
Potsdam, May 15, 2019

Preannouncement *Baroque Pathways*

July 13 to October 6, 2019

From 13 July to 6 October 2019, the Barberini Museum is showing the exhibition *Baroque Pathways: The National Galleries Barberini Corsini in Rome*. 56 masterpieces from the collections of the Palazzo Barberini and Galleria Corsini are on display in Potsdam, including one of Caravaggio's early works, his 1597–99 painting *Narcissus*.

Focusing on a narrative's decisive moment, Caravaggio (1571–1610) initiated a new kind of art. Like a spotlight on a stage, a strong source of light monumentalizes his figures. Spreading beyond its origins in Rome, this new pictorial treatment launched a European counter-movement, which spiritualized and transfigured baroque art and led to a realism whose starkness fascinates us to this day. With its theme of disappointed self-love, Caravaggio's *Narcissus* from the Palazzo Barberini, the centerpiece of the exhibition, exemplifies the relevance of this artistic style for the twenty-first century.

The Palazzo Barberini in Rome holds one of the most important collections of Roman Baroque painting. Along with the Palazzo Corsini, it houses the Gallerie Nazionali, the Roman National Gallery of Antique Art. *Baroque Pathways* shows—for the first time in an exhibition—a representative selection of paintings from this period. It reconstructs the genesis of Roman Baroque painting inspired by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio and through its impact on the rest of Europe, traces developments north of the Alps as well as in Naples. This European dimension is visualized by the reception in Germany, and highlighted by the avid collecting activities of Frederick II in particular, who, in his quest to decorate the Neues Palais in Potsdam, accumulated works by Artemisia Gentileschi, Guido Reni or Luca Giordano.

Pope Urban VIII was the main patron of the Roman Baroque. Even before being elevated to cardinal and his election as pope, Maffeo Barberini had commissioned Caravaggio to paint his portrait (private collection, 1598). Barberini was a connoisseur of scholarly writings and his library included not only manuscripts of the clerical scholars but also major works of ancient literature. Following his ascent to the papal throne, he intended to launch a flourishing cultural epoch of painting, architecture, literature and music that could be compared with the Renaissance. His papacy saw the dedication of the Basilica of St. Peter in 1626, whose construction had begun during the reign of the Renaissance popes over a hundred years earlier.

Urban VIII, with his favored architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini, completed the most important building of the Catholic Church. He commissioned Bernini to build a magnificent ciborium over the tomb of Saint Peter and affix there the insignia of the Barberini family, depicting the sun, bees and laurel.

Meanwhile, the Florence-born family, together with Urban's uncle Taddeo, his brother Francesco, and his nephews Francesco and Antonio, had settled in Rome and charged the most important architects of their time—Carlo Maderno, Francesco Borromini and Bernini—with building the Palazzo Barberini.

Decisive stimuli for Baroque art originated in the Palazzo Barberini. The ceiling fresco in the Grand Salon and Bernini's ciborium bear witness to Pope Urban's high standards and ambition. Virtues flank the allegory of the Divine Providence of his papacy, and present the papal tiara and the keys of Saint Peter. Below them, personifications of faith, hope, and love form a laurel wreath surrounding the bees of the family crest. The ingenuity of Pietro da Cortona's ceiling fresco set new standards—with the staircases designed for the palazzo by the Bernini and Borromini, it became a signum of its epoch.

Since the Museum Barberini in Potsdam opened in January 2017, there has been a desire to realize a joint project with the Palazzo Barberini in Rome. The Museum Barberini was named after the Palais Barberini which Frederick the Great had erected on the Alter Markt in Potsdam in the 1770s. Destroyed in the Second World, it was rebuilt in 2013–2016 by the Hasso Plattner Stiftung as a modern museum structure. The Prussian king, inspired by a copper engraving by Giovanni Battista Piranesi that portrayed the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, wanted an Italian piazza for Potsdam. Thus, Frederick II established a relationship with the family seat of the Barberini family and—quite ironically—with the most important “art pope” of the Baroque era.

A symposium in Potsdam in October 2018 laid the groundwork for the exhibition catalogue. We wish as well to express our gratitude to the authors of the essays and the authors of the introductions and monographs. Our thanks go to Michael Philipp, the curator of the Museum Barberini and co-editor of its publications as well as to Museum Barberini research assistant Valerija Kuzema, for the careful editing of the texts. Like the exhibition, the catalogue essays bridge the gap between the Barberini family as patrons of the arts during the birth and expansion of the Roman Baroque and the Italiensehnsucht of the Prussian kings.

The cooperation with the Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg made possible the loan of two paintings by Artemisia Gentileschi acquired by Frederick II which have hung in the Neues Palais since 1769. After 250 years, they have been specially restored for the exhibition and leave their home for the first time.

The exhibition is a key event of the summer festival *Italy in Potsdam*. Together with the Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, the Museum Barberini invites all visitors to extend their museum visit to discover Italianate buildings and artworks in the city and in Sanssouci Park—with an audio tour on the Barberini App.

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