

MONUMENTAL PRINTS IN THE AGE OF DÜRER AND TITIAN. Within print production of the sixteenth century, the category of large-scale prints – mostly woodcuts, but also some engravings – stands out. Although such works initially seem to have been a regional phenomenon limited to Germany, outstanding examples also came from Italy and the Netherlands. What they all have in common is that they were printed from multiple blocks or plates and are composed of several sheets pasted together.

Surprisingly little research has been carried out and few publications exist on monumental prints. Exceptions include the important catalogue by Horst Appuhn and Christian von Heusinger, *Riesenholzschnitte und Papiertapeten der Renaissance* (Unterschneidheim, 1976), the remarks by David Landau and Peter Parshall in *The Renaissance Print* (New York, 1994) and Mark McDonald's article on Hans Burgkmair's (1473–1531) large frieze of people from Africa and Asia (*Print Quarterly*, 2003, pp. 227–44). Furthermore, McDonald's study of the inventory of Ferdinand Columbus's lost print collection identified a certain number of now unknown works (*The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus*, London, 2004). Larry Silver and Elizabeth Wyckhoff's more recent exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Grand Scale: Monumental Prints in the Age of Dürer and Titian* sought to cast new light on this phenomenon by bringing together nearly 50 specimens from US museums produced between the late fifteenth century and 1630 (Davis Museum, Wellesley, 19 March–8 June 2008; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 9 September–30 November 2008; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 31 January–26 April 2009, London, Yale University Press, 2008, 176 pp., 116 ill., £25). The publication's introductory essay, co-authored by Silver and Wyckhoff, outlines the history of research on this category of print and the exhibition's general purpose. The first of five essays is an overview by Silver of the various big prints of processions and triumphs, addressing their peculiar format and manner of distributing figures. Suzanne Borsch concentrates on a chronological overview of multiple-sheet prints from Italy, including maps – a genre often forgotten in this context. Lilian Armstrong examines the relation between Benedetto Bordon (c. 1455–1530) and Jacob of Strassbourg's (active 1494–1530) *Triumph of Caesar* from 1504 and illustrated Venetian books. Alison Stewart discusses large-scale prints by Sebald Beham (1500–50), and in the last essay Stephen Goddard concentrates on 'modular prints' as a mode of using patterns within a much wider function.





143. Pieter Coecke van Aelst, *A Military Camp in Slovenia*, one of a set of ten connected woodcuts from the frieze *The Customs and Fashions of the Turks*, 1553, woodcut, 352 x 532 mm (New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery).

The authors faced some challenges, beginning with the complete lack of a census or overview of surviving contemporary impressions and the fact that many blocks were reprinted during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While all the contributors raised the central question of a print's original function, little is known about the intended location or purpose of most of these prints. Although some may have occupied a place similar to paintings, they were not cheap substitutes and their production and use probably changed at an enormous speed, driven by current needs and fashions. One should congratulate Silver and Wyckoff for having taken on such an important and fascinating subject, although they could have mined it more deeply.

The prints selected covered a perhaps overly wide range of artists, technical skills and subjects, encompassing trade charts, city views, of Cologne and Venice for instance, and the customs of foreign countries as depicted, for example, by Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502–50) (fig. 143). Monumental representations of religious scenes, such as *The Nativity* by Giorgio Ghisi (1520–82) after Agnolo Bronzino (1503–72; fig. 144), and Jan van Scorel's (1495–1562) *The Deluge* were also shown. Furthermore the

