

*Francisco Jarauta
en las fronteras
de Babel*



ISTITUTO EUROPEO DI DESIGN



Francisco Jarauta en las fronteras de Babel

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Irving Lavin

Uno de los historiadores de arte más importantes de los Estados Unidos, es Profesor Emérito de Historia del Arte en el Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton NJ. Durante muchos años enseñó en el Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Conocido por sus trabajos sobre Gianlorenzo Bernini, su investigación y publicaciones cubren una amplia gama de temas desde la Antigüedad tardía hasta Jackson Pollock, Frank Stella y Frank O. Gehry. Es miembro de la American Academy of Arts and Sciences, expresidente del US National Committee for the History of Art y del International Committee for the History of Art (CIHA), miembro extranjero de la Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei de Roma y de la Accademia Clementina de Bolonia, y fue nombrado miembro honorario de la Università dei Marmorai de Roma (2017). Ha recibido la Medalla de Honor (conmemoración del tricentenario de la muerte de Gianlorenzo Bernini), Ciudad de Roma (1980); el Premio Daria Borghese (1981); y el Premio Internazionale “Galileo Galilei” de la Università di Pisa (2005). Entre sus libros: *Bernini and Crossing of St. Peter’s* (1968); *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts* (1980); *Past-Present. Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso* (1993); *Bernini e il salvatore. La “buona morte” nella Roma del seicento* (1998); *Caravaggio e La Tour. La luce occulta di Dio* (2000); *The Liturgy of Love. Imagery from the Song of Songs in the Art of Cimabue, Michelangelo, and Rembrandt* (con Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, 2001); *L’arte della storia dell’arte* (2008); y *Bernini in St. Peter’s: the Pilgrimage, Visible Spirit* (2014).

Bernini and the Figura Serpentinata: a Drawing recently given to the Princeton Art Museum by Charles Scribner III Irving Lavin



Meditating on this occasion two perfectly unrelated thoughts came to mind. The first was Francis Ford Coppola’s great film *Godfather*, in which Al Pacino succeeds, by murdering all competitors, in gaining control and succeeding his father Marlon Brando as Godfather of the greatly expanded and magnificent Corleone family of Mafiosi.

The other was the remark made by Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, later Pope Urban VIII, to Bernini’s father, the sculptor Pietro Bernini, when he saw something Pietro’s eight-year old son Gianlorenzo had done, warning him “Take care, this child will surpass you and will certainly be greater than his master.” Pietro replied, somewhat cheekily, “Sire, that doesn’t worry me. Your eminence knows that in this game, the one who loses wins.”



Fig. 1.
Caravaggio, *Supper at Emmaus*, 1601.
London, National Gallery

In 1974 Charlie Scribner participated in a colloquium of mine on Caravaggio. His subject was the London *Supper at Emmaus*. (**Fig. 1**) He recognized that the consternation evident in the poses and expressions of the two apostles who failed to recognize Christ by his physiognomy, depended on a passage in the Latin Vulgate. The evangelist Luke reports that Jesus appeared to them *in alie effigies*, in another visage, and only revealed himself in the miracle of his institution of the Eucharist at his blessing of the bread and wine. Charlie also found that this passage in Luke was the explanation offered by a number of early commentators on the gospel and his article became one of the foundations stones of our understanding of Caravaggio as a true intellectual, more, much more than the proletarian, sometime



Fig. 2.
Workshop of Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Design for the Tomb Monument of a Military Officer*, ca. 1670, pen and brown ink with brush and gray wash on cream laid paper. Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of Charles Scribner III in honor of Professor Irving Lavin (2017)

criminal, painter of the mysterious dramatic spiritual illumination we call chiaroscuro.

