

MAKING SENSE OF THE ROME WE SEE TODAY

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LECTURE 4: BAROQUE ROME

I think that the works of Bernini, Borromini and da Cortona which bring the Baroque into being are probably the most interesting or exciting for architects... because these works are, I think, the real beginnings of modern architecture... because they seem to be essentially about the exploration of space rather than of volume...

Bernini, the most extraordinary of sculptors is perhaps still much more a Renaissance artist... his sculpture, his fountains, and his architecture are, despite their invention, still rooted in a Renaissance way of experiencing architecture... and he is the continuation of that sense of design (usually reliant on a literary concept) and form...

Borromini is, I think, the first modern architect... breaking all the traditional rules of classical architecture, exploring complexity and contradiction... both in form and especially in the definition and character of space....

And da Cortona, also a wonderful painter and architect, is perhaps the first modern urban designer, making a quite new and intricate public space...

But before I talk about them and the Baroque highlights of the townscape, I must talk about the ordinary... about the gradual making of the city... remembering that Rome had perhaps as many as two million inhabitants in 200 CE... down to perhaps just 200 000 by 500 CE... and down to just 20 000 in 1400...then gradually climbing to perhaps 100 000 by 1600 CE... and, so, to illustrate this ordinary making and to explain the apparent haphazardness of the townscape, I am going to tell you about my own research regarding **a part of a city-block in Trastevere** (carried out as the major component of my Masters degree at the University of Rome in 1982-85)...

Illustration 1: Aerial [GoogleEarth]

- the Tiber, the Island, Trastevere and its tight medieval texture...
- even Via Lungara is very narrow... one of the few modern roads on the line of an ancient Roman road... leading to the consular Via Aurelia...
- our site faces onto one of these medieval streets, Via del Moro...

Illustrations 2-5: Photographs of Trastevere [SST, 1985]

- all the pics are of 1983-1985...

Illustration 6: Aerial, 1985 [Fotocielo]

Illustration 7: Cadastral Plan

- nine separate properties... with as many as sixty units (retail, residential, office, etc

Illustration 8-25: Photographs of the Palazzo Ruggieri-Cervini [SST, 1984-85]

Illustration 26: 1551, Bufalini

Illustration 27: 1576, du Perac

Illustration 28: 1625, Maggi

Illustration 29: 1676, Falda

Illustration 30: 1748, Nolli, detail

Illustration 31: 1591, Reconstruction of the Block-plan reliant on Pompeo Ruggieri's will

- Pompeo Ruggieri's will uses the words in parenthesis on the drawing...
- the will identifies the property definitively as that of the Ruggieri family
- note the two monasteries across the roads... future problems... probably already incipient and could have been the reason for building a grander palazzo in central Rome near the Gesu...

Illustration 32: 1591, Axo reconstruction reliant on Pompeo Ruggieri's will

Illustration 33: Measured drawing, Piano Nobile [SST, 1985]

- note the number of separate dwelling or other units

Illustration 34: Measured drawing, Via del Moro elevation [SST, 1985]

- note the Renaissance windows of circa 1590
- the Baroque windows of 1670s
- the continuation of the cill-line and floor levels

Illustration 35: 1694 drawing by Architect Moraldo

- the presence of monasteries frequently inhibited building... no over-looking
- note that the windows 1-6 had to be closed due to over-looking onto Monastery of S Apollonia... evidence in documents found

Illustration 36: Measured drawing, Vicolo della Renella elevation [SST, 1985]

- note the continuation of cill-lines, floor levels, etc
- the grand brackets, the attic windows, the heads and shells over the attic windows
- note the obvious incomplete end... intention to extend...
- note the side of the little balcony

Illustration 37: Photograph facing the Tiber [SST, 1985]

- note the obviously incomplete end... and the new balcony

Illustration 38: 1750s, Vasi engraving

- showing a balcony... which had to be removed due to overhanging
- see also S Pietro in Montorio

Illustrations 39-42 Palazzo Ruggieri near the Gesù [SST, 1999]

- a much grander palazzo (though initially with one bay fewer)

- built by Giacomo della Porta for his friend and colleague, Cavaliere Pompeo Ruggieri... completed circa 1591...
- with the Ruggieri rampant lions (here clutching a snake) decorating the court...

