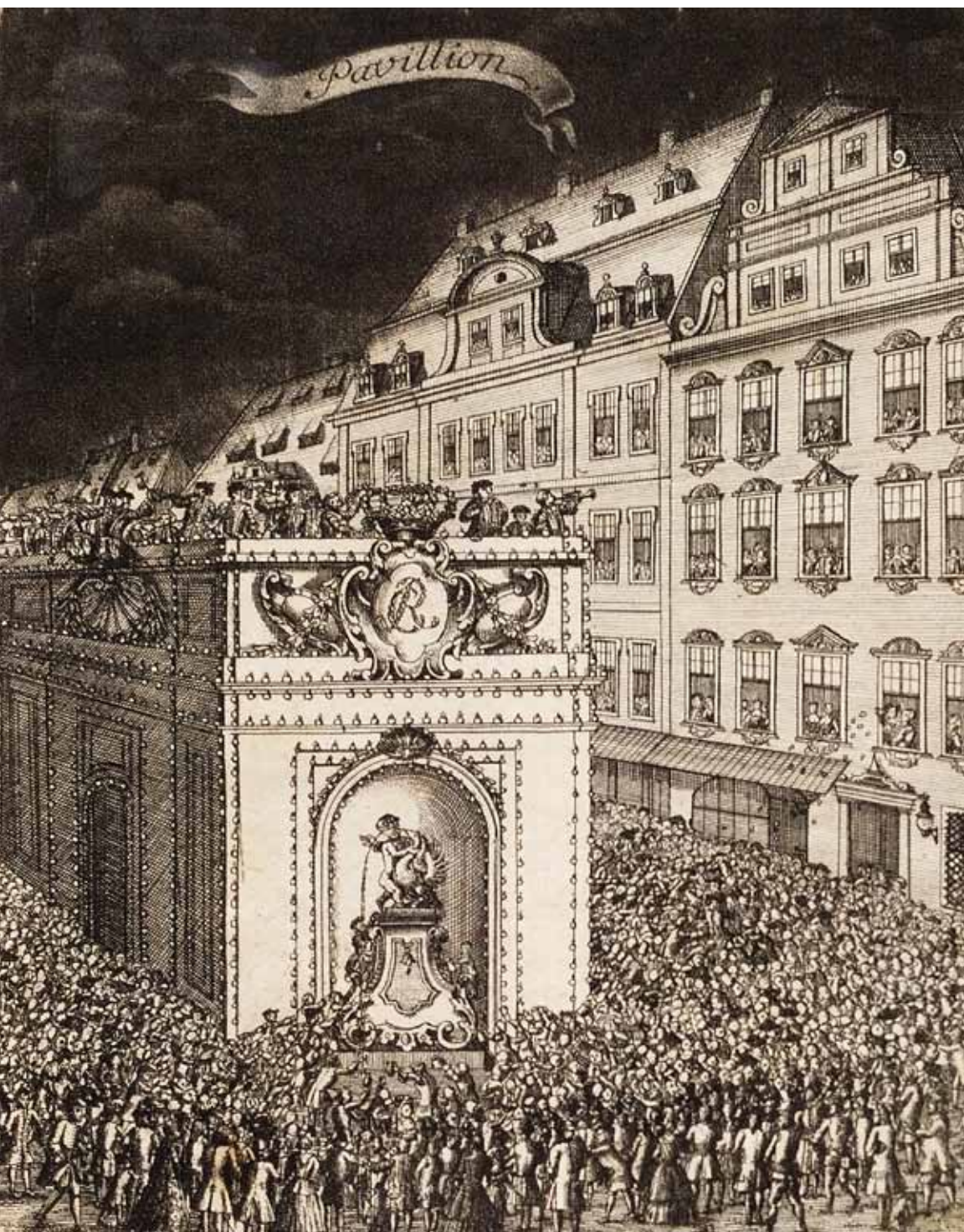


From the Library:
The Fleeting Structures of Early Modern Europe

February 4 – July 29, 2012

National Gallery of Art





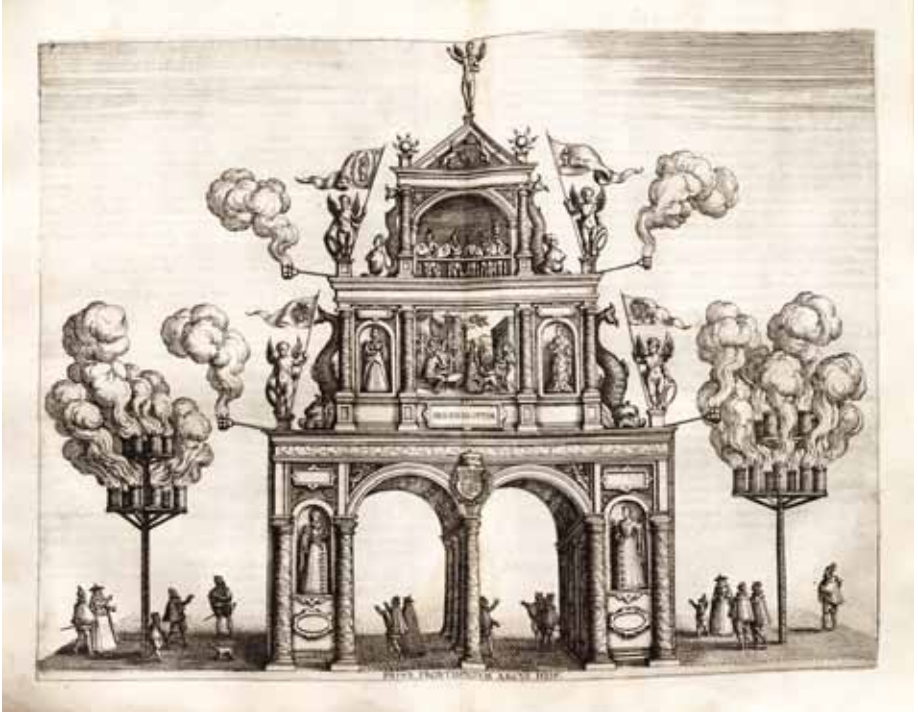
From the Library: The Fleeting Structures of Early Modern Europe

For centuries, the world has seen its cities enrobed in festive garb for all manner of honorary events. Today, urban centers find themselves revitalized and beautified to host the Olympic Games or celebrate a national holiday. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, world's fairs and exhibitions gave cities the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths to the world through public display. In early modern Europe, state visits, coronations, and weddings were among the occasions that provided a city the occasion to stage a lavish production. Artists and architects designed structures and decorations by commission, affording them the chance to experiment with new ideas or encourage city officials to consider new uses of public space.

Today, scholars who are interested in the architectural developments of the past face a distinct obstacle in their research: the fact that many of the structural apparatus built for these festivals were not permanent. In a few cases, a structure proved popular or important enough to be rebuilt in a more durable form; typically, however, they were designed to stand for only a few weeks. Wooden and papier-mâché constructions were quickly disassembled, depriving contemporary researchers of the opportunity to examine them in their original context. Before movable type was introduced in the mid-fifteenth century, the only method of documenting such events was through drawings and handwritten descriptions, which rarely survive today. But soon after Gutenberg's introduction of hand-press printing, festival books describing these events began to appear. By the mid-sixteenth century, they had evolved beyond mere textual descriptions into lavish illustrated volumes. These books helped to disseminate new ideas, and it is through them that we can approach an understanding of these ephemeral structures.

Nonetheless, festival publications cannot always be taken at face value. Despite titles that purport to deliver a "real and true" account of an event, several factors signal that this may not be the case. For example, there were occasions when a book was created ahead of time and distributed as a memento; its contents may or may not accurately reflect the reality of the event. Often, one aspect of these festivals was some form of political communication. Even a book printed after the fact for supposedly documentary purposes could be laced with propaganda, attempting on some level to further the ambitions of the author or his patron. Festival books can be seen as an extension of the festival experience itself.