(**Fig. 2**) Princeton's new drawing came to light only in the later eighteenth century. It is now the subject of an excellent article in the most recent issue of *Art Bulletin* by Franco Mormando, author of two important biographical books on Bernini. Mormando attributes the drawing to the workshop of Bernini and dates it circa 1669. He makes a persuasive case, despite the absence of any documentary or literary evidence, that the drawing was intended for a tomb of a remarka-



Fig. 3.
Ercole Ferrata, *Tommaso Rospigliosi*, life-size statue, marble. Rome, Campidoglio, Sala dei Capitani

ble scion of the Rospigliosi family, one of the grandest and noblest of early modern Rome. (**Fig. 3**) Tommaso Rospigliosi was the son of the brother Pope Clement IX, who died December 9, 1669. With the Popes' help Tommaso achieved considerable stature in Rome, above all as a merchant in the silk and wool industries, which greatly benefitted the economy of the city. Tragically, Tommaso died of malaria at the age of 27 on August 4, 1667. Two years later (1669-70) a statue by Ercole Ferrata, who often worked for Bernini, commemorating Tommaso was erected in the Hall of Captains in the Capitoline (the civic capitol of Rome).



He stands in full armor holding a large pomegranate, a traditional symbol of abundance and also an emblem of the explosive military grenade. (**Fig. 4**) We have a portrait of Tommaso which also shows the military garb, the elaborate head-dress, and the youthful features.

(**Fig. 5**) His qualification for the Capitoline honor of a life-size statue was based on his appointment as Castellano di Castel Sant' Angelo, that is, the ancient tomb of the Emperor Hadrian, which had become a prison for crimes against the papacy, and a refuge for the pope in times of danger. The Castellani were the pope's and the city's honorary guardians. No tomb was ever built for Tommaso, and he was ultimately (1748) interred with another member of the family in the floor of the Basilica of S. Maria Mag-

Fig. 4a.
Pierre Ronche, *Portrait of Tommaso Rospigliosi*. Formerly Rome, Rospigliosi Collection

Fig. 4b.
Albert Clouwet after Pierre Ronche, *Tommaso Rospigliosi*, Engraving



Fig. 5. (above)

View of covered arcade from the Vatican to Castel Sant' Angelo (tomb of the Emperor Hadrian)

Fig. 6. as Fig. 2

giore. (**Fig. 6**) The circumstances of Tommaso's life and death explain the military garb and ample hair of the figure in the drawing and the distressed pose of the figure of Justice at the left as if lamenting the loss of so great a hero. (Charity and her babies are at the right.)

I want to focus my remarks on an important design feature of the portrayal of the deceased, who is engaged in a sweeping, passionate s-curved act of devotion. I believe Rudolf Wittkower in his magisterial monograph on Bernini's

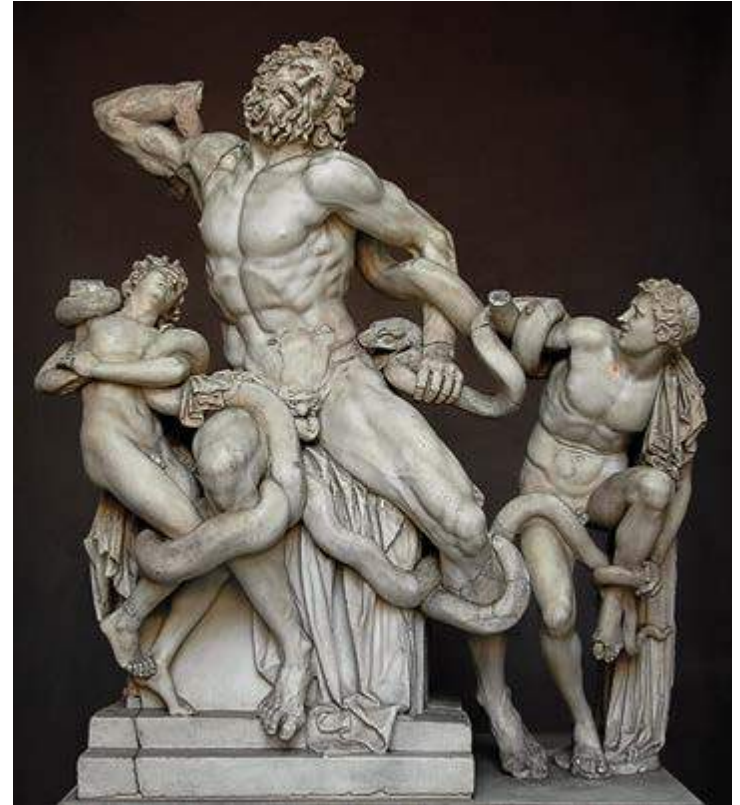


Fig. 7.
Laocoon and Sons, Vatican Museums, Cortile delle Statue

sculpture, 1955, was the first to observe that after a period in the late sixteenth century that favored an all-around view of free-standing sculpture, Bernini returned to a dominant frontal view that greatly enhanced the power and drama of the image. (**Fig. 7**) The story begins in Rome in 1506 with the discovery on the Esquiline Hill



