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Active in the first century BCE, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio wrote his influential architectural treatise in ten books. It remained the standard manual for architects into the medieval period. The topics which Vitruvius considered essential are diverse, including aspects of design as well as geometry and engineering. In the nineteenth century, the English architect and author Joseph Gwilt (1784–1863) won greater acclaim for the books he published than for the buildings he designed. His most celebrated achievement, *The Encyclopaedia of Architecture* (1842), is also reissued in this series. Gwilt’s one-volume translation of Vitruvius’s Latin text was first published in 1826. Supplanting previous versions, this work was long regarded as the standard edition in English. It contains a brief life of Vitruvius as well as an annotated list of previous editions since the fifteenth century. A number of detailed illustrative plates accompany the text.

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Marcus Vitruvius Pollio  
*In Ten Books*

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH GWILT



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University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108070522](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108070522)

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This edition first published 1826  
This digitally printed version 2014

ISBN 978-1-108-07052-2 Paperback

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THE  
  
ARCHITECTURE  
  
OF  
  
MARCUS VITRUVIUS POLLIO,  
  
IN TEN BOOKS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN  
  
BY  
  
JOSEPH GWILT,  
  
FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON.

LONDON:  
  
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MDCCCXXVI.

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## TO THE KING.

SIRE,

THE Writings of MARCUS VITRUVIUS POLLIO have long been distinguished by the especial patronage of Sovereigns. That of GEORGE THE FOURTH is now added to those of Augustus, the Medici, Francis the First, and Lewis the Fourteenth.

It would be presumptuous in me to dwell on the singular connexion between the successful cultivation of the Arts and the appearance of the different Editions of Vitruvius; but when we read the memorable words of Augustus, his first Patron, “ Urbem marmoream se relinquere, quam

lateritiam accepisset,” we are so forcibly reminded of the taste and munificence of our present Sovereign, that we look forward with the highest expectations to the future, while we reflect with gratitude on the past.

With a deep sense of the obligation your MAJESTY has conferred, by allowing me to present this to your notice, and the most sincere prayer, that, in a long continuance of your happy reign, the Nation may receive the fulfilment of its wishes, I have the honour to declare myself, with every respect,

YOUR MAJESTY’S

MOST DUTIFUL AND FAITHFUL

SUBJECT AND SERVANT,

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## PREFACE.

THE following Translation was commenced many years since, under a conviction of the benefit I should derive from it in my architectural studies; but at the time of undertaking it, its publication was not contemplated. During the progress of my labours I found it useful to refer to the different versions of the author, and more especially to that of Newton, the only Englishman who has hitherto translated and published the whole of the text of Vitruvius. That translation I found so unsatisfactory and incorrect, that my resolution was early formed of making an endeavour, at some period, to give the English student, not only a more convenient volume for reference, but, as I presume to think, a truer interpretation of the text of the author. Whether I have succeeded, must be submitted to the Reader's judgment. I have, perhaps, adhered more closely to the text than the idiom of our language may allow, but I trust that this will be far from a serious charge against me. The editions chiefly used have been those of Philander, Elzevir, the Bipont, and that of Schneider, which is a most valuable book: not, however, without fre-

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quent recurrence to the translations of Barbaro and Perrault, and the excellent one of Galiani. The plates subjoined to the work are not so numerous as might have been desired. My reason for limiting them to their present number has been more from a desire to avoid conjectural representations than to save trouble or expense in the publication. The following version is without note or comment, but I am in hopes that it may, at a future period, lead to a further consideration of the precepts and doctrines of the only author, among the antients, on the art of which I am an humble professor.

J. G.

## LIFE OF VITRUVIUS.

THE materials for a life of Vitruvius are only to be found in his own Treatise. Among the antient authors he is merely mentioned by Pliny, as one of those writers from whom he compiled; and by Frontinus, in his Treatise on Aqueducts, as the first who introduced the Quinarian measure. Though practising in Rome, and in the service of the emperors, living in Rome, and writing the subjoined work in that city, there appears nothing that can lead us to assert that he was a native of the place. Maffei, a Veronese, strove to prove the author his countryman, and in corroboration adduced an inscription which existed on a triumphal arch in Verona as hereunder;

L. VITRUVIUS L. L. CERDO

ARCHITECTUS.

Had this arch, however, been built by our Author, it would not prove him a native of the city, not looking to the difference in the agnomen, a circumstance which Alciati attempted to reconcile, by supposing that of Pollio to be a corruption of Pelio, and that then it would be synonymous with

c

## xviii

Cerdo, both the one and the other signifying a currier. Philander, however, completely refuted this conjecture, if indeed refutation could have been necessary, for the arch itself contained a violation of a rule insisted on by Vitruvius, that dentils should not occur under mutuli.

