

JACOPO DE' BARBARI'S VIEW OF VENICE: NOTE ON A RECENT PUBLICATION*

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The *View of Venice* (c. 1497–1500), a monumental woodcut print, features Venice's urban fabric gracefully interwoven with its aqueous environment – a tessellation of over 120 small, interconnected islands (Fig. 1). It is widely regarded as one of the most significant artistic and technological masterpieces of the Renaissance period. This remarkable work of art represents a significant advancement in the field of pictorial representation of cities, showcasing an unprecedented level of urban topographical accuracy from a lofty vantage point and in a monumental form. Notably, it also represents one of the earliest expressions of the autonomy of Western woodcut technique at the turn of a half-millennium, as evidenced by the emblematic title « Venetie MD » emblazoned at the top. The monumental composite dimensions of the work, measuring more than 1,35 by 2,75 meters – it was printed on six separate sheets of customized paper, the largest sheets produced in Europe –, its complexity of production and its groundbreaking scientific and artistic invention signal the scope of the project, which took three years to complete.¹

As Jürgen Schulz pertinently observed, the *View of Venice* is most efficaciously characterized in superlatives – « the largest and most detailed », « the most influential », « a major work of art ».² Its author, the Venetian artist Jacopo de' Barbari (c. 1460/70–1516), and its ambitious German sponsor, the merchant Anton Kolb (c. 1471–1541), suggest a large-scale collaborative enterprise with an

* Review of KRISTIN LOVE HUFFMAN (ed.), *A View of Venice: Portrait of a Renaissance City*, Duke University Press, Durham – London 2024.

¹ On the extraordinary size of the paper, see DAVID LANDAU, PETER PARSHALL, *The Renaissance Print 1470–1550*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1994, p. 16–17 and 43–45.

² JUERGEN SCHULZ, *The Printed Plans and Panoramic Views of Venice*, Leo S. Olschki, Florence 1970, p. 17.

international agenda. The magnitude, novelty and prowess of the *View* were recognized by the Venetian state, who granted Kolb one of the earliest known copyright permissions for a printed image in October 1500.³



Fig. 1: Jacopo de' Barbari, *View of Venice*, first state, 1500, woodcut print, 132.7 x 277.5 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund © Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Nevertheless, the printed image is not merely a manifesto on the new technology of the printing press to circulate and promote information (both real and imagined) in written and visual terms; it is also a celebration of the city's mythical identity and a glorification of the Venetian state. The representation of ancient gods, Mercury and Neptune, is said to be aligned to safeguard the city, while inscriptions accompanying them make clear their protection over the state's commercial interests and its maritime dominion. The topographically elevated terrain that envelops the summit incorporates toponyms that denote Venetian territorial possessions on the mainland and a conduit to Northern Europe. The

³ Venice, State Archive, Collegio notatorio, Registro 15 [1499–1507], October 1500, fol. 28r. The original document of Anton Kolb's copyright permission and export licence request for the *View of Venice* is reproduced in *Appendix 2* of the reviewed volume, p. 336–337. In it, Kolb seeks two permissions: first for a copyright on the invention of the image, and second, for the exclusion of taxes on its sale in the provinces. The state granted a privilegio for four years: this is the first given to a published image, implying that the State was fully aware of the image's novelty. See CHRISTOPHER WITCOMBE, *Copyright in the Renaissance. Prints and the Privilegio in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Rome*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2004, p. 32–33. Kolb must set the price at no less than three florins (the amount that an average skilled worker in Venice might expect to receive over the course of a month) in order to recover the investment.

depiction of the winds personified and encircling the periphery of the bird's-eye view is reminiscent of a map's compass rose. The lower border is framed by islands, such as those of the Giudecca and San Giorgio, which are tilted and magnified to reveal luxurious gardens that would otherwise be hidden behind private villas and monastic complexes. A regatta, clearly marked on the lower right, exemplifies the recreational pursuits that were accessible only to the most prosperous Renaissance cities. The city of Venice is depicted here in a state of jubilant triumph, a visual manifestation of its opulent wealth and formidable power. This imagery has been recorded with an enduring sense of timeless splendor, capturing the pinnacle of the city's international authority during its historical heyday.

As image, the *View of Venice* is characterized by a tension between the realism of its depiction and its idealized representation, thus aligning with the broader characteristics of Renaissance portraiture. Visual enhancements and optical alterations include a composite of multiple viewpoints that enliven and enrich a viewer's observations. De Barbari employed the bird's-eye view technique to accentuate Venice's distinctive *forma urbis* and to highlight specific locations, thereby enabling the viewer to perceive a more expansive view of the city (e.g. the Rialto Bridge, the sole crossing point over the Grand Canal that connects the city's two halves – *de ultra* and *de citra* – and the focal point of a densely concentrated commercial zone, the Mercerie, an economic corridor of paved, interconnected streets lined with three hundred shops; Piazza San Marco with the Ducal Palace, the seat of Venetian governance, framed by the Clocktower, a technological and artistic marvel of its own, realized in the same years as the View; and the Arsenal). Additionally, the absence of traditional, fortified gates enclosing most other Renaissance city-states flaunting Venetian confidence and awareness of its natural lagoon defenses is noteworthy.

The *View* has been consistently used as a document for how the city and specific locations appeared in 1500 and the object of numerous scholarly studies documenting and identifying a range of subjects from specific sites to people and their activities. Turning the pages of Alvisse Zorzi's *Venezia scomparsa*,⁴ an essential book reconstructing the transformation of the urban fabric – its monuments, system of circulation and transportation, even daily life – confirms the foundational status of Jacopo de' Barbari's work for our visual knowledge of the lagoon circa 1500: its woodcut details often appear as evidence of the only remaining sign of a vanished place or of the original setting for those areas that still exist or came later.

The print has also been the focus of cartographic, representational, and morphological analysis. This was initiated by the two short but innovative studies

⁴ The book went through eighteen editions between its initial publication in 1971 (Banca cattolica del Veneto, Venice) and 1977 (Electa, Milan), and multiple reprints (Mondadori, Milan, since 2001).

by Giuseppe Mazzariol and Terisio Pignatti⁵ that accompanied the one-to-one reproduction of the first state print of the *View*, which were followed by the seminal articles by Juergen Schulz,⁶ Piero Falchetta,⁷ Martin Kemp⁸ and Deborah Howard,⁹ as well as the article by Vanna Bagarolo and Vladimiro Valerio.¹⁰ A more interdisciplinary approach, finally, is represented by the essays in the exhibition catalogue *A volo d'uccello: Jacopo de' Barbari e le rappresentazioni di città nell'Europa del Rinascimento*¹¹ and by the two volumes edited by Corrado Balestrieri Trincanato and Dario Zanverdiani.¹²

- ⁵ GIUSEPPE MAZZARIOL, TERISIO PIGNATTI (eds.), *La pianta di Jacopo de' Barbari*, Cassa di Risparmio, Venice, 1962.
- ⁶ JUERGEN SCHULZ, « Jacopo de' Barbari's *View of Venice*: Map Making, City Views, and Moralized Geography before the Year 1500 », *Art Bulletin*, 60/3 (1978), p. 425–474. An enlarged Italian version of this study was published later: « La veduta di Venezia di Jacopo de' Barbari: cartografia, vedute di città e geografia moralizzata nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento », in ID., *La cartografia tra scienza e arte: carte e cartografi nel Rinascimento italiano*, Panini, Modena 1990, p. 13–63.
- ⁷ PIERO FALCHETTA, « La misura dipinta. Rilettura tecnica e semantica della veduta di Venezia di Jacopo de' Barbari », *Ateneo Veneto*, 178 (1991), p. 273–305; ID., « Il putto rovesciato o Venezia nel cucchiaino: note ultime sulla Veduta di Jacopo de' Barbari », in FABRIZIO BORIN, FILIPPO PEDROCCO (ed.), *Venezia e Venezia: descrizioni, interpretazioni, immagini. Studi in onore di Massimo Gemin*, Il Poligrafo, Padua 2003, p. 23–28.
- ⁸ MARTIN KEMP, « Jacopo de' Barbari: *View of Venice* », in JAY A. LEVENSON (ed.), *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, exhib. cat. (Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1991), National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. 1991, p. 253–255. See also LANDAU, PARSHALL, *The Renaissance print*, p. 43–45 and now SILVIA URBINI, « ALU.0100.1 Veduta di Venezia a volo d'uccello », in *Atlante delle xilografie italiane del Rinascimento*, < <https://archivi.cini.it/storiaarte/detail/4685/mappa-4685.html> > (last accessed May 2026) and GIOVANNI MARIA FARA, DAVID LANDAU (eds.), *Renaissance in Black and White. The Art of Printmaking in Venice (1494–1615)*, exhib. cat. (Museo civico di Bassano del Grappa, Bassano del Grappa, Ca' Rezzonico, Museo del Settecento veneziano, Venice, 2024), Scripta edizioni, Venice 2024, entries no. II.1 Ve and II.2 Ve, p. 107–108.
- ⁹ DEBORAH HOWARD, « Venice as a Dolphin: Further Investigations into Jacopo de' Barbari's *View* », *Artibus et Historiae*, 18/35 (1997), p. 101–111.
- ¹⁰ VANNA BAGAROLO, VLADIMIRO VALERIO, « Jacopo de' Barbari: una nuova ipotesi indiziaria sulla genesi prospettica della veduta Venetie MD », in VLADIMIRO VALERIO (ed.), *Cartografi veneti: mappe, uomini e istituzioni per l'immagine e il governo del territorio*, Editoriale Programma, Padua 2007, p. 118–135.
- ¹¹ GIANDOMENICO ROMANELLI, SUSANNA BIADENE, CAMILLO TONINI (eds.), *A volo d'uccello: Jacopo de' Barbari e le rappresentazioni di città nell'Europa del Rinascimento*, exhib. Cat. (Museo Correr, Venice, 1999), Arsenale, Venice 1999, in particular: ANDREA MASCIANTONIO, « 'Per la materia difficilissima': spunti per una lettura d'insieme della veduta prospettica di Venezia », p. 76–83, PIERO FALCHETTA, « La veduta prospettica di Venezia tra teoria e pratica di misurazione dello spazio », p. 69–75 and FRANCESCO GUERRA, CATERIAN BALLETTI, CARLO MONTI, EVANGELOS LIVIERATOS, CHRYSOULA BOUTOURA, « Informatica e 'infografica' per lo studio della veduta prospettica di Venezia », p. 93–100.
- ¹² *Jacopo de' Barbari, il racconto di una città*, 2 vols., Cetid, Mestre 2000, republished as *Venezia città mirabile. Guida alla veduta prospettica di Jacopo de' Barbari*, Caselle di Sommacampagna, Cierre 2009. This volume presents the results of one of the earliest computer projects to employ de' Barbari's *View*, leveraging its power of detail. The authors reproduced numerous thumbnails of individual details, including diverse elements of the city's fabric and iconographical elements of the *View*. These were organised into fifty categories, ranging from « Abbaini » (dormer or attic windows)

To supplement this already abundant scholarly output, this monumental volume – comprising 23 essays, an introduction, an epilogue and three appendices – represents the culmination of a collaborative, multidimensional digital humanities project relating to the *View of Venice*. Part of the *Visualising Venice project*¹³ – an international research consortium of art and architectural historians, architects, engineers, and visual and media specialists, it was developed over three years in the Wired! Lab at Duke University.

