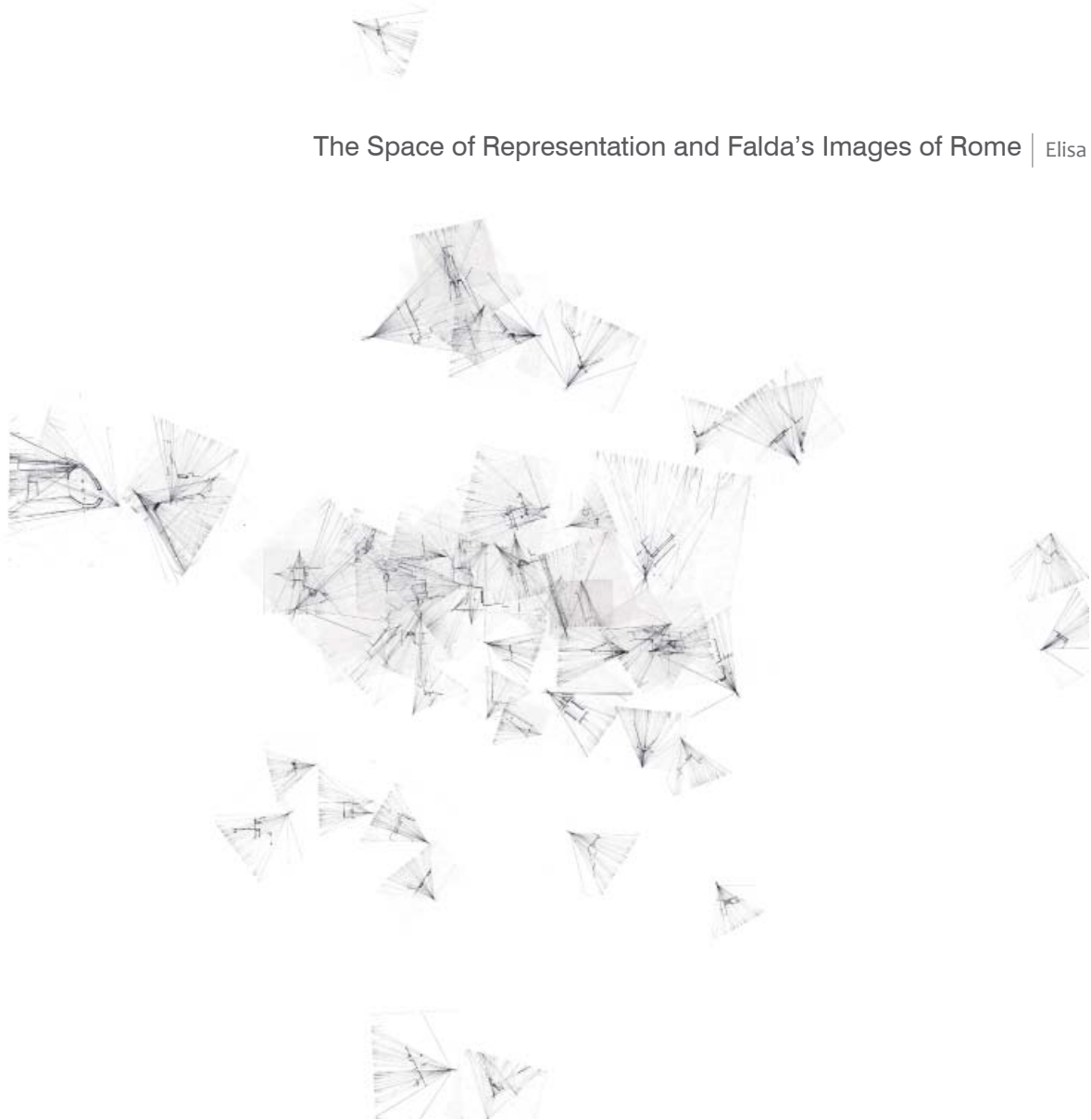# The Space of Representation and Falda's Images of Rome | Elisa Silva

The technique of perspective representation generated important changes in the development of Renaissance and Baroque cities. Images of ideal cities[1] motivated architects and clients to build "real" versions of these stages into the urban fabric.[2] The 17th century views of Rome engraved by Giovanni Battista Falda are a legacy to the ideal city panels where recognizable buildings of the city instead of abstract models build the scenes. As perspective drawings, they record a constructed interpretation of space where three dimensions are translated into a flat image that the mind in turn reinterprets back into volumes. The process layers dimensional variations and alterations over the original subject that the viewer conflates into a single perceptual experience. In other words, the distortions constructed into any one of Falda´s perspectives misrepresent the city and challenge the raw visual data the viewer receives on site, producing an entirely new understanding of space that lies somewhere between imagery and reality. Analysis of Falda´s engravings exposes the perspective drawing's ability to condition the way in which we perceive space.

L fig 01 Raffaello Sanzio *The Betrothal of the Virgin* 1504.
R fig 02 Jan Van Eyck. *Madonna in the Church* 1425

Perspective drawings were first developed during the 15th century with two prevailing methods: the *geometric method* and the *costruzione legitima*.[3] The former is built with a single vanishing point located at the center of the image which is coincident with the viewpoint and perpendicular to the picture plane. The *costruzione legittima*, on the other hand, builds the image from a corresponding plan and elevation drawing in which case the viewpoint can be located anywhere in front of the object and more than one vanishing point can exist. Two paintings of a similar subject matter can serve as examples for each perspective construction method. Raphael's *Betrothal of the Virgin* painted in 1504, (fig 01) where the pavement lines converge toward the opening of the tempietto structure in the center belongs to the *geometric method*. Van Eyck's much earlier painting of *Madonna in the Church* (fig 02) painted in 1425 reflects the *costruzione legittima* method where the diminishing height of the church columns leads the viewer diagonally into depth toward a vanishing point right of center and the lateral directions converge toward a point off the canvas toward the left. The position of the viewer is independent of these points and allows the illusion of depth to remains legible from multiple angles. In both images space is geometrically constructed through graphic guidelines that attempt to mimic vision.

17th century arguments explaining the behavior of vision also rely on geometric constructions. In his 1637 essay entitled *La Dioptrique*,[4] Descartes mathematically studies the way in which eyes translate the light that enters into them to form a two dimensional image. The operations he describes are comparable to the techniques used in perspective drawings; however there is great deal of attention paid to the distortions generated in the process. Through a systematic procedure of translation, objects lose their "true" shape and become distorted representations of themselves: "a figure flattened down onto a plane surface scarcely retains the forms of things; it is a deformed figure that ought to be deformed [...] in order to represent the object."[5] The "deformed figure" is a symbol or sign that triggers our mind to recognize and identify the subject: it is a two dimensional image on the retina that the mind then interprets into volumes. Reflecting on Descartes' visual principles, Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his essay *Eye and Mind* of 1961 sustains that the deformed figure or the represented object "excites our thought to conceive, as do signs and words which in no way resemble the things they signify."[6] Beyond translating raw light into images within the eye, the mind actively layers vision with recognizable symbols that construct what we see. Legibility

and clarity in two dimensions require a certain degree of deformation which in turn distorts vision. The translations and alterations suffered in the process prove to Merleau-Ponty that vision is "a conditioned thought."[7]

Given the analogous behavior of vision's sensory operation and the way two dimensional perspectives are constructed, it is easy to understand how the visual data of an image is also rebuilt by the mind into space. Images, such as Falda's view of the piazza in front of Santa Caterina de' Funari (fig 03) motivate a mental exercise where the two dimensions of the perspective are translated into three and projected back onto the spaces they reference. Comparing Falda's engraving with a photograph of the site (fig 04) reveals the generous difference between the two interpretations. The overlap of raw visual data and the constructed interpretation of the image fuse together and generate a conditioned perception of space, essentially revealing drawing's ability to construct vision. The inherent subjectivity of drawing and the way in which it affects vision represents a vast conceptual field I've termed the "Space of Representation."

