



MUSEI VATICANI



MUSEUMS
AT WORK

FRANCESCO BORROMINI

THE DRAWINGS OF THE VATICAN LIBRARY

The exhibition is the result of the desire to remember and honor the great architect of the 1600s, Francesco Borromini, on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of his death.

The small and precious core of the collection comes from the Vatican Library. Having the mission of conserving important testimonies of the past, the library is the custodian of many documented texts and graphic records of the artist.

The works come originally from the *Vaticano Latino* manuscripts (11257 and 11258), which contain papers owned by Virgilio Spada, an oratorian priest, good friend and supporter of Borromini. These documents are proof of the objective esteem and friendship that Spada had for Borromini. Moreover, the *Chigiano P.VII.9* manuscript is also part of the exhibition. Pope Alessandro VII Chigi (1655-1667) collected and bound this manuscript in person for his library during the years that the artist was still alive.

The selection concentrates on few yet pertinent examples from the artist's grand body of graphic work. Particular attention is given to his artistic production during the pontificate of Pope Innocent X Pamphili (1644-1655).

In addition to the project of the Four Rivers Fountain in piazza Navona, an elaborate documentation regarding the artist's project to renovate Pope Innocent X's family palace is presented in this exhibition.

There are other architectural designs for the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano that transmit the great dedication with which the artist worked at the religious building. Pope Innocent X had entrusted the renewal of the Basilica to Borromini in view of the Jubilee year of 1650.

In the same Holy Year, the architect was involved in a grandiose restructuring of another Basilica, San Paolo fuori le mura, which was also part of Innocent X's program to enhance the patriarchal Basilicas in order to have a revitalized debut during the jubilee.

Lastly, four drawings of different undertakings by Borromini catch our attention: the Four Rivers Fountain in piazza Navona, the city gate of San Martino al Cimino near Viterbo, the plan to restore the sepulchral Pyramid of Caio Cestio in Rome, and the attributed project of a figured portal for the new prisons building in via Giulia. These works attest to the artistic versatility and vitality of the architect, who remains undisputedly a great protagonist in 17th century Roman architecture.