Peter Mayer, engraving in *Beschreibung der Feyrlichkeiten, welche bey Gelegenheit der Durchreise ihrer königlichen Hohheit, der durchleuchtigsten Frau Dauphine, Marien Antonien, Erzherzoginn zu Oestreich*, Freiburg, 1770, David K. E. Bruce Fund



Whether arranged by a powerful individual or by a city as a whole, the books were carefully crafted around particular messages that were important to the organizer. Moreover, the illustrations for such books were sometimes executed several years after the fact by artists who were not present at the actual event, but rather relied on someone else's sketches or written accounts.

Drawing on examples from the rare book collection of the National Gallery of Art Library, this exhibition seeks to highlight these temporary structures as they appear in print, to note some of the questions involved in their study, and to explore the influence they may have exerted on the permanent architecture around them.

Peter van der Borcht, engraving in Jean Boch, *Historica narratio profectionis et inaugurationis serenissimorum Belgii principum Alberti et Isabellae, Austriae archiducum*, Antwerp, 1602, David K. E. Bruce Fund

The Triumphal Arch

1 Peter van der Borcht, engraving in Jean Boch, *Historica narratio profectionis et inaugurationis serenissimorum Belgii principum Alberti et Isabellae, Austriae archiducum*, Antwerp, 1602, David K. E. Bruce Fund (opposite page)

Triumphal arches were one of the standard architectural elements at many types of festivals. Arches served as an attractive way to display the emblems associated with the event. This book describes the festivals celebrated in Antwerp, Ghent, and Valenciennes for the visit of Albrecht VII (1559–1621), archduke of Austria, and his wife, Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566–1633), infanta of Spain. The Spanish arch shown here was one of several erected for the couple's procession through Antwerp. Its design featured twin openings, embellishments such as banners, sculptures, and pyrotechnic displays, and a platform for live musicians. These elements, included at the behest of the artist commissioned to plan the structure, served to publicly declare the city's relationship with the visiting dignitaries.

2 Romeyn de Hooghe, engraving in Govard Bidloo, *Komste van Zyne Majesteit Willem III. Koning van Groot Britanje, enz. in Holland*, The Hague, 1691, David K. E. Bruce Fund

The arrival of William III (1650–1702), king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, at The Hague in 1691 generated several printed accounts of the festivities in Dutch, English, and French. This example is the most lavish, with several double-page illustrations. Shown here is one of several arches that the royal procession would have passed through upon entering the city. Erected in the market, this arch was encircled by temporary walls built to feature mural paintings of William's exploits and accomplishments, and included two large pillars celebrating the royal retinue. Open and accessible to the public, the market made an ideal site for citizens to view the procession, although the structures would have been disassembled rather quickly to allow normal business to resume.

3 After Pieter Coeck van Aelst, woodcut in Cornelius Scribonius Grapheus, *Spectaculorum in susceptione Philippi hisp. prin. ... an. M.D.XLIX, Antverpiae aeditorum*, Antwerp, 1550, David K. E. Bruce Fund

By the mid-sixteenth century it was common for events to be recorded in illustrated prints as well as in textual descriptions. This book marking the 1549 entry into Antwerp of the future Philip II (1527–1598), king of Spain, was published in Latin-, German-, and French-language editions; all featured woodcuts after Pieter Coeck van Aelst describing several structures erected for the event, including this elaborate arch complete with obelisks and a colonnade bearing the iconography associated with Spanish royalty.

4 Cristoforo Dall'Acqua, after Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi, etching in *Descrizione dell'arco trionfale*, Vicenza, 1758, David K. E. Bruce Fund

This book documents an arch designed by Bertotti Scamozzi that was erected for a religious festival organized by Cardinal Antonio Maria Priuli (1707–1722) in Vicenza in 1758. There are obvious differences between the print shown here and Bertotti Scamozzi's own drawing (seen to the right), probably executed sometime around 1780. For instance, Dall'Acqua's print excludes the niches and includes lighting elements not seen in the drawing. The placement and content of the friezes also differ. These discrepancies illustrate the need to approach such descriptions of festivals carefully, acknowledging that they may not be entirely credible as factual accounts.