L fig 03 Giovanni Battista Falda. *Studio e Palazzo della Sapienza.* 1678
R fig 04 Photograph by author of rear facade Palazzo della Sapienza

The "Space of Representation" is essentially a theoretical platform that maps the variance between a viewer's naïve perception of an object and the learned reading of that object through representation. Falda's views of Rome, propaganda imagery for Pope Alexander VII's architectural commissions, effectively occupy this virtual space. In order to better understand the term the following images can be used to define it. First, Andreas Gursky's work entitled Montparnasse, Paris (fig 05) presents the Parisian building as an orthogonal elevation drawing. Photographic

fig 05 Andras Gursky. *Montparnasse, Paris* 1993

data is accumulated through a systematic and rigorous survey that the artist then drafts into an elevation drawing using computer technology. The image is constructed, not captured, due of limitations presented by the urban condition surrounding Montparnasse. The building is much too long and the street much too narrow to provide the distance of the implied view point. Gursky had to enter various apartments across the street and take many photographs at regular intervals that he then seamlessly stitched together into an overall "correct" image, erasing all traces of depth distortion. The result seems to be an "objective" or document-like view of a building that makes the image both credible and unrecognizable since the building in reality can never be seen from this perspective. Elevation drawings are a traditional way of representing structures, widely used by Andrea Palladio to illustrate his villas in the *Four Books on Architecture*. Given the fact that an orthogonal elevation is an abstract drawing of parallel projections, recognition of a building through its façade is a learned ability. Villa Emo's façade drawing (fig 06) directs the way viewers should read the building, which exists the moment its elevation can be recognized, as in the illustration chosen for Caroline Constant's *The Palladio Guide*[8] (fig 07) which is a frontal photograph of the entire building length obtained with a camera located dead center and a professional wide angle lens able to include the entire façade. It is in fact a redundant copy to Palladio's elevation drawing.

fig 06   Andrea Palladio. Villa Emo elevation. *I quattro libri dell'architettura.* 1570

fig 07 Photograph from Caroline Constant's Palladio Guide, 2006

Gursky's image of Montparnasse and Constant's photograph, conflate an architectural representation (in this case the elevation) with vision (personified by the camera) to generate a "constructed" view that is completely accepted as "real" by the viewer.

A second example is Gursky's work entitled *Atlanta* (fig 08), an image of the Atlanta Hyatt Regency atrium designed by architect John Portmann. The image construes the atrium into a canonical one point perspective through the manipulation of photographic data. Gursky transforms the legibility of this narrow closed space into an open theatre viewed straight on as though one of its 4 sides had been eliminated for better viewing. The image's frontal center stage, its symmetry and converging sides construct a modern illustration of Sebastiano Serlio's *Tragic Scene* engraving (fig 09) which later influenced a long tradition of theatre stage set construction.[9] Again, Gursky's image witnesses how the easy recognition of an interior one point perspective view disguises the artificiality of the Atlanta scene in the eyes of a habituated audience. Gursky's work reveals how conditioned viewers perceive traditional drawing typologies as objective and "correct" interpretations of the elements they depict and more importantly the weight these drawings

fig 08
Andreas Gursky
Atlanta, 1996

exercise on people's perception of space. The distance between what can be seen from the street of the Montparnasse building or one of the balconies in the Hyatt hotel and the accepted recognition of these subjects through the constructed images define a specific space of representation.

fig 09
Sebastiano Serlio.
Tragic Scene engraving,
Secondo libro di
perspectiva, 1545

Andreas Gursky and other artists of the Dusseldorf Kunstakademie including Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth and the Bechers who opened this field of artistic research, develop work knowingly immersed in this space of representation.[10] They produce imagery that acutely addresses the constructed artifice of a viewer's vision by projecting recognizable subjects, including city views, buildings, water towers and human figures, within the constructed structure of traditional drawing typologies, often requiring fastidious and meticulous efforts completely hidden behind techniques of representation. Similarly, Falda's views of Rome are impregnated with related visual and conceptual content that although less conscientious is worth exploring.

Giovanni Battista Falda was born in Valduggia, Italy in 1643. The first book of views he engraved was entitled *Il Nuovo Teatro delle Fabriche et Edificii in Prospettiva di Roma Moderna*, published in 1665 with a frontispiece dedication to Alexander VII.[11] The second book dates to 1667,[12] and the third, dedicated instead to Clement IX, was published in 1669.[13] Together the books represent 80 views of Rome and include palaces, piazzas, churches and monuments. As *Teatri di Roma*, Falda's engravings certainly illustrate idealized versions of city views. The overly generous interpretation of space, enhanced by the small scale

of the depicted characters can hardly go unnoticed to an alert viewer. However, the image's strict adherence to the structure of perspective drawings and their similarity to traditional stage set representations make them plausible interpretations and effective conditioning agents of the perception of the spaces they depict.

Up until this point, we have discussed how and why constructed images affect perception. It would be helpful to understand precisely to what extent images differ from their subject matter and what are the mechanisms that produce distortions. As perspective drawings, the manipulations and distortions of space in Falda's views had to result from the very techniques of representation used to generate them. Decoding or deconstructing the image back through its drawing process can reveal critical information regarding inherent distortions. To that effect, analytical drawings of every Falda view were developed as planar reconstructions built through a reverse exercise in perspective drawing. A systematic method was applied to each image which allowed plans and views to be compared to one another exposing recurring techniques and tricks developed by the artist.

The methodology of this planar reconstruction begins with a picture plane, which is the horizontal line that translates the vertical projections from the image to the point of view (fig 10). There are two arbitrary assumptions made in order to arrive at a feasible plan. The first one fixes the view point along the center of the drawing. The second establishes a 60 degree cone of vision, which reflects the visual range eyes perceive without significant distortion and is frequently used in the construction of perspective drawings. The resulting plan emerges by projecting all vertical lines down to the picture plane and then toward the view point. Vanishing points are identified by extending cornices and ground lines to a converging point. The line that connects the point of view to the vanishing point represents the direction of all buildings that share this particular vanishing point and are parallel to one another.

Four images of Falda's views have been selected to illustrate the analytical drawing process and the perceptual distortions they reveal. They are the views of Santa Maria in Vallicella and the Filippo Neri Oratory, Santa Caterina de' Funari, Santa Maria in Campitelli and Santa Maria della Pace.
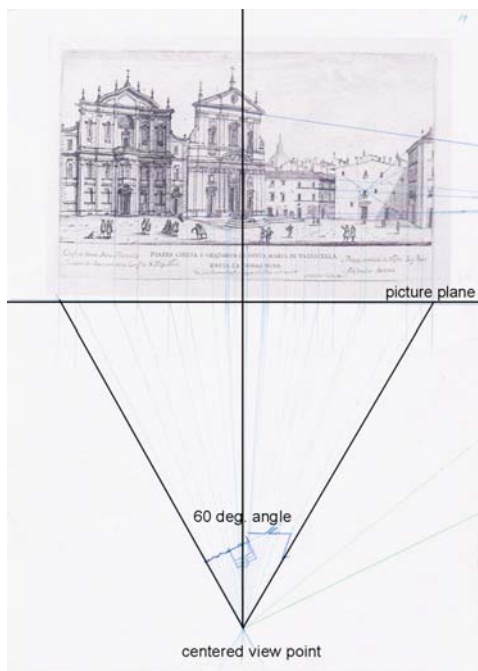
picture plane

60 deg. angle

centered view point

fig 10
Drawing methodology for reconstructing the plan from Falda's perspectives

SANTA MARIA IN VALLICELLA AND THE FILIPPO NERI ORATORY

The Piazza in front of Santa Maria in Valicella, also known as Chiesa Nuova, and the Filippo Neri Oratory are depicted in Falda's first book of the *Teatri di Roma* (fig 11). The oratory was in large part designed by Paolo Mariscelli and more famously by Borromini who took over in 1637. The church was originally designed in 1575 by Matteo da Città di Castello and finished by Fausto Rughesi in 1606.

The plan represented in Falda's image reveals a great deal of distortion, most evident when superimposed on the corresponding portion of Nolli's 1748 map of Rome (fig 12). The distance of the view point from the buildings assumes that a portion of the urban fabric has been erased in order to fit the entire view. Scaling Nolli's plan to fit the width of the oratory and church shows the significant distortion of the buildings to the right that seem to have been enlarged and rotated to become visible from the point of view. The stairs in front of the church appear much deeper than those indicated on Nolli's plan, a willed "correction" of the element to compensate for the ground planes' extreme conversion in perspective.