er's observation was the great achievement of Florentine sculptors of the late sixteenth century in the wake of Michelangelo, who were intent upon making sculpture live in three dimensions. Giambologna famously said that a sculpture should have 40 equally valid

viewpoints, and hence arose the so-called *figura serpentinata* (the term itself recalls the Laocoon) most spectacularly represented by his own three-figured *Rape of a Sabine* in the Loggia dei Lanzi (1583). (Fig. 9) Bernini began to challenge this isolationist ideal early on but his alternate solution appears full-blown in Princeton's new drawing: the sculpture faces the spectator directly for maximum impact, while also enhancing its effect with a vigorous twisting movement in the frontal plane. (Fig. 10) This splendid display of grace and high energy would have appeared in heaven-



of the Laocoon, an ancient three-figured group celebrated by Pliny the Elder as carved from a single block of marble, *ex uno lapide*. The sculpture shows the Trojan priest Laocoon and his two sons in a titanic struggle with two horrific intertwining snakes sent by the angered goddess Athena to destroy them.

Michelangelo was one of the first to visit the excavation to see the amazingly complex sculpture that became the single most powerful influence in the history of European art, including on Bernini who studied it assiduously as a youth. (Fig. 8) The point of departure for Wittkow-

Figs. 8a, 8b. (top)
Giambologna, *Rape of a Sabine*, 1583. Florence, Loggia dei Lanzi
Fig. 9. as Fig. 2
Fig. 10. (next page below)
Bernini, *Project for the Cathedra Petri*, drawing, pen and brown ink with wash. Windsor Castle

Fig. 11.
Bernini, *Daniel in the Lion's Den*. Rome,
Sta Maria del Popolo, Cappella Chigi



ly light in a drawing by Bernini of 1657 that depicts the Archangel Michael descending from heaven to bestow the Keys of St. Peter and the Papal tiara on the throne of St. Peter in the apse of St. Peter's. Considering this project's location as the central focus in the largest church in Christendom, the figure would have been a truly brilliant, gigantic climax.

(**Fig. 11**) Also in the mid-1650s the organic principle inhabits Bernini's magnificent image, something between a painting and a sculpture, of *Daniel in the Lion's Den* in the Chigi chapel in S. Maria del Popolo. The heroic figure is a veritable vortex of move-

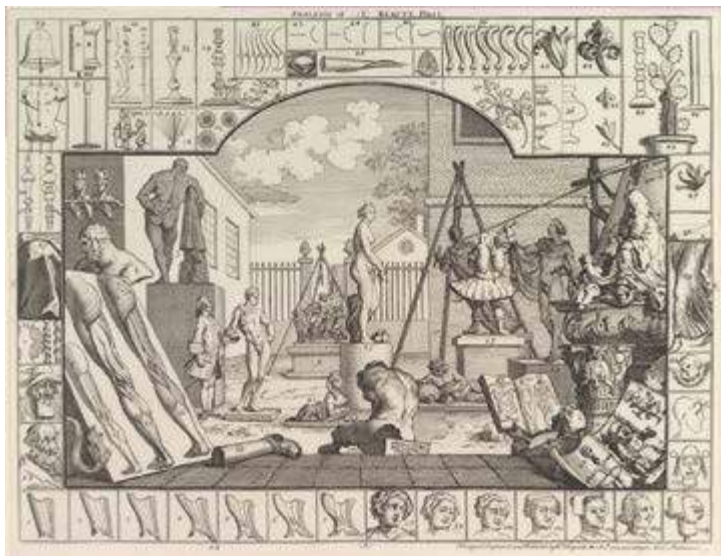


Fig. 12.
Francesco Cavallini, *Tomb of Mario Bolognetti*, 1675-680.
Rome, Gesu e Maria

ment rising in devotion toward the angel descending to save him.

