

# The impact of scale on francesco borromini's sac carlo alle



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

San Carlo Quattro Fontane, known in popular speech as “ San Carlino’ in reference to its small size, is Roman Catholic Church built between 1638-1648 by an Architect named Francesco Borromini from Ticino, precursor to the modern day Switzerland. San Carlo Quattro Fontane is located in Rome, Italy on the crossing of Strada Felice and Via Pia was built originally for the Spanish Trinitarians as an extension of their already existing monastery .

San Carlo alle Quattro Fontanne is often considered Borromini’s most iconic masterpiece of Baroque architecture for his signature use of undulating surfaces, pure mathematical forms and conforming geometrical shaping. San Carlo is significantly small given the magnitude of baroque constructed during Borromini’s time however does this hinder San Carlo’s architectural effect and impact as a classified baroque form of architecture? Francesco Borromini was a stone mason by trade and started off as a stone mason in his early career.

Under directions of his father, he was sent to Milan for perfecting his skills in stone cutting when he was introduced to the craft of architecture before moving to Rome in the early 1600’s and started work for his distant relative and architect, Carlo Maderno. Only after Maderno’s death did Borromini became acquainted with the great Gian Bernini. Bernini became Borromini’s great friend and colleague as they worked on projects such Maderno’s Palazzo Barberini and the Baldachin in Saint Peter’s Cathedral.

Bernini was impressed with Borromini’s novel formulation of architectural detail, something he has greatly perfected as a stonemason. The pair would become prime influences of the Italian baroque movement in Rome of the 1600s in advance of Pope Sixtus V ‘ s “ Roma in forma sideris” plan of Rome.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-scale-on-francesco-borrominis-sac-carlo-alle/>

Unlike Bernini's character traits of being able to please aristocratic and the powerful, Borromini was a lonely, withdrawn man who looked to become an independent architect who prided himself on his specialized training and gained the most modest degree of recognition.

As a Result Borromini began to part ways, both stylistically and personally, with Bernini and set about finding his own projects. On Borromini's later works, Bernini criticized Borromini in abandoning the anthropomorphic nature in building design. At the time it was argued that building proportions should be derived from the proportion of the body of a man, the proportions of the Vitruvian man (as seen below), as it was argued that the proportions of the man was modeled in the image of God.

Borromini however believed in the science of mathematics and how the idea of geometry and nature being inseparably connected, much like what Gallileo wrote about, and he tries to bring light and shape to the fore of his style. After being commissioned by the Cardinal Francesco Barberini of the Spanish Trinitarians, Borromini's first independent commission, Borromini departs from the orthodox interpretations of antiquity and takes up his own style in reference to his ideals on geometry and mathematical proportions. As a result of Borromini's freedom to create in the image of his ideals, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane has elements of unparalleled spatial complexity and Curvilinear Facades. The entire exterior facade of the church is an example of Borromini's predilection for convex and concave forms which creates an undulating surface which transforms the movement of the facade from static to highly dynamic, or as observers would observe, almost like a wave.

In addition to the curvilinear form the front of the church, the front facade is divided into two stories by projecting cornices and laterally divided by four ionic columns with capitals. The main body of the church is an undulating ovular shape with a ovular dome and a lantern on top of it to let light into the body, just like oculus in the pantheon. However the basic concept of the plan does not derive from an oval but from the main theme of the order of religion, The Spanish Trinitarians, which believes in the holy trinity.

The plan and direction of the church is orientated based on the diagram below where the holy trinity, symbolized as the triangle is put back to back to form a diamond shape. This diamond shape is then inscribed on the outside making an oval shape, the shape of the main body of the church. Within this oval shape two circles are drawn and from those circles lines can be drawn from one point to another from the church and thus making those lines the direction of the architecture . The interior of the church can be vertically divided into three principal arts of the lower order at ground level, the transition zone of the pendentives and the ovular dome with it's oval shaped lantern. Dividing the lower part of the church to the upper part is again the occurrence of undulating lines above the ionic columns which envelop the lower part of the church. The ovular dome shape is made of interconnected squares, crosses, hexagons and octagons which diminish in size as they rise up towards the oval shaped lantern which allows natural light to pass in and dramatize the all white interior of the church.

The scale of the church is relatively small compared to the monumental likes of grand architecture such as the Piazza di San Pietro by Bernini, as it was noted that the size of the San Carlo Church can fit in the one of the dome

columns at Saint Peter's basilica However Borromini exploration with small buildings on complicated ground planes which presented, often, irregular spaces, led to a new form of architectural expression which was extremely radical at the time.

His ability to maintain architectural unity with the use of curvilinear of both the interior and exterior of the church, along with the mixture of classical components from ancient Greece, highlights the significance of the San Carlino Church as a new form which broke away from the contemporary architecture which mainly derived from Vitruvius' ideals, seen widely expressed during that time period.

However such a radical change in contemporary architecture at the time was too radical and Borromini's work was met with critical harshness. Due to his poor critical response from art and architecture critiques at the time, he received very little acclaim during his life and consequently didn't receive as many opportunities to create such as the likes of his old colleague Bernini and often worked for religious orders rather than the papal church.

Thus arriving at my opinion that if Borromini was given the chance to design on a much larger scale for example the papal church, his architectural forms and thinking would have been taken more serious and thought about more and would have no doubt had greater influences on architecture which preceded it. Due to the lack of funding of his projects, the scale of San Carlo all Quattro Fontane was extremely small yet it was packed with such elegance and adorned with such detail. In my opinion if improvements could be made, the location and the scale of the church could've further highlighted the architectural genius of Borromini.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-scale-on-francesco-borrominis-sac-carlo-alle/>