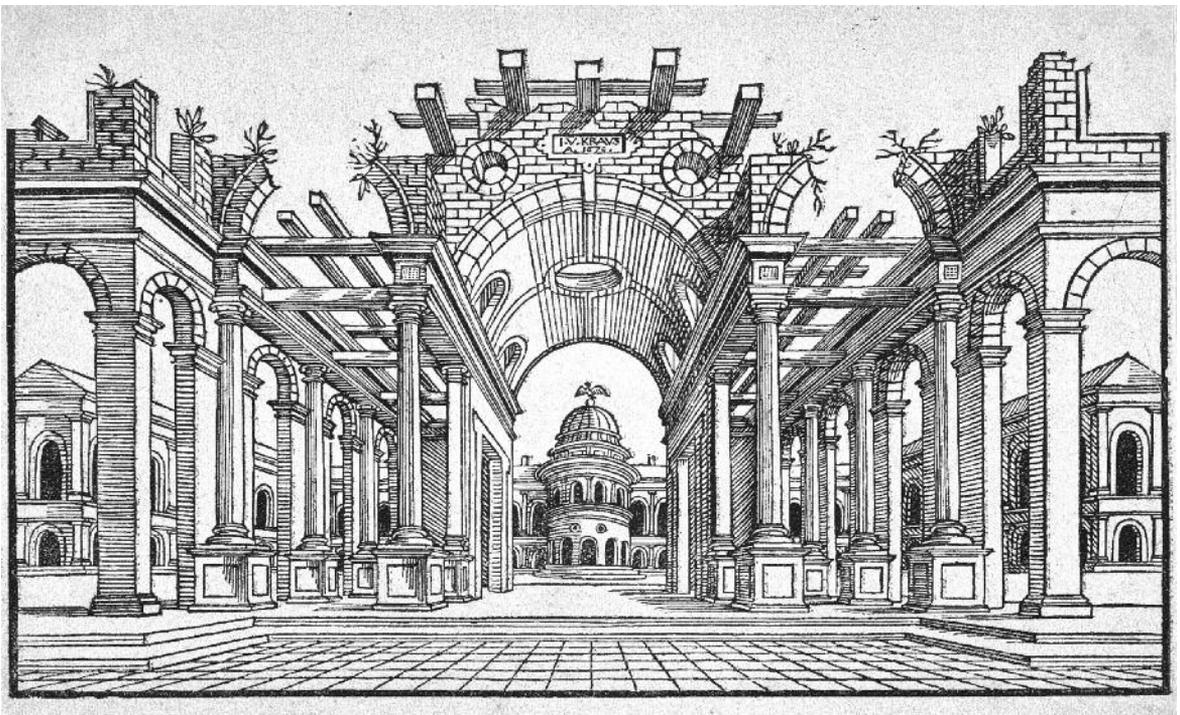


# JOHANN ULRICH KRAUS

## 1655-1719

When the printmaker and publisher Johann Ulrich Kraus was born in Augsburg in 1655, his native city already proudly looked back on a 200-year tradition of printing and publishing. From the late 15th century up to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, the free imperial city was the primary publishing centre for the German-speaking lands. The war years led to a temporary decline in production, but this was quickly overcome after the war. Thanks to the high demand for book illustrations, the printmaking industry in Augsburg also gained widespread importance. Copperplate engravings and later etchings gradually replaced woodcuts, but production in Augsburg consistently maintained an exceptionally high quality and quantity, earning the city the epithet 'Europe's Image Factory'.

Johann Ulrich Kraus was baptised on 23 June 1655. For multiple generations his ancestors had been active in Augsburg as cabinetmakers, known locally as *Kistler*, and Johann Ulrich Kraus therefore initially trained as a *Kistler* in his father's workshop. Around the age of 15 Kraus made his first independent appearance as an artist with three woodcuts after works by Hans Vredeman de Vries (fig. 1). Guild laws, however, prevented him from selling his works as a printmaker, and Kraus was thus forced to first complete an apprenticeship in etching and copper engraving in the workshop of Melchior Küsel (1626–1683). Johann Ulrich Kraus later described the details of this apprenticeship in his correspondence with the polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). He particularly emphasized the fact that he



