

Andrea Palladio, *Les quatre livres de l'architecture d'André Palladio*

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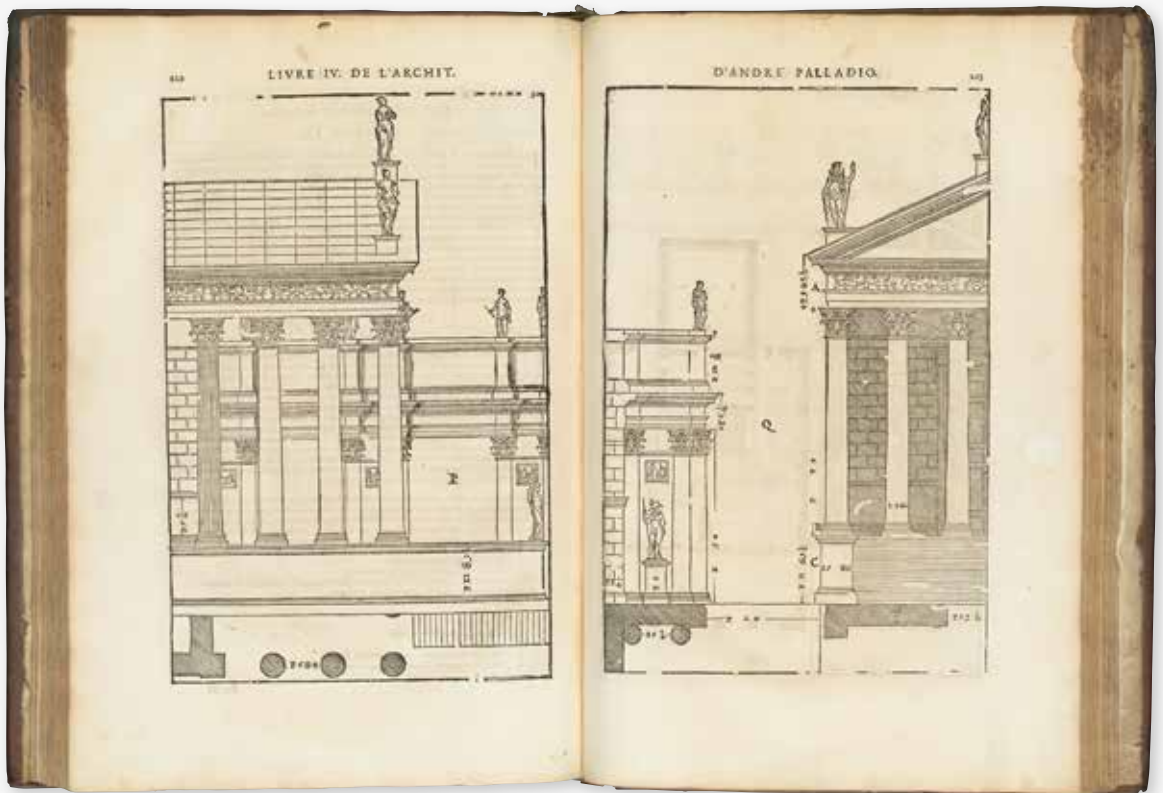
Acquired 2014

Andrea di Pietro della Gondola (1508–80) holds a pre-eminent place in the history of architectural theory. Born in Padua but active professionally in the Republic of Venice, he was – like many in his time – inspired by the intellectual and aesthetic cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. So deep was the impact on his practice that he acquired the nickname ‘Palladio’ (from Pallas, a name of the Greek goddess of wisdom, Athena).¹

Influenced in particular by the treatise *De architectura*, by Roman architect Vitruvius (81 BC – 15 AD), Palladio created a distinctive architectural vocabulary, characterised by the colonnade portico and symmetrical sequences of rectangular rooms stemming from a central atrium; it both celebrated ancient genius and responded to the Mannerist tastes of his own day.² Palladian style came to be seen as definitive of Renaissance principles of harmonious design, and it was enormously popular in domestic and civic architecture in Europe and in England (and its colonies) throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.³

Palladio’s treatise *I quattro libri dell’architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture) was published in Venice in 1570, with woodcut illustrations after Palladio’s own drawings, and played a crucial role in popularising his architectural philosophy and practice. Its French translation, in 1650, by architectural theorist Roland Fréart de Chambray, was the first edition in French and the last edition to use the original illustrations.⁴

State Library Victoria’s acquisition of this 1650 French translation was made possible through funding support from the State Library Foundation and Dr Colin Holden (1951–2016).⁵ Dr Holden contributed to the life of the Library in many ways, not the least through his research into its holdings of works by another great champion of Greek and Roman culture (who followed consciously in the steps of Palladio and Fréart de Chambray),⁶ Italian printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–78). This research culminated in his curating one of the Library’s most successful major exhibitions, *Rome: Piranesi’s Vision*, and authoring the accompanying book, *Piranesi’s Grandest Tour: From Europe to Australia*.⁷ The Library, replete with its classical Palladian portico,⁸ and the lives of many of its staff have been enriched by Dr Holden’s scholarship and friendship.



Andrea Palladio, *Les quatre livres de l'architecture d'André Palladio*, translated by Roland Fréart Sieur de Chambray, Paris, de l'imprimerie d'Edme Martin, rue S. Jacques, au Soleil d'or, 1650. Rare Books Collection, RARESF 720 P17Q