The angle of the line corresponding to the oratory and church in plan is parallel to the line that connects the view point to their vanishing point on the picture plane off the right side of the page. The surface of the four stories building on the opposite end of the image is parallel to the line joining their vanishing point at the center of its adjacent building and the view point. And finally the central structures are exactly parallel to the picture plane and therefore horizontal in plan.
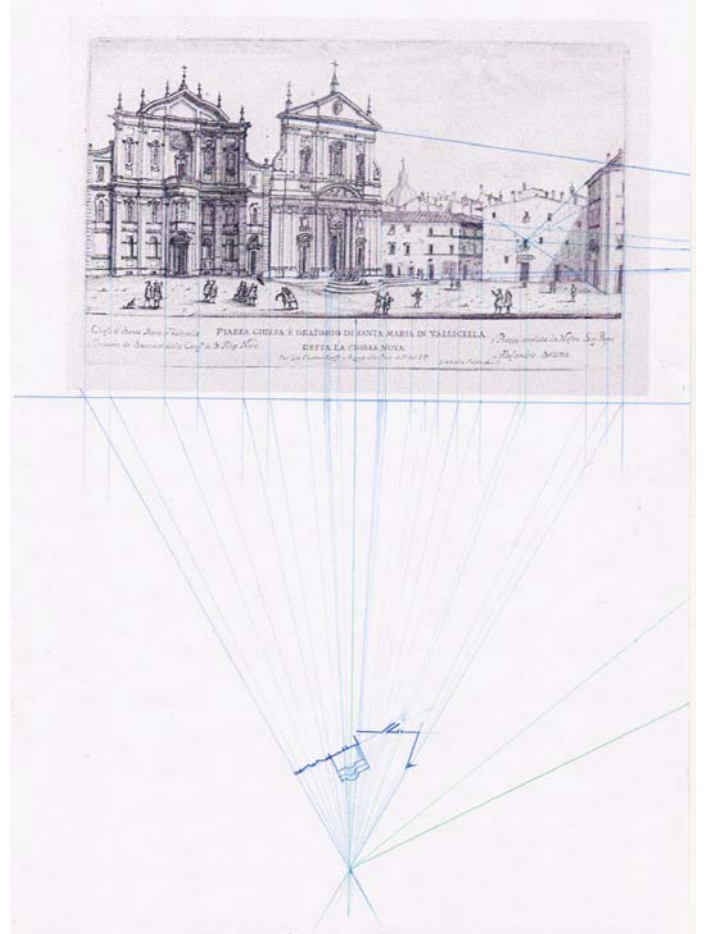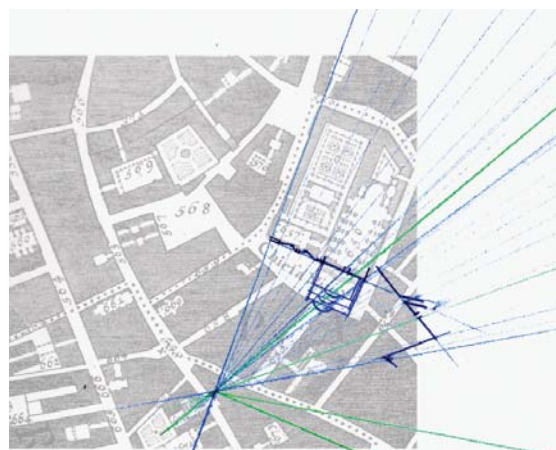
fig 11
Giovanni Battista Falda engraving of Santa Maria in Vallicella and reconstructed plan

fig 12
Superimposition of reconstructed plan on Nolli's 1748 map of Rome

SANTA CATERINA DE' FUNARI

The view of Santa Caterina de' Funari belongs to Falda's third book (fig 13). The church was built under Paul III in 1536 and given over to Ignatius of Loyola. Later in 1560 it was rebuild by Guidetto Guidetti.

Following the method described earlier, a record of the buildings' footprints emerges with significant distortions that become evident when superimposed on the corresponding portion of Nolli's map (fig 14). The reconstructed plan has been scaled to match the church facade and all other surfaces are allowed to deviate. The view point remains quite distant from the depicted building and assumes the urban fabric between has been erased. In order to illustrate the depth of the church and the buildings beyond, Falda has essentially bent the entire street of Via Caetani as though it were on a hinge making it visible from the established view point. Likewise, the narrow Via dei Delfini to the right of the church comes into view as a result of deformations that widen the alley and allow the buildings to be seen without obstruction.

Vanishing points help establish the angles of the various surfaces registered in plan. Via Caetani finds its angle on the page parallel to the line that connects the viewpoint to the corresponding vanishing point off the left edge of the image. The buildings along Via Delfini share a vanishing point beyond the images' right edge that defines their angle and finally the church facade itself presents a slight convergence of the ground plane and pediment base producing a distant vanishing point that minimally rotates the facade off a line parallel to the picture plane.
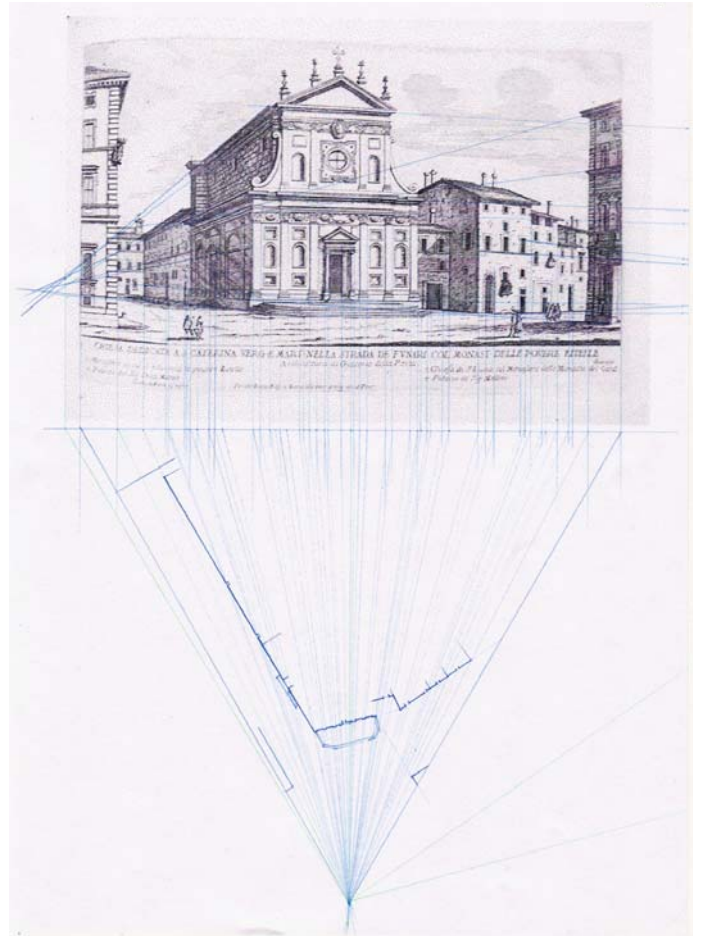
fig 13
Giovanni Battista Falda engraving of Santa Caterina de' Funari and reconstructed plan

fig 14
Superimposition of reconstructed plan on Nolli's 1748 map of Rome

SANTA MARIA IN CAMPITELLI

La Chiesa di Santa Maria in Campitelli designed by Carlo Rinaldi in 1663 belongs to Falda's first book of views (fig 15).

Two vanishing points can be easily identified in the drawing, one corresponding to each side of the piazza. The way vanishing points work in perspective drawings assumes that parallel surfaces vanish toward the same point. If this does not occur, it means that the surfaces are not parallel, as evident in the reconstructed plan. Superimposing this plan onto the corresponding portion of Nolli's map, scaled to match the width of the church facade, discloses several dramatic differences (fig 16). For one the point of view, as in the previous examples lies within urban fabric that would have to be destroyed in order to enjoy the view. The length of the piazza has been greatly exaggerated as well as its width in addition to the fact that both sides have been pried open into a trapezoidal shape allowing the buildings on either side to be better viewed. Furthermore, the symmetrical buildings flanking Rinaldi's church emerge with different widths. In order to balance their presence in the image as equal facades, Falda widens the more distant building in order to compensate for its foreshorten width in perspective.