The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University hosted an exhibition in 2017 entitled *A Portrait of Venice. Jacopo de' Barbari's View of 1500* comprised seven digital displays, which served as companions to the extraordinary woodcut print on loan from the Minneapolis Institute of Art, one of the twelve extant, first-state impressions that was prominently on display (Fig. 2).¹⁴ This installation, curated by Kristin Love Huffman, editor of this volume and Instructor of Art History in Duke University's Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies, represented a new prototype. The integration of touchscreens not only served to revitalize Venice and its historical legacy for a diverse audience but also served to extol the remarkable visual elements of the print and the milieu in which it was produced.

to « Zattere » (waterfront quays), and are illustrated with 890 images, most of which are from the *View* itself. Others are included for comparison, including many drawings by EGLE RENATA TRINCANATO, the eminent architect and historian who revolutionised the study of Venetian vernacular (*Venezia minore*, Edizioni del Milione, Milan 1948, published in forty editions between 1948 and 2010 in three languages).

¹³ See KRISTIN HUFFMAN, ANDREA GIORDANO, CAROLINE BRUZELIUS (eds.), *Visualizing Venice. Mapping and Modeling Time and Change in a City*, New York, Routledge, Abingdon-on-Thames, 2028 (< <https://www.routledge.com/Visualizing-Venice-Mapping-and-Modeling-Time-and-Change-in-a-City/Huffman-Giordano-Bruzelius/p/book/9780367885717> >, last accessed May 2026). The previous *Visualizing Venice* exhibitions include *Acqua e Cibo: storie della laguna e della città* (2016) and *Venice, The Jews and Europe, 1516-2016*, both organised in Venice, at Palazzo Ducale in 2015-2016 and 2016 and curated by Donatella Calabi. The two catalogues were published by Marsilio.

¹⁴ < <https://nasher.duke.edu/exhibitions/portrait-venice-jacopo-de-barbaris-view-1500/> > (last accessed May 2026). See KRISTIN LOVE HUFFMAN, « Jacopo de' Barbari's View of Venice (1500): 'Image Vehicles' and 'Pathways of Culture' Past and Present », *Mediterranea. International Journal on the Transfer of Knowledge*, 4 (2019), p. 165-214: p. 180-186. The Minneapolis copy comes from the incredible collection of Victor Masséna, Duke of Rivoli and Prince of Essling, a great bibliophile and author of the still unsurpassed census, *Les livres à figures vénitiens de la fin du XV^e siècle et du commencement du XVI^e [...] Études sur l'art de la gravure sur bois à Venise*, Leclerc-Olschki, Paris – Venice 1907-1914. The known first-state prints (in subsequent years the matrices underwent some specific changes that resulted in two additional known states: the second one dated between 1511 and 1514, the third one is dated within the sixteenth century, with a propensity toward the second half) are located in the following institutions: Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts; Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art; Hamburg, Kunsthalle; London, British Museum; Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Nuremberg, Germanisches National Museum; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France; Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia; Venice, Museo Correr (2); Venice, Museo Navale. See BALESTRIERI TRINCANATO, ZANVERDIANI, *Venezia città mirabile*, p. 19.

The exhibition enabled visitors to pursue narratives in a non-linear fashion through the perusal of separate displays as well as through the independent, yet thematically related chapters within each one, as – we can say – if reading the essays in this edited volume. The material presented here had the capacity to adapt to the viewer’s level of knowledge and curiosity, as this new media offers malleable possibilities to both the neophyte and the cognoscente visitors alike. The viewer is transported to Venice through an immersive and multi-sensory experience, visually engaging and audibly resonating with animation, colorization and ambient sound. In this ambitious project, the technological accomplishment of the woodcut in the late fifteenth century is further enhanced by the integration of twenty-first century digital technologies. Innovative visualization tools and strategies have been shown to be as important for the conception and dissemination of the *View* as they have been for the realization of this project, including the exhibition and this book.



Fig. 2. View of the exhibition *A Portrait of Venice. Jacopo de' Barbari's View of 1500*, Durham, The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2017.

The volume is also the result of an international symposium with interdisciplinary scholars of early modern Venice.¹⁵ A significant proportion of the essays expand upon the engaging presentations. The publication is further enriched by the contributions of experts in the field, who have been invited to provide additional texts. All address two overarching themes: the representation of Venice and Venetian life in the print, and the print as a manifestation of cartographic and artistic phenomena. In addition to the original, scholars were granted access to the high-resolution reproduction that had been produced for the exhibition; this version was the largest and highest-quality one ever available for study.¹⁶ The convergence of perspectives and methodological approaches among scholars has been facilitated by the collaborative efforts of museums – first of all the Correr museum in Venice, home of the six wooden matrices used to print the *View* and two of the twelve extant first-state woodcuts –, institutions, and non-profit grant-making foundations (Samuel H. Kress Foundation, The National Endowment of the Humanities, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation and the Wired! Lab at Duke University). This partnership permitted a team of colleagues from *Visualizing Venice*, along with the staff from the Correr museum, to conduct light laser scans of the wooden matrices.

Following the prologue by Kristin Love Huffman and Andrea Bellini, the editor's introduction – *The View as an Urban Portrait* – and the plates, the volume is divided into two parts. The first part, *The View as a Printed Cartographic and Artistic Visualisation*, contains essays that coherently delineate the view as an advanced product of Renaissance artistic, humanist and scientific culture. The essays in the second part are more centrifugal in conception and relate to the urban systems and lived experiences of early modern Venice, including its unique identity and idiosyncrasies, social, political and economic infrastructures, and cosmopolitan residents. Using de' Barbari's image as a starting point, each essay has been conceived as a standalone piece, although interrelated themes weave throughout and across the two parts.

The eleven essays in Part I expand our understanding of the scientific, artistic and theoretical strategies for interpreting the collaborative elements of this extraordinary representation of a city, which was incomparable at the time. The fact that it took more than three years to create the *View* highlights the woodcut as a product of technological advancements in printmaking and international collaboration. The essays in this section provide a context for the artistic genesis of the work and offer insight into Jacopo de' Barbari, whose elusive career in Venice

¹⁵ *Stories about Venice and de' Barbari's Marvelous View of 1500*, held October 12 and 13 at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in conjunction with the exhibition: < <https://sites.duke.edu/venicesymposium/program/> > (last accessed May 2026).

¹⁶ Duke Digital Repository image 10.7924/G8MK69TH: < <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4pr7pr2m> >, last accessed May 2026.

remains undocumented. He lived at a time of rich transnational cultural exchange, which spurred artistic and scientific invention across the Alps, notably in Nuremberg, the home city of Anton Kolb. Venice was one of the world's most vibrant cultural centers at that time. Works on paper were ideal for circulating imaginative expression; the most extensively illustrated incunabulum, Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* (or, in the Latin version, *Liber chronicarum*), with woodcuts by Wohlgemut, Pleydenwurff and Albrecht Dürer, printed in 1493, offers good proof of this.¹⁷ In it, the representation of Venice is derived from the large-scale panoramic view of *Civitas Veneciarum*, which was printed on four sheets that folded out from Bernhard von Breydenbach's *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam*, first published in Mainz in 1486 by Erhard Reuwich¹⁸ and, introducing the notion of place in a systematic ordering of the world, highlights Venice as a port of passage for pilgrims en route to the Holy Land.

Kareneidis Barzman's essay, *The View of Venice in a Genealogy of City Views and Government Mapping*, initiates Part I by situating the View within the historical development of city views and state-sponsored representations of Venetian territorial possession. The essay subsequently locates its production in the early stages of the systematic collection and visualization of geospatial data in government archives. This pivotal moment in the development of cartography occurred in the latter half of the fifteenth century, marking the inception of what we now term a geographic information system (GIS) in Venice. This innovation was devised to enhance the management of Venetian territories. This assertion is substantiated by the extensive collection of state-commissioned maps of Venetian sites unearthed by Barzman in Venice's archives. Such chorographic representations, or descriptive mapping, emerged as part of the ancient Ptolemaic and of the understandings of Strabo's *Geography*, first translated in Latin in 1458 under the sponsorship of Jacopo Antonio Marcello a Venetian patrician and government official, that informed the labelling, identifiers and units of measurement that became keys to reading these maps. It is noteworthy that de' Barbari initiated his unparalleled View during a period when Venice was undertaking a comprehensive initiative to render its landholdings fully visible through pictorial representations and shared with them some of the same nested features, including text and directional indicators, even if these appeared as wind

¹⁷ Nuremberg, Anton Koberger, for Sebald Schreyer and Sebastian Kammermeister, 12 July 1493 (Latin, ISTC, is00307000) and 23 December 1493 (German, ISTC is00309000). In creating this remarkable incunabulum, which comprises over 1,800 illustrations, Dürer, who was the printer's godson, was privileged to be the apprentice of the highly skilled senior artist Michael Wolgemut. See LANDAU, PARSHALL, *The Renaissance Print*, p. 38–40.

