

12.2 Baroque Architecture in Catholic Europe - Settings of Absolutism

- 1) **East Facade of the Louvre (1667)** by Claude Perrault. A strong example of pure French Classical architecture (not Baroque). The East Facade is a five-part facade. It has a central pedimented entry block modulated for scale; pairs of columns at the *piano nobile* in the deeply shadowed middle bays, and solid end blocks or pavilions with anchor the facade. Perrault manipulated this facade using the columns in pairs, with the overall thought that by bending a few rules, he made the classical language even better. Therefore, this building is considered **modern**.

Claude Perrault and his brother Charles were considered moderns, in the squabble between the Moderns and the Ancients. The Ancients thought that the ancient architecture should be slavishly copied. The Moderns thought that **reason and intellect would offer guides and solutions as well - classical may be the answer, but it may be rationalized as well.**

Greatly admired by Thomas Jefferson during his term as Minister to France 1785-1789. **Becomes a model for American public architecture.**

- 2) **Bernini and Borromini and the Italian Baroque**

- **Baroque** (Barocca - meaning imperfect pearl). Extravagant, dramatic, emotional interpretation of classical architecture as a sidebar of the Counter-Reformation. The Church was trying to reinvigorate itself (after the Reformation of Northern Europe). A bit of a public relations effort. Look for scenes of epiphanies, ecstasies, symbols, elaborate details - even carving clouds and rays of light, depicting scenes with sculpture as if they were stage sets.

Formal things to look for:

- 1) dramatic use of light and dark (chiaroscuro)
- 2) deeply articulated details
- 3) opulent and varied use of color
- 4) dramatic projection at central block or entry
- 5) Fragmentary or unusually shaped elements
- 6) bending or breaking of classical rules
- 7) Large-scale ceiling frescos

- **Church of the Gesù (1568)** Considered the first Baroque church facade. In Rome. Built for the Jesuits and the Society of Jesus. Breaking some of the rules, arched tympanum, cartouche at top, deeply carved, ornate. Designed by Giacomo Barozzi da **Vignola**. Tromp l'oeil fresco in ceiling *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* by Giovanni Battista Gaulli (1679). Vignola's design for the facade redone by Giacomo della Porta. *IHS* is the symbol for the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits which signifies the building. In Greek, "Jesus" is spelled: ΙΗΣΟΥΣ. Therefore, if you use only the first three letters of Jesus ΙΗΣ (the Σ is sigma therefore written as an "S"....) it becomes IHS
- **Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680)**
- Greatest sculptor, and one of the greatest architects of the 17th C
- Also executed stage designs for theaters
- Bernini's style of the **Baroque** demonstrated an opulent, extravagant, dramatic display of architecture — as if his architecture were like stage sets.
- Used the classical language, but broke many of the rules to accomplish this.
- **Baldachino at St. Peter's** by Bernini (1630) Assisted by Borromini. The elaborate and gigantic Baldachino covers the central altar, employing Solomonic Columns (twisted), and other elaborate decorations to the generally classical elements. The Baldachino was a structure that mitigated the space between the gigantic scale of the church itself and the human-scaled altar below - positioned directly above the tomb of St. Peter.
- **Cornaro Chapel (1650)** at Santa Maria della Vittoria. Very theatrical chapel setting with central figure of St. Teresa with an angel, and with clients carved in the box seating.

Classical elements in general, but very flamboyantly arranged with broken and curved pediment, curved entablature, and richly designed in colored marbles.

- **Francesco Borromini** and his **San Carlo alle Fontane** church in Rome from (1634). **Very Baroque**. Wildly curving and undulating geometry, and broken pediments and suspended frames and niches. Uses classical elements but pushes them into strange, elaborate arrangements that would be unimaginable to Alberti 200 years earlier.
- **Sant'Andrea al Quirinale** 1658-1665. An energized arrangement of interlocking geometrical forms along a curving facade down the street from Borromini's alle Fontane.
- **Piazza del Popolo** an illusory stage-set entrance into Rome from the north edge of town. About 1660. Described as a fanciful propylea (entryway) in Rome, the piazza featured flanking twin churches that were *almost* identical. Assisted by Carlo *Rainaldi*.
- **Piazza of St. Peter's** in Rome (1657). Basilica is finished out as Classical (Renaissance) by **Michelangelo** (1560) and dome completed (1590) and **Maderno's** extension of the nave (1610). Then the Baroque piazza added by **Bernini** arranged almost as the embracing arms of the church - four-column-deep curving arcades that make a porous screen against the city, but allows constant movement throughout. Very centralized, very axial. Almost like a theater set for the approach to St. Peter's.

A major architectural or urban public space such as St. Peter's, might be thought of as the setting for **urban theater**, such as people lining up to see the Pope, as well as civic events.

3) Baroque examples in France from this period:

- **Baroque in France**. Baroque in France less about churches and more about palaces, chateau, hôtels, and so forth...
- **Val de Grace (1646)** by Francois Mansart and Jacques Lemercier for Anne, mother of Louis XIV. **A Baroque-Classical church**, with strong influence from the Roman Baroque. Very logical arrangement of the facade, with deep shadows, and architectural flourishes such as broken entablature and scrolls.
- **Les Invalides** (1669) Ordered to be built in 1670 by Louis XIV to care for wounded veterans of France's wars. The main body of church was designed by **Libéral Bruant** — was finished and had the dome added by **Jules Hardouin Mansart** (nephew of Francois). Royal Military Hospital in the **Baroque-Classical** style.
- **Vaux-le-Vicomte** (1656) by Louis Le Vau (Architect) and André le Nôtre (Landscape Architect). The man who built it was **Fouquet**, who was Louis XIV's Finance Minister. He built this magnificent chateau hoping to impress Louis XIV. Eventually he was accused of shady dealings, and was sentenced to life in prison. This Baroque chateau has corner piers, a dome, a thousand acres of gardens. Heavy, rich, projecting decoration. Opulent, and richly detailed.

4) **Palace of Versailles** (beginning 1660)

- **Louis XIV** reigns longer than anyone else in European history (1743-1715) (72 years)
- Establishes himself as the **Absolute Monarch**. Also known as **The Sun King**.
- Starts to build Versailles at the location of his hunting lodge. Eventually moves his entire palace and retinue out to Versailles in 1682.
- The overriding architectural metaphors of Versailles are the size, grandeur, opulence, of the palace and the infinite vistas of the gardens, which indicate his **absolutism**, or his absolute rule.
- Architect: **Louis Le Vau**. Landscape Architect: **André Le Notre**
- **Versailles comes to America**: The Frenchman, **Pierre L'Enfant**, who designed the plan Washington DC for George Washington in 1791 grew up in Versailles where his father was a court painter.

Therefore, it's ironic that the *formal* manifestation of Versailles's garden landscape, that is, radiating avenues and endless vistas symbolizing **absolute rule**, would then be used in Washington to signify the constitutional arrangement of a **free republican form of government**.

This underscores that the *philosophical idea* of architecture (the content) is not always in alignment with the *formal manifestation* of architecture (the form).