1: Johann Ulrich Kraus, *Ruins of a Temple*, 1670, woodcut, after Hans Vredeman de Vries (Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, Graphische Sammlung, Gr. 1706)

was not required to pay an apprenticeship fee, thanks to his outstanding knowledge of architecture and perspective. Following his apprenticeship Kraus did not travel as a journeyman as was customary, but instead continued working for his master for a total of ten years, up until Küsel's death in 1683. In 1685 he married Johanna Sibylla, Melchior Küsel's eldest daughter, who at that time had already achieved widespread recognition as an artist in her own right, and was praised by contemporary connoisseurs as a talented copper engraver. Kraus and his wife now led a workshop rich in tradition, with a long ancestral line of notably successful engravers and publishers. After Theodor de Bry (1528–1598), his son and successor Johann Theodor de Bry (1561–1623) had taken over the workshop. It then passed to the latter's former assistant Matthäus Merian the Elder (1593–1650) through his marriage to De Bry's daughter, Maria Magdalena. Melchior Küsel completed his apprenticeship with Merian, and married his daughter in 1649. With Kraus's marriage, history repeated itself for the third time in a row, in that a former apprentice and assistant again married the master's daughter. The transition to the next generation thus always involved a name change, rendering the workshop's long-standing tradition less recognizable at first glance. Contemporaries of Johann Ulrich Kraus, however, were certainly familiar with this common practice and well aware of the workshop's notable tradition.

Among the early projects undertaken by Kraus and his wife, there is a striking number of commissions from the court of Heidelberg, culminating in a large project depicting the electoral collection of coins and gems. The court librarian Lorenz Beger (1653–1705) penned the scholarly texts for this, and Johann Ulrich Kraus's workshop delivered illustrations of nearly 800 art objects. 'On the side', as it were, Kraus also created other images including a large panorama of the city of Heidelberg and three views of Heidelberg castle before its destruction during the Nine Years' War (fig. 2, fig. 3).

Around the same time Kraus began producing large wall calendars, opening up a new line of business. One of the most important topics of the time was the war against the Turks. After the breaking of the siege of Vienna with the devastating defeat of the

Ottoman army in the battle at Kahlenberg, outside the city's walls, in September of 1683, the fortunes of war shifted and the forces of the Holy Roman Empire won battle after battle, reconquering Hungary and much of the Balkans. These victories and the related acts of heroism were eagerly and extensively described by contemporary authors. They also appeared particularly often on wall calendars, which provided an ideal medium to guarantee that people would be reminded of the imperial victories each and every day of the year. Battle scenes, depictions of victorious military leaders and defeated Ottomans thus became popular motifs for calendar illustrations. Kraus found another lucrative market producing illustrations, often on a very large scale, for printed funeral sermons. These included portraits of the deceased, and images of *castra doloris* and torch-lit nocturnal processions. Besides the court of Heidelberg mentioned above, Kraus also notably received commissions for this type of image from the court of Württemberg, the House of Hohenlohe, and the princes of Wolfenbüttel, Brunswick, and Hanover. The illustrations for the funeral procession of Friedrich Wilhelm, Elector and Margrave of Brandenburg (1620–1688), which encompassed 87 sheets, represent the largest such commission.

Around 1587 the workshop achieved its full potential with the establishment of an independent publishing house. In 1687 Johann Ulrich Kraus produced his first work as a publisher, a volume entitled *Tapisseries du Roy* based on the eponymous French edition of 1679. This contained images of a series of tapestries of the four elements and the four seasons with allegorical representations of the reign of Louis XIV, after designs by the French court painter Charles Le Brun (1619–1690). The mottoes in the tapestries' corners were replaced by 32 symbolic emblems after the miniature painter Jacques Bailly. Texts by André Félibien and Charles Perrault accompany the pictorial illustrations, and Sébastien Leclerc (1637–1714) created the etchings for the publication. Johann Ulrich Kraus himself, however, seems to have contributed relatively little to this first publication. As he himself explicitly emphasizes in the introduction to the reader, Kraus concentrated primarily on the editorial side of the endeavour,



2: Heidelberg Castle (preparatory drawing), Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung, C 249