¹⁸ ISTC ib01189000. See FREDERIKE TIMM, *Der Palästina-Pilgerbericht des Bernhard von Breydenbach und die Holzschritte Erhard Reuwichs. Die Peregrinatio in terram sanctam (1486) als Propagandainstrument im Mantel der gelehrten Pilgerschrift*, Hauswedell & co., Stuttgart 2006.

heads drawn from the classical tradition of world mapping. In Venice, as nowhere else, the time was ripe for the congruence of public and private interests in the evolving fields of cartography. And this could be nowhere more apparent than in publication of the Barbari's print.



Fig. 3-4: Jacopo de' Barbari, *View of Venice*, first state, 1500, woodcut print, 132.7 x 277.5 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund, details: the « Greco », or north-easterly wind, proposed self-portrait of Jacopo de' Barbari, and the « Scirocco », or south-easterly wind, proposed portrait of Anton Kolb.

© Minneapolis Institute of Art.



In his essay *A City as a World, Jacopo de' Barbari's View in 1500*, Piero Falchetta sheds further light on these map-like tendencies within the *View*. First, he presents the historiography of the scholarly debate regarding the print, which divided into two camps, though it is difficult to draw a clear line between the two theories. On the one hand, there are those who believe that the image is the result of artistic work intended to celebrate the power and splendor of Venice. On the other hand, cartographic theorists assert that the *View* is the result of a « scientific » program and geometric process and are interested in the cartographic procedures available at the time, such as projecting perspective onto a cylindrical surface, which may have been employed by de' Barbari and his collaborators. This overview of the various theories and hypotheses reveals that much of the scholarly discussion of the *View* has focused on technical features, particularly the specific effects of distortions, which were most likely caused by inadequate instruments and the process of converting the surveyed urban fabric into a drawing taken from an artificially elevated viewpoint. Falchetta then discusses the inclusion of the eight personifications of the principal winds (the « Greco », or north-easterly wind, is a proposed self-portrait of Jacopo de' Barbari, and the « Scirocco », or south-easterly wind, is a proposed portrait of Anton Kolb) (Fig. 3-4) or the main directional coordinates, which were a Ptolemaic convention used to represent the world as a sphere. This helped to explain the distorted surfaces in the *View*, which resulted in the invention of the first Ptolemaic perspective map of a city – yet another innovation for its time. Ptolemy's *Geography* was published in several printed editions during the second half of the fifteenth century: the projection of Venice onto flexible space could thus have been inspired by Ptolemy's second projection, with the personified winds in the *View* deliberately referencing cartographic methods.

Unsurprisingly, the mathematical plotting of fixed coordinates would have been invaluable to a city that relied on seafaring trade and movement between maritime locations. Cosimo Monteleone's essay, *A Perspectival Investigation of Jacopo de' Barbari's View of Venice*, outlines the value placed on mathematics as part of the scientific and artistic backdrop of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Venice. The essay attempts to indicate new possible paths of interpretation relating to the fifteenth-century study of mathematics, which has been little explored until now. Specifically, the essay offers new insights into the print, examining the role of perspective within the scientific, cultural and artistic context of Venice at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and how this may have influenced Jacopo de' Barbari's work. By the mid-fifteenth century, mathematics had incited great curiosity and intellectual interest in town, becoming indispensable to the Rialto School, where logic and philosophy were taught. Among the supporters of this scientific renaissance were leading scholars in Venice and the Veneto shortly before the publication of the *View*: Ermolao Barbaro, Giorgio Valla, and Luca

Pacioli. The latter is depicted alongside a young man on his left, possibly Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino in a painting dated 1495 and attributed to de' Barbari himself (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte) (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Attributed to Jacopo de' Barbari, *Portrait of Luca Pacioli (1445–1517) with a student (Guidobaldo da Montefeltro?)*, 1495, oil on panel, 98 x 108 cm, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Public domain © Musei di Capodimonte.

Compasses, geometric diagrams, and scientific books are scattered on the table, and a crystal rhomboid octahedron is painted in perspective and suspended on a barely perceptible wire in the top left corner. Despite the uncertain attribution, the painting is from the Venetian School and demonstrates mastery of geometric challenges, such as the *perspectiva artificialis* and laws of optics. This indicates the artist's access to ancient mathematical and scientific treatises in the state's library, which was bequeathed to Venice in 1460 by Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472), along with contemporary manuscripts and printed books. Artists such as Alberti, Piero della Francesca and Dürer codified these approaches in written and visual form.

Thus, it can be concluded that, by the end of the fifteenth century, scientific treatises and measuring instruments were available to survey a city, and basic mapping of space would have used geometric models to translate measurable reality. Based on the considerations made in this essay, it is possible to conclude that the *View* is a scientific cartographic representation of Venice, although its degree of precision cannot yet be established. Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that, in order to depict Venice from above, Jacopo de' Barbari translated its measurable shape into an appropriately scaled drawing. The distortions could thus be explicated not only as a compositional device, but also as an adaptation to the constraints imposed by the perspective code. This could explain why, since its publication, the uncanny correspondence with many aspects of the real Venice is one of the primary features that continues to fascinate observers today.

The emergence of directional order within social networks, as illustrated in the *View*, is a phenomenon that merits further investigation. Jacopo de' Barbari, a native of Venice, presented an image that not only registered his perceptual experience of the city, but also conveyed his vision of his own habitat. In his essay *An Artist's Address Book, Notes on Venice's Artistic Geography*, Giorgio Tagliaferro proposes a theoretical construct of artistic geography that is largely based on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the « production of space ». This theory centers social discourse on the representation of space, encouraging us to consider the view not merely as a topographical record, but also as part of a lived experience understood through the interconnections of spaces¹⁹. According to Lefebvre, space is produced by, and produces, physical, mental and social practices that respectively reflect the threefold characterization of space as perceived, conceived and lived. Applying Lefebvre's scheme to the *View* reveals it to be a conceptualized « representation of space », presenting Venice as both a geographical abstraction and a coherent system of signs informed by scientific knowledge, as well as a « representational space » that expresses the author's appropriation of the physical space through social practice. This facilitates the viewer's ability to comprehend the subject's lived experience through the agency of imagination. The concept of foregrounding the plurality of social, professional and material interests linked to Venice's urban economy has the potential to emphasize the coexistence of multiple operational modes within the city's fabric. This is characterized by both continuities and discontinuities. Tagliaferro applied these theoretical undercurrents by taking painters as an example. The geographical locations where they resided, pursued their occupations, and procured materials for their artisanal pursuits gave rise to a series of social networks that were

¹⁹ HENRI LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell, Oxford 1991(first ed., *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris 1974), p. 33, 36–46.

intrinsically linked to specific locales. Vincenzo Catena, a prosperous painter who was a contemporary of de' Barbari and was apparently associated with Giorgione, resided in the central commercial hub of San Bartolomeo, in the vicinity of Rialto Bridge. However, the high volume of economic, financial and communication transactions carried out in and around the artist's *contrada* exposed him to cross-connections with other trades and diverse social groups, and his membership of the Scuola di San Rocco, on the other side of Rialto, provided another possible means for him to establish extra-parochial and socially differentiated connections.

The artists were exposed to new trends through their presence in Venice and the interconnectedness of artistic communities. Furthermore, the presence of foreign artists who travelled to the city and were granted commissions could also exert an influence on the broader artistic community. Anna Christine Swartwood House draws attention to the tendency to overlook the margins when attempting to understand the entirety of the *View's* message, rather than focusing solely on the urban form. In her essay *Beyond Venice. At the Margins of the View*, she puts forward the argument that the margins of the print – which, she notes, have received virtually no attention from scholars – offer valuable insights into Venice and its connection to the wider world. In order to comprehend the artistic and geographical achievements of the *View*, it is essential to reunite the aquatic and mountain frontiers with the central focus. On initial observation, the open aquatic and rural horizons sharply contrast with the meticulously differentiated urban center. This contrast pertains to a seminal conceptualization of the relationship between a city and its outskirts during the fifteenth century, whereby the center engages in a perpetual conflict with the periphery to uphold the prevailing hierarchy between high and low culture, as well as between civilized urbanity and untamed nature, a hierarchical structure that proved to be a readily manifestable concept. The virtues of Venice, as represented by de' Barbari, are largely related to commerce. The mountainous landscape frontier, which traverses the top three sheets in a continuous fashion, serves as a reminder of Venice's incursion into the *terraferma*. It also functions as a mapping indicator, with four named cities (Marghera, Mestre, Treviso and Serravalle), all of which were Venetian possessions, acting as guideposts that formed the trade route for the movement of people and objects of luxury goods, including printed materials – quite possibly the six sheets of the *View* and most certainly copies of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* – across the Brenner Pass, from Venice to the north, to reach an export market abroad. The most renowned documentarian of this « space between », who regarded it as a domain for experimentation and potential, was Albrecht Dürer. Dürer documented his travels over the Brenner Pass from Nuremberg to Venice in 1494-95 through a series of drawings and watercolors. As has been previously observed, Jacopo de' Barbari intended that Mercury serve as a form of signature, yet it is noteworthy that in the *View*, he is depicted both ruling over Venice and

signifying its trading partners, most notably Germany, which is invoked by the mountainous frontier (Fig. 6). The pagan god may also concisely express the interrelations of commerce, geography, and the horizon in the sixteenth century. This phenomenon, too, underscores the imperative for a unification of the center with its margins, a concept that Mercury's integration reinforces.



