

# Chapter 24

## POPES, PEASANTS, MONARCHS, AND MERCHANTS

### Baroque Art

#### Summary:

The Counter-Reformation launched by the Roman Catholic Church in response to the Reformation of the previous century allowed the popes and the papal courts to create dynamic art, which was, in turn, created to encourage the faithful to return to the Church.

This political as well as religious endeavor caused great upheavals in the European countries that shared either Protestant or Catholic sentiments. The **European map was being re-drawn**, but the *most significant change in the politics of religion was the granting of freedom of religious choice*. This accord had been reached by the *Treaty of Westphalia and proved to be an essential freedom*. **No longer was Rome the center of the political world**; the various monarchs who very much wanted to take over that role were replacing it. The secularization of Europe also led to the development of scientific thought and discovery.

Great strides were being made in the physical world of science as well as the biological world. Astronomy, chemistry and medicine were now being discussed, although in small select academic communities, the ramifications of such discussions had widespread impact. **Fact and scientific study were replacing faith**. This would lead to other discoveries that would benefit humanity. *The seventeenth century also led to wider exploration for the purpose of establishing trade routes and colonies*. The smaller countries, for example, the Netherlands (Holland) now secured for themselves the financial power to become a major money broker. The *social factors and positions* allowed for the development of the Catholic and Protestant worlds with individual monarchs coming into power as major power players and leaders. This also led to the *increase of a wider patronage system*, more people were able to commission various works of art and the *artists now were gaining individual reputations*, which they could use for prestige and monetary remuneration. The diversity of the period crosses into the eighteenth century and does demonstrate a continuity of a sort.

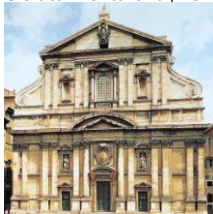
The reaction and the counter reaction to the external stimuli of developing countries, monarchs, the exchange of power and the removal of power created this Baroque period followed by the Rococo.

#### I. Lecture Model

It would be useful to use a number of methodological approaches to explore this period.

**Patronage and the social approach** would be very helpful approaches to explain the diversity of the representational work. An iconographic analysis would work very well in explaining the Church's response to the Protestant break. **The social approach would also work in detailing the number of portraits, which were being commissioned by both sides of the argument, Catholicism vs. Protestantism.**

The **seventeenth century** in Italy saw one of the *most efficient propaganda endeavors since Imperial Rome*. The Roman Catholic Church sought to turn to faithful back to the Church. Rome became a city of monumental architectural renovations.



**22-50 GIACOMO DELLA PORTA, facade of Il Gesù, Rome, Italy, ca. 1575-1584**

The late 16th century church, Il Gesù (22-50) became the *religious as well as political center of the Jesuits*, founded in the previous century as an order to combat the Reformation.



**24-02 CARLO MADERNO, facade of Saint Peter's, Vatican City, Rome, Italy, 1606-1612**

In keeping with this purpose, Paul V commissioned Carlo Maderno to complete the facade of St. Peter's (24-2).

■ The facade was to become an echo of the grandeur of Imperial Rome and a welcoming homecoming to the faithful and the lost faithful. This **grandeur was to keep the faithful and also to create an image of the glory of heaven**. The *monumentality of the facade was an echo of the promise of salvation and redemption*.

■ Furthermore the facade also expressed the permanence of the promise of redemption and the role the Roman Catholic Church played in that promise. After all, it was Peter who founded the basilica and the Roman Catholic Church took on Peter's role as shepherd of the faithful.



**24-04 Aerial view of Saint Peter's, Vatican City, Rome, Italy, 1506-1666**

A master in this artistic endeavor, Gianlorenzo Bernini, literally changed the face of the Vatican and Rome. This artist's contributions cover a wide range of artistic endeavors.

**Bernini** designed the *Piazza San Pietro* (24-4) that becomes a visual metaphor for the promise of Christ as realized in the Roman Catholic Church.

■ The aerial view of the piazza clearly shows this metaphor, the side colonnade wings stretch out and encompass the central plaza. This leads the faithful forward to the very portico of St. Peter's and, hence, the Church. This visual statement regarding the promise of salvation and redemption allowed the Church to create an image, which has granted a sense of peace and serenity to the faithful.

Architecturally, **Bernini** achieved this spiritual feeling by designing the piazza to *complement the monumental facade of St. Peter's*.