Illustrations 43-45: Photographs of the Renaissance portone and the Ruggieri Sutri portone [SST, 1985]

- Sutri, the family origins of the Ruggieri (Silvio Ruggieri married an Aversa of Trastevere in about 1520), is a small hill-town about 50 kms north of Rome...
- this rampant lion would, I am sure, have been on the Via del Moro portone...

I am going now to turn to an important Baroque feature of city-making... while the indefinitely extended axis or shaft of space has often been described as the singular Baroque feature of city- and architectural design, but this had long been a feature of grand design ideas... and it is the extension of the space inside the building into the public realm that is, to my mind, more interesting... and more interesting today....

And da Cortona's design of the facade of S Maria della Pace and its extension into the space in front of it that is most exciting....

Facade, portico and urban space at S Maria della Pace, 1656-62

Illustration 46-47: Nolli's plan, detail, and Modern re-draw [Schwartzing, p155]

Illustration 48: plan showing carving out of townscape [Wittkower, p242]

Illustration 49: Section showing the surrounds, almost theatrical [Schwartzing, 159]

- perhaps echoing Berinini's earlier (1645-52) S Teresa chapel in S Maria della Vittoria

Illustrations 50-54: Photographs (SST, 2019)

And the later carving out in 1727-28 of the **piazza in front of S Ignazio** by Raguzzini, responding to and echoing the nave and aisles inside the church, is another Baroque spatial invention...

Illustration 55: Nolli, showing the piazzas of S Maria della Pace and **S Ignazio**

Illustration 56: Nolli-like plan of Piazza di S Ignazio [Schwartzing, p129]

- see how the nave and aisles project establishing the shape of the piazza
- see also the Jesuit college and courts

Illustrations 57-58: Piazza di S Ignazio, Sections [Schwartzing, pp130, 131]

- see the height of the cornices of the piazza buildings and of the church
- the church by Maderno, 1620-later
- the dome not built... illusionist dome painted onto the flat ceiling

Illustrations 59-64: Piazza di S Ignazio, Photographs [SST, 2015, 2016]

Bernini is probably the prime exemplar of the Baroque, as the sculptor and architect of an enormous number of extraordinary works... long-lived, 1598-1680, and enormously energetic... also a charming man, beloved of the several of the eight popes he worked for... and described as the last of the dazzling universal geniuses of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque...

We've already looked at one of his greatest works yesterday, the colonnade of S Peters...

And I have referred to his two bell-towers at the Pantheon which were removed in a late-19thC restoration and his bell-tower at St Peters which was unstable...

But today we're going to look at a couple of his fountains, an almost theatrical chapel with that wonderful and emotionally powerful sculpture of a saint that epitomises the Baroque and the Counter Reformation and, then, an important little church, S Andrea al Quirinale... but this is, frankly, to do Bernini an injustice... a whole lecture is not enough... but our time is limited...

But, in order to look at Bernini's greatest fountain, the Four Rivers, we are going to look at the space it commands, Piazza Navona... the ancient Roman circus...

Illustration 65: Piazza Navona, Nolli detail, 1748

Illustration 66: Piazza Navona, Nolli-like drawing, 2018 [Schwartzing, p91]

- note the widened streets to the east parallel with the piazza and to the south

Illustration 67: Piranesi engraving, circa 1750 [Piranesi, p]

Illustration 68: Piazza Navona flooded in 1756 [Panini in Kerber, p118]

- the flooding was accomplished by blocking the outflows from the three fountains... and two hours later, the piazza was perhaps a foot or 300mm deep... done on the four Sundays of August... when the heat is unbearable...

Illustration 69: Fontane del Moro/Black from above [Gasponi, Pietra e l'Acqua, p54]

Illustrations 70-79: Approaching the Fountains of the Moor/Black and the Four Rivers, Photographs [SST, various years; Gasponi,]

Illustrations 80-86: Hire-wire trapeze, mid-summer 1983 [SST, 1983]

Still talking about Bernini, we're going to look at three things by him all in close physical proximity all near S Maria degli Angeli in the ancient ruins of the Baths of Diocletian that we looked at yesterday: another fountain, a chapel in a church and a

church... and then we'll end the day with a look at a church by Borromini... which is also in close proximity...