3: Heidelberg Castle, etching, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, S Gal 2/9; 824-118

while his wife copied the etchings. From a publisher's standpoint the *Tapisseries du Roy* was a great success. In the following years up until 1710 numerous new editions appeared. Due to the continually increasing interest in the art of the French court, Kraus decided to publish other series in Augsburg based on French models. The year 1689 saw the publication of the first edition of a volume containing reproductions of a series of grotesques adorning the walls of the bathroom and one other private chamber belonging to Anne of Austria, the mother of Louis XIV. Simon Vouet (1642–1700) created the designs, while Michel Dorigny (1616–1665) made the etchings. A series of views of the palace and gardens of Versailles entitled *Veues de Versailles*, and another of the labyrinth of Versailles with its fountains based on Aesop's Fables entitled *Labyrinthe de Versailles*, followed. Kraus copied both these series from Dutch editions published by Visscher in Amsterdam featuring etchings by Willem Swidde, rather than basing them directly on the French originals. Kraus also copied a book on the Versailles grotto, *Description de la grotte de Versailles*, from the 1679 edition with etchings by Jean Lepautre (1618–1682) and texts by André Félibien.

After Kraus had gathered experience copying existing publications, in 1694 he presented his first self-designed work to the public, a book of angels, giving it the title *Biblisches Engel- und Kunstwerk*. In his preface to the reader, Kraus commented on the volume's underlying concept, stating that in his choice of subject for the 30 plates illustrating biblical passages, he had settled on the goodness of the angels because no other engraver had yet done so, making his work, in his opinion, unique. Regarding his working practices he stated that he had copied much from other artists, but was by no means ashamed of this and indeed viewed it as self-evident that an artist can only evolve through imitation. For this first self-designed publication Kraus developed his own unique layout with which he clearly intended to set himself apart from the competition. He selected a narrow vertical format, placed an image with a title above it in the upper half of the page, and arranged multiple ornamental cartouches in the lower half. These unfurl freely across the page in a great variety of forms (fig. 4).

As advertised in his preface to the *Engelwerk*, beginning in 1698 Kraus published a five-part *Historische Bilder-Bibel* (Historical Picture Bible), followed by a collection of homilies entitled *Heilige Augen- und Gemüthslust ... 1706* (which loosely translates as 'Sacred Desire for the Eyes and Spirit'). All three publications were intentionally printed in the same layout, and each conceived of as an expansion and continuation of its predecessors. The consistent print space functioned as a sort of 'corporate design', a recognizable trademark unique to this publisher, and was maintained in the numerous reprints of the *Engelwerk* and picture Bible.

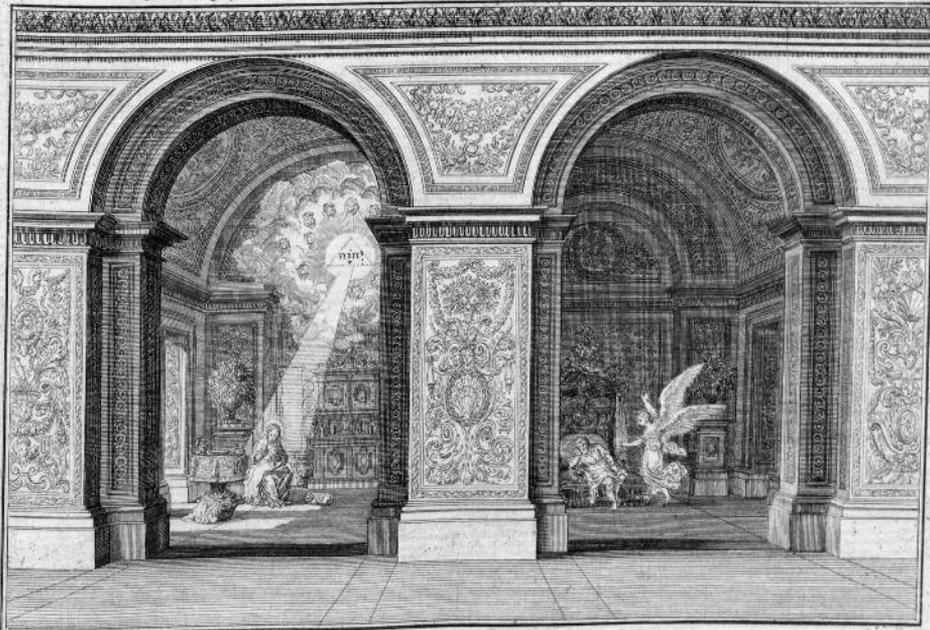
Along with Melchior Küsel's workshop, Kraus had also inherited his former master's comprehensive stock of prints for use as source material, and continually added to it. In his three religious books he drew on this material extensively, creating varied and diverse combinations of motifs. Kraus most often copied the work of French artists, particularly Sébastien Leclerc and Jean Lepautre, but also Raymond Lafage, Daniel Marot, Charles Le Brun, Jacques Callot, Nicolas Sanson, and members of the Perelle family. Kraus combined the French models with the work of German, Netherlandish, and Italian artists such as Matthäus Merian, Melchior Küsel, Isaac Fisches, Johann Wilhelm Baur, Marten de Vos, Hans Vredeman de Vries, Anton Maria Viani, Ludovico Burnacini, Andrea Pozzo, Agostino Mitelli, and Stefano della Bella. Kraus thus took on an important role as disseminator. On the one hand he combined various artistic currents, and on the other he disseminated the new French courtly art of Versailles.