exhibition included over-size prints produced as political propaganda, such as Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) monumental *Triumphal Arch* and *Great Triumphal Chariot* (fig. 145) – both commissioned by Emperor Maximilian I – and the *Procession of the Doge on the Piazza San Marco* by Jost Amman (1539–91). As a result of the exhibition's restriction to US collections, however, a large number of prints were missing. A list of desiderata that would have presented a deeper religious, in particular the increasing Protestant, context, as well as comments on the political upheavals and battles, would include: *The Prodigal Son* and *The 1529 Siege of Vienna* by Sebald Beham, *The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus* and *David and Bathseba* by Jörg Breu the Younger (c. 1510–47), Erhard Schön's (c. 1491–1532) *The Distribution of Fools caps* or, the politically important *Arrival of the Turkish Embassy at Frankfurt for the Election of Maximilian II as King of the Romans, on 22 November 1562* by Jost Amman. While this is an understandable curatorial approach, in a field where often only unique impressions survive at least mentioning and illustrating these prints would have gone some way towards expanding the publication's scholarly scope.

Many of these prints were originally accompanied by



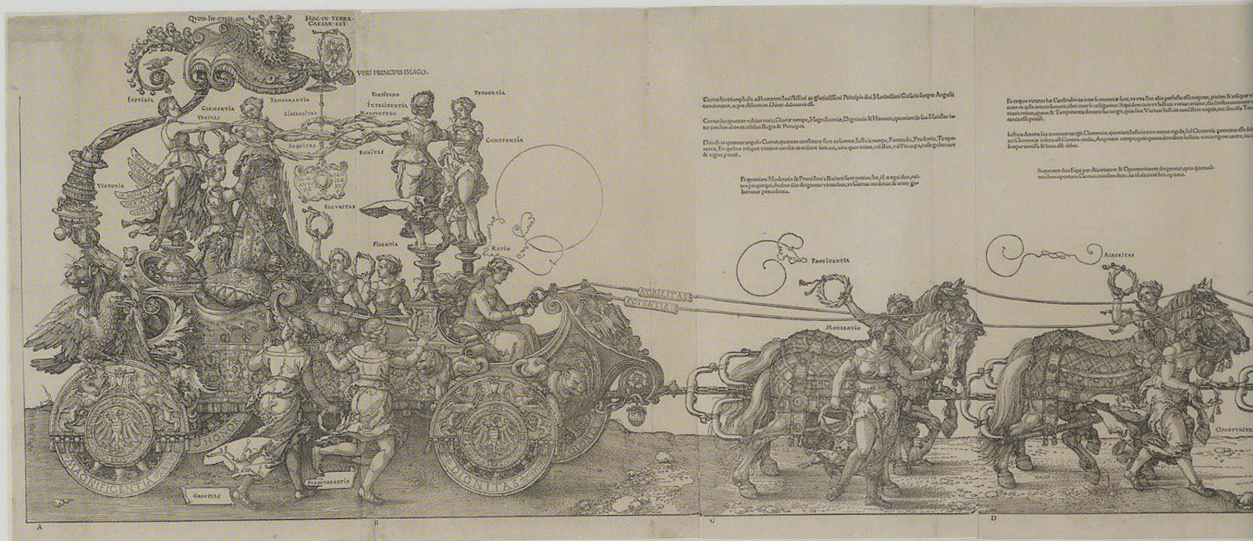


144. Giorgio Ghisi after Agnolo Bronzino, 1553, *The Nativity*, engraving from two plates, 652 x 442 mm (New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery).

texts written especially for them, but these have mostly been trimmed off. The few surviving complete prints provide valuable insight into the circumstances of their production, use and interpretation. Considering the broader theological context of the Reformation, the catalogue

would have benefited from more in-depth discussion of the prints' images in relation to incorporated text and associated textual sources. Elucidating what a particular combination of text and image or the selection of a particular scene would have meant to its original audience is, of





145. Albrecht Dürer, *The Great Triumphal Chariot of Emperor Maximilian I*, 1523, woodcut from eight blocks, 454 x 2,293 mm

course, a difficult task that will demand a close collaboration between linguists, historians and art historians. In spite of what it lacks, this publication remains a valuable contribution to a fascinating field, and underlines the potential for further avenues of discovery. CHRISTIAN RÜMELIN