5 Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi, drawing in *Disegno d'un arco trionfale con due orchestre per una serenata*, c. 1780, David K. E. Bruce Fund

This volume of drawings by Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi (1719–1790) and Gaetano Vicchi contains designs for several festival constructions in Vicenza. Some are based on Lodovico Roncone's written accounts of structures designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi (1552–1616) in 1581 for Maria d'Austria's arrival in Vicenza. Others, like the one shown here, are Bertotti Scamozzi's own designs for an arch erected in 1758. This manuscript, along with drawings in the Avery Library and the Museo Civico di Bassano del Grappa, suggests that a book on ephemeral architecture in Vicenza was planned and at one point entered production, but for reasons unknown was never published.



6 Gaspar Bouttats, etching in Petrus Franciscus de Smidt, *Hondert-jaerigh jubile-vreught bewesen in dese stadt Antwerpen ter oorsaecke vande herstellinge des geloofs in't jaer 1585. door de glorieuse waepen van Sijne Catholijcke Majesteyt, onder t'beleyt vanden victorieusen Prince Alexander Farnesius hertogh van Parma etc.* (detail), Antwerp, 1685, David K. E. Bruce Fund

In 1685 the city of Antwerp presented a grand celebration of the centennial of the recapture of the city for the Catholic cause by Alessandro Farnese (1520 – 1589). The elaborate colonnaded structure shown here was erected in front of the town hall by the priests of Saint-Michel. War trophies, including several paintings and sculptures, are nested in an array of trees and other flora; additionally, several arches went up throughout the city and the prominent buildings were decorated. The arch erected by the bishop of Antwerp outside his cathedral appears in two states: one version is topped by a globe, and the other is topped by a figure of the pope. Which version was actually constructed is unknown, but evidently the town magistrates were unhappy with the original design and asked that the decorations be changed.



7 François Chiche, after Antonio Grano, etching in Pietro Vitale, *Le Simpatie dell'allegrezza tra Palermo Capo del Regno di Sicilia e la Castiglia Reggia Capitale della Cattolica Monarchia*, Palermo, 1711, David K. E. Bruce Fund

In 1711 political developments were clearing the path for the War of Spanish Succession to wind down and for Philip V, grandson of Louis XIV, to be recognized as the king of Spain by all Europe. The city of Palermo held a festival celebrating the victory at the Battle of Brihuega in December 1710, an event that helped to turn the tide in Philip V's favor. Built for the event was the series of arches, shown here, that connected existing buildings. The text claims that the arches — and the enormous statue of Philip atop them — were made of solid silver by the local guild of silversmiths. Although a mammoth stone monument to Philip V stands in Palermo today, there is no silver statue, so it is impossible to know if the text's claims were true.

8 Melchior Tavernier, after Abraham Bosse, engraving in Jean Baptiste de Machault, *Eloges et discours sur la triomphante reception du roy en sa ville de Paris, apres la reduction de la Rochelle*, Paris, 1629, David K. E. Bruce Fund (back cover)

After a blockade of fourteen months, Louis XIII (1601–1643), king of France, finally gained the surrender of the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle in western France in 1628. Festivals were held throughout France to celebrate the victory, but none was more extravagant than the king's entry into Paris. Arches were built throughout the city, and there was a pageant of elaborate floats. Also built for the occasion was the "Temple of Strength Dedicated to the Prowess of the King" shown here. The work, described in the past tense (alerting us to its temporary nature), was installed in the Grand Châtelet, which had been used as a prison and housed multiple torture chambers. The text describes the difficulty of adapting such an incompatible structure for festive ends, but ultimately the king declared it a success and "the most beautiful ornament of his triumph." The political undertones are obvious: the king is placed in the company of great military leaders of antiquity who had also conquered seaside cities (depicted by the statuary lining the hall), who praise his triumph and admit the superiority of his victory over their own. Fourteen painted figures on the vaulted ceiling represent the consummate virtue of the king whose subjects owe him praise. His strength and virtue are also represented by two kinds of fire: "emblems that caused to shine the virtue of the king," probably fireworks, and the more natural "fires of brilliant white wax candles that drive away the shadows of the night." The text also describes the playing of music from a theater, which represents how he "transformed a place of pain and suffering into a paradise of delights and marvels," just as this former prison was transformed through the installation. It also calls on the viewer to enter the place with the appropriate attitude of modesty, lowering the eyes, entering the proper state of mind, and wearing the proper attire.