(**Fig. 12**) The museum's new drawing must have been known and available to one of the most important sculptors following Bernini in Rome at the end of the seventeenth century, Francesco Cavallini, who created a series of astonishing funerary monuments in the church of Gesu e Maria at the center of the city on the Via del Corso. Cavallini's tomb of Mario Bolognetti, who was a Cavalier of the Order of Malta and Commander of a papal Galley, hence the military garb and accouterments, is virtually an incarnation of the unexecuted project for Tommaso Rospigliosi.

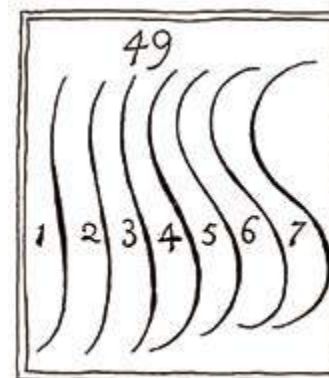
(**Fig. 13**) The underlying theme we have been tracing had a lasting legacy. Hogarth in the eighteenth century, 1783, composed a treatise, the *Analysis of*



Figs. 13.
William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, Plate 1, engraving

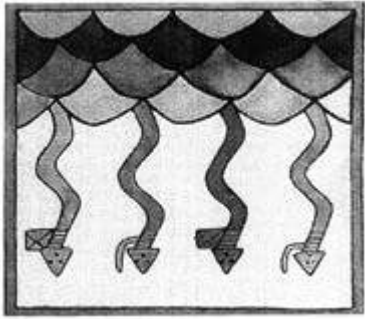
Beauty, illustrated by a deliberately popular and simple-minded engraving, of which the distant, central feature is an image of the Laocoon, (**Fig. 14**), and the analysis of beauty itself was represented by variously curving examples of what he called the “serpentine line of beauty.”

Finally, the theme appears as far afield as the Hopi Indian nation in Arizona, which was celebrated for its annual ritual snake dance. A shamon enacted with a live rattlesnake a prayer to the great rain god, that is, the thunder, lightning, and rain. (**Fig. 15**) Aby Warburg (1866-1929), scion of the great Warburg banking family and founder of the famous Warburg library, and institute of kulturwissenschaft, and the modern discipline of the study



Figs. 14.
Serpentine Lines of Beauty, detail of Fig. 13

of symbols, that is, of iconology. Warburg had developed a debilitating psychological problem and retired to a famous Swiss sanitarium in Kreuzlingen. He had heard of the Hopi ritual and in 1886 determined to go to the Hopi settlement and see for himself. He asked a number of the young tribesmen to make a picture of what they had experienced at the dance ceremony. (**Fig. 16**) Several of them drew pictures of the clouds and rain, while a few others drew abstract compositions that suggested in a diagrammatic way lightning striking from the clouds to the earth in the form of wavy serpentine arrows—symbols, in other words, that were traditional in the tribe’s self-representation. Grasping the underlying the continuity of these forms, Warburg composed a lecture about his experience and his general theory that symbolic thought is deeply embedded, indeed endemic in human culture. He encapsulated the breadth and depth of his thought in a distich he composed for the occasion:



Figs. 15.
Aby Warburg with Hopi
Indian at Oraibi Village,
AZ, 1886. After Michael P.
Steinberg, trans., *Images
from the Region of the Pueblo
Indians of North America: Aby
Warburg*, Ithaca/London,
1995, Frontispiece



Figs. 16.
Hopi Indian, *Thunder-
Lightning-Rain God*. After
Steinberg, p. 3

*Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern,
Athen-Oraibi alles Vettern*
(It is a lesson from an old book:
The kinship of Athens and Oraibi)

He delivered the paper at the sanitarium, where-
upon the presiding physicians declared him fit to go
back to his home, his Institute and his life of profound
scholarship.

