

## Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755) and his artistic, collecting and research activities and the development of proto-archaeology in the eighteenth-century Rome

Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755) was a multitalented Italian artist enjoying a brilliant career either as a painter and draughtsman. He is known mainly from his outstanding caricatures, but apparently, he was also an antiquary and scholar. This aspect of his life and career remains largely underestimated and basically unexplored. The project examines various aspects of artistic production, life and career of Ghezzi in order to verify their relationship to his antiquarian, documentary and archaeological activities. This is done to prove that he was not only an accomplished artist but also a scholar who made a substantial contribution to the development of proto-archaeology in Rome. Ghezzi is a perfect example illustrating application of scientific methods of direct observation into historical research. From the preserved corpus of his drawings and texts, he emerges as a figure basing his investigations on the literary and archaeological sources alike. Therefore, in a broader sense, the project explores a new facet of antiquarianism leaving behind the old “Wunderkammer” and curiosity culture and quickly transforming itself into regular archaeological research.

The basis of the research is Ghezzi's mostly unknown and unpublished pictorial legacy in the form of drawings of antiquities and archaeological sites very often accompanied by elaborated and highly informative “didascalies” including invaluable information on provenance of the documented objects, dates of their findings, collections they belonged to as well as Ghezzi's observations on their artistic value, techniques of production, functions, iconography and its meaning and much more. The artist tended to organise his drawings into albums which are now in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Cod. Ott. lat. 3100-3104 and 3106-3109), the British Museum (Cod. M III 40), the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica e la Calcografia (Ms. 2606), Biblioteca dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte in Rome (Ms. Lanciani 104), Biblioteca Angelica in Rome (Ms. 2136) and single works are in Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum and Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague.

The thirteen volumes discovered so far include around 1500 drawings of various kinds of antiquities but especially engraved gems (ca. 1000). To start, the project will focus on analysis of the above-listed drawings and archival materials. Subsequently, all Ghezzi's “didascalies” will be critically examined. The next step will be interpretation of the drawings and archives and exploration of the reasons why individual volumes were compiled. The preliminary research suggests that they served various purposes: iconographic encyclopaedias, unfinished publication projects and finally, Ghezzi's attempt to show and discuss diversity of art, customs, histories, institutions, religions, and mythologies of ancient civilizations. Other sources like Ghezzi's diary, correspondence and his *dactyliotheca* will be explored as well. Ghezzi's own cabinet of antiquities will be reconstructed as much as possible too and his collecting of drawings of antiquities made by other artists will be discussed as well. The research is original, and it involves multidisciplinary approach since archaeological studies are combined with art historical and historical research.

The project will significantly contribute to the field of eighteenth-century studies and historiography of archaeology. It develops on Momigliano's theory of intellectual history of antiquarians. The surviving archival materials allow to contextualise Ghezzi within the circles of antiquarians, collectors and connoisseurs of antiquities and early archaeologists excavating within and around Rome in the first half of the eighteenth century. The interactions between Ghezzi and figures like Philipp von Stosch, Alessandro Gregorio Capponi and others were greatly inspirational and overall, they resulted in regarding collections no longer as just accumulations of remains of the Classical World but as opportunities to explore and penetrate it. Activities of antiquarians resulted in elaboration of social behaviors and production of tools for such exploration. One of them were drawings and book illustrations habitually criticized for their inaccuracy. Ghezzi's visual documentation of antiquities and the *cave* is unique and more advanced, focused on accuracy and supplemented by erudite commentaries. His texts are communication tools transferring knowledge as much as correspondence exchanged with the Republic of Letters on the onset of modernity. Because of his systematic approach towards documentation of antiquities and their interpretation Ghezzi is a bridge between traditional antiquarianism and much more scientifically oriented early classical archaeology. The project propagates a view that major advancement in research and understanding of antiquity was already made well before the discoveries in Herculaneum (1738) and Pompeii (1748) and studies of Comte de Caylus, Pierre-Jean Mariette or Johann Joachim Winckelmann among others. The results will be published in a monograph showing that the activities of Ghezzi were a necessary step for the first syntheses of ancient art to emerge later. A series of articles is also planned. They will touch various aspects like reconstruction of provenance of various identified antiquities thanks to the information passed from Ghezzi's drawings and “didascalies”, reconstruction and re-emergence of unknown collections of antiquities built in Rome at the time and operations and evolution of the art market for antiquities at the times of Ghezzi among others.