

Engraved plan on nine sheets joined, a full conservation report is available on request.

THE ONLY LARGE SCALE PLAN OF FLORENCE PRODUCED IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Nova Pulcherrimae Civitatis Florentiae Topograhia Accuratissime Delineata Curatissime Delineata

Author
BUONSIGNORI, Stefano

Publication date
[c1660]

Publisher
Jacomo di Rossi,

Publication place
Rome,

Physical description
Engraved plan on nine sheets joined, a full conservation report is available on request.

Dimensions
1270 by 1380mm (50 by 54.25 inches).

Notes
This magnificent plan of Florence is not only the largest printed plan of the city published in the Renaissance but also the first accurate perspective view of the city.

The plan is the work of Stefano Buonsignori (fl1576-1586), Benedictine monk and talented mapmaker, who was employed by Francesco di Medici, to serve as court “cosmographer” from around 1576. His principal task was to complete a series of maps for the Sala delle Carte Geografiche in the ducal apartments of the Palazzo Vecchio. Egnazio Danti had completed 31 maps between 1563 and 1575 – Danti would later be responsible for the Gallery of Maps at the Vatican – Buonsignori would produce a further 23. It was during this time that he drew two maps of the Florentine territories, as well as this magnificent plan of Florence.

The Plan

Buonsignori utilises military perspective (a form of oblique projection sometimes confused with the cavalier perspective), which was popular during the Renaissance. Its particularly high view point being perfect for representing built up areas – especially military buildings and fortifications – hence its name.

The plan is orientated east, the River Arno is shown bisecting the city from lower left to upper right. On the left, the plan is dominated by the Fortezza da Basso, commissioned by Alessandro de Medici, and built between 1534 and 1537. Above is a key listing the features of the fort, and above this is a striking compass-rose, with wind heads and a map of the western hemisphere at its centre. To the upper right is an elaborate cartouche, surmounted by the arms of the Medici, with the text block left blank – in the earlier 1584 state it bore a dedication to Francesco di Medici (1541-1587). To the lower right is a large five column table listing 228 public buildings, churches, squares, and other notable buildings (three more than the 1584 edition, though in both states numbers 114-116 are missing). The additions to the list and plan include the imposing Forte di Belvedere, which was built between 1591 and 1595; the equestrian statue of Cosimo I; and the word ‘orifici’ (goldsmith) added to the Ponte Vecchio. Ferdinando I had ordered the tanners and butchers to be removed from the bridge in 1593, and be replaced by the more refined trade. Below the table are four lines providing information on the numerous hospitals and confraternities not mentioned above. To the lower centre of the plan sits Stefano Buonsignori, in his Olivetan habit, surveying the city with a large sector or proportional compass in hand. Below him are the arms of the Olivetan Order (a local Tuscan order of the Benedictines), consisting of three small mounds with the cross and two olive branches above. Hanging from one of the olive branches is the monogram ‘DS’, Don Stefani; the name used by Buonsignori in both the dedication and the imprint.

States

There are three known states of the plan:

1. Dated 1584: with the dedication to Franceseco di Medici, and the imprint of Stefano Buonsignori.

2. Dated 1594: with the imprint of Giralamo Franceschi of Siena; the dedication to Francesco di Medici has been removed; ‘Curatissime Delineata’ has been added to the end of the title; the plan and table has been updated to 1593 to include: Fort Belvedere; the equestrian statue of Cosimo I; and the addition of the word “orefici” (goldsmiths) to the Ponte Vecchio.

3. A reprint of the 1594 state, now bearing the imprint of Giovanni Giacomo di Rossi, Rome, dating to around 1660.

Rarity

All states are extremely rare. The first and second states both exist in only one example, both in Florence: The Uffizi, and the Palazzo Vecchio respectively. The third state (the present example) is known in two institutional examples: Palazzo Spinelli, Florence, and the Harvard Map collection,

Harvard University. We are unable to trace another example appearing on the market since the Second World War.

Bibliography
Bifolco TAV. 1100 state 3 with the imprint of Giovanni Giacomo di Rossi.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 20742

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