9 Unknown artist (German, 18th century), engraving in Johann Daniel von Olenschager, *Vollständiges Diarium von der höchst-erfreulichen Crönung des allerdurchlauchtigsten, grossmächtigsten und unüberwindlichsten Fürsten und Herrn, Herrn Franciscus, erwählten römischen Kayzers*, Frankfurt, 1746, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

This volume documents a series of events in Frankfurt between August and October 1745 centered around the election and coronation of Francis I (1708–1765), Holy Roman Emperor. The illuminated structure shown here was erected as part of the coronation ceremonies on October 4. Rather than be dismantled immediately, the structure was repurposed (with different paintings) for the name-day celebration of Francis' wife, Maria Theresa, on October 15. The structure's reuse calls into question how many aspects of the design were exclusive to any particular event.

10 Peter van der Borcht, engraving in Jean Boch, *Descriptio publicae gratulationis, spectaculorum et ludorum, in adventu Sereniss. Principis Ernesti archiducis Austriae* (detail), Antwerp, 1595, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Following Allesandro Farnese's siege that wrested control of the city from protestant rule, which ended in 1585, and the subsequent blockade of its main waterway by hostile protestant forces to the north, Antwerp was a city in decline. The new governor, Ernst (1530–1595), archduke of Austria, who arrived in 1594 was a relatively minor Habsburg figure and would die within a year. Despite this, the city put together an impressive festival apparatus for the governor's arrival, and the local printing house Plantijn-Moretus



published this grandiose volume describing it. This was partly to demonstrate the strength that remained in Antwerp, although there are hints of a subtle appeal to outsiders to help save the city from ruin. The inverted amphitheater shown here, where performers populate the “seats” and the audience stands on the “stage,” was called the Theater of Austrian Peace and was erected on “the most spacious and pleasant street in the whole city” for the governor to see on his procession. The text places much attention on the detailed construction and decoration of the theater, as well as on the luxurious costumes of the daughters of the city who filled it; yet the inscription at the base of the stage itself calls on Ernst to “join in a band of peace” and end the wars plaguing the German provinces, so that Antwerp could once again flourish as a commercial center.

11 Moritz Bodenehr, engraving in *Beschreibung der Illumination zu Dresden bey der königlichen sicilianischen in Vollmacht vollzogenen Vermählung*, Dresden, 1738, David K. E. Bruce Fund (front cover)

The marriage by proxy of the future Charles III (1716–1788), king of Spain, to Maria Amalia (1724–1760) was celebrated in Dresden in May 1738. Though the participants themselves were not present, the city organized a large festival that included the mounting of intricate lighting displays throughout the city. This book focuses on the illuminations and records them with a series of engraved night scenes. The frontispiece plate shown here depicts an ornately decorated pavilion whose roof functioned as a stage for musicians. A crowd of citizens surround the front of the structure, hoisting pitchers and steins to be filled with wine spouting from the beak of a sculpted swan; members of the aristocracy enjoy the festivities from the windows of the adjacent arcade of royal apartments.

12 After Joseph Furttenbach, engraving in *Hochzeit-Hauss-Gebäw, der achte Theil*, Ulm, 1662, David K. E. Bruce Fund

The only book here that does not describe an actual event, this example belongs to a series by the architect Joseph Furttenbach that was intended to provide architects and their clients with guides to a variety of building types. This volume is notable because it presents designs for an extravagant wedding house, a temporary structure designed for the comfort and entertainment of the wedding guests. The first floor holds a reception area, along with a kitchen and a dining room; the entire second floor is reserved for a large dance floor that could also be used as a performance stage.

