

Christoph Luitpold Frommel

25 September 1933 – 11 February 2026

Christoph Luitpold Frommel was a giant in Renaissance scholarship, a charismatic teacher and dynamic intellect at the heart of an international community formed around the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome. Born in 1933 in Heidelberg with a wartime adolescence spent in the Black Forest, Frommel's grandfather was the theologian Otto Frommel and his father the composer Gerhard Frommel, a professor of music in Frankfurt am Main. Still, Frommel attributed a greater formative influence to his Amsterdam-based uncle Wolfgang Frommel, dedicatee of two of his books, and then to the spellbinding lecturing of his Doktorvater at the University of Munich, Hans Sedlmayr. He chose Peruzzi's Farnesina as the subject of his doctoral dissertation in 1959 as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that – within an innovative architectural envelope – encompassed painting, astrology, theater, gardens, humanist poetry and antiquity, all enlisted in the service of Rome's wealthiest and most discriminating patron. Presciently, it also offered an opportunity to investigate the urbanism of Julius II. Peruzzi, dazzling draftsman and interpreter of an unconventional strain in antiquity, would long remain a favored topic of research, which continued in a monograph of 1967/1968 on Peruzzi as painter and draftsman and in Peruzzi conferences in 1981 and 2001.

Frommel's unusually long term as *Stipendiat* and *Assistent* at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, 1959–1967, laid the groundwork for a lifetime of research. The Director, Franz Graf Wolff Metternich, was deeply engaged with Bramante and the drawings for Saint Peter's. Frommel, a brilliant and indefatigable archival researcher, enlarged the investigation by discovering the payment documents for the church under Julius II, which allowed him to map the structure and practices of the *fabbrica*. He saw the *ninfeo* at Genazzano as the missing link between Bramante and Raphael and found its plan embedded in the basement of Villa Madama. Almost like a magician, he flipped the famous Uffizi plan for Bramante's Palazzo dei Tribunali over and found an unknown sketch for a grand *Forum Julium* on the verso. Following a generation hypnotized by the paradigm of the central church, he saw the untapped potential of secular architecture and began to assemble the mass of material that went into his Habilitationsschrift of 1968 and his great compendium on palaces, published in 1973 at the age of forty.

Der Römische Palastbau der Hochrenaissance is a magisterial work. The catalogue alone consists of 35 monographs and the endpapers of the three volumes, based on the Nolli map, locate 42 relevant buildings. None of us had any idea there were so many. There is of course acute visual analysis of façades and courtyards but also a novel emphasis on the function of rooms from the grand salone down to the *tinello* and kitchen. The geographical range extends to other centers in Lazio and even to Raphael's Palazzo Pandolfini in Florence. An innovative chapter, *Palastbau und Urbanistik*, brought the Roman street system to life as the scene of political sparring and a constant quest for *Visualisierung*. The effect on Italian scholarship (and my own) was immediate.

During his professorship in Bonn in 1968–1980 Frommel developed into an inspired teacher, guiding dozens of dissertations in his own field but also, sensing the restless tenor of German universities in those years, pushing into the