«. Berlin, Kunstabibiothek, Hdz. 2405.47
Oppenord, «Door in vestibule of second piano nobile of Palazzo Falconieri, top center», Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, Hdz. 2405.4v

Fig. 9 Oppenord, «Door in vestibule of second piano nobile of Palazzo Falconieri, top center», Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, Hdz. 2405.4v

survive.59 The Petit Oppenord is a book of small format and impact. Although there is the usual superabundance of baroque ornament along with the familiar jostling of details for space on the page, the new medium conveys none of the virbrancy of the originals. Along with Dezallier d'Argenville's one may think of Oppenord as «le Borromini de la France,»60 or one may turn the telescope the other way round and think of him as a part of Borromini's fortuna critica. Once Borromini was dead «he became his admirers,» as Audent said of Yeats. But each admirer saw some aspects of the heritage clearly and others not at all. Oppenord had little feeling for the geometrical rigor of Borromini's plans, the plastic torsion in the façades, the learned allusiveness to high Renaissance design, or the pervasive debt to antiquity. He put the accent almost entirely on the second half of the phrase «antique moderne». In the hothouse of his imagination baroque ornament was transformed into arabesques more luxuriant than any of the protagonists of the baroque would have dreamed of. Looking at the prints published after Oppenord's death by Huquier Borromini seems not so much a stimulus as a calmative, a brake on the «abondante variété»61 of his gifted French admirer. Sometimes too ardent, never too cool, Oppenord's swift pen nevertheless did catch, more subtly than any of his contemporaries, the sense of spontaneity and animate life that pervades high baroque detail.

Notes


2 Elaine Evans Dee is preparing a full study, but in the meantime there are brief overviews in Eckhart Berchenhagen, Die Französischen Zeichnungen der Kunstbibliothek Berlin, Berlin, 1970, pp. 164-75; and in Dee 1989 (see footnote 1). Bibliography on specific sketchbooks:


Fig. 10  Oppenord, »Plan and elevation of Palazzo del Banco di Santo Spirito, bottom; plan of Moses Fountain of the Acqua Felice, center; plan of façade of S. Susanna, top«. Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, Hdz. 2405.85v
Eye. « The Cooper Union Museum Chronicle, III, no. 4, September 1962, p. 18 f., cat. no. 48; idem, Extravagant Drawings of the Eighteenth Century from the Collection of the Cooper Union Museum, New York, 1962, cat. no. 24; and Dec 1982, see footnote 1, p. 325.
6. Dee mentions an unpublished sketchbook in a Swedish private collection consisting of eleven leaves devoted to Palazzo Farnese, which I have not consulted (Dee 1989, see footnote 1, p. 79).
7. The father’s name is given as Alexandre-Jean Oppenordt after his naturalization in 1679; see Mireille Rambaud, Documents du Minuter Central concernant l’Histoire de l’Art 1700-1750, Paris, 1971, pp. 139-48, 730, 907 f.
8. Alaux, see footnote 4, p. 47.
9. Montaiglon, Correspondance, see footnote 4, II, pp. 62 and 66. There are sketches after Raphael on New York 41v, 40v; and after the Sistine Ceiling on New York 24v; and after the Farnese Gallery on New York 18r; the Paris sketchbook has many sketches after ancient altars and reliefs.
11. Montaiglon, Correspondance, see footnote 4, II, pp. 385 f. and 396. Kimball, see footnote 1, p. 92 cites the passage in Brice which mentions designs solicited from Oppenord by Innocent XII for a new harbor at Nettono (Description de la ville de Paris, Paris, 1713, II, p. 182 f; I quote from the 1788 Amsterdam edition; II, p. 174). « Gilles-Marie OPPENORD ... si distingue par sa capacité, que le Pape Innocent XII voulut avoir de ses dessins pour les grands Edifices qu’il a fait construire avec une extreme dépense à Nettono, situe a trente-sept milles de Rome, pour y faire un port & d’autres Batimens de consequene, que les etrangers vont voir par admiration. »
12. Smith, see footnote 4, pp. 161 and 354. n. 94. Smith also suggests (p. 356, n. 120) that the sketches for a villa-palace à la française on New York 19v indicate that Oppenord was toying with the idea of entering the concorso of 1696; the sketch is illustrated by Richard Wunder, « The Architect’s Eye, » The Cooper Union Museum Chronicle, III, no. 4, September 1962, p. 18 f. cat. no. 48.
14. Montaiglon, Correspondance, see footnote 4, II, pp. 139, 301, 321.
18. Montaiglon, Correspondance, see footnote 4, II, pp. 401 ff.
21. Cambridge 32v-33r, 57.
23. Montaiglon, Correspondance, see footnote 4, II, p. 431.
24. Montaiglon, Correspondance, see footnote 4, II, p. 151. Wells are shown on Paris 181, for instance, and Berlin 35y (S. Carlino).
29 Cf. also Cambridge 83v: «Un des vases flammans du portail de St. Carlo a Rome.» The six torches on the lantern were designed by Borromini in the early 1640s; they are shown in place by Testin on Stockholm, Nationalmuseum THC 2553: a fragment still visible in 1980 matches exactly the second torch from the right on the bottom of Berlin 61v.

30 He may have studied similar sections in the prints of the Grand４Marot, for example the section of Lemercier’s project for the Louvre (pl. 187 in the copy in the National Gallery of Art in Washington). A telling point of comparison is the habit of cutting through the wall at the point where a bust stands in a niche.

31 My thanks to the sacristan of the church who indicated that things of interest were hidden behind the credenze that let me explore the area in September 1994.

32 Steinberg, see footnote 28, p. 56.

33 Cf. the plan and elevation by Bernardo Borromini on Albertina 179v.

34 The print in the Opus Architectonicum of 1720 (pl. XLIV) mistakenly shows a sword instead of a ruler and one magic square instead of two; the print in De Rossi’s, see footnote 25 (pl. 99) omits the letters SALYS; both reproduce the magic squares with arbitrary numbers. The description of 1664 transcribed in M. Del Piazz, Raggiagli borrominiani, Rome, 1968, p. 138 sees the «pentagono e cinque lettere» as a sign of geometry, but the inscription SALYS identifies it as medicine. The symbols were removed by Vespignani in the restorations of 1859 and replaced with a commemorative inscription; what we have today is a recreation of 1940 on the basis of the prints (Elmilio) R[e], «Re-stauri alla Sapienza.», Roma, XXI, 1943, n.1. Oppenord sketched the symbols again on Berlin 5v and Cambridge 77v, and also put them on what seems like an imaginary tomb for an architect (inscribed «DOM Oppenord») on Cambridge 70v.

35 Illustrated in De Rossi 1982, see footnote 1, p. 335.

36 ASR, Università, vol. 198, fol. 26v: «Per haver tagliato il muro della fabbrica vecchia in fianco a detta logge dove habita il S. Pallamolla [i.e., in the south wing] che era per gettar un arco tra la fabbrica vecchia e la nova per salir sopra al tamburo della volta della chiesa.» These arches replaced earlier staircases in complicated rebuilding operations described in ASR, Università, vol. 115, fols. 33r and 35v. For the photographs of the south buttress-bridge see Anderson 27216; G. Magni, Il barocco a Roma, Turin, 1911, p. 67; E. Hempel, Francesco Borromini, Wien, 1924, pl. 71. Alb. 509 shows an earlier project for stairs on the north and south sides of the cupola and the hollow pier of the lantern.

37 ASR, Università, vol. 198, fol. 47v, 47 ferri che fanno scalini per de(ri) a scala; since there are only 37 rungs there today, Borromini apparently paid for ten ferri too many.

38 ASR, Università, vol. 198, fol. 46d.

39 ASR, Università, vol. 198, fol. 42r: «una scala fatta a corona e tra la grossezza d’una corona e l’altra resta un stradella per salire in giro all’unl’ultima corona;» fol. 44r: «l’attorno alla corona, che fa parapetto alla strada, che va per tutto sino sopra l’ultima corona di tre(ven)tre;» 44v: «gioie, e fieri n.0 22,» «gioie, e ornamenti che fan i razi alle corone che gira attorno a tutta la strada.» There is an accurate description in an anonymous French guidebook of 1677, in J. Connors and L. Rice, Specchio di Roma barocco, Rome, 1991, p. 84: «cette pyramide autour de laquelle est une couronne tournée en vif qui meine jusqu’au sommet forme un escalier qui semble conviennent ceux qui se rendent illustres par les lettres d’monter pour les conduire jusqu’au sommet de la glorie dont tout ce dôme est un symbole.»


42 Connors, see footnote 2, p. 244, cat. 73; De Rossi, Studio I, p. 69.

43 BAV, Vat. lat. 13295 (dated 1705), fol. 14, with the caption «Sig. Falconieri Borromini,» first mentioned by M. Tafuri, in L. Salerno, ed., Via Giulia: una utopia urbanistica del ’500, Rome, 1973, p.454; and then by Howard, see footnote 40, pp. 206-212, Alb. 1069 is also illustrated by Hempel, see footnote 36, pl. 31; and F. Portoghesi, Disegni di Francesco Borromini (cat.), Rome, 1967, cat. no. 21. The Vatican sketchbook has recently been attributed to Juvarra himself by S. McPhee, «A New Sketch-book by Filippo Juvarra,» Burlington Magazine, 135, 1993, pp. 346-350.

44 I.e., above the number 27 in the plan shown in Howard, see footnote 40, p. 35, fig. 4.

45 Howard, see footnote 40, pp. 344-46 gives the documents for the decoration of the landing (which are greatly clarified when one corrects the reading of the first word in the eighth line from the bottom of p. 344 to «piano,» not «repiano»). The doors and niches at the head of the landing, which Oppenord did not sketch, are shown in drawings by Borromini (Thelen, see footnote 40, figs. 16a-c; Howard, see footnote 40, figs. 16-17) and the Juvarra draftsmen (Vat. lat. 13295, fols. 12-13, in McPhee, see footnote 45, p. 349, fig. 39).