The two identified vanishing points that correspond to each side of the piazza dictate their angles in plan as surfaces that are parallel to the lines connecting the point of view to the vanishing point. The central backdrop at the far end appears flat and is therefore parallel in plan to the picture plane.
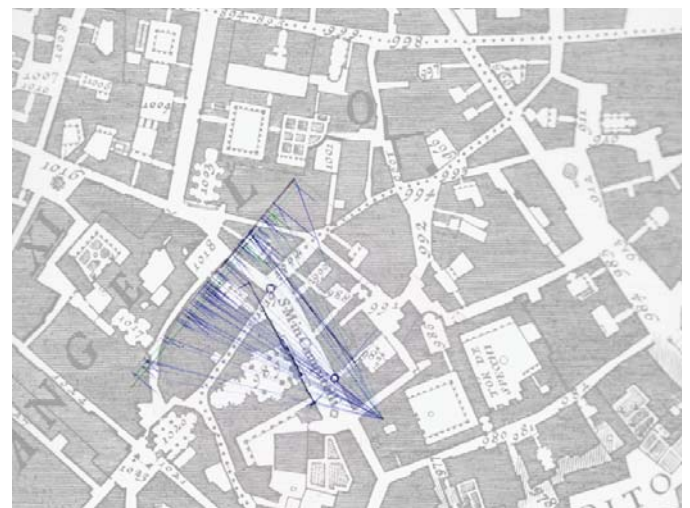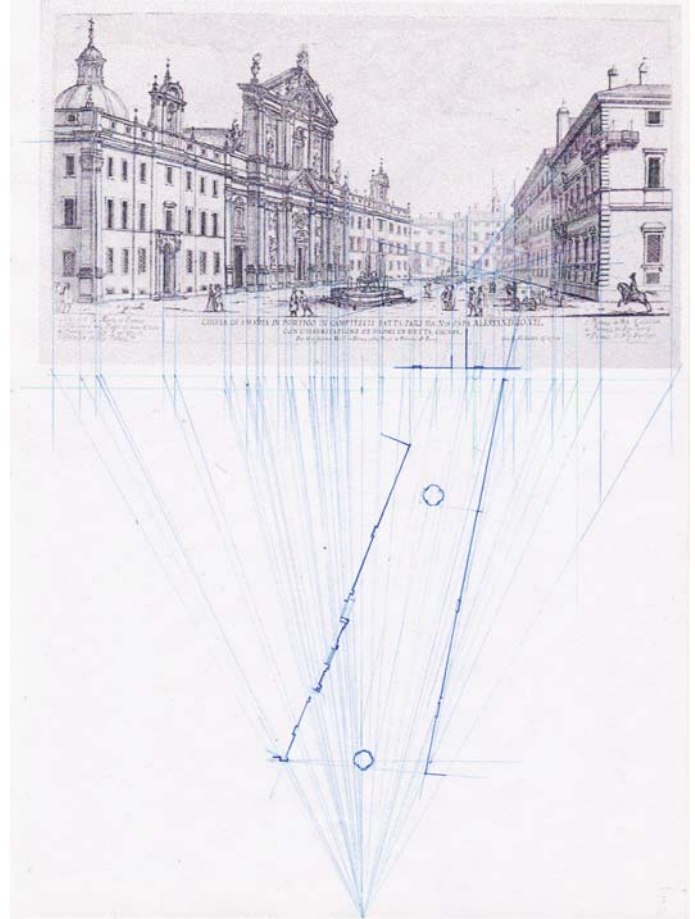
fig 15
Giovanni Battista Falda engraving of Santa Caterina de' Funari and reconstructed plan

fig 16
Superimposition on the corresponding portion of Nolli's 1748 map of Rome

SANTA MARIA DELLA PACE

The view of Santa Maria della Pace and its adjacent piazza belongs to the first book of *Teatri.* It is one of the most creative representations of space Falda produces as a response to the intense urban constraints imposed by the site (fig 17). The church and cloister were designed by Bramante in 1560. Agostino Chigi's chapel inside, with frescos by Raphael, motivated his nephew Alexander VII to restore the church and add the baroque facade and piazza designed by Pietro da Cortona.

The reconstructed perspective plan registers the regularized surfaces of the palazzo elevations, the back of the piazza and the church's new portico side elevation on a flat horizontal line that is parallel to the picture plane. The superimposition of the constructed plan onto Nolli's map shows the great distance required between the point of view and the projected surfaces, requiring an entire block of urban fabric to be erased (fig 18). The rotation of the church's entrance façade and the back wall of its surrounding piazza to meet the angle of the street elevation create a plan that is significantly different from Nolli's orthogonal map, testimony to the considerable liberties Falda took in arranging the architecture of his view.

The various surfaces registered in plan are either parallel to the picture plane or follow angles established by identified vanishing points. The church's front façade that stands behind the semicircular portico converges toward a point on the left that allows it to open toward the viewer and become more recognizable. Conversely the receding facade of the piazza recedes toward a very near vanishing point forcing it to bend into depth more severely than it appears to do so in Nolli's plan, increasing the perceived area of the piazza itself.
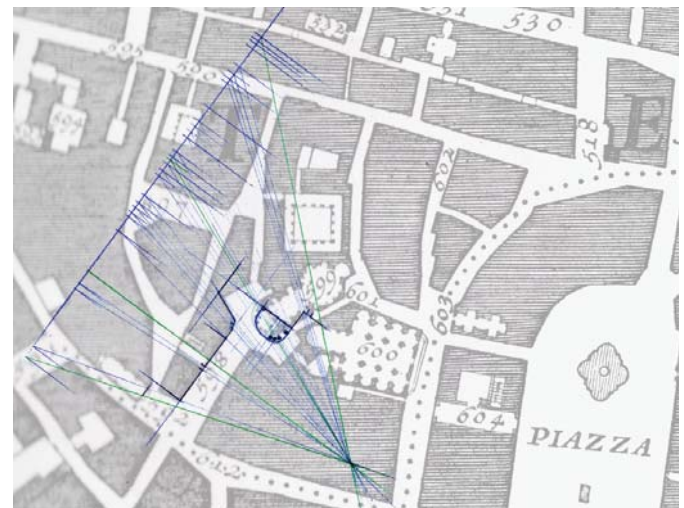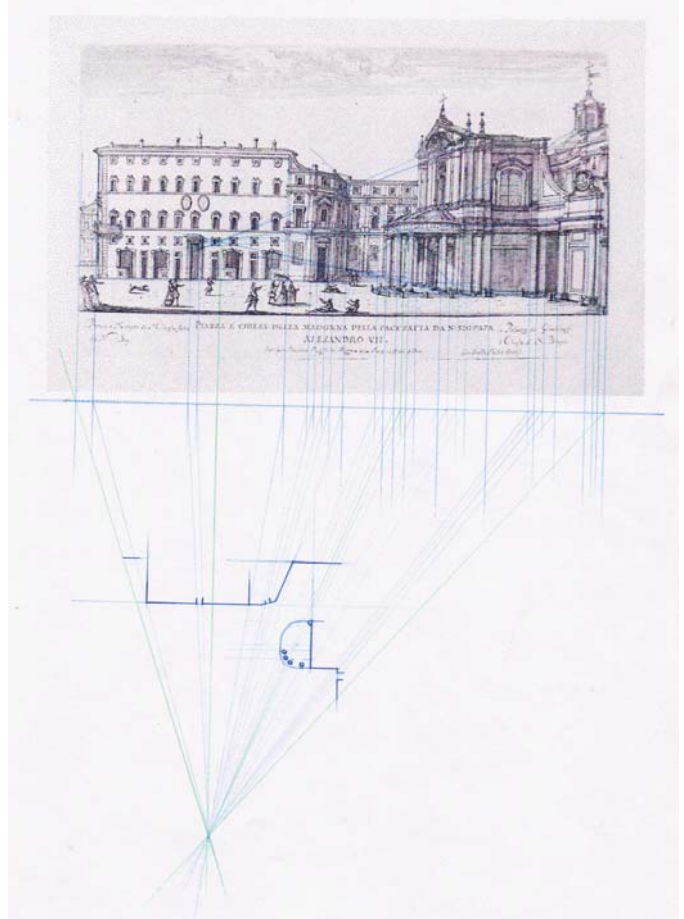