Illustration 87: Nolli, detail showing the four places in close proximity that we're going to look at next

Illustration 88: The Triton, Piazza Barberini, circa 1860, Photograph [Storia Fotografica, 1900-1918, p17]

Illustration 88: The Triton, Piazza Barberini, circa 1885, Watercolour [Roesler Franz, #65]

Illustrations 89-97: The Triton, 1642-3, Photographs [SST, 1984 + various]

- the sea-god, shell and the four dolphins... and the papal arms and the Barberini bees... all welded into an organic whole... a perfect demonstration of the idea of the '**concetto**'... the literary or poetic essential underpinning idea of the work... indeed, it is in this development of the notion of an underpinning concetto that is at the core of Bernini's practice... and successes...

Just up the hill is S Maria della Vittoria... with Bernini's Cornaro chapel and the ecstasy of S Teresa... perhaps **the** epitome of Counter Reformation and Baroque emotionalism... and the work that Bernini himself thought was the most beautiful thing he'd ever done...

Illustrations 98-107: Cornaro Chapel and the Ecstasy of S Teresa, S Maria della Vittoria

- S Maria della Vittoria, the church: completed c 1620, Maderno
- Teresa of Avila.... 1515-1582... mystical experience in 1559 (then 44... not the young woman depicted)... canonised 1622....
- Bernini's chapel of 1647-50s
- the eight figures overlooking and discussing the miracle are the Cornaros, the Patriarch of Venice, his father, the Doge and six cardinals (all but one dead by this time)
- heightened emotional drama... the moment of the miracle of her mystical experience
- Bernini was a profoundly devout Catholic, much affected by Jesuit teaching and practice... the ecstasy of S Teresa was "an exercise of devotion, an opportunity to enlighten and inspire" [Hibbard, p137]

"Beside me... appeared an angel in bodily form... He was not tall but short, and very beautiful; and his face was so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest rank of angels, who seem to be all on fire... In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he pulled it out, I felt that he took them with it, and left me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so extreme that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is

so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one's soul content with anything but God. This is not a physical, but a spiritual pain, though the body has some share in it- even a considerable share. So gentle is this wooing which takes place between God and the soul that if anyone thinks I am lying, I pray God in his goodness, to grant him some experience of it." (Teresa of Avila, circa 1565, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus...* and I note that her *Life* was subjected to the Inquisition in 1575... and published in 1588 with the support of the Inquisitors)

And we'd do well to remember that both Teresa and Bernini practiced S Ignazio's 1548 *Spiritual Exercises*...

- the way the central figures and the overlooking observers are arranged draws the viewer, you and me, into this space... and so to share the religious ecstasy of being united with God...

A couple of hundred meters down the street (passing Borromini's S Carlo alle Quattro Fontane on the way, which we'll return to in a moment), we find Bernini's S Andrea al Quirinale

Illustration 108: S Andrea al Quirinale, Plan [Wittkower, p182]

- 1658-62... the plan echoes the arms of S Peter's colonnade (begun in 1652)... and the semi-circular porch projects, though weakly, into the space in front of the church... [this post-dates and was probably inspired by da Cortona's porch at S Maria della Pace of 1656 ...]

Illustrations 109-118: S Andrea al Quirinale, Photographs [SST, various]

- 1658-62... then the stuccos by Raggi over the next three years ... and the rest of the decoration by 1670...
- extraordinarily rich decoration... even though for the Jesuit novices... which perhaps shows how much things had changed in the previous hundred years... from the starkness and severity of S Ignatius' position and ideas to this richness....
- the oval is a typical device of Bernini but this one is broken (like the Pantheon's) at the entrance and at the altar where S Andrew soars to heaven on a cloud...
- although a relatively small church, an over-whelming sense of richness, even opulence ...

Illustration 119: Nolli, detail showing the three places we've just looked at and, at the centre, **Borromini's S Carlo alle Quattro Fontane**

Illustration 120: The Plan of S Carlo alle Quattro Fontane

- Borromini 1599-1667
- Saint Carlo Borromeo, canonised in 1610

- first the cloister and refectory from 1634, his first independent commission
- then, from 1638-42, the church....
- the plan, extraordinarily complex, is almost indefinable ...