Fig. 6: Jacopo de' Barbari, *View of Venice*, first state, 1500, woodcut print, 132.7 x 277.5 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund, detail: Mercury © Minneapolis Institute of Art

The conviction that Venetian eminence stemmed from its distinct maritime connection and that Venetian affluence was derived from oceanic trade had been a long-standing component of the city's self-concept. De' Barbari's *View* offers a visual representation of these concepts, as evidenced by its strategic placement of Mercury and Neptune, along with the banners held by these classical deities. The work underscores the city's waterways, commercial prosperity, and military strength. Furthermore, the depiction of over 500 vessels, including 148 large merchant ships and 85 cargo ships, transporting luxury goods and commodities between Mediterranean ports and the institutions within the city that regulated and profited from this commerce, serves to convey an impression of maritime prosperity. In *Vessels of Political Communication*, Monique O'Connell contextualizes the *View* as a component of the tradition in Venice of recording « truths » in written form. Humanist chronicles encompassed the documentation of broader patterns of Venetian history, including those recorded by Marcantonio Sabellico and Bernardo Giustinian, in addition to the diaries of Marin Sanudo, Gerolamo Priuli, Pietro Dolfin and Marcantonio Michiel. These chronicles provided detailed accounts of quotidian Venetian life, encompassing both the prosaic and the extraordinary. The two approaches to documenting Venice's history – general praise and propaganda, and detailed realism and personal opinions – are present in the *View*. The overarching vision of the city's appearance is offered, as well as a particular focus on individual streets, canals and buildings. Text and image about the Venetian state are mutually reinforcing, with the text providing a contextual framework for the image and the image serving to augment the text's message. However, O'Connell invites us to consider an interpretation of the image that challenges traditional paradigms. Specifically, she poses the question of whether the image represented the state at the peak of its prosperity, or whether it was instead intended to occlude a pivotal moment in history. In the year prior to the *View*'s publication, wars on two fronts, the eastern Mediterranean, with the Ottomans, and the mainland, in the alliance with the French against Milan, threatened Venetian hegemony, while between 1497 and 1500 the Portuguese's circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope endangered the Venetian economy, namely its monopoly over the lucrative spice trades. In a world where people were increasingly accustomed to consuming news, receiving information in polemical form, and seeing and hearing arguments bolstered by combinations of print and image, the *View* formed part of a network of political communication, both written and visual.²⁰ This asserted the state's persistent strength despite any political and economic challenges.

²⁰ See FILIPPO DE VIVO, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007 and ROSA SALZBERG, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2014.

The print industry played a key role in disseminating hyperbolic messages about the Venetian state. A major hub and a crossroad for import and export, Venice was the leading center of the European publishing industry around 1500, with its streets teeming with bookshops, stationers, and street vendors. Printing businesses benefited from transnational networks and international investments, which were concentrated near the Rialto, Piazza San Marco and the Mercerie, the axis that connected the two main sites. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Frezzaria, just west of Piazza San Marco, was home to a concentration of immigrants and print shops. Foreigners – primarily Germans residing in their warehouse near Rialto Bridge, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the longtime residence of Anton Kolb –, and printing often went together. In her essay *Navigating the Business of Print in Venice with Jacopo de' Barbari*, Bronwen Wilson considers the *View* as a tool for mapping the business of print. Drawing inspiration from the depictions of Neptune and Mercury which point with their trident and caduceus, as well as the winds with their fan-like rays, which mirror the wind roses found on portolans, she suggests that the map's precision in locating places associated with print is due to its deliberate design, influenced by the convergence of printmaking, mapmaking, and mobility. She suggests that the woodcut functions not only as a topographical map, but also as an itinerary that moves viewers from place to place and orients them to the business of print. The collaboration between the Venetian artist de' Barbari and the German publisher Anton Kolb was an important factor in this process, as was experimentation with the potential of the medium and the unique cityscape, as well as the use of instruments for printing, measuring and travelling. Viewed from a distance and surrounded by personifications of winds, the islands resemble a vast map of the world. This Olympian vantage point offers an idealised, utopian and timeless image of the city that reflects the government's long-standing approach of managing competing interests by integrating individuals into the city as a whole.²¹

Although scholarly attention has primarily focused on the print rather than the matrices used to print the *View*, their size constitutes an overall « monumental » picture measuring approximately 140 by 287 centimeters. This places them among the largest wooden blocks ever made, and among the few large-format examples preserved today (Fig. 7). Valeria Cafà discusses the story of these sculptural artefacts in her essay *On the Collection History of the View's Matrices*. The essay reconstructs known data about the events relating to the six blocks prior to their entry into the museum.

²¹ BROWNE WILSON, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2005; EAD., « Venice, Print, and the Early Modern Icon », *Urban History*, 33/1 (2006), p. 39–64.

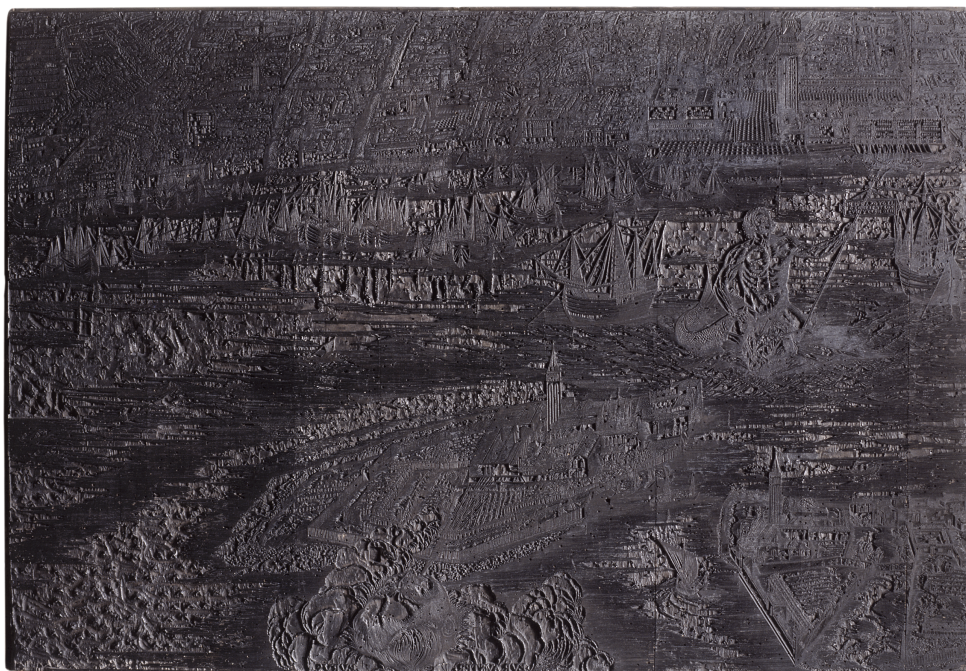


Fig. 7 - Anonymous engraver from Jacopo de' Barbari, woodblock matrix for the print *The View of Venice* (corresponding to the bottom centre), woodcut, 1497–1500, p: 684x995x17 cm; b699x1012x22 cm, Museo Correr, Venice. © Museo Correr, Venice.

Albeit intrinsically linked to the prints, the matrices are works of art in their own right and have a different history, presence and esteemed value in Venice, first among printmakers and later among collectors.²² After 1500, the matrices underwent specific changes resulting in two additional known states. In the first state, dated between 1511 and 1514, the small section containing the date « MD »

²² The measurements of the individual parts are shown below. Each part of the matrix consists of two sections: the carved and engraved section (called the « plate ») and the smooth section on the reverse (called the « block »). Each part is indicated by a letter of the alphabet, starting with the first at the top left (A) and ending with the last at the bottom right (F): A- plate: 683 x 909 x 14; block: 695 x 930 x 15; B- p: 682 x 995 x 17; b: 698 x 1013 x 15; C- p: 685 x 913 x 17; b: 696 x 928 x 14; D- p: 683 x 912 x 15; b: 698 x 928 x 14; E- p: 684 x 995 x 17; b: 699 x 1012 x 22; F- p: 682 x 908 x 14; b: 695 x 925 x 15. It is symptomatic of a change in attitude towards these artefacts, now particularly at the centre of research interest, that the 1999 *A volo d'uccello* exhibition catalogue still stated that the matrices should not be evaluated « as autonomous artistic objects but as works of art intended for transposition onto paper » (p. 102). See the monographic issue of *Studi di Memofonte*, 17 (2016) and ELIZABETH SAVAGE, FEMKE SPEELBERG (eds.), *Printing Things: Blocks, Plates, and Stones 1400–1900*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, forthcoming.

disappears and the roof of the San Marco bell tower is corrected to reflect its completion between 1513 and 1514. This first revision was followed by a further retooling in the second half of the sixteenth century, which aimed to restore the matrices to their original state, producing prints closer to the first state. Venice had changed so much that a revision could no longer modify select notable points, the choice, therefore, was to return to the *View* of 1500, effectively changing the value and purpose of the entire work: no longer a timely documentation of the current state of the city but rather, its memory at a precise moment – at the turn of a new century. The six pear wooden blocks have seemingly always remained in Venice. However, their documented presence has been lost for over two centuries. They reappeared in the second half of the eighteenth century in two short handwritten notes contained in two volumes of the Gradenigo-Dolfin Memorials: the first attributed them to « Alberto Duro » (this reference to the celebrated master as the author must have contributed to their preservation) and located them in the house of Baron Tassis; the second described them as « somewhat moth-eaten » (more likely heavily attacked by woodworms).²³ How and exactly when the matrices entered the family's collections remains unclear. Those who benefited from the Tassis family's misfortune at the end of the eighteenth century included the patrician Teodoro Correr, who had begun his collection of Venetian art and history in those very years. There are almost no provenance records for the works in his collection that he bequeathed to the city of Venice. His collection simply merged into the Museo Civico e Raccolta Correr, forming the nucleus of today's museum.²⁴ An inventory of Teodoro's holdings in his palazzo on the Grand Canal, compiled in 1831, referenced the *View* mounted on canvas and hung on the wall. Correr may have been thus the first to display the print alongside the six wooden blocks in his museum. This display visually connected the two works of art – the woodcut and the matrices – and was replicated in the first room of the Fondaco dei Turchi (the present-day Natural History Museum) in 1880, where the collection was first moved. It continues to be exhibited in the Correr Museum in Venice today.

It is especially fitting that de' Barbari, even after he left Venice for Nuremberg, continued to adopt Hermes's/Mercury's caduceus as his signature, featured in most attributed prints and selected paintings, is one example of his clever erudition, linking himself with the city and his work of drawing and printing it.

²³ BIBLIOTECA DEL MUSEO CORRER, *Commemoriali*, mss Gradenigo-Dolfin, n. 200, tome 11, fol. 11r and tome 16, fol. 25v.

²⁴ MUSEO CORRER, « Classe XXXIII – tipi e piastre da stampa in metallo e in legno ». A recent overview of Class XXXIII and in particular of the corpus of wooden matrices has been compiled by ILARIA ANDREOLI, « Il fondo di matrici lignee del Museo Correr: una presentazione », *Studi di Memofonte*, 17 (2016), p. 25–57.

The three essays that conclude the first part of the volume are in fact dedicated to his work.