fig 17
Giovanni Battista Falda
engraving of the Piazza
Santa Maria della Pace
and reconstructed plan

fig 18
Superimposition on the
corresponding portion
of Nolli's 1748 map of
Rome

These analytical drawings effectively decode the planar distortions Falda embeds in his views. Each image creates the illusion of a new space in terms of size, proportion and directions that nonetheless can be recognized by the viewer as an existing place through the language of its depicted facades. The perspective technique layers other distortions onto the perception of space such as the way in which the height of an element is represented as absolutely vertical, when in fact vision causes vertical lines to converge toward one another just as horizontal lines converge toward points on the horizon. Other manipulations exposed in the analysis are rather subjective and more related to artistic "corrections" than to inadvertent results of the perspective drawing. In the case of Santa Maria in Vallicella, Falda rotates a piece of the piazza open so as to view it from the established point of view, creating a three sided enclosure that recalls stage set configurations. *Santa Caterina's* bent side elevation seems to respond more to a desire to render the space into a stage set with vanishing side streets similar to those carved by Vincenzo Scamozzi in the wooden stage set he designed inside Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. (fig 19) The view of the piazza in front of Santa Maria in Campitelli exposes the difficulty in representing a long and narrow space which Falda resolves by opening each side into a trapezoidal space. The presence of a theatrical aesthetic in Falda's images goes hand in hand with the political, aesthetic and economic forces behind Alexander VII's aspirations for Rome, described at length by Richard Krautheimer in his book entitled *Rome of Alexander VII*.[14] But they are more likely the result of an established tradition of imagery closely tied to stage set representation that Falda sought to emulate.

The 17th century vedute typology known to Falda had a direct relationship with stage set representation. What began with the circulation of Serlio's 16th century treatise on perspective and the famous engravings of the Aristotelian tragic and comic scenes (fig 09), evolved into a long tradition of stage set drawings used to record theatrical productions sold as souvenirs to tourists and pilgrims. Stage set engravings were always one point perspectives taken from the privileged central viewpoint of the royal or religious figure honored in the production. These engravings were produced and sold by the same publishing houses that commissioned vedute drawings. The "corruption" of the city views with the aesthetic of stage set representation may have been the inadvertent result of artists producing both image types simultaneously.

fig 19
Vincenzo Scamozzi
Stage set Teatro
Olimpico, Vicenza Italy,
1579

For example, Gian Giacomo de Rossi, Falda's publisher and patron, also printed the stage set engraving of *La Vita Humana overo il Trionfo della Pietà* by artist Galestruzzi fig 20). This was a theatrical play written by Cardinal Rospigliosi in honor of Queen Christina of Sweden in 1656, 9 years before the publication of Falda's first book. Engravings such as this one were common and probably well liked by audiences who had grown accustomed to the symmetrical harmony of one point perspectives. Falda's assimilation of the stage set aesthetic into his views may have been a simple attempt to make his images more appealing to the taste of his audience.

Particular aspects of Falda's style and technique evidence the influence of two vedutiste artists that preceeded him: the frenchmen Jacques Callot and Israel Silvester. Jacques Callot who was from Nancy, engraved both stage sets and city views during his career prooving
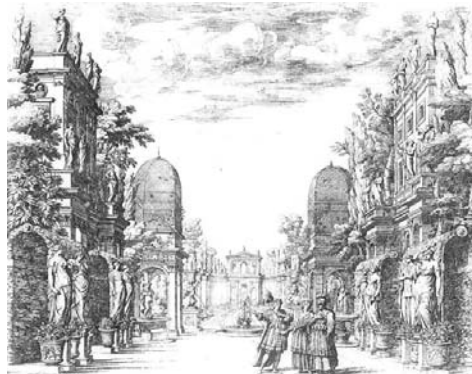

fig 20
Print designed by
Grimaldi and engraved
by Galestruzzi
*La Vita Humana overo il
Triunfo della Pieta,* 1658

Fig. 21 Jacques Callot. *Solimano* engraving, 1620

fig 23 Israel Silvestre *La Madonna di Loreto*, engraving, 1664

the interchangeability between the two subjects in an artist's portfolio. For example, Callot's stage set of the play *Solimano* (fig 21) with its symmetrical side panels, centered view and sloped floor plane are echoed in his view of the Place de Carrier in Nancy (fig 22), rendered in very similar terms. Israel Silvestre's views are also examples of images that use stage set representation techniques to skew or distort the subject in order to increase its legibility. In the view of La Madonna di Loreto (fig 23) the church's side elevation has been bent open to become visible and show the nave's depth, the cupola and dome without obstruction, similar to the bent sides of Falda's Santa Caterina de' Funari. The work of these artists may very well have inspired the framing techniques, the attention to surface and the stage set connotations evident in Falda's views. Of the 80 views of Rome he produced 29 are centered one point perspectives that construct literal stage sets out of the city.

The subtle influence of Falda's contemporary Lievin Cruyl, even if mostly by virtue of contrast, also explains certain choices Falda makes in his engravings. Cruyl produced a series of Roman views in 1664 that exhibit a unique style that several historians believe to be technically superior and more sophisticated than Falda's.[15] Many of these views

were later produced by Falda's and included in his own series allowing us to easily contrast and compare the techniques of both artists. Cruyl's *Prospetto della Piazza di S. Eustachio* (fig 24) is a mirror image of the actual engraving, which as a copper plate would have been reversed in the printing process. He has eliminated the building in front of S. Ivo so as to show the facade unobstructed, but he feels slightly guilty about this deletion and leaves a ruin like trace of the palazzo in plan. A modern photograph documents the existence of this deleted building (fig 25). Falda's comparable view entitled *Studio e Palazzo della Sapienza* (fig 26) copies Cruyl's point of view but deletes the obstructing building altogether, and relocates S. Ivo to the image's center so as tu configure the space into a tri-partite stage set. Falda returns Cruyl's daring asymmetry to a more traditional aesthetic.

More significant than the technical differences that separate these two engravers are the disparate conceptual agendas they submit in their views. Cruyl's drawing of *La Chiesa Nuova,* also known as Santa Maria in Vallicella (fig 27) (remember to flip the drawing to obtain the correct orientation) has elevated the point of view, presumably placing the spectator on the roof top of the buildings across the piazza. This

fig 22 Jacques Callot. *La Place de la Carrière de Nancy, 1637*

fig 24 Lievin Cruyl *Piazza di S. Eustachio* engraving reverse image,1664

L fig 25 Giovanni Battista Falda. *Studio e Palazzo della Sapienza*, 1678
R fig 26 Photograph by author of rear facade Palazzo della Sapienza

The reconstructed plans of Falda's views are a systematic way of recording the graphic distortions perspective drawings can generate. Overlaying the ensemble of eighty reconstructed plans on the corresponding segments of a modern city map reveals the differences between the two morphologies and measures the alterations Falda's images project onto the Roman urban fabric (fig 28). Each engraving superimposes a new construct onto "real" space and conditions the viewer's perception of the represented site. The site in turn becomes diffuse and imprecise, unable to be perceived in its absolute dimensions by a viewer conditioned to read it as a drawn "stage set."

allows him to note important monuments in the background, in addition to representing the subject at hand. At the end of the street flanking the oratory he references la Piazza di Monte Giordano and the Castel S. Angelo beyond. Cruyl is interested in grounding his views within the overall Roman landscape as though the identity of a space also depended on its relationship with a constellation of other building that can be recognized in the distance. Falda's counterpart image (fig. 11), is less complex and more concerned with the immediate aspects of the image. His views are built as two-dimensional surfaces, while Cruyl's tend to become volumetric.

Regardless of the differing complexities and levels of sophistication in both Falda and Cruyl's perspectives, these drawings witness a translations of the urban fabric that essentially reconstruct the city anew according to specific aesthetic taste and guidelines of a graphic structure. Images are not objective representations, but rather inherently subjective interpretations that transform and necessarily distort bodies into two dimensional surfaces.