■ Each counter balances the other; neither diminishes the quality of the other structure. Both the structures the actual building of St. Peter's and the colonnade of the piazza are related not only by size but also by a spiritual quality which both artists amplified.

■ In keeping with this virtuosity, Bernini created for the chapel of the Cornaro family an inspired work that exemplifies the times.



**24-09 GIANLORENZO BERNINI, Ecstasy of Saint Teresa, Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, Italy, 1645-1652. Marble, height of group 11' 6".**

The *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* 1645-52 (24-9) appeals not only to the senses but also to the intellect.

- Juxtaposing the sensual expression of Teresa is the Angel piercing her heart with the arrow of divine inspiration and love; the angelic expression indicates the deep love the Divinity had for Teresa.
- This inspirational rendering, by Bernini, is timed on the moment of sublime communication, as expressed in the words of Teresa herself, “I felt such infinite sweetness that I wished the pain to last eternally. It was the sweetest caressing of the soul by God.”
- This is the moment **Bernini captured the infinite sweetness and the sweetest caressing of the soul by God**. The *mood of the moment can be interpreted as sexual satisfaction or religious joy*. Bernini has sought to create a tableau, described in the writings of Teresa with the moment of her spiritual pleasure.

Another artist who represented the importance of the visual image as a vehicle to represent an idea or theme was **Caravaggio**. His use of shadow and light to hallmark the work created those moments of impact as well.



**24-18 CARAVAGGIO, Conversion of Saint Paul, Cerasi Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy, ca. 1601**

In his *Conversion of St. Paul* c.1601 (24-18), **Caravaggio** has captured the precise moment when Saul becomes Paul and goes forward as an apostle of the Church. This piece as well serves as a vehicle to express the importance of the faithful remaining in the Church.

- The man Saul, who was an enemy of the Christian, becomes the saint, Paul, one of the leaders of the early church. He is, in fact, one of the staunchest supporters of encouraging the gentile to enter into this community of Christians or followers of Christ.
- Intellectually, the seventeenth century viewer would see the reference of Paul converting to the teachings of Christ as a rejection of the Reformation.
- Not all painting in Italy was geared to the religious.



■ Caravaggio created a number of ambivalent and ambiguous works such as the Bacchus done in 1595-96. This work shows a youthful figure, Bacchus, holding and offering a glass of wine. Does he prefigure Christ and the Last Supper?

■ The young man is coyly leaning on a divan draped with a white cloth, a basket of fruit and a glass pitcher of wine on the table.

■ Is this Bacchus enticing the viewer into world of addiction? Is this Bacchus, rather, a disinterested god offering wine as a drink and nothing more?

■ The composition does not adhere strictly to one interpretation or another. Caravaggio offers the viewer a variety of readings and emotional reactions to this work. The ambiguity of the work has never allowed for a concrete explanation.



**24-19 CARAVAGGIO, Calling of Saint Matthew, Contarelli Chapel, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, Italy, ca. 1597-1601. Oil on canvas, 11' 1" x 11' 5".**

**24-20 CARAVAGGIO, Entombment, from the chapel of Pietro Vittrice, Santa Maria in Vallicella, Rome, Italy, ca. 1603. Oil on canvas, 9' 10 1/8" x 6' 7 15/16". Musei Vaticani, Pinacoteca, Rome.**

**Artemisia Gentileschi** trained by her painter father, Orazio, in the art of painting presents another example of the Italian artist creating works, which support the teachings of the Church and also could suggest alternate explanations as well.



In her *Judith Slaying Holofernes* c.1614- 20 (**24-21**), Artemisia details in graphic fashion the biblical event.

■ Judith along with her maidservant entices Holofernes, an Assyrian general, and vanquishes him.

- Judith vigorously decapitates Holofernes; Artemisia re-creates that event in colorful detail.
- The blood spurts from the neck of Holofernes and Judith continues with the strength of purpose to finish the assassination, no matter the struggles of Holofernes.
- It has been suggested that Artemisia used this motif, Judith and Holofernes, not only to represent the Apocryphal Book of Judith, but also to work as catharsis in her personal life.
- The work represents the Church's support of the apocrypha, which the Protestants had banned.
- It has also been suggested that the artist, Artemisia Gentileschi, used this triumphant theme, a woman overcoming a warrior and general, through sheer strength of will as a cleansing to bring closure to a personal crisis.
- A fellow student had raped her. The drama of the Judith theme could stand as an attempt to understand and confront the drama in her personal life as well as a document in support of Church writings.