Woodcuts, engravings and drawings offered Renaissance artists a creative outlet, free from the constraints of traditional commissions in terms of typology, content and site-specificity. The great innovators in graphic arts at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the next were Andrea Mantegna, Albrecht Dürer, and Jacopo de' Barbari.²⁵ In her essay, *The Graphic Inventions of Jacopo de' Barbari*, the volume's editor, Kristin Love Huffman, discusses Jacopo de' Barbari's noteworthy contributions, which, while inventive, have received little attention, especially the woodcuts he created just prior to the publication of the *View* – the foundation for his appreciation by prestigious patrons in northern European courts – and the engravings and watercolors produced in the years immediately following. Around the time of his involvement with the ambitiously conceived *View*, the artist devised another large-scale, multisheet woodcut set: the *Battle of the Satyrs* (a single sheet measuring approximately 385 x 495 mm) and *Triumph over the Satyrs* (three sheets measuring approximately 290 x 1270 mm). These early examples of pictorial poetry that were embraced by artists such as Lorenzo Lotto and Giorgione in the following decade, with small-scale paintings that were prized by Venetian collectors. When studied together as an unfolding narrative intended to be read sequentially, de' Barbari's woodcuts reveal the artist's awareness of humanist themes, his ability to translate them into visual form, and his skill in creating intricate imagery. They represent a moment in time when the sophistication of imagery and composition was achieved in a medium – engraving – that, until de' Barbari, had been less exploratory in terms of format and subject matter. These inventions reveal de' Barbari's understanding of the contemporary humanist revival of poetic and philosophical sources, offering insights into his movement within humanist circles. In an effort to decipher the visual, multivalent registers of meaning in these early woodcuts, Huffman considers their various humanist underpinnings: allegorical/mythological, literal, political, historical, scientific and expressly self-referential. These visual connections extend to other prints conceived independently by the artist: *Victory Reclining Among Her Trophies*, c. 1500–1501, and *The Satyr and His Family*, c. 1504, continue metonymic references from the Satyr woodcuts. Shortly after producing the *View*, and most likely while staying with Frederick the Wise, the artist introduced the still life genre, which

²⁵ On Renaissance print, see LANDAU, PARSHALL, *The Renaissance Print*, and EVELYN LINCOLN, *The Invention of the Renaissance Printmaker*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT 2000 and specifically on Venice, see now FARA, LANDAU (eds), *Renaissance in Black and White*. On de' Barbari, see JAY A. LEVENSON, « Jacopo de' Barbari and Northern Art of the Early Sixteenth Century », Ph. D. Diss., Columbia University 1978, SIMONE FERRARI, *Jacopo de' Barbari: un protagonista del Rinascimento tra Venezia e Dürer*, Mondadori, Milan 2006 and BEATE BÖCKEM, *Jacopo de' Barbari: Künstlerschaft and Hofkultur um 1500*, Böhlau Verlag, Cologne 2016.

had not been seen as a standalone subject since antiquity. The *Dead Partridge* (1504) (Fig. 8) is a stunning depiction of the bird as it would have appeared immediately after the hunt and is yet another triumph.²⁶ Like his woodcuts and engravings, this work on paper features unprecedented subject matter. And, like the *View*, its mesmerising detail captivates the viewer.



Fig. 8: Jacopo de' Barbari, *Dead Gray Partridge*, 1504, watercolour on paper, 25,7 x 15,2 cm. British Museum, London. Public domain © Trustees of the British Museum.

²⁶ Watercolour on paper, 27.7 x 15.2 cm, The British Museum, London.

In her essay, *Revisiting 'lontani et altra fantaxia' An Eyckian Perspective on Giovanni Bellini and Jacopo de' Barbari*, Mary Pardo revisits textual and visual evidence for the critical connotations of the term *lontani* (distances), which, around 1500, was used as a supplement and near-synonym for *paesi* (countrysides) – a term now translated as « landscapes ». The term *lontani* is discussed in relation to the specifically Eyckian legacy: it is argued that its use correlates with the survival of Jan van Eyck's pictorial strategies and the memory of his specific innovations into the late fifteenth century. In this context, the relationship between Bellini's *fantasia* and his conception of distant landscape views is examined, as well as the prototypes of northern artists that were long appreciated by Venetian connoisseurs and are usually cited as sources for Bellini's topographical inventions. Jan van Eyck's panoramic topographies in paintings such as the *Rolin Madonna* and various *Crucifixions* (including one now at the Ca' d'Oro in Padua, which was already there by 1460) or the Antwerp *Saint Barbara* offered models for urban depictions in the style of portraits and bird's-eye projections. De Barbari's illusionistic rendering of urban stereotomy, or descriptive geometry, not only indicates his sophisticated understanding of van Eyck's visual strategies, but also his place among celebrated contemporaries such as Bellini. If the best Quattrocento models for optically coherent, portrait-like urban depictions achieved with tonal modelling were found in the panoramic topographies of Eyckian painting, *lontani et altra fantaxia* (a phrase quoted by nobleman Michele Vianello from a letter by Bellini himself) were pictorial features that the Venetian considered to be unique to his art and the pleasure it gave to viewers and himself. Bellini internalised his *lontani* and enjoyed nourishing his imagination by following his paintbrush on an « aimless » journey (*vagare*), as seen in his *Sacred Allegory* (c. 1490–1500).²⁷ This work brings together the raking light of the foreground, meteorological light from the sky, and reflected and refracted light in the water, bridging the differences between near and far.

The early 1500s – the period in which de' Barbari launched his career north of the Alps – were a decisive and fertile time for intercultural and artistic exchanges between Italy and the North. Among Italian artists documented to have been active north of the Alps in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, de' Barbari is the most noteworthy. As outlined by Rangsook Yoon in her essay, the last of the volume's first part, *Jacopo de' Barbari, a Wandering Court Artist in the North. Changing Perspectives on His Role in Northern Renaissance Art*, he was an urbane, erudite humanist who demonstrated uncanny adaptability as he moved among prestigious courts in northern Europe. His illustrious yet nomadic career began with his involvement in creating the *View* and the recommendation of the Nuremberg patrician Anton Kolb. While his role as a cultural mediator,

²⁷ Oil on canvas, 73 x 119 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

introducing and disseminating Italian humanistic knowledge of classical antiquity and Renaissance artistic theories in Germany, is irrefutable, his critical importance has diminished in the twentieth century. In her analysis of critical works on cultural and artistic exchanges between Italy and the North, Yoon contextualizes de' Barbari's nomadic artistic career within the framework of early modern mobility and the circumstances of Renaissance court artists. By examining his presence in various northern courts (including Nuremberg, Wittemberg, Souburg and Mechelen), Yoon illustrates de' Barbari's transformative role in conveying the artistic motifs and ideals of the Italian Renaissance to the North. In particular, she highlights his contribution to the movement to elevate painting to the status of the eighth liberal art. His patrons in northern courtly circles highly appreciated his mathematical knowledge, which underpinned the theoretical discourse about ideal human proportions. This is evident not only in Dürer's artworks and writing, but also in de' Barbari's influence on several young artists who would soon become major figures, including Cranach the Elder, Gossart, and Hans Süß von Kulmbach. De' Barbari's renderings of nude figures and his studies of ideal human proportions, allegedly derived from the Vitruvian canon which was still obscure in the North, acted as a catalyst in the formation of these younger artists at a time when de' Barbari's artistic leadership prevailed in the courts that employed them. The esteem in which de' Barbari was held by his contemporary patrons, humanists and colleagues, as well as his overall art-historical significance, needs to be re-examined in light of the prestige, artistic commissions and social position accorded to sixteenth-century court artists, who were often treated as members of a prince's inner circle and enjoyed both tangible and intangible benefits. German and Burgundian-Netherlandish monarchs invested heavily in displaying their humanistic and classical learning and taste, and in promulgating such developments in their courts, where a taste for antiquity was previously absent or just beginning. Artists like De' Barbari, who were willing to relocate from Italy, played an essential role in establishing new artistic traditions at princely residences.

The *View* persisted for over two hundred years as the quintessential image of Venice, serving as a legacy of memory for the city. Subsequent representations of the city adopted the *View's* visual strategies as a means of presenting the city to the world until the eighteenth century, when Lodovico Ughi's plan of Venice was published.²⁸ This marked the transition to standard, mathematically charted representations that can be geo-rectified within digital platforms and are therefore relatable to nineteenth-century cadasters and contemporary maps.

²⁸ [*Iconografica rappresentazione della inclita città di Venezia consacrata al reggio serenissimo dominio veneto*], [Venice]: Giuseppe Baroni a S. Giuliano, [1729?], 128 x 177 cm, < <https://lccn.loc.gov/2006629148> >, last accessed May 2026.

The thirteen essays in Part II open with the systems and networks necessary for a city that prided itself on its uniqueness and international status as a trading hub – the invisible ingenuity necessary for a city that was truly in a class of its own, built in a lagoon. This was the result of human creativity coexisting within a mutually fortifying ecosystem, as revealed by the details of the print, thanks to the city's inimitable *forma urbis*. The Queen of the Adriatic had sovereignty over a vast maritime domain. Born of the sea, she was the beautiful mythological goddess, Venus. She remained untouched and unblemished by foreign attack for over one thousand years thanks to the lagoon's waterways, which provided natural defenses. Alongside contemporary written chronicles and personal accounts, the *View* reinforced the notion of Venice as a marvelous, miraculous and divine city. It also underscored the power, wealth and exceptionality of the harmonious Venetian state, otherwise known as *La Serenissima*.²⁹

Jacopo de' Barbari's print depicts the city at the end of a remarkable century of financial and political success, physical growth, urban improvements and construction activity. The Venetian Republic amassed a collection of myths to explain the reasons for its legendary peace, stability, and longevity. One fundamental strand of these myths was the city's own seemingly miraculous foundation; the essential point being that the site was divinely chosen, through the figure of Mark the Evangelist. This divine choice itself gave rise to a city that was unique in its physical context. The entire city was built through the resourcefulness, determination and ingenuity of the Venetian people in a physical environment that most others would deem impossible. Since these foundations are invisible, the palazzi appear to rise straight out of the water. It was almost as if the Venetians were defying the rules of nature and gravity itself. Venice was also a true bastion of Christianity, unstained by any classical or pagan associations. In his essay, *Toward the Perfect City. Urban Development in the Quattrocento*, Richard Goy considers some of the practical ways in which the vision of the « triumphant » was realised during the Quattrocento. This culminated in Marin Sanudo's written laudation, *Laus Urbis Venetae* (1493), and de' Barbari's graphic one, bearing the bold title « Venetie MD » at the top. By the time de' Barbari's *View* was published in 1500, the city's overall form and communication networks had already been established; nonetheless, the 25 per cent population increase over a century is significant given the city's virtually finite form and limits. Thus, land reclamation would not cease in an effort to ease congestion, notably along the northern rim of the city, during the sixteenth century. Goy introduces readers to the process of