The theatrical language Falda adopts may be explained simply as an earnest attempt to appeal to an audience accustomed to stage set illustrations. However, it seems difficult to imagine that Falda would so flippantly alter the planar dimensions of Rome's urban fabric given the fact that he was very familiar with its topography. In 1667 he was commissioned to produced a small map of the city based on Matteo Greuter's 1618 bird's eye view map.[16] And later in 1676 he drafted an even larger map comprised of twelve separate sheets (fig 29), an axonometric illustration so complete it became the most popular and authoritative map of Rome until the arrival of Nolli's orthogonal plan in 1748.[17]

Analyzing Falda's views of Rome a second time, assuming the urban plan remains fixed and that none of the buildings would have been ignored or erased in the exercise of projection, generates compelling ideas about Falda's method of representation. A 60° cone of vision placed within the footprint of a piazza, for example Santa Maria in Vallicella, reveals the limited viewing range permitted within the angle. Dividing the image into several segments, however, that correspond to the amplitude allowed within 60° and placing several of these cones of vision side by side, with rotational adjustments when necessary, presents a fairly accurate and plausible reconstruction of the images as produced by the author. The analysis points to a multiplicity of viewpoints and directions that suggests both physical and visual movement within the recording process of Falda's representations.

The following analysis revisits the same four views explored above with this new approach:

fig 27
Lievin Cruyl. *La Chiesa Nuova* engraving reverse image, 1664

fig 28
Mapping of reconstructed plans from Falda's perspectives onto
a modern map of Rome. They reveal the disparity between the
interpreted plan and the actual topography of the city. By author

The Space of Representation and Falda's Images of Rome ELISA SILVA

fig 29
Giovanni Battista Falda, *Map or Rome* 1667

The Space of Representation and Falda's Images of Rome ELISA SILVA

SANTA MARIA IN VALLICELLA AND THE FILIPPO NERI ORATORY

The view of the Piazza in front of Santa Maria in Vallicella is subjected to a second analytical exercise that uses the plan as a point of departure and as the sole generator of the image. Still within the footprint of the piazza and without erasing any part of the urban fabric, the entire series of elevated surfaces can be accounted for by stitching 3 separate 60° cones of vision (fig 30). A synthesis of all viewpoints constructs the complete image as a continuous scan of surfaces, that in spite of being sequential cannot be viewed or drafted from a single viewpoint.

Nolli's plan provides the orthographic map of the piazza's footprint and allows the analytical exercise to unfold (fig 31). The 3 points of view assume that the spectator moves and rotates directions, replicating a perceptually experience of time and space rather than a static and instantaneous visual impression. A camera can replicate more or less the effect of Falda's image by making a collage of 3 separate groups of photographs taken from points similar to those suggested in the analytical plan. (fig 32) Falda's image reproduces a continuous vision of the piazza and registers a timed experience of the scene.
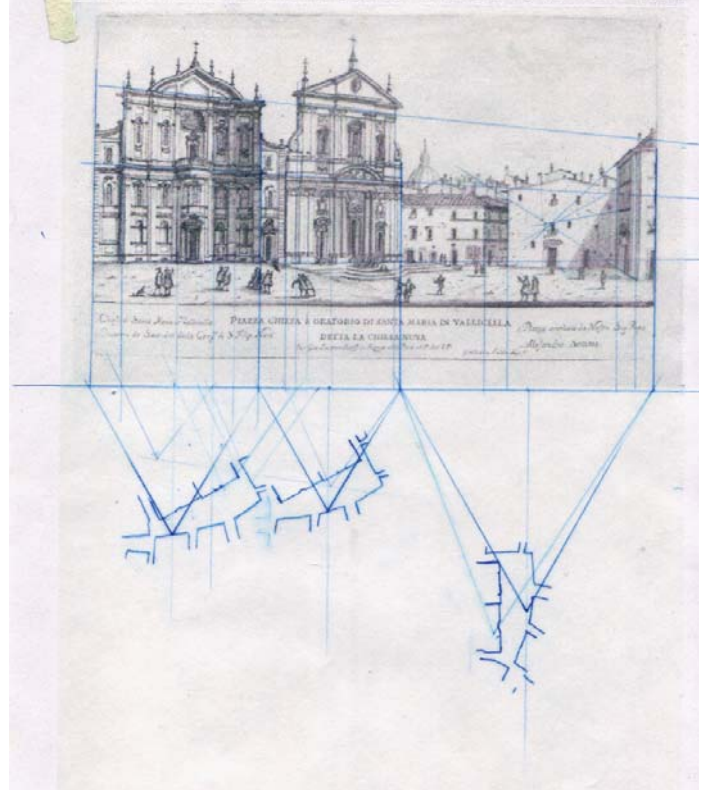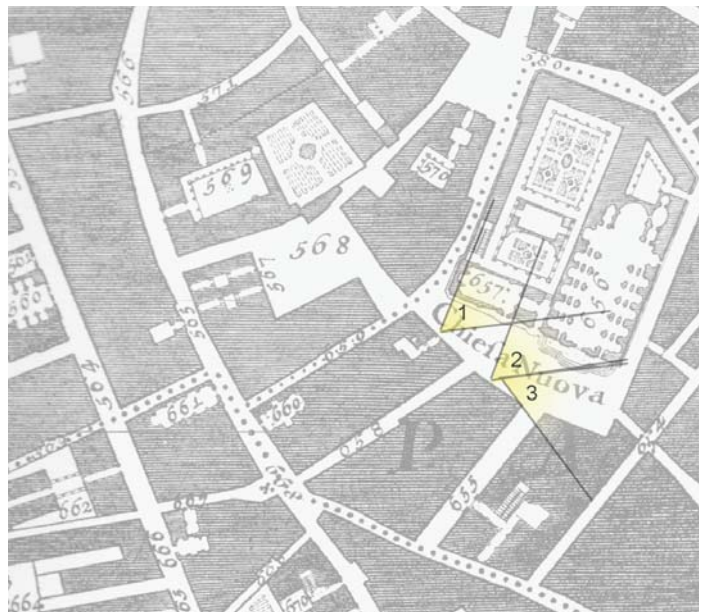
R Top fig 30
Location of viewpoints in the Piazza Santa Maria in Vallicella perspective

R Bottom fig 31
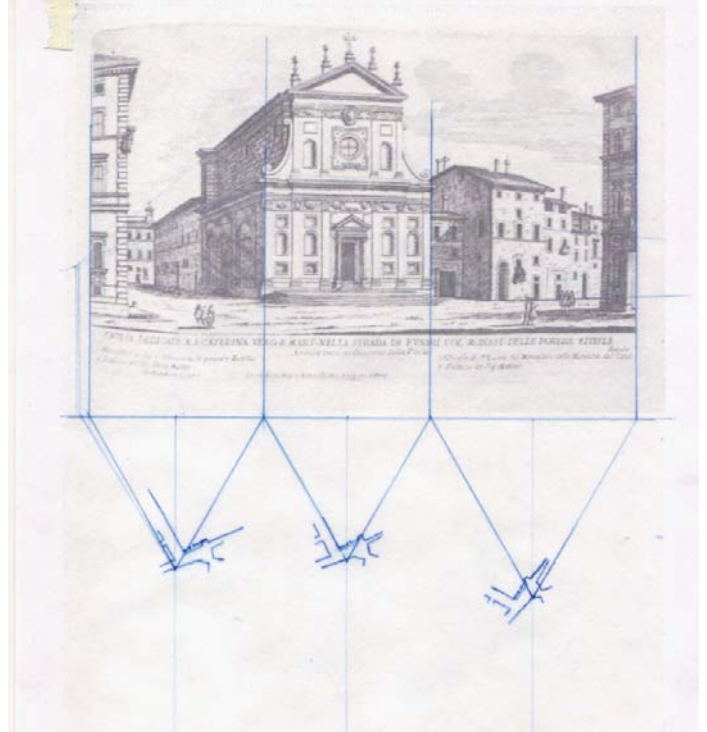Superimposition of view points on the corresponding portion of Nolli's 1748 map of Rome

L. fig 32
Collage of photographs taken from 3 viewpoints

SANTA CATERINA DE' FUNARI

The construction of space from the view of S. Caterina de Funari using a single point of view bends the side of the church open and pries the narrow street apart to show the depicted buildings. Starting with the actual plan and using a 60° cone of vision reveals the need for three points of view placed side by side in order to complete Falda's representation (fig 33). Divided into three sequential segments, the first point is centered on the street beside the church, the second on the church facade, and the third rotates the cone toward the street that extends beyond. The viewpoints move and rotate, enabling the various surfaces to be seen and recorded. These points can be identified and located by superimposing the cones of vision onto Nolli's plan (fig 34). A sequence of photographs taken from these points replicates the spectator's visual experience, which travels from the side of the church, across the facade and over toward the opposite end of the street (fig 35).