From the fragments of inscriptions relative to the Vitruvia family, found in the neighbourhood of Formiæ (the present Mola di Gaeta), it has been presumed, without a great stretch of probability, that it was in this territory Vitruvius was born. The age in which he lived was doubtless between the time of the death of Julius Cæsar and the battle of Actium, though some have assigned it to the reign of Titus. But his omission of the mention of a great number of magnificent buildings, erected after the time of Augustus, and his especial mention of the theatre of Pompey as the only one of stone, sufficiently prove that such a conjecture is not warranted by circumstances. The dedication, moreover, points to Augustus as the patron of Vitruvius: and the incident of C. Julius, the son of Masanissa, who was in the army of Julius Cæsar, having lodged with him, as related in the third chapter of his eighth book, seems clearly to indicate the time of his existence.

It is likely that the following treatise was composed when he was advanced in life, and that it was presented to his patron after he had assumed the title

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of Augustus, that is, twenty-five years before the Christian æra, inasmuch as he speaks of a temple erected to Augustus, in his Basilica at Fano.

He was, as may be collected from his writings, by no means a successful professor, though well born and well educated, and certainly, notwithstanding the common sophisms of the age which appear in his work, a man of no ordinary talent. He was no less a military than a civil architect, as may be gathered from the introduction to his first book, as well as from the rules, now incomprehensible, but doubtless in his time sufficiently clear, laid down in the tenth book, respecting military engines. From the introduction to the third book we learn, that he was of small stature, and lived to some age. That he should have met with opposition from his brethren is quite consonant with later experience, for the rabble of ignorant builders, and artisans, and draftsmen, who in the present day call themselves architects, and meet with considerable patronage, are of the same class as those that flourished subsequently to the time of our author, even in the time of Michael Angelo da Buonaroti.

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LIST OF THE SEVERAL EDITIONS AND  
VERSIONS OF VITRUVIUS.

. . . .—“Editio princeps.”—Without year, place, or printer’s name.  
Printed at Rome, by George Herolt, under the superintendence of Sulpitius, in or about 1486. It begins without title as follows:—“IO. SULTITIUS LECTORI SALUTEM. Cum divinum opus Vitruvii: non modo studiosis: sed reliquis hominibus, &c.”—At the end of the last book of Vitruvius are the following verses:

Lector habes tandem veneranda volumina docti  
Vitruvii: quorum copia rara fuit.  
Hæc lege: nam disces: nova: magna: recondita: pulchra:  
Et quæ sint in re sæpe futura tua.  
Emendata vides: sed peccat litera siqua  
Corrige: nemo satis lynceus esse potest.

To the Vitruvius is subjoined,—“Sexti Julii Frontini viri consularis: de aquis que in urbem influunt: libellus mirabilis.”—The pages are of thirty-four lines, and the Vitruvius contains ninety-four fols. including the letter of Sulpitius, &c. The Frontinus contains only sixteen fols. Gaignat Catalogue 54 francs. La Valiere ditto 130 francs. Polenus says there are but few errors in this edition. Harwood says it is a very scarce book.

1496. This Edition begins thus.—“Hoc in volumine hæc opera continentur. L. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri decem. Sexti Julii Frontini de Aquæductibus Liber unus. Angeli Politiani Opusculum: quod Panepistemon inscribitur. Angeli Politiani in priora Analytica prælectio, cui titulus est Lamia.”—At the end of the Vitruvius:—“Florentiæ impressum anno a natali Christiano M.CCCC.LXXXXVI.”—fol.

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—According to Fabricius, the orthography of this edition is more correct than the preceding one of Sulpitius; in other respects it is very like it. It is quite as scarce as the editio princeps.