After this rapid rise to success, Kraus and his wife suffered a terrible setback in December of 1703 when their workshop near the Klinkertor was destroyed by enemy bombardment during the War of the Spanish Succession. Kraus himself recorded the appearance of the Klinkertor and the adjoining market square in an etching, and contrasted the situation before and after the destruction (fig. 5). In April of 1704 the building was still uninhabitable and the city obviously too unsafe a place from which to run a workshop. By June, however, Kraus had returned and had again taken up where he left off on the *Augen- und Gemüthslust*, and the workshop

Der Engel Dienst den Jungfrauen zu gut.

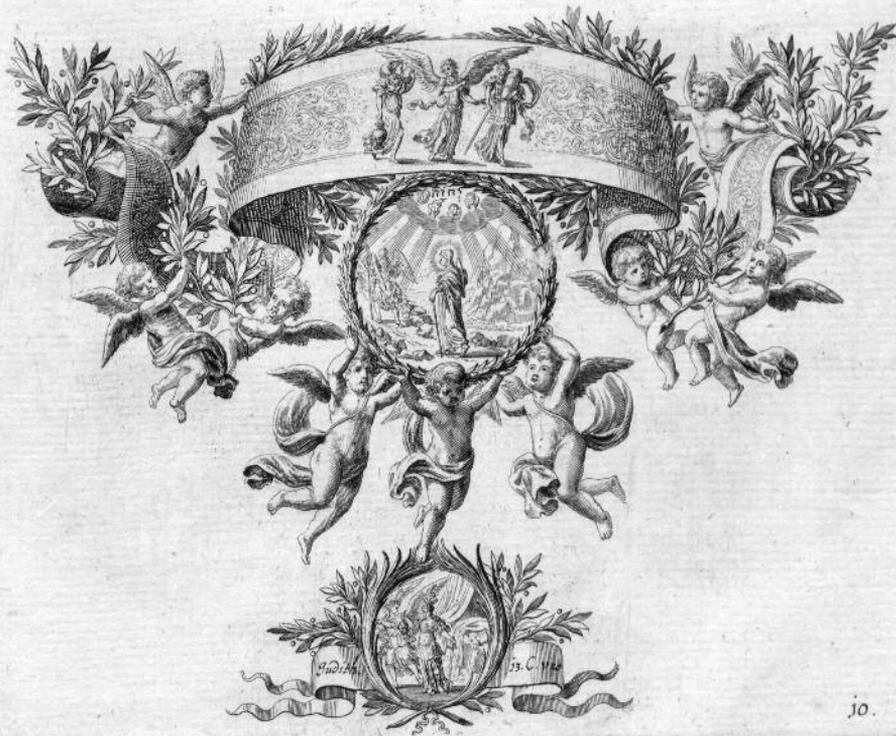
Matth. 1. v. 20. Ein Engel sagt dem Joseph im Schlaf: Er soll die H. Jungfr. Maria nicht verlassen.  
Luc. 1. C. Die H. J. Maria geht wider Engelischen Geleit aber das Gebirge. Joh. 8. v. 11.