The actual space in front of the church is in reality quite restricted, contrary to the expansiveness suggested by the image. Nonetheless, Falda's view does succeed in clearly representing the surfaces visible from various view points in the piazza.
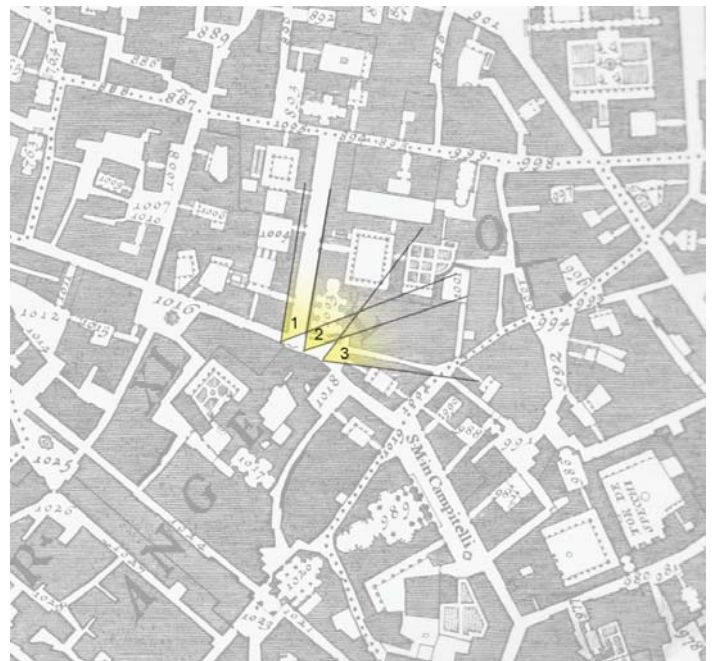
R Top fig 33
Location of viewpoints in the Piazza Santa Caterina de' Funari perspective

R Bottom fig 34
Superimposition of view points on the corresponding portion of Nolli's 1748 map of Rome

L. fig 35
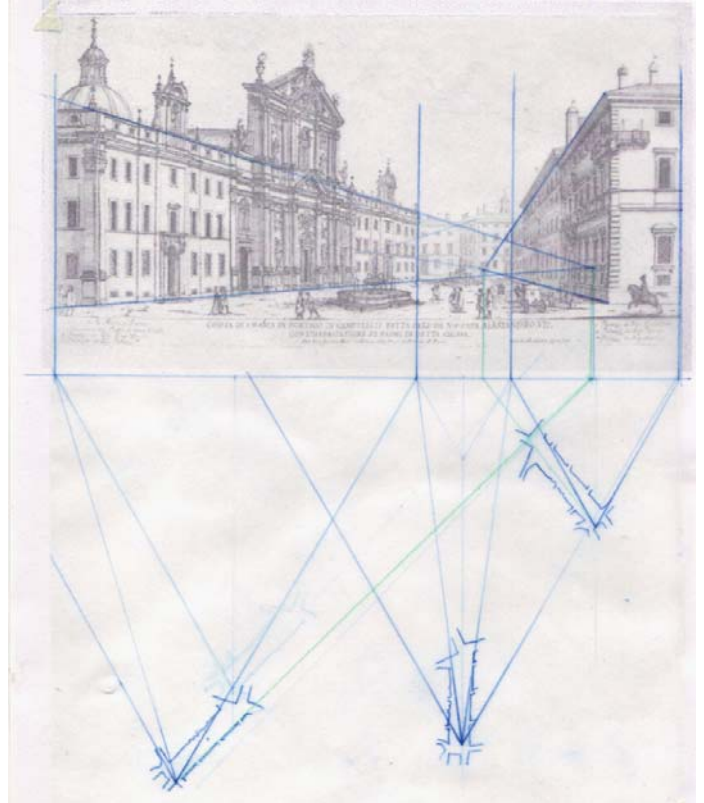Collage of photographs taken from 3 viewpoints

SANTA MARIA IN CAMPITELLI

The first drawing analysis presented the Piazza of S. Maria in Campitelli as a trapezoidal space so that the sides of the piazza could be better seen better. If we start inside the plan and suppose that the viewer's eyes pan across the piazza's surfaces, beginning with the left side occupied by the church itself, over toward the far end and finally centered on the buildings along the right edge, we can identify three different viewpoints that in their sum represent the three rendered surfaces of the square (fig 36). Placing the first point of view along the right edge of the piazza, tucked into the corner, allows the facades of Santa Maria in Campitelli and its flanking buildings to be viewed more frontally, so that they are easily recognized. Likewise, a point of view closer to the left edge of the piazza can project a 60° cone of vision toward the opposite facade, capturing its entire length and projecting it with greater generosity in terms of width. The remaining side of the piazza emerges from a head on view that records the distant buildings as flat elevations as seen on the Nolli plan (fig 37).

A photo collage reconstructs the three different viewpoints, evidenced by the white car in the foreground which appears both close when viewing the church and far when facing the opposite buildings (fig 38).

R Top fig 36
Location of viewpoints in the Piazza Santa Maria in Campitelli perspective

R Bottom fig 37
Superimposition of view points on the corresponding portion of Nolli's 1748 map of Rome
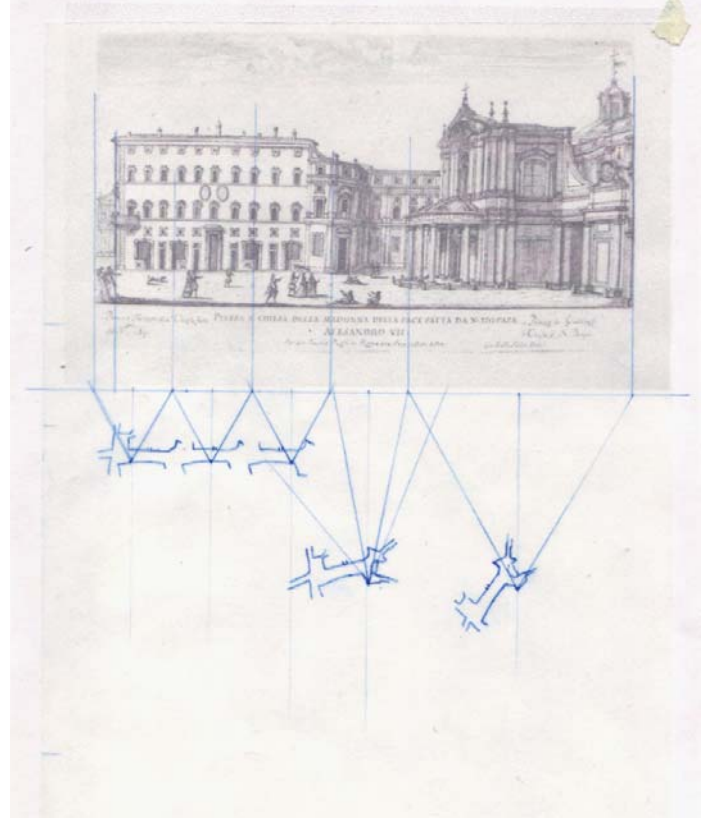
L. fig 38
Collage of photographs taken from 3 viewpoints

SANTA MARIA DELLA PACE

When analyzed as a series of moving points Falda's depiction of the Piazza and Chiesa of Santa Maria della Pace falls into place. Moving the point of view within the limits of the piazza's footprint, we find that a total of 5 separate points of view are required to project the represented surfaces due to the limited open space available (fig 39). Three viewpoints face the facade of the building on the left, a fourth cone focuses on the surface of the piazza behind the church and a fifth projects itself onto the church's profile. These points, located on Nolli's plan (fig 40), generate the photographic collage that essentially reconstructs the engraving by joining 5 different vertical groups of photos (fig 41).