1497. This Volume begins,—“Hoc in Volumine continentur: Cleonidæ Harmonicum Introductorium interprete Georgio Valla Placentino. L. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri Decem. Sexti Julii Frontini de Aquæductibus Liber unus. Angeli Politiani Opusculum: quod Panepistemon inscribitur. Angeli Politiani in priora Analytica prælectio, cui titulus est Lamia.”—At the end of the Vitruvius,—“Impressum Venetiis, per Simonem Papiensem dictum Bivilaquam: Anno M.CCCC.LXXXVII. die tertio Augusti.”—fol. With a few slight variations in the text, this is little more than a reprint of the preceding Florence Edition, as regards Vitruvius. The Cleonidas is an addition to it. The name of the Editor does not appear; he has divided the chapters of the first book differently from those of the two former editions. This book, though not common, does not fetch a large price.
- 1511.—“M. Vitruvius per Iocundum solito castigatior factus, cum figuris et tabula, ut iam legi et intelligi possit.”—At the end,—“Impressum Venetiis ac magis quam unquam aliquo alio tempore emendatum: sumptu miraque diligentia Ioannis de Tridino alias Tacuino. Anno Domini M.D.XI. die XXII. Maii. Regnante inclito Duce Leonardo Lauredano.”—fol. —With many wood blocks. This was the first edition illustrated with Figures. Iocundus altered the text of the two former editions in many places. Polenus thinks he carried his emendations further than he was justified in doing; but he gives the preference to this over the former editions.
- 1513.—“Vitruvius iterum et Frontinus a Iocundo revisi repurgatique quantum ex collatione licuit.”—At the end:—“Hoc opus præcipua diligentia castigatum, et cura summa excusum est Florentiæ sumptibus Philippi de Giunta Florentini, anno Domini M.D. XIII. mense Octobri.”—Small octavo.—The figures in this edition are the same as the preceding, but consider-

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ably reduced and more imperfectly cut. It is extremely scarce, and produced an enormous price (eleven guineas) at an auction in this country a few years since.

1522.—“*M. Vitruvii de Architectura Libri decem nuper maxima diligentia castigati, atque excusi, additis Iulii Frontini de Aquæductibus libris propter materiæ affinitatem.*”—At the end :—“*Impressum Florentiæ per hæredes Philippi Iuntæ Anno Domini, MDXXII. sexto Kal. Novembris.*”—Small octavo. This is a reprint of the preceding edition with the same blocks for the figures.

1523.—“*M. Vitruvii de Architectura Libri decem, summa diligentia recogniti, atque excusi. Cum nonnullis figuris sub hoc signo \* positis, numquam antea impressis. Additis Iulii Frontini de Aquæductibus libris, propter materiæ affinitatem. 1523.*”—Small octavo. Without place or printer's name. This is a counterfeit of the Giunta edition. And though Polenus conjectures it was printed at Florence, there is little doubt that it was the work of Will. Huyon of Lyons. The figures added with the mark \* attached to them, are reduced from those of the first Italian version of the author by Cæsar Cæsarianus 1521, which is hereinafter noticed.

1543.—“*M. Vitruvii, viri suæ professionis peritissimi, de Architectura Libri Decem, ad Augustum Cæsarem accuratiss. conscripti: et nunc primum in Germania qua potuit diligentia excusi, atque hinc inde Schematibus non iniucundis exornati. Adiecimus etiam propter argumenti conformitatem, Sexti Iulii Frontini de Aquæductibus urbis Romæ libellum. Item ex libro Nicolai Cusani Card. de Staticis experimentis Fragmentum. Cum Indice copiosissimo, et dispositione longe meliori, quam antea.*”—At the end:—“*Argentorati. In officina Knoblochiana per Georgium Machæropeum. Anno 1543.*”—Quarto. The text is nearly the same as that of Jocundus. The figures of the wood-blocks are partly borrowed from the Giunta edition, and partly from the translation of Cæsarianus.

1550.—“*M. Vitruvii Pollionis, viri suæ professionis peritissimi, de*

Architectura Libri x. ad Augustum Cæsarem accuratissime conscripti, et locis quam plurimis hac editione emendati. Ad-iunctis nunc primum Gulielmi Philandri Castilionii Galli, Civis Rom. Castigationibus atque Annotationibus in eosdem longe doctissimis ad Franciscum Valesium Galliarum Regem. Una cum Lib. II. Sex. Iulii Frontini de Aquæductibus urbis Romæ, et Nicolai Cusani Dialogo de Staticis experimentis. Cum Græco pariter et Latino indice, dispositione copiaque elaboratissimo.”—At the end:—“ Argentorati, ex officina Knoblochiana, per Georgium Machæropieum, Mense Augusto, Anno M.D.L.”—Quarto. The text is the same as that of the 1543 edition. The notes of Philander which are added, were first published in 1544 at Rome in 8vo, but without the text of Vitruvius.

