



BERNINI

THE SCULPTURES





BERNINI

THE SCULPTURES Maria Grazia Bernardini



© 2013 Gebart S.p.A
Via Prenestina 685 - 00155 Roma
info@gebart.it - www.gebart.it

(All rights reserved)
ISBN 978-88-98302-01-7

Editor-in-chief and picture research
Stefania Spirito

Graphic design
BerardiDesignTeam

Translation
Oona Maria Smyth

Photolithography and printing
Miligraf S.r.l., Rome

Picture credits

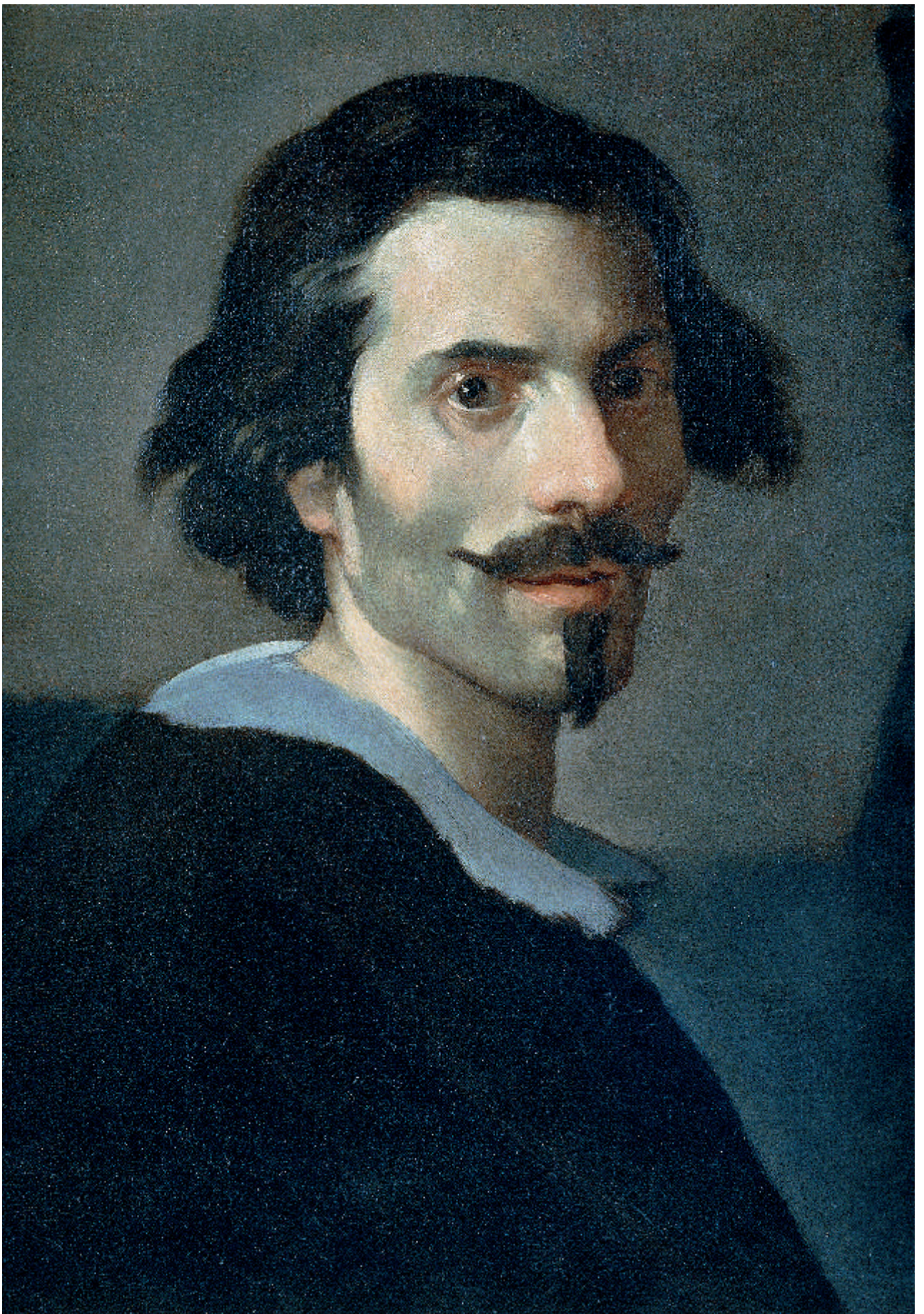
- © 2012 Andrea Jemolo/CORBIS: p. 27.
- © 2012 Bildarchiv Monheim/Archivi Alinari: p. 32.
- © 2012 De Agostini Picture Library, licensed for use by Alinari: p. 39.
- © 2012 De Agostini Picture Library/Scala, Florence: pp. 54-56.
- © 2012 Foto Giovanni Rinaldi: pp. 58-59.
- © 2012 Foto Scala, Florence – by permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali: p. 31.
- © 2012 Foto Scala, Florence/Fondo Edifici di Culto – Ministero dell'Interno: pp. 8-9, 38, 41, 47, 48-49.
- © 2012 Foto Scala, Florence: pp. 10, 22-24, 26, 30, 33, 42-43, 45
- © 2012 Paolo Cipollina/Cromamedia: pp. 35-37.
- © 2012 by the kind permission of Archivio Fotografico Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico, Artistico ed Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale della città di Roma: cover, facing title-page and pp. 6, 11-15, 17-21, 28-29, 50-53.
- © 2012 The State Hermitage Museum/photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets: p. 44.