Spain also a strong and avid defender of the Church contributed to the representation of Catholic dogma. Spanish artists created great dramas denoting the sacrifices the martyrs made to the Church and its teachings.

In addition to the religious works, Spain also produced an artist who did have an impact on subsequent generations.

**Diego Velasquez** gave us glimpses into Spanish society as it existed in the 17th century. This artist illustrated the peasant as well as the aristocrat. He combined the virtues of both and gave us a momentary view into the daily activities of the people.



**24-30 DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, Water Carrier of Seville, ca. 1619. Oil on canvas, 3' 5 1/2" x 2' 7 1/2". Wellington Museum, London.**

In his *Water Carrier of Seville* c.1619 (24-30), he allows us to see the man and his customers, simple people in need of refreshment. The artist has also created a powerful statement of the reality of the city of Seville in the early 1600s.

- By controlling the palette, keeping the tones even he has created a statement on the times and lives of the people who lived outside the royal court. This work becomes truly representational of the period and all its aspects.

In contrast to the street people and the lives of the common folk is the work Velasquez did for the court of Philip IV.



**24-33 DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, *Las Meninas* (The Maids of Honor), 1656. Oil on canvas, approx. 10' 5" x 9'. Museo del Prado, Madrid.**

In *Las Meninas* 1656 (24-33), Velasquez has created a dialog both within the canvas and without.

- We see the princess surrounded by her ladies and court, in the background is a figure standing in the open door, to left of the princess, and the artist has painted himself in act of painting.
- Mirrored on the back wall is a reflection of the royal couple, Philip IV and his Queen, Mariana.
- The dialog presented is at once straight forward yet ambiguous, the principle characters establish eye contact with us the viewers, yet are they willing to engage in conversation.
- The mastery of Velasquez allows him to set the focus and create the dialog or not. He, the artist, confronts us in the act of painting. He is demonstrating his ability and also his place within the court.
- He has the sanction of the royal couple to immortalize their daughter even as they join him in his studio.
- It becomes a lively sitting, yet, the moment the artist has chosen for us, the viewers to witness, is a break in the session. The ladies-in-waiting are speaking with the princess, in the background the adults in the shadow are also speaking with each other; the artist looks around and directly at us as well.
- Velasquez has not only created a work with an atmosphere that is real and believable, he has also created an image, which relaxes the severity of the court portrait.
- Velasquez has allowed a glimpse into the lives of the sitters and we can establish a dialog with them and the artist himself.
- In addition to this, Velasquez has also validated his position in the court of Philip IV. He has certified his position as court painter. He has become more than a mere painter, he has become a trusted member of the royal family; the king and queen in the background are not prominent, yet we see them visiting the studio.



**24-32 DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, *King Philip IV of Spain* (Fraga Philip), 1644. Oil on canvas, 4' 3 1/8" x 3' 3 1/8". The Frick Collection, New York.**

Contrasting the fervor of the Catholic countries and also showing their ability to create a dialog, which these artists enjoyed, are the Dutch. The Netherlands (Holland), because of its history with **the Hapsburgs**, *was firmly committed to Protestantism. Therefore their art had a secular tone from the beginning*, but there were artists who followed Catholicism who were able to continue lucrative careers.

*Dutch art, however, is founded on the non-religious works, which focused on portraits, landscapes or genre scenes.*



**24-47 REMBRANDT VAN RIJN, Self-Portrait, ca. 1659-1660. Oil on canvas, approx. 3' 8 3/4" x 3' 1". The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood House, London.**

The work of Rembrandt as a portraitist is one of the hallmarks Dutch art. The artist sought and was able to convey psychological introspection in his later works.

- In his *Self-Portrait* c.1659-60 (**24-47**), he has captured his self-confidence and validated his careful attention to perfecting his craft.
- Similar to Velasquez, Rembrandt has illustrated himself as an accomplished and successful artist.



- In another **self-portrait dated 1658**, the artist has created a different image. In this self-portrait, Rembrandt has donned a costume, which is incongruent in the Amsterdam setting of the 17th century.
- The lighting of the face reflects his distinctive ability to control the medium, shows a more pensive and sad presentation of the artist.
- An older man who is perhaps an eccentric and one who lived a long life that has not been financially rewarding.
- The money woes and other burdens, which Rembrandt carried in his later life, are mirrored in his pensive yet direct gaze.
- The artist does create a bond between himself and the viewer, we are invited to look further into his life and acknowledge his greatness.

**French 17th century architecture** revolved around the court of Louis XIV. The idea behind the commission of **Versailles** was to create a palace of grand design in place of a hunting lodge. This was all done to create an image of power and glory to be realized in the person of Louis XIV.

This strategy was developed under the guidance of two very powerful cardinals, **Richelieu and Mazarin**. Both men set policies, which consolidated power into the hands of the king or his representative, the regent.

Upon the death of Richelieu, Mazarin succeeded as regent for the five year old Dauphin, Louis XIV.

Mazarin continued the policies and strategies set by Richelieu, Mazarin continued to curb the influence of the Pope in French affairs and he also saw a need to control the aristocracy.

When **Louis XIV** ascended the throne, he continued these policies as well. He even went so far as to demand the aristocracy serve as his attendants. ***No longer did the nobility enjoy the feudal powers they had in the past.***

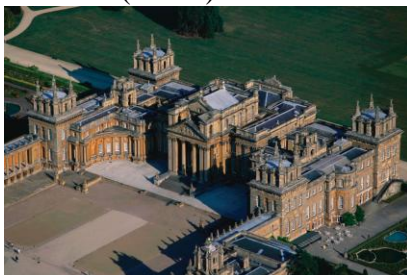
Louis was now able to give free reign to his ambitions to create a show place in France for all to see and admire and imitate. He carefully worked in conjunction with his court designers and architects to create a sumptuous palace that would reflect his power and stature as the sun king.

**Versailles became the definitive model for royal palace architecture in the seventeenth century.** The richness of the furnishings and the design of Versailles were to reflect the style and ambitions of Louis.



For example the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) c.1680 (**24-69**) is a model for the rich and ornate design that so enchanted Louis. He also had another scheme in mind; he wanted to keep the French nobility mesmerized by the splendor of the building and keep them in check. Their service to their king was a solution to uncontrollable nobility.

2) The sun king reigned into the eighteenth century and he did set the standard for royal spectacle. The overwhelming presentation of a palace was imitated in England. The reward the nation made to John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, was **Blenheim Palace 1702-22 (24-75)**.



**24-75 JOHN VANBRUGH, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, England, 1705-1722.**

This structure was to honor him for his efforts during the Spanish War of Succession. *The sense or essence Louis XIV created at Versailles is mirrored in Blenheim*. This same grand standard can be seen throughout Europe, Stadtschloss, Potsdam, Germany begun in 1644 but altered in 1744, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin 1740, or the Upper Belvedere, Vienna 1721-23.

Each palace was modified to accommodate the needs and desires of their respective patrons, yet the essence of the grand design remained. These early years of the eighteenth century were tributes to the diversity that was the hallmark of the period. The challenge of the period was its diversities and how each country and patron met those diversities.

### **Resources:**

#### **Videotapes**

*Reputation: Rape of Artemisia Gentileschi* 30 min. BVL7348 \$129

*Fountains of Rome* 28 min. BVL2150 \$89.95

*The Baroque Period* 60 min. BVL10355 \$89.95

*Daily Life at the Court of Versailles* 60min. BVL943 \$89.95

*Stuart and Georgian London* 20 min. BVL2696 \$89.95

*Age of Charles II* 50 min. BVL4652 \$149

*Dutch Art in its Own Environment* 25 min. BVL3304 \$89.95

*Jan Vermeer* 28 min. BVL7797 \$89.95

*Seville* 60 min. BVL10631 \$89.95

*Rembrandt van Rijn* 30 min. BVL7793 \$89.95

*Peter Paul Rubens* 32 min. BVL7794 \$89.95

*Velasquez* 36 min. BVL2215 \$129.95

Films for the Humanities

1-800-257-5126

<http://www.films.com>

#### **Books**

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Brown, Jonathan and Carmen Garrido Perez. *Velasquez: The Technique of Genius*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

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Stratton-Pruitt, Suzanne. *Bartolomé Esteban Murillo*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002.

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White, James Boyd. *The Edge of Meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 141

Zell, Michael. *Reframing Rembrandt: Jews and Christian Image in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam*. Berkeley, University of California Press. 2002.

#### **Web Resources**

<http://www.lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/bnf/bnf0001.html>

<http://sgwww.epfl.ch/BERGER/Vermeer/english>  
<http://www.chateauversailles.fr/>