- 1552.—“ M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri decem ad Cæsarem Augustum omnibus omnium editionibus longe emendatiores, collatis veteribus exemplis. Accesserunt Gulielmi Philandri Castilionii, civis Rom. Annotationes castigationes, et plus tertia parte locupletiores. Adiecta est Epitome in omnes Georgii Agricolæ de mensuris et ponderibus Libros, eodem autore. Cum Græco pariter et Latino indice locupletissimo. Lugduni. Apud Ioan. Tornæsium, 1552.”—Quarto. Philander himself superintended this edition, chiefly following the Giunta text, which he collated with several MSS. The wood blocks are better than in any preceding edition.
- 1567.—“ M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri decem, cum commentariis Danielis Barbari, electi Patriarchæ Aquilei-ensis : multis ædificiorum, horologiorum, et Machinarum descriptionibus, et figuris, una cum indicibus copiosis, auctis et illustratis. Venetiis. Apud Franciscum Franciscum Senensem, et Ioan. Crugher Germanum, 1567.”—Folio. Barbaro in this seems to have mostly followed Philander’s edition of 1552.
- 1586.—“ M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri decem, ad Cæsarem Augustum, omnibus omnium editionibus longe emen-

- dationes, collatis veteribus exemplis. Accesserunt Gulielmi Philandri Castilionii, Civis Rom. Annotationes castigatiores, et plus tertia parte locupletiores. Adiecta est Epitome in omnes Georgii Agricolæ de mensuris et ponderibus libros eodem auctore. Cum Græco pariter et Latino Indice locupletissimo, M.D.LXXXVI. Apud Ioan. Tornaesium, typogr. Reg. Lugd.”—Quarto. Harwood says that the Editor of this edition was Jo. Tornaesius junior, and that it is more correct, though less elegant than that produced by the father in 1552.
- 1649.—“ M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri decem, cum notis, castigationibus, et observationibus Gulielmi Philandri integris; Danielis Barbari excerptis, et Claudii Salmasii passim insertis. Præmittuntur Elementa Architecturæ collecta ab illustri Viro Henrico Wottono Equite Anglo. Accedunt Lexicon Vitruvianum Bernardini Baldi Urbinate Guastellæ Abbatis; et eiusdem scamilli impares Vitruviani. De Pictura Libri tres absolutissimi Leonis Baptistæ de Albertis. De Sculptura excerpta maxime animadvertenda ex Dialogo Pomponii Gaurici Neapolit. Ludovici Demontiosii Commentarius de Sculptura et Pictura. Cum variis Indicibus copiosissimis. Omnia in unum collecta, digesta, et illustrata a Ioanne de Laet Antverpiano. Amstelodami. Apud Lud. Elzevirium. Anno 1649.”—Folio. This has been usually considered the best edition of the Author: it was certainly at that period the most splendid edition, to which the Elzevir type not a little contributed. De Laet professes to follow the text of Philander’s edition; but neither was this accurately done, nor were the notes of Philander, nor the Lexicon of Baldus given entire, as the title would import. The most valuable novelty in this edition is the Commentary of Meibomius on those Chapters relating to musical notation.
1758. An Edition by the Marchese Berardo Galiani. Folio. Naples. This was accompanied by an Italian Version, which will be hereafter noticed among the Italian Editions. Harwood says this is a “ a fair and valuable Edition.” Not noticed by Schneider.

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- 1800.—“ M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri decem. Ope Codicis Guelferbytani, editionis principis, ceterorumque subsidiorum recensuit, et Glossario, in quo vocabula artis propria Germ. Ital. Gall. et Angl. explicantur, illustravit Augustus Rode Dessaviensis. Berolini, sumtibus Aug. Mylii. 1800.”—Two thin volumes Quarto. The plates to this Edition were published in Folio in the ensuing year to the number of twenty. The text of this Edition is of little value. The plates though ill executed and the glossary in five languages, are useful to the Architectural student. It has no notes appended.
- 1807.—“ M. Vitruvii Pollionis de Architectura Libri Decem ad Optimas Editiones collati. Præmittitur Notitia literaria Studii Societatis Bipontinæ. Accedit Anonymi scriptoris veteris Architecturæ compendium cum indicibus. Argentorati Ex Typographia Societatis MDCCCVII.”—Octavo.
- 1807.—“ Marci Vitruvii Pollionis De Architectura Libri Decem. Ex fide librorum scriptorum recensuit, emendavit, suisque et virorum doctorum Annotationibus illustravit Io. Gottlob Schneider, Saxo. Lipsiæ, sumtibus et Litteris G. J. Göschen. Anno MDCCCVII.”—3 Vols. Imper. Octavo. This Edition, the second and third volumes of which are devoted to commentaries on the text, is the best edition of the Author which has appeared. It is much to be regretted that it was published without plates; with the addition of them it would have been a perfect book.

## SPANISH VERSIONS.

- 1602.—“ Los diez libros de Arquitectura de Marco Vitruvio Pollion, traducidos del Latin por Michaël de Urrea. Alcala de Henarez. 1602.”—Folio.
- 1787.—“ Los diez libros de Arquitectura de M. Vitruvio Pollion, traducidos del Latin y commentados por Don Joseph Ortiz y Sanz. Presbitero. Madrid. 1787.”—Large Folio, with plates.