The modest dimensions of this alley and piazza make the artificialness of the image all the more apparent. Falda gives us a continuous scan of the buildings' surfaces all at once that comes after the experience of moving and remembering the facades in sequence. This interpretive representation bears consideration toward the intentions behind the reconstructed piazza, which in addition to enhancing and updating the church's façade, created a larger space to accommodate the recently adopted custom of ridding in horse drawn carriages.[18] Noblemen could now arrive down Via della Pace and turn within the piazza's circumference. Falda's linear image appears to narrate a new form of processional entry into the prestigious church, while offering a unique interpretation of the spatial characteristics of this place.

R Top fig **39**
Location of viewpoints in the Piazza Santa Maria in Vallicella perspective

R Bottom fig **40**
Superimposition of view points on the corresponding portion of Nolli's 1748 map of Rome

L. fig **41**
Collage of photographs taken from 5 viewpoints

In adhering to the planar dimensions of the depicted views, Falda introduces movement into his images as a way of reconciling the desire to depict all the facades and surfaces that describe a place with the technical restrictions of perspective constructions. The apparent movement that allows Falda to scan across the surfaces of his images and stitch the facades of *Via della Pace* and *Piazza Santa Maria della Pace* can be understood as an operation akin to Gursky's manipulation of photographic data that reassembles *Montparnasse* into a single rolled out facade. Germs of spatial questions and conceptual paradigms can be found in the inner workings of Falda's drawing techniques that begin to reveal the breadth and range of subject matter embedded within the "Space of Representation."
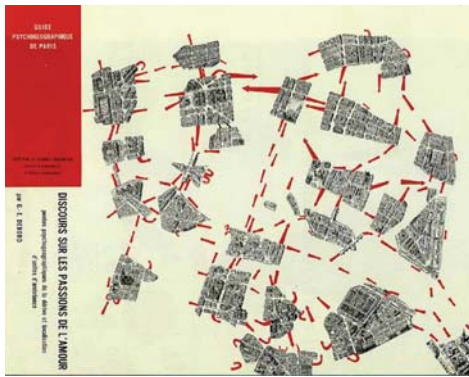
fig 43
Edward Ruscha
*Then and Now,
Hollywood Boulevard,*
1973

fig 42
Guy Debord
*Guide
Psychogeographic de
Paris*, 1956

Consider for example the relationship between Falda's stitched surfaces and Guy Debord's 1956 *Guide Psychogeographic* where movement and memory are the subject of recorded walks through various neighborhoods of Paris (fig 42). Cut out portions of the city plan are related to one another with arrows of various widths as though the city were made of urban islands communicated with others in the midst of generic in-between space. A very different but related example is Ed Ruscha's work entitled *Then and Now*, a set of photographic prints of Hollywood Boulevard, first in 1973 and later again in 2004 (fig 43). Physical and visual movement are simultaneously registered in photographs taken of buildings and landscape along each side of the road at regular intervals from a moving truck. The photographs are then assembled into long scrolls of elevations so that eyes roll across the seamless strung images in the gallery, just as the camera rolls down the

road through the urban landscape. Time and movement are inherent to the piece and to the way in which the audience experiences it. In a way, it represents a progressive development of the much shorter city segments depicted in Falda's views.

However, Falda also worked with more integral records of the Roman urban fabric. His 1676 axonometric map extrudes every single building into its elevation and creates the impression that streets and public spaces have been carved instead of built. This technique represents a significant innovation with respect to Greuter's map, used as a base to Falda's, where only a few individual monuments, obelisks and bell towers were represented three dimensionally. Falda's map also witnesses distortions similar to those introduced in his views. The façades down Via del Pellegrino, in front of S. Carlo ai Catinari and along the Piazza Santa Maria sopra Minerva to name a few (fig 44), appear to construe and exaggerate portions of the urban fabric into stages just as the perspectives tend to define overly generous piazzas or *teatri*. For example, the building behind S. Ivo has been pushed to the right so that the space of Piazza S. Eustachio can be easily recognized, and the street behind S. Agnese has been nudged back just enough to clear the height of the buildings in front of it, allowing the entire street façades to remain unobstructed. Recognition of places and visual memory is triggered by the façade and therefore complete or nearly complete elevations take precedence over accuracy in plan.

fig 44 Portion of Giovanni Battista Falda's 1678 Map of Rome

The map's extruded elevations seem to conceptually replicate the experience of walking through the city, just as Falda's view across the street and Piazza S. Maria della Pace recreate a linear procession. The insipient trace of a temporal city experienced in Falda's work is noteworthy, although most likely motivated by commercial interests than intellectual curiosity. Falda's work witnesses the inherent potential in drawing techniques to manipulate depicted space without arousing the slightest suspicion in viewers. The centuries old tradition of representation has conditioned society's way of seeing to the degree that it can validate as "real" overtly distorted depictions of familiar objects and spaces. The extensive work of contemporary artists such as Ruff, Struth and Gursky in this field, speaks to the relevance and value of this conceptual realm, first in terms of simple awareness and second in terms of possible uses a controlled mastery of these manipulations could engender.

NOTES

1. The *Urbino Panel* attributed to Luciano Laurana c.1480 -1490 and the *Baltimore Panel* by Fra Carnevale c.1480 -1484 are good examples.
2. Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Santa Maria della Pace and Piazza San Pietro are emblematic urban spaces in Rome that serve as examples of staged perspectives in the city.
3. The term *costruzione legittima* first appears in Alberti's *De Pictura* as the second method he describes whereas the *geographic method* refers to Alberti's first method. Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura* 1436
4. René Descartes: *La Dioptrique* 1637
5. *Ibid*
6. Maurice Marleau Ponty: *Eye and Mind* trans. by Carleton Dallery in *The Primacy of Perception,* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964, pp. 159-190.
7. *Ibid*
8. Caroline Constant: *The Palladio Guide*. Princeton NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985 .
9. Sebastiano Serlio: *Secondo libro di perspectiva*, 1545. The wood cut engraving of the Aristotelian tragic and comic scenes were reproduced and disseminated in numerous treatises published after Serlio.
10. Hila and Berna Becker taught at the Kunstakademie in Dusseldorf and built the conceptual frame for the work of subsequent artists they formed incljuding Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth and Adnreas Gursky.
11. Giovanni Battista Falda: *Il nuovo teatro delle fabriche et edificii in prospettiva di Roma moderna sotto il felice pontificato di N. S. Papa Alesandro VII*, 1665.
12. Giovanni Battista Falda: *Il secondo libro del nuovo teatro delle fabriche et edificii fatte fare in Roma e fuori dalla Santità di Nostro Signore Papa Alesandro VII,* 1667.
13. Giovanni Battista Falda: *Il terzo libro del' novo teatro delle chiese di Roma date in luce sotto il felice Pontificato di Nostro Signore Papa Clemente IX*, 1669.
14. Richard Krautheimer: *The Rome of Alexander VII*, 1655–1667. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.
15. Michael Miller and Barbara Jatta, *Le Vedute Romane Di Lievin Cruyl* in: Joseph Connors and Louis Rice, *Spechio di Roma Barocca - una guida inedita del XVII secolo*, Rome 1991, pp. 161-223.
16. Giacomo De Rossi, Falda's publisher, commissioned Falda to update Matteo Greuter's 1618 map of Rome which had become obsolete after the intense building years of Alexander VII. In making his map, Falda copied the city wall and overall orientation of Greuter's map.
17. Comment made in reference to *Falda's Pianta di Roma 1676* by Jim Tice, Erik Steiner, Allan Ceen, and Dennis Beyer: Department of Architecture and InfoGraphics Lab, Department of Geography, University of Oregon website http://vasi.uoregon.edu/index.htm.
18. Richard Krautheimer: *The Rome of Alexander VII*, pp 54-55.