

Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza



The **Church of Saint Yves at the Sapienza** (Italian: *Chiesa di Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza*) is a University church in Rome. The church is considered a masterpiece of Roman Baroque church architecture. The church is between Piazza Navona and the Pantheon.

History

In the 14th century, there was a chapel here for the palace of the University of Rome. The University is called *La Sapienza*, and the church is devoted to Saint Yves (patron saint of the jurists), giving the church its name.

The commission to replace the original chapel was given to Borromini by Pope Urban VIII on the advice of Gianlorenzo Bernini in 1632. Borromini was forced to adapt his design to the already existing palace. He chose a plan resembling a star of David, and merged the facade of the church with the courtyard of the palace.

The church was deconsecrated in 1870 and used as a depository for the Biblioteca Alessandrina. The church was restored in 1926.

Exterior

This small church is located at the east end of a long cortile; the main entrance is at the far end of Giacomo della Porta's courtyard.

The façade echoes the two-tier arcades of the adjoining loggias, except in the church exterior the arcades are blind. No fan of right angles, Borromini has designed a curved, concave façade.

The dome, with its corkscrew lantern, is remarkable in its novelty. The lower concave facade is countered by the hexagonal drum above which projects in convex curves, divided into three bays, the central one occupied with a long window. Pilasters emphasize the divisions.

Above the drum there is a kind of stepped pyramid with emphatic, buttress-like ribs. The lantern above has double columns with concave areas between the columns. The lantern ends in a dramatic spiral with a flaming laurel wreath at the summit--a symbol of wisdom or "sapienza." The corners of the arc have in three dimensions the heraldic symbol of Pope Alexander VII--the six mountains topped by a star.

Interior

The interior of Sant'Ivo is unique because of the shapes incorporated into the rotunda. Borromini was well known for fusing of geometrical shapes as well as his pairing of columns in order to facilitate curves, incorporating them in an harmonious manner in his project at San Carlino. But for Sant'Ivo, Borromini did not blend the different shapes. The rotunda of Sant'Ivo is contrived of distinct shapes, a triangle with its three angles cut as if bitten off, and semi-circles located in between the triangle's three lines. Despite the shift from the smooth geometrical alignments of San Carlino to the sharper abrupt geometrical bends in Sant'Ivo, both buildings exhibit harmony between the sharp edges and the curves and spheres. Borromini utilized curves (semi-circles) and edges (clipped triangle tips) in equal amounts to define the shape of the rotunda. This blending of edges and curves is arguably Borromini's most distinguishable signature.

Another detail is that windows associated with the round sections of the dome are larger than those associated with the edges. One of the edgy sections is where the entrance is located while the altar is located on the opposite end, a round section. The two other round and edgy sections to the sides are identical in features. Through the perforations in the lantern, sunlight illuminates the dome through an oculi. Francesco Borromini had a talisman with the shape of a flying bee the roof of the lantern is a symbol family of Urban VIII Barberini who patronized the construction of Sant'Ivo.

The aisles of arches surrounding the right and left wings of Sant'Ivo are themselves not halted by the church. Here, the space between the arches and the walls in the aisles still continues past the church's sides. Each aisle has a single lateral entrance to the church. These hindered side entrances lead to hexagonal rooms (one on each side), and these hexagonal rooms are connected to the rotunda as well as the smaller facade windows. Behind the Altar to the rear of the church lies two more hexagonal rooms with windows aligned on the back. To the rear wings of the altar are the passages leading to the two separate hexagonal rear rooms.

The inside walls and dome of the rotunda were covered by Borromini with sculptures and motifs. On each edgy and round section there are columns of stars leading up to an angel's face with wings. One close observable difference between the round segments and the edgy ones is that the round ones exhibit a motif of six eggs in a pyramid formation with three crowns holding them together while the edgy segments exhibit a bouquet of flowers held together by a single crown.

The applied plaster decoration as well as the capitals of the fluted pilasters allude both to the Popes who reigned during the construction of this church and to other important Christian concepts. For example, palm leaves refer to martyrdom while the flaming crown is a symbol of charity. The oak wreath is both a traditional symbol of glory and wisdom and a symbol of Pope Alexander VII Chigi.

The dome caps the church without any transitional structure and continues the star plan of the church. Even the pilasters of the lower wall are continued in the dome. The verticality of the dome is emphasized even though there is a wide entablature separating the wall of the church from its dome.

The main artwork of the interior is the altarpiece by Pietro da Cortona, *Sts. Yves, Leo, Pantaleon, Luke and Catherine of Alexandria in the Glory of Angels*, oil finished by Giovanni Ventura Borghesi. The main altar was designed by Nicolo Forti and dates from 1784.

Influence

The corkscrew lantern of the church is the direct inspiration for the also spiralling spire of Vor Frelsers Kirke in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Artists and Architects:

Clemente [Majoli](#) (Maioli)(17th cent), Italian painter
 Francesco [Borromini](#) (1599-1667), leading figure in the emergence of Roman Baroque architecture
 Giovanni Battista [Contini](#) (1641-1723), Italian architect of the Late Baroque period
 Giovanni Ventura [Borghesi](#) (d. 1708), Italian painter of the Baroque period
 Nicolò [Forti](#) (1714-1802), Italian architect
 Pietro Berrettini [da Cortona](#) (1597-1669), Italian Baroque painter

Location:

Addr: Corso del Rinascimento 40 - 00186 ROMA
 Coord: [41°53'53"N 12°28'29"E](#)

Open times:

The church is open only on Sundays from 9.00 to 12.00.
 Closed in July and August.

Mass Schedule:

Sunday: 11.00 (except on July and August).

Links:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sant%27Ivo_alla_Sapienza

http://romanchurches.wikia.com/wiki/Sant%27Ivo_alla_Sapienza

<http://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/italy/rome/stivo/stivo.html>

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<http://www.interensemble.org/eng/s.ivo.htm>

http://www.tourome.com/rome_great_artists/sant_ivo_alla_sapienza.htm

http://www.romainteractive.com/bits/piazza_navona/s_ivo_alla_sapienza.html

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Sant%27Ivo_alla_Sapienza

<http://www.romeartlover.it/Vasi161.htm#S. Ivo>

http://www.info.roma.it/monumenti_dettaglio.asp?ID_schede=166

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