Although every effort has been made to identify sources of images used, copyright holders are invited to contact the publisher relative to eventual omissions.

Facing title-page:
G. L. Bernini, *Self-Portrait as a Young Man* (c. 1623), Rome, Galleria Borghese.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	7
THE FORMATIVE YEARS	8
THE YOUTHFUL WORKS	11
BERNINI AND URBAN VIII: THE YEARS OF MATURITY	22
THE PORTRAIT GALLERY	27
THE FOUNTAINS	32
THE “BEL COMPOSTO”: THE UNION OF THE ARTS	38
THE REIGN OF ALEXANDER VII CHIGI	41
THE LATE BERNINI	46
PUPILS, ASSISTANTS AND FOLLOWERS	54
TIMELINES	60
BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY	63



INTRODUCTION

Although 16th-century art in Rome is mainly linked to the great cycles of paintings in the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo, in Raphael's Stanze, in the Vatican Gallery of Maps, and the ambitious projects of Sixtus V, in the 17th century it was prevalently represented by sculpture: chapels, altars, altarpieces, marble statue groups, figures of saints or allegorical characters, funerary monuments and decorative elements proliferated and spread throughout sacred buildings; fountains and obelisks embellished squares and streets; statues, coats of arms, cartouches and monumental doorways animated the façades of churches and palaces; portrait busts filled the private galleries of the nobility.

The sheer scale of Bernini's works, which can be found in every corner of the city, along with the absolute originality of his inventions, which opened a new phase in the history of art, mean that no study of Baroque sculpture in Rome can be considered complete without an illustration of his creations. Bernini (Fig. 1) was not only a sculptor, he was also an architect, painter, town-planner, draughtsman, engraver, playwright and scenographer. With his outstanding creative powers, multifaceted genius, exceptional abilities as an organiser of colossal events and exuberant personality, he monopolised most of Rome's major artistic projects, causing Passeri to describe him as "that dragon who ceaselessly guards the gardens of the Hesperides, making sure no one else should snatch the golden apples of papal favour, spitting poison everywhere and planting ferocious thorns of loathing along the path that led to rich rewards". A recent exhibition rightly termed him the "director of the baroque".

His art has left a lasting mark on the way Rome presents itself, shaping its *forma urbis*. Next to him, the figures of great sculptors like Algardi and Duquesnoy, both creators of superb masterpieces, pale in comparison. The correspondence between Francesco I, Duke of Modena, and his brother, a cardinal who was in Rome at the time, provides an idea of the enormous prestige and power enjoyed by Bernini. As Cardinal Rinaldi wrote to Francesco, who wished to have his bust portrayed: "Bernini works only as a favour to friends or at the request of important personages. With him, one cannot fix in advance either a schedule or a price. [...] For marble portraits, whether busts or half figures, Algardi the sculptor demands one hundred and fifty *scudi* plus the marble [...] and will deliver the work in one and half months. (Letter of 16 July 1650, ASM).