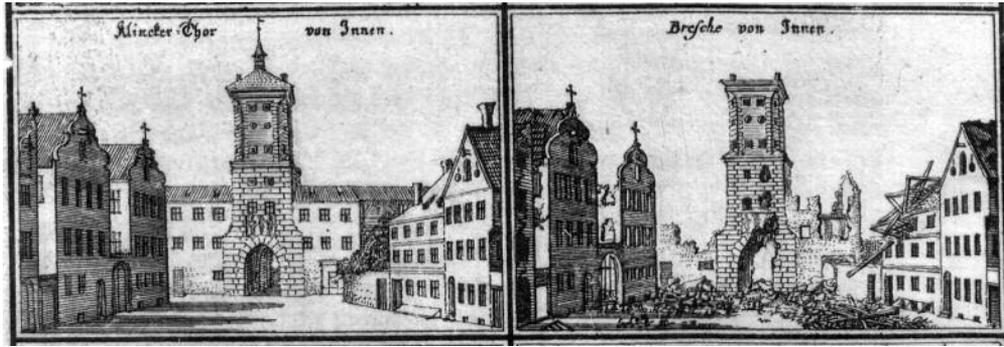
Die Dichter des Lusts von Engeln beschützen. 1. M. Mose. 19. C. v. 20.  
Judith von Engeln bey Holoferne geschützt. Judith. 15. C. v. 20.



Weil Joseph sein Gemahl Mariam schier will hassen /  
Da Ihre Jungfräulichkeit bey Ihm im Zweifel steht /  
Das Er mit dem Entschlus im Herzen ganz umgibt /  
Nicht Kläger selbst zu sein, sie heimlich überlassen ;  
So zeigt ein Engel Ihm der Sach Bewandtnis an .

Wie Keusch und Reinlichkeit die gute Engel lieben /  
So hindern Sie mit Lust, was solche mocht betreiben /  
Die man am Leib und Geist für Jungfern halten kan /  
So mag die Dächtern Caths ein Engel gern bewahren ;  
Marian auf der Reis: Wie Judith gleichs erfahren .





5: *Klinkertor in Augsburg before and after the Destructions*, 1710, etching, Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 4 Aug 236a, detail

quickly regained its former level of productivity. Toward the end of his creative period Kraus worked on a number of architectural treatises. In 1711 he delivered three large-scale etchings for Paul Decker's (1677–1713) magnum opus *Fürstliche Baumeister* (Princely Master-Builders), an extensive collection of detailed plans of ideal examples of secular architecture.

In January 1717 Johanna Sibylla Kraus died. Records show that she had already helped her father in his workshop as a child, learned the trade and practised it there for more than half a century. Her known works already make up a considerable collection, and her actual oeuvre was probably many times as large. Many of the unsigned works today attributed to her father or her husband should in fact be attributed to her. With the death of Johanna Sibylla Kraus the workshop's productivity came to an almost complete standstill. Johann Ulrich Kraus died in July of 1719, two and a half years after his wife's death. Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach's (1656–1723) opulent history of architecture entitled *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architectur* (A Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture) was printed after Kraus's death. Kraus had contributed a frontispiece to Part I and a view of Schönbrunn Palace (fig. 6), both after drawings by Fischer von Erlach. Kraus's publishing company had already changed hands twice by this time. It initially passed to friends of the Kraus family, who sold it shortly thereafter to the Leopold family of art and music publishers.

From an economic standpoint, Kraus led the publishing house to great prosperity. Over the course of multiple decades he released his own publications, printed new editions of local and foreign publications, and delivered numerous book illustrations, particularly to printers and publishers in Augsburg and Dillingen. Religious qualms or reservations regarding the Jesuit subjects taught at the University of Dillingen apparently had no bearing on this professional collaboration. With a consistently high level of craftsmanship, industry, and entrepreneurial skill he had amassed considerable wealth. In the latter stage of his life he is listed in the tax registry of 1717 as one of the three wealthiest engravers of Augsburg, only surpassed by Johann Andreas Pfeffel (1674–1748), and Elias Christoph Heiss (1660–1731).