46 The niche is cut off by the bottom edge of the paper, so Oppenord continues the moldings in the middle of the sheet, just under the palmette, using the letters «O» and «P» as a key. The same niche is also shown by the Juvarra draftsmen in Vat. lat. 13295, fol. 11. The villa gate at the top right of Oppenord’s drawing is unrelated; it stood at the Vigna Panza next to the Acqua Felice; cf. D. Coffin, The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome, Princeton, 1979, p. 202, fig. 128.

47 De Rossi, see footnote 35, l. pl. 123; G.M. Oppenord, Desseine de Couronnement et Amortissements convenables pour deusse de Portes, Voûvetures, Croisées, Niches, &c., Paris: Mariette, n.d., pl. 2, where the motion has a more aggressive looking visor and a drapery in place of the falconcino. For another Roman example see John Beldon Scott, Images of Nepotism. The Painted Ceilings of Palazzo Barberini, Princeton, 1991, p. 98, n. 19.

48 Howard, see footnote 40, p. 343 for the documents.


50 Began in the summer of 1661 under Virgilio Spada, commendatore of the bank since 15 March 1660; rejected by the bank after Spada’s death on 21 December 1662: acquired unfinished by the Marchese Orazio Spada in August 1663. Oppenord’s inscription, «Palais du Card. Coloredo» refers to the fact that the palace was rented by the Oratorian Cardinal Leonadro Collaredo (1639-1709) from the time of his elevation in 1686 to his death in 1709. During this period a wooden bridge connected the palace with Cardinal Collaredo’s rooms in the Casa dei Filippini. See Hempel, see footnote 36, p. 177, fig. 67; Del Piazz, see footnote 34, pp. 125 f and 224 f; C. Pietrangelii, Guide rionali di Roma, Ponte, 3, pp. 66-68; Minna Heimbürger-Ravalli, «Disegni sconosciuti del Borromini per il Banco di Santo Spirito e per Palazzo Spada,» Paragone (Arte), 275, 1973, pp. 57-63; Connors, see footnote 2, pp. 272-76; P. Ferrucci, «Collaredo, Leonadro,» DBI, 27, 1982, pp. 82-85; A. Eula, «Il Palazzo del Banco di S. Spirito – Spada-Benncelli a Roma. Le relazioni di Virgilio Spada,
i progetti di Borromini, le trasformazioni," Quaderni PAA (Messina), II, 1992, pp. 43-48. (My thanks to Dott. Fabio Barry for this last reference.)


52 The catasto plan of 1828-19 in the Archivio di Stato (Rione V, Ponte 1.3) seems to indicate an opening on only one side, as does the nineteenth-century plan reproduced in Eula, see footnote 50.

53 On his French career see Huard, "Oppepnord 1672 à 1742", Michel Gallet, Stately Mansions: Eighteenth Century Paris Architecture, New York and Washington, 1972, p. 178 f. J. Dee 1882, see footnote 1. The Roman drawings decorated Oppepnord's house, according to Brice, Description, 1718, I, p. 110: Oppepnord a sa maison à l'entrée de la rue de Saint Thomas du Louvre, remplie & décorée de quantité de bonnes choses, particulièrement des études qu'il a faites à Rome & dans tous les endroits d'Italie, sur ce que l'Antique & les plus excellens modernes ont de précieux.


56 Vie des fameux architectes, p. 439, quoted in Huard, see footnote 1, p. 322.

57 G.M. Oppenord, Premier Livre de Differens morceaux A l'Usage de tous ceux qui s'appliquent aux beaux Arts (12 livres), Paris, n.d. Though usually dated to the period after Oppenord's death, according to Dee (1889, see footnote 1, p. 81) the date of 1737-38 can be established for the Mouy Oppenord on the basis of the location of the Huquier firm that appears on some plates. For an overview of the publications see Huard, see footnote 1, pp. 323 and 327, and Dora Wiebenson et Claire Baines, The Mark J. Millard Architectural Collection, I, French Books Sixteenth Through Nineteenth Centuries, New York and Washington, D.C., 1993, pp. 370-74.

58 G.M. Oppenord, Livre de Fragments D'Architecture Recueillis et destinés à Rome d'après les plus beaux Monuments (XIV suites), Paris: Huquier, [1744 is etched on fol. 397], folios. iv, 41, 81, 107. However, there is a sketch of one of the later tomb inscribed (Epitaphe du chevalier Francois Borromini) in the small Stockholm sketchbook. (My thanks to Francesca Consagra for showing me photographs of this sketchbook.)

59 Vie des fameux architectes, see footnote 1, p. 439.

60 Elias Luzac, Jr., Observations sur les Arts, Leiden, 1748, p. 131, quoted in Œuvres (the Grand Oppenord), preface.

Addendum
Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Howard Shubert, I can report that two Oppenord sketchbooks have recently passed into the collections of the Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal: the sketchbook formerly in the Houthakker collection, which is really a series of sketches on the pages of a printed copy of Cesare Ripa; and the sketchbook on the Palazzo Farnese mentioned in n. 2 above, number 6, and now illustrated in the Christie's Old Masters Drawings Catalogue 344, 10 January 1996, p. 174 f., with fragments from another Roman sketchbook on p. 179.