²⁹ See ÉLISABETH CROUZET-PAVAN, *Venise triomphante: les horizons d'un mythe*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1999, DAVID ROSAND, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2001, IAIN FENLON, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT 2007 and KARL APPUHN, *A Forest on the Sea. Environmental Expertise in Renaissance Venice*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2009.

expansion and land reclamation – a dynamic phenomenon that is evident in the view of the western and eastern edges of the city. This was an extensive area of marsh and mudflat that evolved over the Quattrocento. Urbanization remained an ideal Venetian balance of practical necessity, fiscal acumen, public and private interests, and secular and religious interests. However, it was always an investment in the city that displayed a strong sense of civic and patriotic pride – a sentiment that is equally prominent in Sanudo's words. Much as driving timber piles into the clay for a new palazzo represented Venetian ingenuity, resourcefulness and strength of will, reclamation reinforced the idea that the Venetians were in command of their destiny, unhindered by the vagaries of their natural surroundings.

As Sanudo famously wrote « Venice is in the water and has no water ». Before the modern era, the city's only sources of fresh water were rain and barges from the mainland. The Venetians quickly learned how to capture this precious resource, devising an ingenious system whereby rainwater was collected in cisterns hidden beneath almost every campo, cloister and courtyard in the city. Each cistern was topped by a *vera da pozzo*, or wellhead. As Venice possessed no stone of its own, all the materials for the wellheads had to be imported from elsewhere. Venetians were masters at repurposing antique remains, and in the early days, wellheads were made from genuine Roman or Greek *spolia*. The purity of the public cisterns was protected by the authorities. The wells had wooden or metal covers that were locked at night and opened every morning by the parish priest or his representative, who would ring the church bells to signal this. Like palaces, which were personal urbanistic interventions, the sculpted wellheads distributed throughout the city provided sustenance and served as places to socialize with neighbors. Patricia Fortini Brown discusses the more than fifty ornamental wellheads identified in the *View* in Venice, Giudecca and Murano – during the Renaissance, there were some 7,000 wellheads in total, in public and private spaces – in her essay *The Wellhead as an Amenity of Venetian Urban Space*. Her close analyses reveal that the iconography and the decorative style of wellheads indicated the history and importance of a site and mirrored the changing tastes in architecture and sculpture over time in Venice. Many wellheads became collectors' items, traveling the world. The Austrians led the way, shipping the weighty showpieces to Germany, Austria, Russia, and beyond, but British and Americans were not far behind.

The wellheads were not the only distinctive features that shaped daily life. The more than one hundred bell towers, which are all connected to churches, dominate the skyline and, like the wellheads, have been documented in the *View*. Although mostly freestanding, Venice's campanili are distinct from all others in Italy. Two basic architectural elements are common to almost all Venetian towers: first, a tall, single brick shaft without openings; and second, an architecturally

distinct belfry. Venetian builders seem to have combined these elements in almost every possible configuration. From the vantage point of the *View*, Venice appears quiet and serene. At ground level, however, it was occupied by over 100,000 busy people and filled with sounds, none of which were louder or more ubiquitous than those produced by the three hundred or so bells that rang out from the bell towers. In his essay, *Hidden in Plain Sight (and Hearing). Venetian Bells and Their Towers*, Jonathan Glixon counts 94 freestanding *campanili* and 12 « a vela » (that is inserted in the roof) in the city itself, for a total of 106; in addition, there are 22 more on the islands of the lagoon, bringing the grand total to 128. This daily framework included bell ringing for religious services, peals to mark the beginning and end of the working day, as well as the evening and nocturnal hours when outdoor activities were limited for safety reasons. Bells also rang in case of fire, to celebrate military victories or peace treaties, for processions and funerals, and simply to indicate the hour, as with public clocks. On an ordinary day, this amounted to more than half an hour of continuous ringing, plus around 135 individual strikes (on Sundays and festivals, there was less continuous ringing, but more strikes). This sonic environment, which resonated across the city from dawn until dusk and reverberated through spaces given that water amplifies sound, structured the rhythm of Venice's everyday life.

The essays in Part II also highlight the visibility and invisibility of Venice's residents and the lives they lived within the city's walls. Four contributions emphasize the active and dynamic role that certain groups residing in the city – typically perceived as being on the margins, whether figuratively or literally – played in the political, economic, religious and social life of early modern Venice.

The *View* documents a period when convent complexes were less influenced by idealizing and self-referential logic – such as monastic rules and reforming decrees – and more by their natural and urban contexts, and the demands of practicality. Historically, convents served as urbanistic anchors, imposing a formal hierarchy on an island due to their scale and chronological position. Around the mid-fourteenth century, convents began to occupy sites on the city's less developed outer shores, where they could construct spacious complexes to support the imperative of separation from the profane realm. However, as the city became increasingly developed, the isolation of the convents began to be compromised. Some convents founded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries took a different approach, settling within dense areas where expansion required the acquisition of neighboring properties, enabling convents to grow piecemeal over time. In her essay, *Santa Lucia and Corpus Domini at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century. The View and Urban Patterns*, Sandra Weddle focuses on two convents in close physical proximity: the Dominican nuns at Corpus Domini, who were inserted into an undeveloped site, and the new religious community of the Augustinians at Santa Lucia, which was founded later, on a denser site. The essay discusses how growth

over time led to a perception of encroachment and potential disruptions to devotional life, along with financial repercussions stemming from ownership rights and the devotional attraction of sacred relics.

The dynamic interplay between religious institutions serving their communities and the city illustrated the interconnected nature of their various residents. Venice has always identified itself through the religious buildings that marked its legendary origins: the image of the church served as a powerful reminder of the Venetian Christian religion, and of Rome's role as guardian of piety and the Catholic faith. Yet it also embodied the distinctive civic identity of a capital that promoted itself as « Altera Roma », the true descendant of the ancient metropolis. Furthermore, following the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Venice established itself as the rightful heir to Byzantium's sacred legacy, then under threat from the iconoclastic impiety of the Ottomans. This spiritual turmoil provided the backdrop to a wide range of social, artistic and intellectual activities related to places of worship, which characterized the final decades of the century. Over time, these cultural maneuvers were sustained and glorified by literature, imagery, cartography and the arts, which were called upon to reinforce the *imago urbis*: a solid, self-sufficient and, above all, pious city. Arranged principally as a ring along the contours of the city – in settlements on the interface of land and water – many ecclesiastical institutions contributed significantly to the spatial maturation process leading to the physical creation of the new urban districts. Since the early thirteenth century, religious communities had initiated land reclamation operations on a scale that sometimes covered entire neighborhoods. These pioneering campaigns sought to rectify Venice's frayed and irregular borders, while enhancing urban areas still dominated by swamps and marshes. These efforts intensified in the sixteenth century due to population growth, the need to drain mud from canal excavations, and the government's desire for a regular and permanent boundary for urban settlements. In *Monastic and Convent Life as a City Phenomenon*, Ludovica Galeazzo³⁰ highlights the role of monastic and

³⁰ Ludovica Galeazzo, an Associate Professor of Architectural History in the Department of Cultural Heritage at the University of Padua, has been a member of the collaborative initiative « Visualizing Venice/Visualizing Cities » since 2011 (University of Padua and Duke University) and has worked as assistant curator on three international exhibitions on early modern Venetian history displayed at the Ducal Palace (*Acqua e cibo a Venezia*, 2015; *Venice, the Jews, and Europe*, 2016) and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke (*A Portrait of Venice: Jacopo de' Barbari's View of 1500*, 2017). Galeazzo is now the Principal Investigator of the project *Venice's Nissology. Reframing the Lagoon City as an Archipelago: A Model for Spatial and Temporal Urban Analysis (16th-21st centuries)*: < <https://veniss.eu> > (last accessed May 2026). *VeNiss* has been awarded an ERC Starting Grant from the European Research Council for five years (2023–2027) and is based at the Università degli Studi di Padova, in the Department of Cultural Heritage, in partnership with the Department of Architecture at the Università degli Studi di Firenze and I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. A sizeable interdisciplinary team of art and architectural historians, socio-economic and literary scholars, as well as experts on digital

conventual complexes as urban hubs connecting people. These complexes form a notable ring around the city's periphery, occupying the outskirts where more extensive properties were found. In addition to the buildings, religious communities cultivated sizeable green spaces containing medicinal plants, vineyards, and edible fruits and vegetables. The interlocking exchange between religious institutions and Venice was not limited to food alone. Nunneries and monasteries were an integral part of Venetian social and cultural life, as well as the urban and economic essence of the everyday city. The Benedictine monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore, located at the lower border of the *View*, was an important site for hosting visitors to the city; it also rented out building spaces for storage or leased landholdings to local industries such as cloth dyeing and sail manufacturing. Like the monastery, the garden was at the heart of contemporary spiritual and intellectual culture. In the first half of the sixteenth century, it was the main catalyst for the reform movement in Venice. The Dominican monastery of San Giovanni e Paolo, one of Venice's main humanist centers and played a significant role in timber-related commercial operations. It had extensive possessions, warehouses and shops which were rented out to private citizens at high prices. Another notable example was the renowned pastry laboratory located within the nunnery of Santa Croce on the Giudecca. Once again, de' Barbari's *View* is an invaluable iconographic resource. Not only does it capture the city's physical growth, but it also describes the ongoing processes.