Fig. 1
G. L. Bernini,
Self-Portrait as a Mature
Man (c. 1635), Rome,
Galleria Borghese.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Gian Lorenzo Bernini came to Rome aged around seven in 1606. He was born in Naples in 1598 to Pietro Bernini, a Tuscan sculptor who moved there in 1584 before being called to Rome by Pope Paul V. As a boy, Bernini worked alongside his father in two of the largest and most prestigious sculptural undertakings of the first two decades of the century: the Pauline Chapel in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (1605-1611) on behalf of Pope Paul V, and the Barberini Chapel in the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle (1604-1618) for the Pronotary Apostolic Francesco Barberini commissioned by Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, future Pope Urban VIII, which saw Pietro Bernini flanked by the leading sculptors of the time. They included an extremely young Gian Lorenzo, who sculpted two small angels in the Barberini Chapel (Fig. 2).

The sculptures in these two projects show the first signs that the late Mannerist style is making way for the vigour and naturalism typical of the Baroque language. In the episode of the *Coronation of Clement VIII* and in the *Caryatids* in the Pauline Chapel, in

the relief with the *Assumption* (now in the baptistry of the basilica, but originally intended for the entrance wall to the chapel) Pietro's style is characterised by a search for decorative effects obtained by extensive use of the drill in locks of hair or beards, by an incredible technical virtuosity revealed in the sharp angular folds, by an extremely animated and crowded composition, and, above all, by pictorial effects obtained by means of continuous passages from high to low relief creating strong chiaroscuro effects. In the sculpture depicting *St John the Baptist* in the Barberini Chapel, Pietro eschews the rigidly static position typical of a statue for an undefined pose of the figure, which, as has been pointed out, may be seated or about to rise. In the *St Martha* (Fig. 3) – also in the Barberini Chapel – Francesco Mochi, one of the great artists of the first half of the century, pursues a naturalism and narrative aims that were wholly new and that would be taken up by the young Gian Lorenzo when carving his future Borghese sculptures: the saint is shown bending forward with holy water to tame the dragon who is grasping



Fig. 2 (left)
Barberini Chapel
(1604-18), right wall,
Rome, Church of
Sant'Andrea della Valle.

Fig. 3 (right)
Francesco Mochi,
St Martha (1609-17),
Rome, Church of
Sant'Andrea della Valle,
Barberini Chapel.



a youth in his claws. Bernini obviously spent his time in his father's workshop observing and learning, but he also studied classical sculpture. According to his biographers the young artist would leave Santa Maria Maggiore every morning to go to the Vatican palaces, where he would study the legacy of antique art. His particular fascination with the sculptures of *Antinous* and the *Belvedere Apollo* (Fig. 4) would emerge with great clarity in his subsequent works.

In the Vatican palaces the young Bernini could linger before the works of Michelangelo and

Raphael who had always been considered the supreme masters, and, as an acute observer, he also looked to the art being painted in his own period, in particular by the Bolognese artists, Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni, and Giovanni Lanfranco, who had painted such extraordinary works between the late 16th century and early 17th century, like the Farnese Gallery, the *Aurora* in the Casino Pallavicini, the Annunziata Chapel in the Quirinal palace, as well as by Caravaggio and Rubens.



Fig. 4 (left)
Belvedere Apollo
(c. 350 BC),
Musei Vaticani.

Fig. 5 (right)
G. L. Bernini,
Goat Amalthea
(before 1615), Rome,
Galleria Borghese.

Questo "assaggio di lettura" è finito
This "reading sample" is finished

***Per acquistare il libro completo
torna alla scheda del volume e mettilo nel tuo carrello.***

***If you would like to buy the complete book, please go back
to its fact sheet on this site and put it in your cart.***