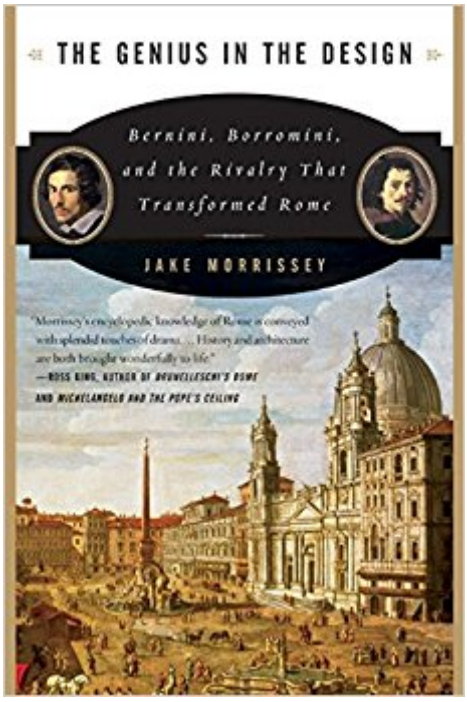
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The Genius In The Design: Bernini, Borromini, And The Rivalry That Transformed Rome



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Synopsis

The rivalry between the brilliant seventeenth-century Italian architects Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini is the stuff of legend. Enormously talented and ambitious artists, they met as contemporaries in the building yards of St. Peter's in Rome, became the greatest architects of their era by designing some of the most beautiful buildings in the world, and ended their lives as bitter enemies. Engrossing and impeccably researched, full of dramatic tension and breathtaking insight, The Genius in the Design is the remarkable tale of how two extraordinary visionaries schemed and maneuvered to get the better of each other and, in the process, created the spectacular Roman cityscape of today.

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Customer Reviews

Sometimes plodding but often entertaining, this dual biography of two Italian Baroque artists popularizes a tale familiar to art historians. Raised in a wealthy family with connections to politicians and cultural players, Bernini (1598Ã¢â ¬â œ1680) was 12 when he was commissioned to do his first major pieceÃ¢â ¬â •and he soon learned how to win the hearts and pocketbooks of rich patrons on his own. Borromini (1599Ã¢â ¬â œ1667) lacked such connections, but climbed the guild's ladder, eventually becoming chief assistant to Carlo Maderno, the chief architect of St. Peter's. When Maderno died in 1629, Borromini was shocked that Bernini was named chief. Morrissey (A Weekend at Blenheim) finely renders the intense rivalry between these two artists, giving a reasonable if fact-heavy look at 17th-century Roman life in the process. Borromini elected

to work for Bernini, but tensions soon led to a break; Bernini went on to complete the Scala Regia and the Cathedra Petri; Borromini found fewer and fewer commissions and eventually killed himself. The book doesn't do justice to the varying levels of ambition, engagement and achievement Morrissey finds in these figures, but it does an adequate job sketching their contours. (Mar.)
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Among Rome's many splendid churches, two of them only 300 yards apart--Sant'Andrea and San Carlos--have dazzled visitors with their beautiful but sharply contrasting types of architectural brilliance. Morrissey here tells the remarkable story of the two seventeenth-century geniuses behind these two churches--collaborators and rivals, united by a deep love for the Eternal City, divided by diverging personalities and imaginative visions. As Morrissey recounts the intertwined lives of Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini, readers see how two very different minds worked together to create a new artistic style (the baroque) but then turned against each other in the fierce competition for commissions and acclaim. By skillfully gauging and then exceeding others' expectations, Bernini adroitly curried favor with the patrons and clerics who employed him. By truculently resisting the slightest intrusions upon his artistic prerogatives, Borromini alienated even many admirers of his greatest achievements--and consequently ended his frustrated life as a suicide. A highly successful double biography. Bryce ChristensenCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

When I was 18 I entered college to study architecture. Like almost all my classmates I revered the great modern architects, Sullivan, Wright, Mies, and Le Corbusier. Unlike my classmates I was also fascinated by history and this fascination and my love of architecture led to a journey of discovery. During that journey I developed a fondness for the symmetry, stability, and rhythms of Renaissance architecture. Then I found Borromini and Bernini and the sensuality and dynamism of their forms and I fell in love. In light of this I am probably not a good judge of the general appeal of this book. It is long on architectural descriptions and critically short on needed illustrations and photographs. A picture is worth a thousand words and a book on the work of any architect requires my illustration that verbalization. This is the one fault of this book otherwise it is an excellent treatment of the lives and works of these two incomparable artists.

This was a fantastic read both with respect to the history of 17th century Rome, the background of

the buildings which both Bernini and Borromini worked on, and the other figures involved. The ingenious narrative will, after discussing a certain issue, backtrack just a bit, like highlighting an issue but then focusing on the brighter details, as Morrissey will do with his careful descriptions of architecture. All in all, fascinating, historically astute, giving important history but not overwhelming you with every detail of every building. I would have given it 4 stars, but there are simply not enough pictures, which makes it difficult when we are reading descriptions of the architectural effects, and we have to imagine it without seeing the artist's effect. What is more boring than "let me tell you about a painting!".

It was very informative, but for my tastes, it was a bit difficult. I don't know many of the churches and other buildings Bernini and Borromini designed, but I'm sure they are lovely. I would now like to visit them to appreciate the scholarly nature of the book. The background about all the Popes and their needs for spectacular, costly tombs shows how controlling the Catholic Church was, especially then.

This book is a wonderful find for someone who is interested in the Baroque period and especially in the tumultuous relationship between Bernini and Borromini. I chose to read this book as a supplement to my Baroque art class and it has helped me immensely. Even though it is a historical depiction, citing many sources and historical events of the seventeenth century, it reads as a novel. You get enveloped in both of these characters and their lives and become entangled in this rivalry that really shaped the architecture of this period. Morrissey does a great job at providing enough historical evidence to set the stage without making the text dry and boring. If you have a true interest in Baroque art/architecture, this is a wonderful read that will only further your passion for Rome in the Baroque period.

This is a book that we read like a novel about two of the greatest artists that lived in the city of Rome during the XVII century.The writing is clear and call our attention to the life of Bernini and Borromini, their work and their personalities. It is a good approach to their work and you will be interested in knowing more about them. It also explores the relation of the power and the arts and in the end tell us that a patron is important to the glory of an artist. For me, that have already studied the life and work of Bernini, wasinteresting, since place him in connections with other artists, Borromini. I believe this kind of relationships and rare and needed.

Excellent book on a subject not often addressed. Borromini and Bernini the 2 great Baroque artists that filled Rome with their beautiful buildings and sculptures. Borromini my personal favorite struggling to compete with Bernini and his large reputation. Their rivalry created some of the most important art in Western Civilization. Masters at their craft and individual genius' in their own right. Finally a book talks about both of them living and working in Rome changing the face of art history with their innovations.

One negative review of this book said it was simple a biography of the two architects and did not have a significant discussion of design. This is not true. There is enough discussion of design to satisfy the lay reader or tourist. The great thing about the book is that it gets you into the spirit of the grandeur of Rome. This is what most readers want and need in our era of hysterical banality.

Seems like every art lover knows about Bernini, but not about another genius of the same period, Borromini. Hopefully this wonderful book will change that.

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