Illustration 121: Table of different spatial configurations

- argued over 150 years by historians... here just a dozen... and I have not even included Paolo Portoghezi's two triangles with hemispheres off them...
- the first modern building... space is the primary material of the design...
- centrally organised... a circle (stretched to an oval) or a Greek cross

Illustrations 122-123: Borromini's setting-out construction drawing

- looking carefully at Borromini's drawing... possibly a setting out drawing... possibly much later (1660), done for the preparation of a publication
- the oval dome is not a true oval... but formed by the radii of four circles..
- the nave is a rectangle with the corners cut off..
- the apse, two chapels, and the entrance are a Greek-cross...
- note that the cloister has more obviously cut off corners...

Illustration 124: Plan [Wittkower, p199]

- I have drawn the rectangle and the arches establishing the rectangle more clearly

Illustration 125: Section [Wittkower, p200]

- the section shows three distinct spatial arrangements:
 - the lowest, everyday life, is confused and uncertain
 - the middle, the space of thought, is organised by the symbol of the cross
 - the uppermost, that of the spirit, is domed and organised by crosses, circles and chamfered rectangles
- but the primary concern is space rather than the solid elements of the architectural elements used... which is why I argue that this is the first truly modern building ... even if, after a flowering of the Baroque in Piedmont and in Austria, architecture turned ever more to revivals, to more detailed arguments about 'correctness' of style often with nationalism at the root of the arguments...

Illustrations 126-147: Photographs [SST, various]

- the facade was not completed till after Borromini's death and there is argument that it or at least the campanile is not his work...
- my early photographs of 1984 show sculptural pieces in the niches.. but these were removed some time in the 1990s... returning to or restoring Borromini's intentions... remembering that the church is of the Discalced Trinitarians... barefoot monks ...and still so...
- so the church is quite different to S Andrea al Quirinale which we looked at a moment ago

So, while da Cortona and Bernini developed the conventional classical language of the Renaissance cleverly, bending the rules... Borromini, however, is quite different in that he is changing even breaking the rules ... and his work was criticised for this... and I am sorry to show you just this one work by him... the church of S Ivo set in the courtyard of the University of Rome just around the corner from the Pantheon is very different from S Carlino but as formally inventive...

But that said, I want to end today with a riddle: when is the work of architecture created?

- The common sense view has it that architecture is always a physical-formal-spatial **thing**... and it is only created when the building is completed... implying that the initial conceptual design, developed through more detailed drawings and choice of materials and specifications including specialist inputs, and the actual construction with all its opportunity for decision-making and development of the idea are all essential phases of the creation... I think that most architects think this is how works of architecture are made... even if many buildings are not built very well or as the designer intended... damaged/spoiled by the builder or the independent instructions or insistences of the owner...

- another view, articulated most clearly by the philosopher of art, Nelson Goodman, is that the work of architecture is the idea or concept of the building as revealed/expressed by the drawings, models, specifications.... and the building is just a single '**performance**' of that composition... of those notations... in this sense, architecture is very similar to music... which is created by the composer and the work, revealed through the notations and instructions to the director and musician-players or orchestra, is then performed... iteratively... each performance is then evaluated as a performance of the work... and the work is experienced and evaluated independently, if via the performances... sometimes the performances are adjudged to be good-accurate-correctly expressive-etc... sometimes less so... in this view, architecture is the same... some architects, but I think not many, do see their work in this way... and an interesting illustration of this is this very church of Borromini that we've just been looking at...

While the interior of S Carlo alle Quattro Fontane had been completed by 1642 and the lower storey of the facade in 1665-67 and the upper storey by his nephew in 1675-77, a small church was built with Borromini's assistance and advice in 1662-70 (the interior) and by completed in 1674 the facade and lantern).... **S Maria del Prato, just below the Umbrian hill-town of Gubbio...**

Illustrations 148-149: S Maria del Prato, Gubbio, Photographs [SST, 2014]

- facade and lantern

Illustration 150: S Maria del Prato, Drawings comparing the two plans

Illustration 151: S Maria del Prato, Drawing comparing the shapes of the two domes

Illustrations 152-158: S Maria del Prato, Photographs [SST, 2014]