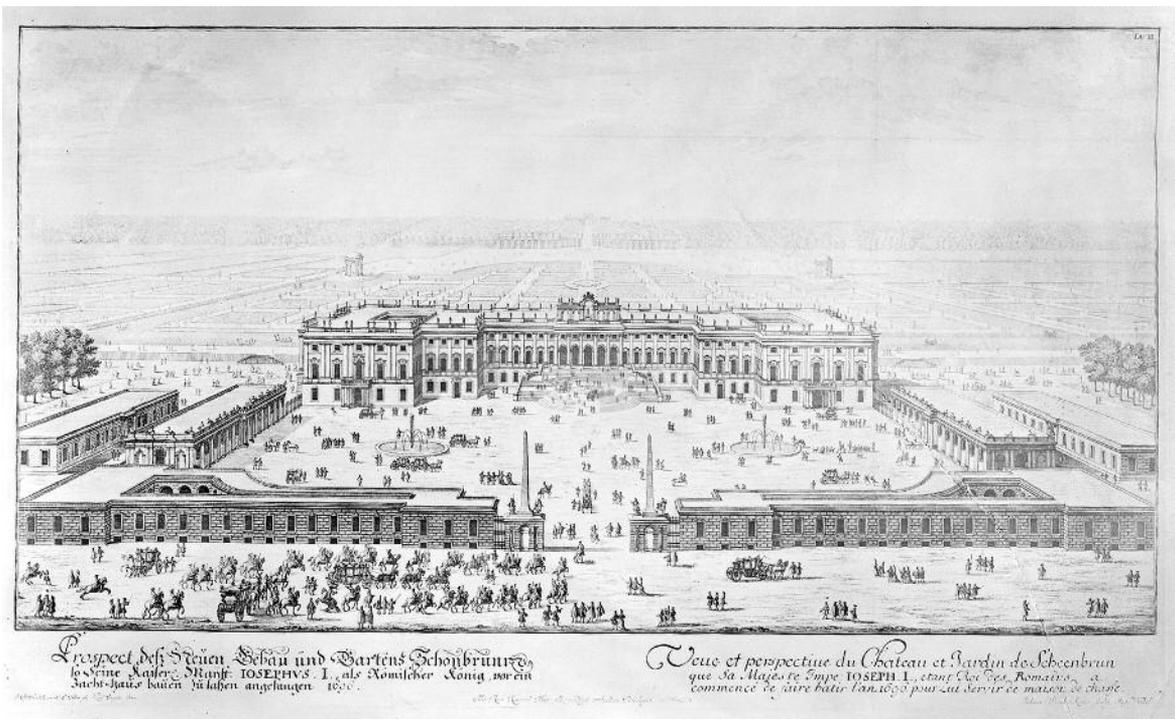
The artistic spectrum of his oeuvre encompasses everything from frontispieces and book illustrations, landscapes, architecture, religious and mythological topics, battles and sieges of the Turkish war, to a few maps. By contrast however, it is striking how relatively few portraits he made. Kraus seems to have intentionally left this genre to other colleagues who specialized in portraiture such as Elias (1640–1693) and Johann Hainzelmann (1641–c. 1693), Leonhard Heckenauer (c. 1650–1704), and Elias Christoph Heiss. Kraus never seems to have truly learned the new mezzotint technique, brought to Augsburg around 1690/95, which was increasingly used to achieve particularly painterly effects in portraiture.

His greatest achievement was surely his role as a disseminator, in that by copying Italian, Netherlandish and – most notably – the new French models, such as were fashionable at the court of Louis XIV in Versailles at the time, he helped spread foreign artistic styles and pictorial inventions. He reworked a wide array of ornament prints and decorative details to produce new combinations of ornament, providing inspiration for local artisans. This is particularly apparent in his magnum opus, the three books *Engelwerk*, *Historische Bilder-Bibel* and *Augen- und Gemüthslust*, which should be understood as a cohesive series based on their identical layout. His frames and cartouches were used as models by painters, goldsmiths, stuccoists, cabinetmakers, and tapestry weavers for years to come. Kraus thus contributed significantly to the rise of a French style characterized by elegant vegetal decoration, which gradually replaced the dominant Italian ornamental style with its broad acanthus vines. Besides his own activities in printmaking and

publishing, his correspondence with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz – polymath, historiographer, and director of the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel – and with Johann Georg Eckhart, Leibniz’s successor in Wolfenbüttel, may be of particular interest to scholars

Compiler: Jörg Diefenbacher  
 Editor: Eckhard Leuschner

\* The volumes Johann Ulrich Kraus I-V have been published as part of our series The New Hollstein German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts 1400-1700. For more information and orders, please contact us at: [info@hollstein.com](mailto:info@hollstein.com)



6: View of Schönbrunn, engraving and etching, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung, 166.629 - C