



MUSEI VATICANI



MUSEUMS
AT WORK

FRANCESCO BORROMINI

(BISSONE, 27TH SEPTEMBER 1599 - ROME, 3RD AUGUST 1667)

Francesco Castelli, known as Borromini, came to Rome from the Canton Ticino prior to 1619. In Urbe, a center for the arts beyond comparison, the dialogue between ancient, contemplative, and contemporary architecture was thriving within the Catholic Church. The young Francesco was able to grow professionally and to complete his studies.

Employed as a stonecutter at the Fabbrica di San Pietro by Carlo Maderno, who was the head architect of the Fabbrica, young Borromini was involved in major works such as Sant' Andrea della Valle and Palazzo Barberini. It was during this time that he met Gian Lorenzo Bernini. At the death of Maderno in 1629, Borromini continued his work in San Pietro under the direction of Bernini, the new architect of the Fabbrica, collaborating with him in the early thirties in the realization of the famous *Baldacchino* among others.

In 1632 Borromini, now promoted to the role of architect, became responsible for the complex of the first university of Rome, the Sapienza, where he completed the church of Sant'Ivo with originality and innovation, as well as the Biblioteca Alessandrina. The work begun in 1643 and was completed only twenty years later, under the pontificate of Alexander VII (1655-1667). The artist possessed a naturally introverted disposition and had a preference for congregations and religious orders. Such is particularly demonstrated by his commissions for the convent and the church of the Trinitari Scalzi, the church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (commenced in 1634) and the Oratory of San Filippo Neri, built alongside the church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, also known as the Chiesa Nuova (1637-1640). In 1646, Borromini was appointed architect of the Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide and began arrangements for the homonymous palace (completed in 1662), which became one of its most significant and inspired creations.

Various important architectural endeavors date back to the pontificate of Innocent X (1644-1655), such as that of the Pamphilj palace in piazza Navona and the adjacent church of Santa Agnese (designed then entrusted to Girolamo Rainaldi), and the restoration of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano for the Holy Year of 1650. These works were followed by the project for the church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte, with its famous two-order bell tower commissioned by the Marquis Del Bufalo.

In addition to commissions for many Roman aristocratic palaces (Spada, Carpegna, Spagna, Falconieri, Giustiniani) between the 1640s and 1660s, the architect was also involved with some projects outside of Rome, such as the church of San Paolo in Bologna (1650-1657), the Falconieri Villa in Frascati (1665) and the arrangement of San Martino al Cimino, near Viterbo (1646-1652).

He died in 1667 in Rome, where he was buried in the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini.