Lecture 3: High Renaissance Classicism in Rome

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1492 - 1503
Rodrigo Borgia elected Pope Alexander VI
supported by King Charles VIII of France and King Ferrante of Naples
supported financially by France and Genoa
enemies
Cardinal Ascanio Sforza colluded with Rodrigo Borgia to block Giuliano’s election
rewarded with palace and 4 mules laden with gold and silver
continued the artistic program established by Sixtus IV and continued by his nephews
Alexander VI has been accused of every sin, far beyond those of Sixtus IV. Commissioned by Alexander VI, the painting was painted by Pinturicchio and his workshop in 1492-1494. The petitioner would have entered Sala dei Santi from Sala dei Misteri. This painting is part of the papal hall of state, representing temporal and spiritual power.
Pinturicchio, Borgia Apartments, Sala dei Santi combines Christian history with references to ancient Rome and ancient Egypt program devised by Giovanni Annio da Viterbo, papal secretary
divine justice

Moses = precursor to Christ
Isis and Osiris = prefigured Moses who learned from them when he was in Egypt
Osiris > Moses > Christ > Alexander VI because of their resurrection = precursors to Christ
South vault above the throne - clockwise from bottom:
Assassination and Dismemberment of Osiris by his brother Typhon (prefigures sacrifice of X)
Isis finds the scattered members and builds a tomb/pyramid (X’s entombment)
Osiris is resurrected as Apis, the bull, Egyptian god of agriculture (X’s resurrection and election of Alexander)
Triumph of Apis (triumph of X and Alexander VI)
Osiris is resurrected as Apis, the bull, Egyptian god of agriculture (X’s resurrection and election of Alexander)
Triumph of Apis (triumph of X and Alexander VI)

heavenly canopy over the papal throne and instilling him with universal spiritual power from the beginning of history
triumph of Christianity > Arch of Constantine

Turbaned figures > Turks who threatened Eastern Europe and Moors who inhabited Spain until 1492
Catherine debates with Maxentius and his scholars about the Incarnation and Passion of Christ (prefigured in the Osiris/Apis scenes above)
according to legend Catherine was Constantine’s niece; Maxentius challenged her as a way of challenging Constantine. 
Maxentius, ruler of eastern Roman Empire, was defeated by Constantine at battle of Milvian Bridge.
PACIS CULTORI > Alexander as bringer of peace and justice
(Pax Borgiana and the Spanish reconquista)
Arch of Constantine surmounted by Borgia bull > Alex VI = Constantine
triumph of Christianity and Church
papal throne centered under arch (peace and bull)
portraits:
Catherine = Lucrezia Borgia
Prince Djem, brother of Sultan Bajazet II, held prisoner in the Vatican = turbaned figure

Catherine was also the protectoress of illegitimate children
also from Alexandria
lavishness of decoration
multitude of bulls
while Cardinal, Giuliano was a generous patron of the arts
completed the tomb of his uncle, Sixtus IV
renovated his titular church of San Pietro in Vincoli
principal residence at SS Apostoli - where he kept his collection of ancient sculpture

stayed away from Rome for almost a decade 1494-1503
voluntary exile from Borgia papal court
while Giuliano was away - Cardinal Raffaele Riario kept patronage alive
passion for classics
financed publication of ancient texts - Vitruvius
collected antiquities > Demeter and Melpomene

1496 Riario bought a sleeping cupid from the dealer Baldassare del Milanese
believing it to be a recently discovered ancient sculpture
to add to his collection
Passion for antiquities - permeates Rome

Riario discovered that the Cupid had been carved by 21 year-old Michelangelo returned it and got his money back
BUT
was so impressed with Michelangelo invited him to Rome
Sleeping Cupid

literary descriptions of sleeping Cupids - one sculpted by Praxiteles

King Ferdinand I gave Lorenzo de'Medici an ancient sleeping Cupid placed in sculpture garden in 1488

competition with antiquity
forgery - Cupid
Battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths
competition with antiquity

Battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths

Battle Sarcophagus, late 2nd c.
Camposanto, Pisa
heroic, Herculean, classical
sleep > death
pensive - all-knowing
limp arm
stairs
block of marble
innocents

5 steps > 5 levels of the soul
Ficino’s neoplatonism
based on Kabbalistic concept

soul’s quest for union with Divine

struggle of the amoral soul ≫ spiritual soul
M wrote often of his inner struggle

yetzer hatov ≫ yetzer hara
good inclination ≫ evil inclination

Michelangelo, Madonna of the Stairs, c. 1491
Donatello, Feast of Herod, c. 1440
1496 Michelangelo arrives in Rome
letter of introduction to Cardinal Raffaele Riario
from Lorenzo di PierFrancesco de’Medici

Riario invited M to carve a statue of Bacchus
rejects it - why?

Martin van Heemskerck, sketchbook,
Jacopo Galli’s Garden in Rome, c. 1532-35
Martin van Heemskerck, sketchbook, Jacopo Galli’s Garden in Rome, c. 1532-35

did Michelangelo present it damaged? later repair it?
or does Heemskerck’s depiction emphasize M’s rivalry with antiquity?
multiplicity of views
human and god
complex
nude > emphasized by pelt in hand
unsteady - inebriated
effeminate
Boccaccio reference to Albricus who described Bacchus as:  
“ancients painted him in the female form, and nude as he is adolescent.”  
Boccaccio, Genealogie decorum I: 264
Jacopo Bellini, *Triumph of Bacchus*, c. 1440
Louvre Sketchbook, f.36
Farnese Bacchus, originally in Lorenzo de'Medici's collection

Apollo Belvedere in Giuliano della Rovere’s collection
Ovid, *Fasti*, 357

“O Bacchus, whose locks are twined with clustered grapes and ivy.”

visualizes metamorphosis of wine into the deity of wine

child-like satyr
alludes to adult temptations and their inevitable results
bestial forces lie dormant in humans

commentary on morality of Rome?
Jacopo Galli recommended Michelangelo to French Cardinal Jean de Bilheres for a sculpture to adorn his tomb in Santa Petronilla, ancient rotunda attached to the transept of old St Peter’s.

Cardinal Bilhetes de Lagraulas = ambassador for King Charles VIII to Pope Alexander VIII.

He did not live to see the sculpture finished - died 1499

appropriated by Alexander VI Borgia

Santa Petronilla destroyed before 1520.
original location in niche above altar
lit by natural light from upper windows
the Virgin would soon place the body of her Son in His tomb = the altar

idealized
monumentalized

beginning and end referenced
never ending time
circular
birth + death

Michelangelo, Pieta, c. 1497-1500
idealized
monumentalized
highly polished > glowed with internal radiance

serenity, calm
divinely ordained

Virgin presents us with her Son > our hope for
salvation and eternal life
right hand frames his wound
left hand offers him to us
mediation between life and death
wounds of crucifixion
head falls lifeless
deadweight
legs awkwardly bent - onset of rigor mortis
left foot rests against a severed stump of a young tree > life cut off in its prime
tree > promise of renewed life > tree of the cross
"whence came death, thence also life might rise again"

upper body is muscular and pliant
inner vitality
right hand grips Virgin’s drapery
Virgin Mary
youthfulness
according to Ascanio Condivi, Michelangelo told him that:

“Do you not know that chaste women stay fresh much more than those who are not chaste? How much more in the case of the Virgin, who had never experienced the least lascivious desire that might change her body?...Therefore, you should not be surprised if, with his in mind, I made the Holy Virgin, mother of God, considerably younger in comparison with her Son than her age would ordinarily require, though I left the Son at his own age.”

or

Dante, *Paradiso*, canto 33
St Bernard in prayer says:
“Vergine madre, figlia del tuo figlio”
(Virgin mother, daughter of your son)

and/or

story of Sarah, wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac
gave birth at 90
according to Rashi, the 11th century Torah commentator
Sarah was so spiritually pure at 100 that she looked 20

Pico and Ficino studied Rashi
head of Christ
youthful Apollo
eyes and mouth slightly open
calls attention to artist's presence
impression of immediacy
lettered by brush
uneven spacing - irregular sizes
across Virgin's heart
revived ancient Greek use of
imperfect tense
used by Apelles and Polyclitus
acc. to Pliny
links Michelangelo to his
namesake
Archangel Michael
divinely inspired creator
spreading God's message
like angels
Ariosto called M. divine
bold declaration of authorship
yet also humble - unfinished
facieba[t] = was making
1507 poem

“Ma più lieto quel nastro par che goda, dorato in punta, con si fatte tempre che preme e tocca il petto ch’egli allaccia”

But even more delighted seems that ribbon, gilded at the tips, and made in such a way that it presses and touches the breast it laces up
Medieval and Renaissance custom socially prominent individuals would embroider the name of emperor or patron

Church vestments were embroidered with passages perpetual devotion

1972 madman attacked her during restoration discovered M in her left palm
ideal geometry
Vitruvius > Brunelleschi > Alberti > Leonardo

central plan/circle = image of divinity
according to Euclid and Plato
ideal city
architectural symbolism
Baccio Pontelli?
San Pietro in Montorio, 1482-1500
commissioned by Sixtus IV and Amadeo Menez de Silva
Spanish order of reformed Franciscans
Amadeistas
variation on the facade of SM del Popolo
without side aisles
interior = combination of
groin, pendentive and umbrella vaults
with semicircular chapels, transepts and apse
ancient god Portumnus (also called Janus) to whom the Janiculum was dedicated
god of harbors and gates (porti/porte)
often represented with a key in hand
Portumnus ≈ Peter

Maffeo Vegio
humanist and member of the curia
identified the Janiculum as site of Peter’s crucifixion

halfway btw 2 pyramids
tombs of Romulus and Remus

pyramid of Cestius, known as the
Pyramid of Remus
Pyramid of Romulus was dismantled in 16c to supply stone to new St Peters
Janiculum Hill

Medieval pilgrims’ guide - the Marvels of Rome claimed that Noah’s ark landed there

Roman god Janus = Noah’s son acc to Roman myth, Janus inherited his authority form Saturn on the Janiculum established a golden age of peace Janus’s attribute = key Peter = new Janus Roman church was prefigured by Janus, Romulus, Remus and Augustus
Bramante’s Tempietto was seen as the equal to the ancients - a classic in its own time like Michelangelo.
Bramante, Tempietto, S. Pietro in Montorio, c. 1502-10
commissioned by Ferdinand + Isabella
with support of Alexander VI

Temple of Hercules Victor
excavated during reign of
Sixtus IV
only known round temple
with doric colonnade

acc. to Vitruvius
Doric order > male deities

Hercules = Christ type

Peter > Christian hero
like Hercules

Renaissance classicism
synthesis of antique and modern
ideal
Temple of Vesta, Tivoli 1st century BC
original dedication unknown
Hercules, Sybil, Vesta
corinthian, peripteral
18 columns

Serlio, Book III
Temple of Vesta, Roman Forum believed to have been built by Numa Pompilius storehouse for Roman legal wills and documents including Palladium destroyed in 1559, rebuilt by Mussolini

Palladio explained that the Temple of Vesta was round “to resemble the earth by which the human race is sustained.”

Peter = rock upon which the Church was founded Vesta = guardian of the family of the Roman state Peter = the guardian of the Christian family (church)

Numa Pompilius = king and 1st high priest of ancient Rome founder to the temple of Janus - indicator of war/peace buried on Janiculum

Numa Pompilius = pagan counterpart to Peter

origins of Rome and those of the Church linked through Peter
Santa Costanza, 4th century, mausoleum for either Constantina or Helena, both daughters of Constantine.

Santo Stefano Rotundo, 5th century

Tempietto conceived as martyrdom
Bramante envisioned a circular courtyard in accordance with Serlio’s concept of the Pantheon and idealized ancient monuments as the embodiment of perfection.
Hadrian’s Villa, Tivoli, so-called Maritime Theater
Hadrian’s private retreat
a villa within a villa
round peripteral temple surrounded by circular ambulatory columns and pilasters lined up with columns and pilasters of temple niches on exterior of cella were echoed on ambulatory outer wall

Platonic ideal

centripetal force with Tempietto at center
4 concentric zones in proportional relationship
cylindrical cella
peristyle
open space
circular colonnade
3 zones:
columns = earthly zone
balustrade = transitional zone
dome = heavenly zone
3 zones:
crypt = underworld > depths of the earth into which the seed of Christianity was planted through Peter’s martyrdom
main body > Church, dominating the terrestrial sphere
dome > Church triumphant
metopes > 12 liturgical objects
incense boat, chalice, paten, papal tiara,
umbrella, keys, and candles etc

dignity of priesthood
papal references
Mass

inspired by frieze from Temple of Vespasian

fusion of antique and christian
brilliant solutions to stylistic problems

sculptural
creative, sculptural design solutions

tall lantern - like candelabra
triumphal arch motif
shell >
triumph over death
eternity

play of light and shade
painterly
Bramante so fully understood the principals of ancient architecture that he no longer was a slave to its rules. He challenged the ancients by designing a modern building all’antica, a classic in its own time.
ENTER JULIUS II 1503-1513 > elected on platform of reform
needed new visual language to express change and reflect enlarged church reaching to Americas and Asia
looked to Roman imperial models
Giuliano was elected pope on first ballot, within 24 hours (bribery, of course)
crowned on October 31, 1503, age 60
Alexander VI had stripped Giuliano of all power and even tried to poison him
exiled in Avignon
RENOVATIO URBIS

plan to return Rome to its former glory
to reinforce glory and power of the Catholic Church

combatted crime in the streets
controlled powerful land barons - denied the ability to join Cardinalate
evicted baronial families as Papal guardians - replacing them with Swiss Guard

massive campaign of beautification
axial streets
St Peter’s
Vatican

fusion of utopian and practical

future rooted in ancient past
Following in the footsteps of his uncle, Sixtus IV, Julius immediately set about urban improvement via della Lungara. He planned Ponte Giulia, connecting Via Giulia directly to Vatican. Via della Lungara was a trade route to ports and a military thoroughfare.
on 18 April, 1506 Julius II laid the cornerstone for new St Peter’s bold decision to destroy the most revered church in Christendom association with Constantine - Julius = new Christian Roman emperor

hired Bramante
to build a colossal new centralized church with Peter’s tomb at its center

(Julius also planned to place his monumental tomb near Peter’s tomb, in the choir)

PEDO SERVATAS OVES AD REQVIEM AGO
(The sheep that were preserved by the staff I lead to their repose).
In Book 4 of his *Quattro Libri*, Palladio states:

“We who worship no false gods, will choose the most perfect and beautiful form for our churches. Since the circle excels all other forms in being simple, homogeneous, everywhere the same, solid and capacious, our temples shall be circular. The circle mirrors God’s unity, infinity, his homogeneity and justice.”

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central plan
iconographically appropriate for martyrium
symbolically appropriate > cosmological symbolism of heaven

cross and circle
elaboration of circles and squares
Greek cross within a square
fusion of Christian and pagan
"dome of the Pantheon over the vaults of the Temple of Peace"

Sigismondo dei Conti, Julius’s secretary

Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine
believed to celebrate the conquest of Jerusalem
revolutionary design
piers turned at angles
walls sculpted and molded
active engagement with space

Bramante recovered the Roman technique of poured concrete
formed and cast on site
large, highly skilled workforce
Bramante = capo maestro

Julius died 1513
Bramante died 1514
belief in perfection of form as image of the divine
end of the 15th century - flowering of central plan churches
ideal > but not great in terms of real/function

Antonio da Sangallo, San Biagio, Montepulciano, begun 1518

Cola da Caprarola + Baldassare Peruzzi,
Santa Maria della Consolazione, begun 1508
work continued for the next 150 years
alternating between central and longitudinal plans
central - preferred ideologically
longitudinal - better liturgically

Raphael
Antonio da Sangallo
Peruzzi
Michelangelo
(Maderno in 17th century)

Michelangelo rejected Sangallo’s design: “dark hiding places above and below [which are]
perfect lairs for crime, for forging money, raping nuns, and other such roguery.”
barrel vaulted Greek cross with terminating apses
barrel-vaulted ambulatory with 4 minor domes
hemispherical dome over crossing
massive piers and thick, sculptural walls
exterior echoes interior
earth and heaven with intermediary attic
(remember the Tempietto)
attic hides corner domes
unified sculptural block
Christ as cornerstone > Peter as rock

unity at moment when unity was no longer possible
Michelangelo freely breaks classical norms
undulating wall
load and support
dark $\triangleright$ light
soaring verticals halted
upward thrust countered by attic $\triangleright$ transitional zone
Michelangelo’s design of dome > hemispherical > dome upon drum with classicizing colonnade
paired columns continued by ribs of dome
broken entablature
perfection of dome > divinity and spiritual perfection
modified by Giacomo della Porta in 1568