While largely hidden within the *View*, Venice's inhabitants – men and women, natives and foreigners, patricians, the bourgeois citizen class and the general populace – nonetheless reinforced state interests as they advanced their own. On certain occasions, this socially diverse group greeted Italian, European and Mediterranean rulers and their families and entourages, creating a visual juxtaposition of republican and monarchical governing systems. As a republic, the Venetian state was emphatically gendered as masculine. However, Venetian symbolism and ritual also featured allegories of women, idealized and real ones. The Venetians also personified their city as a woman. Her iconography drew on the Virgin Mary, personifications of Justice, and even the Roman goddess Venus – who, like the Venetian economy, was born from the sea. However, while the personification of Venice was powerful, she did not represent a symbol of female empowerment; the male-dominated republic created and controlled her, just as it

survey, 3D modelling, and semantic web is working to develop a methodology for grasping the urban dynamics of Venice's cluster of islands, one of the most enduring and contradictory human-made settlements. See LUDOVICA GALEAZZO, « Resemanticising Lost Landscapes: A Database of the Venetian Archipelago », *TRIBELON Journal of Drawing and Representation of Architecture, Landscape and Environment*, 1/2, (2024), p. 64–75 < <https://doi.org/10.36253/tribelon-2943> > (last accessed 2026).

did the gendered female sea. In her essay *Gendered Space(s) and the View*, Holly Hulburt argues for the reconsideration of women of all classes and ages, both foreign and Venetian, as integral to Venetian politics and the urban fabric of Venice, and as necessary for its continued success. By participating in civic rituals and honorary processions, or attending weddings, *feste* or taverns, women acted as vital information brokers. Whether in semi-private palatial *ridotti* – intellectual or entertainment gatherings similar to French salons that served as loci for political strategizing during pastimes such as gambling – their presence was pivotal. Furthermore, as their bodies were adorned with Venetian-traded and manufactured goods like damask and pearls, they formed a living tableau the city’s commercial dominance.

In his essay *Wifely Mobility in Renaissance Venice*, Stanley Chojnacki discusses the movement and stability of families and individuals around the city, examining the variety of residences among patrician families. While some families remained in the same parish (*contrada*) for decades and tended to cluster in specific areas, others, such as the Vitturi family, moved around the city, residing in six different *sestieri*. In particular, Chojnacki traces the unusually peripatetic movement of Cateruzza Vitturi within the city (and to Treviso, a Venetian mainland territory), which she used to enact her loyalties and protect her self-interests.

By 1500, Venice had experienced centuries of sovereignty over an Italian state: a powerful, oligarchic republic with extensive territorial and maritime holdings. At this time, the Venetian state had reached its zenith, extending beyond the city’s administrative epicenter. However, the maritime hegemony that had fueled its dramatic expansion was fatally undermined by the rising Ottoman Empire and European monarchies, as well as the accelerating expansion of trade routes outside the Mediterranean. Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the Americas in 1492 led to a reconceptualization of the world and a shift in the international market. By 1500, the Portuguese had already circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope. Nevertheless, market demands and the steady import and export of goods, including luxury items, were key features of the economic vibrancy of early modern Venice. Networks of individuals and commodities reflected global markets.

Giada Damien’s essay, *Two Palaces, a Chapel, and an Art Collection on the Grand Canal. The World of Domenico di Pietro in Jacopo de’ Barbari’s View of Venice*, sheds light on the life of the jeweler and antiquarian Domenico di Pietro, who was active in Venice in the fifteenth century. His will from 1496 reveals that he had amassed a substantial fortune in cash, precious objects and real estate by the end of his life. Numerous other archival records show his business transactions, revealing that he served a wide network of clients throughout Europe. Among these clients were some of the most prestigious collectors of the time, including Lorenzo de’ Medici, Pius II, Paul II, Innocent VIII, the Este family, and King Matthias Corvinus. His

wealth and status enabled him to contribute to the embellishment of the facades of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, of which he was a member and Guardian Grande for many years. His taste for lavish displays of expensive colored marbles and decorative sculptures visibly reflected his personal taste for luxury and expensive materials, as well as his trade in jewels, his social standing and the prestige of his international clientele. This can be inferred by comparing it with the jeweler's own private commissions undertaken in those same years, all encrusted with slabs of expensive marble: a private funerary chapel in Santa Maria della Carità, described by Marcantonio Michiel as « ornatissima di pietre » (demolished in 1807); an important palace on the Grand Canal, near the church of San Giacomo dall'Orio, which was acquired by the Signoria for the exorbitant sum of 10,000 ducats; and another palace on the Grand Canal, in the parish of Sant'Agnese – probably the one known today as Palazzo Contarini Polignac, just steps away from the church of the Carità.

The *View* must be understood as something more than merely a tool used by merchants to gain information about a city renowned for its commercial enterprises. The *View* itself was a luxury item and was intended for a market with ready buyers. Departing from this premise, Blake de Maria's essay, *Luxury Goods in Jacopo de' Barbari's Venice*, explores Venetian involvement in the global luxury goods network, including manufacturing, trading and retailing, during a pivotal period in global trade, spanning approximately 1480 to 1550. After providing an overview of what constituted a luxury good in sixteenth-century Venice – exemplified by all kinds of glassware, including mirrors, as seen in the two-sided *Portrait of a Man* in Berlin, which is sometimes attributed to Jacopo de' Barbari (Fig. 9) – and discussing the problems inherent in the notion of luxury/*luxuria* as presented in ancient and modern sources, de Maria traces the concentration of the luxury trade along the Mercerie, from Rialto to Piazza San Marco, as well as on ephemeral stalls in central locations during feast days and festivals. Thanks to the Republic's long-standing trade agreements, Venetian merchants were permitted to reside in cities such as Alexandria, Istanbul, Aleppo and Basra. These residencies ensured a constant supply of eastern goods available for purchase in the lagoon city. These foreign objects were designated as « luxury » not only because of the value of the materials used to create them, but also because of their place of origin. During the Renaissance, material culture from faraway places became associated with the exotic, elevating the status of many a necessity to that of a luxury item. Gemstones certainly qualify as such, and their fungibility further increases their value. Venice was geologically incapable of producing gems, although the Venetians were notorious jewel forgers, which makes sense given the city's glassmaking facilities, thus, the gems had to be imported from India, Sri Lanka, or Myanmar. The processing of commodities into luxury goods often took place in the city's outskirts. This decision certainly satisfied practical and security

concerns, as glassmaking furnaces were transferred to the island of Murano in the late thirteenth century. These locations offered easier movement of products, as goods could be transported around the open waterways surrounding the city rather than through the smaller, more crowded canals cutting through it. Many of the workers who transformed raw materials such as textiles into fine fabric bolts available for purchase in Venetian shops lived in terraced housing built in these outlying areas. Since dyeing, spinning and weaving often took place at home, many of these workers were women. Thus, merchant families contributed not only to the decorative embellishment of the city via palatial architecture, but also to its infrastructure. This was necessary for the growth and maintenance of their commercial enterprises, exemplified by the construction of housing for workers. Throughout the sixteenth century, luxury goods from the Americas, including gold, cochineal and emeralds, found their way to Venice's marketplace. However, despite the expansion of the luxury goods market and the development of global trade, Venice would no longer enjoy the primacy of the wealthy mercantile warehouses memorialized in Jacopo de' Barbari's *View*.



Fig. 9: Attributed to Jacopo de' Barbari, *Portrait of a German* (recto) / *Two lovers in a room* (verso), circa 1500, oil on panel, 59,5 x 45 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Public domain © Berlin Gemäldegalerie.

Venice acted as a true entrepôt; during the early modern period, its trade network extended from the eastern Atlantic coast to the western Black Sea coast and beyond. Venetian merchants traded in a variety of goods, including finished products such as carpets, in addition to raw materials imported into Venice for processing before being utilized in the city or exported elsewhere. However, retail production and trade could also be highly specialized and localized. Julia A. Delaney's essay, *Both by Sea and Land. Venetian Trade and Retail in the View*, examines the *View* from the perspective of Venetian mercantile activities and the movement of goods around, throughout and within the city. The essay takes merchants dealing in coloring materials (*vendecolori*), which were particular to Venice around the time of the *View*'s publication in 1500, as a case study. These merchants stood to make vast sums of money from their work, and their goods were used in a wide array of luxury goods for which Venice was known, such as paintings, glass, and textiles displayed in the area around Campo San Bartolomeo. The manufacture and sale of lead white (*cerussa*, *biacca* or *biacca di Venezia*) are of particular interest, as it was used not only as a pigment, but also in glazes and as a flux in the ceramics and glassmaking industries. During the early modern period, Venetians produced the highest-quality lead white on a large scale, dominating the global market and making select individuals extremely wealthy and allowing them to prosper within an otherwise fixed class system.

Around 1500, approximately 120,000 people lived in Venice, a vibrant and cosmopolitan community, one of the largest and most populous Renaissance cities in the Mediterranean and Europe. Although almost no one is represented apart from a few exceptions, such as boatmen on the water or workers in the Arsenal; nonetheless, by closely examining the built environment, the *View* offers a lens through which to understand contemporary Venetian society and reconstruct the social fabric. Despite the invisibility of the inhabitants, consequently, the numerous social and economic interactions, along with the political relations and tensions that formed the Serenissima, can be perceived. With its empty streets and squares, the *View* generally represents the mythologized sociopolitical serenity of the state, reflecting an ideological vision of Venetian society. However, it also highlights spaces where patricians and non-elite Venetians met, socialized and negotiated power. Specific sites and their buildings expressed and shaped these power relations. Traversing the city from the San Marco area in the south to the island of Murano in the north, Maertje van Gelder and Claire Judde de Larivière's essay, *Imagining Social and Political Relations in the View. From Piazza San Marco to Murano*, traces how the city's inhabitants would have filled the otherwise empty spaces of the *View* and thus how Venetian society functioned. It also points to state strategies for maintaining social harmony that, at times, masked the realities of unrest and civil discord centered upon Piazza San Marco. This was an animated economic hub and the theatre of religious, political and punishment rituals, as well

as an arena for the exchange of information. In contrast to this public engagement and bustling activity, de' Barbari's *piazza* is strikingly empty and devoid of people. This visual effect is enhanced by the sheer size of the square, which is delineated by architecture serving the state: St Mark's Church, the Granai and the Ducal Palace, as well as other political buildings. Government policy and the centralized management of essential needs in Venice, as well as in its satellite territories, could either maintain or disrupt social cohesion. Murano is a case in point: the island's two main areas were divided by its own Grand Canal, which ran from west to east. The northern part of the island was populated by peasants and fishermen who lived in thatched huts, tended their gardens and dried their nets along the quays. The south of the island was home to the famous glass furnaces and other trades that contributed to the community's distinctive way of life. Patricians and other wealthy Venetians used the island as a place of *villeggiatura*, or a rural retreat. The Ponte Lungo was the only way to cross Murano's Grand Canal and was a strategic point of passage between the two parts of the island. As such, it was a site of frequent conflict and brawling between peasants of the north and the artisans of the south. Although it was in close proximity to Venice, Murano functioned as an independent yet interdependent dominion, governed by a *podestà* who oversaw it. At times, he was subjected to severe disapproval by local citizens, who made their dissatisfaction clear.