13 Jean Marot, etching in *L'Entrée triomphante de leurs maiestez Louis XIV roy de France et de Nauarre, et Marie Therese d'Austriche son espouse*, Paris, 1662, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Contemporaneous with the wedding house book shown at left is this festival book dedicated to the wedding of Louis IV (1638–1715), king of France, and Marie-Thérèse (1638–1683), and their entry into Paris in 1660. Along with several arches and a firework ship on the Seine, the amphitheater and obelisk-topped arch shown here were built for the terminus of the procession in Place Dauphine, a triangular courtyard just off the Pont Neuf in the center of the city near the Notre Dame cathedral. The text pays special attention to the efforts of Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) and the five “painters of note” who worked under him to incorporate these structures seamlessly into the existing architecture. It was important to maintain the view from the courtyard of the bronze horse sculpture on the Pont Neuf, and the author claims that the structures fit so well that they seemed to be part of the original design. The text also notes that the arch and obelisk represent the people of France and their king. It is only through the support of the people that Louis maintains his power.



14 François Chiche, after Antonio Grano, etching in Pietro Vitale, *La Felicità in trono su' l'arrivo, acclamazione e coronazione delle Reali Maestà di Vittorio Amedeo duca di Savoia, e di Anna d'Orleans da Francia*, Palermo, 1714, J. Paul Getty Fund in honor of Franklin Murphy

During this time period, artists and architects were often commissioned to adorn existing buildings with decorations appropriate for the event, in addition to building new structures. This was sometimes coordinated at a citywide level, while at other times individuals would commission decorations on their own. In this example, a private home has been decorated with tapestries and torches for the coronation of Victor Amadeus I (1666–1732), king of Sardinia, and Anne Marie d'Orléans (1669–1728).

15 Peter Mayer, engraving in *Beschreibung der Feyrlichkeiten, welche bey Gelegenheit der Durchreise ihrer königlichen Hohheit, der durchleuchtigsten Frau Dauphine, Marien Antonien, Erzherzoginn zu Oestreich*, Freiburg, 1770, David K. E. Bruce Fund

The artist Peter Mayer captured the illumination of the Freiburg cathedral shown here on the occasion of the 1770 visit to the city by Marie Antoinette (1755–1793), the future queen of France. En route from Vienna to Versailles for her wedding to Louis XVI, the fourteen-year-old bride-to-be spent a week in the city, where she was celebrated with a variety of events. In addition to lighting of the spire of one of the city's most prominent buildings — an impressive evening pyrotechnic display — several private houses were lit up, and thousands of lamps were displayed on temporary structures of wood and plaster.

16 After Bernardo Antonio Vittone, engraving in *La Suntuosa illuminazione della citta di Torino per l'augusto sposalizio delle Reali Maesta' di Carlo Emmanuele, re di Sardegna, e di Elisabetta Teresa, principessa primogenita di Lorena*, Turin, 1737, David K. E. Bruce Fund

The city of Turin was the site of the wedding of Charles Emmanuel III (1701–1773), king of Sardinia, and Elizabeth Theresa of Lorraine in August of 1737. The occasion was marked by the “sumptuous lighting of the city . . . with the addition of public exposure of the Holy Shroud.” The designer of this display is not credited, but this engraving shows an unusual corner view of the illuminations on one house. The facade is outlined with small lights, probably candles, and each flank of the building is outfitted with separate rows of elaborate torches mounted on the ground and chandeliers hung from the eaves of the building. The mechanism by which these were mounted, and whether the building had to be altered in any way to accommodate them, is not specified.

Checklist of the exhibition *From the Library: The Fleeting Structures of Early Modern Europe*, February 4 – July 29, 2012.

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Written by Yuri Long, and produced by the library and the publishing office.

The Gallery website features highlights from the exhibition and links to exhibition-related activities at www.nga.gov/exhibitions/fleetingstructures.htm.