Due to its prosperity and prominence as a commercial *entrepôt* – identified as *Civitas Mercatorum*, an emporium of trade with transcultural connections stretching as far as the eastern Mediterranean and northern Europe – Venice was an important travel destination and part of the pilgrimage route to the Holy Land, attracting large numbers of visitors. As a model melting pot, it stood at a crossroads of worldly encounters, bringing together Germans, Jews and other foreigners travelling from far and wide – east, west, north and south. In *Cosmopolitan in Venice and State Strategies*, Martina Massaro discusses the cosmopolitan nature of Venice and government tactics for welcoming (and containing) foreigners. She proposes that the relationship between the sixteenth-century architectural transformations at Piazza San Marco and urban interventions such as those at the Rialto and the Ghetto were related to the cosmopolitan Venetian identity and the city's changing needs. Two fires – one in 1512 that destroyed the northern side of St Mark's Square and another in 1514 that burned the Rialto – generated the need to redesign and rebuild these two main districts, providing an opportunity to reconsider their functions. During the first half of the sixteenth century, the Venetian state transferred most of the commercial activities that had previously been located at St Mark's square to the Rialto, establishing it as the primary location for Venetian market activity and international exchange. Political acts issued by the Great Council, the state's largest governing body, established that the various foreign communities must be

given separate areas in which to live. These decisions led to the creation of new residential spaces specifically for foreigners, who maintained a consistent yet transient presence in the city while becoming permanent or semi-permanent residents. By controlling sites as either buildings or isolated *campi*, the state welcomed numerous non-Venetian communities, while simultaneously monitoring their presence and providing a steady source of tax revenue for the city. Massaro examined the case of the Jewish community, the first permanent foreign community established in 1516, and discussed a series of mandates that led to the relocation of non-Venetians from guesthouses near Piazza San Marco to other sites in Venice. The establishment of a Jewish quarter as a permanent area of residence created a cosmopolitan microcosm within a cosmopolitan city and initiated a new Venetian strategy of welcoming immigrants by offering guarantees such as the ability to retain cultural traditions, albeit subject to segregation. Although all foreign and religious communities were subject to vigilant surveillance, the Jews, like other minorities, were valuable to the state (and the Venetian market depended on) due to their economic activity, particularly as money lenders and creditors in market exchanges. Thus, the Republic offered Jews guarantees to practice Judaism and build synagogues that accommodated different rituals for the national communities present in the Ghetto. They were also allocated permanent residences regulated by state law (*ius casaca*, i.e. the right of *ḥazaqah*, *more Hebraeorum*), which, while excluding them from owning property, permitted lifetime rental agreements. In return, the Jews paid heavy taxes, were obligated to lend money and, most importantly, ensured the indispensable credit of the Venetian market for the circulation and exchange of goods around the world.

The volume concludes with an epilogue by Tracy E. Cooper entitled *Venice Lost and Found*, in which she considers the importance of woodcut prints as artefacts that mediate between the past and the present, offering a visualization of the Renaissance city that allows us to rediscover a lost Venice. The *View* encourages close, slow observation, prompting comparative analysis and facilitating understanding and interpretation of Venice then and now. Alongside Cooper's epilogue, in Appendix 1, are short entries on key sites in Venice and visible elements of the *View*. This helps travelers and readers to bridge the past and present. Kristin Love Huffman signs the introduction, *The View and Its Relevance Today*. Venice Then and Now and the entries for *Piazza San Marco*, *The Grand Canal*, *Palatial Splendour*, *Venice's Churches*, and *Venetians: Visible and Invisible Inhabitants*, Ludovica Galeazzo wrote the entry for *Rialto*, Maartje van Gelder on *The Arsenal* and Jonathan Glixon on *Church Bell Towers*. Appendix 2 reproduces Anton Kolb's petition and the Collegio's positive response on the copyright permission and export license request for the *View of Venice* (15 October 1500, Venice, Archivio di Stato (ASVe), Collegio Notatorio, reg. 15, fol. 28r), and Appendix 3 provides the

transcription (by Bonnie Blackburn) of Anton Kolb's will (12 October 1541, ASVe, Notarile Testamenti, b. 128 (notary Francesco Bianco), no. 157, fol. 67v–68r).

One of the fascinating aspects of the *View* is that it encourages observers to approach it from any point, allowing their gaze to wander from one point to another, just as the perfect visitor to Venice should do, pausing periodically to linger on curious details. The essays in this volume reflect this varied, rich, complex and dynamic approach to the observation of documented historical realities. Through numerous academic contributions, analyses of the socio-political and cultural context of early modern Venice, and the presentation of original insights into this iconic image, readers are offered new content, new archival evidence, varied perspectives (from art and architecture and musicology, to civil engineering, urban studies, environmental history and political economy, from gender studies to media studies) and stimulating curiosities about a vibrant, complex, and distinctive Renaissance city, its normative and governmental models (secular and ecclesiastical), and the intersecting networks of people who resided and lived there, both natives and foreigners, such as Jacopo de' Barbari and Anton Kolb. It is a pity, however, that in many cases it is difficult to identify a common thread among the 23 different essays, except for the one, often too tenuous and almost specious, of the *View*, and the overall impression is rather that of an amalgamation requiring greater consistency and, occasionally, less redundancy among the various contributions. There is also a cruel lack of an historiographic essay, which one would have expected in the introduction, presenting and discussing the contents of the numerous previous bibliographical sources.

A View of Venice. Portrait of a Renaissance City is intended for « anyone with a curiosity about Venice – from individuals with a recently adopted interest to those interested in European history, the Renaissance, urban studies, and art and architectural history », but often the essays, which are all rather short on average, never more than ten pages, notes comprised, are too specific for a « beginner » reader or too concise to offer a re-evaluation of certain aspects that are more interesting to a specialist reader. The model seems more suited to an interactive website than to a scientific publication, even if it is intended for a wider audience.

The digital humanities project and accompanying volume present digital technology as a palimpsest superimposed on the technologies used in the early sixteenth century in engraving, cartography and image creation. This interaction has opened up new avenues of research, extending the original graphic system and information into a digital dimension and, at the same time, recapturing the very essence of the *View* as an artefact, revealing the insistent three-dimensionality of the printed woodcut image. As the essays point out, the epic portrait of Venice, a unique city and microcosm of the world, is a cartographic exercise, a documentation of important places and spaces, but also a work of art that draws attention to its own artificiality and technical expertise. It is therefore

to be regretted that the volume includes neither a contribution on the production of printed texts and images in Venice and their worldwide circulation³¹ nor an essay dedicated to woodcut printing in Venice between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Furthermore, it lacks, above all, a more in-depth analysis of the engraving technique of the matrices in light of the high-definition images made captured of the originals.³² In 1999, on the occasion of the exhibition *A volo d'uccello: Jacopo de' Barbari e le rappresentazioni di città nell'Europa del Rinascimento*, the matrices underwent treatment that provided an opportunity to analyze their nature and manufacture, as well as their state of preservation.³³ However, technology has certainly evolved. One would have expected a report on the close analysis of the print and the woodblocks, mentioned *en passant* thanks also to the « microexamination afforded by the new ultra-high-resolution scanning of the original » (p. 309) and the light laser scans of the wooden matrices.

It is to be hoped that the catalogue of the upcoming exhibition on Italian Renaissance woodcuts at the British Museum will touch upon this central question³⁴ More importantly even, the project to restore the woodblocks, generously funded by Save Venice, and the reorganization of their museography at the Correr Museum, may fill this void.

In conclusion, a note on the aesthetic quality of the volume, which pays homage, except for an excessively pinkish tone in the reproductions of the *View*, to the finest products of Venetian Renaissance printing: detailed index, elegant typeface, pleasant and airy layout, high-quality paper, binding and color reproductions, very few misprints, rendering it a particularly enjoyable read.

³¹ HUFFMAN, the editor of the volume, had incidentally addressed this topic in « Jacopo de' Barbari's *View of Venice* (1500) », p. 172–176.

³² On this topic see LAURA ALDOVINI, *Innovation in Late Fifteenth-Century Printmaking* and MATTIA BIFFIS, « The Large Formats », in FARA, LANDAU (eds.), *Renaissance in Black and White*, p. 77–86 and p. 123–132.

³³ ROMANELLI, BIADENE, TONINI (eds.), *A volo d'uccello*, exhib. Cat., esp.: GIUSEPPE TRASSARI FILIPPETTO, *Tecnica xilografica tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento: il 'nuovo stile'*, p. 53–57, STEFANO BERTI, ANNA GAMBETTA, SIMONA LAZZARI, *Indagini sulle matrici lignee della veduta di Venezia e prospettive per la conservazione*, p. 106–110; CARLO FEDERICI, *Venetia MD; Museo Correr cl XLIV n. 57. Relazione di restauro*, p. 111–116 and STEFANO BERTI, entries n. 8, p. 134–137 (woodblocks) and 9, p. 138–141 (print).

³⁴ *Italian Renaissance Woodcut 1400–1500*, London, British Museum, Prints and Drawings galleries, 8 October 2026 – 21 March 2027. The exhibition, curated by Laura Aldovini, David Landau, Silvia Urbini, Sarah Vowles and Grant Lewis is closely related to the *Atlas of Italian Renaissance Woodcuts*, a digital project launched in 2015 by the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, see < <https://archivi.cini.it/storiaarte/archive/IT-SDA-GUI001-000038/atlante-xilografie-italiane-del-rinascimento.html/> >, last accessed May 2026.